

Action for Children Report to Synod Autumn 2023



Introduction

The generosity and kindness shown to Action for Children by our Methodist supporters continues to warm our hearts. When every household is struggling to make ends meet, your outpouring of love for the most vulnerable children, young people and their families and carers is humbling.

As well as a review of recent engagement with our Methodist family, in this report we look at the significant rise in the number of young people and families that we reach. It is clear there is a growing need for our services across our nations which demonstrates the value of your support for our work. Put simply, we couldn't do what we do without you.

Action for Children Sunday

The theme of growing and flourishing together was at the heart of the resources shared with churches for this year's Action for Children Sunday in July. This year, we included two short videos, featuring Tan Y Bryn, a home offering safe and happy childhoods to children who have experienced trauma and Terri's story: a mum who benefitted from our parenting classes and support.

We have had inspiring feedback from churches about their special services and colleagues enjoyed visiting churches to speak about our work and hear stories from our dedicated Methodist supporters.

The Methodist Conference

Our CEO, Paul Carberry, was invited to speak at this year's Conference in Birmingham. With him was Jordan, a young colleague who works as a mentor to young people who are at risk of criminal exploitation. Together they spoke of the work the charity is doing and Paul offered his thanks to Methodists for their support. We were delighted to have such a warm reception from the Conference – it was hugely encouraging.

During the Conference we had a stand where a selection of our staff including Claire, the

local Children's Services Director, had many enriching conversations. We felt privileged to be part of the event.

Our team have enjoyed participating at several other Methodist events in the last few months including the Methodist Women in Britain Conference, Flourish (the Yorkshire North and East event at Scarborough), and the International Methodist Schools Conference in Bristol.

Stephenson Awards

We recently celebrated our annual Stephenson Awards (named after our Methodist founder, the Revd Thomas Bowman Stephenson). The Awards recognise and celebrate our incredible colleagues, volunteers, foster carers and supporters, as well as the achievements of young people and their families. The event was hosted by our long-standing Ambassador, Angela Rippon CBE.

The Revd Rachel Parkinson, Chair of the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District, was one of this year's judges and we were delighted to celebrate the supporter achievement award with Margaret Hobbs from Wellingborough Methodist Church, who has been fundraising for us for more than 70 years!

Our latest reach figures

Our overall charitable reach to children, young people and families in 2022/23 saw a significant increase of nearly 100,000 to 766,000. Our ParentTalk service, which offers online support to families in a range of areas from persistent school absence to how to manage Christmas on a budget, has grown by 24%, reaching half a million people.

The rise in our reach to children and young people has grown in four areas:

- The expansion of mental health support services, including the Blues Programme which offers wellbeing support in schools.

Contacting us

- Your regional fundraiser: <https://bit.ly/fundraiser-contact>
- Supporter care: [0300 123 2112](tel:03001232112) (open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) or ask.us@actionforchildren.org.uk

Connect with us on social media

 @actnforchildren  /actionforchildren  actionforchildrenUK

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.



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- Growing numbers supported through outreach youth housing support services, aiming to prevent future homelessness.
- We reached more young carers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- More disabled children, young people and their families benefited from our community short breaks activities and support.

More information about the growth in our work and our strategic priorities will be in the Action for Children annual report for 2022-23 which will be published towards the end of summer and will be available on our website.

Policy and campaign work

In our last Synod update we shared our [report](#) showing that work does not necessarily provide a route out of poverty and hardship for many families. We have supplemented this with a new [interactive tool](#) where you can discover more about child poverty in your area. You can use this tool to find out about food bank donations to families, free school meals, and fuel poverty. The tool enables you to easily share this data with your MP and in doing so become part of a growing movement of people campaigning for change.

We've joined the End Child Poverty coalition in calling for the UK government to end the two-child limit. Research shows that 1 in 10 UK children are now affected by the controversial policy which limits benefits payments to larger families.

We know that benefits often already aren't enough to keep the fridge full or pay all the essential bills. It stretches already tight budgets beyond breaking point. You can support this campaign by [emailing your MP](#) with the latest data about child poverty in your constituency, including the number of children who are affected by the two-child limit.

Independent visitors

We recently had the pleasure of celebrating our amazing volunteers, staff and young

people from our Independent Visitor service, a program that matches volunteers with care-experienced young people.

We heard stories of how lives have been changed and incredible friendships have formed. Stories like volunteer Yvonne and Briggit who first met almost 20 years ago when Briggit was just 9 years old and living in care. Now, they describe their unbreakable bond as a mother and daughter relationship.

"I wouldn't have thought that 20 years later that this woman is going to be one of the dearest figures in my life. She's literally been there every time I've needed her", says Briggit.

Have you thought about volunteering? Find out more and help change lives:

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/support-us/volunteer-with-us/>

Christmas

It may be summer now, but before we know it Advent and Christmas will be with us. We are preparing worship resources for services that you may wish to hold in support of our work. The theme this year is, The Gift of Joy, recalling the angel's words heralding the birth of Jesus to the shepherds and the great joy brought to all by his birth. We hope it will uplift you and other Christians in celebrating this special time of the year and enable Action for Children to bring heartwarming festive joy to thousands facing going without this year. The resource will be sent to Methodist supporters and will be available on our [website](#). Thank you for your continued prayers for our work and the young people we support.

Stay in touch

Please do not hesitate to contact your [Regional Support Officer](#) or our [Supporter Care Team](#) with your enquiries.

Best wishes

Anna McCrum - Interim Faith Partnerships Lead

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