



Barnardo's Scotland - In This Together

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

**4th May – 16+ and Homelessness
Services**

Barnardo's Registered Charity
Nos. 216250 and SC037605

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

North Lanarkshire Youth Housing Support Service, Positive Destinations

Our Positive Destinations service had been providing emotional support to young female age 19 via our social media platforms. The young woman became very distressed and advised us she was 6 months pregnant and had been allocated a tenancy the week before lockdown. She had applied for a community care grant to help her with furniture but all applications had been stopped. She had applied to the housing department for assistance and they were unable to access their normal support staff or furniture services and therefore could not assist her.

She had some pieces of furniture that had been donated by family members but was sleeping on a mattress on the floor. Via the Wellbeing Fund we were able to order her a bed and mattress to be delivered within 3 days to her accommodation. This solution meant she was able to stay comfortably and safely within her home during COVID -19, reducing potential harm to herself and her unborn baby.

Highlands 16+ and residential services

Our services in the Highlands have been utilising the Wellbeing Fund to purchase a variety of things for our young people and families.

"We purchased the play pen so baby can play while mum does cleaning, the tent was bought for a boy with autism who struggles sometimes and likes to have a safe space to get away from everyone"

"We have also purchased kindles, as well as a small pool table and basketball hoop for a family of 5 and a baby walker"



Feedback from services

Our 16+ services have switched to crisis response and adapted and enhanced a lot of what we deliver.

Some of the pressure points and challenges for our services working with care leavers and care experienced young people are around the mental health of young people including suicidal ideation, self-harm and distress; drug and alcohol abuse and risks with regards overdose; domestic violence; increased vulnerability to CSE and criminal exploitation; financial crisis and associated vulnerabilities and exploitation; homelessness- young people locked down in vulnerable situations and little recourse to move within or out with temporary accommodation.

"The biggest issue we are having is trying to encourage young people to stay home and also trying to address mental health and overdose concerns from a distance"

"We are seeing an increase in requests for financial assistance from young people who are using more electricity/gas"

"We have a lot of young people bulk buying when they get their benefit payment so they have nappies/food etc. and then they're running out of money"

Key Issues identified for care leavers and care experienced young people

Homelessness – this is a huge issue for our young people, many of whom are being evicted from hostels and temporary accommodation and told these aren't safe spaces to be 'locked down in' – this results in these young people sofa surfing and often being picked up by the police.

Compliance with lockdown - many young people are finding lockdown very difficult to comply with – there is a risk of charges and fines as well as risk to self and others by not self-isolating and social distancing.

Finance / budget issues – there are higher costs associated with being home all day – food / electricity/gas etc. This is a population in food & fuel poverty already so the crisis is exacerbating this.

Mental health issues increasing – this includes low mood, stress, self-harm, suicidal ideation, as well as substance misuse.

Attachment issues – this is a population who will often have low or limited networks already. Young people need and seek face to face support and comfort from staff & this is un-implementable at the moment – this is resulting in increased loneliness and isolation.

Inappropriate accommodation – young people will often be in settings they don't like, often without TV's / Wi-Fi other ways of keeping themselves entertained and connected.

Amenities - some young people are alone, often pregnant or with young babies without basic amenities such as beds/fridges /microwaves etc.

Lack of statutory support - some of our young people don't fit categories for statutory assistance, and are therefore not receiving throughcare payments etc. – there is a sense some have 'fallen through the cracks'

Solutions

- Every young person is allocated a worker – even those who just use drop in or usually use other 'lighter' support – this provides a link and the security of someone checking in regularly with them.
- We have enhanced our crisis line and duty systems and are undertaking welfare calls to check in at agreed intervals.
- We have purchased mobile phones and Wi-Fi packages for young people so they can access technology. This is essential and has therefore been prioritised by services.
- We are buying beds, fridges, and other essential household items for young people, as well as providing food and money for utilities.
- We are utilising Facebook, WhatsApp and other social media to connect with young people – games/quizzes/GIFS etc.

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/Barnardo'sScotland)