



coram | better chances
for children
since 1739

Making change happen for children. Now and forever

Coram's innovative vision to improve
children's lives from infancy to independence.

Spring Newsletter 2023

Dear Friends,

Across Coram we work to achieve our vision of a world with better chances for children. The award-winning Young Citizens programme is just one of the ways we do this.

One key aim, to give children a voice that's heard, promotes young voices in the decisions about their lives and the services they depend on. Young people's voices are at the heart of Coram's Young Citizens with those from migrant and refugee backgrounds using their personal experiences to design and lead workshops for other young people and professionals.

Working with Coram Children's Legal Centre and Coram Voice, the Young Citizens teach young people about their rights in the asylum process and care system, helping to meet another aim - to give children a fair chance by enabling them to realise their rights and entitlements and get access to legal support.

The programme also meets a third aim – to empower children and young people with skills for the future. Through paid and voluntary opportunities Young Citizens Trainers build skills that help them achieve their future ambitions. Many want to become the doctors, engineers and social workers of the future and by developing employable skills and utilising Coram's networks we support them to achieve their goals.

The Young Citizens Programme is one of many services we run to achieve our vision, all thanks to your support. I hope you enjoy reading more in this edition of the Coram Newsletter.

Amy Spiller
Programme Manager,
Young Citizens



Our vision to create better chances for children. Now and forever.



As the first and longest continuing children's charity, we have been creating better chances for almost 300 years. Throughout our long history, we have built the expertise to make a real difference, no matter the difficulties facing children and young people.

Today, children and young people are confronting mounting challenges; a loss of care, security, education, voice and social opportunity. Through the kindness of our supporters, we will

continue to evolve and innovate to meet their needs and provide all children with the love and opportunity they need to thrive.

In this edition of the Coram Newsletter, read about our forward-thinking vision to achieve key outcomes to provide better chances for all children. Discover some of the amazing people involved from volunteers, staff and young people to you, our wonderful supporters who make this work possible.

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A loving home

Our adoption services have been finding loving families for children who need them for over 50 years. We are instrumental in one in ten adoptions in England, and more than 1,400 children have been matched with adoptive parents since 2011 through our Adoption Activity Days. The kindness of our supporters provides additional services including post-adoption support, such as creative therapy for children dealing with trauma and loss and ensures they feel safe in a stable and loving home.

We sat down with Hannah Moss, an Adoption Manager at **Coram Adoption**, to learn more about her work bringing together loving families. Hannah and her team work to find adoptive parents for children who often have experienced trauma, loss and separation from their birth families. As well as helping adoptive parents support children throughout their childhood to find trust in adults again and

build self-worth; adoptive parents support children to belong and feel safe.

What is something everyone should know about adoption?

"It's about the children. I used to work in child protection and focus of my work was to support children who were at risk of harm to remain safely with their families. Ultimately, social work

is primarily about supporting families to be together. If it is not safe for a child to be there, then we look at other family options and if that's not possible adoption is considered. For me, this is critical to understand about adoption – the journey that children have been on prior to adoption. It is hard to think about children having experienced harm and the needs and vulnerabilities that result from this. However, it is important that we all hold these children in mind and how best to support them.

Adoptive families provide children with a real sense of belonging after a significant period of uncertainty. We work hard to support parents to be alongside the child on their journey and understand their story. Not just parenting the child in the now but helping them understand where they came from, what their parents did well and also could not do, why they can't live with them and that it is not the child's fault. Even very young adopted children feel responsible and it is so important for their parents and professionals to help them know they are not to blame. This takes time, love, care and support – it is important to know that families need support throughout their child's life time and often in to adulthood."

Why is adoption so important?

"All people, not just children, want to feel like they belong. Sadly, when children experience harm, they often internalise it as being their fault and can carry this alone. Adoption, through understanding

and acceptance of the child's story can give a child a sense of belonging, of being loved and feeling like they are worthy of love. What children need is to know that they are loveable and this can help them learn to accept love for who they are.

When we place a child with adopters, we make it very clear that it is a journey and the child will need to recover from loss and trauma and that takes time. We encourage adopters to treasure moments of connection, like when a child comes to you for a hug and reassurance that first time; when they come home from school and feel able to talk to you about what they have achieved. Little moments like this are so significant because that is a child learning to trust, feeling their worth, knowing that you are there for them. This is going to lead to accepting love and in turn returning love."

What is your final message to our readers?

"We work with some of our country's most vulnerable children. They often have complex needs stemming from trauma and other factors such as parental substance misuse. All adopted children need additional support and some have a range of complex needs. Being adopted into a family is one part of it but adoptive parents and children need ongoing support with a range of needs including therapeutic, health, education. We need to think about advocating for sufficient support services for these families in the immediate and longer term so that children and their families thrive."



Coram's Creative Therapies

Coram's Creative Therapies team provides therapeutic support to children who have experienced court proceedings, those who have been removed from their birth parents or are separated from them, and children with behavioural challenges or special educational needs.

In 2021 to 2022, 252 children, young people, parents, carers and adopters were helped by Coram's therapists. Many of the children our therapists work with have witnessed violence or experienced neglect and are unable to understand or explain their feelings verbally.

Supported by Comic Relief and the Pears Foundation, our music and art therapists, alongside psychologists and family therapists, use art and music therapy to support children, their parents and carers. Through this therapy we aim

to help to improve bonds, overcome trauma and equip children with the skills to succeed at school.

This innovative therapy has been proven to be effective with 90% of parents reporting improvements in their child's behaviour.

One parent told us "We've noticed such a difference at home – P* is like a different little boy, and we've had great feedback from his schools as well; his self-esteem is really growing and helping him engage better educationally."

Another parent, a mother of a six-year-old boy said that, thanks to creative therapy, her son was: "able to show his angry feelings without anything being broken or anyone being hurt, then he could leave it behind."

* Names, images and some of the details of the children mentioned in this newsletter have been changed to protect their identity.

A voice that's heard

A National Voice

Shockingly, up to a third of care leavers become homeless in the first two years after they leave care.¹ Many struggle to access higher education and stable employment and often feel alone and isolated.

As a leading children's rights and advocacy services provider, Coram Voice ensures that the voices of children in and leaving care are heard in the decisions that affect them. With your support, we work with thousands of children and young people, including over a thousand care leavers, every year, reassuring them that they are not alone. A National Voice, the national children in care council led by our Young Ambassadors, improves the care system by placing the views of



children and young people with care experience at the centre. Almost 100 care-experienced children joined us for A National Voice's Amplify event in Manchester on Tuesday 25 October. We celebrated the amazing work of the Children in Care Councils, held workshops with Ofsted and the Department of Education, launched the new 'Support Our Journey' mental health campaign and held the A National Voices awards. This is one of the award-winning projects:

The Voice Award winner: Hull's Children in Care Council, ages 10-16

Hull's Children in Care Council created an animated film called 'Dream On' which talks about the experience of coming into care. The group also made a podcast about how changes in their social worker affects children and young people. It is now shared as part of a training resource for social workers. As a result, Hull City Council committed to lessen the impact on children and young people when a social worker changes.

Our judges said: "The video is really heart-warming and impactful. It is really great that this is shared from the young person's perspective. The fact the video has been recognised by influential people demonstrates how good and emotive it is."

¹ All-party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness Report 1.

A chance to shine

Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation



and young people with Shakespeare's plays in a new way.

We're inviting young people aged 8-25 to create a new speech for a character in a Shakespeare play. We'll encourage them to consider the moment or purpose for which they are giving this person a new voice such as what Romeo can tell us about peers who resort to violence, or Hamlet about the loss of a parent.

This 'speech' does not have to be written, spoken or even use words; participants can choose how their character communicates. It could be with a song or piece of art, movement or via visual message.

A selection of entries will be showcased at a gala event at the end of the year. We will collate the entries to the competition and create 'The Forgotten Folio' - a book of the speeches that Shakespeare 'forgot' to write.

The competition opens on 23 April and closes on 31 July.

Help us spread the word about this brand-new competition and inspire children and young people through Shakespeare. Find out more at shakespeareschools.org



CSSF gives thousands of children each year a unique opportunity to take on the challenge of live performance. One young performer, Katie, wrote to us about her experience:

Dear CSSF,

On Tuesday 9th October, Year 6 performed part of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, at the Mumford Theatre. I also learned, along the way, how to trust other people and we are now much more cooperative.

I was very scared on the night in the dressing rooms and the wings, but when I got onstage, I really moved like Cobweb would: gliding, slithering, and I really felt like my character.

It was a fantastic opportunity for the shy people to come forward and reveal their creativity and acting skills. Thank you so much for organising this Festival. I'm sure Shakespeare himself would be pretty pleased.

Many thanks and yours sincerely,

Katie (Cobweb)



A fair chance in life

Young Citizens

One of the innovative ways we ensure all young people have a fair chance in life is with the help of our Young Citizens Trainers who co-design and run workshops for other young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. They share their own experiences of coming to the United Kingdom to help others make fulfilling lives for themselves in London. We have delivered over 100 workshops to almost 1,000 young people.

Young Citizens Trainer Abdulrahman shared his journey since arriving in the UK and the difference he has made for others as a Youth Citizen Trainer:

"I arrived in the UK in 2018 aged 21, fleeing the war in Syria. I was full of hope but scared as it was a new place and I had to start from zero.

It hasn't been an easy journey to settle here. There have been so many challenges along the way. It's hard to know that I can't go back to my country or see my friends and family for the next five years and I've had to learn and adapt to a whole new language and culture.

I joined Young Citizens because I had been in the UK for four years and still hadn't met people my age because I was placed in adult classes in college. It was an opportunity to meet other people aged 16-25 that I have something



in common with and who I can work with as a team.

In the Young Citizens Training Programme, I found something unique. When I was helped by someone from this country, they were kind and doing their best to help but I thought to myself I will never be like them - they were born here, English is their first language, they were educated here. It's really hard to be like them - and then I started judging myself - every time I did something good, I thought it will never be as good as them and I have to work harder. With every success, I thought I'd done nothing.

Young Citizens is run by young people who've suffered and faced problems and been through the system delivering workshops for people with similar experiences. Young people see that we came with no experience and no word of

English like them and now we're standing in front of them running a workshop. It makes them think if we can do it, they can do it too. We are not there just to teach them; we are there because we believe in them. We are there to give them a little push and make them feel like people care about them.

The Young Citizens project has helped me to achieve my goal of working with refugees. When I came here in it was my dream but I was scared to go for it. The war started in my country when I was 14 so it's very hard to work with refugees and hear their stories without it impacting you, when you're still going through it yourself. The training on Young Citizens has helped me learn how to hear their stories without it affecting my mental health and to stay happy and positive.

When we are delivering workshops, the young people are really keen to work, study and contribute to society and when I see other refugees who are working hard to achieve and are trying to integrate it makes me feel proud of them and proud of who I am as well.

When I came to the UK, I lost all my confidence because I didn't have English and had been out of education since the age of 13. But over the last four years, I have completed all the ESOL Levels, then Functional Skills, maths, and IT levels 1 and 2. I am now studying for my GCSEs and Accounting and Business Administration and working for a charity. I share this with other young people to show they can achieve whatever they want and to not let anything stop them."



An opportunity to gain skills for the future

Coram Beanstalk

On Thursday 2 February, Coram welcomed Her Majesty The Queen Consort to a celebration marking the 50th anniversary of the reading volunteer programme, Coram Beanstalk. Since being founded as 'Volunteer Reading Help' in 1973, Coram Beanstalk has helped more than 250,000 children build their reading ability and confidence. The former Duchess of Cornwall became Patron of the charity in 2013 and remains a passionate advocate of children's literacy projects. She met with children who are supported by the charity and some of our longest-serving volunteers.

Coram Beanstalk's volunteer reading helpers have always been at the heart of this work, providing direct support to children. Author Simon Piers is one of our amazing reading volunteers.



Here is what he had to say about his experience of volunteering.

"I have been a reading helper with Coram Beanstalk for

ten years. I signed up in response to a campaign launched in The Evening Standard, highlighting a steep decline in children reading for pleasure. And as a newly published children's author, I also thought I should get involved with sharing my love of reading with young people missing out on one of the great pleasures of life.

In a series of North London schools, I have read with children who face multiple and different barriers to an enjoyment of reading. They might not have English as a first language, or they might have other educational needs. Or they might not enjoy the right support at home and need their confidence building. Whatever the case, thanks to the excellent preparatory (and ongoing) training that Coram Beanstalk offers, alongside a valuable set of physical and online resources, I have seen children's love for reading develop over often short periods of time.

As Coram Beanstalk volunteers, we don't teach phonics or do guided reading. Instead, we encourage children to identify as readers through short, regular sessions which are child-led and focused on reading for pleasure. We let



children decide what they want to read, no matter what their age or level, be it a picture book, chapter book, non-fiction, or even joke collection. We develop engagement with the text through quizzes and games, regularly read to the children, and never let them struggle with words when they choose to read.

What is remarkable is that, whatever else may be going on in the child's life, time and time again, I see a marked improvement in confidence when it comes to talking about books. The stories and writers they like (or don't.) An ability to discuss and explain why. They become conversationally more fluent as their sense of self and confidence grows. I love my sessions because no matter what is going on in my life, I always leave them recharged, reminded of the sheer wealth and diversity of potential in our schools, a new generation reading their way to achievement."

Coram Beanstalk reading helpers work has never been more vital as approximately 1 in 4 children leave primary school unable to read at the expected level.² Their wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem are impacted, their opportunities in education are severely diminished and their job prospects are negatively affected. In 2021-2022, the kindness of our supporters helped to empower almost 5,000 children to become more confident, able readers.

If you are interested in finding out more about being a Coram Beanstalk reading volunteer and our 50th anniversary celebrations, visit beanstalkcharity.org.uk or scan the QR code below.



² Now the whole school is reading: supporting struggling readers in secondary school. Ofsted Report.



to child exploitation and abuse through the internet.

Commissioned by UNICEF, Coram International recently published 'Legislating for the Digital Age', a guide for governments, industry and international organisations to protect children from these modern dangers. The guide is based on truly international research from Argentina to Zimbabwe, the UK to Bangladesh and Egypt to Ireland and consultations with governments, civil society, industry, international organisations and those who work with children.

This guide could not have come at a more pivotal moment. Reports indicate that the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly exacerbated the scale and complexity of the dangers children face online.

You can find out more about our mission to ensure children have the support they need no matter where they are and read the full report at coraminternational.org.



Support no matter where

Coram International are having a global impact

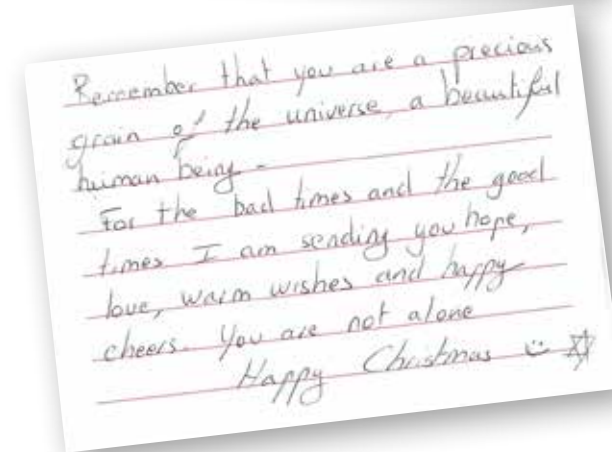
Coram International is at the cutting edge of legal and social policy around the world. We have worked in over 90 countries for over 20 years to protect and promote children's rights.

As technology becomes a greater part of our lives, children face new and complex dangers from the internet. Coram International is on the forefront of making sure legislation around the world effectively prevents and responds

A community of support

Our wonderful supporters

Our work is only possible thanks to the generosity of our supporters and your kindness was once again evident over Christmas. You raised over £260,000 our highest ever fundraising total for our Christmas appeal. As we face a growing need for our services, this support will help us reach more children and young people who need us. Our supporters also wrote heart-warming messages of care to those we support. The messages are displayed in a book in the reception at the Coram campus for all those who visit us to read and have been shared with our community digitally.



Coram Charter Patrons are having a huge impact

Charter Patrons are a special group of supporters who continue the legacy of some of Coram's earlier patrons such as the composer George Frideric Handel and artist William Hogarth. We want to say a huge thank you to all our Charter Patrons for their amazing support

over Christmas when they raised over £20,000!

If you are interested in finding out more about joining our Charter Patrons programme, please visit: coram.org.uk/ways-you-can-give/become-charter-patron.

Coram's Supporter Event returns

After the success of our supporter events last year, we are planning another this Autumn! It will be a chance for our supporters to meet some of the young people whose lives have been impacted by their kindness and some of the Coram staff who work hard to provide children and young people with the love and opportunity they need to thrive.

The event will take place at the Coram Campus in central London on 23 May.



If you are interested in attending, please tick the expression of interest box on the return form or email supportercare@coram.org.uk.

Keep up to date through our channels:

Website: coram.org.uk

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

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

Youtube [Coram](https://www.youtube.com/Coram)

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

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

Tel: **020 7520 0330**

Email: supportercare@coram.org.uk