



Synod Report

East Anglia District
Autumn 2020

Introduction

I am pleased to report to the Synod about how Action for Children's work, with your support makes a difference. In spite of the Coronavirus pandemic, we have continued to pursue our mission to protect and support children, young people and their families with determination.

We thank our Methodist friends for your tireless support and prayers during this challenging time. Many of you reached out to help and we felt the impact of your kindness. Thank you on behalf of the children, young people, families and our staff – you are amazing!

I wish you an enriching and blessed time of fellowship.

Blessings,

Head of Faith Partnerships

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National news

Interim CE and new Trustee

We were delighted to welcome [Melanie Armstrong](#) back to Action for Children as our interim Chief Executive following Julie Bentley's resignation.



Melanie, who was the Interim Managing Director of Corporate Shared Services until December last year, took up her new role on 3rd March 2020.

In June, Dr Daleep Mukarji's tenure as the nominated Methodist representative on our Board of Trustees came to end. Since 2014, Dr Mukarji has contributed immensely, investing invaluable wisdom and business acumen into the running of the charity. We will miss him but, knowing his deep affection for the charity, we are sure he will continue to support us in other ways.

The Revd Dr Michael Long (left) succeeded Dr Mukarji in July 2020. Revd Long is the minister of Notting Hill Methodist Church, very close to the site of the Grenfell Tower fire in London. He is no stranger to Action for Children, and it is a privilege to have him on board. Visit our website to read about [Revd Long and our other trustees](#).



We would appreciate your prayers for our leadership team, especially at a time like this.

Emergency Fund supports families during Covid-19

In response to the Coronavirus crisis, we launched our first ever Emergency Fund appeal, which has raised a remarkable £705,000 so far.

Before the Coronavirus pandemic, there were already more than four million children in the UK locked in poverty. And, for us, supporting vulnerable children and families through the pandemic was a priority. Many more vulnerable families in every community edged towards breaking point, unable to afford basic essentials such as food, nappies, cleaning products, gas or electricity. Generous donations from our supporters enabled us to be there for such families.

The pandemic did not just place financial pressure on vulnerable families; it affected them in many other ways. For instance, keeping children entertained, as well as trying to support their learning has been very stressful for parents. In some cases, we found that children were living at home in poor conditions.

To offer practical support, we adapted some of our community-based services so that families could receive support at home. Examples of what we offered include, activity packs to support children's learning, and advice delivered through phones or an IT device.

We also expanded our digital services. On 14th July, we launched our improved online parenting service, [Parent Talk](#) to the public. It offers free and confidential live chat with our parenting coaches, along with a rich catalogue of articles about parenting issues.

You can listen to our colleagues talk about how we responded in an [interview](#) for the [Methodist podcast](#).

Almost 370,000 supported in 2019/20

Annual reach figures published in July showed that Action for Children supported an incredible 368,648 children, young people and families in the UK in 2019/2020 – that is more than four times the capacity of Wembley Stadium.

Although our overall reach has fallen by 5% compared to 2018-19, we reached significantly more people through our digital services and mental health support.

Funding for children's centres, which previously enabled us to reach high numbers of children and families, has continued to drop. This means that we reached around 50,000 fewer people through our children's centres and family hubs in 2019-20 (a 26% drop). However, our digital support grew by 20% during 2019-20 reaching 17,000 more parents and carers

through [Parent Talk](#) and [Dots](#) (digital parenting support) and the [Build Sound Minds](#) web pages.

Pioneering Serious Organised Crime Early Intervention service launched in Newcastle

Together with Northumbria Police and Newcastle City Council, we launched the Serious Organised Crime Early Intervention service in Newcastle on 13th August. Our pioneering programme diverts young people away from a life of serious organised crime.

The programme will target vulnerable young people who are at risk of getting involved in drug dealing, money laundering and stealing to order. It will offer targeted support to 11 to 18-year-olds through intensive one-to-one support, peer mentoring, education, and employment training.

The service was first introduced in Glasgow in 2013 and was highly successful in keeping 71% of young people we supported out of secure care for at least six months. One teenager who had committed almost 600 offences has not reoffended since taking part in the Glasgow project.

A round table discussion between representatives of the three organisations marked the launch of the project, which is funded by £4.6 million from the National Lottery Community Fund. There are plans to also roll it out to Edinburgh and Cardiff.

Domestic Abuse win for children

July saw a huge success for our Policy Team. Government amended the Domestic Abuse Bill so that children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right. We have been campaigning for this change for years. It will help more than 830,000 children in England living in families reporting domestic abuse, as well as those children who are affected in Wales. We are now looking ahead to how we can secure further support for children affected by domestic abuse.

Ensuring children catered for in post-pandemic recovery plans

We have been working hard to highlight the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on children, young people and families. Alongside other children's charities, we launched a joint call on the Government to put children at the heart of its post-pandemic recovery plans. The call was signed by over 150 organisations and attracted a range of media coverage.

Also, in collaboration with other children's charities, we put together [briefings](#) for Government on ensuring that recovery plans focus on children. They were launched with the Children's Minister and shadow minister at the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Children on 16th July.

We have also published a [report](#) with the Early Intervention Foundation, to highlight the impact of the pandemic on services which intervene early to support families.

We are also working on a report based on data from Action for Children's Emergency Fund, which has been a lifeline for families who have struggled financially during the pandemic. We know that this generation of children face unprecedented poverty and mental health risks. We will be calling on Government to end this crisis of childhood, so that every child can grow up safe and happy. Look out for our report and petition, which will be launching in autumn.

To sign up to [support our campaigns](#) and use your voice to effect lasting improvements to children's lives, visit our [website](#).

Fundraising events

We would like to thank the churches that incorporated Action for Children Sunday into their virtual services. We were touched that you remembered us in your prayers and blessed us with your gifts once again.

Thank you to everyone who took part in [Boycott your Bed](#) on 21st August, our sleep-out fundraiser. We hope you had as much fun as we did. The resources are still available for anyone to take part in their own time.

We are excited to let you know that our Secret Santa Christmas campaign will run again this year. Thanks to more than 19,000 Secret Santas, we raised more than £430,000 for vulnerable children in the UK last Christmas. Look out for more information.

The pandemic has limited the physical fundraising events, we can hold; but, there are still other creative and fun ways to safely raise funds while social distancing restrictions are in place, such as the Virtual Kind Together Challenge and Step out for Children walks. Visit www.actionforchildren.org.uk/how-to-help/fundraising-events/ for ideas or you could come up with your own.

To receive regular information about our work directly from Action for Children, please contact ask.us@actionforchildren.org.uk Thank you.

Contact Details

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Safe and happy childhood

Action for Children protects and supports children and young people, providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.

