

## General report

### 1. Introduction

This year we have provided members of the Conference with a printed copy of our Annual Report which was published at the end of 2009 and reminds readers of our Methodist roots and our 140 plus years heritage. It provides a snapshot of the wide range of services we currently provide and we invite the Conference to thank God for the values and commitment that still drive our work and for all that is being achieved today.

We are determined that Action for Children will continue to be a successful and thriving organisation across the nations of the UK and beyond. We aspire to be respected for our high quality services, strong brand and campaigns for children. We will protect our independence and speak out and innovate for children and young people.

Our priority is to focus the resources available to the front line so that all our decisions and actions are governed by the imperative of making a positive difference in the lives of children and young people, ensuring that they are at the centre of all that we do.

We are deeply thankful for every single person who has supported our work. Our Methodist supporters have always been there for us – just as we try to always be there for the children and young people who need us most. They have given us their time, their know-how, their energy and their prayers. We value our partnership together and in what follows supplement the Annual Report with a brief update on some key aspects of our campaigning work and the development of our partnership with the church.

### 2. The Neglect Appeal was launched in October 2009

*“The true measure of a nation’s standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialisation, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born.” UNICEF 2007*

No one knows exactly how many children in the UK are neglected. However, studies show that up to 10% of children experience neglect. What we do know is that of all the cases where a child has been identified as being at risk, almost half (48%) are due to neglect. But the vast majority of children who experience neglect go unreported and are not helped.

What is meant by neglect? Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic needs and it is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. It can be harder to recognise than other forms of child abuse because it is often a symptom of other long-term and complex problems in a family rather than an easily recognisable one-off event. Neglect comes in many guises. Some of the following, observed on a regular basis over a period of time, may be indicators:

- a child who frequently goes hungry
- a child who regularly goes to school in dirty clothes
- a child who is not taken to the doctors when ill
- a child who is frequently left unsupervised and lives in a dirty home.

What is Action for Children going to do through its Neglect Appeal? We are aiming to raise £17m over the next three years:

- to develop new, mobile services to reach out to children who do not use the services we already have;
- to develop a programme to involve fathers more in mainstream services;
- to develop a programme to tackle poor nutrition in all our family support services;

- to develop nationwide programmes to tackle other specific aspects of neglect and to enhance the skills of our family support workers
- to encourage the government to invest in a policy of early intervention.

For more information go to our website [www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk) .

### **3. Publicity and advertising**

#### *Television*

Action for Children continued to increase awareness of the organisation through advertising. This increased awareness is resulting in increased income and clearer communication across all groups. We will continue to advertise throughout 2010, moving from intensive bursts of advertising to a more consistent 'drip drip' approach. This will further increase our awareness, whilst ensuring best value for money.

The advertising will focus on neglect, in line with Action for Children's appeal activity. A new advert continues our simple and powerful series where young people talk about how Action for Children helped them to transform their lives.

In 'Emily's story', she talks about how she was neglected from a very young age, often going hungry and living in filthy conditions. For Emily, it was the emotional neglect that was most damaging and we know that this can have terrible and permanent effects on many neglected children and young people.

Emily's story has a positive ending. Although there were no quick fixes, she was able to get the help she needed to overcome her experiences and began to feel wanted and loved.

### **4. Increasing partnership with the Methodist Church**

During the last year we have increased our co-operation in areas that can be of mutual benefit. These have included:

- our Public Policy team and the Joint Public Issues Group sharing briefings and working together in preparation for the General Election;
- co-production of Advent and Christmas worship resources;
- co-operation around safeguarding policy and practice;
- celebrating Action for Children Sunday;
- re-establishing the policy and practice basis of our co-operation in international partnerships promoting child care;
- better informing Districts about our project work.

### **5. International partnership work**

As well as being one of the UK's leading children's charities, Action for Children also works internationally. Working in a creative partnership with the World Church Relationships Office of the Methodist Church has enabled us to support child care work through partnerships with the Methodist Churches in southern Africa, Zimbabwe, the Caribbean and Belize. The partnership strategy agreed by the Council of Action for Children and the Methodist Council enables us to make the best use of our joint knowledge and experience, so we can support locally delivered services as effectively as possible.

### **6. Moving from Highbury**

The Highbury site has featured strongly in our history, not least in pioneering the provision of training over many years. The site has profound significance for many and this was marked on 8 June when

the President of Conference spoke and led prayers of thanksgiving. The Sisterhood memorial window is being moved from Stephenson Hall to Westminster Central Hall and we are grateful that its new location will be easily accessible to the public and helps affirm our close partnership with the Methodist Church. Our Annual Reunion will be held at Westminster Central Hall on 3 July when the memorial window will be rededicated.

It was two years ago that the trustees decided that there was a strong business case for moving from the Highbury site as it would cost millions of pounds to make it fit for purpose. An immense amount of work has gone into planning the move. A small central London office is being opened in October and many of our central support services are moving to purpose designed offices at Watford while other support services have already moved to our Glasgow offices.

## **7. Memorandum of Agreement and Articles of Association**

We have amended our Memorandum of Agreement and Articles of Association so as to better reflect our practice for the appointment of charity trustees. All vacancies are widely advertised in the media, including the religious press, and a robust interview process undertaken to ensure that together the trustees have the necessary balance of skills and expertise to oversee the charity's work. Our processes include careful examination of the values we hold in common with the Methodist Church and we look to individual commitment to those values together with an understanding of the importance of our partnership with the Methodist Church. We also ensure that the assessment process includes appropriate participation and assessment of candidates by young people.

After consultation with appropriate Methodist Church officers, and with their support, we have amended the Memorandum of Agreement and Articles of Association to reflect the above process. We will report appointments to the Methodist Conference and look to further develop ways in which we can both report on our work and share our insights and experience with the Conference.

### **\*\*\*Resolutions**

**9/1. The Conference received the General Report of Action for Children.**

**9/2. The Conference noted that the trustees of Action for Children for 2010–11 will be:**

- **Chair: Ms Pamela Chesters (2006)**
- **Vice Chair: Mrs Catherine Dugmore (2006)**
- **Methodist Church Appointee: Ms Ruby Beech (2008)**

**In addition, the following 11 people:**

- **Revd William Anderson (2005)**
- **Mr Allan Burns (2010)**
- **Mr Christopher Daws (2005)**
- **Ms Nicky Douglas (2009)**
- **Dr David Findley (2007)**
- **Mr Gareth Matthewson (2008)**
- **Mr Andrew McDonald (2007)**
- **Mr Gerald Russell (2005)**
- **Mr Paul Snell (2009)**
- **Mr Terence Wynn (2007)**
- **Mrs Heather Schroeder (2008)**

9/3. The Conference expresses thanks to those who retired from Council in 2009–10:

- Ms Lesley Sawers (2008) – retired December 2009
- Mr Alan Broughton (2007) – retired March 2010

**C. Appendix: Reasoned statements**

Allan Burns

Allan has been a co-opted member of the Scotland Committee since 2009. He is an experienced non-executive and Managing Director having worked both in the UK and International markets with responsibilities that required local, regional and global leadership. His business experiences stretches over 35 years in consumer, manufacturing and distribution industries, ranging from vehicles, pharmaceuticals, oil to alcoholic drinks. He has led and managed in both SME and large corporate organisations and has been actively involved with acquisition, turnaround and restructuring businesses internationally achieving transformational business results and cultural change. He currently holds positions as Vice Chair of the National Theatre of Scotland, Court Member and Visiting Professor of Napier University Edinburgh and Chairman of Scotland Food and Drink and previously held board positions with the CBI, SCDI, Scottish Enterprise and membership of the Futures Forum. He retired from Diageo Plc in May 2006 where he was Executive Director of Diageo in Scotland as well as holding Group Procurement Director of Diageo world wide.