

Barnardo's Scotland - In This Together

COVID – 19 - Responding to the needs of children,
young people and families

11th May – Family Support Services

Barnardo's Registered Charity
Nos. 216250 and SC037605

**Believe in
children**
 **Barnardo's
Scotland**

Overview of Barnardo's Scotland Family Support Services

We deliver a range of family support services across the country ranging from early help and support through to intensive interventions when children and young people are at risk of social work intervention. We work across a range of thematic areas including:

- * Children and young people with disabilities
- * Perinatal mental health and early years
- * Families affected by parental substance misuse
- * Families affected by parental imprisonment
- * And our schools based work which we [shared a couple of weeks ago](#).

All of our family support services have had to adapt to the current context to continue to meet the needs of children, young people and their families. This has been done in partnership with funders, service commissioners, and third sector consortium partners who have been flexible in their approach allowing us to adapt our models of delivery to reflect our new reality. We have made clear, open communication a priority, and have put in place effective reporting mechanisms so relevant stakeholders are fully aware of our activities.

Current challenges

There are a range of challenges which all children's service providers are navigating due to the pressure the current lockdown is placing on children, young people and families.

We are finding children, young people and families are seeking contact so they can receive regular emotional and practical support through this challenging time. Some people are reporting they are finding the social distancing and isolation difficult to sustain and many say there is a risk of an escalation in their difficulties over this period.

Some children, young people and families report a break from school has resulted in a calmer atmosphere at home as some children find engagement in education settings a challenge. We recognise, however, that for many children and young people school is very much a protective factor. Our staff are working hard to support families entitled to access School Hubs to make use of these. Where this isn't



happening we are offering practical assistance and emotional support, sustaining our relationships with families.

Where it is necessary, and safe to do so, we are providing face to face support, alongside our remote contact to ensure children and young people are seen and heard as we know not all risks will be picked up through virtual contact. After consultation with our Local Authority partners, we now have two service bases in Edinburgh and Dundee where we have set up our own Hubs to meet the bespoke needs of the populations they serve where children cannot attend the School Hubs.

Not having access to daily free school meals, alongside families being home all day using more food, gas and electricity, is placing significant financial pressure on people. In addition, digital exclusion is a huge issue. Many people do not have access to phones, tablets, laptops, Wi-Fi or money to top up data credit. This has therefore been a focus of a lot of our work in the last few weeks, supported through our successful bid in partnership with Action for Children to the Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund.



Families and partners have been very grateful at the speed at which we have been able to address financial issues, reducing distress at what is a very difficult time for many in our communities.

"We supported a mum with financial constraints who bottle fed for 5 days but was now trying desperately to breastfeed her newborn. She needed to express but the local hospital was not handing out pumps. We were able to buy a pump and get this to the mum very quickly. The Health Visitor stated "I would like to thank Barnardo's for the fantastic, efficient service which enabled this mum to get the equipment necessary to feed her baby"

"Can I take this opportunity on behalf of Susan to thank you for this support, as it has lifted most if not all of the financial burden she personally has had"

We have also been able to use the Wellbeing Fund to support the mental health and wellbeing of our young people.

One of our workers received some feedback from a young person saying how appreciative they were of the financial support they had been receiving from Barnardo's Scotland through the Wellbeing Fund. The young person is a new mum who's baby is under a year old (falling in to the perinatal category). She has high anxiety which has been heightened during this lockdown period. Supermarket shopping in normal circumstances was often anxiety provoking and with all the distancing guidelines in place it was even more so. Having extra money in her budget provided by the fund has allowed her to shop locally in the smaller stores which aren't so busy and so the anticipation and actual act of shopping has been much easier and significantly impacted on lowering her anxiety levels around this greatly.

Creative responses

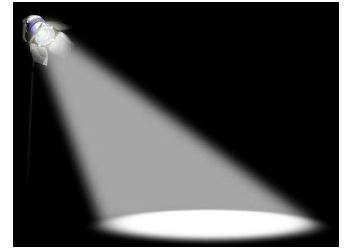
Barnardo's Scotland frontline staff have been enormously creative and person centred in their responses to ensure we are meeting the needs of all the children, young people and families we support. In addition to the provision of digital resources, technology, food parcels and other practical supports, our family support workers have delivered lots of telephone contact, facilitated online groups, undertaken doorstep visits, delivered essential medicines, had safe, socially distanced walks with young people to keep them physically and mentally healthy as well as giving parents a bit of respite.



"My family and I have worked with a lovely worker from Barnardo's Scotland. She has been with us for almost a year now and her amazing help and kindness has been phenomenal. I still can't believe the extremes this amazing person has gone to for me and my kids. She goes above and beyond what's probably expected of her and doesn't bat an eyelid"

"During this virus she's been in contact for support, and dropped off activities for the kids, it's amazing as other support services have now closed. Never the less she's there for support so we don't feel alone. She makes sure we are all coping well, asks how we all are. She's an asset to her job. We could not have made it through this year without her support and now with the lockdown she keeps supporting us. So thank you to her from me and my family"

Spotlight on our localities



Our **Threads Service in Renfrewshire** has been very busy organising lockdown activities. A programme of activities is posted each Friday on a dedicated Facebook page for the service. Some of these activities include a virtual pre-natal yoga group for young mums, origami sessions, music and story time, cooking, baking and craft activities.

"I have had some uncomfortable aches and pains and my midwife said that Yoga would be good...so it was great to be able to access it with Threads"

"My son really enjoyed the origami and we tried it ourselves later that day"

Barnardo's Scotland workers are reading stories online for families which are being really well received.

"Myself and my son like the new page [Facebook] and he enjoyed the storytelling. He found it funny and he recognised the worker from the project, he liked the familiarity of seeing him"

Videos of music, craft and stories are all uploaded on to our YouTube channel so children and families can click on the link as many times as they would like and at a time that is convenient to



them and their little ones, this allows flexibility as to when they engage in the activity.



Our staff have also been putting together craft bags to be dropped at doorsteps. Instructions are posted weekly on the Facebook page with ideas for things to make with the contents of the goody bags, and children and families are encouraged to share pictures with their workers via WhatsApp.

Many families working with our **Tayside Services** are seeking financial support for food, gas, electricity, and sanitary items. For some families, prioritising extra money for food has meant they are left with little, if anything for other items and

amenities. We have had several requests to support with washing machines, and workers have been able to be really creative in sourcing reclaimed washing machines and ensuring delivery within a couple of days to families' homes. One mum said she was spending £50 extra a week due to the washing machine breaking down and having to use the laundrette, she viewed the washing machine replacement as a 'godsend'.

Several families have asked for support with phones, tablets and laptops due to having limited means to connect with the outside world. These items have allowed them to maintain contact with their friends and connect with their school work.

In response, as well as financial support for families, we have set up a Facebook page sharing activities for children; workers are developing art therapy workshops which can be live streamed and recorded for use; we have been able to support volunteers to collect and drop off shopping and activity resources to keep children occupied; and we are in the process of developing our Dundee Service base as a Hub.

Our **Nurture Service in Inverclyde** has been supporting a family returning to Eastern Europe who had sent all their belongings home just before the lockdown commenced, including the children's toys. This resulted in low mood but we were able to help by lending the family a range of toys and other essentials.

In **Ayrshire** we've been sending out resources to families to help keep children and adults entertained and support good mental health and wellbeing. Families who have received resources are very grateful and the children and young people love receiving post addressed to them.



Case Study – Anonymised

Ewan is a six year old boy with a diagnosis for sensory processing disorder and ADHD. He lives at home with his mum who is on a methadone programme. His mum and dad recently split up and since the lockdown he hadn't seen his dad.

The family have no additional family support and mum sometimes struggles to cope. The family situation doesn't feel safe due to the intimidations of an anti-social neighbour. This affects mum and Ewan's mental health and means Ewan can't play outside.

The initial focus of our work was to support the parents to manage Ewan's behaviour through consistent parenting strategies and give Ewan opportunities to socialise and access activities he enjoys. Before lockdown this was achieved through activity days and 1:1 support.

Since Covid19, Ewan's Barnardo's Scotland worker has provided support through text and calls on a daily basis, financial support and food parcels. Ewan was struggling with not attending school, missing his dad and not getting out to play. Ewan is isolated and his behaviour is becoming more challenging with physical outbursts, shouting and throwing items in frustration. Mum feels overwhelmed and worries that she has to take Ewan with her to get her prescription and shopping.

Relationships had broken down between mum and dad, our Barnardo's Scotland worker was able to connect with dad and encourage him to re-establish contact between him and Ewan. This gave mum some respite and strengthened dad and Ewan's relationship. Dad uses the time to take Ewan out for walks in the community. Mum is now able to get out of the house.

Our family support worker is looking to try and get Ewan into the school Hub although this has proved challenging so far. She is also working on connecting with Ewan digitally to make sure she is seeing and hearing how he is doing.

Mum is so grateful for all the support Barnardo's Scotland and her worker is providing.

Barnardo's Scotland works with more than 16,300 children and young people in over 140 specialised community-based services across Scotland, and 95 shops across the country directly supporting the services. Our work includes: fostering and adoption services and support; helping children break free from sexual exploitation; supporting young carers; helping young people in to employment and helping children living in poverty.

Visit www.barnardos.org.uk/scotland to find out how you can get involved and show you believe in children. **Twitter:** [@BarnardosScot](https://twitter.com/BarnardosScot) **Facebook:** [Barnardo's Scotland](https://www.facebook.com/BarnardosScotland)