Count Your Blessings

This Lent, you could help change the lives of children living in poverty. Join us and count your blessings for 40 days.

Action for Children

4.5 million children now live in poverty in the UK. That's 31% of all children. Children who could be struggling to learn because they're too hungry to concentrate. It's easy to think poverty happens elsewhere. But it's affecting the child on the bus. Next door. The children whose names you know. We're seeing more children suffering. A level of poverty that should be confined to history.
But we also see the incredible difference your support can make to their lives.

You can help us to be there, with love and without judgement, in moments of crisis when children are living without the essentials. You could help our thousands of frontline workers taking action for children every day.

Week one

18-22 February 2026

“The children only had hoodies and walked to school in all weathers. We were able to help keep them warm by providing winter coats and cosy bedding.”

Action for Children Support Worker

The growing number of families trapped in poverty, despite working as much as they can and making every sacrifice, means too many children are going without essentials every day and living with the consequences. Poverty touches every part of a child’s life. From living in a damp and mouldy house, to clutching their broken toy, knowing they won’t get another one. Struggling to fit in when they don’t have the right school uniform, and worrying about getting in trouble for not doing their homework when they don’t have the physical or mental space for it.

It’s not just about what they don’t have. Poverty can change a child’s path. It can make dreams harder to reach, potential harder to fulfil. And it’s relentless.

At Action for Children, we see the faces behind the numbers. We understand the many different ways poverty can rob children of their childhoods and future chances. And we’re here to help when families feel hopeless. With your help, we can take action to stop children suffering.

Fundraise with us!

Visit **actionforchildren.uk/ideas** or scan the QR code for ideas and support.

Take action for children this week:

Day 1 If you’re giving something up this Lent, set up a JustGiving page and ask friends and family to sponsor you.

Day 2 Scan the QR code to hear from Georgia and Tracy about their experiences of growing up in poverty and supporting families. You can also share the video on social media or WhatsApp and let your friends know that you’re taking part in Count Your Blessings. It’s not too late for them to join us too! They can download their copy here: **actionforchildren.uk/faithFR**

Day 3 Pray for the 4.5 million children and their families living in poverty in the UK. Thank God for the thousands of Action for Children support workers meeting with them, building friendly, trusted relationships and providing essentials like food, school uniforms, coats and shoes that fit, and money for gas and electricity for heating their home, cooking, and keeping the lights on.

Day 3 Join our online community of supporters connected in faith and passion for creating safety and happiness for children: **actionforchildren.org.uk/faith-space**

Week two

23 February - 1 March 2026

“For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Matthew 25:35, RSV

A hot meal on a chilly day doesn’t only fuel a child’s body. It can provide comfort and joy too. But for too many families, there’s uncertainly about where that meal will come from, and how to pay for the fuel to cook it. That’s where Action for Children makes a difference in the lives of families like Paul and Fiona’s, who can’t work because of long-term health conditions.

We help the child coming home from school to an empty fridge. We put food on the table so families don’t go hungry. And we’re helping to break down the barriers that stop parents from working or boosting their incomes.

Because going without affects who children believe they are. Their place in the world. Their life chances. And their dreams for the future. We’re tirelessly fighting for lasting change – working to tackle the root causes of poverty by campaigning for a fairer social security system that allows children to thrive.

Child poverty isn’t inevitable – it doesn’t have to be this way. With your help, we can take action to stop children suffering.

Remember to put **Action for Children Sunday** – **12 July** – in your church calendar!

Take action for children this week:

Day 5 Scan the QR code to read the story of Paul and Fiona and the impact of the cost of living crisis on their family. Share Paul and Fiona’s story, and tell your friends about your experience of Count Your Blessings so far.

Day 6 St Luke’s Methodist Church Barton’s annual community coffee morning raised over £1,000 in 2025. You could plan one with your church and invite your community, or hold a virtual one with friends. Get in touch with your Relationship Fundraising Executive for ideas and resources to support: **actionforchildren.uk/your-local-fundraiser**

Day 7 Pray for the meals that children get at school. Ask that they will receive the nutrition and energy they need to learn and grow from their lunches and in breakfast club or after-school clubs. Thank God that families will feel the relief of this helping hand.

Day 8 Donate £3 or the cost of a supermarket meal deal and you could help Action for Children provide essential groceries for a family living in poverty.

Day 9 Get ready to take part in ‘Step Out for Children’, a sponsored walk for Action for Children. Contact your Relationship Fundraising Executive for sponsorship forms and support materials by visiting **actionforchildren.uk/your-local-fundraiser.** Or visit our challenge page for other outdoor activities: **actionforchildren.uk/CYB_Challenge**

Day 10 Donate 20p for each piece of fruit in your kitchen this weekend. You could help Action for Children give nutritious food to children who would otherwise go without.

Week three

2-8 March 2026

“As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality exist in our world, none of us can truly rest.”

Nelson Mandela

Thursday 5 March is World Book Day, but many children don’t have books of their own – they’re a luxury for families living in poverty. If you love reading, you’ll know the power of books to inspire, educate, and entertain. To shape young minds and suggest new possibilities. To let them know there is hope, and life can be different. The same is true of activities like after-school clubs and trips to museums or theatre performances. Often these are out of reach to children whose families simply can’t afford them.

In our 2024 research, 7,000 teachers across England said that 37% of their pupils – equivalent to 3.3 million schoolchildren or nine pupils in an average class of 25 – faced barriers to their education. Poverty was shown as a significant barrier - identified by teachers working in the most deprived areas. One secondary school teacher said, “When you’re not with them you’re worrying about them, thinking ‘even though I feel like I’m at capacity, if I did this extra thing, that could really make a difference’.”

With your help, we can take action to stop children suffering and give them opportunities to reach their potential. Because with every child we support, we can make a difference to their lives. Today, tomorrow and for their future.

“If I did this extra thing, that could really make a difference.”

Secondary school teacher

Take action for children this week:

Day 11 Scan the QR code to read Meghan’s story about how being given a computer has helped her keep up at school. Share Meghan’s story with someone else – in person or online.

Day 12 Plan a book-themed fundraiser – like a book sale at your church or run a sponsored readathon with the young people. Get in touch with your Relationship Fundraising Executive for sponsorship forms and support materials – visit **actionforchildren.uk/your-local-fundraiser**

Day 13 Find out more about the effect of living in poverty on the education and life opportunities of children and young people: **actionforchildren.uk/challenges-barriers-impacting-pupils-education**

Day 14 Pray for children and young people living in poverty and the effect that has on their education. Pray that they’ll be well-fed and able to concentrate in lessons.

Day 15 Get in touch with a school near you to ask if there’s anything you can help with: books, resources for after-school clubs or other types of donations. World Book Day can add expense and anxiety for many parents – is there something you could do to help more children have fun, worry free, on this day? Could your church partner with a school to meet some of their needs?

Day 16 One of our incredible Methodist supporters, Ken Dunkerly, creates a quiz for his community twice a year – a total of 47 quizzes so far! In 2025, he raised £826. Could you follow in his footsteps by organising your own?

Week four

9–15 March 2026

“In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for thou alone, O Lord, makest me dwell in safety.”

Psalm 4:8, RSV

This week, our focus is on children and families who need a safe, warm, comfortable place to sleep.

Friday 13 March is World Sleep Day, but sleep doesn’t come easily to everyone. Living in poverty means families can’t always afford beds, bedding or heat for their homes. Too many children are living this reality today.

There are also young people like Lorna, whose story you’ll read this week, who need emergency accommodation when they’ve got nowhere else to turn.

Action for Children is here, helping the child with no bed who’s struggling to sleep in the bitter cold, and the parents struggling to pay for heating. Thanks to your generosity, we can provide them with beds and bedding and help with paying essential bills. And we can be there with a spare room, a cup of tea and the willingness to listen and care for a vulnerable young person.

“They treated me very well and they were very welcoming. I was given food and refreshments, and my clothes were washed.”

Nightstop service user

Take action for children this week:

Day 17 Lorna found herself homeless and living on the street at just 16 years old. To read how Action for Children supported her with emergency accommodation and the love and security of a host family to care for her, visit **actionforchildren.uk/Lorna**

Day 18 Could you Boycott your Bed for one night (and recruit some friends to take part with you) so we can help more children and families? Scan the QR code or visit **actionforchildren.uk/BYB_Methodists** to read about our Boycott your Bed fundraising sleepout. Or donate £1 for every bed in your house.

Day 19 Pray for the children and families who need our help, that we would be able to connect with them and provide hope and practical help. Pray that we would be visible to those who need to find us – maybe hanging one of our posters (e.g. Parent Talk, our online service) somewhere families might see it. And pray for our amazing host families who help young people who need somewhere to stay and be cared for.

Day 20 Could you volunteer with us? There are all kinds of roles that help us support the children, young people and families who need us. Find opportunities in your area and start your volunteering journey at **actionforchildren.uk/volunteer_church**

Day 21 It’s Mothering Sunday this weekend. Pray for all those carrying out a mothering role for children and young people, and especially for the staff in our children’s homes, as they use their specialist skills to care for those who have experienced trauma. Also remember those who find this day difficult and pray that they will experience peace and comfort.

Day 22 Donate 50p for every coat or jacket you own, and you could help us give a warm coat to a child going to school cold every day.

Week five

16-22 March 2026

“The staff have been there emotionally, physically and financially. As my circumstances changed, the level of support they provided changed too. I would’ve been lost without them.”

Suzanne*

Suzanne* joined Action for Children’s Sure Start parental support groups as an older mum when her first child, Caleb*, was born, continuing to come to these groups with her other two sons. When Suzanne became a carer for her mother in 2018, she had to take a career break to support her mother and children. While still using Sure Start programmes for her youngest child, the Action for Children team noticed she was struggling and told her more about the Crisis Fund.

Suzanne had financial help from Action for Children and believes the emotional and practical support she received was life-changing for her family. Through the difficult times that Suzanne faced looking after her mother and three children, she described the support she received as “a lifeline”, especially during the isolation caused by lockdown.

“They were there for me the whole time, calling up to check in on me and making me feel comfortable enough to be honest and just chat away when I needed it. Hearing someone else’s voice during such a difficult time was such a boost.”

Caleb is now eight and the family’s chief apple crumble maker after the family took part in a Sure Start Masterchef programme – learning how to cook healthy meals on a budget. Suzanne’s now joined the volunteering team as she hopes to offer other parents the same support she had.

Find out more about the ways our frontline staff are helping children, young people and families like Suzanne’s* by visiting **actionforchildren.uk/our-work-around-the-uk**

* Names have been changed to protect family members’ identities.

Take action for children this week:

Day 23 Pray for families like Suzanne’s, struggling because they’ve needed to leave work to care for family members. Pray that our services would be able to reach more people in her situation, bringing them hope and practical help.

Day 24 Last year, Derby Support Group held an afternoon tea with delicious food, poetry and tap dancing - raising an amazing £400. You could host an afternoon tea and help more children and families like Suzanne’s have the same lifeline that she experienced. Visit **actionforchildren.uk/faithFR** for all the resources you need to get started.

Day 25 Share a list of things that have brought you comfort this week with a friend or on social media. Remember to tag **#ActionForChildren #CountYourBlessings**

Day 26 In honour of Caleb’s apple crumbles, could you host a coffee morning, or bake sale to raise money for Action for Children? You could even make it crumble themed! Or donate the cost of a cup of coffee. Contact your local fundraiser for all the information you need at **actionforchildren.uk/your-local-fundraiser**

Day 27 Pray for the conversations and actions of our frontline staff and volunteers, that they would be a source of comfort and hope for the people they serve.

Day 28 Donate 20p for every person in your life that you feel you can talk to.

Week six

23-29 March 2026

“What has happened to Tom and me can happen to anybody. I was no better or no worse than anyone else before this happened. I’m just an average person, who was working, my partner was working, and we fell onto hard times.”

Kerry

Benji’s parents, Tom and Kerry, were referred to Action for Children when their health visitor recognised they were struggling and needed support. A caesarean section left Kerry in chronic pain, unable to walk properly and suffering from seizures. Her partner Tom had to give up his job to care for newborn Benji along with Kerry’s two children from her previous relationship.

He says “It’s hard when you pick up the kids from school knowing there’s no activity to go to or you can’t afford to give them a snack. You’re stressed, you’re at rock bottom, and so to be given a £100 food voucher is just amazing. Action for Children’s help has meant everything to us. It’s just been incredible.”

When the family were referred to Action for Children, they were struggling emotionally and financially. They were offered emotional support as well as funds to buy a new washing machine and supermarket vouchers. Support workers also helped them to apply for fuel and energy vouchers they were eligible for.

“Tom and I are so careful with the benefits,” explains Kerry. “We cook from scratch and batch cook and make sure the kids eat good food, but sometimes it’s just not enough so we need to use the food bank. I feel guilty and like I need to protect my kids from our financial problems, but I also feel the need to be open and honest with them, so I explain how sometimes people just need a bit of help.”

During the summer holidays, Action for Children helped them go on a family day to Cadbury World and a trip to the local swimming pool, which their children loved. “Action for Children’s support has been life-changing,” says Kerry. “We cannot put into words what your help has meant to us and the children.”

Take action for children this week:

Day 29 To find out what living in poverty looks like for children and families in your area vist visit **actionforchildren.uk/child-povertyCYB**

Day 30 Regular, ongoing support means we can plan our resources and be a vital lifeline for families and children whenever they need us. Consider becoming part of our regular giving family and helping children day in, day out. Find out more at **actionforchildren.uk/RG_Methodist**

Day 31 Pray for your neighbourhood and all those living in poverty near you, whether their need is obvious or hidden. Pray for your nearest Action for Children project and the staff there, that they would have good relationships with the community.

Day 32 Donate £4.50 to represent the 4.5 million children living in poverty in the UK.

Day 33 Can you think of three people who you can tell about an Action for Children service this week? Perhaps you could use social media to spread the word about our Parent Talk website (**parent-talk.org.uk/faith**), which offers reliable, down-to-earth parenting advice.

Day 34 Encourage creativity, empathy and generosity in the children in your life and get them involved in fundraising for Action for Children. Visit **actionforchildren.uk/ideas** for child-friendly ideas.

We’d love your feedback on this Count Your Blessings calendar. Scan the QR code to let us know what you think!

forms.office.com/e/s7YSivFvGP

Week seven
30 March – 4 April 2026

"We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers."

1 Thessalonians 1:2, RSV

This Holy Week, our focus is on saying thank you. Thanks to our dedicated and passionate staff who care for people living in poverty with love and practical action. Thanks to our partners across the country, who work alongside us to deliver services to children, young people, and families. And thanks to you, our generous supporters, who make everything we do possible.

Thank you, God bless you, and we wish you a very happy Easter.

Leave a lasting legacy

Action for Children's life-changing work wouldn't be possible without the incredible generosity of people leaving us a gift in their will. We've been here for vulnerable children for over 150 years. By leaving a gift in your will you'd be creating a legacy of love. Help us be here for generations to come.

Take action for children this week:

Day 35 Donate any amount you're able to, as a thanksgiving offering to God.

Day 36 Thank God for every generous supporter – individuals, churches, community groups and corporate organisations. Pray that as they share what they have with wisdom, love and compassion, Action for Children will be able to support even more children and families.

Day 37 Find out more about the Action for Children services in your area by visiting **actionforchildren.uk/Med_Services** and pray for the staff and families in each place.

Day 38 Think about all those you'd like to thank in your own life for their love, care, and actions. Make time to do that this week.

Day 39 **Count your Blessings** – and share a list of things you're thankful for on social media, or in person with a friend. Remember to tag **#ActionForChildren #CountYourBlessings**

Day 40 On this last day of Lent, we'd like to say, the Lord bless and keep you, be gracious to you and give you peace.

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I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

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Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Please include your address, as it's needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

Please contact **ask.us@actionforchildren.org.uk** or call Supporter Care team on **0300 123 2112**, if you want to cancel this declaration; change your name or home address; or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

As a valued supporter, we would love to send you regular updates about our work – including heartfelt stories, exciting events, and information about how you can continue to support vulnerable children and young people in the UK. We may contact you by post or telephone, but we'd love to keep in touch in other ways too.

I'm happy for Action for Children to contact me by:

Email, so I can choose when to read updates: Yes ☐ No ☐

SMS, so I can get updates straight to my mobile: Yes ☐ No ☐

WhatsApp, so I can get updates straight to my mobile: Yes ☐ No ☐

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For more information on how we keep your data safe please read our Privacy Policy at actionforchildren.org.uk/privacy.

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SUPPORTER CARE, FREEPOST RUEY-EGCU-ZKZL, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford, WD18 8AG

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