



# Honouring our heritage

Giving generations of children  
safe and happy childhoods

*An Action for Children sister with four girls and a wheelchair. 1900.*

# Where we began



**Then:** School playtime. 1872-1900.

**Our story begins in 1869. Poverty was widespread. Working conditions were brutal. And many people were living rough. Including countless children.**

One night, Methodist minister Reverend Dr Thomas Bowman Stephenson was walking by the arches of Waterloo Station with his friend, Francis Horner, and a policeman. The constable showed them where more than 20 children were sheltered under tarpaulin. Homeless. Bitterly cold. From that moment, and along with another friend Alfred Mager, their lives became dedicated to helping children living on the streets find food, shelter and comfort

Revd Dr Stephenson brought the plight of these children to his ministry, asking

the Methodist community to help him take action.

After moving to London in 1871, he opened the first National Children's Home (or NCH) on Bonner Road.

This became the first of our many family-style children's homes. And as the years and decades passed, from this foundation we've built more and more services to help vulnerable children across the UK.



**Then:** Boys with Sister Catherine Price. 1880-1900.

**Now:** Dana, a support worker, with Rosie. She lives in one of our residential care services, providing a warm and welcoming home to disabled children who have moderate to severe learning disabilities.



Whit Monday group, Old Boys and Girls' reunion. 1903.



## There from the beginning

Without the support of the Methodist community, we wouldn't be here today supporting vulnerable children. It's that simple.

It's hard to express how grateful we are for this legacy of kindness and generosity. But here are just some of the amazing ways Methodists show their support:

- Year-round fundraising.
- Leaving a gift in their will.
- Offering their church spaces for our vital work, including children's centres, parenting groups, early years groups and supervised visits.
- Volunteering at events or in our services.
- Supporting our campaigns for change.

**“ I have been a supporter of Action for Children for over 50 years – I first started as a girl selling sunny smiles. I have seen first hand the effects of child abuse, poverty and disability on children and their families as a children's nurse and realise the importance of the work of Action for Children. I am happy to leave a legacy in my will to continue helping those who need it the most.**

Elizabeth Bishop

## Our legacy

A lot has changed since 1896. We started as NCH, and then changed to Action for Children in 2008. In over 150 years, we've been a source of crucial support for vulnerable children, young people and families with nowhere else to turn. And our ambition – to give children safe and happy childhoods – shines just as bright.

Last year, we supported 765,905 children, young people and their families across the UK. We do this through 426 services in local communities, in schools and online.

We're a vital lifeline. We have been for generations. And together with amazing supporters like you, we can be there for generations to come.



Stoke Aiming High provides short break services and one-to-one support for young people and children with disabilities in Stoke-on-Trent, supporting their individual needs and helping them fulfil their potential.

## Angel's story

Our services for vulnerable children have grown in the 150 years since we began, building on the legacy our founders started. We support families, children in care, disabled children and help young people with their mental health and wellbeing. Our short breaks services for disabled children provide respite care as well as support for a child's individual developmental needs. This is on top of our residential care for vulnerable children who can't stay at home.



Angel was one of these children. She moved into one of our children's homes in Scotland in May 2022, after her aunt and uncle (whom she calls mum and dad) could no longer support her. Although Angel had lived with them for 10 years, they

recognised that she could benefit from more support to meet her needs. Before living with her aunt and uncle, Angel had been in different foster placements since leaving the care of her birth mum aged four, after some difficult early childhood experiences.

Angel felt vulnerable, anxious and lacked confidence, and moving into a children's home wasn't easy at first.

"I felt scared and shy and nervous, and a little bit homesick because I was missing my old home - and I still do to this day - but after a while I settled in. I became more like my old self, more talkative, happier, more smiley. Where I live now feels like my second home and the staff are like family to me."

Staff at the children's home are supporting Angel to navigate the world around her as she transitions into adulthood, from helping her to understand the importance of personal safety when she's out on her own, to how to manage finances.

Angel's excited for her future, which she hopes will lead her to working for Action for Children.

"My dream is to be a residential worker here. I would love that. Then kind of work my way up to manager."



## Your lasting legacy

Throughout his life, Revd Dr Stephenson promised to work "in the service of the children". His legacy is the beating heart of Action for Children's work. But we can't do it without your help.

By helping us be there for vulnerable children, you're a part of the Action for Children family. We're so grateful for the incredible past and present support from the Methodist community. And by leaving us a gift in your will, your lasting legacy could write brighter futures for vulnerable children. Today and tomorrow.

**“ When I re-wrote my will a few years ago, I wanted it to really reflect my values and represent what is important to me. Leaving a gift felt like a natural extension of my lifetime support of vulnerable children. I can't think of a better legacy to leave this world.**

Legacy supporter

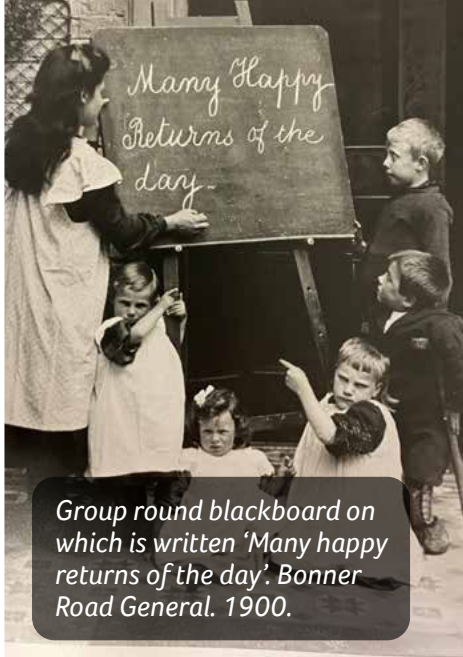
Want more information about leaving a gift in your will to Action for Children? Order our free enquiry pack at [actionforchildren.uk/enquiry-pack](https://actionforchildren.uk/enquiry-pack)

If you've already pledged to leave a gift to us in your will, we'd love to hear why. You can share your story with us via [giftsinwills@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:giftsinwills@actionforchildren.org.uk) or by calling us on **0300 123 2112**.

*Children in Barlow dining hall, Harpenden Sanatorium. 1914.*



*Group round blackboard on which is written 'Many happy returns of the day'. Bonner Road General. 1900.*



*Children playing with dolls' house. Harpenden Sanatorium. 1920.*



*Three girls in dormitory dressed for bed. Bramhope. 1920-1940.*



*Children in school. Bramhope. 1936.*

