



Driven by Love

*Action for
Children*

Our Annual Report 2023/24



Tyler's* story

Please be aware that this story contains content which may be upsetting.

Tyler started life in a violent and chaotic household where he was subjected to physical and emotional abuse from his parents from an early age. He and his three older siblings were frequently tied up outside their back door for 'bad behaviour' and would often go hungry.

Aged nine, Tyler moved into one of our homes for children who have experienced childhood trauma. When he arrived, he was withdrawn and frightened, and emotionally and physically broken.

It took weeks of gentle encouragement to get Tyler to sleep in a bed. The staff would sit next to him all night just slowly trying to coax him off the floor, because sleeping on the floor was all he had ever known. It was a real breakthrough moment when he slept in his bed for the first time.

With the support of the loving staff there, Tyler learnt to process and recover from his trauma. He began to trust people again and feels the staff and children are like family to him now.

Caroline, the Residential Manager, told us: ***"It's very powerful when you say to a child 'it doesn't matter what you do, we're going to stay here, we're going to love you and guide you through it all'. We are there to stand by children. That's what Action for Children does. We stand by every child and we work through difficult times together."***

** This story is based on several true stories of young people supported by Action for Children. The story and photograph of 'Tyler' is used to illustrate what they've been through and how we support them.*

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We take
action
for **children**



Welcome

from our Chair of Trustees, Sarika

I am incredibly proud of the services Action for Children delivers. This past year, we have helped 687,755 children, young people and families – making an incredible difference to their lives. We have also taken action towards our ambitious goal to grow our services for vulnerable children.

The past 12 months have brought more significant challenges for those we support. The ongoing impact of the cost of living crisis, rising prices and high rates of inflation continued to have a devastating impact on many families. The pressure on local authority budgets is clear too, with a number in financial difficulties, while the needs of their communities grow in intensity and complexity – for example, a growing need for mental health support services. All this at a time when funding is so tight. Quite simply, it has been another year of trying to do more with less.

We have been quick to adapt our approach to meet these challenges – in particular prioritising and accelerating the delivery of our new residential children's homes with three more new homes opened in the last 12 months. We've now added four new homes to our portfolio, with 10 more planned over the next two years (read more on page 16). We also commissioned a review into the growing issue of criminally exploited children, building on our work in this area. My thanks to Action for Children trustee and family barrister Charles Geekie KC who was on the review panel, led by child safeguarding expert Professor Alexis Jay CBE, which called on government for a UK-wide system of reform (read more on page 23).

It is vital that we maintain our financial stability and make sure we are maximising the support we can give vulnerable children. In the last year we have put in place a number of initiatives to improve our efficiency including reviewing our internal support structures and processes to make sure we have the right resources in the right place to deliver our strategy (read more about our Optimal Organisation programme on page 33).

Whilst supporting children and families with the immediate problems they face, we are also committed to bringing about lasting change. Our recent policy reports have shone a light on the pressures families are under, especially around the barriers they face to working and making ends meet. With a new government in place, we will continue to call for the progress we know is possible and collaborate with other leading children's charities to amplify those calls.

In the past year, our inspiring Young Ambassadors Board has helped elevate the voice of care-experienced young people. We are so proud and grateful for their dedication and passion for change. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion has also continued at pace, with the introduction of our



Developing Potential and Reciprocal Mentoring programmes. Both initiatives are designed to help efforts to break down barriers to progression for underrepresented groups within our charity. Our staff networks also continue to do incredible work, celebrating and championing communities, issues and events across the year.

Finally, we welcomed Navin Kaul as a new trustee in March 2024. Navin has been involved with Action for Children since 2019 and like all our trustees, is dedicated to having a positive impact on the lives of those we support.

Thanks to the Board of Trustees, co-opted colleagues, all our staff and volunteers and each of our amazing supporters for the incredible difference they make. Our vision, mission and values inspire us to deliver for children and make sure we continue to be their lifeline.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Sarika Patel'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Sarika Patel,
Chair, Board of Trustees

Hello

from our Chief Executive, Paul

When I became Chief Executive last year, I knew we had challenges ahead of us. Like all organisations working in the social care sector, the last year has been tough, but it's also been more rewarding than I could have ever imagined. **Leading an organisation of amazing and dedicated staff, all going the extra mile on a daily basis to help the children, young people and families who need us, is a genuine privilege. I'm incredibly proud of everything the Action for Children family has achieved together over the last year.**

In a time of ever-increasing needs and a tough economic climate, my immediate priorities have been working hard to grow our services – so that we can create more safe and happy childhoods – and make sure we operate as efficiently as possible. This includes delivering our Optimal Organisation programme, which aims to ensure our cost base is sustainable and we have the right resources and skills in place to deliver our strategy. Change is never easy, but I've been very impressed by the way colleagues have engaged with this work. On growth, it's been fantastic to see growth opportunities emerging across our services as well as the strong development of our residential growth programme (read more about this on page 16).

Building on our highly successful Serious Organised Crime Early Intervention Services launched in Scotland and now in Newcastle and Cardiff, The Jay Review into criminally exploited children is, I believe, one of the most important pieces of work Action for Children has championed. In March 2024,

we published our findings in *Shattered lives, stolen futures*, calling on the government for UK-wide system reform to prevent criminal exploitation of children (read more on page 23).

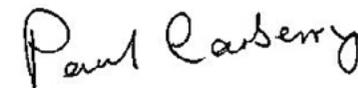
Our fundraising teams have had another fantastic year, raising £17.2m. We launched our first Starry Night Gala event in November. The beautiful Battersea Arts Centre in London hosted celebrities and supporters for a spectacular evening. I was so moved to watch our Young Carers Aloud choir from Wales, led by singer Charlotte Church, perform with such talent and passion.

At the start of 2024, we also launched our general election coalition campaign – Children at the Table – working with other children's charities Barnardo's, The Children's Society, the National Children's Bureau and NSPCC. Together we called on the government and all political parties to work together to improve the lives of babies, children and young people, to put children's needs and voices at the heart of decisions- and policy-making, and to spend more of the nation's

wealth on them. With a new government in place, there's a real opportunity to build a brighter future for vulnerable children and young people.

Our online Parent Talk service reached an amazing 468,786 people last year. And we're really proud that a study by the University of Birmingham has confirmed the value of this award-winning service to the parents that it supports (read more on page 14).

To every member of the Action for Children family, I say thank you for continuing to be a vital lifeline for vulnerable children across the UK. Together, we can continue to build more safe and happy childhoods.



Paul Carberry,
Chief Executive



Highlights

of the year

Driven by love,
we helped

687755

children, young people and families in 2023/24.

That's across our four core service areas:



611,089

Family support



7,839

Children in care



13,949

Disabled children
and young people



54,878

Mental health
and wellbeing

Highlights of the year



← As part of our residential growth programme, we've now opened four new children's homes (three opening in the last 12 months), with a further 10 planned to open over the next two years.

→ Our first Starry Night Gala in November raised over £154,000, with our Young Carers Aloud choir performing.



↑ 350 people had a wonderful day at our first inclusive festival – FestivAll – allowing young people with a variety of needs to enjoy this kind of event for the first time.

We worked with Barnardo's, NSPCC, the National Children's Bureau and the Children's Society to deliver the Children at the Table Campaign, making the case for policy makers to prioritise children in the General Election.



We introduced our Developing Potential and Reciprocal Mentoring programmes to break down barriers faced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and disabled staff.



↑ We've prioritised talking about child poverty and the barriers many parents face to working or working more hours.



← We commissioned a review chaired by child safeguarding expert Professor Alexis Jay CBE, into how policy and practice can better prevent and respond to the growing issue of criminally exploited children. We published our findings in *Shattered lives, stolen futures*.

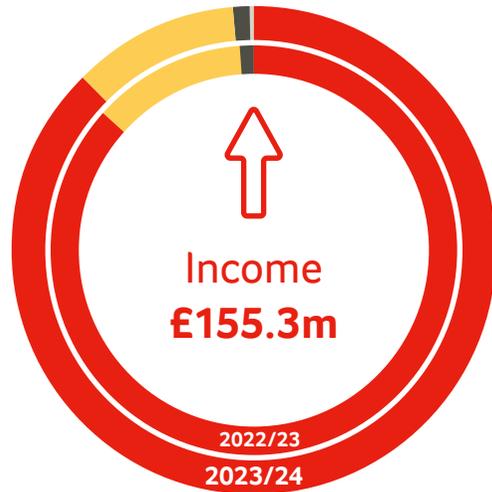
And we've continued to work with many amazing partners, including the John Lewis Partnership and Ella's Kitchen.



Driven by love

Financial performance

Here's a summary of our finances for the year 2023/24.



Income	2023/24	2022/2023
Charitable activities	£136.3m	£129.9m
Donation and legacies	£17.2m	£18.6m
Investment income	£1.6m	£1.3m
Other	£0.2m	£0.0m
Total	£155.3m	£149.8m

Expenditure	2023/24	2022/2023
Charitable activities	£154.3m	£143.1m
Fundraising	£6.7m	£6.3m
Other	£0.0m	£0.1m
Total	£161.0m	£149.4m

Where your money goes

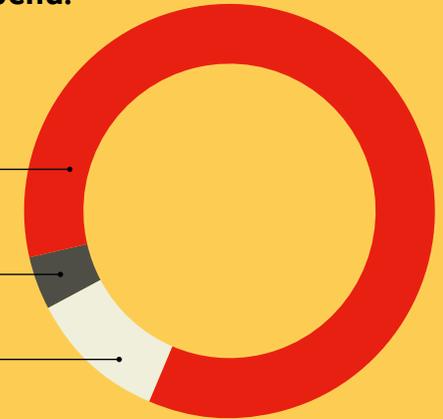
In 2023/24 85p in every £1 was used to create safe and happy childhoods. The remainder was invested in fundraising and admin costs to run the charity.

For every £1 we spend:

85p helps children, young people and families.

4p on fundraising.

11p on admin.



How we created more safe and happy childhoods

Expenditure on activities to help children



£68.4m

Family support



£36.6m

Children in care



£37.2m

Disabled children and young people



£11.3m

Mental health and wellbeing



£0.8m

Policy and campaigning

**more
safe
and
happy
childhoods**



Our vision

That every child and young person in the country has a safe and happy childhood and the foundations they need to thrive.



Our mission

We take action to change the childhoods of those who need help to thrive. Giving vulnerable children and young people the protection and practical help they urgently need and tirelessly campaigning for lasting change.



Our values

In everything we do, we are: passionate, ambitious, collaborative and inclusive.

Our strategy

is made up of seven strategic goals. These goals are underpinned by our commitment to put the voice of children and young people at the heart of our work and to embed our diversity and inclusion strategy.

The first section of this report is structured around our seven goals – starting with how we're increasing our impact through growing our core services, followed by the work we are doing to influence policy decisions.

The report then moves on to our fundraising and how we're driving greater support for our vision and mission through increasing brand awareness.

Finally, we explain how we enable this through our brilliant staff and volunteers, with initiatives that support more efficient ways of working and use of resources.

What we'll do for children, young people and families:

- 1** **Grow our services to help more children and young people.**
- 2** **Increase the impact of our work with children and young people.**
- 3** **Influence policy decisions to improve the lives of children and young people.**

How we'll achieve it:

- 4** **Attract, develop and retain brilliant staff and volunteers.**
- 5** **Inspire greater support for our vision and mission.**
- 6** **Increase our financial contribution from fundraising, nurseries and childcare.**
- 7** **Deliver best value for children and young people and improve efficiency.**

Our services

We deliver **372** services in local communities across the UK, in schools and online.

Family support

Supporting families to make sure children and young people get the best start in life, through:

68 children's centres and family hubs.

61 family support services.

43 Spring nurseries and out-of-school clubs.

36 support services for young people, including youth justice, youth employment and youth support.

9 young carers' services.

1 online Parent Talk service.

Children in care

Caring for children and young people to give them a safe, stable and loving home, through:

20 youth housing support services.

15 fostering and adoption services.

11 children's homes.

1 children's rights and independent visitor service.

1 residential school.

Disabled children

Supporting disabled children, young people and their families, through:

55 residential and community short breaks services.

14 homes for disabled children.

Mental health and wellbeing

Building children and young people's emotional resilience to help them overcome challenges, through:

37 mental health support services.

15 Northern Ireland

● Our front line services

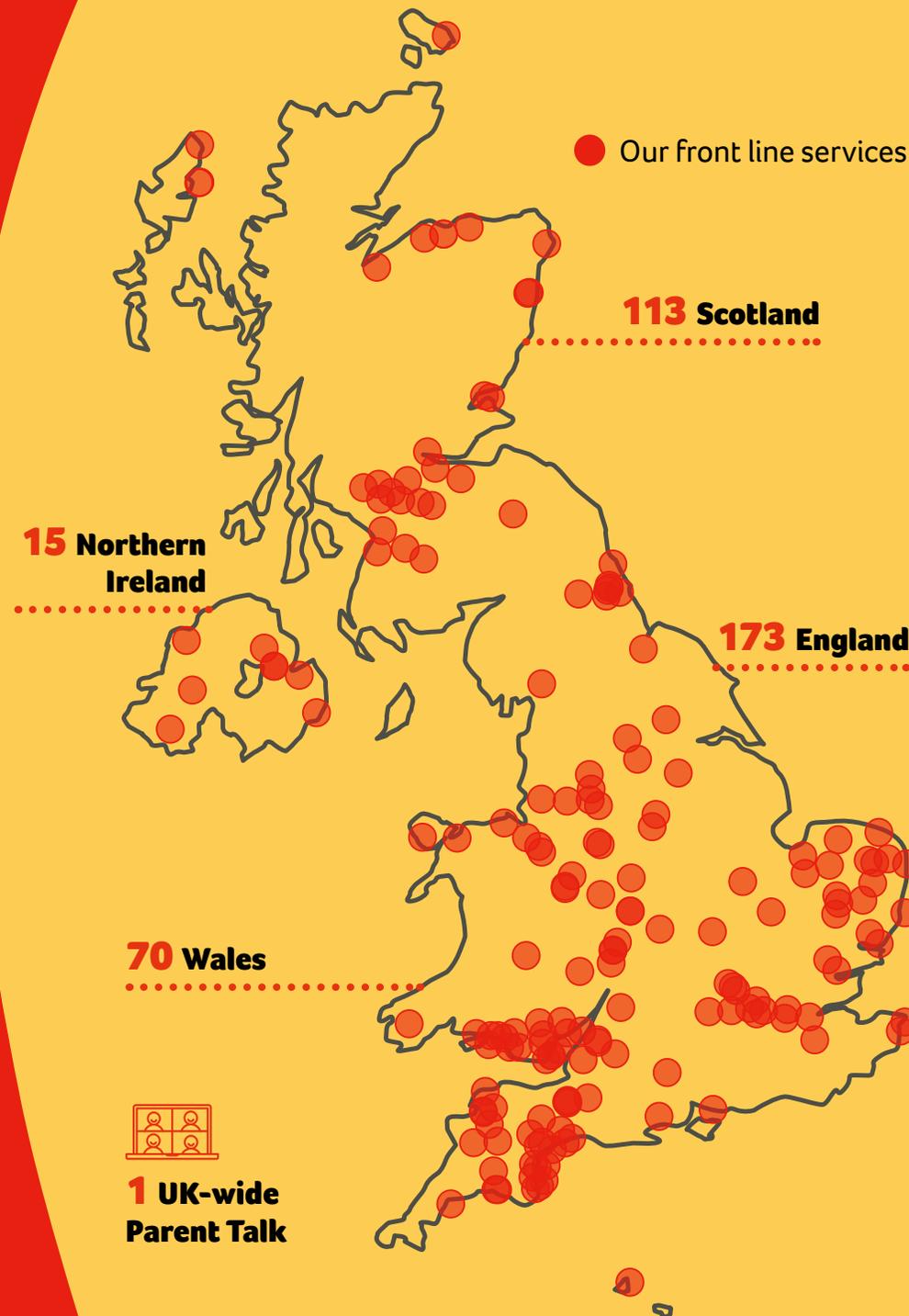
113 Scotland

173 England

70 Wales



1 UK-wide Parent Talk



Growing our services and increasing our **impact**

Family support

All families, no matter their circumstances, will need help, support and guidance at some point.

We know that every family is different. That's why we tailor our support and focus on delivering services that have proven, demonstrable impact. We see time and again that the right support can address a family's needs early on, and it stops things from getting worse. This experience influences our policy work, through our calls to improve funding for family support and early intervention services.

Our support for families includes services like:

- **Our award-winning online advice service, Parent Talk.**
- **Parenting support and early help for children and families.**
- **Supporting young carers.**
- **Youth services, helping with things like employment and building skills.**
- **And Spring Nurseries and Spring Oscars providing childcare.**

Charlene's story

Charlene, 36, from Devon has a six-year-old daughter. She's a single mum who relies on Universal Credit because she can't work due to living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and mental health issues. She's been supported by Action for Children's North Devon Children's Centre in Barnstaple for six years. When money's been tight, we've been there to help.

"I've cut back on absolutely everything, but I've still had times when I've looked in the cupboards and they're empty. I skip meals several times a week and often just eat cereal for a main meal as that's all I have left from the food parcel."

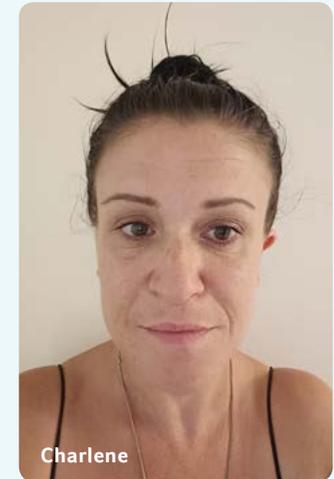
Her daughter gets a hot lunch at school every day, which provides some peace of mind. But during the school holidays, making sure she gets a daily hot meal "is a big worry."

The difference our family support services have made

We recorded outcomes for over **12,000** children and young people and their parents/carers who used our family support range of services.

"It makes me feel awful that I can't provide basic things for her. It's just degrading as a parent. When you're hungry and worrying about feeding your child, you can't focus on anything else."

"Action for Children has helped me with things like food parcels, grants to pay for school uniform and advice on budgeting and bills. I don't know what I'd have done without the staff at the children's centre. They're always there to talk to, and I never feel judged."



Charlene

They showed us that:

- **83%** of parents/carers have improved parenting skills and confidence through our family support services.
- **77%** of children and young people have improved relationships with their parent/carer.

Expanding our existing services

We're always adapting and expanding our services to respond to and meet local needs. Here are some examples from this past year.

In April 2023, we launched Action for Children's fifth Functional Family Therapy (FFT) team in Moray, Scotland, building on our track record of successfully delivering FFT in Scotland since 2012.

FFT is an evidence-based, therapeutic, whole family intervention which works with some of the most vulnerable young people. It supports families to remain together safely in their communities, reducing the risk of the young person being placed in care and improving their long-term outcomes.

After being established, the Moray service set new records for the number of families referred to a newly established FFT team in Scotland, with 47 referrals in 2023/24. To date, eight families have completed the five-month therapeutic intervention, with 100% of families reporting improvements in relationships and reduction in conflict.

In Newcastle, Devon and Norfolk, we've also been successful in securing additional funding in the last year, to continue or expand our work through the Family Hub model.

As a result of this, our Newcastle Early Help Service received an additional £318,000 to deliver specific targeted support for young parents, parents of pre-school children and support groups for families on the Solihull Approach. This is an approach to parenting that supports mental health and wellbeing in parents, children, schools and older adults.

This additional funding brings the total value of our services in Newcastle for 2023/24 to over £2 million. In our Norfolk Early Help Service, we were awarded the contract to support expectant parents as well as parents and/or carers with a child up to the age of two. Thanks to this extra funding (over £800k of Family Hubs funding in August 2023), we now offer a range of data-driven, targeted support, to specifically focus on groups that are often not well supported. For example, we've developed a course (also based on the Solihull Approach) for parents with learning difficulties, which is starting to attract national interest.

In Devon, our community learning approach Building Babies Brains, which supports parents and carers in the first 1001 days of their child's life, is being expanded into the South West and Wales, with around 250 champions to date.

Working together to help stop exploitation

In 2023, we started a new service in Scotland to work alongside existing programmes supporting the children, young people, families and adults who are the most vulnerable to exploitation in the Highlands.

Forming a cluster with Highland Intensive Support and Serious Organised Crime Intervention Services, The Anchor provides early intervention support. It participates in outreach projects helping young people vulnerable to exploitation and other exposure that may pose a risk to them, like alcohol or drug abuse.

With these three services working together, children, young people and families get the right support, that meets their needs, at the right time.



This new service, and the collaborative work of this cluster of services in Inverness, is an on-the-ground example of the work we've been doing from a policy perspective, raising awareness of children being criminally exploited and calling on those in power to put in place policies and procedures that could help turn futures around. Addressing this unmet need is a focus for us, and you can read more about the Jay Review we commissioned on page 23.



Our award-winning Serious Organised Crime Early Intervention service first launched in Glasgow in 2013. It has since expanded across the UK and is now delivered in Cardiff, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Dundee, Inverclyde and the Highlands.

Down-to-earth parenting advice you can trust

Parent Talk is our unique digital support service for parents of children aged 0-19, or up to 25 years old for parents with a child with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). It provides free advice on over 240 topics – from infant feeding to teen mental health.

Parents can also access in-depth personalised advice and support from a one-to-one live chat with our experienced parenting coaches.

Since it began in 2020, the service has supported over 1.8 million people, with 99% of responders in 2023/24 rating Parent Talk as 'good' or 'amazing'.

We have been able to further improve and develop Parent Talk this past year to better meet parents' needs, and to be more accessible and easier to navigate. We piloted Parent Talk+, a service to give parents and carers with children who have additional needs intensive support over a six-month period.

We know, from our own research, that these parents struggle to access adequate support. So Parent Talk+ offered eight sessions of intensive 60-90 minute phone support with a parenting coach who has an understanding of additional needs, and the laws and entitlements related to SEND.

Between May 2023 and March 2024 researchers at the University of Birmingham also conducted an evaluation of our service.



Their report demonstrates the incredibly positive effect Parent Talk can have in relation to improving parent/carer's confidence in their parenting ability, including building noticeable improvements in parenting capacity, mental health, knowledge, skills and coping strategies.

Research shows a strong link between reducing parent/carers' stress, improving how they felt they were doing as a parent, and improved family functioning and child outcomes. And as shown

in the report, most parents/carers see significant improvements for themselves, for their children and for their family after accessing Parent Talk.

468,786

people supported by Parent Talk last year

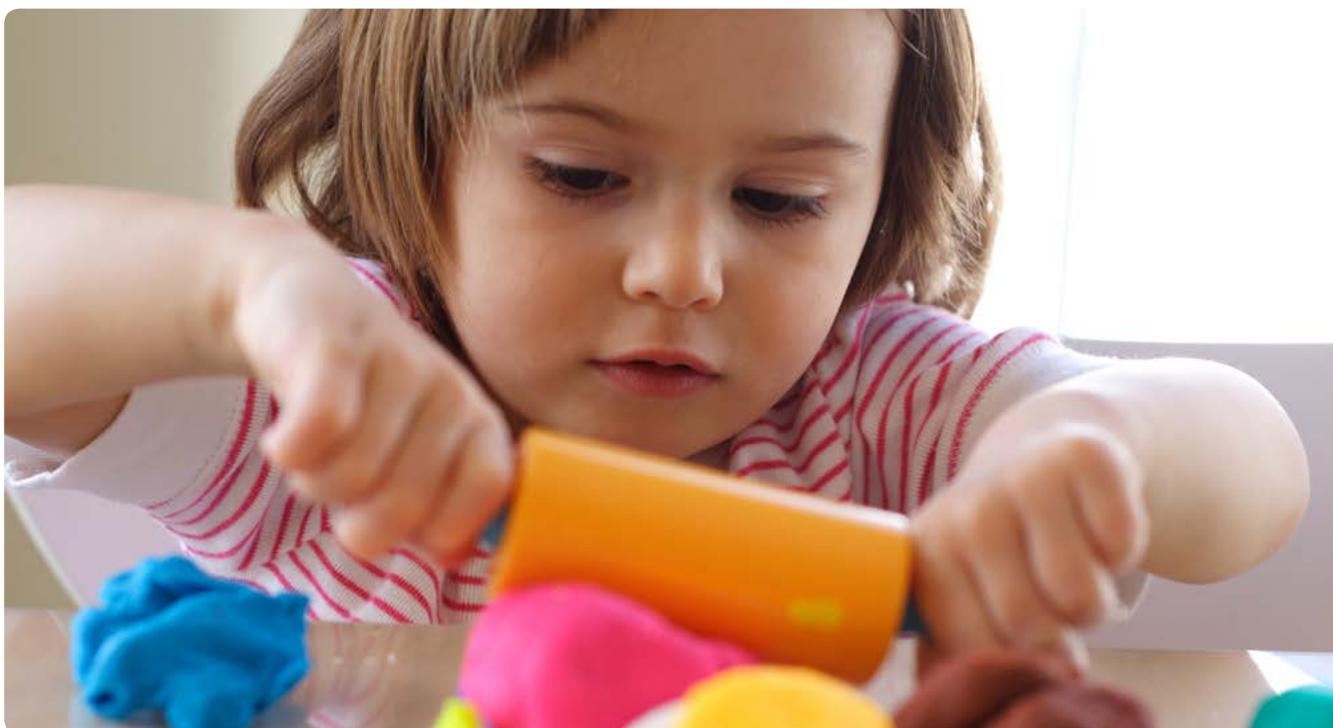


Quality childcare

We provide award-winning¹ childcare services from birth to 14 years, through our Spring by Action for Children Nurseries, and Spring Oscars out-of-school clubs. In 2023/24, Spring childcare cared for 8,600 children across our nurseries and out-of-school clubs.

Spring Nurseries and Oscars out-of-school clubs serve as part of the commercial arm of Action for Children. As well as providing essential childcare and early years education services for parents and children, any surplus generated by Spring and Oscars flows straight into Action for Children to support the wider work of our charity.

2023 has been another turbulent year for the early years education sector, with significant reform to funding systems and further government reviews and reforms announced. While a number of our Spring Nurseries continue to perform strongly, in early 2023, we made the difficult decision to close several settings that were no longer sustainable for the charity to operate. Over the course of the year, ten Spring Nurseries and eight Oscars clubs have been transferred to other providers, and one Spring Nursery closed. One more nursery and one more after school club is due to be transferred in the coming year. At the end of 2023/24, we had 27 Spring Nurseries and 16 Oscars clubs.



Spring by Action for Children continues nonetheless to be a voice for the sector. We have been cited in the Education Select Committee Support for Early Years report, have spoken at the Westminster Education Forum, and have published articles on the reforms in sector publications. Spring has also developed a Thriving Twos strategy, outlining our commitment to supporting staff working with two-year-olds across the sector, through training, initiatives and opportunities.

Last year also saw the launch of the Spring Learning Pathways to complement the Spring Career Pathways. Both support meaningful career progression within Spring, identifying the essential, recommended and

optional training we provide to support staff at each stage in their career. While we recognise that recruitment and retention remains a challenge, we're confident that these pathways, coupled with an increase in communications about the benefits of working for Spring, will be reflected in the staffing and satisfaction levels of our workforce in 2024/25. This will continue to make Spring an employer of choice within the sector.

100% of our nurseries continue to be rated by Ofsted (or equivalent) as good or outstanding. And due to focused work from the Operations Team in Scotland, Spring Oscars inspection gradings have improved from 72% to 91%, rated adequate and above.

¹ Top 20 Large Nursery Groups 2021.
<https://www.daynurseries.co.uk/awards/index.cfm/year/2021>

Children in care

More than one in seven children in England have some interaction with children's social care in their childhood². And the number of children entering the care system is continuing to grow³.

Our policy work pushes for vital changes needed to systems, policies and structures. But to meet the increasing need, we're working towards our strategic goal of opening more residential homes for children who can't live with their families.

In 2023/24, we helped 42,000 care experienced children and young people through support, information, and advice. This includes around 46 children in residential settings through a combination of Action for Children homes, and homes we run on behalf of local authorities.

We've now opened

4 new children's homes since beginning our residential growth programme with a further 10 planned to open over the next two years.



In addition to the Westacres home we opened in 2022/23, last year we opened three new homes – one in South Wales and two in the north-east of England. We currently have six other homes in development – two long-stay homes for disabled children and four for those with social, emotional or mental health (SEMH) needs. These are scheduled to open and welcome children and young people in 2024/25, with plans for four more homes in 2025/26.

Ty Fro, in South Wales, is one of our newest residential homes. The first young person arrived in November 2023. Now Ty Fro is home to three young people – each of them starting to settle in a stable and loving environment.

East Farm is a therapeutic home in Northumberland, for children aged 12 or under at the time they move in. We welcomed our first child to live in East Farm in the summer of 2023, and the second in the autumn.

Ayton Villa home in Gateshead in the north-east of England was registered in July 2023. We welcomed two boys aged nine in November 2023. We had our first Ofsted inspection in March 2024 and were awarded a rating of 'good'.

Our support for children in care includes services like:

- **Fostering.**
- **Residential homes.**
- **Children's rights and advocacy.**
- **Independent Visitors.**
- **And independent living advice and support for young people leaving care.**

Our new home at Westacres

Westacres is a residential children's home for children who've experienced childhood trauma. And it can be their home until they're 18 years old. It was the first home to open as part of our residential growth programme.

Often, children at Westacres have had eight or nine different homes, impacting their ability to trust adults. But our staff help children to understand their trauma, how it affects who they are and how they see the world and the adults in it.

Westacres makes a huge difference to the lives of children and young people, giving them much-needed consistency, a feeling of home, and love. To recognise this, Westacres was awarded Service of the Year at our 2023 Stephenson Awards, celebrating amazing achievements from across the Action for Children family.

"All I want to do is make a difference to these kids. I want to make them happy. I want to make them smile. I want to make them laugh. I want them to do the best they can with the time they've got living here."

– Paul, Residential Support Worker, Westacres.

"I love Westacres because the staff are so nice and caring. They'd do anything for you."

– Young person living at Westacres.

² Drivers of activity in children's social care Research report, May 2022. Department of Education.

³ Department for Education. 2023. Children looked after in England including adoptions.

Fighting for Rossorry Grove

In the context of another year where local authority funding is under pressure and many services are under threat, we fight hard to keep the vital services we operate. Rossorry Grove is one example of that determination.

Rossorry Grove is a supported accommodation service in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, for 13 young people aged 16-25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The service is jointly commissioned, with complex funding arrangements. In 2022, the service was at risk of closing because a portion of that funding had been withdrawn. But the staff and young people immediately took action, reaching out to politicians and council members to highlight youth homelessness and the lack of appropriate funding, services and accommodation in the region. The local media helped to give a wider voice to the young people, and an open day at the service for local members of the Legislative Assembly showcased art and other work representing the positive impact of Rossorry Grove.

Despite the risk of redundancy, a core staff team stayed on. This small team and dedicated manager went over and above, every day, to keep the service running safely and supporting the young people as they dealt with the anxiety of losing another safe home.

After a six-month-long process, and the new provider backing out, we negotiated an extension to the contract, with the additional funding needed. The service has now stabilised, and 13 places for young people facing homelessness have been saved.

Here's what some of the young people said when they found out funding was confirmed:

“Everything feels more hopeful, more bright and secure”

“Home feels like home again and not the uncertainty”

“I would have been homeless again as I had nothing else”

One young person, who was instrumental in this advocacy, won a Young Shining Star Stephenson's Award in July 2023.



Louise's story of her time in care

23-year-old Louise lives in London and is a single mum to her three-year-old daughter. She grew up in foster care from the age of 11. She's now one of our Young Ambassadors, giving voice to care-experienced young people and helping us shape our services and support.

Louise had an Action for Children Independent Visitor (IV) from the ages of 12-18 years old. IVs are trained volunteers who are matched with a young person in care and typically meet with them every month. This gives children and young people the opportunity to build a trusting and supportive relationship outside of the care system.

“As a child, having someone independent from social services in my life was so important to me. There was no judgement from her. A lot of where I've got to has come from her support. She believed in me, and people don't often believe in us as children in care.”

The cost of living crisis and cost of childcare have meant Louise has struggled financially, despite working full-time. She feels there's not enough support for young adults leaving care and wants to use her experience to help give others like her a voice.

“So many care leavers have so much potential and talent, we want to thrive, but we don't always have the right support and connections to guide us. It's so important we have more support, and access to the right services and advocates.”



The difference our children's homes make

Last year, we commissioned the University of Birmingham to research how our children's homes make a difference to the children and young people living in them.

As part of our research, children, young people and the amazing staff in our homes in North Wales told us about their experience with us. The research found that the children and young people living in Action for Children homes⁴ have a positive experience of residential care, a sense of belonging, and a feeling of a 'normal' home life.

The report evidenced that this positive experience is connected to important features of the homes we visited, including:

- A family-like atmosphere.
- Caring, affectionate and stable relationships with staff.
- Positive focus on progress including long-term outcomes.
- Personal relationships are valued, encouraged and supported, including friendships and social contacts.
- Personalised spaces, and outdoor space for socialising and having fun, as well as calm, safe spaces to be alone.
- Staff in homes work closely with team members and managers within relationships of trust.



As well as these, 41 (89%) of our placements have improved stability. Placement stability is critical for a child's wellbeing and development and to help trusting relationships to develop. Children and young people who have stability are more likely to feel safer and happier, do well at school and achieve their potential.

We're building on these strengths and making sure we deliver the same quality of care across all our homes, in all four nations, while developing a strong evidence base and helping us deliver loving care and the best possible outcomes.

⁴ 4 Homes included in the research were Tan Y Bryn and Tan Y Dre in North Wales.

Mental health and wellbeing

One in six children and young people in England aged eight to 25 had a ‘probable mental health disorder’ in 2023⁵. In our services, 28% of children have mental health needs identified at their initial assessment – that number has doubled since before the pandemic. And the number of children and young people struggling is still rising.

That’s why our strategic focus is building mental health and wellbeing support into more of our services for children, young people and families, across each area of our work, as well providing programmes that focus on mental health and wellbeing support.

Our mental health and wellbeing support includes services like:

- **One-to-one and group programmes for children and young people.**
- **Focused programmes for reducing anxiety and depression.**
- **And programmes for teachers and other professionals.**

5 Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023. NHS. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2023-wave-4-follow-up>

Last year, we continued to deliver our targeted mental health support for children and young people through our specialist services.

- **The Blues:** our six-week wellbeing initiative provided in schools in Scotland, Wales and England. 13 to 19-year-olds learn emotional resilience and how to reduce low mood and anxious thoughts. We reached almost 8,000 young people through The Blues in 2023/24. 75% said they had increased confidence, 73% increased self-esteem, and 81% were now able to talk about their mental health and wellbeing. 98% would recommend the service to a friend.
- **Bouncing Back and Bouncing Back Plus:** a two-week programme open to all primary and secondary school aged children, giving them an introduction to their mental health and wellbeing coping strategies. Bouncing Back and Bouncing Back Plus in Wales are supported by a generous donation from Ospreys in the Community. More than 6,000 children and young people completed the Bouncing Back programme in 2023/24. 94% said they have more confidence, and 93% had more ability to cope in stressful situations.
- **The Guide:** giving year-nine pupils in Wales the language and confidence to talk about mental health.

We continue to work on the accessibility of our mental health and wellbeing services. Our Glasgow Schools Counselling service has counsellors who can speak a number of languages, including Gaelic. Young people can also self-refer through discrete QR codes.



Our Staffordshire Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service also created two animated videos and accompanying workbooks, to help children aged five years old and upwards to understand and engage with the subjects of mental health and wellbeing.

Throughout our work, we also prioritise the wellbeing of our staff. Supporting children and young people who have experienced extreme neglect, abuse, trauma and violence can have a big impact. That’s why we implement initiatives like an eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) project at our Derbyshire & Derby Children in Care Emotional Health & Wellbeing Service. This helps staff to recover from traumatic events in their workplace and continue to provide therapeutic care for some of the most vulnerable children.

Delivering more wellbeing support with Scottish Friendly

This past year, Action for Children's partnership with financial services group Scottish Friendly provided mental health and wellbeing support to pupils at three schools in Glasgow.

The schools were chosen based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) in Glasgow, with the most challenged schools presenting with the highest levels of poverty and therefore where our support was most needed. The schools supported were Lochend High School, Govan High School and St Margaret Mary's High School.

Scottish Friendly's commitment to the programme funds two part-time Wellbeing Practitioners to deliver a range of mental health and emotional wellbeing sessions for pupils, including our Bouncing Back and Blues Programmes.

The programme offered staggered support focused on one school at a time. Starting with Lochend High School in August 2023, followed by Govan High School from November 2023, and St. Margaret Mary's from April 2024 until the end of the school year.

So far

140 pupils

at Lochend have been supported, with 31 participating in the Blues Programme, 109 taking part in Bouncing Back and nine receiving one-to-one support.



As a result, the responses included:

- **83%** of pupils who engaged in Blues said it increased their confidence.
- **100%** said they had better family relationships.
- **80%** said they had improved health and wellbeing.
- And **83%** had improved school attendance.



Ellis' story

17-year-old Ellis has struggled with his self-confidence since the loss of his mum at age seven. When the country went into lockdown, Ellis's mental health began to worsen and he started isolating himself from others.



As schools reopened, Ellis was invited to join Action for Children's Blues Programme, which gives young people the tools to look after their emotional wellbeing where he began to understand his feelings more and was given helpful tools to combat negative thoughts.

For Ellis, the programme has helped him overcome his negative thinking and focus on the positives in life.

"At first I didn't know what to expect," Ellis recalls. "I had tried reaching out for support before and nothing had worked. I went into the programme expecting that it would be the same information and buzzwords that are usually thrown about, but it was completely different.

"The programme didn't just give you advice, they helped explain how emotions, actions and thoughts are linked and helped us to understand how one can lead into the other. It also helped us to challenge any negative thoughts that we may be having.

"One of the main things I have taken away from the programme is the rewards system. For anything positive you do through the day, you reward yourself. It has really helped me take notice of the positive things in my life."

Disabled children and young people

Outside local authorities, we are England's biggest provider of disability services for children and young people.

Last year, we won a number of new contracts in regions across the UK to provide new services for disabled children. These contracts include areas like Oxfordshire and Gloucester, and are at various stages of development – from initial stages through to mobilisation. We plan to be opening and operating them next year.

Our new contracts for solo placements – services where a disabled young person is given intensive one-to-one support in a residential home. These new services will join our existing solo placement service in Buckinghamshire, providing a home to a young person who had lived in a secure hospital before coming to live in his forever home.

Our support for disabled children includes services like:

- Long-term residential homes.
- Short breaks for disabled children and their families.
- Community support like day trips or in-home help.
- Short break fostering services.



Pupils and staff at Headlands on a finance literacy course.

The difference our services for disabled children make

- **85%** of disabled children and young people have improved social skills and friendships.
- **77%** have taken part in more or new activities.
- **85%** have improved life skills.

Another year of excellence at Headlands

Our one-of-a-kind Headlands School in Wales is an independent school that supports children and young people with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties, challenging behaviour and Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

The school's annual monitoring inspection from Estyn in October 2023 was extremely positive. The strengths of the school were summarised as providing an inclusive community,

taking an individualised approach and giving pupils extensive learning opportunities.

Headlands also celebrated the implementation and completion of a personal financial literacy qualification, Lessons in Financial Education (LiFE) from the London Institute of Banking and Finance. This new initiative is thanks to a collaboration with the Principality Building Society and the school community.

The qualification empowers students with the tools to navigate the complexities of their personal finance. The LiFE qualification has equipped staff and students with a solid foundation to make informed decisions and start on a path towards financial stability. Headlands also hosted our Wales Boycott your Bed 2023 event, with around 60 people sleeping out and raising over £13,000 for Action for Children.

A festival for all

Staff from our West Hyde Short Breaks service always want to take young people to visit different places, but have often found that venues and activities aren't accessible to them. After talking with one of our festival and music-loving young people, the team looked at how they could support disabled young people to enjoy festivals and gigs.

The team pitched the idea of a uniquely inclusive festival where young people with access needs could attend as part of our Dragons' Den programme – our initiative that helps develop and fund pilot projects, encouraging innovation across the organisation. And following their pitch, our team was successful!

Following a number of false starts, including the pandemic and the hottest day of the year in 2022, FestivAll finally went ahead in 2023.

The sun was shining and the music was playing.



Children enjoying FestivAll

The event was a huge success, with 350 people attending, and 28 volunteers helping with stewarding and activities.

FestivAll 2023 included a live band, singers and dancers, a themed DJ tent, an activity tent, face painting and a chill-out tent for those with sensory needs. It was supported with wheelchair accessible flooring around the site and disabled and specialist toilets and changing facilities.

After years of wanting more for our young people, the joy on our guests' faces and the feedback we received was incredible. And we're delighted to have been awarded the funding to hold another FestivAll in 2024.



Safeguarding

Protecting and supporting children and young people who interact with our services is at the forefront of everything we do. The Safeguarding Service continues to support our children's services across all four nations. From running monthly question and answer sessions and a range of training sessions, to providing bespoke timely support, children's services staff can access advice and guidance whenever they need it.

We review our policies and procedures around important safeguarding issues every year. All this work is overseen by our Board of Trustees, which supports and challenges our arrangements for safeguarding children.

Every quarter, our senior managers audit children and young people's written records (case files). For 2023/24, for over 93% of case files there was evidence of practice supervision or of the management oversight of practice.

This is an important indicator for us. We can see our frontline staff are supported by their line managers, and that our work with children is of a consistently high standard.

“

It was so nice to bring R to an event where she could be included in everything.

– FestivAll guest

Influencing policy to improve the lives of children

Policy change has the potential to improve the lives of millions of children. That's why it's a vital part of our work, alongside the support and care we provide in our services.

We maximise our policy impact by focusing on areas where there is the greatest need, an opportunity to influence change, and where Action for Children has specific and relevant expertise and evidence.

We work together across our organisation to build the evidence base for change, by making the most of our service delivery data and insight, and by making sure we include the voices of children and young people in all of our work.

Over the last year, we have had successes across several key areas of work.

Amplifying the voices and experiences of criminally exploited children

Last year, we built on our years of experience supporting exploited children and young people, and the policy work we've done in Scotland and Wales, by launching the Jay Review of Criminally Exploited Children. The review was chaired by Professor Alexis Jay CBE with former Chief Constable Simon Bailey CBE and Charles Geekie KC, an Action for Children Trustee, on the panel. Over four days of hearings in November 2023, the panel heard 25 hours of evidence from witnesses in person and through video footage. The review received more than 100,000 words of evidence from 70 organisations or individuals,

including young people, parents and mentors with lived experience of exploitation. The final report, *Shattered lives, stolen futures*, received widespread national media coverage.

The Jay Review has been one of the most ambitious pieces of policy work delivered by Action for Children and helped us to begin crucial conversations across the UK, in the run up to the general election, on the policy change needed to improve the response to the criminal exploitation of children.

We've also continued to work with partners to strengthen the response to the criminal exploitation of children across the UK. This includes chairing the Age of Criminal Responsibility Community Confidence Subgroup, which supports the Advisory Group to consider the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland. And being part of the Serious Organised Crime Taskforce in Scotland, who have specifically focused on the criminal exploitation of children over the last year. In Northern Ireland we used the Jay Review to begin conversations with Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), Youth Justice and other key stakeholders around the work Action for Children does on this vitally important issue.



In Wales, we are contributing to the Education and Young People's Select Committee inquiry 'Children on the Margins' exploring harms to criminally exploited and missing children.

A place at the table ahead of the general election

We've worked closely with four other leading children's charities – Barnardo's, NSPCC, the National Children's Bureau, and the Children's Society – to deliver the Children at the Table Campaign. The campaign made the case for policy makers to prioritise children in the general election.

Our collective vision for the campaign was for children growing up in the UK today and tomorrow to be safer, happier, healthier and have more equal access to opportunities. The general election presented a key opportunity to address the urgent issues facing babies, children and young people today.

“

I didn't know what criminal exploitation was, but I didn't think it happened to children. I was naive. It's been the worst experience of my life and when it happened I thought there was no coming back from it.

– Cristi, mum to Sam who was exploited at age 17.

We held two events at the Labour and Conservative party conferences in 2023 – a joint reception and a Youth Zone event. Both were well attended, with then Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, making an appearance at the Conservative Youth Zone event and the Shadow Minister for Children and Families, Helen Hayes MP, at both Labour events. We built on those events by publishing a policy report in November and launching the campaign publicly in January with a parliamentary drop-in event that was attended by 30 young people and 30 MPs and peers.

Throughout the general election campaign, there was a Children at the Table tour of key constituencies giving candidates an opportunity to engage with young people and the crucial messages of the campaign.

Children's social care

Every 15 minutes, a child goes into care in the UK⁶. We work to make sure those in care and those leaving care get the support they need, and to improve early intervention to prevent children needing to go into care where possible. Last year, we responded to the UK government's new strategy for reforming children's social care in England – Stable Homes Built on Love.

We welcomed the response but called on government to commit to further investment in early intervention, to strengthen the legal framework to make sure early intervention services are prioritised, and to work with the voluntary sector. We've continued to work closely with the government to make sure the reforms are implemented effectively.



Families, and the former Chair of the Education Select Committee at the time.

In Northern Ireland we hosted the Children's Commissioner at our Supported Accommodation Service in Rossorry Grove. He met directly with young people to hear their experiences and share some of his top priorities in his term as Commissioner.

And in Wales, as members of the Programme Board, we have continued to support the campaign for the removal of profit from the care of looked-after children. We are pleased to see the Health and Social Care Bill was introduced to the Senedd this May, this will restrict the ability of the private sector to extract profit from the children's social care environment with the focus instead on not-for-profit providers and local authorities being able to provide fostering, children's homes and secure accommodation.

Family support

Last year, we continued to highlight the funding challenges facing local authorities and children's services through our updated children's services funding report – a *Well Worn Path*. The report restated the importance of investing in early intervention services.

To support that work, and alongside NSPCC, we published unique research looking at local authority response to reunification – where children and young people in care go back to living with their families. We hosted a launch event in parliament that was attended by over 15 local authorities, the Shadow Minister for Children and

Our report looking at the educational outcomes of children who had a referral to children's social care received widespread media and policy maker attention.

In Northern Ireland we worked as part of the Reimagine Collective to provide coordinated and tangible impact results from the Independent Review of Children's Services. We're represented on the Reform Board's ongoing work on family support.

In Scotland we worked with the Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland to host a conference – Whole Family Support: The Power of Prevention – Keeping the Promise for Children and Families Across Scotland. Over 150 people attended, and we showcased our service in Clackmannanshire through two workshop sessions, providing family support case studies included in each delegate's pack.

The Northern Ireland Executive was restored in February 2024. During the two years without a devolved government, we continued to work with elected officials and other stakeholders to advocate for children, young people and families around early help, poverty, mental health and youth homelessness. We engaged with the Jones Review of Children's Social Care and created a collective with charity partners to strengthen the voice of the voluntary and community sector, as well as the voice of young people in redesigning our children's social care system. We're now actively engaging with government departments, committees and new ministers around our policy priorities and hope to see positive change for the families, children and young people we support.

⁶ Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting year 2023 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk). (edited)

Participation

We've continued to amplify the voices of young people across our organisation and externally, through delivering Nothing About Me, Without Me – our children and young people's participation and engagement strategy.

We've made significant progress in involving young people in governance structures, policy campaigns, events and fundraising. Here are just a few examples:

Members of the Young Ambassadors Board met the Princess of Wales on World Mental Health Day, and interviewed celebrities and volunteered at the Starry Night Gala.

They were also central to recruitment of our Chief Executive, a Trustee, and a number of other positions. Our Young Ambassadors have been Young Dragons, as part of our Dragons' Den initiative as well as judging this year's Stephenson's Awards.

The group have also been key voices externally for Action for Children. They attended the launch of Children at the Table, our general election campaign and appeared in the media talking about their experiences in care.

In England, children now lead meetings in a residential home – setting agendas and facilitating discussions on a weekly basis.

In Scotland, we've invested in Staff Promise Champions. This network supports all colleagues to develop and oversee the systems, processes, culture and practices in place to keep 'the promise' to improve the outcomes for children and young people who we support, care for and love.



Young people meeting the Minister for Children and Families, David Johnston, as part of the as part of the Children at the Table campaign in January 2024.

In Wales, at Ty Arth, young people shape their environment, decorating the living room with a bear theme, reflecting the house's name. This collaborative effort boosts self-esteem, fosters a supportive community and enhances emotional wellbeing. Further involvement in decorating other spaces instils pride and responsibility, creating personal, safe, and warm environments that enhance their sense of belonging.

In Northern Ireland, we've used legacy donation funds to allocate additional hours to our Media and Policy posts to allow them to focus on engaging with young people to gather data to support our policy work.



Sarah from Action for Children and Darryl inside Westminster at the launch of the Children at the Table campaign.

Fundraising and awareness

Our incredible supporters are the reason we're still providing vital support to vulnerable children and families, 155 years after we were founded.

From bake sales and skydives, to team sleep outs and running the London Marathon. Without the tireless generosity, passion and love of all our supporters – from the dedicated Methodist community to our newest corporate partners – we simply couldn't be there for the vulnerable children who desperately need us.

It's thanks to our family of fundraisers, supporters, volunteers and staff that we raised an incredible £17.2 million in voluntary income in 2023/24. We see every day the difference this money makes – and we're so proud and grateful for another year of overwhelming support and dedication.

Billie Shepherd
with her bauble



In 2023/24 we raised

£17.2 million

thanks to our family of fundraisers, supporters, volunteers and staff.



Your generous support

Secret Santa

Our annual Christmas campaign, Secret Santa, raised over £1.4 million from over 30,000 generous supporters.

Secret Santa drove almost 300 million opportunities to see (OTS), helping to increase awareness of our work for children. This was driven by our TV advert, reaching a huge audience during advert breaks on ITV's This Morning and Channel 5 Christmas films.

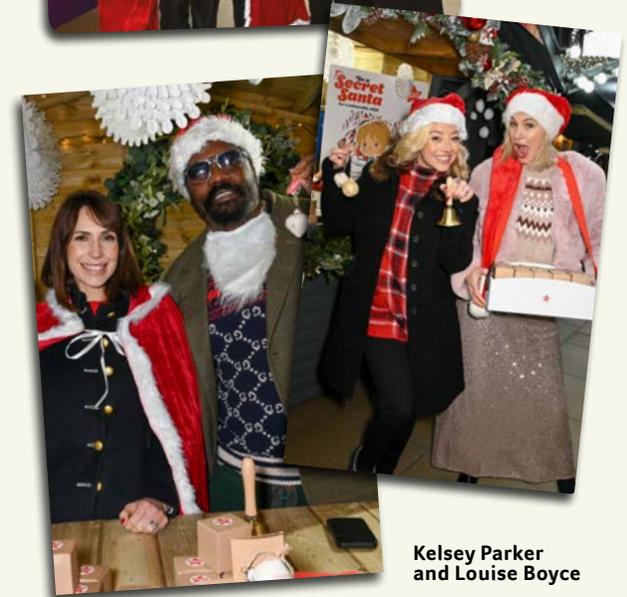
We launched two baubles – one designed by a young carer and the other by celebrity supporter, Billie Shepherd. Both baubles achieved lots of media coverage with celebrities promoting them on social media (including Billie with over 2.7 million followers). This helped the campaign reach new audiences.

Our raised profile during the Christmas period resulted in new corporate support. Frankie and Benny's not only donated £10,000, but ran a multichannel marketing campaign, including in-store, PR, email, influencer content and social media to amplify Secret Santa. Key highlights included TikTok influencer content from Daddy May (who has 1.8 million followers and whose post had 114,000 views) and media coverage in Hello and Mail Online.

We held a celebrity Secret Santa market stall in London Bridge which not only got media coverage, but Rebel Reel Cine Club saw it and then ran an exclusive Christmas film screening and raffle to raise funds.



Harry Redknapp,
Larry Lamb,
Alex Jones,
Luca Bish and
Kelsey Parker



Alex Jones, Derek Chisora

Kelsey Parker
and Louise Boyce

Boycott Your Bed

On Friday 6 October 2023, over 700 business leaders and their teams braved the elements at locations across the UK, to take part in our national sleepout Boycott your Bed. Sleepers also carried out fundraising events and activities in the months leading up to the night itself.

Last year, we welcomed Lenovo as our first national sponsor for this event, now in its 27th year. Philip Oldham, Marketing Director, Lenovo UK & Ireland said:

“For our Lenovo team, it’s one night of bed boycotting, but for so many, the funds we raised on the night will help to ease the burden for the most vulnerable in our society. We’re immensely proud to have contributed both in body and financial backing to this annual event and look forward to continuing our support for Action for Children so they can ensure that many children have the safe and happy childhood they need.”

Legacies

We’re so grateful and inspired by each and every supporter who bequeathed a gift in their will to Action for Children this past year. Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of just over 200 supporters, over one third of our donated income has been raised through gifts in wills.

Gifts in wills are crucial to Action for Children providing brighter futures for many vulnerable children for years to come. We’re continuing to raise awareness of this incredible way of giving, so that future generations of supporters can create their own lasting legacy.

Fundraising events

Our busy calendar of fundraising events offers our supporters, partners, and many more, the opportunity to enjoy exceptional experiences, while hearing real stories from the young people we’ve helped support. And on top of that, we raise vital funds to help more children, young people and families across the UK.

In recent years, we’ve celebrated the inspirational women in our networks and heard from sports people that epitomise just that. We’ve welcomed teams to battle it out for coveted trophies, both on the golf course and in fiercely competitive quiz rounds. We’ve held award ceremonies to celebrate amazing people from across the Action for Children family. We’ve showcased haute couture fashion shows and hosted many a sleepout under the stars. All to raise funds for Action for Children.

.....
2,500 guests

welcomed at events in each of the four nations.



Fundraising across the UK

The support we receive from local communities, individuals giving donations to our appeals and long-standing supporters continues to amaze us.

From our committed TCS London Marathon, Kiltwalk and Great North Run participants, to our brand new community of active supporters who took part in our first ever Fatima 29 Challenge and parachute jumps. Every fundraiser is helping us make a difference to the lives of vulnerable children.

Huge thanks goes to our network of individuals, groups and Action Squads who continue to come up with innovative and imaginative ways to support our work.

Part of the Methodist family

Our inspirational Methodist supporters continue to provide significant support through fundraising, campaigning and volunteering. Despite the challenging economic climate, they’ve kept many traditional fundraising activities going (such as Home Collection Boxes) while also supporting our main campaigns like Secret Santa at Christmas.

In July 2023, our CEO Paul Carberry and other colleagues received a warm reception at the Methodist Conference, where he spoke about our work. This was just one of the Methodist events we took part in this past year. The Church has committed to devoting significant work and resources to help tackle poverty and inequality over the coming years. We thank them for all they do for children and families.

Creating new ways to fundraise

Starry Night Gala

In November 2023, we welcomed over 300 guests to our first-ever Starry Night Gala, held at the stunning Grade II listed Battersea Arts Centre in London. With special guests including Kate Thornton and Alison Hammond, it was an extraordinary evening of theatre and heartwarming moments. Young people from Action for Children's Employability Service in Scotland put their hospitality skills into practice, supporting our events team by helping to deliver many highlights of the evening.

Our headline performer, Charlotte Church, took on the role of vocal coach for our Young Carers Aloud

choir, mentoring children and young people in Wales to give the performance of their lives. They wowed the audience with their moving performance, and the next day, the choir joined Alison Hammond and Dermot O'Leary to perform on ITV's This Morning.

The event was a night to remember. From the moment guests stepped onto the red carpet, they were whisked away into a world of magic and wonder, celebrating how far Action for Children has come since we began and helping us continue our life-changing work.

The event raised an incredible £154,000 to help give more children the safe and happy childhood they deserve.

Action for Children Weekly Lottery

In September 2023, we launched a new way to support Action for Children, piloting a weekly lottery. It gives people a fun and accessible way to support our work regularly. We're continuing to test this through digital channels at a small scale. In 2024 we'll be evaluating if this is a form of fundraising we can grow further.

Compliance and complaints

We're registered with the Fundraising Regulator and follow its Code of Practice and Promise. We maintain high standards for fundraising including being clear, open and honest with supporters, and respecting their privacy and communications preferences.

In 2023/24 we received 112 complaints about our fundraising processes. None of these were required to be escalated to the regulator. They were dealt with in line with our Fundraising Complaints Procedures.



Charlotte Church
at the Starry Night gala

The power of partnerships

Our corporate partners help us raise vital funds to support our work. But they also give their time and expertise to support our services. We couldn't do what we do without them.

We're delighted to have launched new partnerships last year with Scottish Friendly, The Chartered Institute of Housing, Atlas Security and Tyne Tunnels. And we're so grateful for the continued support we get from companies across the UK including Herbalife, Junior Adventures Group, Sarnia Housing Association, The Childcare Company, Hope for a Child and Amazon.



In 2023, **Arcadis** funded the launch of our new Breaking the Cycle programme in Cumbria, along with a counsellor to support children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse to overcome their trauma. Thanks to Arcadis, 28 children have now been referred to the service and will be supported to gain the awareness, confidence, resilience and coping skills they need.



Now in its 14th year, our partnership with **Dell Technologies** continues to make a transformational difference to the lives of children and young people across the UK. Through the Inspire IT programme, our partnership helps to bridge the digital divide by helping children, young people and their families to access the technology they may not otherwise have access to. Our partnership also helps children and young people gain the digital skills which help them to access education and employment opportunities. Inspire IT is currently operating in 44 Action for Children services across the UK.



In 2023, Action for Children and CMC Markets delivered the CMC Markets Education and Enrichment Fund for a third year. By providing a tailored package of support (including tutoring, educational days out, enriching activities and experiences) this fund supported 324 vulnerable children and young people in London via 1,239 grants in 2023. CMC Markets employees further supported Action for Children through volunteering and fundraising, most notably at Boycott Your Bed where their team raised over £21,000 – becoming the top-performing fundraising team.



Starling Bank

Now in its second year, our partnership with **Starling Bank** continues to provide a vital lifeline for vulnerable children and families at a time when we know they're struggling the most. They're helping us develop brand-new content on our Parent Talk service to support families to manage their finances and have conversations about money. That's as well as sponsoring an expert family support practitioner to work directly with parents in critical need. Last year, Starling Bank supported 6,034 vulnerable children and families online.



Our partnership with **Turner & Townsend** continues to break down barriers to education for children and young people across the UK. The Turner & Townsend Education Fund supports families to cover the costs of basic school essentials like school uniforms, shoes and winter coats. In 2023, our partnership delivered its 10,000th Education Fund grant. Turner & Townsend have also continued to offer vital pro bono support on the development of new residential children's homes across the UK, and most recently on our sustainability work.

JOHN LEWIS
PARTNERSHIP

Action for Children has continued to work alongside the **John Lewis Partnership** on Building Happier Futures – its long-term commitment to young people in care and with care experience.

Since our 2022 launch, the donations pledged for Action for Children now total over £1 million.

As a result, three incredible Action for Children programmes are being funded: Wrap, Transition Workers and UpLift. In 2023, these supported 213 children, young people, foster carers and family members. Like 20-year-old Miracle.

Since birth, Miracle was in and out of the care system. Without stability in her life, she found herself struggling with her mental health. With the support of her Transition Worker Catherine, Miracle has thrived. She's now an Action for Children Young Ambassador, and is studying at university.



Miracle told us: ***“Action for Children changes lives – they actually care about the kids they work with and they're always trying to think outside of the box for new ways to support young people. Having our voices heard is amazing.”***

In October 2023, we celebrated the first anniversary of Building Happier Futures. John Lewis Partnership shared their first programme impact report, and launched a new lifestyle brand Made x Care, featuring products designed by people with care experience. And in December 2023, the John Lewis Partnership held a Building Happier Futures Fundraising Weekend for customers in John Lewis and Waitrose stores.

The John Lewis Partnership also supported us in the following ways:

- Partners raising funds by taking part in Boycott Your Bed, holding fun days at The Odney Club, and through sporting events.
- Partners volunteering a combined 50 days of their time.
- A Golden Jubilee Trust Secondment at our HMP Styal Mother and Baby Unit.
- Fully funded data literacy qualifications for 24 Action for Children employees.
- 85 children and caregivers enjoying magical Santa's Grottos in John Lewis stores.
- And Community Matters donations and gifted toys for local services.



We're thrilled to have been in partnership with Ella's Kitchen since 2022, supporting their commitment to ensuring every little one grows up happy, healthy and never hungry.

Over Christmas 2023, Ella's Kitchen launched a product promotion on their limited edition Rudolph's sweetcorn + carrot melty sticks. Available online and in stores UK-wide, the product raised an incredible



£89,000. In addition, Ella's Kitchen shared our Secret Santa campaign with their customers and employees, and launched an optional online store checkout donation to raise additional funds.

Ella's Kitchen also used this moment to engage MPs across political parties with Secret Santa and their '5 for the under 5's' manifesto, which outlines five asks to the government to put little futures first, notably, to highlight our joint ask of ending child poverty by 2040.

Enabling our work

Our people

One of our strategic goals is to attract, develop and retain brilliant staff and volunteers.

As of the end of March 2024, we have 4,394 people employed by Action for Children and 561 volunteers, all of whom are vital to the work we do.

Improving the experiences of our staff begins with our leaders creating a positive culture where the wellbeing of our staff is prioritised, and development and growth is encouraged and championed.

Our people policies, and how we embed them, are informed by best practice and the insight from our staff.

Culture, wellbeing and learning

The ever-changing external and internal environment, the cost of living and developing new areas of work put our culture to the test. That's why we're doing even more to listen to our people.

Alongside our pulse surveys, our staff survey, our leaver surveys, our Investors in People (IIP) and Investors in Volunteers (IIV) surveys and feedback from our staff networks and Trade Unions, we asked a representative group of our people what they value about working for Action for Children. Based on their feedback, we've made sure our flexible working policies meet our people's needs, that learning and development is built into every step of careers, that

we have robust and accessible wellbeing practices, and that we continue to offer our Employee Assistance Programme.

We also continue to build a learning culture and mindset, by offering a wider variety of learning programmes and investing in learning delivered by external suppliers. Our training investment exceeded £2 million with an average spend of around £480 per employee. And we approved 268 additional learning requests for personal and professional development.

In response to feedback, we've worked harder this past year to champion career progression, encouraging our people managers to consider talent from other departments across the organisation. Currently, just over 22% of our roles are filled internally.

We completed our annual check-in with IIP in January 2024, having achieved Silver status in 2022, with a focus on managing change and wellbeing. The feedback from the majority of staff was positive and suggests the approach to managing change has improved since our last restructure.

Most people positively described the wellbeing support provided by Action for Children, and said that it's improved. We were thrilled to be selected as finalists for UK Employer of the Year award and the Best People Team award in the 2023 IIP Awards.

“

For our team, the wellbeing support is phenomenal.

– Staff member



Our People Team celebrating our IIP Silver accreditation at a team development day.

“I think the organisation is listening to people and making sure we are doing it right. It seems to be collaborative with lots of support. I think it's a refreshing change.”

– Staff member.

We also won Childcare Large Employer of the Year in the 2023 Paragon Skills Apprenticeship Awards, which celebrate outstanding excellence in learners and employers.

Paragon Skills is one of Action for Children's apprenticeships providers, working with hundreds of organisations each year in delivering qualifications.

Reward and recognition

We know how vital it is to recognise the considerable skill and passion our staff bring to their roles. A big part of this commitment is to continue to pay the Real Living Wage – the UK wage rate based on the cost of living. We also benchmark all salaries externally to make sure our compensation is fair, competitive and reflects our charitable status.



Diversity and inclusion – taking positive action

To support our efforts to break down barriers to progression and development for underrepresented groups within the charity, we applied positive action and offered two development initiatives to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and disabled staff: a Developing programme and a Reciprocal Mentoring pilot.

We ringfenced 50% of spaces in the Developing Potential programme for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff or/and disabled staff. We had such a successful application process that we were able to offer a second cohort for applicants in 2023/24.

We launched the Reciprocal Mentoring programme in September 2023, where Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and senior leaders were paired to build co-mentoring relationships that promote mutual learning and self-development while building a more inclusive and anti-racist culture within Action for Children.

Both initiatives have regular evaluations and once they conclude in 2024, we'll measure success based on overall and individual objectives.

Our gender pay gap

Our median gender pay gap, as of 5 April 2023, is 5.95% (up from 4.43% in 2022). Although our overall gender pay gap is higher than last year, Children's Services and Fundraising Communications and Policy (FCP) remain within our target range (of 5% either side of a 0% pay gap) and Children's Services Scotland continues to achieve a 0% gender pay gap. We've seen a year-on-year improvement within the Finance and Technology figures, and we've planned actions for the next 12 months. You can read more about our [gender pay gap in our 2023 report](#).

Disability Confident Employer

As we enter our third year of Disability Confident Employer status, we're taking action to make sure disabled people have the opportunities to fulfil their potential within Action for Children.

The Disability Confident scheme encourages employers to improve how they recruit, retain and develop people with a disability. We completed the Disability Confident self-assessment in 2022, and have continued to implement all of the core actions. Positive action continues in our recruitment, and inclusive recruitment training has been rolled out for all recruiting managers.

Investing in our volunteers



561 volunteers have given their time and expertise in support of our goals this past year. Some are actively supporting children's services, sharing their mentoring skills and providing care, some are supporting us to raise much needed funds, and others are volunteering their professional skills to help us with important activities and projects.

In January 2024, we were reaccredited with the Investing in Volunteers (IIV) award for good practice in volunteer management, inclusion and involvement.

Improving efficiencies

To maximise the impact we can have for vulnerable children and young people, we continuously work to improve our efficiency. Over the last year, our focus has been in three main areas.

Investing in our systems

We've reviewed and updated our technology strategy during the year, to make sure our approach reflects the rapidly changing external environment and the complexities of our operations. As well as providing the systems that underpin those operations, we also need to deliver the necessary technology to make our residential homes truly feel like home for the young people who live in them.

A focus over the year has been the ongoing implementation of our new Oracle finance and HR system, the largest systems project the organisation has ever undertaken. When it goes live in the coming year, it will make our systems much simpler, improve the user experience and give us real-time reporting to help optimise how we work.

We've also completed the roll-out of a new outcome recording system for our children's homes. This helps us accurately understand and report on the impact we're having on the children we care for, and is an essential element in developing the quality of our services. Over the next year, we'll begin exploratory work to review the outcome recording systems we use across our other services, with the aim of delivering further improvements going forward.



Optimising our property estate

While much of our estate is directly used to deliver services for children and young people, we also own a number of older and legacy properties – not all of which are suitable for this purpose. After a full review of our estate, we're in the process of selling and repurposing many of those surplus properties. This allows us to reinvest in properties which we can use to support children and young people, particularly through our residential growth programme delivering new homes for children in care.

Over the course of the year, we've also completed a significant programme of remedial works across our estate, making sure all of our properties are in line with sector standards and fit for the future.

Making sure we have the right people in the right places

We want Action for Children to become an organisation which is more responsive, agile and equipped to manage ongoing external challenges, so we can continue to be one of the UK's leading children's charities. Over the last year, our Optimal Organisation programme has been reviewing our internal support structures and processes, and we'll be implementing changes over the coming year. We know we need the right balance of skills across the organisation to effectively deliver our strategy, continuing to reach the children, young people and families who need us most.

Our commitment to sustainability

The work we do to track our CO₂ emissions means that we're very aware of the impact we have.

We've taken significant steps over the past 12 months to address this, including starting a review of our sustainability strategy to make sure this becomes an even greater priority across the organisation:

- We have committed internal resource and as part of our Optimal Organisation programme and we have created a sustainability manager role who is working to recognise our immediate and long-term goals.
- We're working alongside one of our partners, Turner & Townsend, who are supporting us with recommendations to enhance and improve our current processes and embed sustainability more fluidly across the organisation.
- We're reviewing our current fleet offering, with other schemes being researched to optimise the organisation's current emissions usage, and to manage the increase in travel and commuting, as shown in the 2022/23 reported emissions.
- We're working with services and buildings to understand our gas, electricity and water consumption in order to proactively manage the impact this has, while making sure we're still providing for the needs of our services and staff.
- We're reviewing external suppliers, making sure we're proactively checking their credentials and getting assurance that resources are not negatively impacting the environment.

Energy type	2023/24		2022/23	
	Consumption	Emission (tCO ₂ e)	Consumption	Emission (tCO ₂ e)
Gas (kWh)	6,889,873	1,262	10,217,808	1,871
Electric (kWh)	5,511,746	1,170	3,429,786	728
Fleet (litres)	80,169	195	105,262	262
Total emissions		2,627		2,861
Emissions offset by recycling waste		645		628
Net emissions		1,982		2,234

- We have a well-established internal staff Green Action Network. They work with the wider organisation on issues they identify by sharing updates and trends to keep sustainability on the agenda, helping us to achieve our future goals.

In the past year, we have achieved an 11% reduction in our net emissions, primarily due to a strategic change in our gas and electricity supplier. This move has enabled us to access more efficient billing information, which has facilitated better energy management and reduced overall consumption data. In addition, we have streamlined our property portfolio, which has further contributed to the decrease in our gas and electric usage.

We have also seen a reduction in our vehicle usage (fleet), which has played a crucial role in lowering our overall emissions. By implementing more efficient fleet management practices, we have minimised the environmental impact of our operations. These combined efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to

sustainability and our proactive approach to reducing our carbon footprint, which will further be reflected in the coming months as we begin to rollout hybrid vehicles in replacement of our current fleet vehicles.

Going forward by 2024/25 we hope to:

- Implement improvements to sustainable practice, with a fully updated sustainability policy, introduction of a sustainability strategy and clearly defined organisation-wide goals.
- Develop an education platform on sustainability for all staff and internal stakeholders to increase awareness, engagement and create positive impact.
- Formulate criteria and provide a framework for working sustainably to make sure we're completely transparent on this journey. We also want to establish full stakeholder engagement – both internally and externally – to our commitments and journey.

Our **focus** for **2024/25**

We'll continue to deliver against the seven goals within our strategy. Our key priorities for the next 12 months include:



Continuing to accelerate the growth of our services so we can help support more safe and happy childhoods. To do this, we will:

- Continue to grow our core services across all four nations.
- Open a further six Action for Children owned residential children's homes.
- Build on the outcomes from the Jay Review of Criminally Exploited Children, pushing for policy change and expanding the services we offer.
- Further embed the voices of children and young people into our governance structures and service delivery.
- Develop our digital capabilities, better integrating this into service delivery models and exploring new opportunities.



Delivering key projects to make sure we get maximum value from the money we spend. To do this, we will:

- Implement our Optimal Organisation changes to make sure we have the right people in the right places to continue to deliver our strategy.
- Continue to make sure our property portfolio is the right size, selling properties which are surplus to requirements to reinvest in new residential children's homes.
- Finalise key IT infrastructure programmes including implementation of our new Finance and HR system.
- Develop a new sustainability strategy with more ambitious targets to reduce our impact on the planet.



Financial *review*

Our activity in 2023/24 helped us achieve a total income of £155.3m (2022/23 £149.8m), an increase of £5.5m on the previous year. Our total expenditure including investment projects was also up at £161.0m (2022/23 £149.4m), which is an increase of £11.6m on the previous year.

Net deficit for the year, before investment and pension valuation movements, was £5.7m (2022/23 gain £0.4m).

The net deficit was in line with budget, and reflects planned investments in priority projects, particularly investment for growth in our residential services provision and in technology systems to deliver operating efficiencies. The underlying operating position excluding these investments showed a small operating surplus for the year, with significant cost pressures from pay increases and inflation offset by income growth and reductions in non-pay expenditure where required.

Income and expenditure

In 2023/24 we generated a total income of £155.3m (2022/23 £149.8m). We're particularly pleased to report good performance across all income generating areas, despite challenges in the wider funding environment. Our total charitable expenditure was £154.3m (2022/23 £143.1m).

Like most organisations, we experienced price rises that increased our expenditure, but we took measures to manage these in order to end the year in a stable position.

Donations and legacies

Every year, we're so incredibly grateful for the loyalty and generosity of our supporters and partners who help us create more safe and happy childhoods. In 2023/24 we raised £17.2m in voluntary income from donations and legacies. Of this, £12.4m (2022/23 £12.6m) was unrestricted income and £4.8m (2022/23 £6.0m) was restricted to specific programmes such as disability short breaks and children in care.

2023/24 was a more difficult year for fundraising, particularly for restricted income, with a number of our multi-year grants coming to an end. However, we still achieved £12.4m in unrestricted income thanks to our loyal regular givers (£2.8m income) and supporters who left us a gift in their wills (£4.2m compared to £4.7m in 2022/23).

This was the fifth year of our flagship fundraising campaign, Secret Santa, which raised £1.5m (£1.7m 2022/23). It was also the inaugural year of our Starry Night Gala which raised £0.15m and is planned to become a regular fixture in our events calendar.

Our total fundraising expenditure was £6.7m (2022/23 £6.3m) with increased spend driven by higher staffing costs (up £0.3m) and growth in events (up £0.1m).

Our overall income was £1.1m under budget (-6.1%) with the whole shortfall against the restricted income target. Fundraising achieved net unrestricted contribution of £7.4m (£7.8m 2022/23).

Charitable activities

This year, we generated £136.3m income through our core services: family support, children in care, disabled children, and mental health and wellbeing. This is up £6.4m from last year and was achieved thanks to the dedication and commitment of our incredible staff and volunteers.

We've continued to expand our residential children's home services to make sure some of the most vulnerable children have a safe, stable and loving home. We opened three new homes to children and young people in 2023/24. Across our homes, income has increased by £4.6m from previous year.

Expenditure this year has been £154.3m. This is up £11.1m from the previous year and has been driven by two factors. Firstly, inflation has increased in areas including real living wage and utility costs. Secondly, continued investment in our planned residential care growth involved significant expenditure as the homes needed readying and staffing ahead of regulatory inspections, and before children can move into the home.

We will continue with our residential growth strategy, with six new homes planned to open to children in the next 12 months.

Income from our commercial areas – including nurseries and out-of-school clubs – has seen a modest growth in the year, delivering £16.6m in 2023/24 (2022/23 £15.8m). In some settings, expenditure has increased faster than income, due to increasing costs, particularly wages. Our total expenditure was £16.6m in 2023/24 (2022/23 £15.4m), leading to a breakeven contribution in 2023/24 (2022/23 £0.6m). During the year, we made the decision to exit five nurseries and seven out-of-school clubs that were no longer financially viable, and these have been transferred to other providers.

Balance sheet

At the end of the year, our total funds were down on the previous year at £75.6m (2022/23 £80.8m) with unrestricted funds up on 2022/23 by £8.2m to £70.5m. This is driven by the transfer of endowments following the closure of the associated charities as detailed further below. £54.4m of the unrestricted income is either designated or tied to assets supporting our activities, leaving the balance of £16.1m (2022/23 £19.8m) constituting the charity's free reserves. Tangible fixed asset net additions in the year amounted to £4.5m. The total cash balance at the end of the year was £12.9m, with £10.5m of this placed on notice deposits. The group maximises the interest earned on surplus cash by investing in term deposits.

Trading subsidiaries and associated charities

During the year, Action for Children held endowments in two charitable trusts who shared common trustees and management. These are the National Children's Home (charity number 215301) and the Nicholas Galperin Trust (charity number 210618). The endowments that were held in these trusts have now

been transferred to Action for Children in support of its charitable purposes, and the trusts have been closed.

The following trading subsidiaries are also consolidated into the financial results of the Action for Children Group.

Action for Children Services Limited (company number 2332388) provides welfare and educational services. New contracts with local authorities are placed through the company, and turnover increased by 4.28% in 2023/24, to £69.6m. The company made a profit of £1.7m (2022/23 £1.7m), which will be paid over as Gift Aid to the parent charity.

Action for Children Developments Limited (company number 6842765) is a company limited by guarantee. The company looks after commercial trading, property transactions and other developments that support Action for Children's mission. The company also runs children's nurseries under the trading name 'Spring'. The company made a profit of £0.1m (2022/23 loss £0.3m).

Out-of-School Scotland Limited (OSCARS) (company number SC264619) is a subsidiary that provides out-of-school clubs, breakfast clubs and holiday camps. The company made a loss of £0.1m (2022/23 £0.3m).

Action for Children Trading Limited (company number 3776025) is a subsidiary for our fundraising and trading activities. The trading activities were transferred to Action for Children Developments Limited in 2022/23 and the company was wound up during the 2023/24 financial year.

Reserves

Charity Funds Trust and charity law require that we present our funds in the following categories:

Restricted funds, which include legacies, donations and other income that can only be used for particular purposes. These funds are for scholarships and general use. On 31 March 2024, our specific-purpose funds were £5.1m (2022/23 £7.5m).

Unrestricted funds of £71m (2022/23 £62.3m) comprise the general fund, of which a part has been categorised as designated funds, with the remainder being undesignated.

Designated funds of £54.4m (2022/23 £42.5m) include a capital fund equivalent to the net book value of tangible fixed assets used to support operational work of £26.8m (2022/23 £22.3m); a charged assets fund representing the market value of those investments over which the Pension Fund has a charge of £20.2m (2022/23 £20.2m) and £7.5m of old endowments which have been designated to support the residential growth programme. The total value of the assets charged to the pension fund is £40m. This comprises the charged asset fund of £20.2m together with operational properties within the capital funds with a market value of £19.8m. The general fund is £16.6m of which £0.5m is the pensions reserve while the remainder of £16.1m is undesignated and constitutes the charity's free reserves. The pension reserve represents the difference between the fair values of pension assets and liabilities on the FRS 102 basis.

Every year, our Finance Committee reviews our reserves policy and the level of free reserves. We show this in the financial statements as the general fund and fair value reserve, excluding designated funds. The review is then approved by the Board of Trustees and a risk-appraisal approach (determining the likelihood of future costs, potential liabilities and risks) is used to work out the general reserves needed. This is based on the latest business and financial plan, and risks include a loss of income from partners and voluntary donations, and changes to costs. The trustees work to make sure we have sufficient free reserves to protect Action for Children's financial stability. This gives us a safety net should income and expenditure need to be rebalanced.

Taking into consideration our strategic plans and economic and market conditions, we plan to hold general reserves, excluding designated funds, ordinarily above £14m. The ideal minimum free reserves in a period of no investments should be £16m. We know we're currently in an investment phase due to the residential growth programme and technology investments. We intend to reach this target once this investment phase is complete. With the charity's current free reserves standing at £16.1m, the trustees believe the charity will have sufficient reserves to meet future requirements. Our financial plan and reserves policy include Pension Fund contribution costs. The accounting disclosure required for pension liabilities is included in the balance sheet, which can be found in note six.

Investments

Our investments give us the reserves we need to manage future developments, risks and uncertainties. One of our main objectives is to keep an asset allocation model that matches the timing of potential liabilities, within reserves, to appropriate investment assets. The investment policy and statement of investment principles is based on this model, and was reviewed and updated in 2021/22. Many of our investments are managed by the Central Finance Board (CFB) of the Methodist Church which has an ethical investment approach that aligns with our mission and values. The CFB's ethical approach excludes companies considered inappropriate, like those involved with alcohol, tobacco, pornography and armaments, or those who use child labour. And it works closely with other church-based organisations to maximise the influence they have over the companies they invest in. The CFB is also compliant with the Financial Reporting Council's UK Stewardship Code. Our Investment Committee make decisions and measure the performance of the CFB fund against an agreed benchmark.

From December 2023, the Action for Children discretionary funds were transferred to a new investment platform and separated into two distinct investment pools: General Reserve and Contingent Assets. Going forward these accounts will be managed to independent mandates that are appropriate to their separate respective financial objectives.

The long-term target returns, against which the investments are measured, has also changed. We have an inflation-based target replacing the previous market indices-based index.

The target return for the General Reserve account is CPI +3.5% and for the Contingent Assets account it is CPI +1%. These are measured net of fees and are annualised over a rolling five-year basis. The investments also continue to be measured against their respective ARC indices. The General Reserve account underperformed the ARC Steady Growth index by 1.2% and the Contingent Assets account overperformed by 2.3% over the 12-month period. The performance of the Contingent Assets account is impacted by previously being part of a higher risk strategy, as part of the consolidated mandate.

Pensions

The Action for Children Pension Fund is a hybrid pension scheme. It has a Defined Contribution section which employees can join at any time. The Charity also has a funding obligation in respect of the historic Defined Benefit part of the scheme. The Pension Fund value is showing a deficit position of £0.6m (2022/23 showed a surplus position of £37.1m) on the FRS 102 basis. The FRS 102 valuation is governed by the accounting disclosure requirements and is different from the triennial actuarial valuation which was last completed as at 31 March 2021. At this valuation, the pension surplus was £1m, which is a funding level of slightly over 100%. However, we take a more cautious approach to agree contribution requirements. This materially reduces the investment risk to which the Pension Fund is exposed, improves the security of members' benefits and provides better protection for the charity against future funding risks. We call this a 'sustainable target' approach. Under the sustainability target at 31 March 2021 there was a deficit of £60.2m, a funding level of 92%.

For the last 14 years we have been paying a deficit reduction contribution on an annual basis, as agreed with the Pension Fund trustees. A revised deficit recovery plan was agreed as part of the 2021 triennial valuation which was only completed during 2022/23. This has meant that in practice, Action for Children overpaid expected deficit reduction contributions in the year to 31 March 2023. These overpayments counted as prepayments of the deficit reduction contributions due over the year ending 31 March 2024. Work has started on the triennial actuarial valuation as at 31 March 2024 and results are expected in 2025.

Going concern

The organisation faced a very challenging operational environment this past financial year which put pressure on our activities and services. The organisation made a net loss for the year of £5.2m. During this period, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) worked closely with the Board of Trustees to regularly monitor arising situations, considering the cash position and the impact on reserves. The trustees continue to believe that the group and its entities are going concerns and therefore the going concern basis is appropriate for the preparation of the Annual Report and Accounts.

A paper setting out the approach taken by the trustees and rationale for this assessment has been prepared. In reaching this assessment the trustees have considered the factors, risks and uncertainties that may impact the group's operations in the next year.

This assessment is supported by detailed financial modelling, including the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial plans, sensitivity analysis, and quantification of potential risks on the group's reserves and liquidity positions.

Action for Children's financial projections are reflected in the group's 2024/25 budget, and indicative forecast for 2025/26. The operating budget for 2024/25 is balanced, before investments of £2.3m in specific development projects (which have been agreed to be funded from existing unrestricted reserves). While acknowledging risk in delivery of the balanced budget outturn, the trustees believe the budget reflects a 'middle ground' position, balancing known risks against the group's ambitions and opportunity for growth.

The Action for Children's group unrestricted reserves and cash balances are healthy, with a 31 March 2024 consolidated cash and cash equivalent balance of £12.9m (2022/23 £20.4m). Group restricted reserves stand at £5.1m (2022/23 £18.5m) with group unrestricted reserves of £70.5m (2022/23 £62.3m). Actual cashflow declined in line with the reserves-funded project investments and planned capital spend.

The indicative forecast prepared for 2025/26 covers the period after March 2025 up to 12 months from expected date of signature of the financial statements and shows an improved financial outlook with increased contribution across income streams. There are no material risks identified in 2025/26 that would impact the going concern assessment.

The focus of this assessment is therefore on 2024/25, with an expectation that should risks emerge in the current financial year, these would be addressed, and 2025/26 budgets adjusted to ensure our on-going financial sustainability.

In summary, based on the budgets and cashflow projections prepared, and the group's healthy reserves and cash balances, the going concern basis for preparation of the financial statements is deemed appropriate.

Managing risk

Risk management provides the framework within which Action for Children can deliver our strategic objectives.

Our Board of Trustees regularly review the major risks Action for Children faces, to make sure they are confident in the systems and procedures used to manage those risks. They consider this in line with Action for Children’s overall approach and appetite for risk.

Our approach to managing risk

We consider everyone at Action for Children as a ‘risk manager’. Our staff, contractors, volunteers and external service providers are all vital in managing risk. Our clear policies and procedures help our people understand their risk management responsibilities.

We are guided by best practice as set out by the Institute of Risk Management and ISO 31000, following the ‘PACED’ principles of risk management as well as relevant regulatory standards. That includes the Charities and Risk Management guidance (CC26). Within this, we follow a four-stage process – identifying, assessing, managing and monitoring our risks. This helps us to deliver our strategic objectives, improve performance and maximise the value and effectiveness of the services we provide.

Our risk management processes are regularly reviewed and improved: in 2023/24 this included a refresh of our Risk Management Policy as well

Risk management process



as enhancing our approach to reviewing emerging risks through our annual planning process.

Clear accountability

We clearly define roles and responsibilities in our Risk Management Policy. The overall responsibility for risk management sits with our Board of Trustees, and they are supported by the Audit and Risk Committee. This committee regularly review the charity’s corporate risk register and oversee risk management and assurance activity, including Internal Audit.

Risk environment

Our management of risk is informed by the internal and external contexts which we operate in.

We protect and support children, young people and families – and their safety is our priority. Some of our services are, by nature, conducted in a high-risk environment. Action for Children knows that risk cannot be completely eliminated from our front line activities but we always aim to reduce it as far as reasonably possible, to keep service users and our staff safe. The delivery of our impactful services depends on our people – they are core to what we do. We’re exceptionally proud of our experienced, passionate and dedicated staff and their health, safety and wellbeing sits at the heart of our approach to managing risks.

Externally, the environment remains challenging, creating significant interconnected and complex risks. The economic outlook presents an ongoing threat to our ability to deliver services and raise funds as the cost of living crisis increases demand for services, drives wage and cost inflation and impacts donations. Concurrent pressures on public finances present a risk of reduced funding for children’s services.

Our Executive Leadership Team monitor and manage internal and external risks on an ongoing basis and are vigilant to external indicators of increased risk. To be more prepared and resilient, we have mitigating controls in place to minimise negative impacts where possible and periodically test our business continuity arrangements.

Principal risks

Below are our principal risks to our strategic objectives. The Board of Trustees have ultimate oversight of the management of all risks, and we've shown where Board Sub-Committees have additional oversight responsibilities.

Risk	Mitigations include	Accountability and oversight
<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Children and young people we support may come to harm as a result of our actions or inaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dedicated Safeguarding Team led by Director of Safeguarding, reporting directly to the Managing Director of Children's Services and our designated safeguarding trustee. - Comprehensive safeguarding framework including clear policies, procedures, reporting mechanisms and guidance. - Strict controls and oversight structures around supervision of staff working with children, supported by our Safeguarding Team and 'safer recruitment' procedures. - Oversight of safeguarding activities by the Children's Services Committee, chaired by our Chief Executive Officer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early Warning Indicator Reports help us to minimise serious incidents. - Whistleblowing and serious incident procedures ensure proper investigation of and learning from any serious incidents that do occur. - Independent assurance via periodic internal audit coverage of key safeguarding controls. - Formal mandatory safeguarding training for all employees and trustees, supplemented by monthly safeguarding Q&A sessions for all staff. - Annual safeguarding review presented to the Board to ensure lessons learned are captured. 	<p>Accountable: Managing Director of Children's Services</p> <p>Overseen by: Children's Services Committee</p>
<p>People and capabilities</p> <p>Risk of failure to attract, recruit and retain sufficient staff and skillsets resulting in gaps in capability and capacity which could prevent the delivery of our objectives and services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Robust framework of policies, processes, resources and staff networks to support staff and their learning and development. - In-house recruitment function with clear KPIs reported to the Recruitment Steering Group, Executive Leadership Team and updates to the Children's Services Committee, Governance, People and Remuneration Committee and Board. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular performance appraisals, comprehensive training programme, and Management Competency Framework and resources to support staff development. 	<p>Accountable: Chief People Officer</p> <p>Overseen by: Governance, People and Remuneration Committee</p>

Risk	Mitigations include		Accountability and oversight
<p>Financial sustainability</p> <p>Risk of failure to achieve long-term financial sustainability and/or deliver quality services with the available funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Robust financial control and reporting framework in place to facilitate expenditure control; monitoring of liquidity and cash position and adherence to reserves policy; and ongoing monitoring and reporting of business development performance and pipeline, with regular review of our forecasts and assumptions. - Long-term strategy to address pension deficit by 2029 and limit the down-side risk to Action for Children in relation to our pensions liabilities and assets. - Assurance on our financial position, going concern and financial controls via annual external audit and risk-based internal audit coverage. 		<p>Accountable: Director of Finance</p> <p>Overseen by: Finance Committee</p>
<p>Safe spaces</p> <p>Risk of failure to ensure a safe and compliant environment for all of people and service users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialist Health and Safety and Property Teams overseen by our Health and Safety Committee to support effective risk management and keep everyone who uses our services and buildings safe. - Review of health and safety KPIs and updates at the Children’s Services Committee and quarterly oversight of health and safety reporting at Audit and Risk Committee. - Mandatory annual health and safety training for all staff, with additional courses required for roles with a higher risk profile. - Health and safety reporting system to capture risk assessments, incidents and near misses. - Engagement of the Hampshire Fire Service as our Primary Fire Authority and periodic fire drills in all occupied properties. 		<p>Accountable: Managing Director of Children’s Services and Chief Operating Officer</p> <p>Overseen by: Audit and Risk Committee; Children’s Services Committee;</p>
<p>Information and cyber security</p> <p>Risk of significant data protection or information security failure, including cyber-attack, resulting in data breach, disruption to operations, reputational damage and/or financial loss.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information security and data governance structures are established to manage data protection and security controls and initiatives. - Mandatory annual training on information security and data protection. - We hold Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation and our security measures include a Security Operations Centre, regular penetration testing, Security Events Incident Management System, data backups, software patching, and adopting secure-by-design principles to actively minimise threats. 		<p>Accountable: Chief Operating Officer</p> <p>Overseen by: Audit and Risk Committee</p>

Risk	Mitigations include	Accountability and oversight
<p>Delivery of strategy</p> <p>Risk of resource prioritisation and/or operational infrastructure not aligning with and supporting delivery of Action for Children’s mission and strategic goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic goals have been defined and clearly communicated to all staff. - Business plans at an organisational level and within local areas set out priorities for the year ahead alongside associated milestones and metrics. Progress is regularly monitored through Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the Board to ensure delivery is on track. - Priority business plan projects have appropriate governance forums, with oversight and issue escalation to ELT. - The planning process is oriented around the strategic goals and includes assessment of key risks. 	<p>Accountable: Director of Strategy and Implementation</p> <p>Overseen by: Audit and Risk Committee</p>
<p>Reputation</p> <p>Risk of failure to protect the charity’s reputation and/or manage reputational impacts of serious or high-profile incidents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication plans proactively engage and share key messages with main stakeholders, including Trade Unions, donors, commissioners and regulators, such as the Charity Commission. - Through managing other risks and ensuring our policies and procedures are up to date, compliant and adhered to, we seek to minimise the risk of incidents which could cause reputational damage. - Donation Acceptance and Refusal Policy scrutinises large donations prior to acceptance. - The Code of Conduct and due diligence for external partners help ensure alignment with the charity's values. - Reputation crisis communications procedure helps navigate and manage serious reputational risks as they arise. 	<p>Accountable: Managing Director of Income and Engagement</p> <p>Overseen by: Audit and Risk Committee</p>

Governance

Legal structure and governance

Our Board of Trustees is responsible for governance, overseeing our performance and providing strategic direction.

We regularly review how we operate to make sure that we are best supporting children, young people and families, under the guidance of our Chair, Sarika Patel, our trustees and Chief Executive Officer.

We monitor our ways of working against each of the seven principles of the Charity Governance Code (the 'Code'). This is how we make sure we use current best practice and the highest standards of governance.

Supporting our strategic objectives, our governance framework makes sure that we achieve our aims. We are driven by our charitable purpose.

Our Board of Trustees

We've listed our 10 trustees on page 77. The Board meets six times a year and occasionally when necessary. To get a better understanding of the work we are doing and the difference we make to children, young people and families, trustees also visit our services.

Being a trustee is a voluntary position – members receive no rewards or benefits from Action for Children. They get involved because they believe in what we do and want to make a real difference.

You can find all expenses claimed by the trustees in our financial statements. The average attendance figure (at meetings) of trustees in post last year was 88%.

Board effectiveness

We appoint every trustee based on their skills and experience, helping us achieve our strategic objectives. We try to attract diverse candidates who can bring a variety of different perspectives to enhance decision making.

We follow a rigorous appointment process, including interviews by young people from our services, due diligence checks, and the involvement of the Board's Governance, People and Remuneration Committee (GPR).

We always aim to reflect diversity in trustee recruitment – including the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, as well as different backgrounds, life experiences, career paths and diversity of thought. GPR monitors our diversity, and the Board has a dedicated trustee Champion for diversity and inclusion. Diversity was considered an essential part of the trustee recruitment campaign which the Board ran during the Autumn of 2023, resulting in a new appointment. We are working hard to create and maintain a more inclusive culture.

All trustees are appointed for a renewable three-year term. Trustees and committee members go through an induction programme to make sure they understand their roles under charity and company law.

For the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, our trustees are the company directors of Action for Children.

Our close links with the Methodist Church are reflected in our constitution, which means the Church can nominate a trustee. The knowledge, expertise and passion that our Methodist trustee brings is hugely important.

Every year the Board self-evaluates, reviewing the skills of our trustees and its own – and the Chair's – performance. For 2023/24, and as recommended by the Code, the Board commissioned an independent review of its performance, and the agreed actions were overseen by GPR. The Board as a whole was seen as a highly committed, hardworking team with the trustees bringing valuable experience, expertise and skills. A number of strengths were identified, in particular the significant progress being made in the positive orientation of the culture and dynamics of the Board and Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

Board committees

The Board's standing committees report on specific issues. Each committee has agreed terms of reference and includes specialist co-opted members, as well as trustees. The Board delegates the day-to-day running of Action for Children to the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Leadership Team (ELT). The Board also delegates some areas of its work to sub-committees:

Finance Committee

- Oversees our finances and maintains the short and long-term viability of Action for Children.
- Advises the Board on appropriate financial strategy.
- The Investment sub-committee informs its oversight of investments.

Audit and Risk Committee

Makes sure we:

- Meet our statutory accounting obligations.
- Have effective systems of internal control, audit function and risk management.

Governance, People and Remuneration Committee

Helps us effectively run the organisation, ensuring standards of excellence and takes a leading role on people, policy and remuneration.

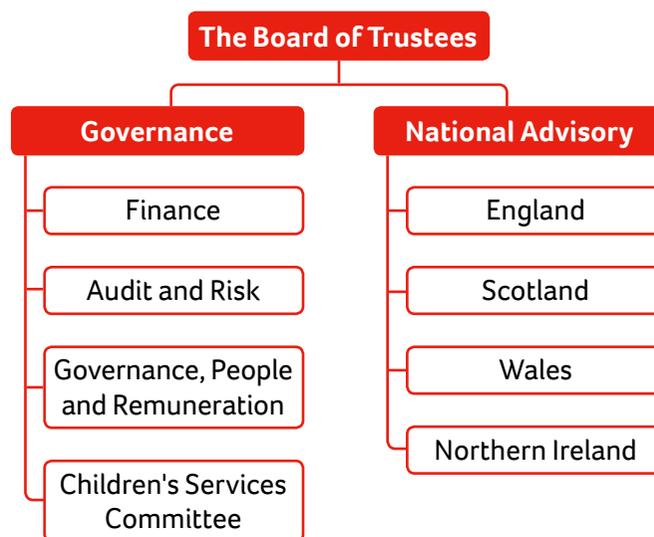
Children's Services Committee

The Committee is focused on improving outcomes for children and young people, by overseeing and developing the quality, reach and performance of our children's services.

The National Advisory Committees

Advising the Board of Trustees, the committees guide what we do in each nation, and help us build deep and long-lasting connections in each of the nations we work in.

Governance framework



How we organise our work

The Chief Executive is supported by our ELT who work closely with the Board of Trustees to support our vision, mission and values and deliver our strategy. As a result of our Optimal Organisation programme there have been some changes to our directorate structure and ELT responsibilities which are detailed in full on page 77.

Trustees' duties in relation to section 172 of the Companies Act

The Board of Trustees has duties under Section 172 of the Companies Act 2006. These include acting in the interests of stakeholders when promoting the success of the charitable company.

The trustees, as company directors of Action for Children, act in accordance with this requirement and, in doing so, have to regard:

- The likely consequences of any decision in the long-term.
- The interests of the company's employees.
- The need to foster the company's business relationships with suppliers, customers and others.
- The impact of the company's operations on the community and the environment.
- The desirability of the company maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct.
- The need to act fairly between members of the company.

Trustees are briefed on their duties as part of their induction. These duties are fulfilled partly through the governance structure detailed on above.

These include embracing and championing our vision of a safe and happy childhood for every child in the UK, and promoting our values to be passionate, ambitious, collaborative and inclusive, which are the foundation of everything we do. The Board has continued to work closely with our new ELT to secure our future financial sustainability.

Engaging with our staff

It's vital we engage with employees on a regular basis. The Board and Executive Leadership Team keep in touch with staff through regular team meetings, our intranet, emails, and all-staff meetings. These are held quarterly and are in addition to other webinars, enabling staff to ask questions and provide feedback.

The trustees are also regularly briefed by the Executive Leadership Team. Updates include:

- Strategic workforce activity providing visibility of delivery progress within the priority activities and programmes which form the business plan.
- Attracting candidates and developing talent.
- Reward and recognition.
- Culture surveys (complemented by data analysis on whistleblowing cases, grievances and complaints).
- Wellbeing and engagement.
- Staff pay.
- Our diversity and inclusion strategy.

This information reaches the Board through reports at meetings, and gives trustees an overview of our culture and how people engagement affects performance. The GPR reviews feedback from staff and volunteer surveys, as well as other projects linked to wellbeing at work, equality, and diversity and inclusion to make sure that any concerns are brought to the attention of trustees. The trustee member of the GPR Committee, Lynne Atkin, is a champion of diversity and inclusion, and regularly meets with staff network groups. The Chair of the Board of Trustees also communicates with staff through her regular blog.

Engaging with volunteers, suppliers, customers and others

The trustees see and celebrate the huge value volunteers bring in supporting projects, services and departments. They also engage with volunteers through our National Advisory Committees. After a successful event held last year to strengthen engagement with our volunteer members, the trustees are planning another. Its aim will be to provide a unique opportunity to discuss key issues and raise opportunities, helping us work together with volunteer members more efficiently and effectively.

Our volunteers receive a volunteer newsletter and are supported by volunteer managers, who meet regularly through our Volunteer Managers Network (read more about volunteering on page 32).

The trustees highly value, appreciate and understand the importance of external stakeholders, like our patron, the public, regulators, commercial partners, media, local authorities, government agencies, charities, children's societies and suppliers.

Engaging with young people and service users

Trustees are dedicated to building strong relationships with the children, young people and families we support. They know we can only be a vital lifeline when we engage effectively, collaborate and put their views and experiences at the heart of our services. Last year, the trustees visited services across the four nations, including the Mother and Baby Unit at Her Majesty's Prison in Styal, Manchester.



Our Young Ambassadors Board at their get together in December.

Young people on our National Advisory Committees and Young Ambassadors Board help us to recruit trustees and senior staff, and shape our service design and delivery and campaigns. The trustees, through the Children's Services Committee, receive updates from the Participation Team, highlighting feedback from the children and young people about the services they receive. The trustees are engaging directly with the young ambassadors through the Board and relevant committees to help directly inform what's working well, where we can continue to make improvements and share any innovative ideas for future development and growth.

All our partners must comply with the requirements of any professional standards or trade bodies, as well as all applicable laws, statutes, regulations and codes of practice relating to safeguarding, anti-bribery and anti-corruption. Our Donation Acceptance Policy ensures we do not compromise our mission, values and charitable purpose when raising money. For more on our fundraising compliance, see page 28. Our vision and values are also promoted to partners and new providers to make sure they understand what we stand for as a charity.

Trustees receive regular commercial, operational, communications, fundraising, media and policy updates. This helps them understand the impact our activities have, and the views of our stakeholders.

The trustees also review financial and operational performance at their bi-monthly board meeting. They are responsible for establishing and maintaining an effective system of internal controls to detect, prevent and manage risks. They are also responsible for reviewing legal and regulatory compliance. For more on our Risk Management Framework, and how we identify and manage risks in all our activities, head to page 40.

Integrity

The Board's ethical policy framework embeds ethical standards and common principles through which we assess investments, procurement, funding and/or other significant activities and informs all of our policies and procedures.

Our ethical policy framework helps us manage any issues with donations, our work with suppliers or partners, or when appointing trustees, staff and ambassadors.

To make sure we meet legal and sector standards, we do not work with any organisations:

- That compromise our vision, mission, values and charitable objectives.
- That conflict with our principles and policies.
- That undermine our services to children.
- That undermine our commitment to safeguarding.
- That undermine our commitment to diversity.
- That operate in markets known to damage children and families.
- That treat the environment in an unsustainable way.
- That conflict with the ethical principles developed by NCVO and the principles of the Charity Governance Code.
- Whose actions breach the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- That compromise our roots in the Methodist Church.

Modern Slavery Act 2015

Action for Children has a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery. We are committed to acting ethically and with integrity in all our business dealings and relationships. We have implemented, and enforce, effective systems and controls to make sure modern slavery does not take place anywhere in our business, or in any of our supply chains, by including specific prohibitions as part of our contracting process. We have also revised and updated our Modern Slavery Policy during the last 12 months.

Statement of trustees' **responsibility**

The trustees (who are also directors of Action for Children in line with company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' Annual Report (including the strategic report) and the financial statements in line with applicable law and regulations.

The trustees must prepare financial statements for each financial year, according to company law. Under that law, the trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law), including FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Under company law, the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company, the group and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable group for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and consistently apply them.
- Observe methods and principles set out in the Charities SORP (FRS 102).

- Make reasonable and prudent judgements and accounting estimates.
- State whether applicable UK accounting standards have been followed, subject to any differences disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis (unless it is inappropriate to presume that the group will continue in business).

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that can show and explain the charitable company's and group's transactions. They must also disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and the group and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) and the provisions of our governing documents.

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and the group, and therefore also taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees confirm that:

- So far as each trustee is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware.
- They have taken the necessary steps to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information, and to establish that the charitable company's auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. UK legislation governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions. The Trustees' Annual Report (including the strategic report) was approved and signed on behalf of the trustees on 19 September 2024.



Sarika Patel,
Chair, Board of Trustees

Independent **auditor's** report

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Action for Children (the “charitable company”) and its subsidiaries (the “group”) for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities, the Group and Charity Statement of Financial Position, the Consolidated Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102; the financial reporting standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- Give a true and fair view of the state of the group’s and the charitable company’s affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of the group’s incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- Have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor’s responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC’s Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees’ use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company’s ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least 12 months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor’s report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves.

If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion based on the work undertaken in the course of our audit:

- The information given in the trustees’ report, which includes the directors’ report and the strategic report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- The strategic report and the directors’ report included within the trustees’ report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the strategic report or the directors’ report included within the trustees’ report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- The parent company has not kept adequate accounting records; or
- The parent company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or

- Certain disclosures of trustees’ remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- We have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees’ responsibilities statement set out on page 48, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company’s ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor’s responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor’s report that includes our opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of noncompliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is available on the Financial Reporting Council’s website at: [frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of our auditor’s report.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of noncompliance with laws and regulations. We identified and assessed the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements from irregularities, whether due to fraud or error, and discussed these between our audit team members. We then designed and performed audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks within which the charitable company and group operates, focusing on those laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The laws and regulations we considered in this context were the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011 and The Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, together with the Charities SORP (FRS 102). We assessed the required compliance with these laws and regulations as part of our audit procedures on the related financial statement items.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which might be fundamental to the charitable company's and the group's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty. We also considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the charitable company and the group for fraud. The laws and regulations we considered in this context for the UK operations were General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Health and Safety legislation and employment legislation.

Auditing standards limit the required audit procedures to identify non-compliance with these laws and regulations to enquiry of the trustees and other management and inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

We identified the greatest risk of material impact on the financial statements from irregularities, including fraud, to be within the timing of recognition of income and the override of controls by management. Our audit procedures to respond to these risks included enquiries of management, internal audit, legal counsel and the Audit & Risk Committee about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, sample testing on the posting of journals, reviewing accounting estimates for biases, reviewing regulatory correspondence with the Charity Commission, and reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements, even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. For example, the further removed noncompliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the inherently limited procedures required by auditing standards would identify it. In addition, as with any audit, there remained a higher risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls. We are not responsible for preventing non-compliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations.

N. Hashemi

Naziar Hashemi
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of
Crowe UK LLP

Statutory Auditor
London

15 October 2024

Financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

Consolidated statement of financial activities (incorporating the income and expenditure account)

	Notes	Total			Restricted funds		Total funds 2024	Total			Restricted funds		Total funds 2023
		General	Designated	Unrestricted funds	Specific purpose	Endowment		General	Designated	Unrestricted funds	Specific purpose	Endowment	
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income and endowments													
Income from donations and legacies	3	12,411	–	12,411	4,785	–	17,196	12,544	–	12,544	6,030	–	18,574
Investment income		1,572	–	1,572	–	–	1,572	1,250	–	1,250	92	–	1,342
Income from charitable activities													
Family support		59,667	–	59,667	184	–	59,851	31,701	–	31,701	21	–	31,722
Children in care		34,201	–	34,201	–	–	34,201	34,989	–	34,989	159	–	35,148
Disabled children and young people		33,416	–	33,416	71	–	33,487	26,637	–	26,637	100	–	26,737
Mental health and wellbeing		8,683	–	8,683	30	–	8,713	36,146	–	36,146	104	–	36,250
		135,967	–	135,967	285	–	136,252	129,473	–	129,473	384	–	129,857
Other income													
Net gain on disposal of fixed assets		260	–	260	–	–	260	14	–	14	–	–	14
Total income and endowments		150,210	–	150,210	5,070	–	155,280	143,281	–	143,281	6,506	–	149,787
Expenditure													
Expenditure on raising funds	4.5	6,752	–	6,752	–	–	6,752	6,329	–	6,329	–	–	6,329
Expenditure on charitable activities													
Family support		65,070	–	65,070	3,326	–	68,396	35,063	–	35,063	1,473	–	36,536
Children in care		35,427	–	35,427	1,164	–	36,591	34,658	–	34,658	2,220	–	36,878
Disabled children and young people		36,855	–	36,855	360	–	37,215	29,211	–	29,211	340	–	29,551
Mental health and wellbeing		9,010	–	9,010	2,283	–	11,293	37,228	–	37,228	2,246	–	39,474
Campaigning and public policy		780	–	780	6	–	786	611	–	611	11	–	622
		147,142	–	147,142	7,139	–	154,281	136,771	–	136,771	6,290	–	143,061
Total expenditure		153,894	–	153,894	7,139	–	161,033	143,100	–	143,100	6,290	–	149,390
Net gain/(loss) on investments	9	1,362	–	1,362	–	–	1,362	(1,058)	–	(1,058)	–	(664)	(1,722)
Net (loss)/income for the year before transfers		(2,322)	–	(2,322)	(2,069)	–	(4,391)	(877)	–	(877)	216	(664)	(1,325)
Transfers between funds	14	(636)	11,945	11,309	(286)	(11,023)	–	(4,708)	4,708	–	–	–	–
Net (loss)/income for the year before other recognised gains and losses		(2,958)	11,945	8,987	(2,355)	(11,023)	(4,391)	(5,585)	4,708	(877)	216	(664)	(1,325)
Other recognised losses													
Actuarial loss on pension liability	6	(807)	–	–	–	–	(807)	(1,893)	–	(1,893)	–	–	(1,893)
Net movement in funds		(3,765)	11,945	8,180	(2,355)	(11,023)	(5,198)	(7,478)	4,708	(2,770)	216	(664)	(3,218)
Funds brought forward	14	19,814	42,488	62,302	7,478	11,023	80,803	27,292	37,780	65,072	7,262	11,687	84,021
Funds carried forward	14	16,049	54,433	70,482	5,123	–	75,605	19,814	42,488	62,302	7,478	11,023	80,803

Action for Children financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

Statement of financial position as at 31 March 2024

	Notes	Group		Charity	
		2024	2023	2024	2023
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	7	26,800	22,309	26,800	22,309
Intangible fixed assets	8	430	644	430	644
Investments	9	36,245	39,565	36,245	28,282
		63,475	62,518	63,475	51,235
Current assets					
Debtors	10	21,411	20,483	14,745	12,635
Notice deposits		10,528	13,734	10,528	13,269
Cash		2,351	6,632	1,847	5,875
		34,290	40,849	27,120	31,779
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	(19,207)	(20,306)	(11,931)	(11,827)
Net current assets		15,083	20,543	15,189	19,952
Total assets less current liabilities		78,558	83,061	78,664	71,187
Provisions for liabilities	12	(2,402)	(2,258)	(2,402)	(2,258)
Net assets excluding pension reserve		76,156	80,803	76,262	68,929
Pension reserve		(551)	-	(551)	-
Net assets including pension reserve		75,605	80,803	75,711	68,929
Funds	14				
Restricted funds					
Endowments		-	11,023	-	-
Specific purpose		5,123	7,477	5,123	7,191
Total restricted funds		5,123	18,500	5,123	7,191
Unrestricted funds excluding pension reserve		71,033	62,303	71,139	61,738
Pension reserve	6	(551)	-	(551)	-
Total unrestricted funds including pension reserve:		70,482	62,303	70,588	61,738
Total funds	14,15	75,605	80,803	75,711	68,929

These accounts were approved by the Board of Trustees on 19 September 2024. and signed on its behalf.



Sarika Patel
Chair



Peter Curran
Trustee

Company number 04764232

Action for Children financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

Consolidated cash flow statement

	Group	
	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Net cash outflow from operating activities (below)	(8,702)	(7,506)
Cash flows from investing activities		
Interest received	534	155
Dividends received	455	541
Rental income from investment properties	583	646
Proceeds of sale of tangible fixed assets	260	701
Proceeds of sale of investment properties	120	-
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(5,379)	(5,965)
Proceeds of sale of investments	17,721	570
Purchase of investments	(13,079)	(510)
Net cash provided by investing activities	1,214	(3,862)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year	(7,487)	(11,368)
Cash and cash equivalents brought forward as at 1 April	20,366	31,734
Cash and cash equivalents carried forward as at 31 March	12,879	20,366

Reconciliation of net expenditure to net cash outflow from operating activities

	Group	
	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Net (expenditure)/income for the year (as per the statement of financial activities)	(4,391)	(1,325)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation and amortisation charges	1,003	695
Net (gains)/loss on investment assets	(1,362)	1,722
Investment income	(1,572)	(1,342)
Net (gains)/loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	(260)	(14)
Pension current service and administration cost	1,294	1,458
Pension employer contributions	(1,531)	(3,351)
(Increase) in debtors	(928)	(1,876)
(Decrease) in creditors	(1,099)	(3,399)
Increase/(decrease) in provision for liabilities	144	(74)
Net cash (outflow)	(8,702)	(7,506)

Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Cash in hand	2,351	6,632
Notice deposits (less than 3 months)	10,528	13,734
Total cash and cash equivalents	12,879	20,366

Analysis of changes in net debt

	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Total cash and cash equivalents b/fwd	20,366	31,734
Cashflows	(7,487)	(11,368)
Total cash and cash equivalents b/fwd	12,879	20,366

Notes to the financial statements

1. Basis of preparation

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102.

The group and charity financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: *Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland Ireland (FRS 102)* (Charities SORP (FRS102)) issued on 2 October 2019 and the *Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)*. They also comply with the reporting requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and the Charities Act 2011.

The group and charity financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis (see below), under the historical cost convention, as modified by the revaluation of listed investments and investment properties.

In preparing these financial statements the charity has taken advantage of the exemptions permitted under section 408 of the Companies Act 2006 and has not presented its unconsolidated Statement of Financial Activities.

Going concern

The accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis. This is deemed an appropriate basis by the trustees based on an assessment of the charity's financial forecasts, reserves and cashflow projections for at least 12 months. The trustees have also considered potential financial risks the charity may face, and actions that would be taken to mitigate these risks should they arise.

The trustees have approved a balanced operating budget for the 2024/25 financial year (before investments in growth plans and infrastructure projects), and reviewed indicative forecasts for the 2025/26 financial year. Scenario modelling has been undertaken to assess risks to the budget and forecasts, including impacts of cash and reserves positions. The group has a strong balance sheet with unrestricted reserves at 31 March 2024 of £71.0m (2023 £62.0m) with anticipated substantial cash balances in the period. The trustees are satisfied that the current financial strength of cash balances and reserves will allow timely remedial actions to be taken as necessary to minimise impact.

As such, the trustees remain satisfied that the group and parent charitable company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future, being a minimum of 12 months from the date these accounts are signed. Accordingly, the financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

2. Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of the group and charity financial statements are set out below.

Basis of consolidation

The results of subsidiaries are consolidated on a line-by-line basis and acquisitions are included at fair value at the date acquired. The statement of financial activities (SOFA) and balance sheet consolidate the financial statements of the charity and its wholly owned subsidiaries, Action for Children Services Limited, Action for Children Developments Limited and Out of School Scotland Limited. The associated charities, National Children's Home and Nicholas Galperin Trust which had previously been treated as subsidiaries and consolidated in the group accounts were closed during the 2023/24 financial year.

Accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, management is required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities.

The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from those estimates and the estimates, along with their underlying assumptions, are continually reviewed. Key estimates and judgements used in the preparation of these accounts include the use of external valuation reports for:

- The carrying value of investment properties, which are determined using external valuation reports.
- The recognition of any pension asset or liability under FRS 102.

The following judgements have been made in the process of applying the charity's accounting policies and that has the most significant effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements:

- Income recognition in relation to contracts.
- Pension actuarial assumptions (see note 6).
- Investment property valuations (see note 9).
- Dilapidations provision (see note 12).
- Redundancy provision (note 12).

Income

All incoming resources are included in the SOFA when the charity is legally entitled to the income, when receipt of the income is considered probable, and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy. Entitlement, for legacies, is the earlier of the charity being notified of an impending distribution and the legacy being received.

Incoming resources from charitable activities, including capital grants, are included in the SOFA when they are receivable. The full amount of capital grants is taken to the SOFA when receivable.

Where cash is received in respect of contractual work to be undertaken in the next financial year, if there is agreement from the funding body, this is treated as deferred income. Where such agreement has not been obtained it is included in other creditors.

Donations and gifts received at offices and projects during the year are recorded gross, or at estimated value, except that the sale proceeds from gifts donated for resale are included, at their sale price, when they are sold. All other incoming resources are reported gross of fees and expenditure whether raised by the charity or its agents, except for small

fundraising events, not under the direct control of Action for Children, where funds are remitted and recorded net of direct expenses.

No amounts are included in the financial statements for services donated by volunteers.

Expenditure

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and is classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they are allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

The costs of generating funds include fundraising and publicity costs, trading costs and investment management costs. Fundraising and publicity comprises the salaries of staff and other direct and indirect costs, which include appropriate allocations of central support costs.

Expenditure on charitable activities include the expenses relating to campaigning and advocacy, together with the costs of informing and educating the public about the work, and the costs of other supporting services, management and administration essential to the professional and competent execution of the work. Where arrangements exist for the delivery of work by partner organisations, the cost of this is included within the relevant activity. Where central services support both direct charitable work and fundraising, allocations of their costs are made on a head count basis which reflects the use made of those services.

Governance costs

Governance costs represent the salaries, direct expenditure and overhead costs incurred by the corporate resources department as well as internal and external audit costs. The corporate resources department is involved in the compliance with the constitutional and statutory requirements of operating a charitable company.

Retirement benefits

Action for Children contributes to a variety of pension arrangements on behalf of staff. Most benefits are provided by the Action for Children Pension Fund, which has a number of sections, including defined benefit and defined contribution elements.

The costs of providing defined benefit pensions are treated in accordance with FRS 102. The following elements are charged to the SOFA: the service cost of pension provision relating to the period, together with the costs of any benefits relating to past service (allocated to staff costs); the pension finance cost, which is a charge equal to the increase in the present value of the pension fund's liabilities at the previous year end, less a credit equivalent to the pension fund's long-term expected return on assets; and the actuarial gain or loss on the Pension Fund's assets and liabilities (allocated to other recognised gains and losses). The difference between the market value of the assets of the Pension Fund and the present value of accrued pension liabilities is shown as an asset or liability on the balance sheet, except that an asset is only recognised where the charity has the sole right to determine the use of surplus of assets over liabilities.

Pension costs for the defined contribution part of the fund are charged to the accounts on an accruals basis in the period in which they occur.

Action for Children also contributes to the Teachers', local government and NHS pension schemes in respect of a number of its employees. All such costs are included within the SOFA on an accruals basis as incurred.

Leases

Rentals under operating leases are charged to the SOFA over the term of the lease on a straight line basis.

Value Added Tax (VAT)

As part of Action for Children's activities is classified as exempt or non-business activities for the purposes of VAT, Action for Children is unable to reclaim all the VAT that it suffers on its operating costs. Expenditure in these financial statements is therefore shown inclusive of VAT paid and not reclaimable.

Funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the Board of Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity.

Part of the unrestricted funds have been designated for particular purposes by the Board as described in the Annual Report in the notes to the financial statements. The Board periodically reviews the levels of designated funds to ensure they are adequate to support the purposes for which they were set up, and any surplus or deficit is transferred to or from the general fund.

The fair value reserve is the amount by which the fair value of investments exceeds their historical cost (excluding the endowment funds).

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors, or which have been raised by the charity for particular purposes. The costs of administering such funds are charged against the specific fund.

Endowment funds are now designated to be used for the charity's residential growth programme.

Tangible fixed assets

Tangible assets are recorded at cost or, in cases where tangible assets have been donated to Action for Children or acquired through a merger, at open market valuation at the time of the donation or merger. Assets in the course of construction are transferred to the relevant category of asset and depreciated when practical completion is achieved. The threshold for capitalisation is £1,000.

Depreciation is charged on the following basis: In the case of freehold buildings the acquisition cost of buildings, together with any adaptation costs that add value to the property, is capitalised and depreciated over the estimated useful life of the property. No depreciation is provided on freehold land.

For the purposes of depreciation, 999 year leasehold buildings are treated as if they were freehold buildings. Capital expenditure on other leasehold buildings will normally be regarded as a depreciating cost and as such is written off over the estimated useful life (see below).

Other tangible assets are depreciated on a straight line basis over their useful lives which are estimated to be:

Assets in the course of construction	No depreciation
Freehold buildings	50 years
Leasehold land and buildings	10 years or lease period if shorter
Equipment	4 years
Computer software	4 years
Computer software (major)	5 years
Furniture and fittings	5 years
Motor vehicles	4-6 years

When the currently expected useful life of individual assets is considered to be less than these periods, shorter periods are used.

If there are factors indicating that an impairment to the carrying value of fixed assets is possible, an impairment review is conducted and if fixed assets are found to have a carrying value materially higher than their recoverable amount, they are written down accordingly. The recoverable amount would typically be determined by reference to an external valuation report, and any loss would be recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities for the year.

Intangible fixed assets

Intangible fixed assets are held on the balance sheet at cost less accumulated depreciation and any impairment losses.

The purchase of brands is capitalised as an intangible fixed asset and amortised on a straight line basis over an expected useful life of seven years.

Goodwill arising on the acquisition of a business is capitalised as an intangible fixed asset and amortised on a straight line basis over an expected useful life of seven years.

Impairment reviews are made when events and changes in circumstances indicate that an impairment may have occurred. If any asset is found to have a carrying value materially higher than its benefit to generate future revenues, it is written down accordingly.

Investments

Action for Children holds investments both in order to generate income for the support of charitable activities over a long-term period and to provide assets to meet the needs of reserves, identified in the reserves policy. Investments are stated at current market value on the balance sheet date unless there is evidence of a different fair value.

Investment properties are recorded initially at cost and are revalued at the end of each year on the basis of fair value.

Gains or losses arising during the year are disclosed in the consolidated statement of financial activities within other recognised gains and losses in the year and in note 9.

Cash equivalents

Cash equivalents are represented by cash balances held on a short term basis.

Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result on the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amounts after allowing for trade discounts due.

Cash flow

The charity meets the definition of a qualifying entity under FRS 102 and has therefore taken advantage of the disclosure exemption in relation to presentation of a cash flow statement in respect of its separate financial statements, which are presented alongside the consolidated financial statements.

Government grants

Government grants are recognised on the accruals basis, when there is reasonable assurance that the charity will comply with the conditions attaching to the grant and the grant will be received.

Recognition of income and expenditure from Nurseries and Out-of-School Clubs

Income from these activities is primarily carried out through Action for Children Developments Limited and Out of School Scotland Limited entities. These activities are in line with the charitable objectives of the parent entity and the income and expenditure from these activities is classified under 'charitable activities' under the subcategory 'family support'.

3. Income and endowments

Incoming resources from charitable activities are analysed across the main activities of Action for Children on the face of the statement of financial activities. This income is mostly derived from work with local authorities, health trusts and central government sources, providing services to children, young people and their families.

Donations and legacies	Group	
	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Donations	12,957	13,934
Legacies	4,239	4,640
	17,196	18,574

Specific purpose receipts included above are £4,785,000 for donations (2023: £6,030,000).

Trustee donations during the year were £3,900 (2023: £2,975).

Legacies notified but not accrued at 31 March 2024, due to probability or measurable criteria not being met, were estimated at £0.86m (2023: £0.88m).

Charity income

Total incoming resources for the charity were £139,004,000 (2023: £134,227,000). The net deficit for the charity was (£5,130,000) (2023: deficit (£2,893,000)).

Gift Aid payments received are included under donations. Management fees received are included under income from charitable activities in the charity statement of financial activities.

Subsidiaries and associated charities

Action for Children Services Limited, Action for Children Trading Limited and Action for Children Developments Limited are wholly owned trading subsidiaries of Action for Children, the charity. They are engaged in delivering welfare and educational services on behalf of the charity, fundraising, and commercial activities respectively. All profits are gift aided to the charity. Out of School Scotland Limited provides services relating to after school clubs, breakfast clubs and holiday clubs.

National Children's Home (NCH) and Nicholas Galperin Trust which were associated charities that shared common trustees and management were closed during the 2023/24 financial year.

A summary of the results for the year ended 31 March 2024 is given below:

	Trading subsidiaries			Associated charities			
	Services	OSCARS	Developments	NCH	Nicholas Galperin	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Turnover	69,629	1,826	14,800	-	-	86,256	82,640
Cost of sales	(67,892)	(1,609)	(12,363)	-	-	(81,864)	(78,309)
Gross profit	1,737	217	2,437	-	-	4,392	4,331
Charitable activities	-	-	-	-	-	-	(117)
Administration costs	(24)	(139)	(2,506)	-	-	(2,669)	(218)
Surplus/(deficit) on ordinary activities before investment income	1,713	78	(69)	-	-	1,722	2,152
Investment income	-	-	-	-	-	-	311
Net (losses)/gains on investment assets	-	-	-	-	-	-	(665)
Surplus/(deficit) on ordinary activities before tax	1,713	78	(69)	-	-	1,722	1,798
Tax on ordinary activities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Retained earnings brought forward	-	-	(37)	-	-	(37)	12,087
Donations under Gift Aid	(1,713)	(78)	-	-	-	(1,791)	(2,007)
Retained earnings carried forward	-	-	(106)	-	-	(106)	11,878

3. Income and endowments (continued)

The net assets of the subsidiaries and associated charities are set out below:

	Trading subsidiaries			*Associated charities			
	Services	OSCARS	Developments	NCH	Nicholas Galperin	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fixed assets	-	-	-	-	-	-	11,283
Current assets	9,348	838	1,066	-	-	11,252	14,394
Creditors	(9,348)	(838)	(1,172)	-	-	(11,358)	(13,799)
Net assets	-	-	(106)	-	-	(106)	11,878

*Associated charities NCH and Nicholas Galperin were closed during the year.

Investment income

	Group	
	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
CFB funds – UK	395	480
CFB funds – overseas	60	61
Interest income	534	155
Income from securities	989	696
Rental income from investment properties	583	646
	1,572	1,342

4. Expenditure

Group	2024			2023		
	Direct costs	Support costs	Total	Direct costs	Support costs	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure on raising funds						
Donations	5,917	400	6,317	5,492	532	6,024
Legacies	334	12	346	237	16	253
	6,251	412	6,663	5,729	548	6,277
Investment management costs	89	-	89	52	-	52
	6,340	412	6,752	5,781	548	6,329
Expenditure on charitable activities						
Family support	59,831	8,565	68,396	31,638	4,898	36,536
Children in care	33,696	2,895	36,591	34,005	2,873	36,878
Disabled children and young people	31,771	5,444	37,215	25,205	4,346	29,551
Mental health and wellbeing	10,139	1,154	11,293	35,573	3,901	39,474
Campaigning and public policy	739	47	786	581	41	622
	136,176	18,105	154,281	127,002	16,059	143,061
Total expenditure	142,516	18,517	161,033	132,783	16,607	149,390

The charity's policy is to allocate support costs of various functions to the activities above based on the costs of those activities. Support costs by category include technology £8.6m, property £3.2m, finance £2.7m, strategy £0.7m, HR £1.1m, other £2.4m. Details of governance costs are detailed later in this note.

Trustee costs

7 trustees were reimbursed travel expenses totalling £1,194 (2023: 3 recipients of £1,235).

The charity purchased insurance for trustees and officers during the year to indemnify them against possible liabilities incurred by them in relation to their duties.

Trustees are not entitled to and did not receive any remuneration.

	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Fees payable to the auditors of Action for Children		
In respect of the charity audit	116	85
In respect of subsidiary and associated trust audits	29	26
	145	111
In respect of certificates for project partners	-	-
In respect of tax and other advice	-	-
	145	111
Value Added Tax (VAT)		
As stated in the accounting policy, Action for Children is unable to reclaim all the VAT which it suffers on its purchases of goods and services. During the year the cost of irrecoverable value added tax amounted to:	2,222	2,301
Rentals under operating leases		
Plant and machinery	7	6
Land and buildings	1,996	2,224
	2,003	2,230
Depreciation	1,003	695
Governance costs		
Staff costs	553	506
Internal and external audit fees	247	221
Legal fees	151	75
Other costs	35	70
	986	872

5. Employees' emoluments

Staff costs comprise:	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Wages and salaries	95,342	90,929
Redundancy costs	640	67
Termination payments	–	–
Temporary staff costs	3,992	2,767
Social security costs	8,412	7,784
Apprenticeship levy	450	426
Action for Children Pension Fund – defined benefit current service cost	–	–
Action for Children Pension Fund – defined contribution cost	4,331	4,048
Teachers', Local Government Pension Schemes and NHS Pension Fund contributions	510	559
	113,677	106,580

Included in the redundancy costs is £249,577 (2023 £0) of ex gratia redundancy payments made in line with Action for Children's redundancy policy. Such payments are made at the discretion of senior management and are non contractual.

Other than the Action for Children Pension Fund, the charity participates in a number of defined benefit schemes, where the accounting treatment is as for defined contribution plans.

The Teachers' Pension Scheme and the NHS Pension Fund are unfunded schemes. Liabilities in addition to ongoing contributions potentially arise with redundancy or early retirement. But that is a risk controlled by the charity, and provision is made for the full liability if the occurrence arises.

The charity also has admitted body status in various Local Government Pension Schemes (LGPS), which may potentially carry a risk to the charity. Action for Children ensures that potential risks outside its control are passed back to the relevant local authority in line with the Department for Communities and Local Government guidance dated December 2009, *Admitted body status provisions in the Local Government Pension Scheme when services are transferred from a local authority or other scheme employer*, and the local authority retains the actuarial, mortality, inflation, regulatory changes, discount rate and investment return risks.

The average number of employees during the year was:	2024	2023
	No.	No.
Fundraising	157	151
Charitable activities	4,044	4,061
Support services	231	217
	4,432	4,429
Number of full time equivalents at year end	3,407	3,128

The number of staff whose emoluments fell within each of the following bands was:	2024	2023
£60,001 to £70,000	35	27
£70,001 to £80,000	24	19
£80,001 to £90,000	8	4
£90,001 to £100,000	5	3
£100,001 to £110,000	2	–
£110,001 to £120,000	3	2
£120,001 to £130,000	1	1
£130,001 to £140,000	–	1
£150,001 to £160,000	–	1
£160,001 to £170,000	1	–

Of the staff listed above, 76 were accruing benefits under the Action for Children Pension Fund defined contribution section (in 2023 it was 54). The amount of contribution paid in respect of these staff to the scheme was £351,150 (2023 £242,692).

The total emoluments paid in 2023/24 and the current annual salaries of existing key management personnel are shown below. In the bandings above, where these staff are also included, the required definition of emoluments is total gross pay plus any benefits in kind. The analysis below also includes employer pension and national insurance contributions and termination payments.

The total cost of key management personnel was £1,091,168 (2023 £875,659).

6. Pensions

Action for Children provides pension benefits mainly through the Action for Children Pension Fund. The assets of the Pension Fund are held in a separate trustee administered fund.

Current staff are members of the defined contribution section of the Pension Fund, into which new employees are auto-enrolled.

Until 30 April 2010 benefits were provided to employees through a number of defined benefit sections and a hybrid scheme combining career average revalued earnings and defined contribution arrangements. On 1 May 2010, following a review of benefits and consultation with members of the Pension Fund, staff of Action for Children and Unions, all sections of the Pension Fund were closed, with one exception, for both new and existing members. Staff who transfer to Action for Children under Fair Deal TUPE arrangements are eligible to join a defined benefit section of the Pension Fund comparable to the local government pension scheme. A new defined contribution section was created for all other staff.

Membership of the Pension Fund at 31 March 2024 was:	2024	2023
Active members – defined benefit section	–	–
Active members – defined contribution section	3,003	2,990
	3,003	2,990
Deferred members	9,781	9,467
Pensioner members	3,080	2,978
	15,864	15,435

As at 31 March 2024, there were no active members still accruing benefits under the defined benefit section.

Contributions for the defined contribution section are variable with the following matching rates:

Employee	3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	above 7%
Employer	5%	5%	5%	6%	7%	7%

Further, Action for Children pays a 2% contribution for all active members into the defined benefit section to cover death in service and to meet the administration costs of the Pension Fund.

The total employer contribution to the defined benefits section of the Action for Children Pension Fund for the year was £1,531,000 (2023 : £3,319,000).

UK Legislation requires that pension schemes are funded prudently.

The last agreed triennial funding valuation of the fund was carried out by a qualified actuary as at 31 March 2021 and shows a deficit of £60.2m (on the trustees sustainable target basis).

The deficit recovery plan, accepted by the Pensions Regulator, is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding to regularly communicate and share information between the employer and the Pension Fund. Action for Children has paid deficit contributions of £1.0m for the year to 31 March 2024.

The deficit reduction contributions are reflected in the charity's business plans and the assessment of the charity's reserves policy.

In addition there is a charge in favour of the Pension Fund over certain assets owned by Action for Children in the event of default.

The Memorandum of Understanding includes agreement that up to 50% of the proceeds from sale of the properties owned by the charity to be paid to the Pension Fund if the proceeds are not invested by the charity within an agreed period.

While the settlement of pension liabilities is a very long-term process, with costs spread over many years, the funding level is volatile. Valuations are snapshots on one day and are sensitive to changes in financial market factors. The actuary AON provides a regular report on the funding position of the Pension Fund and this is closely monitored by the Pension Fund and charity.

Pension funds are valued in different ways for different purposes. The triennial valuation noted above is carried out by the scheme actuaries AON to establish an appropriate funding level, and uses prescribed financial assumptions that are different from the assumptions that must be used under the Financial Reporting Standard, FRS 102 valuation detailed below, which is carried out for accounting disclosure purposes. The FRS valuation uses lower inflation and higher interest/ discount rate assumptions than the triennial valuation, and both of these differences lead to a lower calculation of pension liabilities.

The FRS102 position shown below is a deficit of £0.5m a funding level is slightly below 100%. The ongoing valuation basis is used in agreeing contribution levels and the recovery plan. Although movements in the FRS102 valuation show in the statement of financial activity and feed through to the balance sheet total, they do not change the general fund.

It is the general fund that is directly linked to the reserve policy and important in assessing the charity's ability to manage its future operations. The deficit contributions are reflected in the charity's business plans and the assessment of the charity's reserve policy.

The Charity is aware of the Virgin Media v NTL Pension Trustees ll Limited Court of Appeal judgement which may give rise to adjustments to the scheme. At present the legal process is incomplete and therefore we are unable to quantify any potential liabilities.

FRS 102 valuation

Under FRS102 the amount of any surplus should be restricted so that it is no more than the economic benefits that could be realised by the charity, either in the form of future refunds or reductions in future contributions. As the charity does not have an unconditional right to the surplus arising on the FRS102 valuation of the Pension Fund, any surpluses are not recognised in the financial statements.

These financial statements have been prepared in line with the requirements of FRS 102. The FRS 102 valuation is only in respect of the defined benefit sections of the Action for Children Pension Fund and the following analysis only covers that element of the Pension Fund. The principal FRS 102 actuarial assumptions determined by financial markets and demographic conditions are shown below. A later table shows the sensitivity of the liability to these assumptions.

Financial assumptions % pa	2024	2023
Inflation - RPI	3.10	3.30
Inflation - CPI	2.40	2.50
Rate of increase in salaries	2.00	2.00
RPI min 0%	3.15	3.35
RPI min 0% max 2.5%	2.00	2.05
CPI min 0% max 3%	1.95	2.00
Discount rate	4.80	4.75

The duration of the fund is approximately 16 years based on initial results of the 31 March 2021 funding valuation.

Demographic assumptions	Value at 2024	Value at 2023
Mortality base table adopted	S3 tables (S3MA for males, S3PFA_M for females) and scaling factors of 110% for males non-pensioners, 105% for female non-pensioners and 100% for pensioners.	S3 tables (S3MA for males, S3PFA_M for females) and scaling factors of 116% for males non-pensioners, 111% for female non-pensioners and 106% for pensioners.
Mortality future improvements adopted	Improvements in line with CMI 2022, with a smoothing parameter of 7.0, an initial improvements parameter of 0.5 for males and females, and a long term rate of improvement of 1.5%.	Improvements in line with CMI 2021, with a smoothing parameter of 7.0, an initial improvements parameter of 0.5 for males and females, and a long term rate of improvement of 1.5% pa.
Life expectancy for male currently aged 60	26.8	26.9
Life expectancy for female currently aged 60	29.0	29.0
Life expectancy at 60 for male currently aged 40	28.0	28.1
Life expectancy at 60 for female currently aged 40	30.4	30.5
Transfer take-up	Nil	Nil
GMP equalisation	0.8% allowance included in the Defined Benefit Obligation (DBO) reflecting AON's best estimate in respect of the cost of GMP equalisation (regardless of actual method being implemented).	0.8% allowance included in the Defined Benefit Obligation (DBO) reflecting AON's best estimate in respect of the cost of GMP equalisation (regardless of actual method being implemented).
Cash commutation	Pre 2002/Post 2002 members assumed to exchange 20%/5% of their pension for a cash lump sum at retirement.	Pre 2002/Post 2002 members assumed to exchange 20%/5% of their pension for a cash lump sum at retirement.

The mortality assumptions are based on the recent actual mortality experience of fund members and allow for expected future improvements in mortality rates.

Balance sheet position

	2024		2023	
	Value	Asset allocation	Value	Asset allocation
	£'000	%	£'000	%
Alternatives	135,600	%	153,200	30.8
Loans	316,800	29.7	324,300	65.2
Cash	3,406	69.6	19,987	4.0
Equity securities	-	0.7	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total fair value of assets	455,806	100.0	497,487	100.0
Actuarial value of liabilities	(456,357)	-	(460,396)	-
(Liability)/Surplus for FRS 102 purposes	(551)	-	37,091	-
Derecognition of surplus	-	-	(37,091)	-
Net Liability reorganised in the balance sheet	(551)	-	-	-

None of the fund assets are invested in the charity's financial instruments or in property occupied by, or other assets used by, the charity.

Analysis of amounts charged to the Statement of Financial Activities

	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Service cost	-	-
Current service cost	-	-
Past service cost (including curtailments)	-	-
Settlement cost	1,275	1,458
Administration expenses	19	-
Interest on net defined benefit liability/(assets)	-	-
Financing cost	-	-
Pension expense recognised in profit and loss	1,294	1,458
Return on fund assets (in excess of)/below that recognised in net interest	43,611	189,963
Liability (gains)/losses arising during the year	(3,945)	(141,579)
Change in effect of the asset ceiling	(38,859)	(46,491)
Total recognised actuarial (loss)	807	1,893

Reconciliation of the fair value of the Pension Fund assets and liabilities

	2024			2023		
	Assets	Liabilities	Fund	Assets	Liabilities	Fund
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Assets/(liabilities) at the start of the year	497,487	(460,396)	37,091	687,508	(606,189)	81,319
Interest income (expense)	23,162	(21,394)	1,768	18,671	(16,408)	2,263
Current service cost	–	–	–	–	–	–
Administration costs	–	(1,275)	(1,275)	–	(1,458)	(1,458)
Past service cost (including curtailments)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Contributions by fund participants	–	–	–	–	–	–
Contributions by the employer	1,531	–	1,531	3,351	–	3,351
Actuarial gain/(loss)	(43,611)	3,945	(39,666)	(189,963)	141,579	(48,384)
Net benefits paid out	(22,763)	22,763	–	(22,080)	22,080	–
Assets/(liabilities) at the end of the year	455,806	(456,357)	(551)	497,487	(460,396)	37,091

Actual return on fund assets

	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Interest income on fund assets	23,162	18,671
Remeasurement gain/loss on fund assets	(43,611)	(189,963)
Actual return on fund assets	(20,449)	(171,292)

Sensitivity of the Pension Fund liabilities

The sensitivity of the liabilities to changes in the key assumptions used to measure the Pension Fund's liabilities is shown in the table to the right.

The sensitivity invitation shown is approximate and has been determined by taking into account the duration of the liabilities and the overall profile of the fund membership. This is the same approach used in previous accounting periods.

The surplus/deficit figures shown below are before the application of the restricted asset ceiling.

Following a 0.5% p.a. decrease in the discount rate.

Sensitivity of the Pension Fund liabilities	Change	New value
	£000s	£000s
Following a 0.5% p.a. decrease in the discount rate		
Assets of the fund at 31 Mar 2024	–	455,806
DBO at 31 Mar 2024	(31,357)	(487,714)
Surplus/(deficit) at 31 Mar 2024	(31,357)	(31,908)
Following a 0.5% p.a. decrease in the inflation assumption		
Assets of the fund at 31 Mar 2024	–	455,806
DBO at 31 Mar 2024	(27,888)	(484,245)
Surplus/(deficit) at 31 Mar 2023	(27,888)	(28,439)
Following a one-year increase in life expectancy		
Assets of the fund at 31 Mar 2024	–	455,806
DBO at 31 Mar 2024	(13,737)	(470,094)
Surplus/(deficit) at 31 Mar 2024	(13,737)	(14,288)

7. Tangible fixed assets

Group and charity	Assets in the course of construction	Freehold land and buildings	Leasehold land and buildings	Computers and equipment	Furniture and fittings	Motor vehicles	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost							
At 1 April 2023	5,952	26,136	3,816	13,994	3,515	1,769	55,182
Additions	4,648	153	-	127	326	26	5,280
Transfers	(4,167)	4,167	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	(444)	-	-	-	(88)	(532)
At 31 March 2024	6,433	30,012	3,816	14,121	3,841	1,707	59,930
Depreciation							
At 1 April 2023	-	10,505	3,264	13,901	3,454	1,749	32,873
Charges for year	-	588	56	76	59	10	789
Disposals	-	(444)	-	-	-	(88)	(532)
At 31 March 2024	-	10,649	3,320	13,977	3,513	1,671	33,130
Net book value							
At 31 March 2024	6,433	19,363	496	144	328	36	26,800
At 31 March 2023	5,952	15,631	552	93	61	20	22,309

Assets in the course of construction comprise incomplete building, major refurbishment and capital project work, and are not depreciated.

The cost of the land, which is not depreciated, was £4,317,663 (2022 £3,757,320).

Of the total cost or valuation of leasehold land and buildings £2,415,000 (2022 £2,253,000) relates to leases due to expire within 50 years or less.

It is not considered that any assets have suffered permanent impairment to their value.

Capital commitments for contracts placed in respect of capital expenditure less amounts incurred to 31 March 2024 amounted to £568,645 (2023 £2,120,000).

Commitments to operating lease payments were:

	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Within one year	578	729
Between one and five years	628	1,081
After five years	126	140
	1,332	1,950

8. Intangible fixed assets

Group and charity	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
At 1 April	644	872
Goodwill written off during the year	–	(48)
Depreciation charged for the year	(214)	(180)
Net book value at 31 March	430	644

9. Investments

Value at 31 March	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Securities				
Units in funds managed by the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church:				
L&G UK Property Feeder Fund I Class Acc	547	–	547	–
Epworth Climate Stewardship Fund for Charities GBP Inc	1,145	–	1,145	–
Epworth Global Equity Fund for Charities GBP Inc	2,894	–	2,894	–
Epworth UK Equity Fund for Charities GBP Inc	1,141	–	1,141	–
Vanguard U.K. Government Bond Index Fund GBP Acc	1,295	–	1,295	–
Rathbone Ethical Bond Fund Institutional Inc	606	–	606	–
FP Foresight Global Real Infrastructure Fund A Inc	1,969	–	1,969	–
Threadneedle UK Social Bond Fund Institutional Income GBP	438	–	438	–
Vanguard U.S. Government Bond Index Fund Investor GBP Hedged Inc	875	–	875	–
Royal London Short Term Money Market Y Acc	616	–	616	–
Royal Mint Responsibly Sourced Physical Gold ETC	537	–	537	–
Rathbone Greenbank Global Sustainable Bond Fund F Acc	919	–	919	–
Cash-Epworth	90	–	90	–
CFB UK equity fund	–	4,233	–	4,233
CFB overseas fund	–	4,002	–	4,002
CFB gilt fund	–	333	–	333
CFB corporate bond fund	–	1,043	–	1,043
CFB short fixed interest fund	–	1,489	–	1,489
CFB managed fund	7,482	11,946	7,482	–
CFB deposit fund	–	2,008	–	2,008
CFB Continuous Asset Fund	4	–	4	–
	20,560	25,054	20,560	13,108
Unlisted equities	5	5	5	5
	20,565	25,059	20,565	13,113
Investments in subsidiaries	–	–	–	–
	20,565	25,059	20,565	13,113
Investment properties	15,680	16,287	15,680	16,287
Total investments	36,245	41,346	36,245	29,400

All investments are held in the UK.

Investments are valued at current market value, but where listed shares have a limited market their fair value is reviewed. Unlisted investments are valued at cost or, if donated to Action for Children, at valuation at the time of donation.

Investments in subsidiaries are valued at the higher of cost and estimated value at the time of acquisition less any diminution in value.

Investment properties are valued at the end of each year on the basis of open market value by external firms of chartered surveyors.

The historical cost or earliest known valuations of investments held at 31 March 2024 were:

– Securities £17,981,962 (2023 £13,183,873).

– Investment properties £6,031,017 (2023 £6,060,018).

Investment gains and losses	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Securities				
Market value at 1 April	23,725	25,059	23,725	13,113
Acquisitions during the year	13,079	510	13,079	510
Sale proceeds of disposals during the year	(17,601)	(570)	(17,601)	(570)
Net investment losses in SOFA – realised	-	-	-	-
Net investment gains/(losses) in SOFA – unrealised	1,362	(1,274)	1,362	(611)
Market value at 31 March	20,565	23,725	20,565	12,442
Investment properties				
Market value at 1 April	15,840	16,287	15,840	16,287
Reclassification from fixed assets at book value	-	-	-	-
Sale proceeds of disposals during the year	(120)	-	(120)	-
Net investment losses in SOFA - realised	-	-	-	-
Net investment gains in SOFA - unrealised	(40)	(447)	(40)	(447)
Market value at 31 March	15,680	15,840	15,680	15,840

The investment property revaluations as at 31 March 2024 are on the basis of independent valuations carried out by Sanderson Weatherall.

The valuations were conducted on the basis of fair value in use.

Investments in subsidiaries

- (i) Action for Children Services Limited is a wholly owned company registered in England and Wales handling the primary purpose trading activities of Action for Children. The investment comprises shares at a cost of £100 (2023 £100). The company registration number is 02332388.
- (ii) Action for Children Trading Limited is a wholly owned company registered in England and Wales handling fundraising trading activities of Action for Children. The investment comprises shares at a cost of £100 (2023 £100). The company registration number is 03776025.
- (iii) Action for Children Developments Limited is a wholly owned company registered in England and Wales handling nursery and new developmental activities of Action for Children. It is limited by guarantee. The company registration number is 06842765.
- (iv) Out of School Scotland Limited is a wholly owned company registered in Scotland and provides holiday camps and after school clubs. The investment comprises one hundred shares at a nominal value of £100 (2023 £100). The company registration number is SC264619.
- (v) Action for Children (Scotland) Limited is a wholly owned company registered in Scotland. The investment comprises one share at a cost of £1 (2023 £1) and it has not traded. The company registration number is SC526474.
- (vi) Action for Children (Wales) Limited is a wholly owned company registered in England and Wales. The investment comprises one share at a cost of £1 (2023 £1) and it has not traded. The company registration number is 10011497.
- (vii) Action for Children (Northern Ireland) Limited is a wholly owned company registered in Northern Ireland. The investment comprises one share at a cost of £1 (2023 £1) and it has not traded. The company registration number is NI638222.
- (viii) St Barts Day Nurseries Limited is a wholly owned company registered in England and Wales. The company registration number is 11010289. The company has not traded since incorporation.

10. Debtors: amounts falling due within one year

	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Trade receivables	12,986	13,187	4,392	2,960
Prepayments	1,040	1,253	933	1,174
Accrued income	6,826	5,961	5,880	4,926
Amounts owed by subsidiary undertakings	–	–	2,983	3,540
Other	559	82	557	35
	21,411	20,483	14,745	12,635

11. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Trade payables	1,035	1,613	1,029	1,313
Tax and social security	4,127	3,809	3,971	3,656
Other creditors	1,935	1,316	1,582	723
Accruals	3,684	3,635	3,347	3,309
Deferred income	8,426	9,933	2,002	2,826
Amounts owed to subsidiary undertakings	–	–	–	–
	19,207	20,306	11,931	11,827

The group deferred income balance has moved as follows during the year 2023/24.

	£'000
Balance at 1 April 2023	9,933
Released during the year	(9,933)
Provided at 31 March 2024	8,426
Balance at 31 March 2024	8,426

12. Provisions for liabilities

Group and charity

	Onerous leases	Dilapidations	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000
At 1 April 2023	515	1,743	2,258
Additional provision in the year	–	310	310
Provision utilised	(119)	(47)	(166)
At 31 March 2024	396	2,006	2,402

13. Analysis of group net assets between funds

	2024				2023				
	Restricted	Unrestricted		Group balance sheet total	Restricted		Unrestricted		Group balance sheet total
	Specific purpose funds	Designated funds	General Fund		Endowment funds	Specific purpose funds	Designated funds	General Fund	
Tangible fixed assets	–	26,800	–	26,800	–	–	22,309	–	22,309
Intangible fixed assets	–	–	430	430	–	–	–	644	644
Investments	–	27,633	8,612	36,245	11,023	–	20,179	8,363	39,565
Debtors	–	–	21,411	21,411	–	–	–	20,483	20,483
Cash and short term deposits	5,123	–	7,756	12,879	–	7,477	–	12,889	20,366
Other liabilities and provisions	–	–	(21,609)	(21,609)	–	–	–	(22,564)	(22,564)
Pension liability	–	–	(551)	(551)	–	–	–	–	–
Total funds	5,123	54,433	16,049	75,605	11,023	7,477	42,488	19,815	80,803

Further analysis of the funds and movements during the year are given in Note 14. The purpose of the main funds are noted below. Specific purpose funds represent legacies, donations and other income that can only be used for particular purposes.

Designated funds are part of the charity's unrestricted funds that are earmarked by the trustees for a particular purpose and currently comprises the capital fund and old endowments. The capital fund is the amount invested in fixed assets used in the charity's operational work, net of capital grants and associated financing. The transfers out of designated funds reflect the net amounts released to the general fund in the current year. The charity previously held expendable endowments which were held for the benefit of the charity. Following approval by the Charities Commission, the Board of Trustees has approved the release of the endowments and proceeds from the sale are designated to fund the residential growth programme of the charity.

For the capital fund this is principally depreciation, offset by new purchases, and the release of the provision for capital grants. The charged asset fund is the value of the charity assets charged to the Pension Fund less the value of operational properties which are already part of the capital fund.

14. Group statement of fund movements

	2024					
	Brought forward	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Gains and losses	Carried forward
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Endowment funds						
Annual Income Fund	3,128	–	–	(3,128)	–	–
Lincoln City & County Home	94	–	–	(94)	–	–
Nicholas Galperin Trust	3,852	–	–	(3,852)	–	–
Scholarship Fund	453	–	–	(453)	–	–
Sheila Mildred Gage	16	–	–	(16)	–	–
Sidney Charles Salter	382	–	–	(382)	–	–
St Leonard's Convalescent Home	3,098	–	–	(3,098)	–	–
	11,023	–	–	(11,023)	–	–
Corporate partners						
Advent International – support for Emergency Fund, ParentTalk and the Sandwell Family Partners	71	(42)	(21)	–	–	8
CBRE – corporate partnership funding programmes supporting young people in foster care	226	51	(118)	–	–	159
Dell (Inspire IT) – corporate partnership funding a digital inclusion programme	324	250	(327)	–	–	247
FirstGroup – corporate partnership funding mental health support	85	86	(139)	–	–	32
John Lewis Partnership – supporting children and young people in care	519	425	(391)	–	–	553
Royal Mail (The Blues Programme) – funding for the 'Blues' mental health programme	33	–	(4)	–	–	29
Turner & Townsend	118	135	(91)	–	–	162
Trusts and statutory funders						
Big Lottery Fund – note 16 – (The National Lottery Community Fund) – TNLCF support a range of AFC programmes	455	554	(962)	–	–	47
CAF Covid Relief Fund – 3 yr programme to support young carers	566	383	(596)	–	–	353
Garfield Weston	–	150	(142)	–	–	8
Devon County Council	137	32	(149)	–	–	20
Newcastle City Council	–	140	(81)	–	–	59
Inspiring Scotland – Youth Action Fund	121	190	(253)	–	–	58
Moondance Foundations – programme supporting girls & young women in Pembrokeshire	12	–	(12)	–	–	–
Nominet – Big Welcome digital programme	(1)	–	–	–	–	(1)
Prudence Trust	–	178	(138)	–	–	40
Robertson Trust – STAY programme	17	176	(158)	–	–	35
Scottish Friendly	–	47	(32)	–	–	15
Shared Care Scotland	–	22	(8)	–	–	14
South Wales Police & Crime Commissioner	115	126	(118)	–	–	123
Sport England – programme supporting children and families through access to sport	101	–	(83)	–	–	18
Welsh Government – 'Bouncing Back' mental health programme	155	285	(368)	–	–	72
St Leonard's Convalescent Home (CO 105)	285	–	–	(285)	–	–
Other funders						
Emergency Fund – emergency appeal supporting families in crisis as a result of Covid 19.	322	136	(374)	–	–	84
Other projects less than £100,000 donation in year	3,816	1,746	(2,574)	–	–	2,988
Specific purpose funds	7,477	5,070	(7,139)	(285)	–	5,123
Designated Fund (for residential programme)	–	–	–	7,482	–	7,482
Capital Fund	22,309	–	–	4,491	–	26,800
Charged Asset Fund	20,179	–	–	(28)	–	20,151
General	19,815	150,210	(153,894)	(637)	1,106	16,600
	62,303	150,210	153,894	11,308	1,106	71,033
Pension reserve	–	–	–	–	(551)	(551)
Total – unrestricted	62,303	150,210	(153,894)	11,308	555	70,482
Total Funds	80,803	155,280	161,033	–	555	75,605

	2023					
	Brought forward	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Gains and losses	Carried forward
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Endowment funds						
Annual Income Fund	3,312	–	–	–	(184)	3,128
Lincoln City & County Home	100	–	–	–	(6)	94
Nicholas Galperin Trust	4,094	–	–	–	(242)	3,852
Scholarship Fund	479	–	–	–	(26)	453
Sheila Mildred Gage	17	–	–	–	(1)	16
Sidney Charles Salter	405	–	–	–	(23)	382
St Leonard's Convalescent Home	3,280	–	–	–	(182)	3,098
	11,687	–	–	–	(664)	11,023
Corporate partners						
Advent International - support for Emergency Fund, ParentTalk and the Sandwell Family Partners	51	–	–	20	–	71
CBRE – corporate partnership funding programmes supporting young people in foster care	316	16	(106)	–	–	226
Dell (Inspire IT) – corporate partnership funding a digital inclusion programme	224	201	(101)	–	–	324
FirstGroup – corporate partnership funding mental health support	175	47	(137)	–	–	85
Iceland	–	408	(408)	–	–	–
John Lewis Partnership - supporting children and young people in care	–	639	(120)	–	–	519
Royal Mail (The Blues Programme) – funding for the 'Blues' mental health programme	188	3	(115)	(43)	–	33
Turner & Townsend	–	–	–	–	–	–
Trusts and statutory funders						
Big Lottery Fund – note 16 – (The National Lottery Community Fund) – TNLCF support a range of AfC programmes	907	1,117	(1,571)	2	–	455
CAF Covid Relief Fund – 3 yr programme to support young carers	493	671	(608)	10	–	566
Garfield Weston	–	–	–	–	–	–
Devon County Council	209	232	(304)	–	–	137
Newcastle City Council	–	–	–	–	–	–
Inspiring Scotland – Youth Action Fund	–	188	(67)	–	–	121
Moondance Foundations - programme supporting girls & young women in Pembrokeshire	34	80	(102)	–	–	12
Nominet – Big Welcome digital programme	45	13	(59)	–	–	(1)
Prudence Trust	–	–	–	–	–	–
Robertson Trust – STAY programme	–	164	(200)	53	–	17
Scottish Friendly	–	–	–	–	–	–
Shared Care Scotland	–	–	–	–	–	–
South Wales Police & Crime Commissioner	85	133	(103)	–	–	115
Sport England – programme supporting children and families through access to sport	–	206	(99)	(6)	–	101
Welsh Government – 'Bouncing Back' mental health programme	59	424	(372)	44	–	155
St Leonard's Convalescent Home (CO 105)	193	92	–	–	–	285
Other funders						
Emergency Fund – emergency appeal supporting families in crisis as a result of Covid 19.	267	179	(128)	4	–	322
Other projects less than £100,000 donation in year	4,016	1,693	(1,691)	(84)	–	3,934
Specific purpose funds	7,262	6,098	(5,883)	–	–	7,477
Designated Fund (for residential programme)						
Capital Fund	17,497	–	–	4,812	–	22,309
Charged Asset Fund	20,283	–	–	(104)	–	20,179
General	27,292	143,281	(144,992)	(4,708)	(1,058)	19,815
	65,072	143,281	(144,992)	–	(1,058)	62,303
Pension reserve	–	–	1,893	–	(1,893)	–
Total - unrestricted	65,072	143,281	(143,099)	–	(2,951)	62,303
Total Funds	84,021	149,379	(148,982)	–	(3,615)	80,803

15. Charity statement of fund movements

	2024					
	Brought forward	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Gains and losses	Carried forward
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Corporate partners						
Advent International – support for Emergency Fund, ParentTalk and the Sandwell Family Partners	71	(42)	(21)	–	–	8
CBRE – corporate partnership funding programmes supporting young people in foster care	226	51	(118)	–	–	159
Dell (Inspire IT) – corporate partnership funding a digital inclusion programme	324	250	(327)	–	–	247
FirstGroup – corporate partnership funding mental health support	85	86	(139)	–	–	32
John Lewis Partnership	519	425	(391)	–	–	553
Royal Mail (The Blues Programme) – funding for the 'Blues' mental health programme	33	–	(4)	–	–	29
Turner & Townsend	118	135	(91)	–	–	162
Trusts and statutory funders						
Big Lottery Fund – note 16 – (The National Lottery Community Fund) – TNLCF support a range of AFC programmes	455	554	(962)	–	–	47
CAF Covid Relief Fund – 3 yr programme to support young carers	566	383	(596)	–	–	353
Garfield Weston	–	150	(142)	–	–	8
Devon County Council	137	32	(149)	–	–	20
Newcastle City Council	–	140	(81)	–	–	59
Inspiring Scotland – Youth Action Fund	121	190	(253)	–	–	58
Moondance Foundations - programme supporting girls & young women in Pembrokeshire	12	–	(12)	–	–	–
Nominet – Big Welcome digital programme	(1)	–	–	–	–	(1)
Prudence Trust	–	178	(138)	–	–	40
Robertson Trust – STAY programme	17	176	(158)	–	–	35
Scottish Friendly	–	47	(32)	–	–	15
Shared Care Scotland	–	22	(8)	–	–	14
South Wales Police & Crime Commissioner	115	126	(118)	–	–	123
Sport England – programme supporting children and families through access to sport	101	–	(83)	–	–	18
Welsh Government – 'Bouncing Back' mental health programme	155	285	(368)	–	–	72
Other funders						
Emergency Fund – emergency appeal supporting families in crisis as a result of Covid.	322	136	(374)	–	–	84
Other projects less than £100,000 donation in year	3,816	1,746	(2,574)	–	–	2,988
Specific purpose funds	7,192	5,070	(7,139)	–	–	5,123
Designated Fund (for residential programme)	–	–	–	7,482	–	7,482
Capital Fund	22,309	–	–	4,491	–	26,800
Charged Asset Fund	20,179	–	–	(28)	–	20,151
General	19,250	133,934	(137,550)	(34)	1,106	16,706
	61,738	133,934	(137,550)	11,911	1,106	71,139
Pension reserve	–	–	–	–	(551)	(551)
Total – unrestricted	61,738	133,934	(137,550)	11,911	555	70,588

15. Charity statement of fund movements

	2023					
	Brought forward	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Gains and losses	Carried forward
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Corporate partners						
Advent International – support for Emergency Fund, ParentTalk and the Sandwell Family Partners	51	–	–	20	–	71
CBRE – corporate partnership funding programmes supporting young people in foster care	316	16	(106)	–	–	226
Dell (Inspire IT) – corporate partnership funding a digital inclusion programme	224	201	(101)	–	–	324
FirstGroup – corporate partnership funding mental health support	175	47	(137)	–	–	85
John Lewis Partnership	–	639	(120)	–	–	519
Iceland	–	408	(408)	–	–	–
Royal Mail (The Blues Programme) – funding for the 'Blues' mental health programme	188	3	(115)	(43)	–	33
Turner & Townsend	–	–	–	–	–	–
Trusts and statutory funders						
Big Lottery Fund – note 16 – (The National Lottery Community Fund) – TNLCF support a range of AFC programmes	907	1,117	(1,571)	2	–	455
CAF Covid Relief Fund – 3 yr programme to support young carers	493	671	(608)	10	–	566
Garfield Weston	–	–	–	–	–	–
Devon County Council	209	232	(304)	–	–	137
Newcastle City Council	–	–	–	–	–	–
Inspiring Scotland – Youth Action Fund	–	188	(67)	–	–	121
Moondance Foundations - programme supporting girls & young women in Pembrokeshire	34	80	(102)	–	–	12
Nominet – Big Welcome digital programme	45	13	(59)	–	–	(1)
Prudence Trust	–	–	–	–	–	–
Robertson Trust – STAY programme	–	164	(200)	53	–	17
Scottish Friendly	–	–	–	–	–	–
Shared Care Scotland	–	–	–	–	–	–
South Wales Police & Crime Commissioner	85	133	(103)	–	–	115
Sport England – programme supporting children and families through access to sport	–	206	(99)	(6)	–	101
Welsh Government – 'Bouncing Back' mental health programme	59	424	(372)	44	–	155
Other funders						
Emergency Fund – emergency appeal supporting families in crisis as a result of Covid.	267	179	(128)	4	–	322
Other projects less than £100,000 donation in year	4,015	1,693	(1,691)	(84)	–	3,933
Specific purpose funds	7,068	6,006	(5,883)	–	–	7,191
Designated Fund (for residential programme)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Capital Fund	17,497	–	–	4,812	–	22,309
Charged Asset Fund	20,283	–	–	(104)	–	20,179
General	26,975	127,807	(129,766)	(4,708)	(1,058)	19,250
	64,755	127,807	(129,766)	–	(1,058)	61,738
Pension reserve	–	–	1,893	–	(1,893)	–
Total – unrestricted	64,755	127,807	(127,873)	–	(2,951)	61,738

16. Group statement of fund movements, further detail

Funds received from the following trusts and organisations have been granted towards expenditure on the following projects:

	Brought forward	Incoming resources	Outgoing resources	Transfers	Carried forward
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Big Lottery Fund					
BME Heritage Youth	–	35	(12)	–	23
Early Action Youth Homelessness	(1)	–	1	–	–
Side Step National Programme	404	519	(900)	–	23
Skills for Living	13	–	(12)	–	1
Young Adult Carers Support (Empowering Young People)	41	–	(41)	–	–
	457	554	(964)	–	47
Northern Ireland Housing Executive					
Rossorry Grove Supported Accommodation	–	383	(370)	–	13
Sperrin & Lakeland Floating Support	13	351	(351)	–	13
Waterside Sure Start	–	624	(624)	–	–
	13	1,358	(1,345)	–	26

17. Taxation

Action for Children, as a charity, is exempt from taxation of income and gains falling within Section 478 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent they are applied to its charitable objects. No tax charge arises in any of the subsidiary entities included in the group accounts due to their policy of gifting all taxable profits to Action for Children each year.

18 Contingent liabilities

Action for Children has agreed a recovery plan with the Action for Children Pension Fund for clearing the Pension Fund deficit. To support the recovery plan, on 7 March 2011 a security agreement was signed creating a first legal charge to Action for Children Pension Fund of £32m over freehold properties and of £8m over CFB investment units.

The charge becomes enforceable in the event of default, including Action for Children becoming insolvent, ceasing business or failing to pay contributions in line with the schedule of contributions or Pensions Regulator direction.

19. Related parties

All transactions with subsidiaries, associated charities and trustees are disclosed in the financial statements. No trustees of Action for Children are also trustees of the Pensions Fund.

Management fees and Gift Aid payments paid to the parent charity during the year were as follows:

- Action for Children Services Limited: £69,227,883 (2023: £66,447,226).
- Action for Children Developments Limited: £540,307 (2023: £449,841).
- Out of School Scotland Limited: £210,454 (2023: £376,631).

Additional **information**

Our legal and administration details

Registered office

Action for Children
3 The Boulevard
Ascot Road
Watford
WD18 8AG

Banker

HSBC Bank PLC
The Peak 333
Vauxhall Bridge Road
London
SW1V 1EJ

External auditor

Crowe UK LLP
55 Ludgate Hill
London
EC4M 7JW

Internal auditors

RSM
The Pinnacle
170 Midsummer Blvd
Milton Keynes
MK9 1BP

Investment managers

Central Finance Board
of the Methodist Church
9 Bonhill Street
London
EC2A 4PE

Board of Trustees

Sarika Patel (Chair)
Dawn Warwick (Vice Chair)
Markus Ruetimann
(until 1 July 2024)
Revd Dr Michael Long
(Methodist Church appointee)
Enda Johnson
Steve Bell
Peter Curran
Lynne Atkin MBE
Leslie Evans
Charles Geekie KC
Navin Kaul
(from 22 February 2024)

Executive Leadership

Name	Title
Paul Carberry	Chief Executive
Brigitte Gater	Interim Managing Director of Children's Services
Locks Farmer	Managing Director of Income and Engagement (from 1 July 2024), Previously Managing Director of Fundraising, Communications and Policy
Richard Bryars	Director of Strategy and Implementation
Jo French	Chief Operating Officer (from 19 Feb 2024), Previously Interim Director of Commercial, Property and IT
Fiona Adams	Director of Finance
Mike Knight	Chief People Officer

Finance Committee

Peter Curran (Chair)
Enda Johnson
Susan Bailey
Simon Cruickshank

Audit and Risk Committee

Steve Bell (Chair)
Lynne Atkin MBE
David King
Richard Brown

Children's Services Committee

Dawn Warwick (Chair)
Revd Dr Michael Long
Enda Johnson
Peter Curran
Leslie Evans
Charles Geekie KC

Governance, People and Remuneration Committee

Lynne Atkin MBE (Chair)
Sarika Patel

Committee members at the time of report signing

England Committee

Revd Dr Michael Long (Chair)
Lauren Seager-Smith
Jansen Ryder
Amanda Naylor OBE
Alison Priestley
Adé Solarin

Northern Ireland Committee

Enda Johnson (Chair)
Zara Duffy
Anthony Armstrong
(young person co-opted member)
Odhran McGeown
(young person co-opted member)
Dominic McSherry

Scotland Committee

Leslie Evans (Chair)
Robert Fleming
Rupa Mooker
Robert Steenson
Simon Murrison
Danielle Cairns
Stephanie Savage

Wales Committee

Peter Curran (Chair)
Paul Bulpin
Iona Wyn Turner
Necia Lewis
Angharad Roberts
(young person co-opted member)

Thank you

We'd like to say thank you to our patron, and all our ambassadors, celebrities, supporters, boards and committees who give their time to make more childhoods safe and happy.

★ **Our patron**

HRH The Princess of Wales

★ **Vice Presidents**

Ken Deeks MBE

Lynda Myles-Till MBE

★ **Our celebrity ambassadors**

Angela Rippon OBE

David Tanner

Dermot Murnaghan

Diane Keen

Emily Maitlis

Fatima Whitbread

Jenny Agutter OBE

Jessica Hynes

Kevin Whately

Larry Lamb

Martha Kearney

Mary Nightingale

Matthew Lewis

Michael Buerk

Nerys Hughes

Richard Farleigh

Sharon Horgan

Sian Lloyd

★ **Our ambassadors**

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top OBE

Gordon Bullock

Sir Iain Livingstone

Flora Martin MBE

Rt Hon Lord Jack McConnell of Glenscorrodale

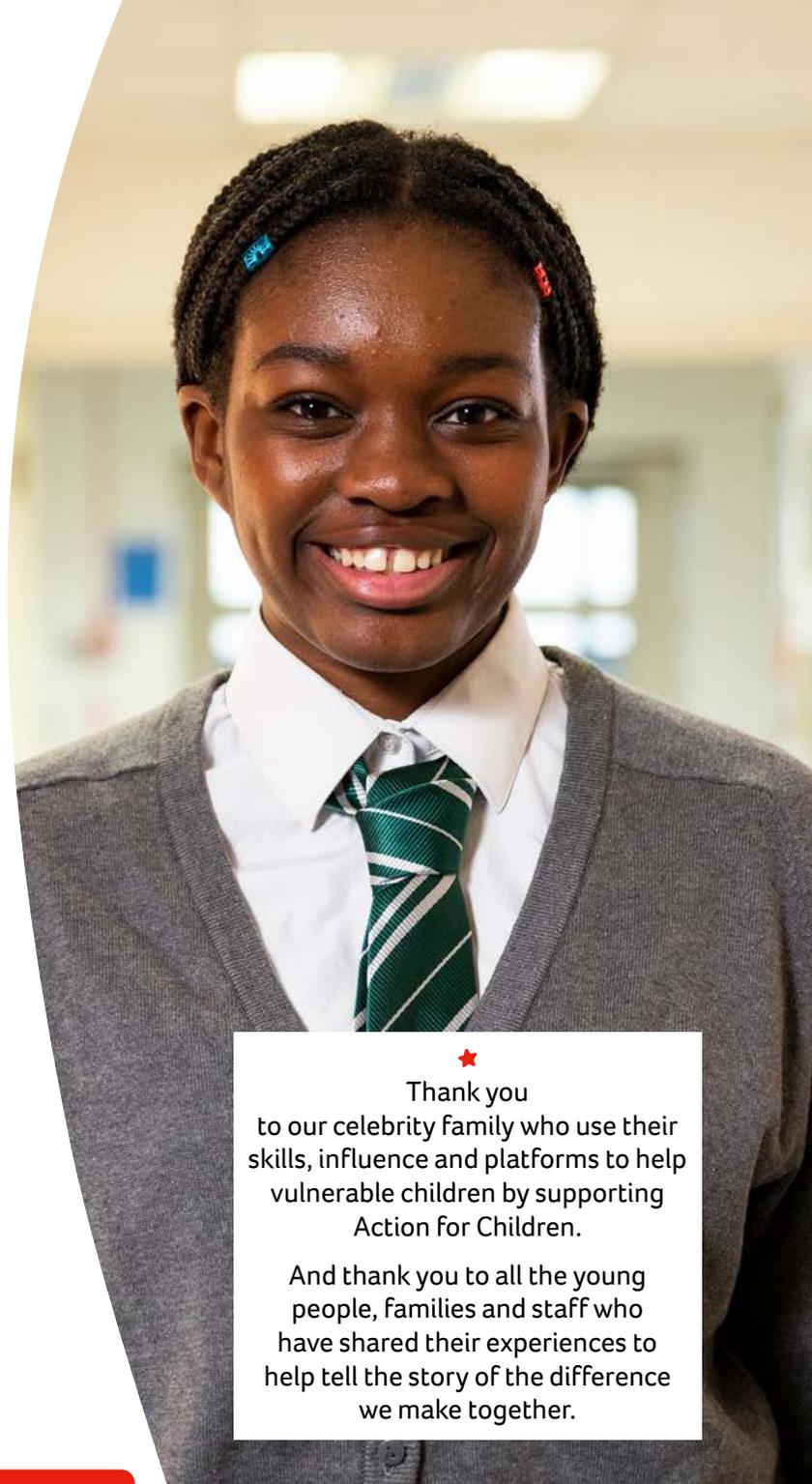
Baroness Kathleen Richardson of Calow

Bill Bottrill

Neville Shulman CBE

In memory of our Ambassador,
Sister Eluned Williams MBE

This year marked the passing of Sister Eluned Williams MBE, one of Action for Children's last Methodist-ordained 'Sisters of the Children'. Sister Eluned worked with us for 44 years, 25 of which she spent managing Ardwyn Children's Home in Dinas Powys. She received an MBE for services to children and young people. After her retirement, she continued as an Action for Children Ambassador. She is warmly remembered by all those whose lives she touched.



★
Thank you
to our celebrity family who use their
skills, influence and platforms to help
vulnerable children by supporting
Action for Children.

And thank you to all the young
people, families and staff who
have shared their experiences to
help tell the story of the difference
we make together.

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Guernsey Community Foundation
LTA Tennis Foundation
Moray Local Action Group
Newcastle City Council –
Newcastle Youth Fund
North Lanarkshire Communities
Health & Wellbeing Fund
Northern Ireland Community
Foundation – DoH Carers'
Support Fund
Shared Care Scotland –
Short Breaks Fund
Souter Charitable Trust
The Alice Ellen Cooper Dean
Charitable Foundation
The Charles Jacob Charitable Trust
The Distillers' Charity
The Eveson Trust
The Gannochy Trust
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The Prudence Trust
The Robertson Trust
The Royal Warrant Holders
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The Scottish government
Welsh government and
Carers Trust Wales

William Grant Foundation
ZVM Rangoonwala Foundation

**We'd also like to thank all those
supporters who wish to remain
anonymous.**

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Chelsea Pinches-Burrowes
Clair Poulton
Gareth Petty
Michael Evans
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Gareth Powell
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Suzanne Edmondson
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*Members of the Boycott your Bed Executive Board

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Ciara Hurley-Stewart
Denise Parkinson
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Elizabeth Hammond
Kate O'Connor
Kimberly Metaxa
Maureen Tadros
Sarah Gibbon
Ugo Arinzeh

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Chris Shaw (Chair)
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Alastair Bennett
Bill Rudgard
Dan Faulks
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Karthi Gnanasegaram
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Alison Donnell
Donald Smith
Jim Rennie
Maitland Walker
Mark Taylor



Action for
Children

To find out more about the work we do across the UK –
and how you can support us – visit:

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Or get in touch with our **Supporter Care Team** on: **0300 123 2112**.

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Get **involved**

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