



### WELCOME TO FAMILIES FIRST!

Families First is a small charity based in St Andrews, Scotland, supporting children and families facing disadvantage and adversity across North East Fife.

We run Befriending, Youth Group, Schools Work and Family Support services, all with the help of our wonderful volunteers, supporters and donors!

### YOUTH GROUP

After a busy Autumn term including a fantastic bowling, laser tag and karaoke trip followed by lots of festive fun (hot chocolate, cookie decorating, crafts, movies...!!), the 4 Youth Groups are settling into an even busier 2025!



We started the term with some 'no-bake' baking and a bit of Taylor Swift (friendship bracelets, singing and dancing, sometimes all at the same time!).

Late February is 'Alpaca time' as we will be visiting our friends at Bowbridge again! Learning how to take care of

the alpacas, feeding them, and taking them for walks is a very rewarding activity for the young people, building their confidence and self-esteem.

In March our Youth Groups will be getting creative in a project part-funded by the Old Course Hotel. We will be working with a local ceramic artist who will take us through the process of making pots and then decorating and glazing them. We are hoping to hold an exhibition to show off their fabulous creations - keep an eye on our social media for lots of photos!

- Kathryn Henderson, Youth Worker (Young People's Service)



### CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our local community, we were able to ensure that all 133 children in the 58 families we support had presents to open on Christmas Day!

**We received donations from all across the community and are so grateful to all of you!**

Advent calendars were donated by the St Andrews branches of Morrisons, Sainsbury's and Tesco, and we collected 58 boxes of biscuits from St Mark's Church!



The University of St Andrews School of Physics and Astronomy, Tay FM, Cupar Old Parish Church, St Michael's Golf Club, Nationwide St Andrews

and many generous individuals collected toys and gifts for our families, and the Cornerstone community donated gift cards for older children.

The families we work with really appreciated all of your kindness and generosity - you really did make a difference this Christmas!

### PASSING THE CEO BATON!



27 January was a momentous day - the final team meeting for Morag, retiring after 13 years as manager (see last newsletter!), and the first meeting for our new CEO, Gemma!

### COME AND JOIN IN THE FUN!

To find out more or volunteer, you can visit our website [www.familiesfirststandrews.org.uk](http://www.familiesfirststandrews.org.uk), send an email to [oa@familiesfirststandrews.org.uk](mailto:oa@familiesfirststandrews.org.uk), or phone 01334 208086. We look forward to hearing from you!

## SCHOOLS WORK

At Families First, we continue to support children and young people with the challenges they are facing around education. We take a person-centred approach, listening to each individual's specific challenges and needs so we can work together to help them overcome any difficulties.

Sometimes this can be a one-off challenge. For example, one child was unable to access their online learning portal so could not do their homework. We were able to provide them with a tablet and support them to ask their teacher for their log in details, so they can now complete their homework tasks.

Other children and young people struggle with more significant emotionally-based school avoidance and need more intense support to help them engage with education. We work with their schools to build an individual package, looking at building confidence, understanding and managing emotions, developing coping strategies and some solution focused thinking.

We help each child or young person develop their own strategies, taking into account any additional support needs, their methods of communication and their coping mechanisms. Some have approved flexible timetables in place, allowing them to access the areas of education that they are able to cope with and receive support with those aspects they find more challenging.

We are working closely with one school in an off-site setting, supporting a child to complete their school work in an environment they feel comfortable in, providing them with the opportunity to keep learning and to gain qualifications.

We have built some really strong partnerships with local schools and work closely with them to ensure we are meeting each individual's needs, aiming to support each child and young person to reach their full potential

- Alison Falls Services Manager

# WELCOME, GEMMA!

We are delighted to introduce you all to our new CEO, Gemma Nicolson, who joined Families First on 27 January. Gemma has spent most of her career in the voluntary sector, with a focus on supporting children, young people and families who have faced trauma and disadvantage.



Previously working at Victim Support Scotland, Families Outside and Fife Gingerbread, Gemma has most recently been Head of Operations at 'Held In Our Hearts' in Edinburgh. We are all enjoying getting to know Gemma and introducing her to the wonderful world of Families First!

## A WORD FROM GEMMA...

“I am so excited (and really proud!) to join the team at Families First. I have had the warmest of welcomes from our wonderful, committed Board of Trustees, Morag (ahead of her very well deserved retiral), our dedicated and incredibly fun team of staff and volunteers and also from the children, young people and families accessing our services who I have had the pleasure of meeting in my first few weeks. A highlight so far has to be working at my computer while hearing children in the Centre singing their own rendition of Sister Sledge’s “we are family”! I am really looking forward to this next chapter and to connecting with you all going forward. Meantime, please know that my email inbox ([ceo@familiesfirststandrews.org.uk](mailto:ceo@familiesfirststandrews.org.uk)) and door are wide open. It would be lovely to hear from you.”

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## **VOLUNTEER CELEBRATION - 28th February, 7.30-8.30pm, St Andrews Baptist Church. Volunteer Awards and party food!**

**VOLUNTEER TRAINING - 29th March, 9am - 4pm**, St Andrews Baptist Church, South St, St Andrews. We would love you to come and get involved! All roles available. Contact [vc@familiesfirststandrews.org.uk](mailto:vc@familiesfirststandrews.org.uk)

Please scan here to  
donate and help us  
support local families!!

