

# People at the Centre Update 21



**Aberlour's new report "[Evaluation of Urgent Assistance Fund](#)" was published on November 16 2020 and warns of a "deepening poverty crisis"**

The report, by Professor Morag Treanor, evaluates the use of the Aberlour's Urgent Assistance Fund and how it is working in practice. The research is made up of both quantitative analysis of the data submitted by families as part of the fund application procedure, and qualitative interviews with sponsors and families who have received the fund.

Present throughout both strands of the research is the devastating impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on families and their circumstances.

Between March and August demand of the Urgent Assistance Fund increased by 1000% (compared to the same time last year) demonstrating the huge increase in need for financial assistance from families.

The report shares that nearly all applications were made for basic essentials. Of the applications made:

- 60% were from families who were unable to afford to feed their children
- 50% were unable to afford to keep their homes warm
- 29% couldn't afford to clothe their children adequately

17% of families needed emergency cash because of parental mental health issues. This was the number one reason for families needing cash and clearly demonstrates the huge impact on mental health the COVID-19 pandemic has had.

Other situations commonly facing families were children's disabilities or illness (12% of families), parents' disabilities or illness (7.5% of families) and domestic or physical abuse (11% of families).

Some testimonies shared in the report were:

"We had one woman... she's got a disabled child... she has mental health difficulties. She's been through the worst domestic abuse you could ever imagine... [She's selfemployed] then, came COVID, boom, and she had no money at all. Nothing. Not a penny apart from Child Benefit... She wasn't able to ask her ex-partner for money or help with money for the children, so she was in such a difficult situation because she just had, like, literally no money... I think I got her £200/£300 [from Aberlour]. That got her stable and then all the other money started to kick in." - (Family support worker)

"I think lockdown's been hard because everybody's used to doing their everyday thing. It's really hard to have the five of you all in the house, all at the same time and nowhere to go. Sometimes you just decide you're going to escape and you're going into your car. Just to get a bit of headspace. That's everybody, I think. The lockdown's probably affected everybody's mental health. Being stuck in the house, I love my family with all my heart, but it's hard as well, because we're all like sardines in a tin and everybody has different needs, but parents also have needs. Getting things together and getting time to do things together as a couple and taking your kids for days out going to the beach, which is normal, or to the local park all that stopped. Life just changed for everybody." - (Shona, a person who received support)

Featured on [Aberlour's website](#) SallyAnn Kelly, Chief Executive of Aberlour Children's Charity has warned:

"When the lockdown started, we feared that it would have a devastating impact on families living in or on the edge of poverty. This has sadly proved to be the case. While our services have continued to support children and families throughout Scotland, and our supporters have donated magnificent sums to our Urgent Assistance Fund, we need to continue to raise more money to sustain our vital work and reach more families at risk of falling through the cracks."