



Creating a brighter future  
for all Scotland's children.

# CHILDREN FIRST IS SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHARITY.

## OUR PURPOSE

To protect  
Scotland's  
children.

## OUR VISION

A Scotland  
where every  
child is safe.

## OUR VALUES

With **love**,  
we put  
children first.

With **purpose**, we  
transform children's  
lives together.

With **strength**, we do  
whatever it takes to protect  
Scotland's children.

## OUR MISSION

We stand up for every child because all children should have a safe childhood.

We **protect** children from harm and support them to **recover** from trauma and abuse through our national and local services.

We help children, their families and the people that care for them by offering emotional, practical, and financial support.

We give children hope and a **safer, brighter** future.

## OUR IMPACT

Children feel **safer** and more **loved** within their own families.

Families have **stronger** and **safer** relationships.

Children, young people and families feel **heard**, and their experiences are more **understood**.

Children and families are more able to **recover** from trauma and abuse.

Children and families feel **happier** and have improved **wellbeing**.

Children and families feel like they **belong** and are more **connected** with their communities.

Children are more able to **learn** and **grow**.



# 140 YEARS OF PROTECTING SCOTLAND'S CHILDREN

Last year marked our 140th year as Scotland's national children's charity. I'm proud of the life-changing impact we've had on babies, children, young people and families across Scotland.



Highlights included marking the first birthday of Scotland's first Bairns Hoose and celebrating our role in the development of Bairns Hoose projects in other areas of Scotland.

Our hoose in North Strathclyde helped 270 child victims and witnesses in its first year to heal and recover from unimaginable trauma and abuse. It is hard to think about, but the youngest child supported was just three years old.

Another milestone was the historic incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law. We played a crucial part in the campaign to advocate for this important change, to ensure that children's human rights are better protected and respected in the future.

Thanks to Keep the Promise funding, and our belief that children do well when families do well, we continued to work with national and international partners to campaign for every child to have access to family group decision making, if they need it.



“Thanks to Children First, home and school feel like a big thumbs up.”

Alfie, young person.

But most importantly of all, through our dedicated teams, we protected thousands of children from harm, kept them safe, and supported them to recover from trauma and abuse through our national support line and in their homes, schools and communities across Scotland.

Today's children are facing unprecedented challenges. Abuse, trauma, neglect, poverty and online harm are having a devastating impact on their childhood years. Almost two-thirds of adults we surveyed believe growing up in Scotland is worse today than ever before. This needs to stop.

To make life better for all children in Scotland, we need to be bolder and braver. While our purpose, to protect all Scotland's children, remains the same, we refreshed and evolved our brand in 2024 to help us meet the needs of a new generation.

At Children First we stand up for every child because all children should have a safe childhood. Every baby, child and young person should have hopes, dreams and opportunities.

Some of the children and young people we work with visited the first minister after he chose Children First to benefit from his Christmas card. They all shared their wishes for 2025 with him. Jamieleigh's was simple - for all children to be safe.

Together we can make Jamieleigh's wish happen, we can protect all Scotland's children and create a brighter future for the next generation. But there is still much to do, and our work has never been more needed.

I hope you enjoy reading the incredibly brave words of many of the young people we supported last year. Please support our work so we can continue to make positive change happen.

**Mary Glasgow**

Children First Chief Executive



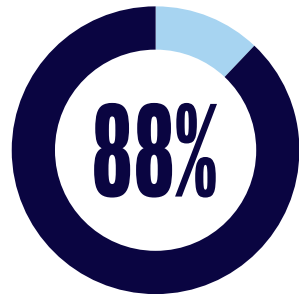
# SCOTLAND'S CHILDREN ARE IN CRISIS AND URGENTLY NEED YOUR SUPPORT

That's why we will do whatever it takes to help children and give them a {brighter} future.

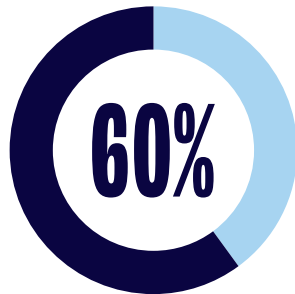


**100** referrals a day, on average, are being made to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Scotland.

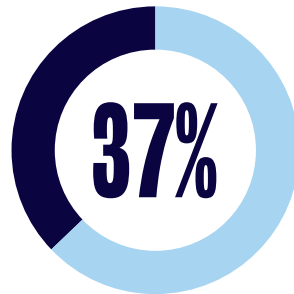
**33%** of children have no adult in their life they can trust or talk to (P5 – S6).



of people are worried about the impact of social media on children.

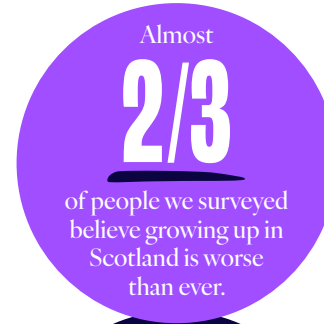


of people contacting our support line are worried about a child's emotional wellbeing.



of sexual crimes recorded in 2023/24 by police related to a victim under 18.

\*May-Chahal & Herczeg (2003) Child Sexual Abuse in Europe, Council of Europe.



**TOP 10** challenges children and families were facing when they came to us for support:

1	Child emotional wellbeing
2	Family relationships
3	Parental mental health and wellbeing
4	School/education
5	Family separation
6	Parenting
7	Poverty/money worries
8	Domestic abuse and coercion
9	Disability
10	Child development



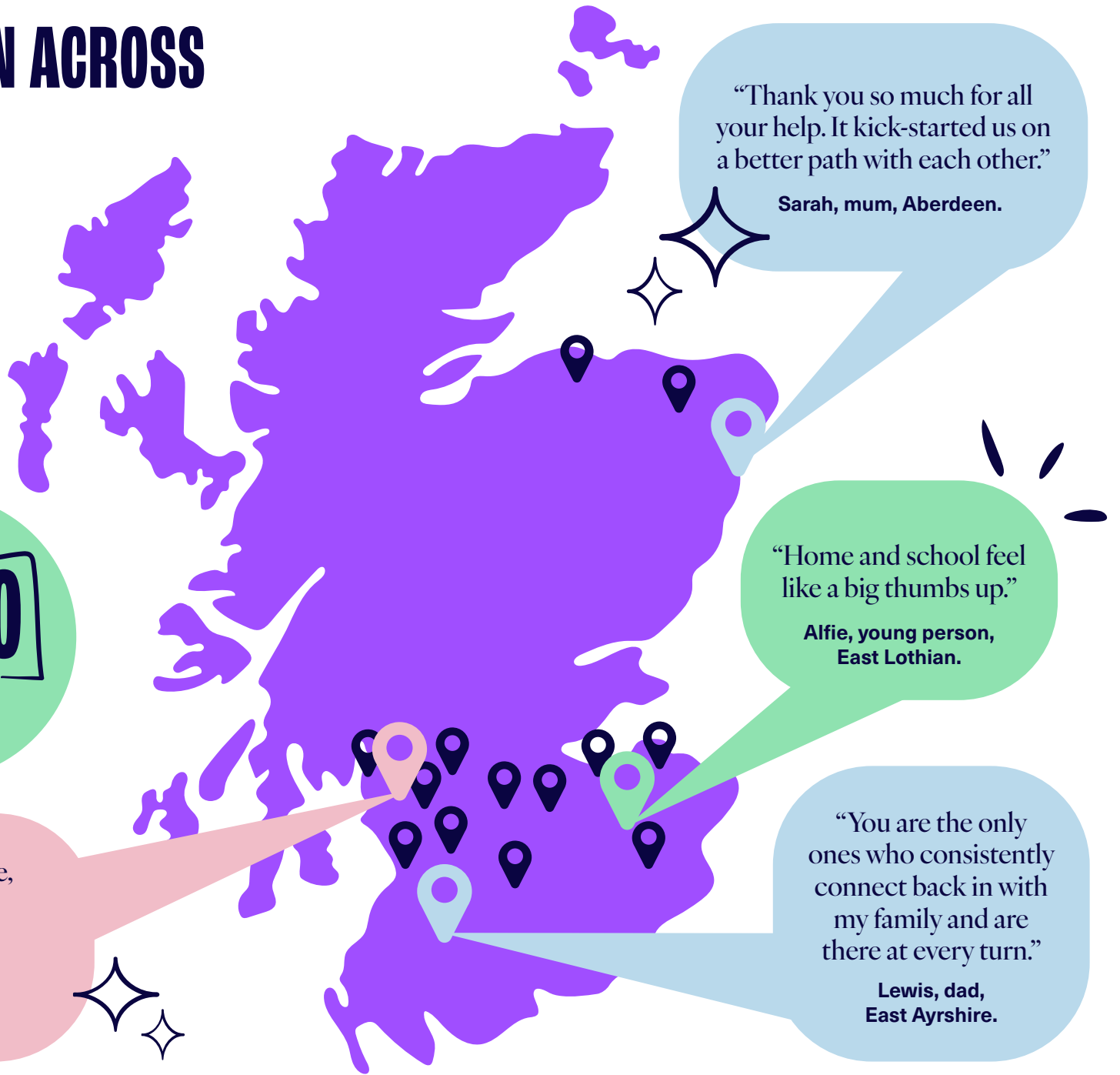
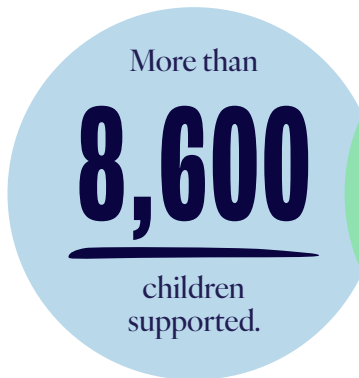
“Our Children First support worker went above and beyond when supporting my son. Her support helped us get safe and away from domestic abuse. The support from Children First should never be underestimated.”  
**Laura, mum.**

# SUPPORTING CHILDREN ACROSS SCOTLAND IN 2024

Our services provide practical, emotional and financial support to children and families across Scotland through our national support line and in their homes, schools and communities.

In 2024 we helped more than 8,600 children and over 8,800 parents and carers to have a brighter future.

In total 17,493 people were supported.



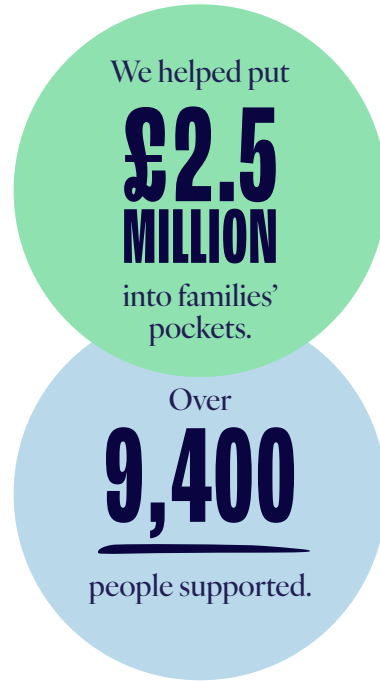
# SUPPORT LINE

From mental health, money worries and online harm, to struggles at school, our support line\* offers emotional, practical and financial support to any family in Scotland.

Children First's support line gave expert, confidential advice to more than 2,500 families and supported over 9,400 people in 2024.

More than two thirds of families who reached out for help were worried about their child's emotional wellbeing and half had concerns about family relationships.

The support line worked with more than 1,000 families to provide financial wellbeing support and advice that helped families secure close to £2.5 million in financial gains and deal with half a million pounds in debts to make them more manageable.



\*During 2024 our Parentline and financial wellbeing services were rebranded to Children First support line.



“My support line worker listened, challenged when she needed to, always put the needs of my child first and helped me navigate a very complex situation.”  
**George, dad.**

“The support we received was absolutely amazing.”  
**Lee family.**

“I received fantastic support both online and via phone, regarding a concern for my son's emotional wellbeing.”  
**Lucy, mum.**

“Your support over the most difficult year of my life was a lifeline to me.”  
**Elaine, mum.**

“My Children First recovery worker saved my life quite a few times. Without her I would have been lost. She helped me believe I could get through it.”  
**Ollie, young person.**

# TRANSFORMING CHILDREN'S LIVES

Every day our teams across Scotland support children who are distressed and at risk of serious harm and help them to recover from trauma and unthinkable abuse. We work alongside babies, children and young people and their families for as long as it takes. We never give up. Our local services have worked alongside thousands of children and families to improve their lives so that they can have hope for a brighter future.

## LOCAL SUPPORT IN GLASGOW

Our Glasgow family wellbeing service works alongside children and their parents and carers in their homes, schools and communities. The team provides early help to support the whole family often preventing them from reaching crisis point.

In 2024 the team supported more than 1,390 people.

Thank you to players of People's Postcode Lottery for making our work to support children and families in Glasgow possible.

Children in Glasgow and Edinburgh can access free face-to-face emotional health and wellbeing support from Children First thanks to funding from BBC Children in Need, in partnership with The Children's Society and MACS Supporting Children and Young People.

*space to grow*

Support that helps children flourish



## LOCAL SUPPORT IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

Our Borders service has been running for more than a hundred years and provides expert support to children and families to recover from abuse and trauma including domestic abuse, support with kinship care and help to keep a child with their wider family network if their parents are unable to care for them.

The service also provides holistic, child-centred and recovery focused support for brothers and sisters whose family circumstances and past experiences have impacted on sibling relationships.

The Borders team supported more than 1,500 people in 2024.



“I decided what support looked like for me and my daughter – we weren't just told what we need to do. I have worked with other organisations before, but I never really felt listened to until now.”

**Jenny, mum.**



“The support we received after my children's dad died suddenly helped rebuild their confidence and resilience. Children First do the most amazing job, and we will never forget what they have done for our family.”

**Lara, mum.**



# SUPPORTING CHILDREN THROUGH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Children First's Bairns Hoose teams support children who have been victims or witnesses of horrific crimes to recover from trauma and harm. They work alongside children and their families to help them get all the support they need through the health, care and justice systems.

In response to the trauma child victims experience going through Scotland's criminal justice system, Children First launched the country's first Bairns Hoose in 2023.

Last year the Children First North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose marked its first birthday. In the first year, 270 child victims and witnesses and their families have been supported to recover from unthinkable trauma.

We are now working with local partners to develop Bairns Hoose's across Scotland including in Aberdeen, The Scottish Borders, Aberdeenshire, West Lothian and across Ayrshire. We are also working with partners in the Forth Valley as they scope out Bairns Hoose development.

In 2024 Bairns Hoose services across Scotland supported a total of 185 families - 303 children and 221 adults.

185

families supported.

303

children supported.

"If you want me to be honest [my recovery worker] is probably the only reason I'm talking now – my anxiety was so bad back then I couldn't speak."

Calm, young person.



"The best thing about Changemakers is meeting people who have had experiences like mine. We want to make things better for other young people."

Sophia, young person.

## BRAVE CHANGEMAKERS

Giving children and young people who have been supported by Bairns Hoose the opportunity to share their views on the services we provide to them is important to us. Their feedback shapes how we work and helps influence change.

We offer a range of ways for children and young people to share their experiences, for example through group meetings, creative projects and exploring ways to share their story.

Changemakers is a group of children and young people that have been supported by North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose and are passionate about making a difference.

The group meets regularly to support each other and works on a range of projects from supporting our recruitment to ways to change the justice system.





# KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER



In 2024 we provided family group decision making services to more than 1,700 people across Scotland, working with over 420 families.

Family group decision making can empower a child's wider family to come together to discuss and agree a family plan when facing a decision about the care of their child. This approach helps keep children safe and can prevent children being taken into care.

Children First have been pioneers of family group decision making since 1998 and are the largest third-sector provider of family group decision making services in Scotland.

"I had a choice and felt in control about what we talked about."

**Jamelia,  
young person.**

"We needed someone to come in and help us listen to each other."

**Ray, dad.**

"It stopped everyone fighting."

**Luke, young person.**



# CAMPAIGNING FOR CHANGE

**We campaign for change because we believe that every child should have a safe and happy childhood.**

Our campaign priorities are based on what the children and young people we support tell us matters most. We make sure their voices are heard as we work with partners, decision-makers and politicians, to champion the changes that will protect children from harm and ensure their rights are fulfilled.

Last year the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was incorporated into Scottish law. We are proud to have been part of the campaign to advocate for this change, to ensure that children's human rights are better protected and respected in the future.

We continued to lead a collaborative movement of national and international partners to build momentum for every child to be offered family group decision making when they are facing a decision about their care, thanks to Keep the Promise funding.

Our expert team informed a range of Scottish Government and parliamentary work from the Scottish Budget to improving the justice system for children and young people.

We also supported the development of the Promise, which is Scotland's commitment to care experienced children and young people that they will grow up loved, safe and respected.

# KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN SPORT

Child wellbeing and protection in sport and our new case management support service are partnerships between Children First and sportscotland that work together to help keep sport safe for children and young people.



## The child wellbeing and protection in sport team provides:

- Advice and resources on a wide range of issues, including case specific advice and support regarding any child protection or wellbeing concern.
- Consultancy to help sports organisations develop ways to keep children and young people safe.
- Training to develop understanding about child wellbeing and protection for governing bodies and board or committee members.

In 2024 the service saw an increase in enquiries of 19% to a total of 320. The team focused on children's human rights in sport and hosted a national conference and a series of events throughout the year.

## The case management support service, which launched last year, provides:

- Case management advice and support for governing bodies managing disciplinary issues across the sports sector.
- Training and resources to ensure that fair and effective processes are in place to manage disciplinary concerns, and staff and volunteers have the skills to utilise these.
- Access to independent professional advice through our case advisory group.

In 2024 this new service trained 31 sports governing bodies on managing investigations and launched essential disciplinary and investigations guidance for all governing bodies to follow.

# SAFEGUARDERS PANEL TEAM

Children First is contracted by the Scottish Government to manage and operate the national Safeguarders Panel, which includes around 140 Safeguarders across Scotland.

A Safeguarder is someone appointed by a children's hearing or Sheriff to make sure a child or young person's best interests and human rights are represented in the court process.

They build positive relationships with the child, parents, carers, and other significant people in the child's life. They listen to their views, to help reach a decision about the child's future that is in their best interests.



The Children First Safeguarders Panel Team is responsible for the recruitment and selection of Safeguarders, their learning and development and monitoring their performance.



# BIDE OOT

Bide Oot offers families the chance to try new skills, sports and activities together during a residential weekend at an outdoor education centre in a remote area of Scotland. It's all part of the wider support we offer families we are already working with.

Families who have experienced Bide Oot say it has helped them strengthen relationships, built their confidence and had a long-term positive impact on their mental health, relationships, and emotional wellbeing.

Our Bide Oot team get to know families before they go away for the weekend and activities take place after the trip to help create meaningful connections between families taking part and in the wider community.



“Usually, me and my mum don’t talk a lot but when we were at Bide Oot we talked all the time.”  
**Harry, young person.**

“We all became one big family.”  
**Leigh-ann, mum.**

“The group has become a big part of our lives, the kids and I have made new friends and loved being part of it all.”  
**Sharon, kinship carer.**

“That weekend without screens – it was like having my kids back and I’ve tried to keep that up at home.”  
**Joe, dad.**

“We bonded as a group, the young people made new forever friends, and we made family memories.”  
**Ashley, mum.**



# MAKING SURE CHILDREN'S VOICES ARE HEARD

At Children First we're passionate about empowering children and young people to share their views, feelings and wishes on the issues that affect them to help shape our services and to influence key decision makers to drive change.

A range of projects in 2024 have seen children and young people's voices make an impact. These include young people's involvement in our brand refresh, speaking to the First Minister about their hopes for the future and sharing their views on living in the digital world.

Pictured: Children and young people meeting the First Minister after telling him their wishes for the future at Christmas.



### Qualities of a good anti-racist ally

**RESILIENT:** The distance a bee can fly in its life is astonishing!

**KIND:** Two pairs of ears to listen

**BRAVE:** On their T-shirt twice to be doubly brave

**COURAGEOUS:** A stop-racism placard to help speak up and speak out

**ASSERTIVE:** A speaker, microphone and radio to be heard

**RESPECTFUL:** Wings, stripes and brown arms to represent diversity

### Actions of a good anti-racist ally

**VOTE & SIGN PETITIONS**

**EDUCATION & LEARNING** - read anti-racist books

**TALK TO FAMILY & FRIENDS**

**JOIN A COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP**

**GET CREATIVE** - share stories

**TALK TO POLITICIANS** - write to your MSP

**TEACHERS ABOUT RACISM**

**SPEAK UP AND SPEAK OUT**

**BEING PRESENT IN OUR COMMUNITY**

To help everybody in the world feel welcome and safe, we all need to be a good anti-racist ally—someone who stands up against racism and discrimination.

The children at Barmulloch Primary School in Glasgow wanted to help children and adults understand what it means to be an anti-racist ally. They designed this avatar to help demonstrate what qualities make a good ally for anti-racist change.

## ANTI-RACISM PROJECT

In a recent project, pupils from Barmulloch Primary School in Glasgow were involved in a series of workshops exploring anti-racism.

The children shared their views and ideas about what makes a good anti-racist ally through artwork, giving them a chance to reflect on how racism has impacted them personally, their school and wider community.

The pupils designed their own characters which explored what makes a good anti-racist ally.

Highlighted in the posters are attributes the children believe anti-racist allies should display including being resilient, kind, brave, courageous, assertive and respectful.

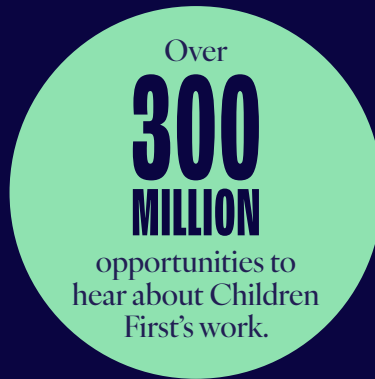
# CHAMPIONING CHILDREN IN THE MEDIA

A key part of our campaigning and fundraising work involves raising awareness of the issues that impact children.

Last year we secured more than 1,000 pieces of media coverage across print, broadcast and online.

Media coverage highlights included:

- Our declaration of a childhood emergency.
- A Freedom of Information request which revealed a staggering 100 referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
- In depth interviews on the impact of child poverty.
- Our call for the Scottish Government to tackle the children's mental health crisis in Scotland.
- Children First being selected as the First Minister's chosen charity for his Christmas card.
- Calls for politicians of all parties to put children first.



**100 CHILD MENTAL HEALTH REFERRALS A DAY**

**'It's intolerable', the true horror of child poverty in modern Scotland**

**SCOTLAND'S CHILDREN ARE FACING A DAILY WAR TO SURVIVE**

# CELEBRATING PARTNERSHIPS

Every day we work tirelessly across Scotland to keep children safe, but we can't do it alone. Throughout 2024 we worked with many wonderful and generous partners and we are incredibly grateful for their support.

## PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY

People's Postcode Lottery is a charity lottery which raises vital



funding to support a huge range of good causes. Since 2008 players of People's Postcode Lottery have been raising funds for Children First. This funding helps us to protect children from harm, keep them safe, and support them to recover from trauma and abuse through our national support line and in their homes, schools and communities across Scotland.

Together with players of People's Postcode Lottery we are giving children a safer, brighter, future.



## SCOTTISH GAS NETWORK

Thanks to funding from Scottish



Gas Network, our support line was able to provide targeted energy advice through our financial wellbeing team, helping families to stay warm, well and make financial gains of close to £575,000 in 2024.



# THANK YOU!

Every year, we protect thousands of children from harm, keep them safe, and support them to recover from trauma and abuse. But we can't do it alone.

Together with our colleagues, volunteers, supporters, donors, action groups and partners, we are creating a brighter future for all Scotland's children and we can't thank each and every one of you enough.

An extra special thank you goes to the wonderful children, young people and families who have

shared their views and ideas with us, helping shape our services and strengthening our influencing and campaigning work.

With **love**, we put children first. With **purpose**, we transform lives together. With **strength**, we do whatever it takes to protect Scotland's children.

There is still much to do and our work has never been more needed.

Thank you for your continued support.

Your support helps protect Scotland's children and gives them hope for a brighter future.



# SCOTLAND'S CHILDREN NEED YOUR SUPPORT

We believe that every child should have a safe and happy childhood. Every child should have hopes, dreams, prospects and opportunities.

But, for many, they simply do not exist.

Scotland's children urgently need your support.

A cluster of six overlapping circles in various colors (green, purple, blue, light blue, teal, and pink) arranged in a roughly circular pattern. Each circle contains a different call-to-action. The top row includes 'Make a DONATION' (green circle), 'Leave a gift in your {Will}' (purple circle), and 'VOLUNTEER' (light blue circle). The bottom row includes 'Take part in a fundraising event' (light blue circle with a star icon), 'Sign up to our NEWSLETTER' (teal circle), and 'Follow us on social media' (pink circle with social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter).

Make a **DONATION**

Leave a gift in your {**Will**}

**VOLUNTEER**

Take part in a fundraising event

Sign up to our **NEWSLETTER**

Follow us on social media

You can make a real difference to the lives of children and families across Scotland. Please help us to protect Scotland's children and ensure they grow up safe and happy.

Visit [childrenfirst.org.uk](https://childrenfirst.org.uk) to find out more.

Worried about a child? Our support line is here to help: **08000 28 22 33**



Together, we can create a brighter  
future for Scotland's children.

Their hopes, dreams and  
opportunities are in our hands.

**Children First, 83 Whitehouse Loan, Edinburgh EH9 1AT**

Registered Scottish Charity Number: SC016092

**Support line 08000 28 22 33 | Fundraising 0345 10 80 111 | [childrenfirst.org.uk](https://childrenfirst.org.uk)**