

**11/02/2019**

## **Open Letter to Fife Council Co-Leaders Cllr David Ross and Cllr David Alexander**

I am writing this letter to you both in an attempt to increase the understanding of our current situation and the actions we have taken in an attempt to overcome these difficulties.

As an organisation, everything we do is for the families we support and the families that will need our support in the future. We are driven to give them not only the help they need, but to also give them a voice in the community and beyond.

We are vocal about the work we do and the impact it has because we see it working on a daily basis, and know what would happen if the support was suddenly not there. If we didn't shout about it at every chance, how else would it be heard or noticed? Early intervention and preventative work can be taken for granted, as by its very nature the people who gain the most from it are never seen by a statutory service.

That isn't to say there is no place for third sector and statutory services to work in partnership, quite the opposite is true in fact. We have been working in partnership with Fife Council for years on many of our projects, all of which have been partially financed by external funders. Now that the external funding is ending, it feels to some degree that the partnership is ending too.

Fife Gingerbread has brought in millions of pounds to Fife to address the needs of families and fill gaps in provision. We have supported hundreds if not thousands of families in the past decade, no doubt saving Fife Council millions of pounds through the preventative work we specialise in.

There are councils in the UK who are reporting worrying spikes in the number of looked after children due to Universal Credit and ever increasing poverty, however Fife Council have reported looked after children numbers are lower than expected considering the poverty levels in Fife.

We are not claiming Fife Gingerbread can take 100% of the credit for this unexpected lower level, but we are saying that we are a key player here in Fife. In 2018 we supported 729 families, and currently have 348 live cases. Within these live cases are over 700 children, meaning we have over three times more children being directly impacted by Fife Gingerbread than is enrolled in an average Fife primary school.

If we are forced to reduce to a third of our capacity, that's the equivalent of two primary schools of children and parents going without the support we know they need. As I have mentioned everything we do is to benefit families, so as you can imagine the thought of having to exit these families from our service is devastating and is the reason we have been fighting tooth and nail to do everything we can to get the funding we need, and the families need.

Ideally we would not have had to resort to a public campaign, or had to seek numerous meetings with senior council officials, or had to seek support from every political party, or appeal to the Scottish Government to step in to save our families; but that is the nature of the third sector, it's always the last in the queue for funding, but first in line for cuts. We are the lifeboat for families when the ship hits the iceberg, and I can say without any doubt that a reduction of our service will have a devastating impact on our families, and beyond.



Rhona Cunningham  
CEO of Fife Gingerbread