

30. Action for Children

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1. Introduction

We invite the Conference to support and celebrate all that is being achieved through Action for Children as the children's charity of the Methodist Church.

Our Annual Report for our financial year 2013/14 is now available from our website and hard copies can be found at the Action for Children stall at the Conference. The Annual Report provides a snapshot of services we provide together with consolidated accounts for the year. Some key facts from our report illustrate the breadth and reach of our work:

- 650 services across the UK
- 300,000 children, young people and their families directly helped
- 5,000 staff
- 2,000 volunteers
- 96p in every pound spent helping children and their families.

2. Unlocking our potential – Action for Children five year strategy

2.1 Over the past year Action for Children has been actively engaged in developing a new five year strategy and has consulted widely with our beneficiaries, stakeholders, staff and Trustees. The new strategy takes us from 2014 to our 150th Birthday in 2019. It sets out how we will take on the big challenges that we will face. Most importantly, it will enable us to support more children, young people, parents and carers in the best possible way, so we can make an even bigger difference.

2.2 For more than 145 years we have been at the forefront of child care, keeping generations of children safe and ensuring they have the support they need to realise their potential. In 1897 our founder – the Revd Thomas Bowman Stephenson – wrote in a letter to a supporter that he was “yours in the service of the children”; and almost a hundred and fifty years later – while much else has changed – this commitment remains with us at Action for Children and is articulated in our new vision and mission.

- Our vision: every child and young person has the love, support and opportunity they need to reach their potential; and
- Our mission: to act early so children get the care and support they need, and to speak out fearlessly on their behalf.

2.3 There are five key themes that run through our strategy:

1. Being user led – listening to our service users.
2. Focusing on early action – a key policy and service delivery objective for us.
3. Empowering our staff – without whom none of this can happen.
4. Becoming digital leaders – capitalising on our multi-local approach.
5. And planning for longer term growth – to support the people we work with through difficult times into the future.

Through it all of course runs the golden thread – we are here “in the service of the children.”

2.4 We welcome feedback on any aspects of our report or new strategy and our work at Action for Children and will be pleased to see you at our Conference stall.

3. Making a difference together – our Partnership with the Methodist Church

3.1 We are deeply thankful to so many people in the Methodist Church who have supported the work of Action for Children. Our Methodist supporters have always been there for us – just as we try always to be there for the children and young people who need us most. Methodists regularly give of their time, their expertise, their energy and their prayers.

3.2 During the last year we have continued to develop our cooperation in areas that can be of mutual benefit. These have included:

- I. Our Policy and Campaigns Team and the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) sharing briefings and where possible working together to plan and support campaigns to influence national governments. We were pleased to make a small contribution to the JPIT report *'The lies we tell ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty'*, and congratulate the JPIT on the effectiveness of that report;
- II. Cooperation around safeguarding policy and practice continues through contact between lead connexional and Action for Children expert staff together with support also being provided in some Districts. Our Head of Safeguarding, Deanna Neilson recently attended the Annual Anglican-Methodist Safeguarding Conference on 4-6 February 2015;
- III. The designation of the second Sunday in July to celebrate Action for Children Sunday. Many churches use worship resources prepared by Action for Children and we are pleased to provide staff to speak briefly about our work; and
- IV. Methodist support for a wide range of fundraising activities never ceases to amaze us. Our Partnership Fundraising Team is pleased both to extend thanks and to offer their expertise and help for fundraising initiatives that Methodists wish to undertake in support of Action for Children.

4. Campaigns and Public Affairs

4.1 Our campaigns are rooted in our experience, and the work we do directly with children and young people gives us the insight, expertise and authority to campaign on their behalf. We include children and young people at every level of our campaigning and help them to speak for themselves as often as possible.

4.2 We are asking the Government to review the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, which applies to England and Wales, to protect children from all forms of abuse. We are delighted that the Serious Crime Bill now contains an updated child cruelty offence following our campaign to update the criminal law.

4.3 Following workshops in which we listened to the concerns and issues that most trouble the children and young people with whom we work, we have been successful in campaigning to change the law in Wales so that young people can remain with their foster carers up to the age of 21, if that is what they wish. We are campaigning to help vulnerable young people avoid unmanageable debt; for a stable home for all care leavers; and for better services for

neglected children. For further information and to support the latest actions in our campaign please visit our website www.actionforchildren.org.uk/campaigns

5. Farewell

In September 2014 we bade farewell to the Revd Will Morrey, our Faith Communities Adviser. We are very grateful to him for his guidance and support over the years. At the time of writing Action for Children are recruiting for a new Head of Church Partnerships after seeking advice on the role from two of our Trustees, the Revd John Howard, the Chair of Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District and Dr Daleep Mukarji, former Vice-President of the Conference. This role will be key to helping us maintain and build our relationship with the Methodist Connexion and will also take an ecumenical approach and help us take our work to other faith communities.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

30/1. The Conference received the General Report of Action for Children.

30/2. The Conference noted that the trustees of Action for Children for the current year are:

**Chair: John O'Brien (2012), Vice Chair: Heather Schroeder (2008), Methodist Church
Appointee: Dr Daleep Mukarji**

Joe Barrell (2012), Les Clifford (2011), Helena Feltham (2013), Stanley Goudie (2011), Kate Guthrie (2014), the Revd John Howard (2011), Keith Ingham (2014), Paul Snell (2009)