



# Barnardo's Falkirk Services



**COVID – 19**  
**Supporting families out of lockdown**

Working from home  
August 2020

Working with hope

In May the Scottish Government published their Covid-19 Route Map, setting out their five step plan for moving out of lockdown.

As we entered Phase 3 in July, although some restrictions were eased, many families faced new challenges, for example extended furlough, redundancies, returning to work, childcare and keeping children occupied during the school summer holidays, as well as the financial and emotional impact of preparing for schools re-opening in August.

Barnardo's Falkirk has reviewed and adapted the way we work throughout each phase to ensure that the needs of young people and families are met.

Scottish Government Guidance	How we have supported young people and families
<p><b>Lockdown</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential food shopping and travel only</li> <li>• Stay at home</li> <li>• Isolation / shielding</li> <li>• Schools, non-essential businesses closed / staff furloughed</li> <li>• Work at home where possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of food parcels, shopping deliveries, mobile phones, data, utilities support and other essential items to families</li> <li>• Delivery of wellbeing packs to all families and young people</li> <li>• Regular phone / video calls to support</li> <li>• Virtual FGDMs / Reviews</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical distancing – outdoor activities – within 5 miles of home</li> <li>• Meeting with 1 household outdoors permitted</li> <li>• Continue to work at home where possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above</li> <li>• Some garden / doorstep visits – socially distant contact</li> <li>• Walk &amp; talk sessions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with 2 households outdoors permitted</li> <li>• Those shielding can go out</li> <li>• Work at home where possible</li> <li>• Public services begin to resume</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above</li> <li>• PPE ordered in preparation for Phase 3</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face to face youth work can resume</li> <li>• Non-essential offices can reopen – working from home and flexibly to remain default where possible</li> <li>• Schools return</li> <li>• Face coverings in public places</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above</li> <li>• Socially distanced contact continues</li> <li>• Garden FGDMs begin to take place at Watling Lodge</li> <li>• Liaising with schools regarding return</li> <li>• Discussions with Health &amp; Safety regarding safe return to buildings, risks and measures required</li> <li>• Funding for utilities and other £ support</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 4 – NOT YET IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical distancing may still be required</li> <li>• Home and flexible working remains encouraged</li> <li>• All workplaces must have appropriate hygiene measures in place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice guidelines being developed</li> </ul>

This report provides an update to previous reports on the work being done by our Pathways, Axis, Barnardo's Looked After Substance Team (BLAST), Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) teams, as well as an exciting new pilot (delivered in partnership with Aberlour) Falkirk Families Information & Support Line (FFISL).

## Financial and practical support

On 17 August the third tranche of the **Scottish Government's Wellbeing Fund** was confirmed, with Barnardo's Scotland receiving £180k. Due to the late decision from the Government we have extended the cut off period for applications to the middle of October, rather than end September. This extension will enable workers to consider whether families are likely to need emergency payments to help them through the October half term week, when there won't be any school lunches for example.

### The focus for this funding is:

- Emergency payments: food, food vouchers, direct payments, utilities, return to school requirements
- Capital: communication devices, MHWB packs, (we are also including white goods, furniture in this category)

Acknowledging this final tranche of funding, we have carefully considered our exit strategy and remain committed to:

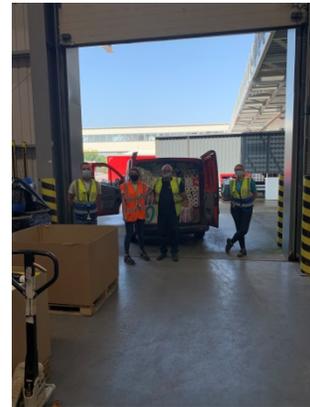
- maintaining clear communication with families so they know that the funding is going to be coming to an end
- implementing a triage system to make sure those most in need are prioritised for the funding that is still available
- exit planning with individuals and families to identify other community supports – both financial and non-financial
- undertaking and/or updating financial health checks with individuals and families to make sure they are accessing all that they are entitled to

From the first and second tranches of the funding, **over £32.5k** in cash payments, vouchers and purchase of food, fuel and equipment was distributed to young people and families across the council area. Many families have been unable to meet these costs themselves due to loss of earnings / furlough, changes or delays in benefits and increased food / fuel due to the family being at home more.

Service	£ - Phase 1	£ Phase 2	£ Total
FGDM	387.31	4540.61	4927.92
PEF	2766.70	1676.89	4443.59
Axis	1913.36	4022.92	5936.28
BLAST	907.67	118.99	1026.66
<b>Total £</b>	<b>5975.04</b>	<b>10,359.41</b>	<b>16,334.45</b>

## External donations

In August we received a huge donation from Amazon which included boxes of nappies, baby wipes, cleaning products, toilet rolls and lots of other boxes with a variety of household, clothing, school bags and toys. These are currently being distributed to families and young people across Falkirk.



*“Love the jackets they fit perfect, thank you”*

*“Love the curtains and the boys with love the rest”*



*“Huge thanks to Amazon for their overwhelming generosity! These items have been very welcome and much appreciated by our families.”*





We received a further donation of 25 play packs for some very lucky children up to the age of 8 years who will have many hours of fun with these items.



*“Thank you so much IKEA”*

*“Boys are loving the play dough thanks again”*



A number of items for our young people were donated by Bo'ness United football Club previously. A further donation was made recently, which included more footballs, football boots and astro trainers. Much appreciated by our budding young footballers.

## Pathways profile

In line with Scottish Government guidelines, all staff continue to work from home whilst we remain in Phase 3 of the pandemic. Referral numbers have risen steadily and Coordinators have been able to support families virtually to plan and participate in family meetings and reviews. Some socially distant meetings are now also taking place in the garden at Watling Lodge.



➔ **15 new referrals since 01/04/2020**



➔ **1 socially distant family meeting – plan completed**



➔ **3 plans developed without need for a family meeting**



➔ **12 virtual family meetings / 7 reviews – 12 plans completed**

Testament to the hard work and dedication of our Coordinators, we have received extremely positive feedback from families and referrers alike.

**Family A** – it was thought that the young person might need to be accommodated, rather than kinship care due to the death of his gran and his grandad not being in a position to meet his needs alone. The Coordinator was able to identify a number of other family members, including an aunt who was happy for him to go and live with her. Another family member from the other side of the globe also joined the meeting virtually!

Lifelong Links was identified within the Family Plan as a possibility to enable lifelong social connections to be identified and celebrated. It is hoped this will provide the young person with further extended family members to stay in touch with throughout his life.

*“All on board”*

*“Brilliant plan”*

*“Thank you for all your help”*

*“Thanks so much for organizing and the work you put in, it’s really nice to come together and know that he can stay within his family”*

*“Hi Nicola, I’m just looking for a wee update re the xxxxx family. I know there was an FGDM and also a review meeting. I think this process was really positive for the family and they asked me to check if there would be any further reviews or meetings?”*

*Thanks*

*Kim*

(Social Worker)

*“It was helpful as it gives us a look at what everyone wants but confusing as in how to move on with xxx and his plans but it did give us a lot to think about”.*

Two Coordinators, Viv McCurdy and Nicolla Stewart developed a video to be shared with families referred to the service to help



them to understand how the virtual process would work and help to alleviate their concerns. This was just one of the ways the team has been

able to reach out and make connections with families and young people during these difficult times.

Click here to view the video



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*“FGDM and Lifelong Links would have been completely lost if we hadn’t commissioned Barnardo’s as Falkirk Social Workers are just managing to provide a critical service during the crisis”*

Cathy Megarry, Social Work Team Manager, Falkirk Council

## School summary

Over the school summer holidays Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) staff continued to provide weekly virtual and socially distant support and activities to **over 70** young people and families. Workers have been able to develop really positive relationships with these families, the value of which is evidenced below.

**One worker** shared her first experience of a socially distanced meeting with a mum and young person. Having initially felt anxious, she reported that the session had gone well. Mum said she had really appreciated meeting and being able to talk face to face. The young person was delighted to see the worker and had a good chat about school. The worker left feeling a real sense of achievement.

**Young person A** refuses to attend school due to anxiety. Communication between the worker and young person is normally via email. Mum stated *“I don’t know what you have been doing but keep it up as she has spoken about getting back to school and getting qualifications!”*

The young person emailed the worker: *“Just wanted to email you to say thank you for everything you’ve done for us during COVID and beforehand, seeing what you’ve done for us has made me interested in the type of work that you do as I would like to follow in your footsteps, any chance you could send me some information on what it is you actually do and what I need to do at school etc to get there, thanks”*

The young person also wrote: *“Yes tomorrow would be fine thanks, hopefully I feel better and I’ll try work up the courage to video chat “*

Family A was provided with a wide range of practical supports, such as food hampers, nappies, tablet and wellbeing items in addition to supporting them to manage the behaviour of the child at home and family relationships. Mum later text the worker:

During a birthday video call with his worker, **Young Person B** was so excited he had received a handmade card. He said *“It was amazing and the best card I got”*



XXXX has settled bank into school well. She is in a P5/6 composite class this year so hoping she will still get pushed on. She is back at her football training and her gymnastics is due to start back on the 31st so she has taken a huge lift from that. At home she has been brilliant. Going to bed great, has stayed over at grandparents in recent weeks - all without any upset. We have given her a phone which seems to have helped (although she doesn't take it to school).

*“Overall we have seen a huge difference on her and she seems much happier and less anxious. Hopefully this will continue as the weeks progress and a more normal routine begins again.  
Your help has been greatly appreciated x”*

*“The weekly phone calls over the past twelve weeks have helped her vent her frustrations and talk through the issues from a different perspective and look at positive ways forward.”*

As schools returned on 11 August staff prepared for their return to school work bases. There were undoubtedly some concerns around the practicalities and safety of re-entering school buildings. Managers and Head Teachers were in regular contact prior to re-opening to discuss any issues and provide reassurances on measures that would be taken to maintain safety and social distancing.

## Axis overview

Referral numbers have increased steadily and much of the work continues virtually with young people and families. However workers have been carrying out socially distanced contacts with those who are particularly vulnerable, including visits to residential units and young people newly referred.



Young person A was referred to the service due to concerns around her cannabis use, which was reported to be taking place in the presence of her young child. Struggling to cope and experiencing very poor mental health, two workers visited the young person and found her home to be in a state of disarray with dirty clothes, dishes and rubbish throughout.

The workers spent time at the property helping the young person to clear the rubbish and clean the house. Bags of washing were taken to the launderette and later returned to her. It was also noted that the shower in the property was not working properly and she did not have a Hoover. She had no money to buy food or nappies.

The worker arranged an emergency appointment with Falkirk & District Association for Mental Health (FDAMH) and assisted her to attend the same afternoon. The purchase of a new Hoover and shower repair was arranged, along with a delivery of food, nappies and cleaning supplies.

*"Thank you so much, I have been asking for this for the last 3 weeks"*

During the lockdown her college placement was at risk as she had been unable to complete the work on her phone. She had also been suspended from bidding on new properties, despite having asked for help to enable her to reduce her matrix score. A laptop and dongle was purchased to enable her to complete her college work and the worker supported her to work towards having her suspension lifted to bid for alternative accommodation.

*“I feel like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders”*

She was unable to use her back garden to let her child play due to debris left by previous tenants. The worker arranged to have the garden cleared and sourced some outdoor play equipment to lessen her feelings of isolation as restrictions prevented visiting playparks.

## Falkirk Family Information Support Line (FFISL)

We have been working in partnership with Aberlour to provide the Falkirk Family Information & Support Line (FFISL). The pilot was commissioned by Falkirk Council to support vulnerable families and those struggling to cope with the impact of COVID-19 over the school holidays (29 June – 31 August, Monday – Friday 10am – 4pm). Discussions are currently underway to consider an extension to the project.

Offering a wide range of assistance, including emotional support, parenting advice, family life, relationships, finance, mental health and wellbeing, callers are listened to and given space to explore their feelings and consider options for a positive way forward. Signposting to other supports required is also offered, for example benefits advice, foodbanks and activities for children and young people.

20 families  
contacted

10 families  
remain  
engaged with the  
service



18 families receiving  
multiple calls

*“The helpline has been a huge relief”*

**Parent A** was feeling isolated due to shielding and poor health expressed her gratitude for the support she had received. She said: *“The service has helped me to feel less isolated and given me space and time to talk about my worries and how to help my children through the pandemic.”* One of the children had suffered from poor mental health and the lockdown had cut off many of the supports in place for her. Mum was concerned that she could not cope with this alone and having the helpline to explore her concerns and ways to support her daughter has increased her confidence as a parent and improved the relationship for both of them.

*“Sometimes it’s more helpful than you realise to talk to someone neutral and to vent your thoughts and feelings. I’ve come away from the conversations feeling motivated and not so alone. The weekly support is something I didn’t realise I needed and I’m now thinking about long-term support once the helpline stops”.*

*“Thank you for your support”*

*“I appreciate being able to talk to someone who is neutral”*

**Kinship carer A** talked about circumstances of trauma and multiple loss for the child in her care, extended family and self. She advised that she was struggling but “keeping going for the sake of the child”. The worker reminded her of the importance of self-care and the following week the carer advised she had taken some positive steps but “her head wasn’t quite there yet”. The worker arranged a special uplift with the council to clear items from the house and for Barnardo’s Gardner / Handyman to help tidy up the garden to enable the child to use the space for play and reduce pressure on his carer. Delighted with this she said *“Oh my god that’s amazing! I’m buzzing. I’m so excited about getting the garden cleared. Thank you so much for everything!”* She also said *“I’m so happy! I was thinking today, Linda has been amazing”.*

**Worker A** provided support to a great grandmother who is kinship carer for two of her grandchildren. She was worried about being able to afford new uniform items for the children due to payment delay for school clothing grants. The family received financial support and the young people were both feeling excited that they were able to purchase their new school items and felt better about returning to school. Gran was grateful for the support she had and stated *“I can’t thank Barnardos enough, you have been such a huge support over the past couple of months”.*

## Volunteer Support

Our Forth Valley Volunteer Service continues to support contact with young people and families during these difficult times.

At the time of reporting:

- 2 (of 5 available) volunteers are making regular contacts by telephone / video

- 3 volunteer helpers will be available to support the re-opening of our buildings when this has been approved
- 2 volunteers have provided articles for social media pages
- 1 has offered to develop personalised story videos for younger children.

## Challenges

Despite the country beginning to move out of lockdown, a number of challenges remain for our services. In addition to those mentioned in previous reports the following issues are ongoing:

**Training & development** – although unable to access formal training, all staff are encouraged to participate in online training opportunities, for example some staff members have completed Low Intensity Anxiety Management (LIAM) and Be Wild training.

**Access to buildings** – Watling Lodge remains closed for the foreseeable future, with staff only being permitted access to collect resources, such as printing that cannot be done at home.

## Going forward

Planning for phase 4 remains work in progress at present, with practice guidelines being developed to identify and mitigate risks in relation to building access, social distancing and how we work safely with young people and each other. This includes the use of PPE, appropriate hygiene equipment and technology to enable the continuation of home working in line with Government guidelines.

Despite the challenges it is reassuring that we are still providing very valuable services to our most vulnerable young people and families and we remain very much ‘open for business’.

If you would like to refer to any of our services, please email us securely at: [fv.barnardosaxisservicefalkirk@nhs.scot](mailto:fv.barnardosaxisservicefalkirk@nhs.scot) and a member of the appropriate team will contact you directly.