



Families First St Andrews **25th Annual Review** **2025 – 2026**

Families First work alongside children, young people and their families, experiencing disadvantage and adversity living in North East Fife.



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



Chairperson's Report Lin McArthur Maclean



Families First St Andrews has undergone some important changes in the last year. After welcoming our new CEO in January 2025, we are delighted that she has settled into the job so well and is providing strong and dynamic leadership, attracting new funding and offering staff new opportunities for support and professional development.

It was sad to say goodbye to our Transport Coordinator and to learn of the planned departure of our long-standing Services Manager over the course of the year, but as we look forward to the arrival of a new Services Manager, we are pleased that, in addition to providing career progression opportunities, such as our new Young People's Service Coordinator, we continue to attract strong candidates for both paid employment and volunteering roles.

The Families First St Andrews Board has also had a change of Chair and has welcomed two new members. Our outgoing Chair had been a Board member for ten years and Chair of the Board for four of them. At last year's AGM, we thanked her for her faithful commitment to FFSA and her inspiring leadership. Both of the new Board members have extensive corporate and financial experience and have already shown themselves to be valuable members who are committed to the work of FFSA.

In terms of FFSA's day-to-day activities, the Board has been pleased to hear, often and regularly, about the experiences of 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.

Being part of the community in St Andrews and NE Fife is vital to us. We are extremely grateful to all our funders, fundraisers 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 whom we support.

The Board is extremely proud of the contribution made to this work by all of our children, young people, their families, our volunteers and staff; it is they, collectively, who make Families First St Andrews such an amazing organisation. I would like to thank them all, and, as it prepares to celebrate its first wonderful quarter of a century, I wish Families First every success in the future.

Finally, to the Board of Trustees: it is always such a pleasure for Board members to support Families First staff and volunteers in their important and necessary work for the children and families in this community. As outgoing Chair of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank all Board members, past and present, for their generosity in giving their time and talent and, as I step down this year, I wish the new Chair of the Board as much joy in the role as I have had over the last year.

CEO's Report

Gemma Nicolson



As I reflect on 2025/26, my first full year as CEO of Families First St Andrews, I do so with deep gratitude, pride and a renewed sense of purpose. This year has been one of listening, learning and seeing, up close, the warmth, skill and quiet determination that underpin our work with children, young people and families. It has reaffirmed for me not only the importance of what we do, but the values, relationships and community spirit that make Families First so special.

Our work is often gentle and relational, but its impact is significant. It can mean a child feeling confident enough to join in, a parent finding someone who will listen without judgement, or a family discovering that support is still there when things feel stretched. Families come to us with different stories, strengths, pressures and hopes, and our role is to understand what matters to them and shape support around that.

This year, I have been struck by the importance of belonging. Through all that we do and with thanks to all who make it possible, Families First offers more than practical help. It offers connection, encouragement and a steady, compassionate presence.

I am hugely grateful to our staff team, who bring professionalism, creativity and kindness to work that is not always simple, and to our volunteers, who give their time, energy and care so generously. The relationships they build are at the heart of Families First, and the difference they make is felt not only in the positive outcomes we strive for, but in the countless quieter moments of connection, trust and hope that can be just as transformative as any outcome we measure.

I am also grateful to the families who place their trust in us, to schools and partners who work alongside us, to funders and supporters whose confidence and generosity make our work possible, and to our Trustees for their stewardship, encouragement and care. Families First is woven into St Andrews and North East Fife through this shared commitment, and I never take it for granted.

As we look to the year ahead, we know there will be challenges to meet, resources to secure and needs that continue to change. We have wished some familiar faces in the team the very best in their new chapters elsewhere, and we are excited to welcome new people into the Families First story.

This coming year also marks an important milestone for us: our 25th anniversary. It gives us a moment to celebrate all that has been built, and to recognise everyone who has made that possible. Thank you to everyone who has been part of our work. It is a privilege to lead an organisation with such heart, and as we step proudly into this anniversary year, I do so with gratitude, confidence and excitement for all that we will continue to build together.

Volunteer Coordinator's Report

Kirsten Watson



Another year has brought exciting new opportunities and highlighted the continued commitment of our volunteers!

It is wonderful to see our volunteers involved in so many areas of the charity; from regular activities to practical support behind the scenes, our volunteers have continued to give their time generously and wholeheartedly. We have been especially delighted to welcome additional Family Support and Driving volunteers, enabling us to expand these areas of support, while also introducing community reading sessions and other activities. One particularly heartwarming highlight came during the festive season, when volunteers joined staff in delivering Christmas presents. This support played a vital role in ensuring all of the families we support had presents to open and share together.

Additionally, group volunteering opportunities have enabled university societies and groups to volunteer their time, skills and fundraising efforts to support our children and families. During the second semester, three university societies – St Andrews Voluntary Service (SVS), The Lumsden Club and SPI St Andrews – worked together to raise funds before taking part in a group volunteering activity. Together, students created Easter Bunny Bags filled with toys and craft activities for children attending the family day, alongside baskets for the Egg Hunt. We're very grateful for all the student societies and community groups who partner with us through their own projects and at our annual Friends of Families First Autumn Coffee Morning.

The opportunity to present online at the Befriending Networks National Conference, alongside Jan Clarke, (Befriending Coordinator) was a personal highlight as well. This conference brought together 94 organisations and 113 attendees from across the sector, and we were delighted to be invited to share our experiences of creating positive endings when befriending matches come to an end, and to reflect on how we support and train our volunteers to create these moments. It was a wonderful space to collaborate with and learn from professionals across the sector, leading to valuable conversations, shared ideas, and new networking opportunities. We were delighted to receive feedback on our presentation from other organisations including:

"Jan & Kirsten deliver similar work to the same age group as our service, the memory book and ending preparation have inspired me to look at improving how we currently handle this."

As always, the biggest joy of my role is spending time with our volunteers during support meetings, training sessions, and informal conversations. Their compassion, dedication, and willingness to support others continue to inspire all of us. We are incredibly grateful to every one of our volunteers, whose contribution remains at the heart of Families First.

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 recognise and thank some of the wonderful people who have supported us this year. A special thank you goes to Marta Droszkowska Raynor, who donated £625 through sales of her charity calendar featuring beautiful photos of St Andrews; Little Beehive Nursery Cupar and Strathkinness, who raised an amazing £2191.76 during their Charity Fundraising Week events; and Simon Almond from The Old Course Hotel, St Andrews, who took on the Ben Lawers 7 Munros Challenge, raising an incredible £2713.75 in support of our work.

Thank you to all our wonderful supporters:

Almond, S	Hamilton, J	Scottish Children's Lottery
Angus, M	Hine, H	Smith Children
Anonymous donors	Holmes, N	Smith, I
Angus, D	Holmes, S	SPAR Leuchars
Artery St Andrews	Holy Trinity Church	Sproson Gallery
Bonkers Gift Shop	Hughes, J	St Andrews Aquarium
Box Tacos	Jack, M	St Andrews Botanic Garden
Broom Family	Johnalan Hair Design	St Andrews Community Choir
Bryte Coffee	Kilrymont St Andrews Rotary	St Andrews Community Council
Byre Theatre	Kiltwalk Walkers & Sponsors	St Andrews Links Trust
Cameron & St Leonards Craft Group	Kingdom Vineyard	St Andrews Quaker Meeting
Cartwright, A	Kobi Carpets	St Mark's Church
Chariots of Fire Beach Race	Leith, L	Step Rock ASC
Chisholm, D & H	Little Beehive Nursery	Tay FM Cash for Kids
Canongate Primary School	Main, C A	Tayport Charity Shop
Coia, A	Maclean, L	Tesco (local and staff)
Con Panna	McCarron, P	The Lumsden Club
Cornerstone Church	Milne, N	The Royal & Ancient GC
Crail Art Festival	Miss KM Harbinson CT	The St Rule Club
Cupar Old Parish Church	Morrison	Topping Booksellers
Craigtoun Country Park	Mugdock Children's Trust	Torpey, R
DeAngelis Family	Nationwide Building Society	Toy Drive
Dickens, P	Neilson, D	University of St Andrews
Docherty, J G	Nichols, M	Departments & Societies
Dovey, M	Northpoint Café	Ward Family CT
Dr Guthrie's Association	Ostara	West Sands Power
Droszkowska Raynor, M	Pellegrini & Barlow	Williams, S
Easy Fundraising shoppers	Roberts, K	Williamson, J
Electricity Asset Services	Rotary Club of St Andrews	Willis, S
Ford, C	Roxburgh, W	Winter, J
Fresh Looks	Russell, E	Wood, C
Glasgow, A & L	Sainsbury's (via Neighbourly)	



52 children attended the Befriending Service

38 young people attended Youth Groups

61 young people attended High School Transition Groups

32 parents and carers attended the Family Support Service

46 children and young people attended Summer Activities

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



91 new referrals were received

Between April 2025 to March 2026 we reached 321 people



We provided intensive, direct support to 184, and the remaining 137 received additional services

34 people were referred with neurodivergent conditions

18 people were referred with behavioural challenges

68 people were referred with emotional needs

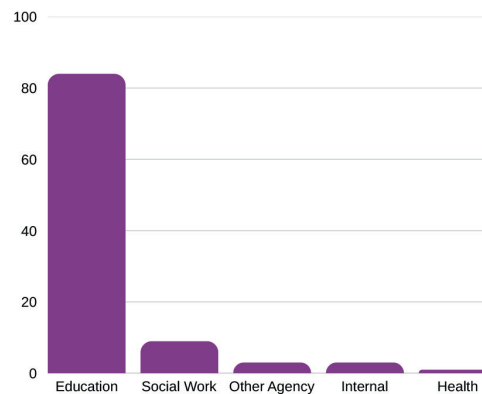
33 people were referred with general families difficulties

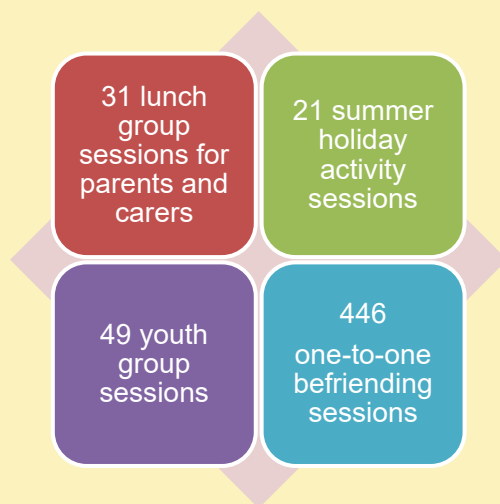
16 people were referred for isolation

Staff attended 47 wellbeing/school review meetings



Referring Agencies





One-to-One Befriending Service

Jan Clarke, Coordinator



Looking back over the past year, we are delighted to reflect on a year of growth, progress, and positive impact through our Befriending Service. Our priority has remained creating meaningful, nurturing connections that empower children and support volunteers alike.

Throughout the year, we have tailored the service to each child, ensuring activities and approaches reflect their individual needs and interests. From outdoor adventures to creative arts, each experience has been carefully designed to build confidence, encourage curiosity, discover new interests and promote wellbeing.

An essential part of our approach is ensuring that children have a voice in their own befriending journey. We encourage them to share their ideas, express preferences, and make choices about what they do during sessions. This collaborative approach not only strengthens engagement but also empowers children to develop positive decision-making skills and self-esteem.

Our volunteers remain at the heart of everything we do. Their dedication, creativity, and commitment make a lasting difference to the children they support, while many also value the friendships, sense of purpose, and personal growth they gain through volunteering. We remain committed to ensuring every volunteer feels supported and valued through regular training, guidance, and recognition to ensure they feel valued in their vital role.

Collaboration remains key to our success. We've continued strong links with all our partners, which enable us to respond effectively and sensitively to the diverse and sometimes complex needs of the children in our service. Alongside this, our team have continued to engage in ongoing professional development, ensuring our practice remains informed, responsive, and rooted in best practice.

One highlight of the year has been supporting several young people to work towards their High 5 and Dynamic Youth Awards in Climate Action Studies, in partnership with Youth 1st. Through creative and environmentally themed projects, children transformed discarded clothing and decorations into imaginative new items, culminating in a playful fashion show celebrating sustainability. Visits to St Andrews Aquarium deepened their understanding of plastics and ocean conservation, while baking and cooking sessions promoted healthy, cost-effective living.

This past year's achievements reflect the commitment and collaboration of our volunteers, staff, and partner agencies, whose compassion and dedication continue to strengthen our befriending community. We are incredibly proud of everything that has been accomplished and we are excited to build on this in the year ahead, continuing to change lives, one friendship at a time.

Family Support Service

Alexis Rinaldy, Coordinator



As I reflect on the past 12 months, I am immensely proud of how our Family Support Service has continued to grow. While our one-to-one mentorship and weekly lunch groups remain at the heart of what we do, we have also been incredibly fortunate to expand our reach by empowering the parents and carers within the service. Through specialised partnerships, we offered a range of training opportunities to parents, carers, volunteers, and staff. These included informative sessions with Tourette's Scotland and Rebekah Donnachie at the Terrence Higgins Trust on key topics such as sexual health and LGBTQ+ inclusion. Fife Gingerbread also facilitated a practical child maintenance drop-in clinic, while Dr. Wendy Simpson, a Health Psychologist, delivered a science-based two-day course combining mindfulness, group discussion, and practical activities. Together, these opportunities equipped participants with practical knowledge and lasting emotional tools to support their own wellbeing and that of their families.

Our seasonal calendar was filled with joy and connection, featuring a vibrant Easter Fair at St Leonards and a memorable summer trip to Almond Valley, which provided a wonderful interactive experience for the children. We also continued our cherished tradition of an annual festive outing to The Byre Theatre.

None of these events would have been possible without the incredible generosity of our local community. From providing the use of venues and financial contributions, to donating Easter eggs and snacks, this collective support enables our families to create lasting memories in a welcoming and supportive environment.

The impact of this work is best reflected in our annual evaluations, which brought a tear to my eye once again this year. As one parent beautifully shared, "The family days and lunch groups provide a sense of belonging, while the 1:1 support with Alexis offers a trusted space to talk and feel less alone."

Looking ahead, our priority is to build on the momentum and success of the past year. We remain committed to delivering our 1:1 sessions, weekly lunch groups, and family days, while continuing to place families at the centre of everything we do and every decision we make.

Our goal is simple: to ensure that no parent feels they are navigating their journey alone. At the same time, we will continue to invest in our dedicated volunteers and staff, ensuring they feel confident, supported, and equipped to respond to the evolving needs of the families in our community.

Young People's Support Service

Kathryn Henderson, Youth Worker



Youth Group has had a busy, fun-filled, social, and educational year!

From January to April, we undertook a cookery project aimed at tackling food poverty and reducing food waste, while also supporting the personal and professional development of our young people through the completion of Dynamic Youth Awards booklets. Each young person, and each group, engaged with the project in different ways. They explored themes including healthy, affordable meals, different cultures, and locally sourced and seasonal produce, to name just a few.

We also delivered a range of additional sessions during school holidays and in-service days. These included a visit to Bowbridge Alpacas, a May Day Sports Day in partnership with Saints Sports and the Rotary Club of St Andrews, and a rugby taster session with the University Women's Rugby Club.

Our Summer Holiday Activities programme was a highlight of the year for children, families, staff, and volunteers alike. The programme provided valuable support during the school holidays, a time when changes to routine can lead to distress, increase isolation and place additional pressures on families. Through the groups, children had opportunities to maintain friendships, build confidence, try new activities, and enjoy positive experiences within their local communities.

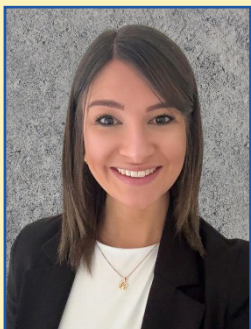
Working in partnership with Youth 1, children took part in a range of sports, STEM, and climate change activities, alongside outings to The Scottish Deer Centre, Cairnie Fruit Farm, Camperdown Park, and exploring Scotland's Secret Bunker. The programme ended with a barbecue and toasted s'mores, providing a fun and memorable end to the summer.

In partnership with Bell Baxter High School and Madras College, we successfully delivered our High School Transition Groups. A total of 62 Primary 7 pupils were referred from 18 primary schools across North East Fife, to take part in a programme supporting a positive transition to secondary school. Core sessions were delivered from April to June, focusing on building confidence, developing friendships, and preparing the young people for the changes ahead. This support continued with a recreational summer activity in July, followed by lunchtime drop-in sessions during the new school term.

Our 2025 Christmas Appeal supported 52 families with 120 children and young people over the festive period. The appeal helped to alleviate financial pressures by ensuring every child had presents to open on Christmas Day, regardless of the challenges their family was facing.

Services Manager's Report

Alison Falls



As I reflect on the past year at Families First, I continue to feel immensely proud to be part of such a dedicated and compassionate team. There remains a strong sense that we are a “wee family” ourselves — committed to providing meaningful, high-quality support to children, young people and their families across North East Fife.

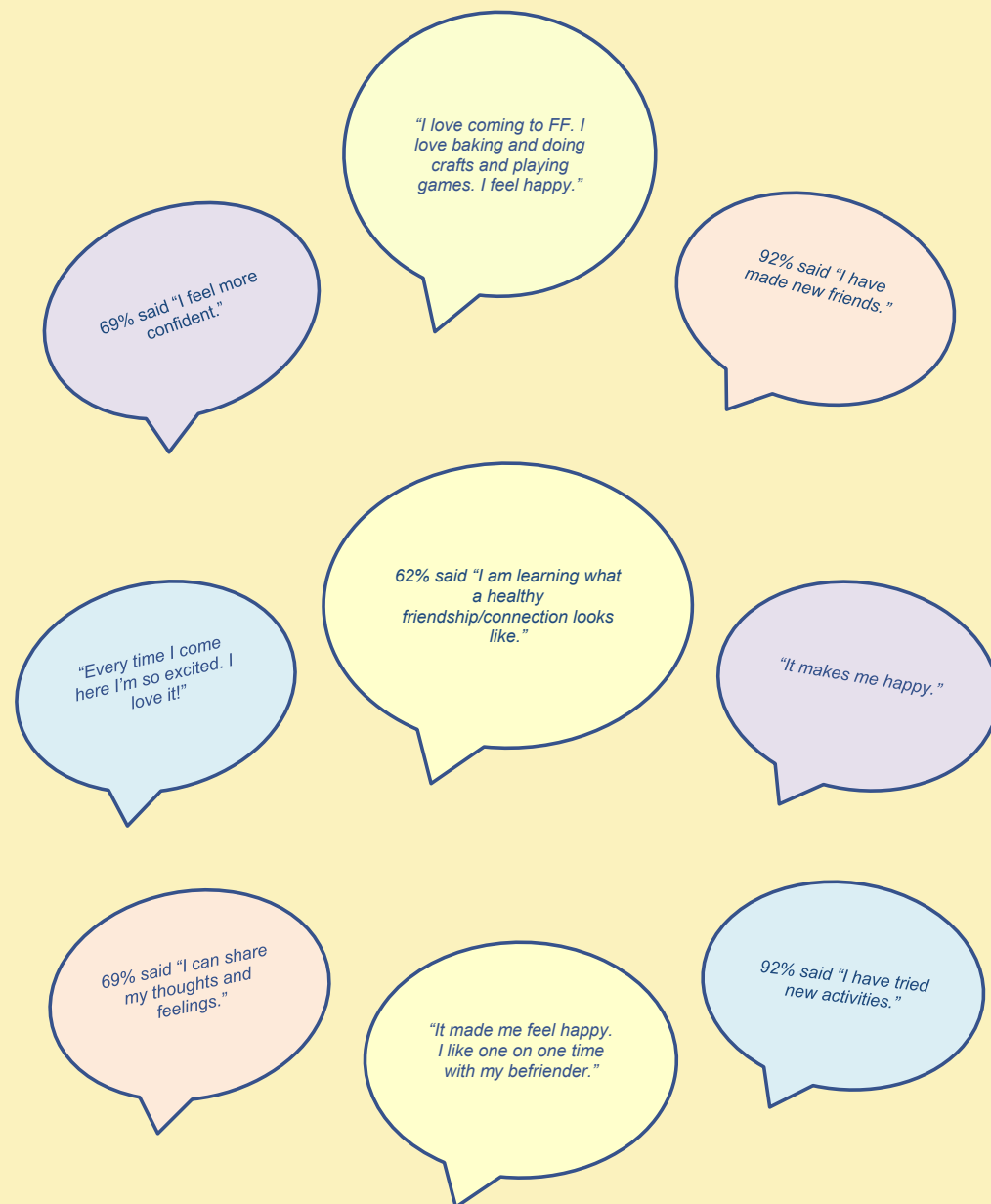
This has been another successful year, underpinned by a strong culture of collaboration. The team's shared commitment, professionalism and creativity ensure that our services remain responsive, person-centred and impactful. We continue to take a holistic, strengths-based approach, supporting individuals to overcome challenges, build confidence and reach their full potential. Our work across services — including youth groups, transition support, family support, 1:1 interventions and holiday programmes — has continued to make a positive difference, with each element shaped by the voices and experiences of our service users.

Partnership working remains a key strength. Our close relationships with schools, social work, health and third sector organisations enable us to provide coordinated, effective support and create new opportunities for families. Our work within schools, in particular, continues to promote engagement, improved attendance and enhance the wellbeing of children and young people.

On a personal note, this year also marks the end of my 16-year journey with Families First. It has been a privilege to contribute to the development and delivery of such a wide range of services over the years — from Breakfast Clubs and Youth Groups to Transition programmes and family support. I am incredibly grateful for the relationships I have built with colleagues, partners, families and volunteers, many of whom I remain in touch with.

As I move on, I do so with a deep sense of appreciation for all that Families First represents. From the organisation achieving the Queen's Award in 2016 to being recognised with a Local Hero Award in 2024, it has been an honour to be part of this journey. I will truly miss everyone and wish the team every success as they continue to make a lasting difference in the lives of children, young people and families in the years ahead.

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



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

Alchemy Foundation

JS Innes Charitable Trust

Alexander Moncur Trust

Leach Family Charitable Trust

Alfred Dunhill Links Foundation

Mary Moore Trust

Bank of Scotland Foundation

Misses Barrie Charitable Trust

Barbara Ward Charitable Foundation

National Lottery Community Fund

Erskine Cunningham Hill Trust

Nationwide Building Society Grant

Fife Council Rural Poverty Action Group

New Park Educational Trust

Fife Council SLA

Plum Trust

Fife Health Charity

Robert Haldane Smith Charitable Trust

Foundation Scotland – Baillie Gifford

Robertson Trust

Foundation Scotland – Volant Charitable Trust

Souter Charitable Trust

Garfield Weston Foundation

St Andrews Baptist Church

George Mclean Trust

St Andrews Ladies' Putting Club

Haramead Trust

St. James's Place Charitable Foundation

Hedley Foundation

The Vardy Foundation

Hugh Fraser Foundation

Walter Craig Charitable Trust

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Walker Shoolbraid Charitable Trust

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WM Mann Foundation