

Action for Children house style guide

This house style guide is a working document developed and used by the design team – it may be useful when you're writing for Action for Children as it explains in detail Action for Children's house style. For a more general guide, please look at the writing guide in the brand toolkit.

Standard statement (must be word for word)

Action for Children is committed to helping the most vulnerable and neglected children and young people in the UK break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so they can achieve their full potential.

For publications for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland:

As above, but replace 'Action for Children' with Action for Children-Gweithredu dros Blant/Action for Children Scotland/Action for Children Northern Ireland as appropriate, and replace 'the UK' with Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland as appropriate.

Registered charity and company numbers

Registered charity nos. 1097940/SC038092

Company no. 4764232

In Scotland, this must appear as:

Registered charity no. 1097940/company no. 4764232

A charity registered in Scotland no. SC038092

Disclaimer

Where the names of service users have been changed (in quotes, case studies etc), use the following disclaimer in the small print at the end of the document:

Names have been changed to protect the identity of service users.

Forms

Leaflets with attached forms to fill in, eg payroll giving, reply forms for invitations etc – as a general rule don't use a full stops, even for sentences, as it's cleaner. Avoid colons. Follow tick boxes with lower case (lc) letters for single words, upper case (UC) for sentences (but be driven by context – ok to break the rule if consistency within the form seems more important).

Examples:

I will not be attending the reunion

First name _____

- Black
- White
- Mixed parentage

- vegetarian

Action for Children publications (internal and external)

Use only initial caps.

Examples:

Participating in good practice

Action packed

Team brief
Look beyond the scars
Factfile (change from FactFile)
Net Smart rules (change from NetSmart Rules)

Exceptions may include:

Where the name of a leaflet is also the name of the project – Larnie Parental Support Project

Use italics when referring to these publications, eg ‘the Action for Children report *Look beyond the scars* is available on the website’.

Capitals

Use caps sparingly. Internet and intranet are to be lc. Quality Protects is UC, best practice and best value to be lc – always be driven by context though. Gift Aid takes caps, although the logo doesn’t. References to race should be UC on forms but lower case in running text (unless geographical), eg Asian adopters are needed for Asian children, while black adopters are sought for black children. Qualifications should usually be lower case – diploma in social work, a business degree, NVQ level 4 in childcare. SDG (service development groups) do not need caps, eg the residential services SDG, the health and wellbeing service development group will develop...

Organisations – use caps, eg Dorset Health Authority; Oxfordshire County Council; Great Ormond Street Children’s Hospital; Vernon Primary School; St Peter’s Church; Oxford University; Portsmouth Polytechnic.

Job titles – all lower case, eg chief executive; prime minister; project manager; circuit co-ordinator.

(But distinguish between title and job description eg President Bush/the US president; Project Manager Barbara Wallis says.../Barbara Wallis, the project manager, says...; Clare Tickell, Chief Executive/Action for Children’s chief executive, Clare Tickell; one of Action for Children’s vice-presidents/Action for Children Vice-President Jenny Agutter)

Action for Children Chair and Action for Children Council take upper case C to avoid confusion.

Action for Children projects and initiatives – use UC, eg Art Matters (previously called Life Matters), Larnie Parental Support Project (but home collecting boxes, street to store collections, house to house collections, as not initiatives – but be driven by context), Growing Strong, ARTiculation, Access to IT

Government departments and agencies – UC, eg Sure Start, Children’s Fund, Youth Justice Board, Department of Health

Action for Children departments/teams – use lower case when possible, otherwise use UC, eg the corporate fundraising department will host the event/Corporate Fundraising are hosting the event

Action for Children groups and plans – eg the senior management group (SMG) will meet on Tuesday.../the project’s annual business plan

Bills and Acts of parliament – UC eg Children (Leaving Care) Act.

Titles – in Action for Children titles, only the first word has a leading cap. The rest are lc. Wherever possible, respect the caps of external publications (eg *The Big Issue*, *Time Out*, *The Guardian*)

Table entries – upper case first word even if not a sentence, as looks better

Bullet points

Bullet points should be short units of information, such as a list, and finishing the initial sentence. Avoid using complete sentences and if necessary rewrite in order to avoid them. No punctuation is used between bullet points, no full stop is used after the final point, and points should begin with lower case. When it is necessary to use secondary points within a bullet point list, en dashes are used.

Children may be involved in:

- swimming
- skating
- arts and crafts
- games
 - table tennis
 - Monopoly
- cooking

When bullet point lists include several sentences in one point, rewrite if possible, otherwise use a full stop at end of bullet point. For example:

Action for Children's Net Smart rules:

- Never respond to nasty or suggestive messages. Always tell your parent or carer if you get such messages or if you see rude pictures while online and report them to your internet service provider.

When this creates a conflict (eg when short and long bullet points exist in the same list) it is at the discretion of the editor.

Numbers

Spell out numbers one to nine, and use numerals for 10 and above, except in tables and lists. This is at the editor's discretion, especially in publications such as Factfile, where it is appropriate to use numerals throughout.

Ages

One to nine in full, 10 and above as numerals. Use hyphens when adjectival, except when an age range, for example:

12-year-old Karen

Karen is 12 years old

75% of 12 year olds

16- to 25-year-old visitors (avoid use of en dash in this instance)

Years

The financial year is to be written 2008/09 and the calendar year 2008–09. For publications covering two years, use the coming year to avoid looking out of date (eg Factfile 2008).

Gender inclusive language

Use gender inclusive language wherever possible, but take the cue from the client (eg some of the Henley Ball women insist on being called Chairman). To get around the his/her issue, use 'their'.

Picture captions/credits

No full stops at the end of pic caps, even where there are two or more sentences.

Pull-out quotes

No full stops at the end of pull-out quotes. Only use quotation marks (single) when it's a direct spoken quote.

Standfirsts

No full stops at the end of standfirsts, even where there are two or more sentences.

Customer support team (was Supporter Services)

Should be written in the same way whether in running text or display, for example:

‘For further information, please contact Customer Support on 0300 123 2112 (open 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday).’

Times

Use ‘9pm’ not ‘9.00pm’

In running text use an unspaced en rule between times, eg 9am–4.30pm, 7pm–9pm, 9am–10.30am. On the front of invitations, events etc, use ‘to’, eg ‘12 noon to 4pm’

Percentages

Per cent in text, % in parenthesis, tables, pullouts and headings – eg, 15 per cent of children at the project are Asian (10% come from Pakistan). In documents such as reports that have lots of statistics, use numerals and % even in text, eg five projects reported less than 4% of parents attended (3% in the West Midlands)

Preferred spellings

Adviser, not advisor – except Ernst & Young, who use advisor

Whistleblowing

Online

Email (this is changed from e-mail)

No one (not no-one)

Freepost (not FREEPOST)

L’Derry (not Londonderry)

Minority ethnic (not ethnic minority)

Mixed parentage (but black mixed parentage when appropriate, eg black adoption)

Ofsted (not OFSTED)

Focused

Sure Start (not SureStart)

Looked-after children/children who are looked after

Whole-organisational marketing strategy (WOMS) – must be hyphenated

Preschool (not pre-school)

Roll-out (not rollout)

Fulfil (not fulfill), fulfilling

Bed and breakfast (first mention in text), B&B subsequently

Supervision/1:1 – if plural, please put half space before s, eg 1:1s (as it looks strange in some fonts)

Anti-social

Day care

Health care

Childcare

Key worker

Preferred terminology

Birth child/family (not natural child/family)

Survived sexual abuse/suffered sexual abuse/experienced sexual abuse (not victim of sexual abuse)

Children/young people in care (for looked-after children/children who are looked after)

For Westwood, Spires, Headlands and Cotswolds schools, use ‘challenging need’

For Penhurst School, use ‘profound need’

For general info about our schools, use ‘challenging and profound need’

Shared care (not respite care)

Avoid

Do's and Don'ts/Dos and Donts

Apostrophes

Use the possessive apostrophe – Ladies' Lunch, Young Achievers' Awards, Vice-Presidents' Dinner, Champions' Cup (although the UEFA Champions Cup doesn't have one) – the exception is young carers project as for the young carers, not belonging to them.

Take the singular form when it is the clearest – eg parent/carer's signature, rather than parents/carers' or parent(s)/carer(s)'

Ellipsis

To have no space before and a full space after

Dialect

Local or national dialect words may be used if the meaning is clear from the context, otherwise provide translation when first used (eg Scottish projects may be outwith [outside] the legislation). Phonetic spellings to reflect accent are to be avoided.

Initials/names

Full stops not needed after initials, eg John R Peterson, SG Bloomberg

Intranet locations

Use initial caps for each section, with an arrow in between, eg Publications > Order forms. Don't include Home in the address, but make clear it's the intranet, eg ...you can find it on the intranet at Children's Services > Project materials express service Don't use full stop after address.

Action for Children addresses

Should be set out as follows, using only initial caps for offices:

Action for Children
3 The Boulevard
Ascot Road
Watford WD18 8AG
Telephone: 0300 123 2112

Action for Children
Registered office
3 The Boulevard
Ascot Road
Watford WD18 8AG
Telephone: 0300 123 2112

Formal letters

It's important all letters we send follow the same style, and that the language, tone and structure are clear and simple. For the font, always use Arial (11 point size and black). You'll find a template at the end of this document to use as a guide.

Addresses and date:

Begin by including your address at the top right-hand side of the page.

Below the address, leave a space, then include today's date in the following format:
6 May 2007 (not 6th May 2007, May 6th 2007 etc).

Leave another space then move across to the left-hand side of the page and put the recipient's name and address.

Greeting:

Leave another space and then directly underneath the address begin with the greeting 'Dear'. If you are on first-name terms with the reader, use 'Dear Jane'. Otherwise use 'Dear Mr Smith' or, if you are writing to a woman and don't know her title, use 'Dear Ms Smith'. If you don't know the person's name, use 'Dear Sir', 'Dear Madam' or 'Dear Sir or Madam'. You don't need to put a comma after the greeting. Then, leave another space and directly underneath, you can then begin your letter.

Ending:

Once you have finished, leave another space then close the letter on the left-hand side with 'Yours sincerely' or 'Yours faithfully'. If you used the name of the person at the start of the letter then use 'Yours sincerely'. Otherwise use 'Yours faithfully'. Again, you don't need a comma here. Then sign the letter, and print your name below your signature.

[Action for Children logo]

[Enter office name]

[Enter Address Field 1]

[Enter Address Field 2]

[Enter Address Field 3]

[Enter Town/City] [Enter Postcode]

[Enter Telephone]

www.actionforchildren.org.uk

[Enter Date]

[Enter recipient's name]

[Enter Address Field 1]

[Enter Address Field 2]

[Enter Address Field 3]

[Enter Town/City] [Enter Postcode]

Dear [Enter recipient's name]

[Begin your letter here]

Yours sincerely / Yours faithfully [Delete as appropriate]

[Your signature]

[Your name]