

## 7. Action for Children

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Action for Children invites the Conference to thank God for a productive year and to pray for grace to continue to make an even greater impact in the coming years. We would also like to thank the Methodist Church for supporting us in so many ways; we are proud of our relationship.
- 1.2. 2015 marked two notable anniversaries: 60 years of working in Scotland where support is given to 14,000 disadvantaged children and young people, and 15 years in Northern Ireland where support is given to 6,000 children. Politicians, government officials, partners from other organisations and our Methodist supporters joined us to mark these significant milestones. In preparation for our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019, discussions have begun with Methodist leaders and MHA (which turns 75 in 2018) about the most appropriate way to recognise this impressive history of commitment to public service.
- 1.3. This year, one trustee leaves the Board of the charity: the Revd John Howard, District Chair for the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District. Since 2011, his support, wise counsel and unwavering commitment have been of great benefit.

### 2. Time to transform

- 2.1. Over the past year, reflection on progress and objective evaluation of capacity to build on success has been undertaken. Action for Children operates in a rapidly evolving environment with ever more complex challenges and where resources are extremely stretched; therefore, the Charity must evolve in order to respond. To become the charity we envision, we must find new and innovative ways to deliver our services to meet the escalating need and optimise our resources, so that time and money are spent on doing the things that will make the biggest difference for children.
- 2.2. Transformation will make it possible for Action for Children to increase focus on its core purpose to improve demonstrably and permanently the lives of disadvantaged children in the UK. In addition to the services that we deliver on behalf of Local Authorities, we need to provide even more services that we fund ourselves to fill the gap in provision that reducing Local Authority budgets will leave. And if we are going to maximise the benefits for children, the services that we do provide ourselves will need to be extremely cost-efficient, delivering measurable and lasting change for the better where the need is greatest. This will mean developing innovative new services and then, once we have strong evidence of positive results, rolling them out to meet need across the country.

### **3. Our Services**

- 3.1. In spite of Local Authority cuts to children's services, Action for Children has continued to deliver essential services to improve the lives of disadvantaged children. We deliver services for children of all ages, from early years to those starting families of their own: parenting support through our Children's Centres, specialist services for disabled children and helping young people develop practical skills and emotional resilience needed to become confident and independent adults.
- 3.2. We measure the results of our work extremely rigorously, and last year we were able to demonstrate that 76% of those who used our services experienced an improvement in their family life as a result and 86% of children were more able to achieve their educational potential. The full impact report is available on our website [www.actionforchildren.org.uk/who-we-are/our-impact/](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/who-we-are/our-impact/).

### **4. Our policy and campaigning work**

- 4.1. Our policy and campaigning work in the UK has produced a number of successful outcomes for children over the last year. We focus resources and energy where we can make a real impact concentrating on influencing policy decisions that directly affect children. We have led or collaborated on several campaigns, teaming up with organisations such as the Joint Public Issues Team, NSPCC, The Children's Society and Barnardo's to share information and campaign for change that will make a difference.
- 4.2. Some highlights from the past year include:
  - In partnership with the New Local Government Network, hosting roundtables at the Conservative and Labour party conferences; attending SNP and Plaid Cymru conferences.
  - Achieving national recognition of disadvantaged young people's needs in the UK Financial Capability Strategy, especially those who miss out on financial education at school; attending 3Generate 2015 to talk to young people about this.
  - As part of the End Child Poverty 'Money Matters' campaign, successfully influencing the Government to keep measuring household income as part of the way they monitor child poverty.
- 4.3. We are grateful for the efforts of many Methodists who supported our campaigns, helping us make the case for change for these issues.

### **5. Support from the Methodist Church**

- 5.1. Action for Children is privileged to receive significant support from the Methodist Church each year in the form of financial support, volunteering, and practical items (eg for young people moving into independent accommodation). We are astonished and humbled by the commitment and creativity of those who helped raise around £1.5 million that came from parts of the Church last year. A large proportion of this invaluable financial support for our work with children was raised through supporter groups and church fundraising events throughout the year especially celebrating Action for Children Sunday and collections over the Christmas period, and from home collection boxes and house-to-house collections.
- 5.2. There has also been an increase in services running from church halls, enabling us to support even more children and families in great need. We express our thanks to all those who

volunteer in this work but we would welcome more volunteers as need grows. We are extremely grateful for all this help; without it we could not do our vital work.

## **6. Our Methodist Partnership**

- 6.1. Karis Kolawole became our Head of Church Partnerships last year and has focused her energy on strengthening existing relationships with the Methodist Church, developing new ones and exploring opportunities for new partnerships. She has held several meetings and attended many more, and we are pleased that her interaction with the church has been both positive and welcoming.
- 6.2. We are particularly keen to work with the Methodist Church, its ecumenical partners and local communities to help more disadvantaged children, working with schools, church workers and young people to make this possible. In order to identify where there is scope to work together, Karis has met with several members of the Connexional Team and District Chairs. Similar discussions have started with Cliff College and the Safeguarding Adviser about sharing knowledge and expertise.
- 6.3. Action for Children can make a greater impact in the lives of children working collaboratively with the church, its community and its ecumenical partners, and so welcome support with: delivering more services through volunteering and using church premises; raising money to meet new needs (eg mental health and refugee children); raising awareness of the needs of children through community engagement activity and supporting our campaigns.

## **\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

**7/1. The Conference received the General Report of Action for Children.**

**7/2. The Conference noted that the trustees of Action for Children for the current year are:**

Chair: John O'Brien (2012), Vice Chair: Heather Schroeder (2008)  
Methodist Church Appointee: Dr Daleep Mukarji (2014)

Joe Barrell (2012), Les Clifford (2011), Richard Cryer (2015); Helen Gallagher (2016), Stanley Goudie (2011), Tracy Griffin (2015), Kate Guthrie (2014), Markus Ruetimann (2015), Paul Snell (2009), Yvette Stanley (2015)