

DAPL

2025-26

Fife School Counselling Service



What will the future bring?

DAPL@SCHOOL



In this edition: Looking Back & Looking Forward

We will provide a review of the counselling and support we provide to the children, young people and families of Fife. We will highlight the partnership working that we have been involved in and we will provide an update on how the counselling service currently serves the school and wider community.

This year we are experimenting with some AI options to produce **DAPL@School**. The written content is all done by humans, some of the data summaries and the picture design is AI.

- What is the future for counselling in Scottish schools?
- In the Counselling Room
- **What do you think?** Children and young people actively shape the counselling service by sharing their thoughts, opinions and experiences
- Data- Collecting & sharing the right information
- ASD- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- A Wish & A Warning
- Getting it wrong! Part of making it right
- In the Art Therapy Room
- Partnerships
- BACP, BAAT & HCPC
- Change can be positive
- DAPL Contact Details

What can services do in challenging times?

As our society continues to struggle on multiple levels to provide the resources to meet an increasing complexity of need within our schools, the 3rd sector is both the solution and the most vulnerable resource.

Funding demands that we are flexible, responsive and effective. Those key elements are continuously eroded when faced with uncertainty.



As part of the menu of options, counselling in schools has now been integrated into the standard suite of services. This ensures that the team around the child considers all options before referrals are made to specific services.

In some schools this may be a chance to commission specific resources, services or programmes ideally suited to them. Most importantly children and young people maintain the option to access well established, good quality, qualified, regulated support services that have evolved in their community.

Our children and young people who may have experienced ACEs, are impacted by trauma or are

struggling to find themselves in the ever evolving world of neurodiversity. All of them find a place to be heard and supported in the counselling room.

This coming year brings both challenges and opportunities for counselling in schools and for the young people and families we serve.

DAPL and the wider 3rd Sector are no strangers to uncertainty. Surviving from funding stream to funding stream is a way of life for us.

In Fife we have offered this service for over 25 years developing and thriving as we adapt to the needs of our communities.

Change brings new opportunities.



In the Counselling Room

The bell rings and a few minutes later the door opens.

The young person has found the room. A text from their counsellor, a note from their guidance teacher or a call from the school receptionist has directed them to this quiet space away from the busyness of the school.

They are invited to sit. There are more comfortable chairs in this room. Less like a classroom.

The counsellor introduces themselves. Checks that the young person is who they expect and checks that they want to be here.

The counsellor explains the process that has brought them here. The referral. The concerns.

Is this what the young person expects? Is this what they thought it was about?

The counsellor explains the counselling agreement. Limits to confidentiality. The things we need to be clear about to keep them and others safe.

Once the link to give consent is sent to the young person's email the YP Core evaluation is done. This gives a baseline score to give an indication of risk, priority areas that need attention and a way to chart progress over the coming weeks.

Once these ten questions have been asked and actions that need to be taken if any immediate risks become apparent. The control of the session moves to the young person.

What do they want to talk about?

What is important to them?

What's happening?

What would they like life to be like?

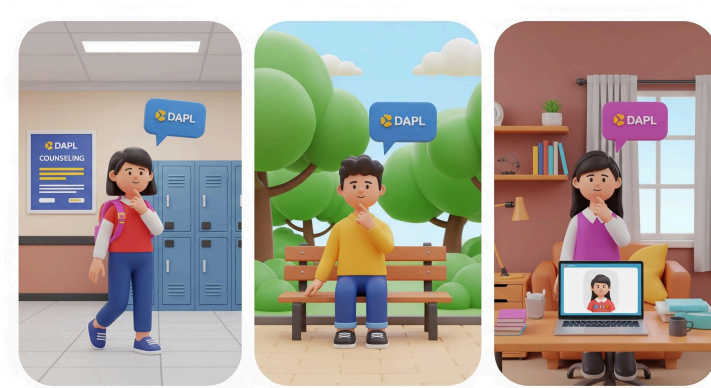
From this beginning the therapeutic relationship grows. Building trust. Building an understanding of each other.

Counselling isn't about "fixing". It's about understanding.

Connection.



What do you think?



Throughout the counselling engagement we are genuinely interested in what the young person is feeling about the support being offered. We ask for feedback within the session and we ask that a separate form is filled in, independently where possible, after the last session.

Here are some of the unedited comments and summaries of that feedback.

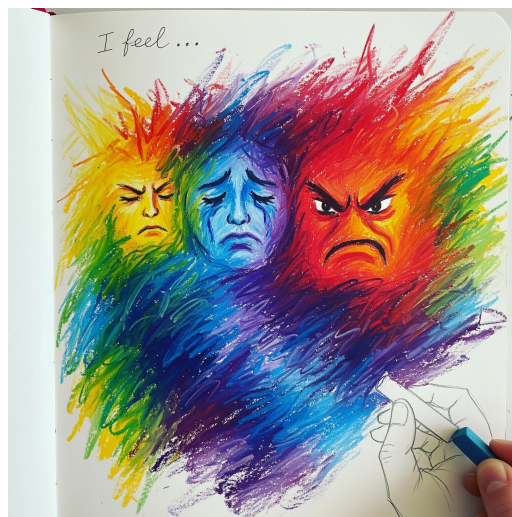
"She actually showed me that she was listening unlike other adults"

"It's fun. I get to be weird. I can stare longingly out the window at the birds and think about random things without being judged. "

"They made me feel better, having someone to talk to about the stuff I can't talk to others about"

"It has been fun, and has helped me talk about things, like the transition to high school."

'It's been helpful as you get to express stuff and have time to open up about things. I like the fact I get to draw out feelings. It's been good.'





"its amazing service really helped me I might have taken my own life without it"

"The therapy has helped, it gave me a pause in my week, and I was able to talk about things... Mondays are a better day in my week."

"Since starting therapy I have been able to concentrate on things that I am interested in - like online creativity, and I have made real progress."

"Working with DAPL was helpful, I got advice about coping strategies, about how to calm down and find a safe space"

'Counselling has helped me significantly to realise what happened and has helped me move forwards and leave it in the past so it doesn't hold me back. I do get nervous sometimes but I work through this as my self-confidence has grown.'

This is just a selection of the feedback we get from young people almost every day. We regularly share their words via X along with some fun images and a bit more detail about where they are from, what age they are and what school they attend. If you're interested in hearing what young people say about us on a regular basis, click the link and follow us on X.



DAPL gathers a huge amount of data in the course of our work with people. It helps shape services, supports understanding and tracks progress.



What did you like most about working with your DAPL Counsellor/Art Therapist?

(An AI Summary of 385 responses)

- **Active Listening and Understanding:** The most frequently mentioned positive aspect was the counsellor/art therapist's ability to listen, understand the client's situation, feelings, and problems without judgment, making them feel heard and validated.
- **Safe and Confidential Space:** Many appreciated having a safe, non-judgmental, and confidential space to talk freely and openly about issues they couldn't discuss with others, which helped them "get everything out" or "let loose of my problems."
- **Helpful Support and Advice:** Respondents valued the practical support, helpful advice, coping strategies, and different perspectives offered, which assisted them in understanding and managing their emotions, anxiety, stress, and problems.
- **Counsellor Demeanour and Rapport:** Clients frequently described the counsellors as kind, nice, friendly, supportive, understanding, genuine, relatable, and easy to talk to, with some enjoying the "banter" or relaxed atmosphere, which fostered a comfortable working relationship.
- **Variety in Sessions and Activities:** Some enjoyed the use of art therapy (drawing, digital drawings, play dough), outdoor walks/walk and talks, listening to music, and the option to communicate via text or phone.

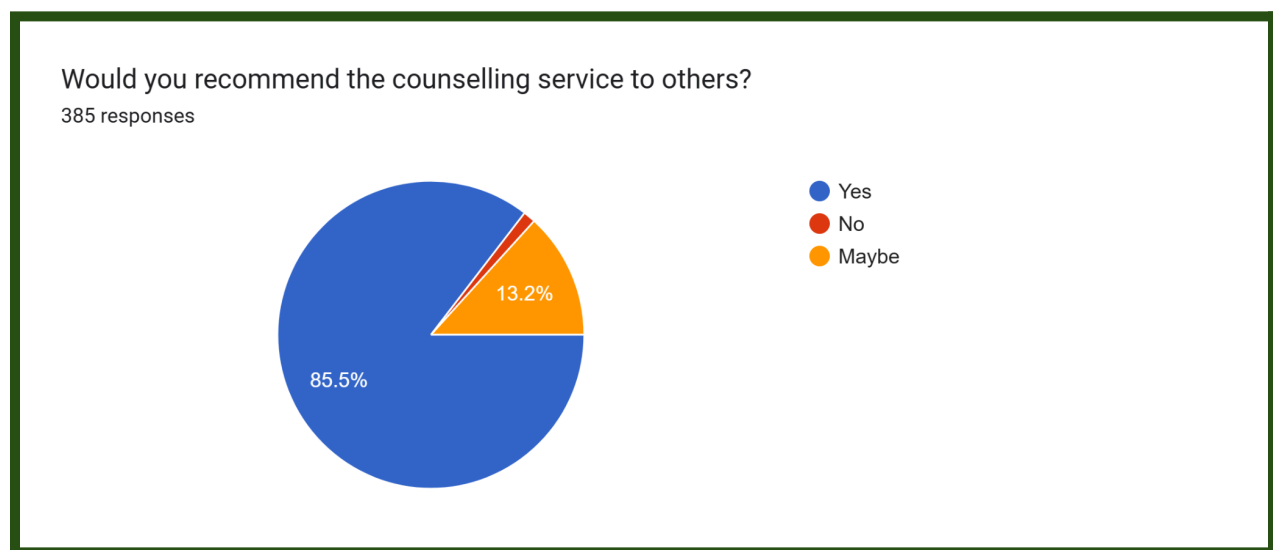
What did you like least about working with your DAPL Counsellor/Art Therapist?

(An AI Summary of 385 responses)

- **Session logistics & duration:** Sessions were too short, and some wished they were longer or more frequent than one day a week. Issues with timing included

missing school periods/classes (especially favourite subjects), inconvenient scheduling, and the need to close sessions quickly.

- **Nature of interaction:** The shift to non-face-to-face/online/over-the-phone sessions was disliked, along with technological issues. Some also mentioned awkward silences or the counsellor not asking enough questions, making the client do most of the talking.
- **Difficulty with emotional expression/content:** Respondents found it hard to open up, be honest, talk about difficult or personal feelings/topics (like home life or memories), and getting emotional. It could feel awkward or scary at times.
- **Administrative tasks:** A recurring dislike was filling out forms and questionnaires.
- **Lack of perceived progress or understanding:** Some felt they didn't receive enough advice or didn't make progress, while others felt misunderstood or that the counsellor's responses were not what was needed.



Please share your thoughts about our service?

An AI summary of 296 responses

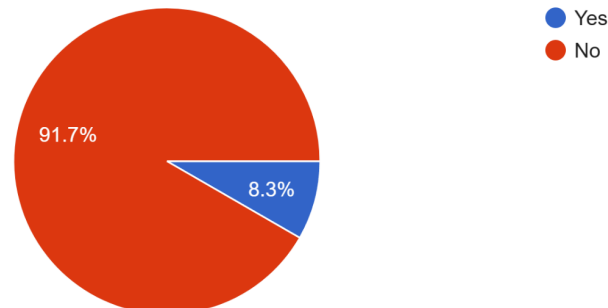
- **Highly Positive and Impactful:** The service is described as "absolutely AMAZING," "utterly brilliant," "incredible," and "best ever," with many reporting it as "very helpful," "really good," and a "great help" that made a massive difference to their mental health and confidence, enabling them to feel "alive again" and "real."
- **Safe, Non-Judgmental, and Confidential Space:** A strong theme is the feeling of safety, privacy, and confidentiality, where users felt listened to, understood, and able to open up about difficult topics without fear of judgment.

- **Effective for Processing Difficulties and Emotions:** The service helped users to get feelings and thoughts out, process trauma, understand themselves better, confront problems, manage anxiety and stress, and develop coping strategies.
- **Appreciation for Counsellor Approach and Availability:** Counsellors are frequently praised as being kind, supportive, and good listeners, with some specific counsellors mentioned by name (Cyrese, Kathryn, Alison, Stevie, Jack, Kim). The in-school location and relative speed (only a few months wait) and freeness were also appreciated.
- **Areas for Improvement/Further Need:** Some users mentioned the service was too short, wished for more sessions, felt the wait time was too long, or expressed a need for more flexibility during school holidays. There was also feedback that it works best when the individual is willing to engage, and some felt it was not for them or was useless.

All young people have direct access to the service manager. Every request is responded to via email.

Would you like the manager of the counselling service to contact you to discuss the service you've received? If you select yes, they will contact you via email in the first instance.

385 responses

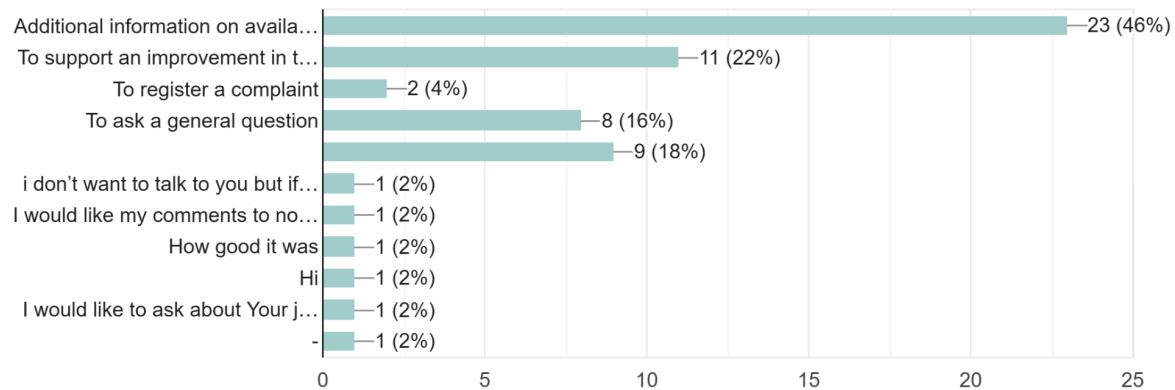


Out of the 50 young people who responded to this question, 48% wanted additional information, 22 % wanted to support us to improve the service and 4% (2 people) wanted to register a complaint.

(All of this data covers the time from 18/04/2023 until 16/11/25)

If you have selected yes please select an option to help us understand what you are looking for from the contact.

50 responses



DAPL has resolved to only gather the data that is useful to the young people, the school and development of the wider service.

Our commitment to GDPR and confidentiality is without question.

When young people and families tell us things, we need to listen. We need to try to make sense of what is happening in their lives and support improvements.

Gathering the right data and taking the right action is a foundation of providing a trauma informed service that supports real change in our communities.





Just over 18% of the Primary School children referred to the School Counselling Service have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis or are on the assessment pathway.

Just under 24% of the High School Pupils referred to the School Counselling Service have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis or are on the assessment pathway.

Ensuring that the counselling service fits for everyone we need to ensure that flexible and dynamic approaches to engagement works for everyone.

Working creatively, outdoors, online, in safe spaces and listening to what these young people need forms a foundation to our work.

The National Autistic Society highlights the need for services to be accessible. Their "hints and tips" are a useful starting point if you haven't already thought about the barriers that people with autism face.

“One of the biggest barriers that autistic people face when visiting a new venue or using a new service is staff that are unsupportive because they have little or no understanding of autism. One of the best ways to support autistic people is to have staff with a good understanding of autism.”

All of the school Counsellors and Art Therapists have a clear and well established understanding of what young people with autism might face in getting the most out of their therapy.

The National Autistic Society suggests involving people with autism in creating services that better understand autism. DAPL has continuously sought and received ideas and accounts of lived experiences from parents and young people themselves to develop a service that truly meets the needs of autistic people.

Our key aims in respect of this are drawn from the National Autistic Society.

- Identifying autism and how it affects people in different ways
- How to communicate with an autistic person
- Sensory differences
- Identifying how to change your practice and make changes within your workplace to effectively support people.



We want a service that works for everyone. Acceptance, equity and inclusion should be built into every service as standard.

A Wish & A Warning

We have a shared wish that children, young people and their families get the support and services they need, when they need them. DAPL has always been about one main thing. Hearing the client. Regardless of age, gender ethnicity or any other defining factor we need to listen to the people we serve.



All behaviours are communication. Connecting, disconnecting, provoking or dismissing. Ignoring or abusing. Exhibiting our self-harm behaviours or hiding them. Taking drugs, drinking alcohol, vaping, smoking or living life online. Eating, not eating. Sleeping or staying awake for days and nights at a time.

We need people to be curious. To have the time, space and compassion to wonder what is happening for us.

Fife is a fundamentally amazing place. It's filled with great people and great services. Every child, young person or adult that we get to work with can name someone. A teacher, social worker, youth worker or sports coach that saw them, heard them and looked out for them.

In Fife we have developed exceptional Third Sector services with exceptional professionals working away to help those who need some additional support.

In our schools we have a rich history of growing partnerships with services that have developed specifically to meet the needs that we have in Fife.

DAPL is one of those services; however; we are very fortunate to work in partnership with our colleagues in Clued Up and Barnardos. We also welcome our newer partnerships with Venture Trust and Includem.

The Third Sector's strength is in its flexibility and in its ability to be responsive. Our weakness often surfaces when resources are scarce and we are vulnerable, as a sector, to cuts in our funding.

Our Third Sector services are years in the making. Often growing in the turmoil caused by trauma. They can disappear overnight. It's only in their absence that the community feels that loss.

Protect and value your Third Sector organisations as much as they protect you and our communities.

Getting it Wrong



We don't always get it right. We often don't really hear exactly how our support has helped. Sometimes people just don't know how counselling or art therapy has helped, they just know it has.

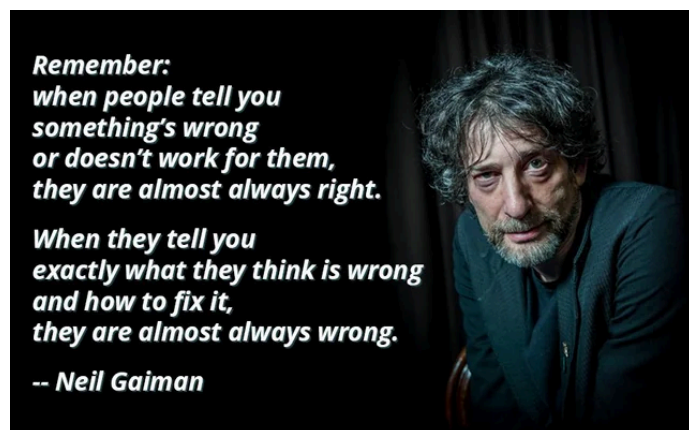
“We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know.”

(Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld)

In therapy, the relationship is key. It's not like a manualised task where you can plug people in and out of the process. One thing we hear very clearly from young people, families and education colleagues, change, especially unexpected change, is not good.

The most critical feedback we receive centers around disconnection. Breaks in communication, absence due to illness or holiday.

Feedback and complaints can cause discomfort however we are committed to hearing both good and bad to ensure that the service remains relevant, effective and honest.



***Remember:
when people tell you
something's wrong
or doesn't work for them,
they are almost always right.***

***When they tell you
exactly what they think is wrong
and how to fix it,
they are almost always wrong.***

-- Neil Gaiman

<https://www.dapl.net/useful-info#get-in-touch>

Use this link to share your thoughts and experiences.

In the Art Therapy Room

The bell rings and a few minutes later the door opens.

The young person has found the room. A text from their art therapist, a note from their guidance teacher or a call from the school receptionist has directed them to this quiet space away from the busyness of the school.

They are invited to sit. There are a range of creative materials laid out on a table with space to work. Less like a classroom.

The art therapist introduces themselves. Checks that the young person is who they expect and checks that they want to be here.

The art therapist explains the process that has brought them here. The referral. The concerns.

Is this what the young person expects? Is this what they thought it was about?

The art therapist explains the working agreement. Limits to confidentiality. The things we need to be clear about to keep them and others safe.

Once the link to give consent is sent to the young person's email the YP Core evaluation is done. This gives a baseline score to give an indication of risk, priority areas that need attention and a way to chart progress over the coming weeks.

Once these ten questions have been asked and actions that need to be taken if any immediate risks become apparent. The control of the session moves to the young person.

Do they want to talk or do they want to explore and try out the art materials?

What is important to them?

What's happening?

What would they like life to be like?

From this beginning the therapeutic relationship grows.
Building trust. Building an understanding of each other.

Art Therapy isn't about "fixing". It's about understanding. It isn't about being an artist. It's about finding expression beyond and without words. Transforming trauma into image.

Processing. Purging. Communicating. Connection.





Partnership Across the Community

Counselling, art therapy and the wider range of support that is available for young people in Fife has presented both opportunity and challenge. How do we ensure that children and young people get the right support at the right time?

Fife's well established Our Minds Matter model provides a basic framework for supporting our shared understanding of where services and interventions might sit.

This helps school staff to direct children and young people to the least invasive and most appropriate services available to them. It also provides clarity for services in developing partnerships with minimal duplication and waste.

The new services that are envisaged through the next period of funding offer a chance for new ideas and approaches to shape the landscape of support.



As these services take root we hope to see further partnerships and co-production in the way in which we stretch the resources to support the children, young people and families of Fife.

Our colleagues in Fife Council have produced a Wakelet to guide you through the supports that are already in place.



<https://wakelet.com/wake/uanrJazimikLPbzVlpGeX>



DAPL has long had an association with the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy. We have been one of the consistently accredited organisations in Scotland for the last decade. Currently we are one of only three services in Scotland that have achieved this standard.

What it means

- Quality assurance: BACP accreditation provides external validation that a service is safe, secure, professionally managed, and operates to high standards.
- For clients: It reassures clients that they will receive a high-quality, professional service.
- For employers and funders: It enhances credibility with employers and funding bodies and can help with securing new contracts.
- For the service: It helps with recruiting and retaining practitioners and volunteers.

Have a look at the BACP website to find out more about counselling. They have links to the ethical framework, standards, updates and research that supports counselling practice in the UK today.



All art therapists must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). It is the regulatory body that oversees arts therapists in the UK, while the British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) is the professional body and a membership organisation for the profession. All of the DAPL art therapists comply with these regulations.

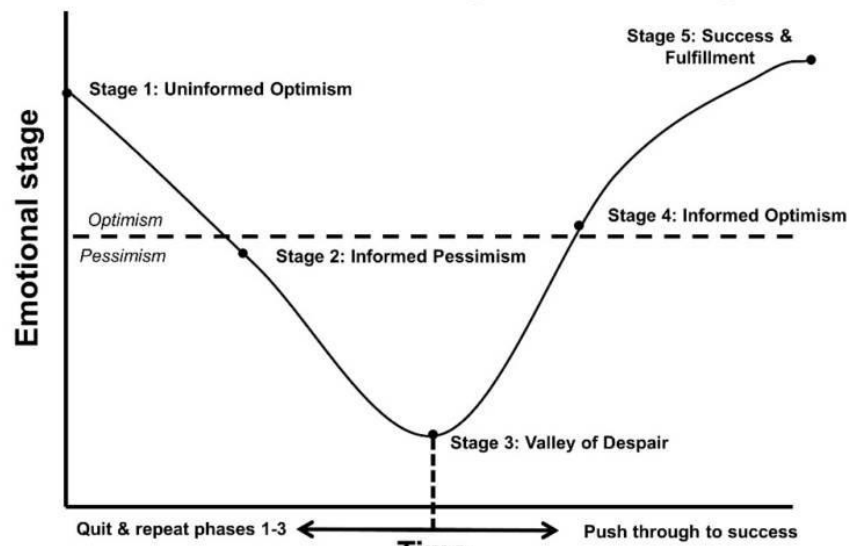
Change Can Be Positive

Whatever changes come from the recommissioning process, there will be positive developments. Services find new ways to meet the needs of young people, families and the community.

We rediscover old solutions, try new approaches and grow through adversity.



The Emotional Cycle of Change



Sometimes you need a clean sheet to start afresh and to address the issues of the here and now rather than continuing to solve the problems of yesterday.

Whatever the future brings, DAPL's school counselling service has delivered on its goals. We have developed a super efficient service while maintaining our ethical and professional standards. The public money spent on our service has been returned to the community as tangible support and service. The money spent on counselling in schools has saved money further down the line in the NHS, social work and in criminal justice.

We look forward to the new beginnings with everything that it will bring.

- Change is inescapable.
- Change is necessary.
- Change can be positive.





Drugs, Alcohol and Psychotherapy Limited

DAPL is managed by a voluntary Board of Directors who come from a wide range of backgrounds and who have a shared interest in supporting Fife communities. They set the tone for how we go about our work. Mindful of need, compassion for those who need support and passionate about the possibilities of change.

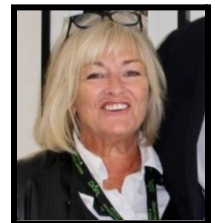
Check our new website for more details about how you could get involved, offer your support or suggestions or just learn more about DAPL <https://www.dapl.net/about-us>

Our patrons

Eleanor Bowman MBE

Fundraiser and campaigner

Eleanor Bowman received a MBE in 2007 for her charity work.



Clive Russell

Actor and campaigner

Clive Russell was raised in Leven and attended Buckhaven High School.



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