



Action for Children Report to Synod

Autumn 2022

Introduction

My report comes with heartfelt thanks to our Methodist family for your unwavering support. From April 2021 to March 2022, you raised over £644,300 to support Action for Children's work. We are touched by how you overcame the constraints of the pandemic and lockdown to raise such an incredible amount. We can't thank you enough.

Now that the worst of the pandemic is behind us, we are keen to reconnect with supporters. My colleagues and I have been excited to catch-up with old and new friends at events, such as the Methodist Women in Britain Residential (April) and their 10th anniversary garden party (June); the Joint Public Issues Team and Methodist Conferences (both in June).

Action for Children Sunday

We are grateful to churches that have held or plan to hold an Action for Children Sunday service. We hope that the material for young people helped them to explore how the theme, 'There's a star in every child' applies to them and other young people around them. The worship material will remain online until next year. Find it here: actionforchildren.uk/worship

Action for Children reaches over 670,000 in 2021-22

Results of our 2021-22 Reach survey showed that our services reached an amazing 671,275 children, young people and families, a significant increase from the previous year.

Our growing reach came against the backdrop of the impact of the pandemic on community-based services. Here are a few key figures:

- Mental health support reached 94,689 children, young people and parents or carers. This is an equivalent increase of 400% over the previous year.
- Parent Talk digital support reached over 400,000, an increase of 11%.
- Our children's centres, early help and family hubs increased their reach by 60% to over 102,000.

We are proud of these achievements and know we could not have made such an impact without supporters like you.

Sidekick - new text service for young carers

We have been piloting Sidekick, a confidential text messaging (SMS) service for young carers in UK aged between 13 and 18 (or up to 25 if they have additional needs). They can send a text at any time about anything and will get an answer back from a qualified support worker within 24 hours.

A young carer is someone under the age of 18 who looks after a family member who has a physical or mental health condition, or misuses drugs or alcohol. The Children's Society estimates there could be up to 800,000 – with many falling through the cracks.

Our own research shows young carers are reluctant to ask for help and to use 'crisis' support services because they often feel their situation is not important enough compared to the person they care for. So, we hope that Sidekick can offer them much needed support. Find out more here:

<https://sidekick.actionforchildren.org.uk>

Olwyn nominated for Stephenson's award

Congratulations to Olwyn Margaret Dimmock, lifelong Action for Children supporter, who staff nominated for a Stephenson's award.

Records show that over the past 33 years, Olwyn (on the right in the picture) has raised up to £160,000 for the charity, working with her Methodist community. We believe she deserves this recognition for investing so much passion and energy and for motivating others to support her beloved charity.



Named after our founder, the Stephenson's Awards celebrate our amazing supporters, volunteers, carers and staff, and the achievements of the children, young people, and families we support.

Cost of living crisis open letter

The cost of living crisis is a huge concern for everyone. We are taking several actions to urge the government to tackle the cost of living crisis. This includes an open letter to the Prime Minister asking him to restore benefits to a decent level; increase the child element of Universal Credit to help lift children out of poverty; and deliver a serious and cross-government strategy to tackle child poverty and making it a key part of the government's plans for levelling up.

We would like you to add your voice to our petition. You can read and sign the letter online at actionforchildren.uk/livingcosts

Latest annual figures from the End Child Poverty Coalition, of which we are a member, show 3.6 million children are living in poverty in the UK, down 200,000 (-2%) on the year before. The results cover the period

from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 when millions of families were getting the £20 Universal Credit uplift, which experts say is the main reason the overall figure went down.

We are also collaborating with other organisations to take action, such as the Joint Public Issues Team and over 50 faith groups and charities who have endorsed the report 'Is cost of living support enough?' by Professor Donald Hirsch of Loughborough University.

Boycott your Bed: Stay Up

We are excited to announce that our fundraising event, 'Boycott your Bed' is back on Friday 7 October 2022. We invite you to join our dream team, a community of people giving up their beds for one night to raise vital funds to support vulnerable children in the UK.



Whatever you do with your night, the money you raise could make a vulnerable child's dreams of a safe and happy childhood come true.

Royce Warner raised an amazing £3,331 when he took part in Boycott your Bed two years ago. It coincided with his 80th birthday, so he slept in a bath. Roy of St Paul's, Penmaenmawr in Wales is pictured with regional fundraiser, Nikki.



Our Regional Fundraising Team will be on hand every step of the way with invigorating challenges in the exclusive Bed Boycotters Facebook group. To find out how you can get involved on your own or with a group of family and friends or your church, visit www.actionforchildren.uk/stayup or email [your Regional Support Officer](mailto:yourRegionalSupportOfficer).

Banking funds raised

You can now pay the funds you raise into your local Post Office. We have negotiated this convenient way of banking with the HSBC to get round the challenges of finding a local branch.

To pay into your local Post Office, you would first need to apply for a deposit card by contacting our Supporter Care Team by emailing ask.us@actionforchildren.org.uk or calling 0300 123 2112.

There are other ways to pay: BACS (online banking), our website, or by telephone. These are our preferred

Contacting us

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

Connect with us on social media

@actnforchildren /actionforchildren actionforchildrenUK

methods as they help keep operational costs to an absolute minimum and ensure that we can focus funds on supporting the children, young people and families that need our help more than ever.

If you choose to pay in your funds by cheque, please:

- ensure you write your details on the reverse of the cheque itself, enabling us to track and – importantly – to thank you.
- send cheques to our Watford Office: 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Rd, Watford WD18 8AG. Our colleagues there will receive and acknowledge them, with thanks.

Cash donations in £20 and £50 notes

In a couple of weeks, the Bank of England will take the old-style paper £20 and £50 notes out of circulation. Polymer versions, first introduced in February 2020, will replace them. The paper notes will be valid until 30 September 2022. Home Collection Box holders and anyone responsible for collecting cash donations need to be aware as only some banks will allow you to pay in the old notes after that date.

Help us improve our communications

Methodists are a valuable part the Action for Children family. We would like to understand our Methodist supporters better, so that we can communicate effectively and create the right opportunities to help you stay involved in what we do.

Please help us complete a short survey which takes between 5 and 10 minutes. Your answers will remain anonymous. To share your thoughts, visit <https://bit.ly/3JSgJAJmethodistsurvey> Thank you.

We know that the pandemic, furloughing staff, and subsequent restructuring impacted how we engaged supporters. We are working hard to ensure that you have the support and information you need to stay involved and informed. We are fine-tuning processes for banking donations, Home Collection Boxes and managing relationships locally.

Please do not hesitate to contact your [Regional Support Officer](#) or our [Supporter Care Team](#) with your enquiries. Their contact details are at the end of this report.

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

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Karis'.

Faith Partnerships Lead
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.

