



Families First St Andrews **23rd Annual Review** **2023 – 2024**

Families First works alongside children, young people, and their families to overcome the personal challenges they face in life.



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Office of Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) number: SC032506

Please tell us the difference coming to Families First has made to you ...



Chairperson's Report Alison Cartwright



As I look back over another successful year of Families First services, I can see that the team have delivered many wonderful activities - too many to mention! At our Board meetings we get a full report from Alison Miller on all that the team have been up to; we all look forward to these reports as they highlight how vital Families First services are to those in the community of North East Fife facing disadvantage and adversity in their lives.

As a Board we are always keen to hear how creative and innovative the team are in developing and providing their services in partnership with the volunteers, children, young people and families they work with, as either individuals or in groups. We were so pleased to hear that a young person successfully applied for a grant to get horse therapy sessions for all the young people in our Youth Groups. They were introduced to Kinshaldy Stables by one of our Trustees and it all fell into place seamlessly. These little moments in time come about because people are keen to talk to us about what they can do to support Families First.

Community relationships are important to everyone at Families First and we all take every opportunity to network and speak to others about our work; we are particularly pleased with the progress of Friends of Families First and how well they are promoting our work in the community.

As I look to the future of Families First, I am particularly struck by the skills and expertise within the Board of Trustees. They are as keen to use their knowledge to ensure Families First continues to support families facing adversity in North East Fife as anyone else involved. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and my fellow Trustees for giving me the opportunity to be involved with such an amazing organisation. I have every confidence we will continue to thrive because of the people they are and the values we hold.

Manager's Report Morag Coleman



In our volunteer training we run an exercise called 'The 9 Golden Rules'. This is completed in small groups with the participants having to place the 'Golden Rules' in order of priority, showing what they think is the best approach to managing behaviour. The learning here is that there isn't a top golden rule - it really does depend on the situation presented to you. However as I look back on my 13 years as manager, I realise there probably has been a top golden rule to the success of Families First all along. It hasn't been the amount of money we can raise, the increasing number of people we can support each year or the number of new projects we can develop; it's the people. The people involved with Families First are crucial to making the charity a success. All of the people I have met along the way from the children, young people and their families, community groups, partners, volunteers and Trustees to the staff, have a willingness to work together to make a difference to themselves and to their communities.

As you will see from this year's statistics and feedback, we have had another successful year in raising enough funds to support children, young people and their families who face disadvantage and adversity. It's 4 words from a parent, when asked what difference being involved with Families First had made to them - "It saved my life" - that makes all the difference to me. This wasn't down to anything other than the trusting relationship this parent had built with our staff.

It takes time for service users to build trust when they have experienced trauma and adversity in their lives. We are able to give them that time so that when they are ready to make change, we are there to support them. The children, young people, parents and carers need to know that we will be there for them no matter what, for as long as it takes.

As I prepare to hand over the leadership reins, my hope is that the continued success of Families First will be based on its core ethos of valuing others and showing care, respect, love, kindness, tolerance, understanding and compassion; we need our people to carry on doing what they do best.

Volunteering



The Friends of Families First Committee has grown to become a group of passionate, committed and skilled individuals working hard to support the Families First team to fundraise and raise awareness in the local community, with businesses in particular, and encourage the recruitment of volunteers.

This year the committee (a sub-group of our Board of Trustees) has really come into its own; they are now operating as an independent volunteer committee, within the rules and guidelines of the Families First Board of Trustees.

They have made many community connections and have created a database listing everyone contacted by the Friends group. They organise coffee mornings and collect raffle prizes and cakes from local businesses and others in the community; enjoyed by all who attend.

Coffee mornings always highlight the great importance of communities giving back, goodwill, inclusivity and the all-important raising awareness of Families First. The amount of chatter that emanates from the room is testament to the enjoyment visitors get from a social event in their community.

This year volunteers have told us the positive things about volunteering are:

- *"Everything. Everyone is so friendly and helpful, and I have learnt so much from volunteering here. All of the young people I have worked with are incredibly kind and caring as well. I have even made some friends during my time here".*
- *"I think the best part for me is getting to know amazing people whom I can learn from including both the professionals and the kids. I also enjoy getting away from my everyday life a bit to do something meaningful".*
- *"For me it is a nice break from studying – I get out of the house and can take my mind off things while doing something good and often fun".*
- *"Using my time constructively and contributing to the community and my own well-being".*
- *"It enables me to give back to my community. I do feel that I am able to make a difference and that is very important to me. The philosophy around 'Be That Person' is key to this".*

Local Champions of the Year



This year we have again received so many local donations and gifts in kind that we cannot begin to mention everyone, but we thank them all from the bottom of our hearts.

Theo Brian, a local young person, raised an amazing £669 for Families First by cycling over 200km from St Andrews to Oban in one day! He cannot be praised enough for his amazing effort and his dedication to supporting others. We were very pleased to partner with Crail Festival in the summer of 2023; they raised £3,000 for us through their annual celebration which brings together the local community and visitors for a diverse range of cultural events in Crail. We were also very grateful to a Madras College former pupil group who generously raised £590 through their school reunion.

We have so much support from our community; they are willing to support us because they know the difference we can make.

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|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Anonymous donors | Heids & Hearts | Roxburgh, W (volunteer driver) |
| Angus, D | Hine, H | Russell, E |
| Anim8 | Holmes, N | Sainsbury's (local donations) |
| Baird family | Holmes, S | Stewart, A |
| Brian, T | Holy Trinity Church | St Andrews Aquarium |
| Byre Theatre | Hughes, J | St Andrews Amateurs |
| Cambo | Jack, M | St Andrews Botanic Garden |
| Chariots of Fire Beach Race | Jeavons, T | St Andrews Dental Care |
| Chisholm, D & H | Kiltwalk Sponsors | St Andrews Free Church |
| Canongate Primary School | Kingdom Vineyard | St Andrews Quaker Meeting |
| Con Panna | McCardel, D | St Leonard's Church |
| Cornerstone Church | Madras College ex pupils | St Mark's Church |
| Craigtoun Country Park | Main, C A | Step Rock ASC |
| Coia, A | Martin, W | Swilcan Singers |
| Cupar Old Parish Church | McCarron, P | Tay FM Cash for Kids |
| Docherty, J G | McGilchrist, M | Tesco (local) and Staff |
| Domino's Pizza | Milne, N | The Squeeze |
| Dovey, M | Morrisons | Toastie Bar |
| Easy Fundraising shoppers | Nationwide Building Society | Toy Drive |
| Fellowship of St Andrews | (local donations) | Trail, D |
| Frame, I | Nichols, M | University of St Andrews |
| Glasgow, A & L | Roberts, K | Societies |
| Hamilton, J | Rotary Club of Cupar | Williams, S |
| Harrison, D & J | Rotary Club of St Andrews | Willis, S |
| | | Wood, C |



55 children attended the Befriending Service

40 young people attended Youth Groups

73 young people attended High School Transition Groups

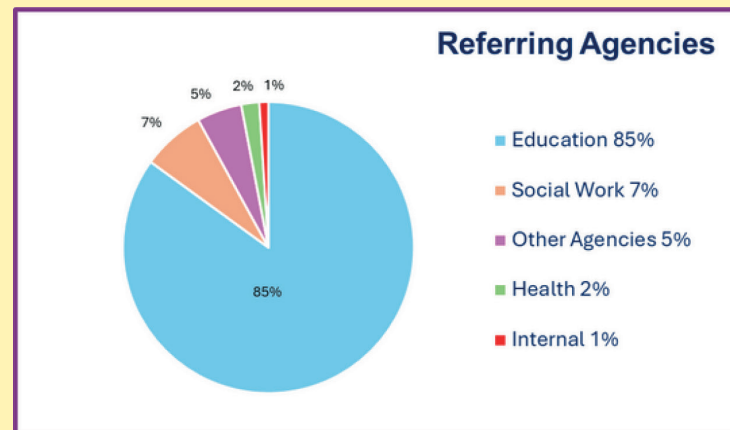
44 parents and carers attended the Family Support Service

50 children and young people attended Summer Activities

20 young people received one-to-one focussed support in schools



114 new referrals were received



61 people were referred with neurodivergent conditions

29 people were referred with behavioural challenges

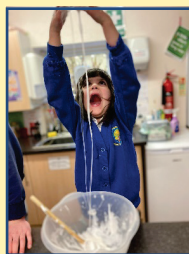
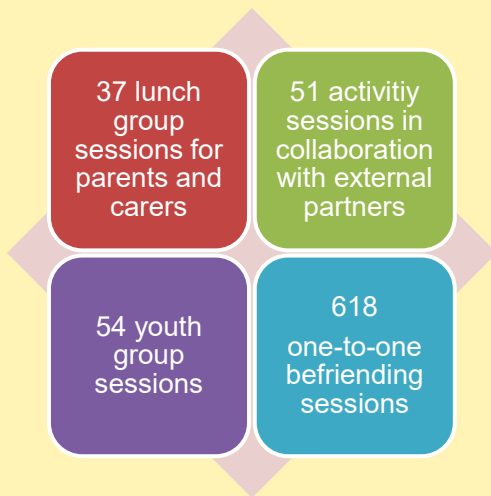
87 people were referred with emotional needs

42 people were referred with general families difficulties

32 people were referred for isolation

Staff attended 60 wellbeing/school review meetings





One-to-One Befriending Service Jan Clarke, Coordinator



It's been a quick year, hasn't it? They say time flies when you're having fun, and fun is our main objective at Befriending!

Befriending continues to be a unique and vital service for some of the children living in North East Fife; we're often told that there's nothing else quite like it. The flexibility, longevity and adaptability of the service really benefits children and their families.

At Befriending, we continue to listen to our service users and evolve to suit their changing needs. We're able to do this as we often stay in a child's life from age 5 -16, getting to know them, offering early

intervention, reassurance and support to achieve positive outcomes.

Morven Craig joined us this year as Youth Worker for the Befriending service, which has made a huge difference to the quality of the work we do. Morven spends her time providing excellent support to the very important partnerships between the children and their Befrienders. This gives me more time to attend professional meetings such as looked after child reviews, school and wellbeing meetings. We are committed to being part of the team around the child to ensure they get the best possible support they can.

This year we have been able to increase the number of lunch time sessions we offer, which helps children who are finding it difficult to attend school all day or who are more comfortable in quieter environments.

We also started a new group this year which takes place in the Coastline Community Church in Pittenweem. In our bid to continue to evolve, rather than bringing the children all the way into St Andrews, we take our service to them. This saves two long journeys after school and helps us reduce our carbon footprint.

As always, we remain humbled and privileged to be part of the children's lives; we learn so much from them, for example, how to make cakes then get out of doing the dishes...

Every day's a school day!

Family Support Service Alexis Rinaldy, Coordinator



This year has been the first year of really feeling 'COVID FREE'.

We started our family days off this year with a visit from the Animal Man. Feedback from our families showed they very much appreciated an engaging new experience, which was funny and free. The families felt included and enjoyed being with others which makes me smile and feel relieved, as these events do not come without their challenges! We also visited Craigtoun Country Park, Ryze Dundee and the Byre Theatre at Christmas; I always feel a sense of pride that we can offer our families the opportunity to spend time together without the financial or logistical challenges they would otherwise face.

This year we have said some emotional goodbyes to several families and had the pleasure of welcoming new families into service too. It's wonderful to be able to see our parents and carers move onto new destinations and even have them return as volunteers. We have also been proud to see some return to work, continue education and achieve their goals.

When I sit down to review their service with them, they often tell me that they would not have been able to achieve their successes if it were not for Families First, but really, they have always had the ability within them! We all need a little guidance and encouragement at times in our life, and I am honoured that people feel we can offer them that. 😊

A large part of the service consists of building support packages for families, and we have had another successful year working in partnership with local services. These include The Big Hoose Project, Kingdom Community Bank, Job Clubs, BRAG, Fife Council, St Andrews Preservation Trust, and the Squeeze to name just a few. I love meeting teams from other services because it helps me offer the best support I can, and often comes with giggles and new relationships along the way too.

Another year of memories made, and challenges overcome. We aim to continue to build our service on the feedback we receive from our families into 2024, while throwing in some fun along the way too.

Young People's Support Service Alison Miller, Coordinator and Deputy Manager



The focus of my year, aside from holiday events and activities, has been working with children and young people in school either through group work, such as Transition groups, or individually. The level of support can fluctuate depending on the challenges they may be facing at that time. Due to the trusting relationships I have established, I can support them with one-off challenges through to long-term interventions.

I have learned to understand and recognise the signs of stress that have an impact on the way children and young people may communicate in worrying situations. We work to develop strategies together,

which help them to cope and manage the situations they find difficult.

To ensure this work is successful I work alongside many people including children, young people and their families, school staff, volunteers and my colleagues here at Families First.

Some of the strategies we have worked on together include flexible timetables, so children and young people can access the elements of education that they can cope with, alongside support during the periods they find more challenging. I have helped to arrange later starts for some children which gives them the time they need to regulate in the mornings, starting their day in the most positive way, prepared and ready to learn. Young carers particularly benefit from this as they have time to complete any caring responsibilities they may have in the morning without experiencing extra stress and anxiety. One child had worries about break times as they found unstructured social situations difficult to navigate. I worked with the school to ensure that they had supported break and lunch times, with a safe space and a trusted adult as a point of contact, providing reassurance for the child.

This year I have developed lunchtime drop in sessions at Madras College for the young people we work with who might want to chat about their worries or just touch base. The hope is that if I can help them early on, they won't build worries up into something too big to manage. Being in school also gives me the opportunity to speak to teachers in person, saving a lot of time trying to catch each other on the phone or via email.

I deliver my work with a trauma informed, strength based approach, and very much look at children and young people who do not attend school through the lens of Emotionally Based School Avoidance. By helping them to talk about their emotions and fears I hope they will integrate back into school and reach their full potential.

**Young People's Support Service
Kathryn Henderson, Youth Worker**



Every term, Youth Group starts with a creative consultation so we can ensure that we are planning group sessions around the young people's interests. Staff and volunteers also discuss activities that the young people may not have thought about previously but might be interested in trying. Staff then plan sessions accordingly for the term, or even further ahead if the group has made many suggestions!

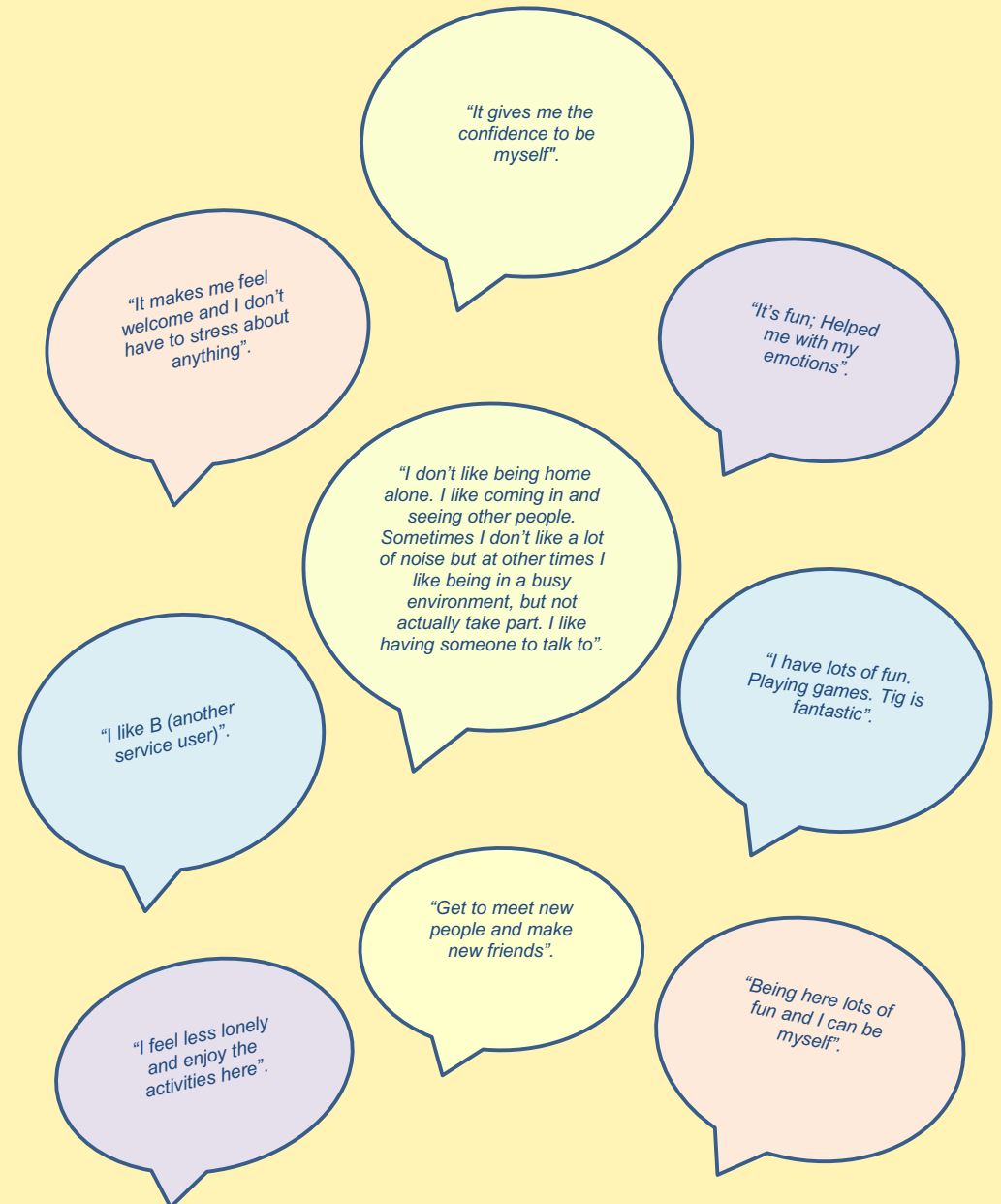
The young people are provided with session reports to complete at the end of each session, providing the following feedback if they wish to: "What did you like about today's activity?", "What would you change?", and "What would you like to do next time/in future?" If they do not wish to write, or they simply have a suggestion at a different time, the young people have the opportunity to express their thoughts during sessions. This allows them to make new suggestions at any point during their service and we try to facilitate these requests as much as possible.

Most recently this led to one young person applying to and securing funding for Youth Groups to participate in Equimotion courses with Stride to Pride Ponies at Kinshaldy Stables. With my support they completed the funding application and secured £2,000, enabling our young people to enjoy 12 Sessions – over 4 Youth Groups from February – April 2024.

During the young people's trip to Ryze in Dundee last October there was a mixture of ages attending, and I was struck by the kindness and care shown to the younger children in the group by the older young people; they were encouraging and supportive.

We ensure we review their service with them or their parents and carers so we can help them achieve their goals and find activities that are suitable for them. As with Equimotion and Ryze, the young people can choose to join in or not, but we ensure we find activities to suit everyone to help improve their wellbeing and offer new opportunities.

Please tell us the difference coming to Befriending has made to you ...



A huge “Thank You” to this year’s Core Funders

Albert Hunt Trust	National Lottery Community Fund
Alexander Moncur Trust	Nationwide Building Society Grant
Alfred Dunhill Links Foundation	Paristamen Charity
Erskine Cunningham Hill Trust	Robertson Trust
Fife Council Anti-Poverty Fund	Royal & Ancient Golf Club
Fife Council SLA	Royal Caledonian Trust
Fife Council Community Recovery	Russell Trust
Foundation Scotland - Baillie Gifford	Souter Charitable Trust
Foundation Scotland – Cervus Trust	St Andrews Ball
Foundation Scotland - Essentia	St Andrews Baptist Church
Foundation Scotland – Volant Charitable Trust	St Andrews Ladies’ Putting Club
George McLean Trust	St Regulus Ladies’ Golf Club
Hugh Fraser Foundation	Tesco Community Grant
Impact Funding Partners	Thistledown Trust
Maple Trust	University of St Andrews Student Charities Campaign
Mary Moore Trust	Youth 1st – Youth Action Fife