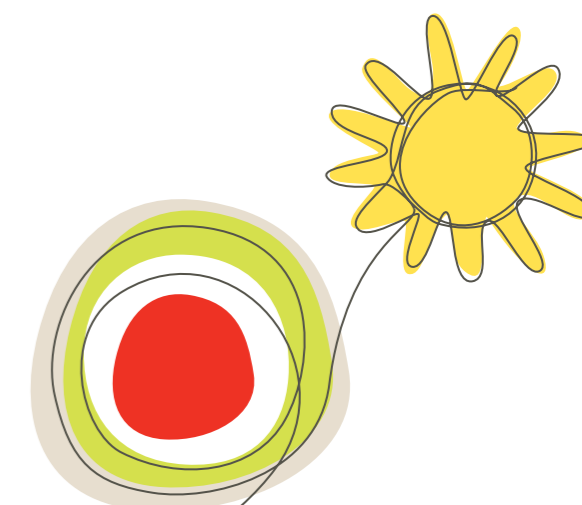
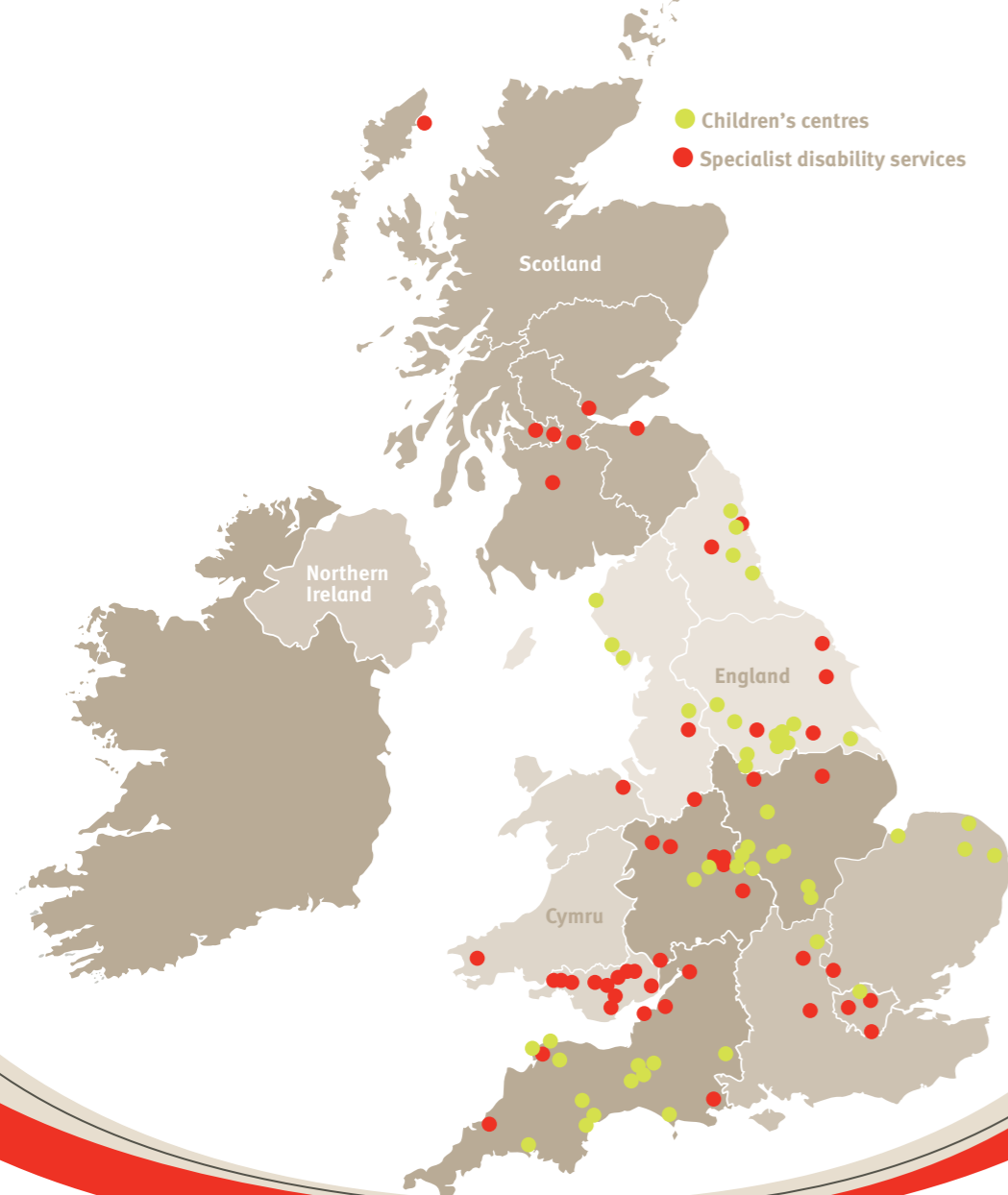


Action for Children

Disabled children's services



Contact us

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Website: www.actionforchildren.org.uk

Action for Children

Action for Children is committed to helping the most vulnerable children and young people in the UK break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so they can achieve their full potential. We help 156,000 children, young people and their families through around 420 projects across the UK.

This includes our innovative portfolio of:

- fostering and adoption services
- youth services
- family support

as long as it takes

as long as it takes

Disabled children's services

We provide a wide range of high-quality specialist services to support disabled children and young people and their families.



Our vision is a world in which disabled children, young people and their families have the support they need to be able to do what they want to do, when they want to do it

Our extensive range of services starts from the early years and extends through to young people's transition into adulthood. This means we can work with children and young people from birth to the age of 25.

- ▶ Although we work with all levels of needs, we are experts in working with children with the most complex and multiple impairments and the associated health needs or behaviours others may find challenging.
- ▶ We are the biggest provider of services to disabled children in the UK – in addition to over 60 specialist services, we also offer wider services such as youth services and family and children's centres.

- ▶ We support inclusion and participation in the wider community, and we understand that services can be delivered effectively in different ways from a number of bases.

We believe:

- ▶ disabled children and young people and their families should shape the services we provide
- ▶ all disabled children should be actively involved in community life and supported to overcome barriers that prevent inclusion
- ▶ all disabled children have the right to express their needs and views and be supported to communicate them
- ▶ services should be flexible, reliable and fun

Our mission and purpose is to help disabled children, young people and their families live the lives they choose by providing fun, inclusive and flexible support

Communication specialists

We recognise that approximately 7% of five year olds entering school in England have significant difficulties with speech and, or language and approximately another 1% of five year olds have the most severe and complex speech communication and language needs.*

That is why we support young people creatively by using a variety of communication systems to ensure their voice is heard. We also speak on behalf of young people where necessary.

Outcomes

We are focused on improving outcomes for children and young people, supported by our systems and processes that record and report accurate and timely information. These will be used to manage and improve the services we offer.

As well as identifying individual needs, we can report on a child's progress and gather information about assessments, plans and reviews.

'84% of Children and Young People have achieved agreed targets'
Outcomes from two of our short breaks projects working with children with complex and multiple needs

Project focus

Avalon, working in partnership with North Somerset Council

Avalon provides residential short breaks services. The project provides up to four beds, seven days per week and also accommodates emergency placements.

Avalon works closely with North Somerset Council and does its best to work flexibly to their changing needs. Working together ensures the best outcomes for local children. Examples of this include:

This means we can capture evidence of the impact that our services have on the lives of children and young people.

We use our resources to support our services

Our charity status enables us to add value to our services by raising donations that fund innovation, pilot new models of support and buy equipment that would not always be funded by commissioners.

Example:

Partnership with Balfour Beatty: an example of added value

Balfour Beatty has chosen Action for Children as its Charity of the Year for two years running. During this time it has raised £250,000. Five projects, which previously had limited outdoor play, will now have the specialist equipment necessary to provide a fun outdoor environment for children and young people.

Working in partnership with commissioners

We believe in working in partnership to design and deliver a bespoke service around the individual needs of commissioners. From service design to day-to-day delivery, we will work responsively and flexibly.

- ▶ agreeing flexible short breaks outside of contracted hours to enable one parent to continue working
- ▶ rearranging on-call rotas to be available so one family could have the home birth they wanted
- ▶ changing statements of purpose to provide full-time residential care. After family breakdown, one young boy needed an emergency placement for five months. He made such an improvement, social services have now successfully placed him with a foster family

*Bercow Review of Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs', DSCF 2008

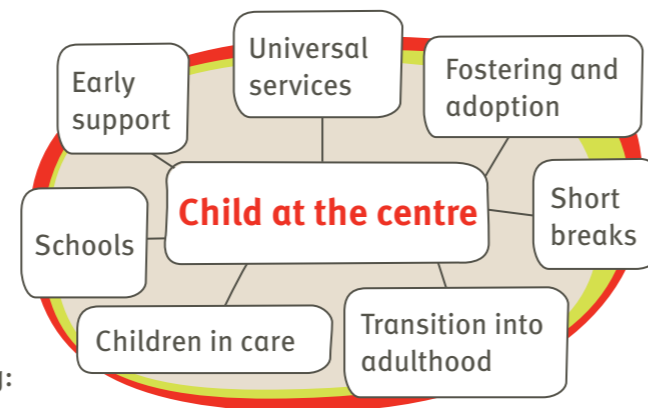
Our service areas

Short breaks

We support fun activities for disabled children, both with their family and outside the home. This includes those who have multiple and complex needs and/or very challenging behaviour.

We provide a range of short breaks, including:

- in the family home, approved foster carers' homes and childminders' homes
- in the community – accessing universal play, leisure, sport and cultural activities, through specialist play scheme services or day care support from families in the community
- in our residential short break homes



Our broad range of flexible service models are committed to designing and delivering short breaks around the needs of the child and balancing them with the wider support needs of families. All of our services offer children and young people a positive experience of being away from home and the chance to enjoy independence from their families.

The services reduce pressure and strain on families who provide 24-hour care and can help prevent family breakdown.

Project focus

Pastens

Overview

Pastens provides residential care and short breaks for children and young people with severe learning difficulties who may also have physical disabilities and/or challenging behaviour. Dedicated care is provided for up to 19 children and young people aged between five and 19 in three houses at the site.

Pastens is designed to create an environment that feels as much like home as possible.

The project is used by many different local authorities for spot purchase, but also has a block contract.

Rio's story

Rio is 14, has severe learning difficulties and is on the autistic spectrum. She has limited communication and uses a wheelchair.

When Rio's mum Lucy first visited Pastens, she realised that she had finally found somewhere that could give her daughter the

specialist care and support she needed to reach her full potential.

Lucy and her husband were finding it increasingly difficult to cope with Rio. Her complex condition demanded constant one-to-one attention and would lead to frequent verbal and physical outbursts in the family home.

Pastens initially provided residential short breaks for Rio. The success of this support and resulting improvement in Rio's mood and behaviour made it clear that she would benefit even more if the move was made permanent.

Rio moved to Pastens on a full-time basis in June this year. She likes having dinner with other children, playing on the trampoline, spending time in the sensory garden and multi-sensory room. She has built new friendships and is going on a holiday to Butlins in the summer – something that would not have been possible a few months ago.

Rio now goes home one night a week to her family, who say she is happier than she has ever been. Her smiles are enough, they say, to know that they have made the right decision for her future.



Project focus

Family-based short breaks – Family Breaks Devon

The carer

Cath currently supports seven children – all of whom are disabled and have a range of healthcare needs, some of them complex.

Cath says: 'The families we support put a great deal of trust in us as carers to look after their children – that's why the training is so important and why I wouldn't be able to do what I do if I didn't get all the support from

Action for Children. I'm not a professional – just a normal parent like anyone else who loves children and wanted to help others.'

Family

Julia has 12-year-old twins, Olivia and Samuel, who have no speech, limited communication and behaviour that can be challenging to others. Olivia has been spending one night a week with Cath for the last five years.

Julia says: 'Parents of children with disabilities can't just book a babysitter. They need to know that their child's needs will be taken care of and that the person involved has been properly trained. That's why Action for Children's Shared Care scheme has been so good for Olivia and the rest of the family. The relationship was given time to grow at the start so that by the time we came to leave Olivia with Cath we knew we could trust her. She's like part of the family now.'

Early support

Our targeted early support centres provide specialist support to the family and the child on diagnosis. This support continues as their child grows older.

We provide accessible, community-based resources and facilitate links with other community facilities for children and their families.

Examples of services available include early years creches, specialist parenting programmes (such as the NAS EarlyBird and EarlyBird Plus programme for parents of children on the autistic spectrum) and access to speech and language, occupational and physiotherapists.

With the support of Action for Children Furness Children's Centres, parents and carers are now saying:

'My child now plays better with other children – she's talking a lot better'

'He has learned new words'

'I notice his communication more'

'I have learned to take the time to play and listen'

Disabled children in care

Residential homes

We help disabled children who are unable to live with their families by providing them with a supportive home that will help them to reach their full potential.

We provide a stable, secure and nurturing environment, assessing each child and developing an appropriate support plan. The enriched learning environment helps children learn life skills such as personal care, cooking and communicating with others.

Fostering and adoption

Action for Children has a long history of finding families who can provide safe and caring homes for vulnerable and difficult to place children and young people in the UK.

We offer a range of services that meet the complex and diverse needs of children and young people in care.

We find caring adoptive families for disabled children. As well as short break opportunities with foster carers, we offer long-term placements for disabled children as an integrated element of our services.

Project focus

Penhurst School

Penhurst is a non-maintained 51/52-week residential special school in Oxfordshire, for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties aged five to 19. The school also has an adult home for young people aged 19–25 called Redwood House, where they can continue to develop skills for adult life.

Inclusion in universal services

We aim to ensure all our universal services are available to disabled children and we seek to promote opportunities for them to be included from the earliest age. A good example of this is the services being delivered in our large portfolio of Sure Start and children's centres.

Many services are easily accessible to local communities.

They make an excellent base for parent support groups to meet and for targeted parent support programmes to be delivered. We can offer childcare in settings where they can play and enjoy time with their non-disabled peers. We are also piloting the delivery of short breaks from our children's centres.

In addition to our full range of specialist services, we have a wide range of universal services that are used by disabled children and young people. These include:

- ▶ children's centres
- ▶ child sexual abuse services
- ▶ positive activities for young people
- ▶ advocacy and representation
- ▶ creches
- ▶ volunteering opportunities
- ▶ supported housing

'I can go into town if I want to, catch a train, manage my own money. I have a job and am about to move on to my own place'

Tom, a young person at Action for Children Kingfishers



Schools

Our schools are committed to helping children and young people with the most challenging and complex needs to achieve their full potential.

Working with local authorities and families, we provide an outstanding, awarding-winning learning environment where all children and young people benefit from an individual approach to their needs from our experienced and caring staff team.

Our schools support a range of special needs and our well-resourced surroundings ensure that all pupils achieve positive outcomes.

Transitions into adulthood

We are aware that many disabled young people and their families are fearful of what the future may hold. Good transitional services are a real opportunity to allay this fear. Our services enable young people to develop appropriate levels of independence, roles and relationships based on their own choices. We provide opportunities and build links that enable social inclusion, community participation and life skills, keeping young people at the centre of the transition process.



Transitional services we offer include:

- ▶ short breaks
- ▶ person-centred planning
- ▶ transition key working
- ▶ independent living skills
- ▶ volunteering
- ▶ participation

We are uniquely positioned to offer outstanding transition services to young people because:

- ▶ we work with young people up to the age of 25
- ▶ we always keep the young person's wishes and aspirations at the centre of our work

We deliver specialist services in England, Scotland and Wales and support disabled children and young people within universal settings across all four nations

