



Families First St Andrews **24th Annual Review** **2024 – 2025**

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



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



Chairperson's Report Alison Cartwright



2024-25 has been a year of change for Families First! We said a fond farewell to our CEO, Morag Coleman, who retired in mid-February after 13 years. Staff, Trustees, family, friends and colleagues from the sector gathered to celebrate her achievements at a retirement party only slightly delayed due to Storm Eowyn!

The Board were delighted to appoint Gemma Nicolson who joined Families First as CEO at the end of January and hit the ground running following an intense two week handover with Morag. We will all miss Morag who had a huge impact on Families First during her time leading the charity, but we are looking forward to working with Gemma as Families First continues to build on its reputation and expertise and moves forward to the future.

During the year the Board has been pleased to regularly hear about the activities undertaken by our volunteers, children and young people. They seem to thoroughly enjoy their time with Families First and we are delighted that they also find their sessions valuable in building confidence. Work in schools and with parents and carers has also continued, ensuring that we are able to offer a bespoke service that supports our children and young people with their individual needs. As you read through this report you will see more about the wonderful work that goes on.

Being part of the community in St Andrews and NE Fife is vital to us. We are extremely grateful to all our funders and volunteers from our local community; without their support none of our valuable work would be possible. Together we can make a huge difference to the lives of local children, young people and their families.

I am also delighted that our Board continues to work hard to promote and develop Families First along with the staff and volunteers. We have a great mix of skills and expertise along with a real understanding of the values of the charity.

The Board are extremely proud of all our children, young people, their families, our volunteers and staff as they are what make Families First such an amazing organisation. We are delighted to be able to support them in all their work.

CEO's Report Gemma Nicolson



This year marks a significant turning of the page in the story of Families First St Andrews. As we bid a fond farewell to Morag, who dedicated 13 remarkable years to leading the organisation with vision and heart, I step into the role of CEO with deep respect for the journey that has brought us here.

I am drawn to thinking of chapters. Every person who has passed through the doors of Families First — staff, volunteers, Board members, and, most importantly, families — has played a vital part in writing the story of this incredible charity. Your hard work, commitment, and belief in what we do have built the strong foundation upon which we continue to grow.

These chapters are never lost. They live on — honoured, remembered, and deeply appreciated. They shape our current work and will inform all that's to come. Just as we are part of the present chapter of Families First, we also feature in those of the children, young people, and families we support in North East Fife — many of whom are navigating complex challenges and disadvantage. To be even a small part of their stories is both humbling and profoundly inspiring.

As we turn the page toward 2025/26, I want to take a moment to express sincere gratitude to:

- Our incredible team, for their tireless dedication and compassion.
- Our volunteers, who give so much of themselves to support others.
- Our Board, for their wise stewardship and guidance.
- Our funders and supporters, without whom none of this would be possible.
- And to all who came before us — thank you for paving the way.

Together, we continue to write a story of hope, resilience, and community. I am proud to be part of this chapter and excited for what comes next.

Volunteer Coordinator's Report Kirsten Watson



Time has flown by since I joined the organisation in June 2024! It has been a successful year for people to hear about and get involved with Families First and we have welcomed a number of fantastic new volunteers into the team.

Over the past 12 months, I have had the pleasure of getting to know our volunteers, meeting our service users, and working with a dedicated and welcoming staff team. It has been wonderful to chat with our volunteers during support and supervision meetings and exit interviews. During these meetings, many of our volunteers talk passionately about the child, young person or family that they are working with, the fun and enjoyment they have had during sessions, and the brilliant support from staff. It has been a joy to hear about the volunteers' enthusiasm for being involved with Families First and the activities here.

Here are some of these thoughts:

- *"I love to go to Youth Group and get to know the young people and the other volunteers. The evenings are always fun, light-hearted and a really lovely, cosy evening activity".*
- *"All the staff are eager to assist us volunteers throughout the process, which I greatly appreciate. I am also very grateful for the staff's active interest in how each volunteer is doing, especially with the debriefs after befriending".*
- *"Volunteering is a great break in a busy week to enjoy spending time with a young person. They really appreciate our time and activities we plan. One of the best things I have done in St Andrews".*

The Friends of Families First committee have continued to raise awareness and funds in the community. The October coffee morning was a great success, assisted by the lovely Lumsden Club volunteers! Look out for more events run by the Friends committee in the near future, and if you are interested in getting involved with these efforts, it would be fantastic to hear from you.

A highlight of the year was the Volunteer Celebration event held in February, with party food, party hats and balloons! It was a wonderful opportunity to express our gratitude for the time, effort, and care our volunteers give so generously. During this event, the recipients of the George Baird Memorial Award and other awards such as the Outstanding New Volunteer were celebrated. The event was well attended and very well received, with volunteers appreciating the chance to connect and reflect on their achievements and contributions.

Local Champions of the Year

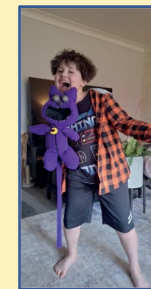


This year we have again been delighted by the support we have received from so many groups and individuals; thank you all from the bottom of our hearts!

We would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the people who have supported us this year. Noah, a local young person, raised an amazing £645.25 for Families First by taking part in the Edinburgh Kiltwalk 11 mile Big Stroll. Following his fantastic fundraising efforts, Noah was awarded a Silver Blue Peter Badge! We were also extremely grateful to 5 young people from Step Rock ASC who took part in a challenging 'Triple Crown' sponsored swim, raising an incredible £1867.66 for us! Finally, a huge 'thank you' to Canongate Primary School pupils who held a super-successful fundraising coffee morning and 'Colour Run', raising £582.50 to support our services!

Thank you to all our wonderful supporters:

Anonymous donors	Harrison, D & J	Rotary Club of St Andrews
Angus, D	Helen Main Charitable Trust	Roxburgh, W (volunteer)
Arnold Clark Community Fund	Hine, H	Russell, E
Baird family	Holmes, N	Sainsbury's (local donations)
Balgove Larder	Holmes, S	Scottish Children's Lottery Trust
Barratt Homes	Holmhead Trust	Smith, I
Baynes Charitable Trust	Holy Trinity Church	Stewart, A
Brown, F	Hughes, J	St Andrews Aquarium
Byre Theatre	Jack, M	St Andrews Ball
Cairnsmill Caravan Park	Jeavons, T	St Andrews Botanic Garden
Chariots of Fire Beach Race	Kilrymont St Andrews Rotary	St Andrews Community Trust
Chisholm, D & H	Kiltwalk Walkers & Sponsors	St Andrews Quaker Meeting
Canongate Primary School	Kingdom Vineyard	St Mark's Church
Cobham, C	Leith, L	St Regulus Ladies' GC
Cockburn, J	Leuchars Army Base	Step Rock ASC
Coia, A (volunteer)	Madras College DAS Unit	Swanson, G
Con Panna	Main, C A	Tay FM Cash for Kids
Cornerstone Church	Maclean, L	Tesco (local and staff)
Cupar Old Parish Church	Mary B Bannerman Trust	The Old Course Hotel
Craigtoun Country Park	McCardel, D	The Royal & Ancient GC
Dickens, P (volunteer)	McCarron, P	The Saint Bar & Kitchen
Dow, S	Milne, N	The Squeeze
Dr Guthrie's Association	Morrison's	Thistle-down Trust
Duncan, C	Mugdock Children's Trust	Toy Drive
Docherty, J G	Nationwide Building Society	Trail, D
Domino's Pizza	(local donations)	University of St Andrews
Dovey, M	Nichols, M	Departments & Societies
Easy Fundraising shoppers	Norah Webber Charitable Trust	Ward Family Charitable Trust
Gilbert, F	Paristamen Charity	Williams, S
Glasgow, A & L	Riddell, J	Williamson, J
Hamilton, J	Roberts, K	Willis, S
		Wood, C



52 children attended the Befriending Service

43 young people attended Youth Groups

103 young people attended High School Transition Groups

42 parents and carers attended the Family Support Service

57 children and young people attended Summer Activities

26 young people received one-to-one focused support in schools



156 new referrals were received

Between April 2024 to March 2025 we reached 409 people



We provided intensive, direct support to 235, and the remaining 174 received additional services

53 people were referred with neurodivergent conditions

42 people were referred with behavioural challenges

116 people were referred with emotional needs

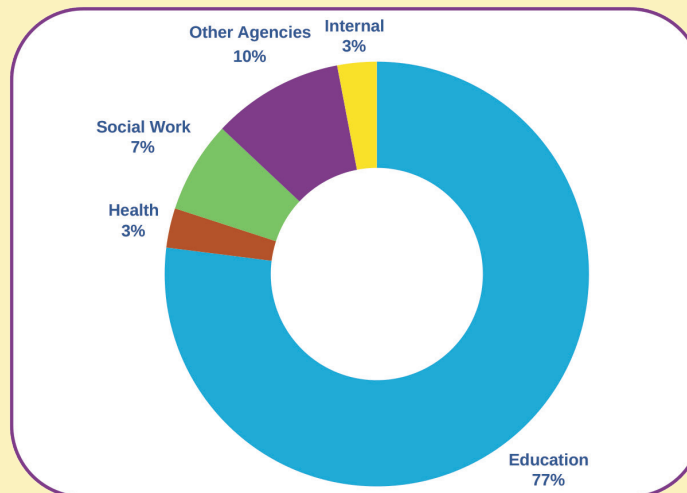
72 people were referred with general family difficulties

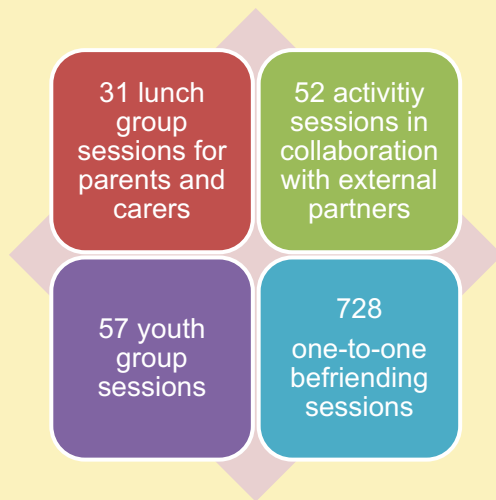
35 people were referred for isolation

Staff attended 44 wellbeing/school review meetings



Referring Agencies





One-to-One Befriending Service

Jan Clarke, Coordinator



Looking back over the past year, we're proud of the progress and continued positive impact of our Befriending Service. Our focus has remained on improving the experience for each child, ensuring sessions are tailored to their individual needs and interests. By offering staggered starts throughout the year we've been able to provide children with valuable time to settle in, allowing us to get to know them better and help them feel at ease.

An important part of our approach has been empowering children to take an active role in shaping their own sessions. Supporting them in positive decision making has helped build their confidence and makes their time with us more meaningful.

We've also dedicated more time to briefing and supporting our volunteers. Working in conjunction with Kirsten, our Volunteer Coordinator, we recognise that well prepared volunteers lead to stronger, more successful befriending matches. We continue to place high value on the commitment and professionalism of our volunteers, encouraging best practice and ensuring they feel appreciated and supported in their roles.

Collaboration has been a key part of our work this year. We've maintained strong partnerships with agencies across education, social work, and health, helping us respond effectively to the increasing and often complex needs of the children referred to us. Recognising these growing challenges, our team has actively engaged in ongoing training opportunities to stay current and ready to manage changing circumstances.

One highlight this year was having Morven, our Befriending Youth Worker, complete Kitbag Training, a resource widely used in schools. Kitbag is an emotional literacy tool. It helps children express themselves and work through any challenges they face. We also use a variety of different methods to promote good communication. One of our children in service has an iPad with the GRID communication app downloaded onto it. He has very little recognisable speech, but he is very keen to communicate. This tool makes it possible for him to feel included and lets him know he is valued and respected.

Thank you to everyone, volunteers, partners, and staff, who have contributed to this positive and impactful year. We look forward to building on this progress in the year ahead.

Family Support Service Alexis Rinaldy, Coordinator



We launched this year's family activities with a fair-themed Family Day at St Leonards School. The event was a great success, with families praising the endless entertainment, welcoming atmosphere, and the fact that it was fun and free. Their feedback was heartening and affirmed the value of the extensive planning involved.

Throughout the year, we offered a range of enriching experiences, including visits to St Andrews Botanic Garden, Dundee Science Centre, and a festive outing to the Byre Theatre to see *Beauty and the Beast*. These opportunities allow families to spend meaningful time together, free from financial or logistical barriers and are always well received. Families consistently express appreciation for how well organised our events are and the reassurance of having supportive staff on hand.

In 2024, we also focused on promoting sustainability and encouraging family involvement in local initiatives. Highlights included a themed hen party during our lunch group, continued one-to-one support, and special sessions such as a Photography Workshop delivered by professional photographer Kit Martin.

A significant aspect of our service remains the development of tailored support packages for families. This year, we continued to strengthen our partnerships with key organisations including The Big Hoose Project, NHS Fife, Job Clubs, BRAG, Fife Council, Fife Law Centre, Include Me, Link Befriending, welfare support services, foodbanks and housing providers. I'm deeply grateful to these partners for their ongoing collaboration, which not only enhances the support we offer but also builds positive working relationships — and often brings a few laughs along the way.

As we reflect on another year of meaningful memories and shared successes, we remain committed to growing and evolving our service based on the feedback of the families we support. Looking ahead to 2025, we aim to expand our reach, deepen our impact, and continue delivering support with care, creativity, and community at its heart.

Young People's Support Service Kathryn Henderson, Youth Worker



The Young People's Support Service has had another brilliant and busy year!

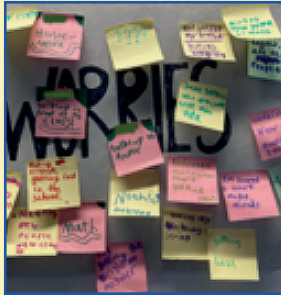
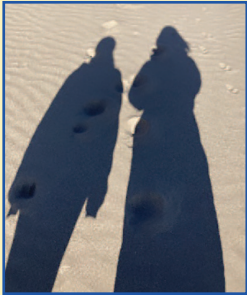
Youth Group remains a place that our young people enjoy hanging out and relaxing in a supported environment. We consult with the young people creatively and support and encourage them to develop their own programme of activities. They chose a variety of old favourites as well as sharing ideas for new activities that they would like to try, some of which they otherwise may not have had the opportunity to experience. Throughout the year we were fortunate to receive various sources of funding and organise collaborative working opportunities, enabling us to provide additional activities during school holiday periods.

Over the Easter holidays we enjoyed a 'Crafternoon' at the R&A Golf Museum, and a beach clean with Climate Action & Youth 1st. In collaboration with The Rotary Club of St Andrews and Saints Sport, two mixed sports sessions were organised in May. These were a huge hit and have since become an annual tradition! During October, the young people enjoyed visits to Bowbridge Alpacas where they learned how to feed and care for the animals. Following this, the young people successfully applied to Youth Action Fife's funding to allow them to spend more time working with the alpacas; these visits took place in February 2025 with 25 young people and 24 volunteers attending. Other outings included tenpin bowling, karaoke, and laser tag. In March 2025, the young people took part in a Pottery Project in partnership with East Nook Studio, made possible by funding from the Old Course Hotel, participating in 8 sessions across 4 Youth Groups to make and decorate their own pots and figurines.

July saw another successful year of Summer Holiday Activities. These were delivered across five local communities – Leuchars, Tayport, St Andrews, East Neuk and Cupar – with weekly sessions open to all children and young people enrolled in our services. They were encouraged and supported to connect with their local community and build friendships. Popular outings included visits to Craigtoun Country Park, St Andrews Aquarium, St Andrews Botanic Garden, the Scottish Deer Centre and many more! Youth 1st and B: Activ also collaborated with us to provide fun and engaging sports and craft activities.

Transition Groups were held in Bell Baxter High School and Madras College, supporting referred primary 7 pupils with the social and emotional challenges of transitioning to secondary education; with a record number of referrals this year (67 for Bell Baxter and 36 for Madras). We aimed to ensure that they had a more positive, confident start to secondary school by offering a programme including team building, discussions around hopes and worries about high school, school tours, and Q&A sessions with key staff. A recreational summer activity and follow-up lunchtime drop-in sessions in the new term helped to address any teething issues and ease ongoing anxieties.

Services Manager's Report Alison Falls



The past year has been another incredibly positive one for Families First, with continued success across all our services. A key factor underpinning this success is our strong culture of collaboration. Our team's shared commitment, mutual respect, and drive to work together ensures that we provide high-quality, efficient, and compassionate support to every individual we work with.

We continue to take a holistic and strengths-based approach, meeting children, young people, and their families where they are and supporting them to achieve their full potential. Every service we deliver is person-centred and developed with the views, needs and aspirations of our service users at its core.

Each team member brings a unique blend of skills, knowledge and creativity, and it's through close collaboration that we are able to design and deliver impactful services. Whether it's creating new activity sessions, responding to emerging needs, or supporting transitions, our collective effort ensures that no child or young person is left behind.

During 2024–2025, we placed a particular focus on strengthening partnerships with local services, schools and community organisations. These relationships are vital as not only do they enhance communication and coordination, but they also ensure our service users receive the most effective and joined-up support possible. Our collaborative partnerships have also enabled us to expand the range of activities available to families, often opening doors to new experiences and opportunities that might not otherwise have been accessible. Crucially, we co-design these opportunities with our service users, ensuring their voices shape the services they receive.

Our work within local schools remains an important element of our support. Through close working relationships with schools and education partners we are helping children and young people overcome challenges, improve attendance and feel more confident in their learning environments.

As we look ahead, we are excited to continue building on these strong foundations, working together to ensure every child, young person, and family we support feels heard, valued, and empowered.

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



A huge 'Thank You' to this year's Core Funders

Alex Timpson Trust

Alfred Dunhill Links Foundation

Bank of Scotland Foundation

Barbara Ward Charitable Foundation

Cordis Charitable Trust

Fife Council Rural Poverty Action Group

Fife Council SLA

Fife Council Community Recovery

Fife Health Charity

Fletcher Bequest Trust

Foundation Scotland – Baillie Gifford

Foundation Scotland – Volant Charitable Trust

Gordon Fraser Charitable Trust

Helm Training

Hugh Fraser Foundation

Impact Funding Partners

Lady Marion Gibson Trust

Lennox Hannay Charitable Trust

Mary Moore Trust

Meikle Foundation

Miss A M Pilkington Charitable Trust

National Lottery Community Fund

Nationwide Building Society Grant

Plum Trust

Pump House Trust

Robert Haldane Smith Charitable Trust

Robertson Trust

Souter Charitable Trust

Stafford Charitable Trust

St Andrews Baptist Church

Truemark Trust

Walter Craig Charitable Trust

Walker Shoolbraid Charitable Trust

Westwood Charitable Trust

WCH Trust for Children

Youth 1st – Youth Action Fife