

14. Action for Children

1. Introduction

On 9 July Action for Children will celebrate 140 years of caring for the most vulnerable and excluded children across the UK. The Revd Thomas Bowman Stephenson and his Methodist friends set up The Children's Home in London in 1869 to give poor and homeless children the chance to build a brighter future. Since then we have been there for countless young people, helping them to transform their lives. We became Action for Children in 2008 because this name describes us better, but we are as focused and passionate as ever. We ask the Conference to thank God for the values and commitment that still drive our work today.

We are also thankful for every single person who has supported our work in the last 140 years. Our Methodist supporters have always been there for us – just as we try always to be there for children and young people. They have given us their time, their know-how, their energy and their prayers. In the last year the President and Vice President of Conference have both taken opportunities to spread the word about what Action for Children does and why we do it.

In fact, raising people's awareness of Action for Children is one of the main reasons for changing our name. We already work in local communities across the UK and beyond. Becoming a household name will help our work with children and families and our campaigns to have even more powerful results.

Our new name directly echoes John Wesley's challenge to his helpers to 'go not to those who need you but to those who need you most'. Some of those who need us most now are children. Right now Action for Children is looking at how our fundraising and campaigning can do even more to support our work with children and families. As part of this, we want to build even closer, more inspiring relationships with local Methodist communities. We value their regular prayers and will work hard to make sure they understand the work we do and share our passion for transforming young lives.

In today's poor economic climate, children and families who are poor, isolated or socially excluded need our support even more. There's no doubt Action for Children will have to take some hard decisions in future, but 140 years of experience has taught us that if we stick to our core values, we can keep making a real and lasting difference. We're also confident that Methodists' strength and generosity means they will always help us rise to the challenges we face.

This report and Action for Children's annual report have more information about how Methodists support our work. Supporters will be able to download our annual report at www.actionforchildren.org.uk or get a copy from Mary Keane on 020 7288 7869.

We look forward to the Conference celebrating our 140th anniversary in morning prayers on 9 July and to another year of partnership and discovering God among us.

2. Our values and aims

Alongside our change of name, last September we also restated what we believe in and what we're striving for. We want all Action for Children staff and supporters to feel they can talk clearly and passionately about this, in a way that inspires others. The language is modern, but these statements still reflect our history and Thomas Stephenson's vision.

Our vision is a world where all children and young people have a sense of belonging and are loved and valued, where they can fulfil their potential, shape their destiny and experience the joy of life.

Our values are passion, equality and hope.

- ∞ Passion – We are driven by our desire to help children and young people overcome injustice and disadvantage.
- ∞ Equality – We believe all children and young people have equal worth and equal rights.
- ∞ Hope – We believe in a child or young person's potential, no matter what they have experienced or what they have done.

Our goal is to help the most vulnerable children and young people break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so they can achieve their full potential. We empower children by helping them to overcome obstacles in their lives that hold them back. We tailor our work to local circumstances and we work hand in hand with children and young people, families, communities and local organisations.

We work with children and young people:

- ∞ whose families need support
- ∞ who cannot live with their birth families
- ∞ who are disabled
- ∞ who experience severe difficulties in their lives

3. Action for Children's relaunch

After months of planning and work across the whole organisation, we became Action for Children in September 2008. The relaunch attracted media coverage and we held modest launch events in Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow and London to explain our thinking and plans to people representing the Methodist Church and other important interest groups. We also began our first-ever TV advertising campaign in January 2009.

There is a long way to go before the person in the street knows who we are and the work we do. But early reports from researchers suggest people are more aware that we are a children's charity doing vital work that deserves support. Long-term supporters are reporting back that more people are aware of Action for Children after the TV adverts.

4. Publicity and advertising

We have achieved some excellent coverage in the media over the last year and taken the charity in a new and exciting direction to raise our profile.

Newspapers

As part of its Charity Christmas Appeal, *The Times* decided to feature nine Action

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for Children services for children in care over the Christmas holidays.

These articles showed *Times* readers just how wide-ranging our work is, covering everything from private fostering support through to supported lodgings. The featured services were:

- ∞ Cornwall Leaving Care's 'Two of a kind' mentoring scheme
- ∞ Action for Children Black Families, London
- ∞ Youthbuild Glasgow
- ∞ Wessex Community Placement (intensive fostering)
- ∞ Tall Trees Family Centre, Sussex (private fostering)
- ∞ Shared Care Caerphilly
- ∞ 'Room 4 U' Corner House Independence project, Derbyshire (supported lodgings)
- ∞ London Independent Visitors
- ∞ Action for Children Fostering, Sheffield

The response was fantastic. The articles generated a total of £100,000 for Action for Children – *Times* readers donated £50,000 and this amount was matched by Barclays Bank.

Television

Action for Children's first-ever TV advert aired on 1 January and two different adverts ran until 8 February. In this simple but powerful campaign, young people talked about how Action for Children helped them to transform their lives.

Nicola explained how hard it was to be a young carer and how Action for Children helped her to cope with looking after her

mum. Today, she helps us to support other children caring for sick or disabled relatives. Dan, an autistic young person who went to an Action for Children school, talked about how angry and frustrated he felt, and explained how we helped him to feel more in control of his feelings, so he could get on better with people.

While the adverts were on TV there was a massive increase in visitors to the Action for Children website. Many more people also got in contact to ask about our services and offer support.

5. Our services in the UK (at 6 April 2009)

	Disabled children	Children in care	Supporting families	Youth
England	33	19	177	61
Wales	17	4	26	6
Scotland	8	10	18	26
N. Ireland	0	1	11	2
Total	58	34	232	95

Note: Adding in Action for Children's ARTS initiatives project, gives a total of 420 projects.

6. International work

As well as being one of the UK's leading children's charities, Action for Children also works internationally with governments and other charities. A lot of this work is done through partnerships with the Methodist Churches in the Caribbean,

Central America and southern Africa. The World Church Relationships Office of the Methodist Church helps us to build these partnerships.

The Council of Action for Children and the Methodist Council have agreed on a strategy for working together in future – this strategy will let us make the best use of our joint knowledge and experience, so we can support locally delivered services as effectively as possible.

7. Campaigning

Giving a voice to the UK's most vulnerable children and families is a vital part of our work. We are *Action* for Children and we are positive and fearless in speaking out for vulnerable and excluded children. We will continue to produce research and to campaign in 2009.

Our latest campaign was launched in September 2008, with a special report called *As long as it takes: a new politics for children*. Its theme reflects Action for Children's goal to be there for children for as long as it takes. We called on government, politicians and other agencies to change our approach and work together so we are all there for children, for as long as it takes. In particular, it demands an end to short-term thinking on all policy, funding and legislation that affects young people's lives.

We took this further in January 2009 with *Stuck in the middle*. This report highlights how important it is to support children aged 6 to 13 as they go through key changes like puberty, new schools

and parents divorcing. We have already lobbied governments and raised public awareness about children's 'middle years' and used postcards and our website to get the public on board. Our website has lots of information about our campaigns and reports: www.actionforchildren.org.uk

8. Celebrating 140 years

Thomas Bowman Stephenson, a Methodist minister from the north east of England, believed passionately in social justice. He challenged the Methodist Church to address the plight of children living on the street.

In 1869 he set up the first Children's Home in a stable near Waterloo, with the help of two friends from Bolton, Francis Horner and Alfred Mager. They wanted to provide the kind of care that other children got in a loving home. This was radically different to the treatment children received in workhouses.

To celebrate the 140th anniversary of Thomas Stephenson opening the first home, on 9 July we will hold parties and other celebrations in our projects and offices around the UK. We will ask supporters to join us where we can.

Action for Children Sunday, 12 July

We'll continue our celebrations on Action for Children Sunday, on 12 July. If you would like more information about what we are doing, please contact your local fundraising team.

Thursday 10 December 2009

We hope as many people as possible will join the President of Conference and

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guests for a major celebration at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King. This will include a performance by young people at our projects of the arts skills they have developed through our Articulation programme.

9. Notice of Motion (8) 2008

Conference, hearing that the Synod of the Methodist Church in Scotland noted with concern the decision by the Council of NCH to restructure its committees so that the three ex officio places for members of the Synod on the Scotland Committee of NCH are to be reduced to one, and regretted that it had not received information from Methodists involved with NCH as to the advantages of the new relationship with the Methodist Church in Scotland, requests the Council of NCH to find ways of showing that monies raised for NCH through the Methodist Church will be used for projects that are not in receipt of central or local

government funding, unless to provide a clear augmentation to such a project, and to report progress on this matter back to the Conference of 2009.

In response to Notice of Motion (8) at Conference 2008, members of the Scotland Committee of Action for Children met with members of the Scotland Synod on 23 September 2008. They shared valuable insights about how the Methodist Church in Scotland operates within the wider Methodist Connexion, and how Action for Children Scotland works within Action for Children UK-wide.

The members agreed that Action for Children and the Methodist Church share values like passion, hope, belief in equality and inclusiveness, and putting children at the heart of the work. Looking ahead, we will examine how we make these values work in practice, so we can learn more from each other.

***RESOLUTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

- 14/1.** The Conference received the General Report of Action for Children.
- 14/2.** The Conference appointed the following as trustees of Action for Children for three years (2009–12):
- ∞ Ms Pamela Chesters (2006)
 - ∞ Ms Nicky Douglas (2009)
 - ∞ Mrs Catherine Dugmore (2006)
 - ∞ Mr Paul Snell (2009)
 - ∞ New trustee to be confirmed (2009)
- 14/3.** The Conference noted that Heather Schroeder was appointed for three years as a trustee of Action for Children by the Methodist Council on 14 October 2008, acting in the name of the Conference.
- 14/4.** The Conference noted that in December 2008 Ruby Beech was appointed to act for three years as the Connexional Team's appointee to the trustees for Action for Children.
- 14/5.** The Conference noted that the trustees of Action for Children for the following year will be:
- ∞ Chair: Ms Pamela Chesters (2006)
 - ∞ Vice Chair: Mrs Catherine Dugmore (2006)
 - ∞ The Secretary for External Relationships or their appointee: Ms Ruby Beech (2008)

In addition, the following 13 people:

- ∞ Revd William Anderson (2005)
- ∞ Mr Alan Broughton (2007)
- ∞ Mr Christopher Daws (2005)
- ∞ Ms Nicky Douglas (2009)
- ∞ Dr David Findley (2007)
- ∞ Mr Andrew McDonald (2007)
- ∞ Mr Gareth Matthewson (2008)
- ∞ Mr Gerald Russell (2005)
- ∞ Ms Lesley Sawers (2008)
- ∞ Mrs Heather Schroeder (2008)
- ∞ Mr Paul Snell (2009)
- ∞ Mr Terence Wynn (2007)
- ∞ New trustee to be confirmed (2009)

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14/6. The Conference expressed thanks to those trustees who retired in 2008–09:

- ∞ Mr Robin Wendt CBE (1997)
- ∞ Mr Garron Baines (2003)
- ∞ Ms Anthea Cox (2003)

14/7. The Conference warmly acknowledged the exceptional contribution of Robin Wendt CBE as trustee and then Vice Chair of Action for Children. Robin's astute judgement, careful chairing of meetings and wise counsel has helped steer the governance of NCH and now Action for Children through periods of immense change and development. The Conference extended to Robin its profound gratitude and very best wishes.

14/8. The Conference amended Standing Orders as follows:

007(v) 'NCH' '*Action for Children*' means the charitable company of that name incorporated on the 14th May 2003.

240 NCH *Action for Children*. The Conference shall exercise its powers of appointing and removing members of the board of NCH *Action for Children* in accordance with the constitution of that body as amended from time to time ...

Appendix: Reasoned statements

Heather Schroeder

Heather is a qualified social worker and retired as Director of Children, Schools and Families with Camden Council in August 2008.

She was previously Director of Social Services for Camden. She has a wide-ranging, in-depth experience of leading, direct and support services and major change initiatives and has valuable knowledge of the current and future agenda for children's services and for adult social care and health.

Ruby Beech MBA MCIPD

Ruby is an HR professional who is currently working as Director of Corporate Services for the London-based charity Hestia Housing and Support. She moved there in October from a post at the House of Commons, where she was Assistant Sergeant at Arms/Head of Management Services. Prior to this, Ruby was Coordinating Secretary for Central Services with the Methodist Church. Her earlier career included work in the private, public and charitable sectors, including being Director of Personnel for the YWCA of Great Britain and Director of Personnel and Training for the Council of YMCAs.

During her year as Vice-President, Ruby had a theme of the inclusive love of God and tried to advocate for those whose voice is sometimes not heard and to seek equality

for all, including on the grounds of gender, race and sexuality. She also prompted the first Presidential and Vice Presidential blog and built up communication via the internet, including social networking sites such as Facebook. Ruby has recently joined the Action for Children Facebook group and invited her friends to do the same.

In local church settings Ruby has been a youth leader over many years and has a passion for the care and development of children and young people. She is also a Local Preacher and a member of a number of trustee bodies.

Nicky Douglas

Between 2004-2008 Nicola was the Managing Director for Walt Disney Television International in Hong Kong; prior to this she was the Managing Director of Nickelodeon UK and before that Vice-President of Turner Entertainment Networks Europe. Nicola has global experience of brand management, marketing and communications in addition to a track record of delivering change within large and very diverse environments. Nicola not only brings business acumen but also a well developed network of business contacts and leadership at a senior level.

Paul Snell

Paul Snell is the Chief Inspector of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), which will merge with the Healthcare Commission in April 2009 to form the Care Quality Commission; at which point his role will come to an end. He joined CSCI as Director of Inspection, Regulation and Review in March 2004. In that role he led the delivery arm of the Commission, managing nine regional directors and the national director for service inspection. Prior to his appointment to CSCI, Paul Snell spent seven years as Director of Social Services at Nottingham City Council, including a spell as Acting Chief Executive. Before that, he held management positions in several local authorities. He is a GSCC-registered social worker.