



Action for Children Report to Synod Spring 2023

Introduction

Karis Kolawole is now on maternity leave and I am covering her role for a year. I look forward to supporting you in the months ahead.

We are hugely grateful to all our Methodist supporters for your continued commitment to help us secure safe and happy childhoods for thousands of children each year. In such challenging times for so many, your support is even more valued and vital for our work.

Fundraising over Christmas

I am delighted to report that we had our most successful Secret Santa fundraising campaign ever last year, helped by our first TV advert which ran in the weeks leading to

Christmas. As always, Methodists brought creative ways to support Secret Santa including carol singing at local train stations, hosting carol concerts and services at church as well as special collections during Advent. Thank you so much for your generosity – it makes such a difference.

We are thrilled to be working with the John Lewis Partnership on their long-term commitment to young people across the UK who are in care and have care experience. Through their Building Happier Futures fund, they are helping us to support more care-experienced young people, with particular focus on transitioning to adulthood and employment.

The iconic John Lewis Christmas advert shone a light on the care system by

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featuring the story of a man learning to skateboard in preparation for fostering Ellie, a young teenager, and also highlighting that an estimated 100,000 children and young people would spend last Christmas in care, in the UK.

Thank you to all who donated in John Lewis and Waitrose stores and online during the run up to Christmas. Please look out for more on our work with the John Lewis Partnership over the coming months.

Policy and campaign work

Our Director of Policy and Campaigns, Imran Hussain, has been invited to be one of the advisers for the Royal Foundation's Centre for Early

Childhood. Earlier this year, Imran met with our Royal Patron, the Princess of Wales, at Windsor Castle to discuss the Centre's work.

Child poverty ruins childhoods and damages children's life chances. Children who experience poverty and hardship do worse at school, earn less as adults, suffer poorer health and are more likely to need help from a social worker. In February, we published a report showing that work does not necessarily provide a route out of poverty and hardship for many families. The report can be found [here](#).

Our findings show that when it comes to supporting families in financial distress, work is simply not the silver bullet

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it is often presented as. We need more realism and less rhetoric from government in how we talk about the relationship between poverty and work. And we need a social safety net that ensures families can meet their essential costs and restores the link between a family's needs and the support that is available to them.

Increasing the Child Element on Universal Credit by at least £15 a week and abolishing the Benefit Cap would help to lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty and hardship and represent a big step towards building a system that guarantees a basic level of income security.

We invite our Methodist supporters to join us as we

continue to campaign to end child poverty.

New CEO announced

We announced late last year that Paul Carberry, our National Director for Scotland, will become the next Chief Executive of Action for Children, following a rigorous recruitment process.

Paul has been with the charity for almost 30 years starting as a project leader, and he has built up a wealth of experience across Children's Services, particularly as National Director for Scotland and latterly covering as National Director for England as well.

He will take over from Melanie Armstrong, our current CEO in the Spring of this year. Melanie was

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appointed CEO in 2020 and has steered us through the pandemic, stabilising our finances and introducing our new strategy.

Parent Talk research

Our national online service, Parent Talk, provides accessible and trustworthy advice, support, and reassurance for parents and carers of children. In the year April 2021 to March 2022, 9,000 parents and carers used our one-to-one service and nearly 470,000 people accessed some sort of support from Parent Talk.

Recent research using data from Parent Talk, has highlighted some of the concerns and challenges facing parents and families. By analysing the conversations between

users and Parent Talk coaches, we found that:

- There has been a huge increase in parents seeking support for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- Child mental health was the top issue that parents sought advice with via Parent Talk's 1:1 coaching service.
- There has been a steady increase in parents seeking help for a child who feels too anxious to attend school.

Our service continues to offer support to families with advice on common concerns affecting millions including parent burnout. Find advice on our website [here](#).

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We couldn't do any of this without you

In the 153 years since Action for Children was founded by the Revd Thomas Bowman Stephenson, our mission is still the same – to secure safe and happy childhoods for vulnerable children and young people. Our first Gratitude Week earlier this year allowed us to thank our supporters. We couldn't do what we do without you. We are so thankful not just for our Methodist roots but for the dedication of generations of Methodists to our cause.

Count Your Blessings

As we look towards to Lent, we have prepared our own take on forty ways to count your blessings. We hope this will offer a

positive boost to each day. 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.

Action for Children Sunday

This year, Action for Children Sunday falls on Sunday 9th July. We are currently preparing worship resources to support this special day and will share these with you in April. We will focus this year on the impact of poverty and the cost of living crisis on children and their families. We hope you will find the resource useful in your mission and ministry.

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Come and say hello in 2023

This year we plan to have stalls at the Methodist Women in Britain Conference at Swanwick in Derbyshire, Yorkshire North and East District's Flourish Gathering in Scarborough, the Methodist International Education Conference in Bristol and the Methodist Conference in Birmingham. If you're at one or more of these events please do come and say hello!

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

I wish you an enriching time at Synod.

Best wishes

Anna McCrum

Interim Faith Partnerships Lead

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