



# Information for applicants

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## Introduction

Thank you for expressing an interest in a position within Action for Children. We are one of the UK's leading children's charities and our projects are leaders in their fields, providing innovative and responsive services in all four nations of the UK. Wherever you are, Action for Children will be working nearby.

We require high-calibre staff both in the direct provision of services and in our wide range of support services. Our recruitment process aims to attract quality applicants and above all to recruit the right people. This document contains information about Action for Children, the recruitment process and our employment terms and conditions, which you may find useful.

## About 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.

Despite our size and scope, we remain a local charity. All our services are unique as they are developed in response to specific local needs, but they are all run in partnership with communities and local agencies – and with our service users themselves. We all share a common vision: to make sure that every child has the chance to live their life to the full. As well as running projects, Action for Children is an active campaigning organisation and is committed to speaking out about issues that affect our service users. We aim to campaign 'with' and not just 'for' people.

## Values, purpose, vision and mission

### Our values

Action for Children's values express the timeless guiding principles that underpin our work. We would sooner close our doors than breach them:

- ▶ Passion – we are driven by our desire to help children and young people overcome injustice and disadvantage
- ▶ Equality – we believe all children and young people have equal worth and equal rights
- ▶ Hope – we believe in a child or young person's potential, no matter what they have experienced or what they have done

### Our purpose

Our purpose expresses our enduring reason for being. It must guide the organisation and inspire our people:

- ▶ To help the most vulnerable children and young people break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so they can achieve their full potential.

### Our vision

Our vision describes our ideal: what the world would look like if Action for Children ever fully achieved its purpose:

- ▶ Our vision is of a world where all children and young people have a sense of belonging, and are loved and valued. A world where they can fulfil their potential, shape their destiny and experience the joy of life.

### Action for Children's operational mission is:

Action for Children meets the needs of children and young people who most need support to achieve their full potential. Through our work and through speaking out, we seek to break the cycle of deprivation. We challenge injustice and empower children to overcome the obstacles in their lives that hold them back. We tailor our work to local circumstances, in partnership with children and young people, families, communities and local organisations.

We work with children and young people:

- ▶ whose families need support
- ▶ who cannot live with their birth families
- ▶ who are disabled
- ▶ who experience severe difficulties in their lives

## Action for Children's services

Our services fall into nine broad categories:

**Adoption:** projects finding permanent families for children in care

**Disability:** residential short breaks, specialist play and education opportunities for children and support for families

**Early years and family support:** family centres, children's centres and Sure Start projects providing early learning services, safe play facilities and support for families facing difficulties such as poverty or isolation

**Education:** special schools and support services for children who are struggling to cope with mainstream schooling or those who are not attending school at all

**Family placement:** foster care projects and shared care services linking disabled children with part-time home-based carers

**Health:** counselling and mental health projects for children who have been through trauma such as sexual abuse, and projects supporting children who are caring for a sick or disabled relative

**Participation and family rights:** children's rights and advocacy services, family mediation for separating parents, mentoring and befriending services for vulnerable children

**Residential care:** residential family centres that help families in crisis and residential homes for children who are severely disabled or who have profound emotional and/or behavioural difficulties

**Youth services:** leaving care and youth homelessness projects, drop-in centres, youth justice projects and Children's Fund services supporting schoolchildren in disadvantaged areas

## Statutory and voluntary income

Today, much of the funding that Action for Children needs to run its projects comes from statutory agencies such as local authorities, and some also comes from central government sources. The rest of our funding is voluntary income from individual and corporate supporters, trusts, churches, schools and other community groups.

Voluntary income is vital to our work in projects across the UK. It also guarantees our independence and gives us the freedom to campaign about issues that affect our service users. In order to meet our voluntary income objectives, it is essential for us to foster close working relationships between Action for Children projects, fundraisers and supporters.

## Our links with the Methodist Church

Action for Children was founded in 1869 when Revd Dr Thomas Bowman Stephenson, a Methodist minister, renovated a disused stable in Church Street, London, to provide a safe refuge for homeless children.

Today, Action for Children retains its close links with the Methodist Church. For example, many Methodist churches provide volunteers who play a significant role in supporting Action for Children and raising voluntary income in their local communities. However, Action for Children welcomes staff and volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and religions, who share in Stephenson's vision of providing services for the most vulnerable children.

Methodist tradition emphasises issues of social justice and supports working with different faith communities and cultures in building community. Our relationship with the Methodist Church supports and celebrates our inclusive policies on equality and diversity.

## **Equality and valuing diversity**

Action for Children supports, implements and promotes the principles and values of equality and diversity in its work. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that we welcome and celebrate working in a multi-cultural, multi-faith society and believe that no one should be unfairly treated.

Being a good employer is essential to fulfil our purpose. Every employee has a responsibility in fulfilling our commitment to equality and diversity. This is crucial to our responsibilities as an employer and service provider.

We believe that the diverse composition of our service users and the communities we serve can best be met by a more diverse workforce, which includes more black and minority ethnic people and more people with disabilities.

We also believe that staff who feel isolated, excluded or think they have been treated unfairly should have support and redress through the organisation's policies and procedures for grievances, discipline and dealing with harassment.

## **Positive about disabled people**

Action for Children is committed to employing disabled people and since 2001 we have been an accredited user of the two-tick symbol. This means that we have made five key commitments to assure people with disabilities that we are taking practical steps to offer them positive employment opportunities, and that we are committed to developing the full potential of disabled employees on an equal basis with others.

## **Applying for a job at Action for Children**

As part of Action for Children's equality and diversity policy we want to ensure that every applicant is treated fairly. The only information that is used to decide whether or not to shortlist an applicant is the information provided in your application form. Your application form is therefore very important and this section is designed to help you to complete it. If you already work for Action for Children, we still require the same range of information in relation to the job you are applying for.

## **The job description and person specification**

Every post advertised by Action for Children is supported by a job description and person specification. The job description outlines the main duties of the post, and the person specification describes the knowledge, experience and skills required for the position. If, after reading the job description, you are still interested in the job, then consider whether you have the relevant skills and experience, as detailed in the person specification. If you do, consider how to demonstrate this. In your application form (see the next section) make sure that you give enough detail about how you meet each of the criteria.

## **Completing the application form**

Read through the application form carefully before you write anything to make sure that you are clear about what is being asked. You may find it helpful to do a rough version first – this avoids mistakes and allows you to organise your application properly. Please note that we only accept application forms, not CVs. If your application is not fully completed or is marked 'see CV' it will not be considered.

This application form must be completed in black ink or typed, as it will be photocopied. The application form consists of eight sections, outlined below.

### **Personal details**

You must complete this section accurately as the information you provide here helps us to comply with the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. We are unable to offer employment to someone who does not have the right to live and work in the UK. If you are offered the post, it is conditional on you providing proof of this right through documentation such as a national insurance number, P45 or passport. Action for Children's human resources team will be able to provide further guidance.

### **Career history**

When completing this section of the application form it is essential that you include any relevant voluntary, paid or part-time work that you have had. If you have never been in paid employment or have not worked for a long time, think carefully about any other relevant experience, not necessarily in a formal work setting, that you may have gained.

Please also make sure that you include details of your current or most recent job, even if you feel that the job is not relevant to your current application. You should explain the main features of your role, including things that you are or were responsible for, but do not go into too much detail. You will have the opportunity to expand on the skills and experience that are most relevant to your application later in the form.

You should also provide details of your past employment, starting with the most recent job and accounting for any periods of time not spent in further education or employment. You should, where possible, confirm salary details for any posts you have held within the last five years.

### **Education, professional qualifications and training**

The person specification sets out any qualifications required for the job, and you should list these in this section. You may also want to include any other qualifications you possess or training courses you have attended that you feel are relevant for the post. If you are offered the post, we will need to view the qualification certificates that you list.

### **Most relevant experience/reasons for applying**

This section of the application form is very important. Use it to demonstrate how your knowledge, experience and skills match the selection criteria listed in the person specification. You may find it helpful to use sub-headings. It is very important to address each selection criterion where the method of assessment is marked as being 'application form'.

You should not simply repeat your employment history but consider the knowledge, skills and experience required to do the job and show how you possess these by giving specific examples from your own experience. Do not leave out any relevant knowledge, experience or skills gained outside full-time work. You may have considerable responsibilities at home, such as running a house or caring for relatives or friends, organising leisure activities, work/student placements or work within the community.

Do not just state that you can do the job or that you have the requisite skills or abilities, but explain clearly and concisely how you meet these requirements and can fulfil the responsibilities of the post.

If necessary you can continue on a maximum of two additional A4 sheets. Each additional page must be numbered and must include your name and the job reference number of the position you are applying for.

## **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions Order 1975)**

Make sure that you complete this section of the form. As we are a children's charity all posts are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and all convictions, both spent and unspent, must be disclosed. All posts within Action for Children will, in due course, be subject to a standard disclosure check, and some posts involve more detailed checks. Action for Children will obtain the disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), which is an executive agency of the Home Office. The CRB will check the background of job applicants to make sure that they do not have a history that would make them unsuitable for certain posts. Action for Children works within the Codes of Practice for CRB, Disclosure Scotland and Access Northern Ireland. Copies of these Codes can be obtained on request from Action for Children or from [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk) or [www.disclosurescotland.co.uk](http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk) or [www.accessni.gov.uk](http://www.accessni.gov.uk).

A copy of our policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders is available on request.

## **References**

All appointments are subject to satisfactory references, which we will request if we decide to pursue your application. Your two referees should represent your present or most recent employer and a previous employer. Within this framework, you should give details of the person(s) most able to confirm your suitability for the post for which you are applying. Action for Children reserves the right to contact any other past employers where it seems necessary. If you have not worked in paid employment, you may provide the name and address of anyone who knows you well and who will be able to confirm the information you have provided and comment on your suitability for the job.

Internal candidates should give their managers as a first referee.

## **Declaration**

When you have completed the application form read through it carefully, checking for any errors and to make sure you have not missed anything out. Then sign and date it to confirm that the information is correct.

## **Equality and diversity monitoring**

At Action for Children we are committed to a policy of equality and diversity to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly. Please complete the equality and diversity monitoring form to help us monitor our recruitment process and to promote our equality and diversity policy. All information given in this section is both anonymous and confidential and is used only for statistical monitoring purposes. You should be aware that your personal details will be held on a computerised information system.

## **Interviews**

The covering letter sets out the interview timetable. If the dates set present a problem, please advise the human resources team as soon as possible. However, our ability to accommodate changes to the timetable may be limited.

## **Health**

All appointments are subject to satisfactory medical clearance. To obtain medical clearance you will be provided with a medical health questionnaire for our occupational health adviser to consider. Any information you give is confidential between you and our adviser, who may need to write to your doctor for clarification.

## Benefits and terms of employment

Action for Children has a comprehensive set of employment policies, procedures and guidelines that enable us to operate effectively and fairly with our employees. Our policies are generally in excess of the statutory and market requirements, particularly regarding leave and maternity rights. These conditions apply to all staff employed throughout Action for Children offices, shops and projects located in the United Kingdom.

### Leave

Action for Children entitlement starts at 22 days per year, rising to 32 days a year based on service and grade. In addition, there are statutory and general national holidays, with an additional day at Christmas. Action for Children also offers very attractive maternity, maternity support, adoption and special leave schemes, in addition to statutory parental and paternity leave.

### Part-time/flexible working/job-share

Action for Children has always been committed to considering flexible working requests. Our conditions of service are designed to increase the variety of work available to those individuals not seeking to work full-time. This will enable employees to balance their work and home responsibilities and benefit the organisation by enabling Action for Children to utilise their skills.

### Action for Children pension scheme

Action for Children recognises the importance of pension provision as part of an employment package. The Action for Children pension scheme offers an excellent benefit that is comparable with the best in the charity sector.

Action for Children offers a hybrid pension scheme. This is a pension is made up from two elements:

1. an element that is salary related, based on 50% of your salary – the benefit builds up on a career average basis equal to 1/75th of one half of your salary for each year of service
2. a defined contribution element – an amount equal to 7% of employee's salary will be paid into a money pot account. This money pot account will grow as contributions are added each month and with investment returns. At retirement the entire money pot account will be used to buy pension benefits for you that will be paid in addition to the career average element.

In addition to the pension benefits, you will also be covered for a life assurance lump sum of three times your annual salary should you die while a contributing member of the pension scheme.

The standard employee contribution is 7% of your salary, which will be deducted from your monthly salary payments, if you choose to become a member. Action for Children contribute the balance of the cost of providing all benefits from the pension scheme.

You do have the option to pay a lower rate of contributions of 5% of your salary, for a lower benefit in return. If you choose to pay the lower rate of contributions, the amount paid into the defined contribution money pot account will be equal to 3% of your salary. (The remaining 2% will go towards the cost of providing the career average element.)

All contribution paid to the pension scheme are deducted before tax.

If you would like to join the Action for Children pension scheme you will need to complete an application form.

Further details on the pension scheme are available on the Action for Children intranet under *Working at Action for Children > Pensions* or from the Action for Children Pensions team at [pensions@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:pensions@actionforchildren.org.uk)

### **Season ticket loan**

We offer an interest-free travel loan facility to purchase rail or bus tickets.

### **Use of vehicles**

Certain positions attract a company car on the basis that the employee will complete 6,000 business miles a year. Further details will be made available where relevant.

### **Car recovery service**

Employees can join car recovery services at a substantially reduced fee for use with personal cars.

### **Childcare vouchers**

Action for Children recognises that staff need flexible pre-school and out-of-school childcare of a type and in a location most convenient to them. Childcare vouchers allow employees to choose their own childcare provider and to have their childcare costs reduced. Childcare vouchers help to improve the working lives of staff, helping them to balance work with caring responsibilities. This benefit is operated within a salary sacrifice scheme.

### **Trade unions**

Action for Children supports the system of collective bargaining, and believes in working with trade unions. Staff are encouraged to join unions and Action for Children recognises Unison and Amicus (MSF section) for negotiating purposes.

### **Training and development**

Our aim is to provide opportunities for all employees to learn and develop within Action for Children. We are committed to providing high-quality training and development that is relevant to the job holder and the organisation. We work with employees and managers to identify learning needs and to find the solution that best fits their need. Our commitment to evaluation means we are constantly striving to improve the service we provide.

### **Probationary period**

All new employees of Action for Children must serve a probationary period, normally of six months. During this period an employee must demonstrate competence for permanent appointment to the post.

### **Appraisal and performance reviews**

Action for Children is committed to maximising the skills and potential of all employees in support of its strategic aims and objectives. A key aspect of this process involves employees participating in regular one-to-one sessions and an annual appraisal.

### **Sick pay**

We offer a comprehensive occupational sickness scheme that offers up to six months' full pay and six months' half pay, depending on length of service accrued with Action for Children or a recognised employer.

### **Relocation**

In approved cases we offer a comprehensive relocation package that provides a contribution of 80 per cent of the cost for removal of furniture and fittings, legal expenses involved in a house. We offer an interest-free travel loan facility to purchase rail or bus tickets.

## Retirement age

Action for Children has adopted a flexible approach to retirement, whereby we will employ staff up to the age of 65, and allow employment to continue up to the age of 70. Further details are available on request.

## Continuity of employment

Action for Children recognises continuous service from an employee's **immediate former employer only** (providing that employer is one of those listed below) and there has been no break in service of more than seven calendar days. For the avoidance of doubt, continuous service is not recognised from any previous employers (even if they are on the list below) prior to this.

If the above conditions are satisfied, continuity of service will be preserved to enable you to benefit from the following Action for Children policies and schemes:

- ▶ sick pay
- ▶ annual leave
- ▶ enhanced maternity/adoption allowance

You are referred to the relevant Action for Children policies for further information.

Continuity of employment with the former employer will not be recognised for any other reason or purpose.

Former employers with whom length of service is recognised where there is no break in service are:

All local authorities

National Health Service

Civil service

Methodist Church organisations

National Council for Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO)

Child Care Providers Scotland (CCPS)

Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)

Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)

Action for Children policy does not extend to bodies or employers affiliated to the above employers.

With the exception of teachers, Action for Children does not recognise any previous service for unfair dismissal, redundancy or any other statutory purpose.

For the avoidance of doubt, continuity of employment does not continue if an employee leaves Action for Children and takes up new employment with any of the above employers.

## Recruitment complaints procedure

Applicants for posts in Action for Children will be selected on their ability to fulfil the requirements of the post they are selected for, based on the guidelines set out in our corporate standards for recruitment and selection.

If you consider that the recruitment process has been managed in a discriminatory or unfair manner, or if there is any aspect of our process that did not comply with our standards, you may register a complaint.

## Procedure

Your complaint will be investigated within 10 working days from the date the complaint was received (or reasons should be given for a revised timetable). Please note:

- ▶ All complaints must be in writing and directed initially to the Head of Recruitment Shared Service.
- ▶ The Head of Recruitment Shared Service will then forward the complaint letter and a copy of the acknowledgement to the appropriate officer. The officer will be at assistant director/head of department level, depending on the level of post referred to by the complaint.
- ▶ The officer to whom the complaint has been directed will be responsible for investigating the complaint. In circumstances where it is considered appropriate an investigator will be appointed.
- ▶ Following the investigation, the officer to whom the complaint was referred will decide whether the complaint has any substance and, if necessary, determine appropriate action.
- ▶ The officer to whom the complaint was referred to will inform the Head of Recruitment Shared Service, prior to contacting the complainant directly about the outcome of the investigation.
- ▶ A copy of the letter outlining the outcome will be sent to the national director. This procedure does not exclude any right the applicant may have to apply to an employment tribunal.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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.



[www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)