

# Scottish Families

The latest news and updates from the team

## WINTER

February 2022  
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### Support families in 2022

Hear from a fundraiser and how you can take on a fundraising challenge in 2022 for us!

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### Recovery Bill

Hear how we responded to the proposed Right to Addiction Recovery (Scotland) Bill

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### Three Years of Routes

Routes, our young person's group kicked off January with the premiere of their film 'I Am Not Alone.'

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## One to One Support with Scottish Families

We offer one to one support to anyone in Scotland over the age of 16 who is affected by someone else's alcohol or drug use.

We will offer you time and space to explore the issues affecting you, let you express your thoughts and feelings, and help you to come up with ideas and solutions to move forward.

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# Winter

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To keep up to date with all of our latest news make sure to follow our social media channels:

Twitter [@ScotFamADrugs](https://twitter.com/ScotFamADrugs),  
Facebook [@ScottishFamiliesAffectedByDrugs](https://www.facebook.com/ScottishFamiliesAffectedByDrugs)  
Instagram [@scottishfamilies](https://www.instagram.com/scottishfamilies)



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Sign-up here: <http://eepurl.com/c9oCYb>



# Word from the CEO



Never one to enjoy sitting in front of a computer all day (my CEO skill set is rather characterised by a short attention span and a need for constant entertainment, as my team will confirm), it has been lovely to return to more face to face work encounters in recent times. We enjoyed our Glasgow Central bucket collection in the run up to Christmas. In this picture, I would say Tich and I do look a little over-excited at getting out of the office. This week I had a great visit to our friends at My Support Day at The South Lanarkshire Beacons – the building was positively jumping that morning with so much energy and connection, just fantastic. And looking ahead I have a mini-team visit to the Circle recovery hub in the diary, along with an in-person research event in Stirling and our upcoming 'This Fierce Love' tour.

I have also been receiving very welcome opportunities to present to other staff teams recently (albeit online), and I am now starting each one with a very clear message to THINK FAMILY in their work. We know with so much virtual support continuing, families are much less visible to other services. But even where they are physically visible, there is a sense that services just don't see families, not least because they are so focused on the individual and their substance use (or other) issues. We offer multiple support options as we absolutely believe one size doesn't fit all and families need options to suit their particular needs. But we know services can find it hard to

keep on top of a constantly changing support landscape in terms of who is delivering what, how and where. So all we need them to do is THINK FAMILY, THINK SCOTTISH FAMILIES, and contact us. We can do the rest in terms of engaging with families to discuss their situation, and linking them into the best support for them. This month we have been setting up our new 'My Family, My Rights' project, funded (thank you!) by the STV Appeal. This will involve working with family members to co-design and co-deliver a new Family Advocacy College, and from that to co-produce a new Family Advocacy Service. One of the key learning points from this project will be to identify what is getting in the way of good policy and strategy around families becoming good practice on the ground. We are so good in Scotland at writing down really strong and powerful commitments for families affected by substance use (and their loved ones), but reality on the ground just feels so different for families.

Very closely aligned to this new development at Scottish Families is a new national development whose title doesn't exactly trip off the tongue ('National Drugs Mission Lived and Living Experience National Collaborative', phew!). But this looks like a promising new opportunity for families to influence change by having their voices and experiences heard. Our Chair, Colin Hutcheon, and I have had the chance to discuss early thinking with the new independent Chair, Prof Alan Miller, and this was a great chance to share our views on what works well for families, compared to what they might experience as tokenistic, patronising or excluding. At Scottish Families, we see families as our starting point and always at the centre – we see everything through the family lens. If the Collaborative can get this right, it is a real opportunity. And we did warn that there might be some fireworks, as there is anger and frustration and exhaustion. But if we can harness that passion and energy we will be on to a winner.

# Say hello to our new volunteer, Megan



## Why did you choose to volunteer with Scottish Families?

I recently completed my MSc in Psychology but won't be working as I've just started maternity leave. I still want to gain relevant experience while I take time off and volunteering will help me achieve that. I specifically reached out to Scottish Families as the work they do is critical and very meaningful to me on a personal level as I grew up affected by drugs and alcohol and lost my dad to an overdose at a young age.

## What will you be working on with us?

I'll be volunteering for the communications team with a primary focus on writing blogs aimed towards young people and a long-term goal of carrying out a small research project.

## Even though you've only recently joined us as a volunteer, how have things been so far?

I've volunteered for a couple of charities in the past and Scottish Families is by far the most welcoming. Rebecca and Shana are very supportive and approachable!

## What does 'family' mean to you?

Always messy, stressful, and unpredictable but takes priority over anything or anyone. Family means a network of unconditional support that helps you all grow and change for the better.

## If there was one piece of advice you would give to a family member, what would that be and why?

Your 'story' doesn't define you and your identity doesn't have to be tied up with the pain you've been through if you don't want it to be.





# Support families in 2022 by taking on a fundraising challenge



In February's podcast episode of 'Life with Alcohol and Drugs', our Fundraising Manager Sarah met with Christina who ran the Women's 10K in 2021 and completed the Glasgow Kiltwalk with her sister and partner, raised over £1000 for Scottish Families!

Christina shared a few words of wisdom for anyone who is looking to take on a fundraising challenge in 2022 to support us!

'...just challenge yourself because at the end of the day, it's only you that's undertaking it. You'll always know that you've done it, and it's such a healthy way to express either grief, or if you're having troubles with, say, someone who you know who suffers from addiction, you can know that you are actively doing something that will maybe trickle down to them and help them.'

If Christina has motivated you to take on a fundraising challenge for us, there's plenty coming up that you can get involved in. Events in 2022:

- [Supernova Run \(18th – 20th March 2022\)](#)
- [Kiltwalk 2022 \(various dates and locations\)](#)
- [Edinburgh Marathon Festival \(28th – 29th May 2022\)](#)
- [Loch Ness Marathon \(2nd October 2022\)](#)

**All of these events are ready to book now** – just fill in our form below and our Community Fundraiser Clare will be in touch with full details on how to get involved and fundraise.

## [Register your interest in an event](#)

If you have another event in mind, get in touch with Clare as we'd love to hear about it!

We believe #ChangeWillCome but we can only carry out our work thanks to trusts, grants, and donations like yours.

Signing up to take part in an event and fundraise is a brilliant way to support our work. All our participants get a t-shirt, sponsor forms, and our help to get you to your fundraising goal.

How do your donations support families affected by alcohol and drugs?

- £18 could pay for a session of one to one support, giving families a place to speak and be heard
- £40 could pay for an hour of bereavement counselling, supporting anyone who has lost a loved one through alcohol or drugs

# Life with Alcohol and Drugs Podcast Round-Up



As our podcast nears over 1,000 downloads, we wanted to add this little section to our newsletter to round up our last three episodes.

We're still giddy over the responses we've had to our podcast, with people enjoying each episode and wanting to get involved. Our podcast features guest speakers and topics concerning life with alcohol and drugs and offers support and advice to anyone who needs it.

If you're up for getting involved in an episode or have an idea of a topic we should cover, email Rebecca at [rebecca@sfad.org.uk](mailto:rebecca@sfad.org.uk).

## Episode 9: Fundraising Challenges with Christina

In this episode our Fundraising Manager Sarah is chatting to Christina, who took on a fundraising in 2021 for us. Christina combined two events together – the Glasgow Kiltwalk and the Women's 10K. She did both events with her sister and her partner.

Christina's mother sadly passed away in June 2021 from the lifelong effects of alcohol. They found us because they were

seeking bereavement counselling.

'And our mum, she was a social care worker. She worked through Covid. She was a grandmother, a mother, friend; she was all that to everybody else, but she had this problem.'

Christina and her team managed to raise an incredible £1,100 for us and we couldn't be more delighted from their efforts.

And if that wasn't incredible enough, Christina will be taking on another fundraising challenge for us this year and this time her niece Charlotte is getting involved.

'...she was six so she was too young to do the race, and the Kiltwalk that we did was too long for her. So she's taken it upon herself, she wants to do the Kiltwalk this year in Dundee.

'...she calls Scottish Families 'Nana's Charity', that's what she calls it. That's how impactful your charity has been on us as a family.'

[You can listen to the full episode here.](#)

## Episode 8: Support over Christmas

Even though Christmas now feels like it was

many months ago, there's still something so strong about the information Lynne from our team shared on this podcast that can be used in everyday life.

We know that Christmas can be a really difficult time, especially when alcohol and drugs are in your life and there might be quite a lot of pressure to have that traditional Christmas, but you know deep down that's not going to happen, or your loved one is possibly drinking or using drugs over the Christmas period and it's just a very hard time for many families.

'I think one of the top bits of advice is to make plans; plan ahead. Family members will talk a lot about how they're waiting to see what happens. They'll wait for this or that appointment or whatever, with regards to their loved one, but what we would encourage them to do is to make plans that suit you as a family member, not wait to see what your loved one is or isn't doing.'

[You can listen to the full episode here.](#)

## Episode 7: Alcohol and Relationships

In this episode, we were joined with Daryl

and Colin from our team who focused on the theme of Alcohol Awareness Week 2021 of 'Alcohol and Relationships.'

Daryl and Colin asked some family members they were supporting to share some quotes and insights into alcohol and relationships and what was shared was incredibly powerful.

"My husband is a functioning alcoholic, he holds down his job and can keep up appearances outwith family life. Although not physically abusive, he has been extremely emotionally and mentally abusive, this made me withdraw from life in general as I started to believe it was because of me he was like this, everything was my fault, I was to blame for the way everything is. I was so selfish..."

A really powerful episode, with real family stories and Colin and Daryl are excellent at providing advice and information on if you find yourself in a similar situation.

[You can listen to the full episode here.](#)





# Young People Affected by Drugs and Alcohol: How to Manage Negative Emotions



- By our volunteer, Megan

Being a young person affected by a family member's drug or alcohol use can give a completely different set of challenges to those experienced by older adults. Much of the advice we hear for those worried about a loved one's drinking or drug use isn't necessarily helpful if you're young and struggling. Often, one of the first pieces of advice given to someone when they are distressed is to 'talk to someone'. However, if it's a parent's behaviour you are concerned with, you're bound to feel nervous about speaking out due to fear of the possible consequences within your family unit.

A parent's alcohol or drug use may be causing you negative emotions, but the fear that you may lose a parent if you tell the 'wrong' person or service maybe even more worrying. You are likely used to living with these secrets and hiding your home life away from outsiders. You may have a lack of trust in older adults in general when you've experienced unreliable and unpredictable behaviour from caregivers at a young age. This is more than understandable.

Next are some ideas on how to manage the different negative emotions you may be feeling in a way that doesn't cause you further anxiety.

## Who do you trust?

As mentioned, asking for help can be hard because of a lack of trust and fear of repercussions. Try to identify a friend, family member or older adult you feel you can confide in. This may be easier said than done but it is important to know that you aren't alone.

The Scottish Government estimates around 40,000-60,000 children and young adults are negatively affected by parents who use drugs or alcohol at any given time. This number is likely to be larger when we start to consider other family members or friends we may be worried about. This massive number means that many people have experienced the concerns you are currently living with and while it won't solve all your problems, finding the right person to talk to can help you begin to feel less isolated from society.

If you feel you don't have a friend or a family member that you fully trust, remember there are services you can reach out to that are required to keep your information confidential. Try browsing the service directory on our website for links to organisations nearby, reach out to us directly, or try one of the apps or websites listed at the end of this piece.

## Acknowledge Your Feelings

When there is a problem with drug or alcohol use in your family unit, this is rarely the only problem you'll be living with. You may also have to deal with housing problems, poverty, conflict between parents or other adults, or even bereavement. This could cause feelings of shame, anger, anxiety, fear, depression, and hopelessness.

Before you can figure out ways to manage these emotions, you need to recognise and acknowledge that they are there. When we acknowledge our feelings, we are more likely to know how to deal with them and they have less power over us. We can choose to react destructively to our emotions, or we can learn to understand and control them.

Emotions won't last forever and observing them rather than being consumed by them will help lessen their intensity. During a particularly difficult time, it is undoubtedly hard to follow this advice instead of getting swept up in the moment; but the most important thing is to get into the habit of not stuffing your emotions away.

## Unfollow

Social media can be an insensitive place at the best of times. Drinking alcohol is often seen as an important part of Scottish culture so there is no shortage of content that revolves around drug and alcohol use. Sometimes this content is just met with laughter but other times we see stigmatising language as a response from strangers. This can be hurtful when you are dealing with a loved one who is experiencing the issues that are being ridiculed.

If you keep coming across content that upsets you or you are finding yourself getting angry at strangers' replies, don't be afraid to unfollow, unfriend or block the offending pages. There is no point in using up energy in this way. Even without the problems you are facing, social media can make some people feel anxious and inferior, so it's helpful to identify what pages make you feel this way so

that your negative emotions aren't heightened.

## Immerse Yourself in a Positive Environment

It's easy to read a useful blog or talk to a friend and forget that advice when difficult times creep up because emotions can become overwhelming. It's harder to ignore good advice when you're regularly engaged with a support group of peers through services where you can keep up good habits and know you're surrounded by people that understand and empathise with your situation.

Practising mindfulness through meditation or breathing exercises is also a proven way to stop your brain from racing out of control when you feel anxiety setting in. If that doesn't sound like something you're interested in, simply listening to music, exercising, or expressing your emotions through arts and crafts goes a long way in transforming negative feelings into positive actions.

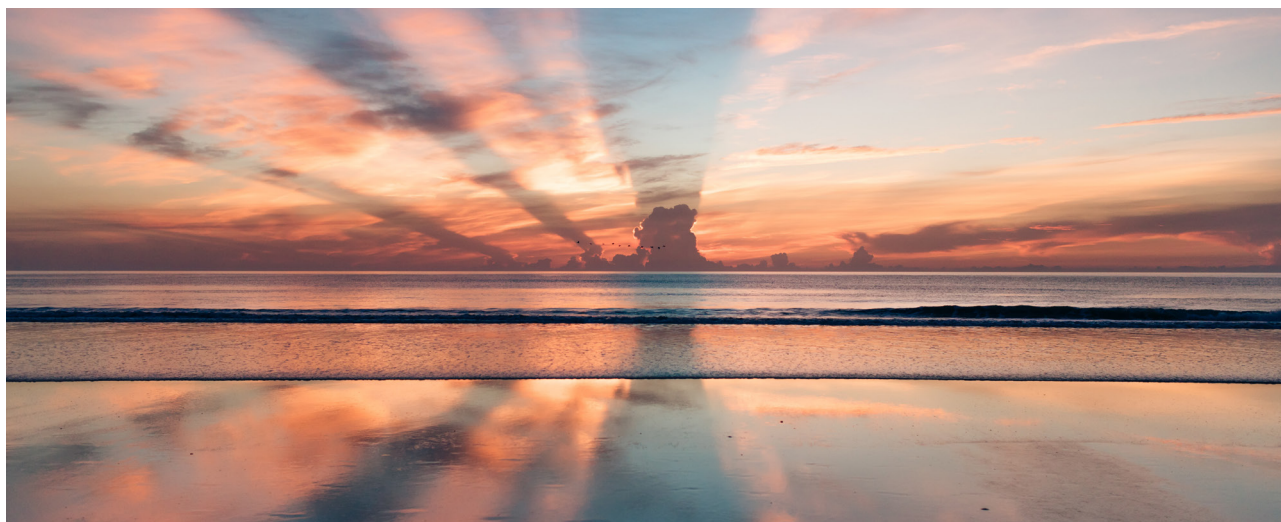
## More Than a Statistic

You might have experienced different services, teachers or other adults treat you like you are also a problem. Some people might expect you to be difficult because of your problems at home or they are waiting for you to take up the same behaviours as the adults in your life that use drugs and alcohol. Whilst you might engage in some less than perfect behaviour (nobody is perfect); it's important to remember that children and young people who experience adversity in their early life are among some of the most resilient in society in their older years. Don't let anyone pigeonhole you or write you off and try not to give them reasons to. You are more than your home life!

## Useful tools

- [Calm – Meditation \(available on Android and IOS\)](#)
- [Mindshift – CBT based anxiety tools \(available on Android and IOS\)](#)
- [Healthy Young Minds – Self-help resources](#)

# One to One Support with Scottish Families



We offer one to one support to anyone in Scotland over the age of 16 who is affected by someone else's alcohol or drug use.

We will offer you time and space to explore the issues affecting you, let you express your thoughts and feelings, and help you to come up with ideas and solutions to move forward. Each support session lasts around one hour and the frequency can be arranged to suit your needs. Most of our sessions are online and by phone, but if you would prefer support in other ways we can arrange this.

You will be supported by a practitioner from our Telehealth or Holding On team that includes Gill Harmon, Sarah O'Hare, Alison Fleming, and Nicole Darroch. You can find out more about our team below.

## How can I get in touch?

If you feel one to one support is for you, you can get in touch through our National Helpline where you will speak to one of our advisors. They can chat with you about what's going on and can tell you more about our one to one support. If you feel one to one support is for you, the advisor will refer you to our family support team.

**Call: 08080 10 10 11**

**Email: [helpline@sfad.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sfad.org.uk)**

**[Chat on the live help on our website](#)**

## What happens next?

Once our helpline advisor has referred you, a member of our family support team will contact you to find out how we can best support you.

In the first session, they will ask for some information about your situation and talk through the different ways they can offer support.

Our one to one support is normally weekly sessions, although this depends on your situation. You can decide how often you'd like us to be in touch. We also have evening appointments available if you prefer.

We focus on the CRAFT (Community Reinforcement and Family Training) approach to family support. Our trained practitioners will explain and go through different topics each week such as boundaries, communication skills and self-care. If you feel CRAFT is not for you, we can look at other ways of supporting you.



## Meet the Team

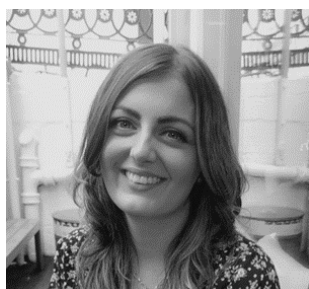
### Gill Harmon - Acting Senior Virtual Family Support Practitioner



Gill has been with Scottish Families since November 2018. Gill works on our Telehealth service delivering CRAFT to family members. She also works on our bereavement service setting up counselling sessions for family members. Gill has seven years of experience working in an alcohol and drug treatment service in a Local Authority. Before this Gill worked with young people experiencing homelessness, trauma and addiction.

Gill's experience to date forms her passion for working with family members. Gill has always felt that families should have the right to their own support. As well as often being an integral part in their loved one's recovery families have to be recognised in their own right.

### Nicole Darroch - Virtual Family Support Practitioner



Nicole joined Scottish Families in November 2020. She has worked with children and families for 10 years in different sectors such as residential care, children's rights and advocacy, as well as variants of other third sector projects.

Nicole qualified as a Social Worker in 2014. Relationship-based practice is always at the heart of what she does and she always aims to work for an organisation that places relationships at the centre.

### Alison Flemming - Virtual Family Support Practitioner

Alison joined Scottish Families in April 2021



as a Virtual Family Support Practitioner delivering Telehealth and our Holding On project. She has five years' experience in delivering CRAFT (Community Reinforcement and Family Training).

Prior to working for Scottish Families, she established family support in South Ayrshire. She has also worked as a Project Worker for people in addiction. Alison is passionate about families and getting them support in their own right.

### Sarah O'Hare - Virtual Family Support Practitioner



Sarah joined the team in July 2021 as a Virtual Family Support Practitioner, delivering both Telehealth and Holding On. Children and young people were at the heart of her previous experience, as well as working in the voluntary sector. Sarah was a volunteer counsellor at Childline for 5 years and has supported families in a hospice setting, and school/community settings. In a previous role, she delivered an evidence-based family therapy model to young people and their families to reduce the risk of relationship breakdown and accommodation. She is passionate about improving family relationships and empowering families.

# Proposed Right to Addiction Recovery (Scotland) Bill: How We Responded

– A series of blogs about families and substance use by our Policy and Research Assistant, Rebecca McColl.

The Right to Recovery Bill was launched for consultation by Douglas Ross, MSP for Highlands and Islands (Region) in October 2021. Scottish Families responded to the consultation in January 2022 after discussions with our team and our Family Reference Group (which includes family members impacted by someone else's substance use).

The reasoning behind the proposed Bill is to “enable people addicted to drugs and/or alcohol to access the necessary addiction treatment they require” by enshrining the right to access “necessary addiction treatment” in Scots law (Right to Recovery Bill, 2021). The Bill proposed a statutory right to a range of treatment options, such as short and long-term residential rehabilitation, community-based rehabilitation and medical assisted treatment. Furthermore, the Bill seeks to prevent individuals from being refused treatment from alcohol and drug services for reasons such as medical or criminal history, and allow for individuals to choose a preferred treatment option “unless it is deemed harmful by a medical professional” (Right to Recovery Bill, 2021). Having carefully considered the Bill, Scottish Families welcomes any discussion to improve treatment, support and recovery in Scotland, however, we shared concerns regarding if the legislation would achieve real change on the ground, and noted there was a stark absence of any mention of rights for families.

## How We Responded

We know that individuals and families constantly face barriers and challenges when trying to access services and support, and there are persistent issues around the quality of treatment when accessed. We believe the sentiment and intentions of the Bill align with the experiences of families and individuals across Scotland, however, the decision to propose a legislative right brings a number of concerns.

Firstly, there is a range of policy changes happening in Scotland right now, such as the likely implementation of a National Care Service and developments to Human Rights Legislation. Both have the potential to completely change the landscape in Scotland, and changes to Human Rights Legislation could secure stronger rights regarding access to alcohol and drug treatment than what is currently being proposed by the Right to Recovery Bill.

The language used within the document (such as ‘addiction’ and ‘drug user’) can be stigmatising and may exclude people who may not identify with such terms. We would suggest using ‘people first’ language in order to be respectful and inclusive, which is especially important when proposing change.

It is deeply disappointing that rights for families were completely omitted from the Bill, aside from a brief mention in the foreword. As stated in the national alcohol and drug strategy ‘Rights, Respect and Recovery’

(2018), family members were given the same rights as individuals using alcohol and drugs. Furthermore, the Scottish Government published a new framework, in December 2021, further solidifying the commitment to whole family approaches and family inclusive practice. It must be said that the absence of families in the Right to Recovery Bill ignores this commitment and that families have the right to support in their own right, regardless of the treatment or other status of their loved one. If the Bill is to progress, there is significant room for improvement and a need for clarity throughout, particularly regarding what the Bill could mean for families.

### What Would Legislation Mean?

Families tell us constantly that they are often excluded from their loved one's care and nor are they updated. We understand restrictions around GDPR, however, it is of concern that legislation would only add another barrier for families. We know there are already multiple issues experienced by families whose loved ones also have mental health issues. Change has been needed here for a significantly long time, and it is of concern that adding legal processes to an already complicated situation for families may make matters more difficult. It is unclear what sort of right the Bill is proposing, how that would be achieved, or what type of action it would allow for. It is difficult to comment on what this would mean for individuals and families when much of what the Bill is proposing is uncertain. The Bill also suggests individuals should be able to choose a preferred treatment option unless deemed harmful by a medical professional. It is unclear what circumstances would give a medical professional the right to deny a treatment option, and the final decision would still be beyond the individual seeking treatment. This proposal would therefore allow for little to no change, and could potentially damage therapeutic relationships by creating a power imbalance. There is no mention of families, causing questions surrounding family involvement in this process and what support families should have in their own right.

refused treatment when seeking help, no matter their circumstances. We have the right to healthcare, but there is an existing accountability gap. The Bill is specifically proposing the right to a service, as opposed to the right to a desired outcome (for example, highest attainable health). An approach based upon human rights would focus on the quality of services and ensure outcomes were being met. We need a commitment from the Scottish Government and all political parties that the Human Rights Bill, which states that the 'right to health' includes those who need access to alcohol and drug services, is adhered to. Although we understand the sentiment behind the Bill, we believe other avenues, such as human rights, would create a more robust pathway to long-lasting cultural change.

### What Happens Next?

The Bill is the first step in introducing a Member's Bill in the Scottish Parliament. The consultation period ended on 12 January 2022, and responses will be analysed prior to a final proposal which will be submitted to the Scottish Parliament by Douglas Ross MSP. The proposal must achieve the support of at least 18 MSPs from at least half of the political parties or groups represented in Parliament. If the Scottish Government does not intend to legislate the Bill, Douglas Ross MSP will then have the right to introduce a Member's Bill. A Member's Bill must then pass three stages where it may be amended or rejected. If passed at the end of the process, it becomes an Act. This can be quite a lengthy process, meaning it takes a couple of months to find out the outcome of the proposed Bill. At the time of writing, Scottish Families submitted our full response to the Bill on 12 January 2022 and are awaiting the publication of the final proposal.

We agree that no one in Scotland should be



# Three Years of Routes: ‘I Am Not Alone’ Short Film



“Without Routes I’d be lost.”

Routes, our young person’s group for East and West Dunbartonshire, kicked off January with the premiere of their film and documentary, ‘I Am Not Alone.’ The film was directed and shot by the young people themselves and produced and edited by our friends over at Braw Talent Film Production.

As of April this year, Routes will be three years old. This brings an end to the three-year national demonstration period Routes was originally funded for, and the perfect time to share the impact the group has had since 2019. The film was designed to show visually how meaningful Routes has been to the young people, full of emotion and laughs too. I heard it was also fun to make!

The film premiere was a huge success to a good crowd in Kirkintilloch, with another planned to take place in West Dunbartonshire. The film was followed by a question and answer session with the young people and the filmmakers at Braw Talent.

The film itself was packed of memories and anecdotes of the young people’s experience at Routes, along with interviews with the Routes team and partners involved with the project. From start to finish, the film

was filled with honesty and heart, and highlighted the importance of friendship and just having somebody who understands. I think that’s all I can say without adding too many spoilers!

The event was attended by Routes supporters, such as social workers, teachers, and local police, some of whom featured in the film themselves:

“Well done to Routes and you Claire. I’m very proud to be in the film and mean what I said. Hopefully Routes will grow from this and your efforts to support young people whose lives are affected by addictions.” – Well-being Teacher, Boclair Academy.

The premiere was the first time the young people themselves got to see the film in its entirety. Seeing the film for the first time brought both laughs and tears from where all the young people were sitting (and the rest of the audience!). It was clear to see how much the film meant to all involved.

“I was so nervous but the words and the things used in the film were so nice, it really touched me and meant something. Like I don’t know how to explain it, but I loved watching it.” – Routes Young Person.

After the film was shown, the young people answered a few questions from the audience about Routes and their experience making the film. The young people were candid about how important Routes is to them. The young people that spoke displayed clear emotion when talking about how much Routes and the friendships they've made mean to them. It was easy to see that Routes has provided an outlet for the young people to have fun, get support when needed and meet others who understand. When asked what their favourite activity has been so far, skiing won unanimously!

*"I was so scared to talk in front of all those people but they all looked so interested in what we had to say that I couldn't stop when I started talking! I'm so proud of myself, I never would have thought I could do that..."* – Routes Young Person.

The young people discussed how Routes helped them increase their confidence and self-esteem. As shown in the quote above,

some of the young people would never have imagined having the ability to speak in front of a crowd before. They spoke of now being able to envisage a positive future of their own, which they said they also hadn't thought about, or had thought of negatively, before coming to Routes.

*"The short film was really good, and it looked like you all had a fab time making it. The work you [Claire], Pam and Callum do really is amazing, and it's evident to see the positive impact it has on all of the young people and their families. Well done guys."* – East Dunbartonshire Social Worker.

Before the event closed, the audience asked to see the film again. The audience reaction was a testament to how powerful the film is, and how important Routes is to young people in East and West Dunbartonshire. A massive congratulations to all involved!

By Rebecca McColl, Policy and Research Assistant



# Writing Group Short Stories and Poems



In our East Dunbartonshire Family Support Service, our worker Colin has been running a writing group over many months now and we're bringing you some of the poems and short stories that have been written so far! Thank you to all the family members who shared their writing here.

Our first poem is from Mary and is all about her dog Chico who joins in on all the virtual support activities the group has been doing the last few years.

## My Wee Poem

I love wee Chico he is my life  
He gives me comfort when there is strife  
I will never be lonely, he is my one and only

Mary has also written a short story on how did I find family support?

## How did I find family support?

I found family support with Scottish Families when I was going through one of my many bad spells with a husband and son who were alcohol dependent. All I seemed to do was try to get help for them. I contacted every agency who I thought would give me the answer on how to get them better. After what seems like a lifetime of worry,

seeing them trying to live with this problem, I nursed them through withdrawal when they tried to stop, I was always praying that this was the end and they would get better. Both had spells in rehab, my son was first to go into the priory and I thought (this is it). I went to the family group there and loved to talk because things were good for him there. He came home full of hope and his dad was really bad, we took him to the priory and things were good for a while.

One word that I hated was (relapse). I thought that it would kill me if that happened, after years of repeated relapse I'm still alive but at times in total despair. My personality and social circle have been my saviour, I could put on a happy face and get on with life but inside my heart was breaking.

One of my many calls to the addiction team, pleading for help for my son led them to get me in touch with Colin from Scottish Families, I instantly made a connection with him, he understood what I was going through. Ok he wasn't going to cure my son, but I knew that the help was there for me. I started to go to the group meetings and felt really comfortable with everyone, I could say how I felt and talk about how things were for me without being judged, it was my place to feel sad or angry.





COVID came and the meetings stopped but we continued to do stuff on zoom, mindfulness, Pilates, yoga, we did MOOC courses which I was given a certificate for. Colin was always there if I needed a rant!

Sadly, I lost my husband in 2020 after heart surgery. I don't think I have really had time to mourn because my son continues to be my constant worry. He has continued to have spells of addiction including drugs, which has cost me thousands of pounds trying as usual to keep him safe. He has had more rehab, which would work for a short time, and then it would be back to his behaviour only worse each time.

Through it all Scottish Families have been there for me, it has given me a reason to get up in the morning (other than my wee dog) Colin has things on zoom most mornings and this is my time, it's great to be able to be myself with everyone in the group. Life goes on through good and bad and I know that Colin and Scottish Families will be there for me and that gives me comfort and hope.

Next we have a short story from Karen who has been a member of the writing group for a long time. Her short story focusing on the question of what were you looking for in family support?

### What were you looking for in family support?

When I first contacted SFAD I really didn't know what I was looking for. All I knew was

that I was screaming, "help!" I wanted help for my son. He had just moved to a rented flat in Edinburgh after selling his family home forty miles away in the country. It had been an emotional disaster for him and he had cracked up. The move had been so that he could be close to his work, but he was in no fit state to work. He needed help urgently.

I was looking for an address in north-west Edinburgh and found SFAD on that website, so I sent an email there and then. I was impressed when I got an email asking for my phone number, and a lady called Suzie said she would call me. She did indeed call me on the Sunday afternoon two days later, and spent over an hour talking to me. It was Suzie who told me that if I was worried that my son was suicidal I should ask him! That was the kind of help I needed, and the next amazing thing was that within a week I was put in touch with Colin, the facilitator for East Dunbartonshire. I started going to his group meetings every week from then on.

I think I assumed that SFAD was there to help me to get help for my son. At that point I simply had no idea how badly his addiction was affecting me, mentally, emotionally and physically. I was surprised when I realised that the focus of the meetings was me, and it took quite a while before I realised that it's all about keeping ME strong. They also taught me how to help my son. They run a course called CRAFT – Community Reinforcement and Family Training, and one called Family Recovery College.

In the last two and a half years, I have gained a much deeper understanding of the nature of addiction, to both alcohol and drugs. It's very helpful that some of the staff at SFAD have the lived experience too. Their descriptions of their own behaviour and feelings have helped me to understand my son's lifestyle so much better.

Colin's description of the chaos of his lifestyle before his recovery lets me see that our son's behaviour just now is not unusual for someone suffering from alcohol/drug addiction. I have come to understand that alcohol has affected our son's brain, and his emotions, so that he can think no further than keeping the dreadful withdrawal symptoms at bay. We take great hope and comfort from the fact that Colin was just as ill and yet has turned the corner and has been sober for ten years.

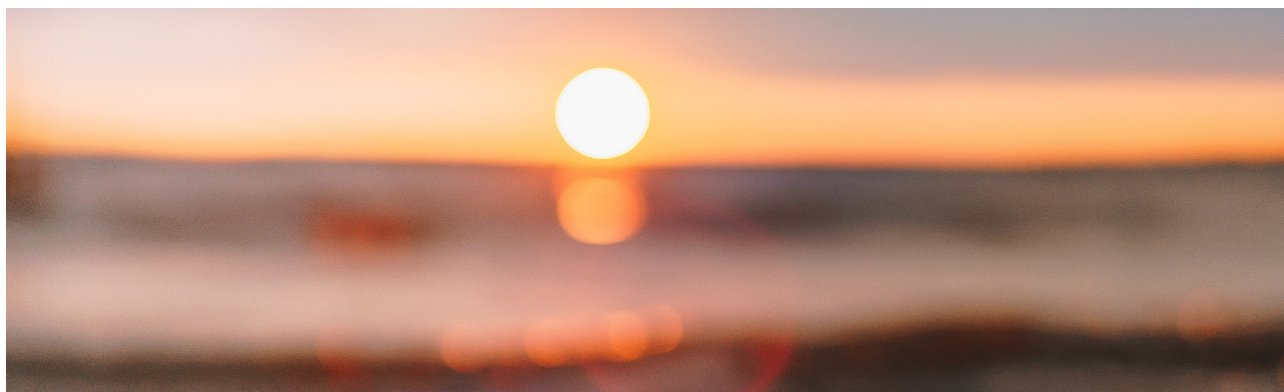
It is all too easy to get sucked into your loved one's chaos with them. You find yourself so preoccupied with worrying about him and how you're going to get him to eat anything at all, and what might he want to eat, and is he still all right (you haven't been upstairs to check on him for three hours,) that you forget to take your own medication and you find yourself eating randomly at odd hours. Colin's job is to try and keep me on track, to keep me motivated to live as normal a life as possible and not to succumb to the depression that threatens to engulf me when I waken every morning.

The groups which SFAD run provide the family with the space to share our experiences and our fears with the facilitator and with each other. It's strangely helpful to

know that other people have similar problems, sometimes worse than our own, and it helps to keep things in perspective. A problem shared is a problem halved.

In our instance, our problems have escalated because of Covid and Lockdown, but throughout it all, SFAD has run Zoom meetings and we have been able to study mindfulness, be part of a writers' group, do some workouts with a fitness instructor and actually make friends with people in other parts of the country. The writers' group even published a little book to inspire hope. All this has been invaluable at a time when mental health has been severely challenged, both by those suffering from alcohol or drug use and by their loved ones. We are, of course, looking forward to when we can resume face to face meetings and do other activities .... Christmas Dinner on the day after Valentine's Day, outings to interesting places, and tai-chi classes.

I was originally looking for help for my son, and I suppose I was a bit disappointed, to be honest, that SFAD didn't have the answers to his problems. That however was my naïve understanding of addiction. Now I am two-and-a-half years wiser and better able to help anyone else with this dreadful affliction, and I could never have imagined how much there was to understand. I find myself shouting SFAD's praises from the rooftops and I tell everyone I meet how helpful SFAD has been. I tell them to be sure and tell anyone else who may be going through the distress of a loved one with an addiction problem that Scottish Families is there for them, just as they are there for me all the time.



Helen from the group has also written these two poems and would like to share them with you.

### To me...from me...

It's the night before...

He is all packed up n ready to go...  
She's falling behind and felling so low.

He's smiling that soon he's free, to breathe  
fresh air...  
She's closing herself in, wondering who will  
care.

He's already planning his weekend,  
She's wondering if this will ever end...

The fear,  
The anxiety,  
The pain that she finally starts to feel...

After all these years,  
All the lies,  
All the drama  
This shit, again? feels so real.

He's about to live his life,  
Free as a bird,  
With no consequence,  
No regret,  
No reality of the real world.

She's about to lose the grip,  
Of the life she built,  
The confidence..  
Because she's not strong enough.....

So many words are said,  
So many promises made,  
But she knows her journey.  
Her path,  
Her destination...

He's her hurdle..

She needs to grab her courage,  
Stay strong,  
Jump high....  
Live her life without him.  
Stay strong.

### Second poem

I gave 100%, he gave 20,  
Is it enough?? it shud be plenty.  
I really can't give no more..  
It hurts, it's bloody sore!

So I need to give 110..  
Things will be so much better then,  
Then I'm not to blame,  
All will be good,  
All will be quiet,  
We can have a good life,  
It's gonna be 10 outta 10.

But it's never enough, it's never right,  
The beast within is plain in sight,  
It comes from within,  
Fuelled by drink,  
Relationships and love...  
Pulled to the brink..  
It's painful, it hurts..  
Who turned off the light??

His darkness is mine..  
Why can't he see the light



# Family Recovery College 2021 Graduation



**“When the well is dry, we know the worth of water.” Benjamin Franklin**

By Susie McClue, Senior Connecting Families Development Officer

Coming together in person these days can feel quite special after such a prolonged time of distancing ourselves. Our Family Recovery College graduation celebration was a particularly special first in person event for our team. Over the course of 12 weeks in the Autumn/Winter of 2021, we hosted 24 students online to take our course: Understanding Substance Use and Holding on to Hope. Having never met before, our course celebration event seemed like the perfect opportunity. Thanks to Milk Café Catering, we enjoyed lunch together, and when the food is good the conversation is good! After lunch we shared a few moments celebrating students' participation in the college with certificates and graduation gifts. And we finished with cake. There is always cake!

I shared the Franklin quote with the students on Saturday. I had read it recently and it made me think about so many of the journeys and stories we have had the privilege of listening to as part of the Family Recovery College. The reason we gathered to celebrate the course was because we all knew 'the worth of the water'.

As part of our planning, some of the students got together with us to share their ideas, and one of these was to make sure that part of the event helped us capture student experiences and reflections so that we can continue to see more families take part in the college. So I will finish with a few of their thoughts. Thank you so much to everyone who took part in our college and a special thank you to all of the friends of the Family Recovery College who came to share their expertise, experience and present to students throughout the course.

Describe taking part in the FRC:

**“The course helped me to gain a perspective of how I am affected by my child's addiction and what I could do about it.”**

What would you say to someone considering taking part in the FRC?:

**“Gave me confidence to seek help from other agencies – I now know our rights!”**

Share a message of encouragement for others affected by someone else's alcohol or drug use:

**“You are not alone even if it feels like it. Seek out others. Talk. Stay strong.”**

# Mindfulness with Scottish Families



By Susie McClue, Senior Connecting Families Development Officer

In 2021, I had the opportunity to join some of my Scottish Families colleagues on the LW2Mindfulness course: Finding Peace in a Frantic World led by Alistair Kelly. I had read bits about and been aware of mindfulness over the years and I even remember having a guest speaker at a team meeting not long after I started with Scottish Families in 2014 who had us eating strawberries mindfully. Taking a course is a lot different from trying a few ideas and I really enjoyed the way Alistair guided us through so much practice during each session, gently inviting us to keep stretching our capacity and proficiency in the practice as the weeks went on.

The immediate difference it made for me was recognising and becoming aware of how challenging slowing down my noisy mind was going to be for me. It was a discipline to show up each week when other demands might have felt more of a priority. It was a challenge to focus on the mindful practice especially when at first, I didn't 'feel' the benefit. I learned that the act of doing each practice consistently is important and you reap the reward by persevering. Over time you find that it is easier to find a sense of peace because the practice pathway is familiar and known. I also loved that the course incorporated poetry, as I find words helpful in reflecting and paying attention to what I am experiencing.

The course thinks about ideas such as

'being on autopilot' and how we can notice it and be more present, about the benefits of gratitude and about practising curiosity, kindness, compassion, and patience toward ourselves. I can't even start to do justice to all that we read, discussed, or were taught but I can tell you about the difference it made for me. It affirmed my humanity. It taught me about 'wise responding' and it revealed that my ability to look after myself well can often be lacking even though I would say that I really align with all these values in what I believe. The challenge for me is to put belief into action.

## Walk slowly

It only takes a reminder to breathe, a moment to be still, and just like that, something in me settles, softens, makes space for imperfection. The harsh voice of judgment drops to a whisper and I remember again that life isn't a relay race; that we will all cross the finish line; that waking up to life is what we were born for. As many times as I forget, catch myself charging forward without even knowing where I'm going, that many times I can make the choice to stop, to breathe, and be, and walk slowly into the mystery.

By Danna Faulds

Alistair's website: [LW2Mindfulness · Living Well, Living Wisely](#)

# Mindfulness with Scottish Families



## Gratitude Meditation Exercise

It's not often we take time to appreciate the good things we have in life and only focus on the negative. Use this exercise to remind you of what you are grateful for.

1. Take some time to place yourself in a comfortable position. Take a few deep breaths and let your chest rise and fall with each inhalation and exhalation. When you are ready, let your eyes drift closed and your body relax.
2. As you continue to breathe slowly and deeply, let your attention rest gently on your breath. Feeling the movement as it enters and exits your body. Each time you exhale, let go of any tension. Relax your face, your shoulders, your belly, your legs.
3. On your next exhale, settle your attention to the area around your heart. Focus on the feelings of love, compassion, empathy, forgiveness.
4. With your attention on your heart centre, bring to mind something or someone you are grateful for. This could be a person, a pet, a job. Anything at all you are grateful for.
5. As you continue with your easy, relaxed breathing, picture what makes you feel grateful and smile to yourself.
6. Bring your attention to people or what truly nourish you in your life
7. Feel gratitude for your own life and what you have been blessed with.
8. Now bring your attention to how this gratitude feels in the area around your heart. With each inhale, let this feeling grow outwards. Expanding to fill your chest, your arms and hands, your legs and feet. With each inhale this feeling grows, filling you up.
9. And now, even as you return your attention to your breath, let your body remember the sensations of your gratitude. Smile as you open your eyes remembering what you are grateful for.



# Take part in our Communications Survey!



Can you help us improve our communications and social media? We've created a new, quick and easy, interactive survey that will allow us to use your amazing feedback to carry on building our online content.

Click the link below to complete the survey, and we promise, it takes less than 5 minutes!

[Take our survey](#)

# The Scottish Families Book Group



My name is Lena and I work as a Family Development Support Officer in the Forth Valley Family Support Service. I've been with Scottish Families for about 14 months and have been lucky enough to be involved with our Book Group for about a year now. I can honestly say that it is one of my favourite parts of my job – in fact, it never, ever feels like work. I have always loved reading and have been escaping into books for as long as I can remember. It's a favourite hobby of mine that helps calm my mind and it's fantastic to be able to share this with family members and see the positive impact it has on them too.

Our Scottish Families Book Group began in February 2020 and is offered remotely, via Zoom, each month. Books are selected for reading and we come together for an informal discussion of what we've read. It's a great opportunity for connection and we currently have family members joining in with the group from across Scotland – including Edinburgh, Fife, Forth Valley, Inverclyde and the Highlands.

We begin each conversation by giving the book a rating out of ten, sharing why we've rated it that way. It's a great ice breaker and leads to good discussion, especially if the book has divided opinion.

Conversation then typically flows around the feelings the book brought up for us; which characters we identified with or liked the most/least; what we thought of the title and how it relates to the book's contents and what we thought of the ending – did it work for us, or would we have changed it? Readers in the group are encouraged to suggest books for us to read and this has led to everyone discovering new, different authors and books they perhaps wouldn't have picked up otherwise. The group members have been vocal about preferring not to read books focusing on alcohol and drugs, which has been reflected in the books that have been suggested. Only two of the twelve books read so far have covered addiction – both by Scottish authors: 'Shuggie Bain' by Douglas Stuart and our latest read, 'The Young Team' by Graeme Armstrong.

In December, we were lucky enough to have author Helen MacKinnon join us for our discussion of her book, 'Talk of the Town.' Set in the Falkirk area, it's a coming-of-age story of two girls growing up in the 1980s. Helen captures that decade so well in her writing and it was a joy to listen to her share her journey of becoming a writer as well as have her read some of her favourite extracts from the book.

The book group has been incredibly well received by our family members, who not only enjoy the connection the group offers but have also shared how much they enjoy receiving the books and making time for themselves to read each month. In a recent survey about the group, 92% of respondents said they were making more time for themselves as a direct result of being in the Book Group. Here are some of the comments they shared:

**“An activity to occupy the mind and ease anxiety.”**

**“Gives me a totally different social sphere and interaction. Do something different to make time for myself.”**

**“It makes me feel less isolated. It’s good to know without it being talked about that we**

**are all experiencing the same problems at home. Especially helpful during the pandemic.”**

**“It seems the simple things are still as effective in improving well-being: reading, chat, social interaction, having a time out from often challenging periods in life.”**

Our next choice is Emily Edwards’ ‘The Herd’ - described by its publishers as ‘the thought-provoking and unputdownable must-read book club novel of 2022’ it’s about a couple of best friends who have different opinions about whether to vaccinate their children – a timely topic which apparently delves deeply into both sides of the debate and divides the two main characters, affecting their friendship. I can’t wait to get started on it.





# Book Review: 'The Young Team'



By Lena McMillan, Family Support  
Development Officer

February's book choice for our group was  
'The Young Team' by Graeme Armstrong.

Spanning the years 2004 – 2012, during which time Glasgow was named the 'murder capital of Europe,' this is a story about a boy who joins a gang. Entry to the gang gives him an identity, a taste for violence, a brotherhood, and days and nights caught up in alcohol and drugs – something that starts out as fun but descends into addiction and the push-pull of wanting to stop but feeling compelled to keep on going.

This is also a story of so much more – it shows the person behind the persona and encourages us to understand their sensitivity, their motivations, their humanity. It descriptively immerses us into a world many of us would otherwise never experience and it invites us to challenge our assumptions. It has moments that will make you laugh out loud and moments that will break your heart. Ultimately, it is a story of hope.

Set in North Lanarkshire, it is written in the local dialect, which adds to its authenticity. There is swearing in the book – lots of swearing - again adding to its down-to-earth genuineness. For three of our group, this put them off reading the book

altogether and they chose not to rate it for this reason. For the rest of the group though, this book was a huge hit, scoring an impressive 9.3/10. Some of our readers said it had taken them a while to get their heads around the language used and found the scenes of fighting and violence difficult. Many of our group found it relatable to their own vicarious experience of substance use, as they've witnessed their loved one's struggle with this. There was a general feeling that Armstrong covers this topic honestly, with one of our readers saying they found the book 'eye-opening and powerful in helping me understand the addiction.'

One reader shared their sadness at the book ending, another said they had deliberately slowed down their reading pace because they didn't want it to end, and others spoke about recommending it to family and friends. Our discussion was jam packed with positive comments and praise for a truly remarkable first novel:

'...loved it...'

'...totally unexpected...'

'...fabulous...'

'...amazing descriptions...'



# **Caithness Family Support Group**

Living with a loved ones problematic substance use can cause stress, anxiety and distress within the home

It's vital that you get support for yourself to help you cope with the situation that you find yourself in.

We are family members who have experienced addiction in our families and we are here to support you and offer information and guidance.

If you would like to know more get in touch.

**Telephone: 07754763950**

Confidentiality Assured





**Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs**

**Main Office:** Edward House, 199 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, G2 3EX

**Helpline:** 08080 10 10 11

helpline@sfad.org.uk

webchat available at: [www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk)

**Twitter:** @ScotFamADrugs

**Facebook:** @ScottishFamiliesAffectedByDrugs

**Instagram:** @scottishfamilies

**General enquiries:** 0141 465 7523

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**website:** [www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk)



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