



# Action for Children Report to Synod

## Spring 2022

### Introduction

We thank God for the fresh opportunities that a new year brings. Action for Children is overcoming the challenges of the last few years and moving forward with determination to support vulnerable children and their families. Ensuring children have a safe and happy childhood remains our priority.

Your thoughtful donations and volunteering continue to make a huge difference. We ask that you also remember our work and those who use our services in your prayers. Thank you.

### Star in Every Child

We have a lot to look forward to, especially the launch of our new campaign, Star in Every Child. This campaign aims to show that when a child has the safe and happy childhood they deserve, their star shines brightly. Too many children in the UK right now don't have the chance to shine. Their childhoods are overshadowed by abuse, neglect, poverty, and poor mental health. Shortly, we will tell you more about how you can get involved.

We also look forward to seeing Methodist supporters at events like Action for Children Sunday services and the Methodist Conference.

### Action for Children Sunday on 10 July

The pandemic prevented many churches from marking Action for Children Sunday in the last two years. We were touched by the thoughtfulness of churches that found other ways to support our work. This year it falls on 10 July, but churches can mark it on another Sunday if that is more convenient. We are working on worship material that we hope will work for both online and in-person services.

### Methodist Conference President and Vice-President meet Action for Children staff

We were honoured to welcome The Revd Sonia Hicks, President of the Methodist Conference, when she visited Short Breaks @ West Hyde, Hertfordshire, in January (*pictured with staff*).

Last December, Barbara Easton, the Vice President, was our guest at a special Christmas reception in London.

West Hyde is a residential short breaks service for young people with



learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and complex health needs. It provides day and overnight care after-school, at weekends and in school holidays. Short breaks give families time away from demanding caring responsibilities and supports the young person to make friends and learn independence skills.

Revd Hicks toured the service and saw how Methodist support helps make a difference. She said, *"What I've really found moving... is just the sense of family that exists here. All the staff... are passionate about the work that Action for Children is doing here and the care that they offer to the young people who use this service. I have been absolutely amazed by that. I wish it could be replicated in every part of the Methodist family."*

We are grateful for Rev Hicks' and Barbara's passionate support for the charity's work.

### 3Generate Health and Well-being Centre



Action for Children staff helped run some activities at the 3Generate Conference for 8 to 23-year-olds in October 2021.

Collaborating with a Methodist youth worker and youth representatives, our mental health support workers ran the Health and Wellbeing Centre. Young people dropped-in for group or individual activities that support their mental wellbeing e.g., colouring, crafts, journaling, talks and creating their own self-care kit.

In the Town Hall, we consulted young people about how they would like to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. They gave lots of useful feedback which will help shape our Children and Young People's Participation Strategy. We also delivered a workshop for children, youth and family workers.

It was an excellent collaboration with Methodists, which staff thoroughly enjoyed. We look forward to other opportunities to support Methodist youth.

### Campaign for increases children's services funding

After years of campaigning for increased funding for children's services, and support for families with the youngest children, we were pleased with many of the commitments made in government's Spending Review in the autumn. The Chancellor increased grant funding for local authorities and announced funding packages for family hubs and for vital early years services.

But the work doesn't stop there: we're now aiming to ensure that these services reach as many families as possible, and that they are supported with long-term, sustainable funding for years to come. You can read our [blog](#) for more details.

### **Calls to Prime Minister to tackle child poverty**

Despite positive Spending Review announcements, many children are still facing a very difficult year ahead. The recent cuts to Universal Credit, combined with the unfolding cost of living crisis, are devastating families across the UK. Our frontline staff have told us that child poverty levels are at the worst they can remember. We have supported thousands of families desperate to keep their children warm, clothed and well-fed.

We're calling on the government to take urgent steps to end child poverty, by increasing the child element of Universal Credit and making sure that benefit changes reflect the rising costs of living. You can sign our open to the Prime Minister here: <https://bit.ly/PM-Poverty>

### **Craftivism for change**



Last September, we invited Methodists to take part in a craftivism activity to urge their MPs to commit to making children a personal priority.

Over 50 people signed up to make stars and send them to their MPs with a letter. We were pleased to

receive responses from some MPs, including Sajid Javid, MP for Bromsgrove and Secretary of State for Health and Social Care at the time.

We are considering what we learnt and how we will involve supporters in future. If you would like a direct invitation to take part, please email [karis.kolawole@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:karis.kolawole@actionforchildren.org.uk)

### **New charity partnership with Iceland Foods**



We are pleased to let you know that Iceland Foods has chosen us to be its charity partner for 2022. The

ambitious partnership will see lots of exciting activities in communities across the UK. Iceland has a massive presence with 1,000 stores and 30,000 staff across the country.

The food retailer first started supporting us through our 2020 Secret Santa campaign when it made all its staff Secret Santas, donating £280,000 to our Emergency Fund. In 2021, it generously increased its Secret Santa support to create a £300,000 Winter Fund supporting children, young people and families.

#### **Contacting us**

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

#### **Connect with us on social media**

@actnforchildren /actionforchildren actionforchildrenUK

Last year, we also made a bid to become Morrison's charity but sadly lost out. We appreciate the efforts of Methodists who visited their local store to encourage staff to vote for us.

### **Secret Santa raises almost £900K in 2021**

Our Christmas campaign, Secret Santa, was a huge success, raising an amazing £860K so far. We would like to thank existing Secret Santas and those who signed up for the very first time.

The donations help us support families who are struggling to afford the basics, like food and clothes. More than four million children in the UK are locked in poverty, and this affects many aspects of their lives – including, their mental health and ability to learn.

### **Count Your Blessings Lent resource**

Please join us on a 40-day journey during Lent to learn and pray about our work and donate to help us reach more children. We have produced a resource, which is available to download from our website: <https://bit.ly/FaithFR>

### **Giant Wiggle Yoga**

Giant Wiggle, our fun-filled sponsored activity for children, in partnership with The Very Hungry Caterpillar™ is back. Children and adults can sign up to an exclusive wellbeing yoga session.

The Giant Wiggle is pre-recorded, so you can take part at any time during the month. It features Becky from Little Yoga Stars UK, a cook-along with a chef from one of our nurseries and CBeebies star Andy Day reading The Very Hungry Caterpillar.

To sign up for a free digital pack full of activities, visit: [actionforchildren.org.uk/giantwiggleyoga](http://actionforchildren.org.uk/giantwiggleyoga).

### **Join an Action Squad**

If you're part of a fundraising or community group, we'd love to tell you more about the many benefits of making a transition into an Action Squad. Action Squads are a wonderful family of community event volunteers who do incredible things to raise vital funds for our work. Ask your [Regional Support Officer](#) about setting up or joining one.

I wish you an enjoyable time at Synod. Thank you for your support.

Blessings,

Faith Partnerships Lead  
[karis.kolawole@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:karis.kolawole@actionforchildren.org.uk)

### **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.

