



#Voice

coram | better chances
for children
since 1739

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Sharing our Stories

Autumn Newsletter 2022

Dear Friends,

It has been a challenging year for many across the country, including the children and young people that Coram Voice helps. While the daily impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has reduced, we are now experiencing a cost of living crisis and key services such as health and social care are under unprecedented pressure.



Coram Voice has worked alongside children and young people during many tough times. Since our formation in 1975, we have championed the rights of children and young people who depend on the help of the state, including those in care and care leavers. We have always strived to ensure young voices are heard when decisions are being made about their lives.

We are needed now more than ever. Pressure on Children's Services is all too often leaving them struggling to properly support the children and young people in their care. The cost of living and housing crises are leaving too many young people in unsuitable housing or homeless. Every day, Coram Voice works to empower children and young people. Our [Always Heard](#) helpline offers much needed advice and support across the country. Coram Voice [Advocates](#) work with children and young people to make sure they have a safe place to live and access to the education, employment, and financial support they need. Volunteer [Independent Visitors](#) befriend isolated children in care, helping them to gain confidence and new skills. As well as supporting one child at a time, we are also improving the care system by helping change it for the future. Our [Bright Spots](#) programme has supported over 20,000 young people to share with local authorities what good (and less good) support looks like. [A National Voice](#) project helps care-experienced young people come together and have their voice heard by local and national decision makers. We also provide children and young people with the opportunity to unleash their creativity and share unique insights into their experience of the care system through the [Voices Writing Competition](#).

Inspired by the talent and resilience of the children and young people, Coram Voice will continue to help them overcome challenges and support them to thrive.

Andrew Dickie
Coram Voice Head of Services

Sharing stories from across the Coram Group

In this edition of the Coram newsletter, we are sharing inspiring stories from our work across the Coram Group. We're showcasing our volunteers who give up their time to create better chances for children, staff working to provide young people with the love and opportunities they need to thrive, and those whose lives your support has changed, as well as other supporters, who like you, believe that all children and young people deserve the very best chance in life.

We are currently facing unprecedented challenges - a cost of living crisis on the back of a global pandemic and growing instability, but these stories shine a light on the good being done every day, the change that your support is making, and the resilience and potential in the children and young people we support.

Contents:

- 4-5 Sharing the love of stories with future generations
- 6-7 Our work with asylum-seeking and refugee children and Sebur's story
- 8-9 Rita's story of building a forever family
- 10 -11 Monier's story and how the cost of living crisis is affecting young care leavers
- 12 A story of success
- 13 Leave the gift of better chances
- 14 Supporter stories
- 15 Share your stories
- 16 Thank you for making these success stories possible!

Sharing the love of stories with future generations

Coram Beanstalk believes that reading is for everyone and through specialist one-to-one reading sessions with our trained volunteers, we can give children the best chance in life through developing a love of reading.

Jessie volunteers as a Coram Beanstalk reading helper in Liverpool and shares her story of supporting children with their reading:

What are your favourite books to share?

Out of all the books I have read with the children so far, my favourite has got to be 'You're a Bad Man, Mr. Gum!' because it has brought a lot of laughter to our sessions, and 'The Brilliant World of Tom Gates' because it is filled with so many things that have sparked really interesting conversations with the children!

What are your top tips for reading with children?

With children who are a bit reluctant to read, I would say that it is important to let them know that there is no pressure for them to read. A good idea might be to spend the first few weeks/term doing the reading aloud in your sessions, making sure that your voice

matches the tone of the book. As the weeks go on, you could try getting the child to read maybe one sentence, then one paragraph, then one page etc. until hopefully, they feel comfortable being the one to read during your sessions.

I would always give the child a choice with regards to who wants to read at the beginning of every session, regardless of whether it is your very first or very last session with that child, and regardless of whether they are comfortable or not yet with reading aloud in your sessions. I have found that a fun way to decide who is going to read if a child is undecided is to roll a dice and if, for example, the dice rolls an even number then the child will read and if it rolls an odd number then you will read.

What's one of your favourite success stories?

One of the children I worked with was initially quite reluctant to share her own



thoughts and ideas about things in the books and didn't engage with any book talk. However, after moving on from the short, picture books in the starter pack to a longer chapter book, she really came out of her shell and gradually shared more and more of her ideas with me, engaging with book talk.

What's it like being a Coram Beanstalk volunteer?

Spending time with the children is my favourite part of being a reading helper! Before volunteering with Beanstalk, I hadn't had any experience working with children, but since starting this journey, I have seen just how imaginative, funny, and bright young children can be - I definitely underestimated them at the

start! This experience has also given me a lot of relevant experience which I have found extremely useful as I have plans to train to be a primary school teacher.

Reading volunteers are at the heart of Coram Beanstalk's work. If you have a few hours a week to help children find the joy in reading you could become a Coram Beanstalk reading volunteer. Find out more at beanstalkcharity.org.uk or by scanning the QR code below.



Our work with refugee & asylum-seeking children and families

Recent catastrophes in Ukraine and Afghanistan have highlighted the plight of those fleeing danger. 1 in 10 children in care needs immigration support and without it they face uncertain and unsafe futures. Through ground-breaking projects, Coram has helped hundreds of children to secure their futures in the UK with more than 400 looked-after children, care leavers and families supported to submit applications to the EU settlement scheme. We have also dealt with 8,000 queries about children's rights to ensure they can access the love and opportunities they need to thrive.

Afghanistan

CCLC recently held an event, welcoming a group of Afghan families accommodated in local hotels who had fled the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan. We provided information on family reunion, housing and welfare benefits to families in need of support and advice to help them to begin rebuilding their lives in the UK.

Furthermore, Coram Voice provides specialist advocacy services to young care-experienced people from Afghanistan. With help also available in Dari and Pashto languages, advocates can talk to local authorities on their behalf and help them get their voices heard.

Ukraine

In March the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme launched, an unprecedented 'stranger sponsor' scheme where UK-based sponsors provide accommodation for six months after arrival. Coram's Migrant Children's Project has been working with the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to provide insight into how this is working and how problems can be averted going forward. This is vital as the first of the families and single women who arrived are about to come to the end of their six months. Communities across UK have almost always been extremely welcoming and most enquiries end in positive advice. Through working with the government and our expert helpline, Coram will be there to support Ukrainian children and families through this difficult time.



Sebur's story

My Journey, a poem by Sebur, age 15 – Upper Secondary category winner of Voices 2022 writing competition

Coming here was not part of the plan
But I had to flee danger in Iran

Every day the police could take my life
Every single day filled with fear and strife

You wouldn't believe the things that my eyes have seen
Things that would make your soul scream

Things that you can never forget
Nightmare than would wake you up in a sweat

Fifty-four people in just one small boat
We were worried that it would not stay afloat

No one can understand how much I was terrified
If in the next second I would even be alive

Landing in a country where everything is new
Everything so difficult, don't know what to do

I have lost my parents, I'm filled with so much regret
My message: please give your mother and father respect.

Voices is a creative writing competition for children and young people in and leaving care, run by Coram Voice. The competition celebrates the creativity and talent of care-experienced children and young people just like Sebur.



Rita's story of build

Rita, aged 56, is a single adopter who lives with her daughter Victoria*, now a teenager, who has additional needs. This is her story of adopting with Coram.

Rita had always known that she wanted to be a parent and had thought about adoption for many years. She made her first call at the age of 44. Rita's mother had been an adoption social worker and through her Rita had heard good things about Coram.

"I couldn't see how the magic would work. I used to receive the magazines with the profiles of the children, and I found it hard to feel a connection with any of them." But Rita's social worker reassured her: "My social worker had a lot of experience, and she could pick up so much from a child's profile. She really knew what she was doing, and I felt that she really wanted it to work."

After a few potential matches which did not progress, Rita's social worker called to say that she had received the profile of a four-year-old girl called Victoria.

"I didn't want to get my hopes up, but she sent me the profile and it was just love at first sight. I just thought it was too good to be true..."

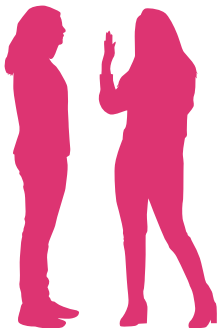
Victoria had been diagnosed with Developmental Coordination Disorder, anxiety, and was on the autistic spectrum, she was under the care of a paediatrician, physiotherapist and occupational therapist. She has recently been diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum.

"Victoria didn't have many interests or books when she arrived to live with me. But very soon she developed lots of interests and it has enriched my world. I have done things that I would never have done if it wasn't for Victoria. Victoria smiled for the first time at the theme park. She said 'Mummy, I'm happy', so we got season tickets and went all the time!

I had the most fantastic social worker from Coram who was my absolute rock, she was there through thick and thin. She was the 'Rolls Royce' of social workers, she went above and beyond. She was always on the end of the phone.

I joined a support network with other single adopters, even before I'd been matched with Victoria, and we are still in touch now. We now have a group of single adopters from all over the country and we have been going on holiday together for the past few years.

* Names, details and images have been changed to protect Victoria's identity



ing a forever family

My daughter is so much more than I could ever have hoped for. My expectations have been exceeded a thousand times over. We talk about how she found me, and I found her. We couldn't imagine a better match.

I feel more fulfilled, I know I wouldn't have felt complete without being a parent, so I am the person I wanted to be.

It feels like such a privilege to be able to help her become herself. I can't take credit for the person she is becoming but I feel that I'm part of it. It feels like my greatest achievement. I have poured my heart and soul into her. The rewards are more rewarding when you've had a difficult start."

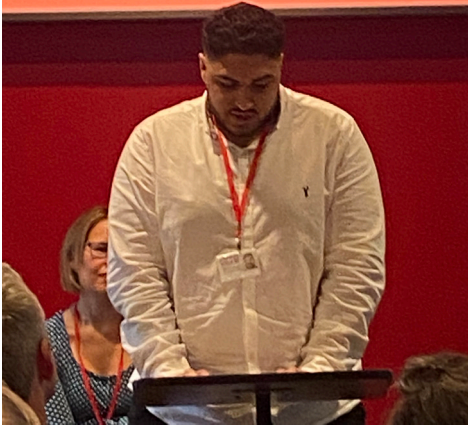
In the coming year we will be celebrating 50 years of Coram Adoption with a publication assessing our impact over the decades and an event with families. There is much to celebrate as Coram Adoption is today, a leading voluntary adoption agency, rated outstanding by Ofsted and has helped 1,498 children, young people and adoptive parents directly.

If you are interested in finding out more about adopting through Coram, please visit our website coramadoption.org.uk.



Young People's voices

Carla & Monier



Monier's Story

Monier is a dedicated Care Experienced Consultant with Coram Voice, who uses his experiences as a care leaver to spread awareness and improve the lives of those in and leaving care. He shared his story at our recent supporter event:

"I grew up in South Shields, and at age 13 I was taken into care. At the time I was confused and lonely. I didn't know why I had been taken into care, only that I had been taken away from my family. After several failed foster placements, I was eventually placed into residential care where I was treated poorly. A complete lack of communication and disregard for my individual needs caused an escalation in my behaviour, and on more than one occasion I attempted to run home to my biological family. I was completely lost and lacked any sense of belonging. Even today, despite having my own family now, I still often question where I truly belong.

Coming to terms with my experiences has been a long and often difficult process. Finally reflecting on my time in care over the past few years, I have started to understand that the negative experiences I endured were due to a lack of understanding of myself, and more specifically, my needs. Due to my own voice being both neglected and discarded in all elements of decision-making.

My role as a Care Experienced Consultant here at Coram Voice, helps me use my voice now in the hope my experiences can bring about changes within the care system, achieving positive outcomes for young people in care and care leavers today.

Late last year, I travelled to Wandsworth and alongside colleagues, met care-experienced young people as part of the New Belongings Programme. This workshop provided the young people a chance to share and highlight their concerns, some of which I could identify with. My biggest takeaway from the meeting was the safe space and sense of community Coram Voice and Wandsworth Council had managed to create amongst the young people, which is something I never experienced during my time in care.

Working alongside such passionate individuals, who champion those in care, and care leavers, like me, is a privilege. The work Coram Voice does to highlight issues within the care system is vital to ensure the negativity I experienced many years ago, does not impact those in care today, and the only way they can do this is with your help."



How the cost of living crisis is affecting young care leavers

The cost of living crisis is hitting many across the nation, none more so than care leavers. While many young people who are impacted by the rising costs can fall back on parents, care leavers are expected to be financially independent from the age of 18 whereas young people in the general population now tend to live in the family home until 24. Care leavers are only eligible for Under 25 Universal Credit of £61.05 from 1 April.

Prior to the current crisis, 25% of the UK homeless population were care-experienced.* Facing growing financial pressures this shocking statistic is only set to rise.

Many young people leave care not knowing what their rights and entitlements are and without the support to help navigate the difficult transition to independence. Coram Voice's advocacy service ensures they can access their rights and entitlements and that care leavers' voices are heard in the decisions about their lives and the services they need.

Linda Briheim, head of policy and practice development at Coram Voice told us: "We are very worried about the impact that the increasing cost of living will have on care leavers. We know from our Bright Spots programme that coping financially is an important factor that influences care leavers' well-being. The cost of living increases are all the more likely to mean that they will struggle in the future."

* The hidden truth about homelessness report. CRESR

A story of success

Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation's active and inclusive approach engages over a thousand pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities each year. Our programmes for SEND schools are always bespoke, built to fit with individual needs within a group and specific areas of interest.



I've had the privilege of frequently delivering our work in SEND schools. There are so many stories to choose from to share here, of which the underlying theme is sheer joy!

In particular, I remember working at a school in North London where we were making a 'Play in a Day' of Macbeth. Within the group there was a young person called Archie*, who teachers told us often struggled to participate in activities with others. Although this was apparent during the workshop, there was a key turning point for Archie on that day.

We were staging the final battle in the play between Macbeth and Macduff using a big group movement exercise, which required one student to lead the action from the front. Prior to this, Archie was spending a lot of time with support staff at the edges of the room. However, in this moment his interest was piqued. We took hold of that opportunity and encouraged him to take on a key role. The result was that he guided his peers through the series of epic battle moves that led to Macbeth's untimely death! Archie's engagement was totally transformed and it was an absolute delight to watch. He was engrossed and in those few minutes went from being at the periphery of the group to front and centre of the action, entirely connected with his classmates and visibly proud, excited and confident.

Moments like that stay with me forever and remind me again and again why drama is such an excellent tool for developing young people's confidence, raising aspiration and providing the right skills to navigate through life positively.

Louise de Froment - Workshops and Inclusion Manager CSSF

* Names, details and images have been changed to protect children's identities.



Leave the gift of better chances

Leaving a gift in your Will is a personal way to make a lasting difference to a cause you care about.

This **Remember a Charity Week** (5 to 11 September), Coram along with 200 other charities are encouraging our supporters to 'help the work live on' by considering leaving a gift in their Will, after taking care of loved ones. Gifts in Wills allow us to continue to create better chances for children long into the future.

Liz Beloe, a retired counsellor who left a gift in her Will to Coram told us, "I'd encourage you to consider placing a gift in Coram's safe hands. Every legacy, however small, can make a difference and is money well spent towards vulnerable youngsters finding love, acceptance, value and their rightful place in the world. What better investment could there be in the emotional health of future generations and society?"



To find out more about our free gift in Wills service please visit tinyurl.com/CoramWill or scan the QR code below.



If you have any questions about how to include Coram in your Will please contact Rachael on 020 7520 0306 or rachael@coram.org.uk.

Jonathan's supporter story

Jonathan*, a supporter and Coram adoptive parent, who ran a half marathon to raise money for Coram told us his story:

"We adopted our two daughters, Ivy and Emily, in the spring of 2014. They were aged three and two at the time and are biological sisters. Meeting them for the first time was very emotional, especially as we had started our adoption journey with Coram a year before and up until that point we had only seen photos of them. That now seems a lifetime ago as I couldn't imagine my life without them today.

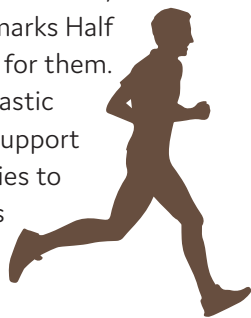
It took Emily the first month or so to recognise me as a family member to trust and hug and such but we were lucky that they both adapted very quickly. Coram was very supportive throughout the adoption process and everything that came after. They also put us in contact with other adopters going through the same process, which gave us an added level of support. The support network we had from Coram really helped us to adapt to life as a family.

Coram is a great charity and I've seen the support they've given to other people in perhaps more challenging circumstances than ours, and how



they've always advocated in the best interests of the child. I think we've been lucky that we haven't needed to lean on Coram much since adopting but it is great to know that the support is there if we were to need it. Coram is a charity that really wants the best outcomes for the children that they're trying to help.

This year, to give back to Coram, I ran the London Landmarks Half Marathon to fundraise for them. The day itself was fantastic and knowing that my support would help other families to have the same chances ours did made it even more special."



If you would be interested in taking part in an event to support Coram, check out our event pages on our website [coram.org.uk/ways-you-can-get-involved/fundraise-us](https://www.coram.org.uk/ways-you-can-get-involved/fundraise-us).

* Names have been changed to protect the privacy of Jonathan, Ivy and Emily.

Share your Story

Over the last six months, you may have seen flyers asking you to share your connection to Coram. We have received many wonderful letters, we thought we would share some of them.

Chloe Appleby wrote to us with her story: "I support Coram in memory of my dear grandfather, who was brought up in the Foundling Hospital. He was born George Willson in 1866 but his mother Eliza Willson, then aged 20, was deserted by his father and the hospital changed his name to Edwin Keane.

I think he was happy at the Hospital. He was befriended by the maths teacher, who taught him to play chess, and when he wanted to train as an accountant, the Hospital arranged for an apprenticeship and funded him an extra year."

Rosemarie Cousins wrote: "Children have no way to protect themselves from pain and harm. I want to fight for

them so they are protected and loved. This charity, Coram and other charities I support gives me a chance to do just that."

Another supporter penned: "As a youngster growing up in London, my friends and I used to play in what was called Coram Fields playground. I came from a poor, but supportive and loving family so I hope I can help youngsters who are not so lucky."

To read more stories shared by supporters, watch a video of former Foundling Hospital pupil Eleanor telling her story, or find out how you can share a story with Coram, please scan the QR Code below or check out the Share Your Story page on our website [coram.org.uk/supporter-stories](https://www.coram.org.uk/supporter-stories).



Thank you for making these stories possible!



Faced with the rising cost of living and ongoing impact of the pandemic, amongst other new and evolving issues, children and families face unprecedented challenges. With 400,000 children in the UK in need, 100,000 in care and 215,000 living undocumented, our work is needed now more than ever.

Your support is vital in enabling Coram to support children from infancy to independence, addressing the loss of care, security, education, voice and social opportunity. As well as tackling

challenges in policy, law, practice and attitudes to uphold children's rights and advance their welfare. Many of the stories shared in this newsletter would have been very different if not for your generosity. Thank you.

Scan the QR code below or visit coram.org.uk/CEO-thank-you to hear a message of thanks and an explanation of your impact by our CEO, Dr. Carol Homden.



Keep up to date through our channels:

Website: coram.org.uk
Youtube [Coram](https://www.youtube.com/c/coram)

Facebook: [@Coramsince1739](https://www.facebook.com/Coramsince1739)
Twitter [@Coram](https://www.twitter.com/Coram)

Instagram [Coram.uk](https://www.instagram.com/Coram)

If you have any questions, please contact our supporter care team on

Tel: **020 7520 0330**

Email: supportercare@coram.org.uk