

# coram

better chances  
for children  
since 1739

Spring 2022



# Continuing to champion children and young people

Dear Friends,

November 2021 marked the start of Coram Children's Legal Centre's 40th anniversary celebrations and the launch of a report looking back over our 40 years of championing children's rights. (You can read this on our website [childrenslegalcentre.com](https://childrenslegalcentre.com))



Since 1981, we have dedicated ourselves to promoting and protecting the rights of vulnerable children domestically and internationally. We deliver access to justice for children and young people through accessible online information, outreach advice reaching communities most in need, and complex casework and representation at all levels of the UK courts. We advocate for policy and systems change and our international research and consultancy has supported governments around the world to develop strategies and policies to implement child rights reform.

Whether it is unaccompanied asylum seeking children who have fled persecution and war in places like Afghanistan, children taken into social services care for their own protection, care leavers who need ongoing support as they navigate the transition to independent living, or children with special educational needs and disabilities who face discrimination, our legal teams are there to support them.

With school closures, reduced contact with the world outside the home and increased access to the digital world, the pandemic has presented new risks to children and had a profound impact their rights. As we emerge from the pandemic, never has there been greater need for our legal services but demand far outstrips capacity and sadly we have to turn away many referrals.

Nonetheless, as we look to the future, we remain determined to increase our capacity to help children in need of legal protection and with your support, we look forward to 40 more years at the forefront of children's rights.

**Rosalyn Akar Grams**

**Managing Director of Legal Practice and Children's Rights  
Coram Children's Legal Centre**

# We are fighting for children



At Coram, we have been fighting for children and young people for nearly 300 years. Today, our mission remains the same; to create better chances for children by providing them with the love and opportunity they need to thrive.

Coram Children's Legal Centre recently celebrated 40 years of championing children's legal rights, the focus of this Spring newsletter. We'll explore some of the projects across the Coram Group also fighting for children and young people

in diverse and meaningful ways, including A National Voice, who run campaigns and projects to amplify children's and young people's voices, and our Young Citizens ambassadors who help other young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. We hear from those on the ground about how their work strives to create better chances for children. Also, find out how you can join us on our fight by becoming a member of our special group of supporters, our Charter Patrons.

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# Supporting each other

Coram **Young Citizens** is an award-winning peer support programme for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Our Young Citizens Trainers do amazing work by co-designing and running workshops for other young people who are new to the UK, covering topics including;

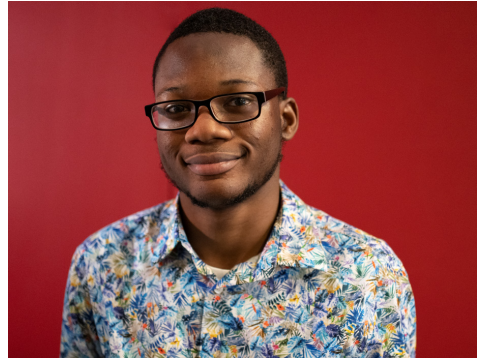
- The asylum process for young people
- Their rights as a care leaver
- Skills for wellbeing
- Building your support network

Not only are the workshops full of important information but they are also a wonderful way for young people to come together and share experiences.

Abdullahi is a Young Citizens Ambassador, who told us all about his experience as a Young Citizens Trainer.

## **Hi Abdullahi, tell us about yourself?**

*My name is Abdullahi Yussuf and I'm 21 years old. I'm a recent graduate of BA Social Anthropology at SOAS University of London, which I graduated with an upper second class. I am also a Young Citizens trainer and a volunteer coordinator at Coram. I will be studying MA Events and Experience Management at Goldsmiths University this September as well.*



## **Can you explain what the Young Citizen Trainers do?**

*The Young Citizens trainers are a group of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, and we deliver workshops to other young people from similar backgrounds, and we share our experiences with the young people especially if they're new in the UK.*

## **What's the best thing about being a Young Citizens Trainer?**

*Personally, the best thing about being a part of the Young Citizens programme is that one is constantly able to inspire and motivate other young refugees and migrants to be the best that they can be and that they can make the impossible possible.*

## **What do you think is the biggest impact of Young Citizens?**

*I think the biggest impact of the Young Citizens programme is the lesson that both the Young Citizens*



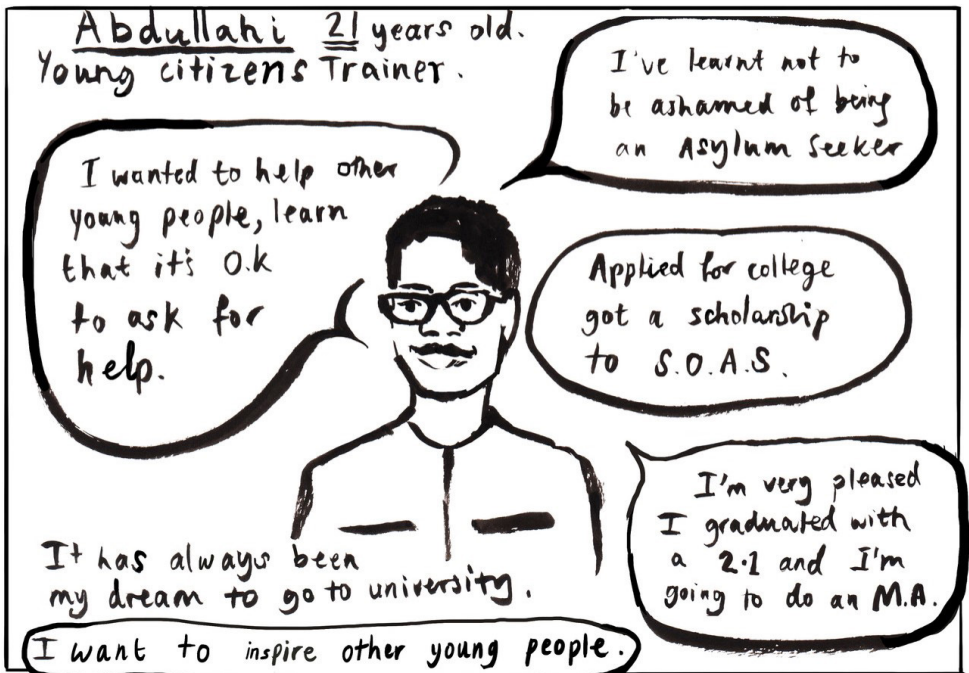
Trainers and the young people we deliver workshops to learn from one another and that we're always rooting for each other to continue to fight for our dreams and make a change within contemporary society. Another impact of the programme is the comfort it gives to everyone that's on the programme as it's a place where we are all able to speak freely, confidently, and comfortably. The programme has gotten me to a point where I'm no longer ashamed to say I'm an asylum seeker. The programme has given and continues to give me the ability to break the stigma attached to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants - which I'm forever grateful for.

**If you have one piece of advice for someone who has recently come to the UK what would it be?**

My piece of advice for someone who has recently come to the UK would be to fight for your dreams because your dreams will fight for you.

Abdullahi has recently written a piece titled "What it's like to have your life put on hold by the Home Office" for the Big Issue. You can read it online at [bigissue.com/opinion/what-its-like-to-have-your-life-put-on-hold-by-the-home-office/](http://bigissue.com/opinion/what-its-like-to-have-your-life-put-on-hold-by-the-home-office/)

You can find out more about Young Citizens and the workshops they deliver at [coram.org.uk/youngcitizens](http://coram.org.uk/youngcitizens)





# Thank you for helping children find joy in reading

Thanks to the kindness of our supporters, Coram Beanstalk has been able to help children to become confident readers through one-to-one reading sessions with our trained reading volunteers.

Due to the effects of the pandemic, it was estimated that 200,000 children<sup>1</sup> will be unable to adequately read by the time they start secondary school and with long periods of school closures, children need additional support to get their education and confidence back on track. With your support Coram Beanstalk has been able to rise to this challenge.

The impact of your support:

- 97% of schools said their children in the Coram Beanstalk programme developed a positive attitude to books and reading.
- 95% of schools said their Coram Beanstalk reading helpers helped children to increase their self-confidence.
- 85% of schools said their reading helpers helped children to accelerate in their learning.

<sup>1</sup> Sian Griffiths. Pupils starting secondary with a reading age of six. The Times. 23.01.2022



*“Since lockdown, many of our children hadn’t picked up a book or even been read to. We are now trying to support our most deprived and vulnerable children to gain an interest in books again through the Coram Beanstalk scheme.*”

*The children constantly ask ‘when it is my reading day?’ and we have a queue of children ready and willing to take part. If we could have a reader for each year group we definitely would – sadly we just don’t have the space. We have worked with Coram Beanstalk for four years now and each year we see a massive improvement with the children’s reading levels and confidence. It is a fabulous organisation.”*

**Caroline Smith, Looked After Children’s Lead, Middlefield Primary**

You can find out more about Coram Beanstalk’s work and how you could become a volunteer at [beanstalkcharity.org.uk](https://beanstalkcharity.org.uk)



## A special group of supporters who have joined our fight

Coram’s Charter Patrons are a group of supporters with a keen interest in our work and are highly valued members of our community. Their support is hugely important in helping us to create better chances for children.

As a Charter Patron you will receive impact reports with added insight into Coram’s work and invites to events with our Governors to learn more about our planning and developments. You will also have the opportunity to contribute your views on the future of

Coram as well as being kept informed of issues affecting children and young people. Membership starts at £1,000 per annum, paid monthly or annually.

To find out more about Charter Patrons, please call Rachael Corns on 020 7520 0306, or email [Rachael@coram.org.uk](mailto:Rachael@coram.org.uk) or visit [coram.org.uk/ways-you-can-give/become-charter-patron](https://coram.org.uk/ways-you-can-give/become-charter-patron)

# Championing chil

**Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC)** is an award-winning children's rights organisation specialising in law and policy affecting children and young people. For 40 years we have ensured children's rights, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children, are realised on every level. CCLC's historic roots stem from the United Kingdom's response to UNESCO's 1979 International Year of the Child and since we opened our doors in 1981 we have been using the law to promote and uphold children's rights.

Today, we champion children's legal rights by:

**Providing free legal information and advice.** Our Child Law Advice Service provides free information and advice on child and family law and education law. Our Migrant Children's Project advice line offers free, confidential advice for young refugees and migrants. Through online information, telephone and email, we help 200,000 people every month, with 98% feeling more confident after speaking with our advisers. In the last decade we helped 10.5 million people through legal information and advice.<sup>2</sup>

**Challenging the system to promote a positive change for children in law and policy.** We fight for systematic change

using evidence from our frontline work and specialist technical knowledge to ensure that children's rights are at the core of law, policy and practice. Marianne Lagrue, our Policy Manager told us: *"It really matters that at Coram Children's Legal Centre we have the bravery to think big. We are not just helping individual children, families and young people, but we are working to challenge the systems that underpin the injustices that children face, and the reasons they can't access justice."*

**Protecting and promoting children's rights around the world.** Coram International is at the cutting edge of legal advancements with a team of human rights lawyers and socio-legal researchers working across the world from Tajikistan to Tanzania.

**Providing training on children's rights.** We train professionals who work with children, young people and families to improve their knowledge on the rights of children and young people.

**Providing free, high-quality legal representation to children, young people and families.** We champion children on a case-by-case basis in immigration law, child and family law, community care, public law and education law.

<sup>2</sup> You can read more on the last 40 years in our Championing Children's Rights Publication at [childrenslegalcentre.com](http://childrenslegalcentre.com)



# Children's legal rights

## Lucy's story

At 16, Lucy ran away from home, where she lived with her father and did not feel safe. Her school contacted the local authority when they realised she was sofa surfing and she was taken to the local authority.

However, her school pastoral carer was not allowed to accompany her, instead, they called her father. Lucy refused to go home and her father refused to allow her back and left. Despite this, the local authority deemed she should return home and called the police to remove her from their premises.

CCLC were able to intervene, we liaised with the police who agreed not to remove her. We were able to secure accommodation for Lucy and continued to provide her with ongoing legal representation to safeguard her welfare and mental health, despite the local authority continuing to attempt to discharge her from their care.

Lucy said:

*"I had a lot of childhood trauma, I ended up in a very uncomfortable place with children's social care, and Coram helped me with all of my issues and to get the outcome that I needed.*

*Kelly helped me with misinformation and gave me the confidence that I needed to stand my ground. She gave me reassurance that what I was asking for wasn't unreasonable. Feeling safe and feeling happy— that's not too much for any child to ask for. It made rebuilding the broken pieces much easier when we were given the time to do it off of our own backs."*



# Telling their story

Through A National Voice, the National Children in Care Council which is part of Coram Voice, we empower children in care and young care leavers, by giving them the skills and support to be able to make a positive change on a local and national level. We now have 24 amazing care-experienced ambassadors who represent their regions and speak on issues facing young people. We also work with care-experienced children and young people to tackle the issues they feel are important through national campaigns, influencing government and creating opportunities to come together with their peers.

A stylized speech bubble logo with a purple outline and a light blue fill. Inside the bubble, the words "A NATIONAL VOICE" are written in a playful, bubbly font. "A" is in yellow, "NATIONAL" is in white with a blue outline, and "VOICE" is in yellow with a blue outline.

Our **Home is Not a Placement**

campaign was born out of a survey of over 17,000 care-

experienced children and young people which identified stability as a major issue they are facing. This lack of stability is rooted in fear of being moved and not feeling settled and that they feel they are living in a placement not a home. The campaign aims to encourage local authorities, foster carers and residential settings to think deeply about what young people need to feel at home, informed by the stories of the young people themselves.

The campaign began on social media in 2021 and #HomeisNotaPlacement sparked important conversations on what a home is and is not. One care-experienced young person said:



*"In 2021, me and the other A National Voice (ANV) ambassadors worked hard on a social media campaign called 'Home is Not a Placement' in order to start a conversation about what home is and what it is not for a care-experienced child or young person.*

*The campaign was to challenge the language used and to ensure young people felt they had a safe place where they were settled, and had stability!*



*ANV ambassadors put together resources, including engaging activities into a pack for organisations/schools to use in order for care-experienced young people to have their voices heard around placements/housing and influence positive change within the system!*

*I think it is really important that a young person feels settled, comfortable and welcome where they are living. Jargon within the care system has become all too familiar and sometimes people forget that having a home where you feel safe and settled can be one of the most important things in a young person's life. A home can be defined in many different ways depending on the young person and what they feel makes it their home.*

*'Home is not a placement' is a campaign that will help create positive change for care-experienced young people!"*

**Tia, A National Voice Ambassador, 19**

On the back of the success of the digital campaign, we have launched a pack of activities for professionals, children and young people to think about what makes a good home and how we can cultivate one. You can download the pack from our website [coramvoice.org.uk](http://coramvoice.org.uk)

**"A home is where you feel safe, it's homely, comfortable, and decorated nice, you feel part of the family, you're listened to and you have your own space."**



# Taking on a challenge for Coram in 2022

As a Coram supporter, we would like to offer you the chance to take part in the TCS London Marathon on Sunday 2nd October 2022! We are looking for some enthusiastic and motivated people to take on this iconic event to raise much needed funds for Coram. However, places are in high demand so apply now!

The TCS London Marathon is one of the most iconic running events in the world, so why not be a part of it in 2022? You'll get to raise money for charity while ticking off a bucket list event.

You will receive:

- An exclusive Coram running vest
- A motivating cheer point along the route

- Finishers medal
- Regular support and advice from a dedicated member of the Challenge Events team
- An invitation to join the Team Coram WhatsApp group, for regular training advice and fundraising hints and tips
- A post-race reception for you and up to five family/friends
- Personalised certificate of thanks from Coram

The registration fee is £75 and there is a fundraising target of £2,000 for our charity places. Alternatively, if you do want to take on a challenge for Coram but don't fancy this one, why not take a look at the other amazing events on our website.

To apply please fill out our application form at [coram.org.uk/tcs-london-marathon-application-form](https://coram.org.uk/tcs-london-marathon-application-form) or email [sarah.grant@coram.org.uk](mailto:sarah.grant@coram.org.uk)

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

Tel: **020 7520 0330** Email: [supportercare@coram.org.uk](mailto:supportercare@coram.org.uk)

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