



# Synod Report

East Anglia District  
Autumn 2019

## Introduction

I am delighted to bring good news about your beloved charity, Action for Children. Thank you to all churches and fellowship groups that held events to mark our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, especially on Action for Children Sunday. Celebrating this historical occasion has been an exciting time of reflection, deep gratitude and gathering momentum for the future.

Listening to former staff and people who were blessed by our work share their memories, I hear great sense of pride and gratitude in their stories. Thanks to Methodist support we continue to help shape inspiring stories of hope. Thank you so much.

I wish you a wonderful time of fellowship at Synod.

Blessings,

Karis Kolawole

Head of Faith Partnerships

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## A memorable 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary

### Choose Childhood campaign launch

We launched our special anniversary report called, 'Choose Childhood' on 9<sup>th</sup> July at a Parliamentary reception. It is the result of research looking back over 150 years, asking children, parents and grandparents about childhoods and evaluating the policies of our national government and the Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland administrations.

Despite significant changes over the years to make life better, much more still needs to be done. The report shows that for many children in the UK, childhood hurts. In recent years, children at risk of harm, mental health needs, and child poverty have increased. Every child deserves a safe and happy childhood. That is why we are urging the government to urgently commit to a national action plan for children.

We thank everyone who has signed up to the campaign already and invite those who have not signed up on our website please do visit our Action for Children table at Synod to sign the campaign.

The Choose Childhood report also comes with a young people's version and a discussion pack, which are available on our website.

### Royal Patron photographic workshop

Our Patron, HRH the Duchess of Cambridge, made her own unique contribution to marking our anniversary by taking part in a photographic workshop for children and young people at our Warren Park service in Kingston upon Thames. We teamed up with the Royal Photographic Society for this event on the same day that Her Royal Highness was confirmed as their Royal patron.



The young people took part in several sessions led by Honorary Fellows of the Society who showed them how to take great photographs. The workshop also highlighted how photography can help young people develop confidence and self-expression.

### Methodist Conference

We kicked off our birthday celebrations at the Methodist Conference and had a wonderful time catching up with many of our friends from across the Districts. Our Deputy Chief Executive, Carol Iddon, addressed Conference outlining our progress, issues we still need to tackle and our future plans. She also thanked the Methodist Church for their amazing support in various forms. You can listen to her stimulating speech here: <http://bit.ly/AFCatMethConf19>. Over lunch, we hosted a fringe event where we presented the findings behind our 'Choose Childhood' report.

Subsequently, Conference has passed a motion asking every Methodist to write their local MP urging them to do something about the state of childhood. JPIT will provide guidance on how to do this in September.

## Plaque honouring our inspirational founder

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August, we unveiled a plaque at Brunswick Methodist Chapel in Newcastle in honour of our inspirational founder, Revd Thomas Bowman Stephenson. He was born in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1839 and baptised at the chapel in 1840.



It was very moving and symbolic to have Len Raven unveil the memorial plaque with the Lord Mayor of Newcastle. Len lived at our Edgeworth Children's Home between 1939 and 1950 and remembered vividly the time he spent in our care.

Our CEO, Julie Bentley, was also joined by our Methodist supporters, our trustee Gill Ellis, City Council partners, Chi Onwurah MP for Newcastle Central, and many former service users and staff. This plaque is a fitting commemoration of the life of a pioneer who touched so many lives throughout society and left a great legacy that still inspires us today.

## Policy & campaigning update

### Domestic Abuse Consultation and draft Bill

The Domestic Abuse Bill was introduced to Parliament in July 2019. We were delighted to see that ours and our partners' recommendations reflected in making the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's role more independent from government. However, there are still gaps in the provisions for children, particularly regarding access to services. We will continue to work with the aim of ensuring that children are sufficiently recognised within the definition of domestic abuse, and that all children who have experienced domestic abuse are able to access the support they need. Our blog will provide more detail about what we are asking the government to do:

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/news-and-blogs/policy-updates/2019/july/the-domestic-abuse-bill-making-it-work-for-children/>

### Local news and events

Action for Children will take over all Children's Centres for the Norfolk area from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019.

If you would like to learn more about our services locally please get in touch with Holly your local fundraiser who would be happy to visit your Church and update your members about what Action for Children does locally.

Our 1869 Action for Children pop up shop reopened in Castle Mall, Norwich. So far, the store has raised over £10,000, thank you to everyone that has visited the shop and supported it.

### Secret Santa

Last year, you helped make our Secret Santa campaign a huge success, raising thousands of pounds to help many children in the UK who risked facing a Christmas without food, warmth or love. We need your help again this year – please be a Secret Santa for a vulnerable child this Christmas. With your support, we can give more children a hot meal, a present and a safe place to sleep. Find out more: [secretsanta.actionforchildren.org.uk](https://secretsanta.actionforchildren.org.uk).

Other fundraising events happening in the District include:

- Step out for Children walks – various locations  
[actionforchildren.org.uk/step-out](https://actionforchildren.org.uk/step-out)
- Local skydive – various locations
- Inflatable 5k Norwich or Ipswich
- Cambridge Half Marathon 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020

To receive regular information about our work directly from Action for Children, please sign-up with your local fundraiser or at our table at Synod. Thank you.

### Contact Details

Your local fundraiser is: Holly Canham  
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