

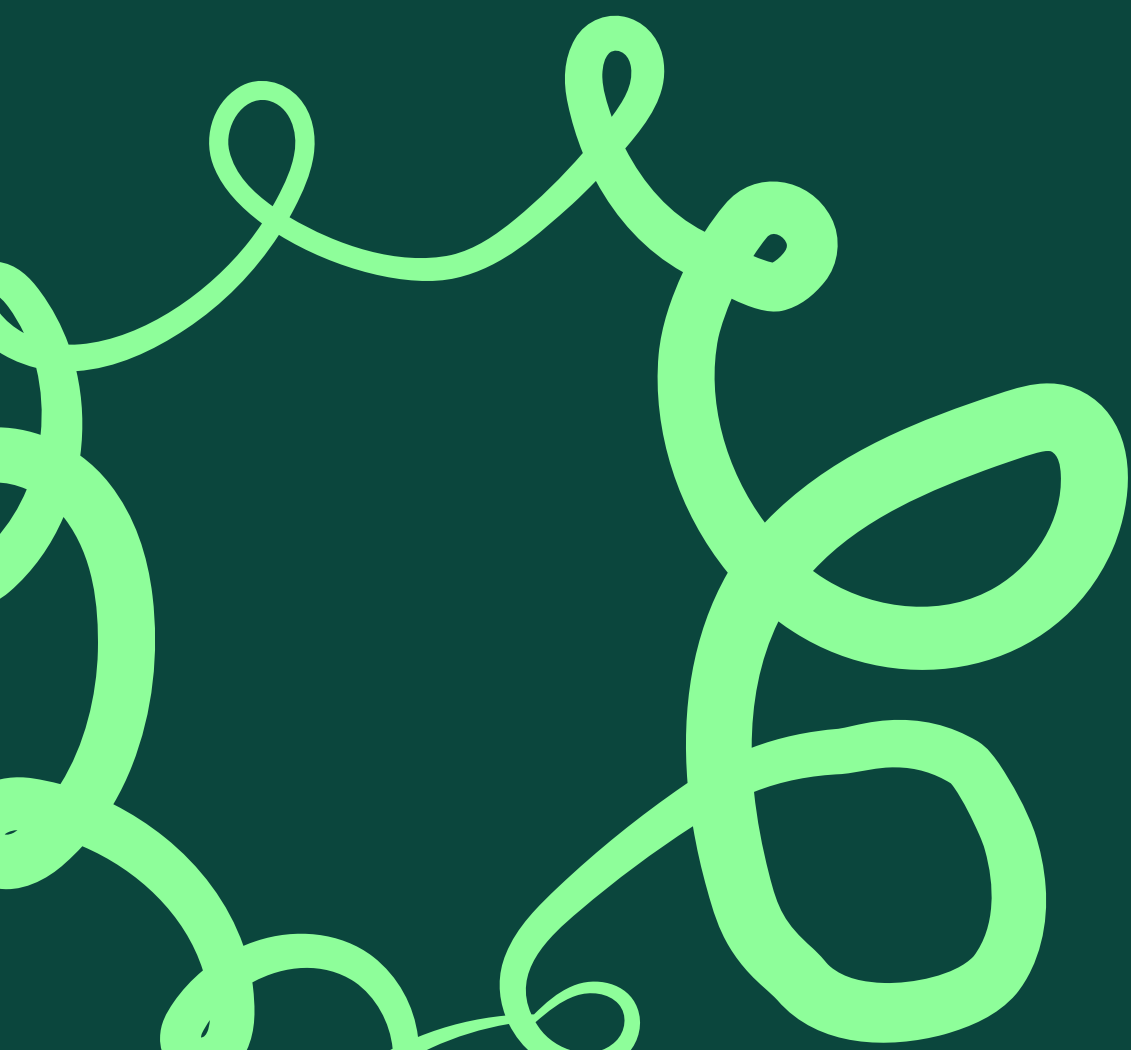


BARNARDO'S SCOTLAND VISION FOR THE NEXT SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Manifesto for the Scottish Parliament Election 2026

A guide to how the next Scottish
Government can change
childhoods and change lives





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Foreword

by **Martin Crewe, Director of Barnardo's Scotland**

Barnardo's purpose is to change childhoods and change lives, making children and families safer, happier, healthier and more hopeful. We have supported children and families in Scotland for over 100 years, but too many children and families today continue to face significant challenges. That's why we need the next Scottish Parliament to take bold action to improve the lives of children and families and invest in the future of the country.

The term of the next Scottish Parliament will take us to 2030 – a year when we should see the delivery of ambitious targets for child poverty and The Promise. However, despite good intentions and some progress, we are far away from achieving the vision on both.

Our manifesto for the next Scottish Government sets out practical asks on a range of issues from family support, to tackling child poverty and improving health and wellbeing that are designed to improve access to support for families who need it most.

Our asks are informed by our practical frontline experience of delivering over 150 services across Scotland, supporting thousands of children, young people, parents and carers each year. Thank you especially to the children and young people who provided their views to in co-designing this manifesto, particularly children and young people from 16 plus Glasgow, Caern in the Community, HMP Edinburgh Visitors Centre, Falkirk Young Champs and Youth Involvement Project Glasgow.

We hope you will support the proposals in our manifesto and invest in Scotland's future.

About Barnardo's Scotland

At Barnardo's, our purpose is clear – changing childhoods and changing lives, so that children, young people, and families are safe, happy, healthy, and hopeful. At Barnardo's Scotland we run more than 150 services, supporting around 11,500 children, young people, parents and carers. For over 150 years, we've been here for the children and young people who need us most – bringing love, care and hope into their lives and giving them a place where they feel they belong.



Manifesto summary

Our key asks of the next Scottish Government



The case for family support in every community

The next Scottish Government must establish a network of family support services in every community across Scotland, putting an end to the postcode lottery of support, and ensuring families who need it can access support.



Transforming support for children and young people in and leaving care

Introduce a right to advocacy support for children and young people at all stages in the care planning process, including introduction of an opt-out model of advocacy within the children's hearing system.

Expand the free bus travel scheme to include all care-experienced young people under the age of 26.

Improve financial and housing support for all care experienced children and young people.



Tackling child poverty

Immediately increase the Scottish Child Payment to at least £40 per week.

Immediate expansion of universal free school meal provision to primary 6 and 7s.



Tackling child exploitation

Launch a new national strategy and action plan, working with partner organisations, to tackle the exploitation of children.

Invest in Scotland-specific research and data collection on the scale and nature of child abuse and exploitation.

Invest in enhanced training and support for all professionals working with children and families.



Improving children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

Investment in children with mental health support needs.

A renewed and refocused Pupil Equity Fund

A long term plan for supporting children with additional support needs.



Youth employment, training and skills

Launch a new Youth Employment Strategy

Establish and fully fund a youth-focused Scotland Guarantee employment programme, with specific focus on school leavers who are not in education, employment or training.

Conduct a review of Foundation Apprenticeships, to extend the scope of these to include 16- and 17-year-olds who have left school early.

The case for family support in every community

Children's social care services in Scotland remain under pressure. Some children enter care because their family was not able to access the support they needed early and before a problem reached crisis point. Investing in family support is therefore critical if we are to ensure that children can remain safely living with their birth families whenever possible.

Barnardo's knows from its work supporting families across the UK that parents who are struggling really value being able to access family support services in their communities. These bring together a holistic offer of support aimed at helping the family with a range of challenges whether that is with housing, accessing benefits, or working with families impacted by issues such as domestic abuse and substance misuse.

"My family support worker was a wonderful woman. She helped with everything, G.P, food, social network - without her I would be in a bad situation."

Parent supported by a Barnardo's family support worker

We also know that investment in these services can save money in the long-term – since it costs significantly more to look after a child in care than to provide early support to a family in the community. Analysis by Barnardo's policy report **'It Takes a Village'** (2021), looked at the outcomes from our intensive family support service and using the case of our family centres on the Isle of Wight, and found that **for every £1 invested in the service, the saving in costs to the state is approximately £2.60**. Based on the number of families the service supported in a single year, the service has saved approximately **£1 million** per annum to the state.

Investing in these services was a key recommendation of The Promise with a commitment that all families in Scotland should have access to consistent family support services by 2030.

However, despite the introduction of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund in 2021-22, we know that there is often quite limited access to these services. This means that families across Scotland currently face a postcode lottery when it comes to accessing the support they need.

Barnardo's Scotland wants to see consistent access to family support that is relationship-based, easily accessible, flexible to family need and responsive to practical, emotional and financial challenges. We would like to see all parties commit to increasing investment in early intervention family support services and ensure family support is available in every community – this is crucial if we are to keep The Promise.

What is Family Support?

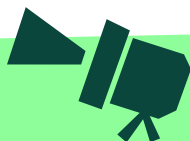
Family support is an approach that centres on relationships, by providing a range of practical and emotional support to help strengthen and nurture family connections – getting alongside children, young people, parents and carers in their communities and providing compassionate, consistent and practical support and operating a 'no wrong door' approach.

Barnardo's has dozens of family support services across Scotland which support thousands of individuals. Family support can often be perceived as an early intervention approach, effectively reducing the need for more intensive, intrusive and expensive treatments at a later stage.

However, it can also be offered at any stage of family life and be delivered flexibly increasing or decreasing in intensity in response to changing levels of need. Importantly, a longer-term involvement should not be perceived as inherently negative, as it may in fact be enabling a family to sustain improvements and keep children at home.

Family Support in Barnardo's Scotland

SERVICES SPOTLIGHT



We know from our direct experience that it can take some time for families to find the right type and level of support, often only being able to access help once their situation has deteriorated and there is a risk of statutory intervention. That's why we need to see a greater focus on early intervention.

Family Support Worker from Inverclyde:

"I support families with any sort of need, so it could be problems with their tenancy, problems with their finances, budgeting, getting their benefits straight, those sorts of immediate practical supports. I also offer support emotionally, if they are going through tough times either because they have mental or physical health problems, or because someone in their family has mental or physical health problems, or relationship issues with kids, partner or other people in their family or community. It can also be they have problems implementing routines and boundaries with their kids and addressing this can make family life much better.

I try and give support that's appropriate to the level of their need, to come alongside them and not disempower them in any way. I want them to realise they have the power within themselves to get through whatever is going on for them and get out the other end. I always believe we can work together to get to a place where they no longer need me. Parents are the best people to know what's going on in their family, they are the experts and it's much better to support them to a place where they can deal with things on their own."

Edinburgh Family Support Partnership - Umbrella Hubs

Edinburgh Family Support Partnership is a transformational new collaboration between City of Edinburgh Children's Services, Barnardo's Scotland, Children First, Citadel, Safe Families and Edinburgh Community Food. Our aim is to radically transform how Edinburgh Children's Services and partners deliver services to families within the city of Edinburgh whilst simultaneously improving a family's journey through the current complex landscape of accessing family support.

Our multi-disciplinary teams are community based, in four areas across the city of Edinburgh. As well as connecting families with holistic responsive and flexible support the teams will empower families to 'reach in' themselves and be supported along their journey through a relational and strengths-based approach.

Our aim of providing early intervention that empowers families to take control encourages an integrated approach, leads to tailored plans and provides the right support when it is needed and diverts children and families from escalating into statutory processes. Families are at the heart of our approach and restorative family led decision making drives our support in partnership with families, their networks, communities and enables them to address challenges before they become a crisis.



Case study from the Umbrella Hub

Sarah* is a mum of two, who attended a community pop-up after being signposted by her former social worker. Sarah highlighted that she was looking for ongoing support for her family and after an introductory chat with pop-up staff, moved to a private room for a 1:1 conversation with a Barnardo's worker.

Sarah was very open in this 1:1 conversation – she shared that she had been looking for support for her mental health and family relationships for a while but felt only school had been supportive until that point.

Following a discussion with a multi-agency team and with Sarah's consent, it was decided that Sarah's family would benefit from being allocated a Barnardo's family worker, to carry out long-term family support by drawing on knowledge and experience around neurodiversity and complex family work.

Following further communication between Sarah and her worker, and with Sarah's consent, the worker contacted Sarah's social worker to confirm that the safeguarding concerns had been managed and that they were closing their involvement.



Sarah's family were then introduced to the Umbrella Hub. Sarah accepted support and the Barnardo's worker is now building a relationship with the family before beginning individual and family work both within the family home and in the community.

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

Calls to action for the next Scottish Government

The next Scottish Government must establish a network of family support services in every community across Scotland, putting an end to the postcode lottery of support, and ensuring families who need it can access support.



Transforming support for children and young people in and leaving care

Barnardo's is committed to Keeping The Promise to transform the care 'system' and ensure that every child in Scotland grows up safe, loved and respected¹.

Work to Keep The Promise is underway, but there is still much to do – we know that we continue to have huge challenges ahead of us, with too many families experiencing increasing levels of need.

Support in the children's hearing system

Barnardo's has a long history of providing advocacy support for children and young people in the Children's Hearing System, via the Hear4U advocacy service – often assisting young people in their transition to adulthood who are facing a range of challenges including homelessness, financial difficulties, loss of contact with family and friends and poor mental health and wellbeing. Advocacy can be an important mechanism for ensuring children and young people have their views and voices heard.

“Making sure people who have anxiety, disabilities are unable to advocate for themselves, have someone who they can trust, who is reliable. This person can comfort them while helping them speak up for themselves and ensure young people's views are heard.”

Views of young people who took part in our focus group about 2026 priorities.

“Having you there helped me because it took the pressure off me, so I didn't need to speak myself.”

Feedback from a young person supported by a Barnardo's advocacy worker, following support provided for their Children's Hearing.

We believe that children in the hearings system should be granted better access to independent advocacy, to ensure they can be provided with impartial information about their rights and entitlements, and be given enough space to ensure their own opinions and feelings are communicated within the moving on process. **Barnardo's supports a change in the model of providing advocacy support** – where all children and young people have access to information about the advocacy provision available and are supported to make an informed choice on whether to take up the support available.

We also believe there is a need to see increased access to advocacy support for children and young people going through key stages in the care planning process. Particularly as we are moving towards more 16- and 17-year-olds in the children's hearing system – with many likely to be care experienced – there is a need to further invest in advocacy, throughcare and aftercare support for young people at this particular stage of life. This will ensure they are aware of their rights and can be supported to realise them.

1. Barnardo's (2024); [Our Journey to Implement The Promise, Plan 2021-24](#)

Transforming support for young people moving into adulthood

Transitioning to adulthood can be a challenging time for anyone, but for children and young people leaving care this period of change can be even more difficult. It is essential that the right support is available at the right time for care-experienced children and young people – and that this support is designed to promote the rights, needs, and wants of the individual.

Without help from the ‘bank of mum and dad’, care-experienced children and young people leaving care face even more difficulties in meeting costs such as furnishing a new home or making a rental deposit. These additional costs, combined with the rapid increase in the cost of living, can result in significant financial demands.

SERVICES SPOTLIGHT



16+ Glasgow

The Barnardo's 16 plus service in Glasgow provides a transitional support service to young care leavers in Glasgow. Including residential accommodation, supported tenancies and on-going support up to the age of 26.

Young people who are supported by the Barnardo's service took part in two focus group sessions in summer 2025 to give their views on what they think needs to change to support children and young people in Scotland, and what they think the priorities should be for the next Scottish Government.

“Support services being more joined up would make access easier for us, by just having one place to contact rather than several... Consistency of workers would help, with someone who knows you - rather than being judged on your past by someone who doesn't know you at all”

“There needs to be specific apprenticeship opportunities for care-experienced young people.”

“There should be more provision of support for children and families living in poverty and on edges of care - and more time given to social workers to allow time to build relationships.”

“Care leavers cut off dates are unfair - there's no cut off date with parents so it should be the same for foster care and other care... we come from tough backgrounds, so why should support stop at 18 or 21 or 26? Support stopping is like being abandoned... you're just left.”





Gap Homes

A 'Gap Home' provides high quality, affordable housing for care-experienced young people and provides the opportunity for a young person to live in a new property in an established community with support available to them from Barnardo's.

The Gap Homes programme was developed by Barnardo's in response to the lack of suitable housing and support available to young people at the point of leaving care. Poor quality housing and a lack of support increases the likelihood of homelessness. This is exacerbated by a lack of suitable accommodation for young people preparing to live independently.

Stirling has five Gap Homes and is one of numerous sites across the UK where Barnardo's is constructing Gap Homes, with more to come.

Jenny*, lived in a Gap Home in Scotland for just over a year with her newborn baby. She was 19 and living in a residential unit when she became pregnant so it was arranged for her to move into a Barnardo's Gap Home.

"It was a big change, and I was scared. But living there with the support I had wasn't a massive jump to go from being surrounded by people, to suddenly living on your own and everything that comes with that. It was a nice stepping stone."

"As well as my worker that came to help me every day, there was different support I could access at different stages depending on what I needed, including parenting support and counselling when I was struggling. I got help from Barnardo's with learning how to pay bills and managing all those other things to run your own home."

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

Barnardo's fostering service

Barnardo's has been supporting foster carers and adopters to provide loving family homes for children and young people for more than 150 years. We have foster carers and adoptive parents in the North, Edinburgh and West of Scotland, with qualified staff placed geographically in each of our localised services, to provide support to all our caring families.

Mockingbird

Mockingbird is a pioneering international programme, licensed by The Fostering Network. The programme nurtures relationships between children and foster families, supporting them to build a resilient and caring community of six to 10 satellite families called a constellation, akin to an extended family.

Barnardo's is the first and only fostering service to have applied the Mockingbird model in Scotland – and we currently have two constellations. The model consists of a hub home with a central experienced carer who acts as a “grandparent” and several homes usually in a small geographical area which are treated as a “constellation”.

The aim is for the caring community to mirror an extended family, including children with a variety of ages and backgrounds, and to nurture relationships not only between children and their carers but with other children and adults within the group.

Regular monthly activities are arranged that can include outings such as trips to the beach, water sports and arts and crafts. Carers also connect with each other informally between the meetings and the project aims to enable normal childhood experiences within the cluster, such as sleepovers and playdates, without the usual barriers and delays.

This is possible since the agreement from the local authority (as the ‘corporate parent’) and the necessary police checks are already in place. Carers can support each other and share experiences with advice available both from other carers and from the hub home.

Foster Carer views on the benefits of Mockingbird:

“Having regular time with other foster carers and children, allows us to share experiences.”

“Having that support of other carers gives the young person the sense of extended family support, allowing sleepovers and joining in on other activities.”

“We are now a large family with the support that it gives us.”

National evaluations² of the model also indicate how it improves the experience of children in care as well as helping with foster carer retention. A national evaluation of the model (published in 2020) for example found that although there was no difference in the number of placements moves of children there was evidence Mockingbird improved continuity of care. This was because, if placements broke down, children could often move to a new foster carer in their constellation whom they already knew. Foster carers participating in Mockingbird were also less likely to de-register and there was evidence that they had higher levels of wellbeing.

2. Mockingbird Fostering Network Evaluation

Calls to action for the next Scottish Government

- Introduce a **right to advocacy support** for children and young people at all stages in the care planning process, including introduction of an opt-out model of advocacy within the children's hearing system.
- Expand the **free bus travel scheme to include all care-experienced young people** under the age of 26.
- **Improve financial support for all care-experienced children and young people** transitioning to adulthood by ensuring that all care-experienced young people who are claiming Universal Credit receive the over 25 rate and work with the banking sector to produce guidance on the financial support available for young people leaving care³.
- Help to ensure that young people who leave care can access high quality accommodation including:
 - **Increased investment in supported accommodation** for young people leaving care to ensure that all young people in Scotland who want to access this type of accommodation when leaving care are able to do so.
 - Ensure all local authorities in Scotland provide rent deposit and guarantor schemes available for care leavers to help them access accommodation in the private sector.



3. Barnardo's (2023): [No bank of mum and dad – the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on care-experienced children and young people](#)

Tackling child poverty

Despite ambitious targets to reduce child poverty in Scotland to 10% by 2030, far too many children, young people, and families living in or on the edge of poverty across Scotland continue to struggle – unable to afford the basic things they need to live.

As a result, financial support for children, young people, and families has become ever more crucial to ensuring families can afford the essentials – providing them with choice, security, and the

resources to enable their children to thrive. In recent years Scotland has taken steps to introduce policies to tackle child poverty, such as the Scottish Child Payment⁴.

Yet the latest statistics show 1 in 4 children in Scotland continue to live in poverty – with Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) analysis showing that one third of those in poverty are in very deep poverty⁵.

Barnardo's Child Poverty Fund

Helping children and young people in poverty has been a core part Barnardo's work for over 150 years. In response to the cost-of-living crisis we have been providing urgent crisis support to families in our services, including through accessing our 75 children's centres and family hubs. In the first phase of our crisis response, between October 2022 and August 2024, we supported over 18,560 children, in over 9,875 families. We provided immediate support to help prevent hunger and ensure access to safe and warm spaces. Examples include helping families to afford warm hats and jumpers in the winter, and to replace fridges and washing machines when they break down.

“When I was under 25, I was receiving less Universal Credit than someone over 25 would receive. How is that fair? It felt like my family was less important than other families I think there should be a standard rate across Universal Credit. I was doing adult stuff from the age of 19 when I was pregnant with my son, and I wasn't out partying or things like that. But I was getting less, even though it wasn't my choice at the time to leave employment – it was due to being pregnant.”

A young parent supported by Barnardo's Scotland

“Extending free school meals would absolutely make a big difference to the families we work with. A high percentage of our children already get free school meals. About 70% of our families. A lot of families who are in employment can be classed as the ‘working poor’ due to having little or no disposable income. These families don't always qualify for provisions such as free school meals and school clothing grants, which is an additional cost for families to provide their children with a substantial lunch to keep them going for the full school day. For families that use breakfast clubs as well – having that warm meal makes a big difference, even having some cereal in the morning provides them with a meal to start them off for the day.”

Family support worker, Inverclyde

Meeting the child poverty targets is possible but will only be achieved if ambitious targets are met with ambitious actions. That's why we're calling for politicians in the next Parliament to be brave and bold for children.

4. MyGov.Scot (2022); [Scottish Child Payment: How It Works](#)

5. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2025); [Children being left behind: deep poverty among families in Scotland](#)

Calls to action for the next Scottish Government

- Immediately **increase the Scottish Child Payment** to at least £40⁶ per week.
- Immediate expansion of **universal free school meal provision to primary 6 and 7s**.
- Consider the expansion of universal school meal provision to include secondary schools.
- Mitigate the young person's penalty⁷, where under 25s are paid a lower amount of Universal Credit, by topping up the Scottish Child Payment.
- Issue strengthened guidance requiring local authorities to consistently identify and meet the needs of children in No Resource to Public Funds (NRPF) households.



6. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2021); [Laying the foundations for a Scotland without poverty](#)

7. One Parent Families Scotland (2025); [End Young Parent Poverty: Top up the Scottish Child Payment](#)

Tackling child exploitation

Barnardo's Scotland has a long history of tackling child sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking in Scotland by supporting victims, raising awareness in communities, and calling for national leadership.

Across the UK, Barnardo's delivers services supporting children and young people who have been or are at risk of sexual exploitation and, where appropriate, their families who have been impacted by this.

In 2024 Barnardo's was invited by the Scottish Government to join its new **National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Strategic Group**. We continue to urge the Scottish Government to renew a national strategy and action plan to tackle child sexual exploitation and strongly believe that child criminal exploitation must also be given specific focus and attention within any new plan.

SERVICES SPOTLIGHT



Common Ground, Glasgow

Common Ground is a youth-focused project in Glasgow city centre led by Barnardo's with other partners – designed to provide a safe, welcoming space for young people while also offering street outreach support. It began in March 2025, initially as a 12-week pilot.

Young people often visit the city centre to meet friends, pass time, or access services, but some face risks like exploitation, violence, substance use, and unsafe situations. Common Ground aims to reduce these risks by offering a safe place to go and trusted adults to talk to.

Launched in Spring 2025, Common Ground is Glasgow's first cross-partner contextual safeguarding model. Barnardo's is leading the project alongside partners including Aberlour, Action for Children, Right There, and the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU) – the project offers a multi-layered response to adolescent risk in the city centre – combining outreach, a youth-only hub, and coordinated safeguarding follow-up.

Co-designed with young people the model supports those who are visible in the city but invisible to services, offering safety and support where statutory systems do not currently reach.

Our Model: Contextual Safeguarding in Action

Common Ground offers a tiered response:

Street Guardians (SVRU): a visible, trauma-informed adult presence in city hotspots—building trust, noticing distress, and guiding young people to safety.

Common Ground Street Team: street workers from Barnardo's and partners, engage with young people in real time – assessing need, identifying risk, offering relational support.

The Hub: more than a physical drop-in, the Hub is the relational heart and coordinating centre of the model. Open on key evenings in the city centre (under Central Station), it offers a youth-only, low-barrier space where young people can rest, eat, charge phones, and access emotional support. Designed around principles of nurture, consistency, and psychological safety, it enables disclosure, regulation, and trust-building. We triage safeguarding concerns and initiate multi-agency coordination – connecting young people to services across health, housing, and child protection.

Follow-up and Escalation: every concern is followed up. Safeguarding referrals, contextual risk mapping, and cross-border information sharing occur through established pathways (e.g. Police Intelligence Portal, social work, housing). We also contribute to the Glasgow Central Station Safeguarding Group, working alongside British Transport Police, Railway Children, Network Rail, and ScotRail to coordinate responses and identify vulnerable young people in transit. This work enhances our ability to safeguard across city boundaries and transport hubs – key sites of risk for exploitation and missing episodes.



Real Love Rocks

Real Love Rocks (RLR) is an educational resource, created by Barnardo's, alongside children and young people. It is an evidence-based and age-appropriate resource to give young people the knowledge and confidence to identify and speak out if someone behaves in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable, pressured or at risk.

Following a therapeutic intervention with a young person by Barnardo's Early Intervention (BEIS) Service in Kirkliston Primary School in Edinburgh, it was highlighted that there was scope for further work around CSE. In collaboration with the school, we agreed to offer a programme that would focus on the Primary 7 year group starting in August 2024.

Barnardo's launched new and updated versions of Real Love Rocks for primary aged children after an Ofsted review recommended that schools need to assume sexual harassment and sexual abuse online are happening in their settings, even if they have not received any reports. It is interactive and designed in an empowering and fun approach using animations, activities, and games.

The updated version reflects the different types of harms children may face as they grow up. These include child sexual abuse, criminal exploitation, radicalisation, and extremism. Real Love Rocks is trauma informed and develops kindness, understanding and empathy for children themselves and others. The primary school edition of the resources has been designed for use with 10 and 11-year-olds with topics including feelings, brains and bodies, relationships, grooming, exploitation, abuse, and online safety.

Between January and July 2025, Barnardo's partnered with a secondary school in Renfrewshire to implement the Real Love Rocks Supported Implementation Programme, aimed at addressing the growing issue of exploitation among young people in the local community. The initiative included whole-staff training, bespoke resource development, and supported delivery of pilot sessions to a targeted year group.

Staff reported increased confidence in identifying signs of exploitation and engaging in child protection procedures. Learner feedback from the pilot showed that 84% felt comfortable during sessions, 66% learned something new, and 83% believed the topics covered were important for young people. Notably, 60% of respondents could name a service or person they could approach for help, indicating improved awareness and access to support. 83% of the children that took part in the pilot felt this programme should be available to all children.

"The RLR programme was very well received by our staff. They thought it was hugely thought provoking and relevant, particularly to those who are also parents. It gave us reassurance that we are doing the right thing. The bits about developmental stages was really insightful. It helped with some of the online issues that our young people are facing and armed us with the knowledge needed to discuss these with families."

(Head Teacher)

Calls to action for the next Scottish Government

- **Launch a new national strategy and action plan**, working with partner organisations, to tackle the exploitation of children.
- **Invest in Scotland-specific research and data collection on the scale and nature⁸ of child abuse and exploitation**, building on the model of the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse for England and Wales.
- **Invest in enhanced training and support**, pre- and post-qualification, for all professionals working with children and families, so that they have the knowledge and confidence that they need to better protect children by identifying signs of and responding to child sexual abuse, including sexual exploitation – and child criminal exploitation.

8. Barnardo's Scotland Policy Report (2020): **Sexual exploitation of children involved in the Children's Hearing System**

Improving children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

Barnardo's Scotland works directly with more than 400 schools and we have educational links to 400 more. This breadth of experience means that we can talk with confidence about the benefits of taking a whole-school approach to mental health.

We like to describe our work in schools in terms of a pyramid. At the base we provide universal activities that build a community of support for pupils and those around the school. Further up the pyramid, we deliver targeted support to individuals and groups around key themes such as attendance, anxiety, transitions and school avoidance.



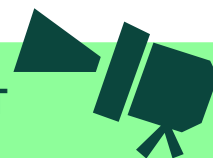
At the apex of the pyramid is intensive support for children and families that is bespoke to need – this could include trauma, bereavement and loss, child exploitation and neurodiversity (and is made possible by the breadth of experience and expertise of Barnardo's services). Underpinning the whole pyramid is workforce capacity and wellbeing.

Lack of access to early support is the key challenge to improving health and wellbeing of children and young people, based on experiences from Barnardo's services. Our work is underpinned by trauma-informed practice, supporting children and young people to process and recover from traumatic life experiences, reduce functional and behavioural difficulties, and build the skills and resilience needed to achieve their full potential.

We also know that investment in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to reduce waiting lists must be supported with renewed focus on early intervention and adequate resources to provide wraparound support that promotes wellbeing at the earliest stages.

As set out in our 'Tackling Child Poverty' section we also clearly know that the impact of poverty has a huge effect on participation in education in many ways and has an impact on children's wellbeing. This also has an impact on children's right to access education under the UNCRC Scotland Act. That's why we are also concerned over the future of the Pupil Equity Fund, which is being continually diverted to meet other funding pressures on schools. We believe clearer guidelines and reporting are needed on how the fund is used to tackle poverty.

SERVICES SPOTLIGHT



Barnardo's holds the UK licence for *The PATHS® Programme for Schools (UK & NI Version)* – an internationally recognised evidence-based whole school programme that explicitly teaches social and emotional skills including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. We have supported the implementation of this programme in school settings across the UK.

Calls to action for the next Scottish Government

- **Investment in children with mental health support needs.** This should include universal school initiatives, targeted support in the classroom and intensive support to families. This funding should be allocated to local authorities to ensure a co-ordinated approach.
- A renewed and refocused **Pupil Equity Fund** with twin aims of increasing children's attendance at school and improving attainment. This funding should be allocated direct to schools and weighted towards areas of highest deprivation.
- A long term **plan for supporting children with additional support needs** should be developed.



Youth employment, training and skills

Barnardo's employment, training and skills (ETS) courses provide young people with skills and qualifications they can build on and develop throughout their working life.

In partnership with employers, schools, colleges and charities, we train and support over 3,000 young people every year through 20 specialist centres across the UK. In the last year we provided 1,369 training places from five services across Scotland. Barnardo's provided support across a range of rural and urban settings in eleven Local Authority areas. Our services have a well-established employer engagement team that supported around 200 employers across a diverse range of sectors over the last year.

"Barnardo's really helped me gain social and employability skills and I feel more prepared and excited for the future after the group."

Young person from Edinburgh

"These past couple of weeks it has been eye-opening as I was unsure on what I wanted to do. It has helped me understand myself and what I want to do for my future."

Young person from Inverness

"I feel so much more confident after going to this group and really glad it has helped me apply to college. I am a lot more independent now."

Young person from Edinburgh

"Didn't think I would ever be able to achieve anything like this."

Young person from Tayside

SERVICES SPOTLIGHT

Barnardo's Works East of Scotland is an innovative service supporting young people and their families, who might normally face barriers, to secure independent and sustainable employment, study or further training. We offer support services throughout Edinburgh and Midlothian to those applying for college, looking for a job or Modern Apprenticeship.

Our variety of group and tailored individual programmes help young people and care leavers aged 15 – 29 to gain valuable life and work skills, qualifications and practical work experience. Our support now also extends to parents or carers, to provide a more extensive family package.

Everyone is supported during their programme by a Project Worker to meet the targets set to enhance their personal development and employability. We also have our own fully trained counsellor, who runs private, confidential appointments to provide mental health guidance to those who most need it.





Calls to action for the next Scottish Government

- Launch a new **Youth Employment Strategy**, setting out how the most disadvantaged young people can be supported to progress into the world of work including a commitment to supporting care leavers in accordance with The Promise.
- Establish and fully fund a youth-focused **Scotland Guarantee** employment programme, with specific focus on school leavers who are not in education, employment or training. This should include increased transition support to post school destinations for young people in our most deprived areas.
- Conduct a review of **Foundation Apprenticeships**, to extend the scope of these to include 16- and 17-year-olds who have left school early. As it stands these are only available to fifth and sixth year pupils excluding children who leave school in fourth year but who would benefit most from support.

About Barnardo's Scotland

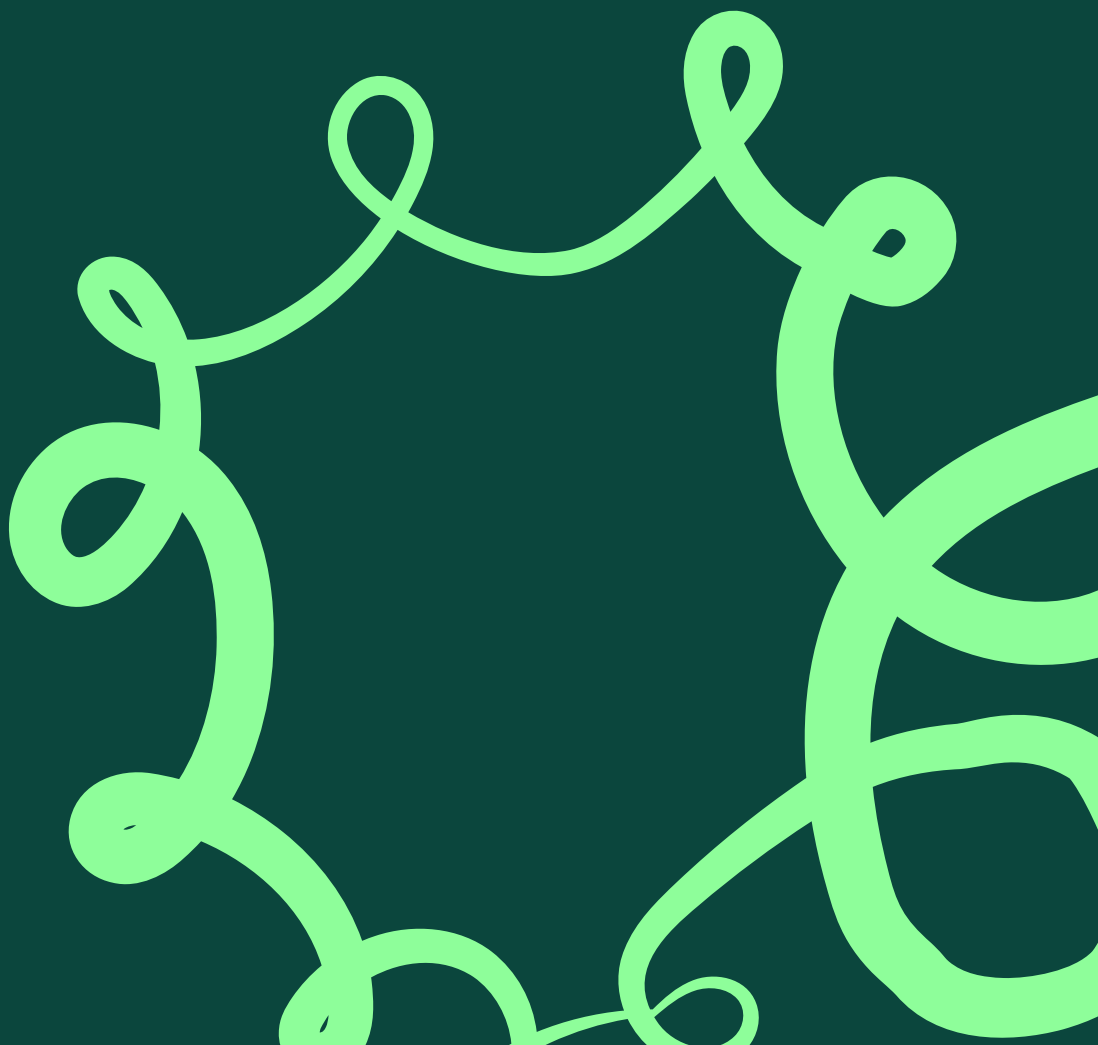
At Barnardo's, our purpose is clear – changing childhoods and changing lives, so that children, young people, and families are safe, happy, healthy, and hopeful. At Barnardo's Scotland we run more than 150 services, supporting around 11,500 children, young people, parents and carers. For over 150 years, we've been here for the children and young people who need us most – bringing love, care and hope into their lives and giving them a place where they feel they belong.

Contact us

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