



Prevention, Protection and Recovery

Children 1st Strategic Priorities 2023 - 2025





Introduction

Children 1st supported 60,000 children and family members to stay safe, loved and well between 2018 and 2023.

Families have told us that given the context of the last few years, our support has been a lifeline. Across Scotland, our local and national services worked right alongside families helping to prevent harm and to protect children, supporting them to recover from trauma, violence and abuse. To progress children's rights we campaigned for significant changes to Scottish policy, practice and legislation including: equal protection from all forms of violence, incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and improvements to the support available to child victims and witnesses in the criminal and civil courts.

Our work, as set out in our charitable Charter, is founded on the understanding that children do well when families do well. From our earliest days, Children 1st have supported families to build strong relationships to keep their children safe, loved and well with them. So, the practical, emotional and financial support we offer is more than a lifeline, it is the support that children and families need to overcome the challenges they face today to enjoy a happier, more secure tomorrow.

Today, children and families are facing an unprecedented level of challenge, trauma and change. The cost-of-living crisis, ongoing political uncertainty and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic are having a profound impact on children, families and the organisations and services that are there to support them. In this rapidly changing context, we have decided to extend our strategic priorities which focus on prevention, protection and recovery to 2025. In 1884, our founders came together in Glasgow exasperated by the lack of action to support children suffering the impact of enormous social upheaval, and growing gaps between rich and poor and asked themselves: "If not us, then who?"

With children and families facing new changes in society and increasing levels of poverty which threaten their safety, wellbeing and security, that same question is what drives the strategic priorities which we share here for the next two years.

Our goals are to support families to keep children safe, to protect and fulfil all children's rights in legislation, policy and practice and to help children, their parents and carers to recover from the impact of childhood trauma and abuse.

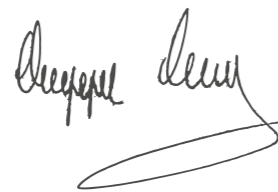
We will continue to push the Scottish Government to fully incorporate the UNCRC and play our part in keeping Scotland's Promise that every child should grow up loved, safe and respected — and children should be able to stay with their families when they can. We will continue to lead the development and implementation of Bairns Hoose. We will work alongside children and young people and our partners to ensure implementation is consistent across Scotland and is of the highest possible standard.

As part of our commitment to anti-racist and inclusive practice we will improve our reach, support and impact with ethnically diverse communities. We will continue to demonstrate the impact of our direct support to children, young people and their families. We will record our work in a way that reflects and reinforces our relationship-based, trauma-sensitive practice and provides us with a more systematic overview of the needs and issues that children and families face across the whole of Scotland. This will guide the development of our services and more effectively inform our campaigning work to bring about transformational changes that can make a difference to every child in Scotland.

We will continue to work with a wide range of partners, most importantly children and families, as well as supporters, campaigners, policy-makers, volunteers, organisations and businesses to achieve our shared ambition that every child in Scotland grows up safe, loved and well together with their family.



Mary Glasgow,
CEO, Children 1st



Maggie Craig,
Chair, Children 1st

The Vision

**Children 1st's ambition is
for every child in Scotland
to stay safe, loved and well,
together with their family.**

We will be alongside families for as long as they need us, providing the emotional, practical and financial support they need to help them put their children first.

We will lead transformational change to systems, legislation and practice to fulfil the rights of all children and families in all their diversity.



The Challenge

Children and families have faced an unprecedented level of challenge in the last few years. As COVID-19 spread across the country, the emotional and physical health of children, their families and all those who work alongside them has been severely impacted.

Children 1st responded to the immediate practical and emotional needs of children in the most difficult of circumstances. Closure of basic services for families, such as nurseries, schools and colleges and limited access to medical services, such as Health Visitors, GPs, Child and Adolescent Mental Health services, all had a significant impact on children's health and development. Research has shown families have been the hardest hit financially, with a quarter of UK families now living on a reduced income as a direct result of the pandemic.¹ The impact on employment, especially for low-paid and zero-hour contracts, rising fuel costs and household bills has pushed many families to breaking point.



Children and families continue to experience overwhelming levels of domestic abuse.² Online sexual abuse of primary aged children increased by over 1000% according to the UK Internet Watch Foundation.³ Sexual abuse of children also increased during the pandemic.⁴ At a time of increased hurt and harm to children, statutory justice, care, and protection systems were struggling to cope leading to weakened safety nets for children and families.

Throughout the pandemic, Children 1st confirmed that our unwavering determination to be there for children and families no matter what, was needed more than ever. We mobilised and sustained flexible and agile supports making sure children and families had vital contact with trusted support staff focusing on safety and wellbeing and found creative solutions to be there, right alongside families, no matter what the circumstances.

In the aftermath of the pandemic poverty continues to rise to intolerable levels. Today an estimated one in four children live in poverty in Scotland.⁵ Poverty is disproportionately experienced by lone parent families, children from black and minority ethnic communities and larger families.⁶ Despite long term political commitment to eradicate child poverty, there remains a persistent and stubborn challenge which must be urgently addressed. Poverty has a catastrophic impact on the health and wellbeing of children now and will continue to blight their lives in the future. The shame, stress, and anxiety that poverty causes make raising happy, healthy and safe children a struggle for parents and carers and inequality of opportunity breaches the rights and blights the lives of far too many.

Today, we face one of the most challenging and volatile periods of our 140-year history. There is an unprecedented level of need, but the stretch on the public sector is greater than ever. We will hold fast to our core goals of prevention, protection and recovery. By building strong, trusting relationships with children and families to help them overcome the challenges they face and amplifying their voices and experiences Children 1st will bring about real transformational change.

¹ [March: Impact of COVID-19 on family finances | News and features | University of Bristol](#)

² Domestic abuse: statistics recorded by the police in Scotland - 2021/22 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

³ [Online sexual abuse of primary children 1000% worse since lockdown \(iwf.org.uk\)](#)

⁴ [The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on child welfare: sexual abuse \(nspcc.org.uk\)](#)

⁵ CPAG Scotland

⁶ [Child poverty facts and figures | CPAG](#)

Our Approach

Our approach is rooted in the understanding that strong, safe, relationships are what prevent and protect children from harm and enable them to recover from trauma and abuse.



Our Goals to 2025

Children 1st will continue to align our strategic goals to our core purpose. Over the next two years we will continue to demonstrate the quality and impact of our direct support to children, young people, and their families. Through our campaigning work we will continue to fight for the fundamental changes which are required to respect, fulfil and protect the rights of every child in Scotland.

We will

1. Prevent abuse, neglect and trauma by offering practical, emotional and financial support to children, their families and communities to overcome the challenges that get in the way of strong, safe, relationships.
2. Ensure all children's rights are respected, protected and upheld in legislation, policy and practice.
3. Support children, their parents and carers to recover from the impact of childhood adversity and trauma.



How we will reach our goals

Prevention

- We will deliver integrated campaigns to increase the understanding and availability of the support that families need to keep their children safe and to address the systemic barriers that prevent families receiving the support they have a right to.
- In line with our commitment to anti-racist and inclusive practice we will improve our reach, support and impact with and alongside ethnically diverse communities.
- We will improve access to early help, and support to more families across all of Scotland's communities through our digital, Children 1st Parentline service.
- We will continue to develop our family support services and deepen our connections with local communities. Our colleagues will build strong and trusting relationships with families, so that together they can identify, and overcome the challenges families face in keeping their children safe, well, and together.
- We will further embed and expand our financial wellbeing work within our holistic family support teams to reduce the impact of poverty and along with our partners we will campaign to end child poverty.

Protection

- We will work with communities and partners across Scotland to raise awareness of the impact of abuse, trauma, neglect, poverty and discrimination to ensure the protection and safety of all children.
- We will improve and further develop the quality of our engagement and participation work so that our work is rights based and the voices of children and families are heard in all decisions that affect them. We will ensure those voices are leading our campaigns for change within care, protection and justice systems.
- We will establish Scotland's first Bairns Hoose for child victims and witnesses of violence based on the Barnahus model.
- We will continue our work to offer holistic, relationship-based support to families where children are at risk of harm, and champion and expand access to Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) and other restorative approaches.

Recovery

- We will develop accessible and effective support for children and their families to recover from the impact of trauma within our local family support services.
- We will continue to develop our knowledge, skills and practice to make sure our approach to trauma recovery is informed by the latest research evidence and the needs of the children we support.
- We will campaign to ensure that holistic trauma recovery is available and accessible to child victims and witnesses within Bairns Hoose from the moment they disclose hurt or harm.
- We will continue to innovate by testing and developing responses to trauma recovery that are relational and holistic, campaigning for investment and taking successful models to scale.

Making it Happen

- We will use our fundraising resources effectively to ensure we meet our organisational ambitions. We will strengthen existing support, engage new supporters and seek out new opportunities to grow our impact.
- We will develop our knowledge, skills, approaches and services based on listening to children, families and partners and evidence about what works to achieve and sustain long term change.
- We will recruit, train and develop staff and volunteers to help us achieve our goals and to be the best at what we do.
- We will maximise our partnerships with others to ensure we make an impact across the whole of Scotland, reaching as many children as possible.
- We will invest in, innovate and transform our systems, technology and infrastructure to better connect with children and families, deliver support and to report on the impact of our work.
- We will further develop as an inclusive, diverse and equality led organisation to ensure we reach more families who need our support.
- We will grow awareness of our brand, work and purpose to encourage more people in Scotland to join us in achieving our ambition to keep all children in Scotland safe, loved and well with their families.

The Way We Do Things

Relationships are at the heart of everything we do

We believe in the innate capacity, strength and resilience of the human spirit to respond to connection, and to overcome challenges and thrive through supportive and trusting relationships.

We are courageous

- Standing with children to protect their rights
- Challenging others to do the same
- Working inclusively to develop support with all communities
- Being real and doing the right thing

We are making things happen

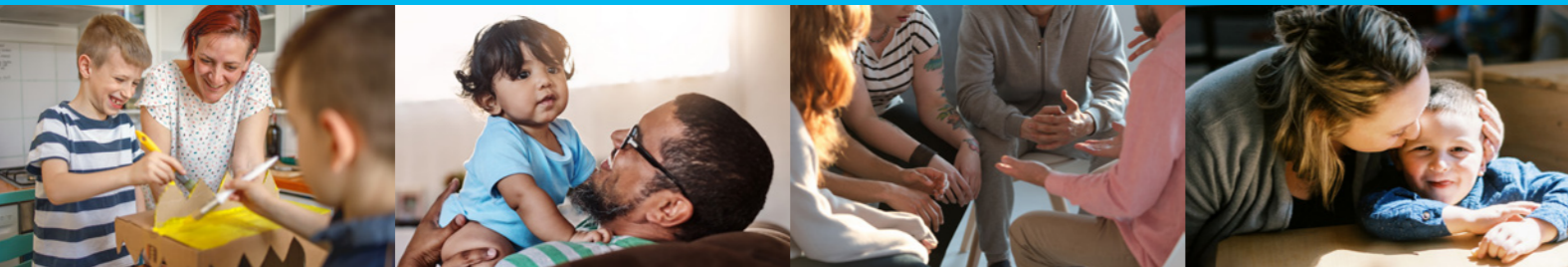
- Being clear, straightforward and practical
- Working in partnership with others
- Being agile and responsive

We are compassionate

- Connecting and empathising
- Listening so that we can understand
- Doing with, not to or for
- Respecting and treating people with dignity
- Believing in the capacity of people and communities to address their own challenges

We are leading

- Spreading our learning, skills and expertise
- Sharing, innovating and partnering
- Informed by the latest evidence
- Improving the quality of everything we do



If Not Us, Then Who?

Just as a group of like-minded Scots came together to protect and prevent children from harm in 1884, we need help from individuals, partners, communities, organisations and businesses to help Scotland's children today.

If you believe that every child in Scotland should stay safe, loved and well with their family then please join us to help make it happen.

There are so many ways that you can work with us to deliver these priorities and make a difference to children and families in Scotland.

Donate

When you donate to Children 1st you are helping children and families across Scotland. Whether you support an appeal, make a one off or regular donation, or leave a legacy, every pound you give helps to prevent and protect children from harm and supports children and families to recover from trauma and abuse.

Campaign

We can't protect children's rights to stay safe loved and well with their families on our own. Join our campaigns for change to make a difference to every child in Scotland.

Volunteer

As a volunteer with Children 1st you can make a difference to children and their families in your local community or across Scotland. Whether you support families as a peer mentor, befriender or driver, answer calls to Children 1st Parentline, help with events and collections or share your skills with our corporate, fundraising, communications or policy teams you will help transform children's lives.

Raise funds

Without our amazing supporters we cannot offer the support in local communities and across Scotland which helps families keep their children, safe, loved and well. Organising a fundraising drive or taking part in a challenge event is great fun and our fundraising team will support you every step of the way.

Partner with us

Working with organisations, companies and communities who share our ambition means that together we can bring about greater transformational change to the support, systems and structures that families need to keep their children safe.



Our commitment to show how we're making a difference to Scotland's children and families

Children 1st's making a difference framework guides the way that we measure and report on the impact of our work. It includes three elements:

- Working with children, young people and families to identify their own hopes and aspirations, relevant to working alongside Children 1st and to gather their stories in their own words about the difference their work with us has made in their lives;
- Gathering core data that allows us to identify the children and families we are working with, and which supports our understanding and ability to articulate their needs;
- Measuring our success in achieving seven Children 1st outcomes, which reflect our approach and charitable purpose and are rooted in the UNCRC and the Scottish Government Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) framework;

This enables Children 1st to report more clearly about how we're making a difference, what's working well and what else we, our partners, statutory services and policy-makers, need to do to realise the ambition that every child in Scotland grows up safe, loved and well with their family.



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