



**coram** | better chances  
for children  
since 1739

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## Building Bright Futures

Empowering children with the skills and  
aspiration they need to thrive

Autumn Newsletter 2023

Dear Friends,

Evidence shows that being educated in core life skills early on gives children the best chance of developing the resilience, confidence and practical skills to navigate life on and offline, empowering them to make changes to last a lifetime. Coram's education services aim to do just that by giving children:



- **A Chance to Shine** through creativity and performance, building confidence and skills.
- **Skills for the Future**, equipping children to make positive decisions about their wellbeing.

Coram reaches over 600,000 primary and secondary school children each year to deliver this aim, and we hold trusted, long-standing relationships with over 3,000 schools across the country.

Children starting school have seen their development negatively impacted since the pandemic with four and five year olds less likely to meet the expected levels of development according to research commissioned by the [Education Endowment Foundation](#).<sup>1</sup> This has set back their learning, sense of safety and security, connections with others, and social and emotional development. It's why children's mental health remains a core focus of our work, as good mental health is a gateway to effective learning, supporting them to achieve positive outcomes in school, work and life. Our approach is designed to give pupils a voice and for them to feel empowered and able to put new knowledge, skills and attitudes into practice every day, in preparation for adulthood.

This work is only possible thanks to the generosity of all our supporters and the dedication of our staff and volunteers - thank you to you all.

**Harriet Gill**  
Managing Director, Education and Wellbeing



<sup>1</sup> Education Endowment Foundation. Pandemic adversely affected young children's development, with fewer reaching expected levels by the end of reception class. 2022

# Providing children with the skills they need to thrive

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Coram directly helps over hundreds of thousands of children, young people and families each year. In this edition of the Coram newsletter, we explore one of the ways in which we do this by building strong educational foundations, to help children gain the skills and self-belief they need to thrive.

This issue, we are celebrating 50 years of Coram Beanstalk helping children find the joy in reading. We look at Coram Life Education, the UK's leading charity provider of Personal, Social, Health and Economic education. And we explore the work of Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation who

inspire children and young people through the world's largest youth drama festival.

With the cost of living continuing to rise, families are facing mounting pressures, putting children's futures at risk. The pandemic has already taken a heavy toll on children with all too many missing school, struggling with anxiety and falling behind in their learning. Furthermore, a quarter of parents with children under 11 reported that living costs were causing mental health issues in their children.<sup>2</sup> Through our specialist support, like those highlighted in this newsletter, we can give children the help they need to thrive into adulthood.

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<sup>2</sup> Cost of living has harmed mental and physical health of hundreds of thousands of children, parents' poll says. INews.



# How Harold the Giraffe helped children at Horsenden Primary School

Harold the Giraffe has been a big hit at Horsenden Primary School in Ealing. With his own scarf knitted by a member of staff at the school, Harold takes part in school assemblies, teaching the children Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) using Coram Life Education's SCARF resources.

Coram Life Education is the UK's leading charity provider of PSHE reaching 575,000 children, supporting teachers in over 2,500 schools and through online resources. Last year, we saw a

49% increase in the number of children reached.

Coram Life Education's SCARF resources help schools to go beyond the

curriculum to help children understand, explain and regulate emotions. They equip them to navigate risk, stay safe on and offline, and to develop healthy relationships, in preparation for adolescence and adulthood.

Starting this sort of education early gives children the best chance of developing the resilience, confidence and practical skills they need to navigate life on and offline. Coram Life Education's work is an important part of our vision to give all children the life skills needed to thrive.

Emma Appelby head teacher at Horsenden Primary School has been using our resources since 2021 and told us, "Before, our children didn't really understand what PSHE was. Now they are absolutely clear – in SCARF, we learn about our relationships, we learn about keeping ourselves safe. Now when we talk to the children, they can tell us exactly what they are learning, and they understand that it is progressive and that the skills become more complicated. There has been a positive impact on children understanding their roles and responsibilities and their rights."

**Children have also told us how impactful the learning has been on them:**

*"We're allowed to talk about tricky issues in a safe space"*

*"We have a right to be protected from any abuse and be safe"*

*"We have the right to our thoughts and our rights make us feel empowered"*

Harold the Giraffe has certainly been a big success at Horsenden Primary School. Emma Appelby says, "It ticks all of the boxes – it is very affordable, everything is there, it's incredibly flexible, teachers like using it and most importantly, the children really enjoy it. I don't think you can go wrong, who doesn't love Harold?"



**Emma Appelby head teacher at Horsenden Primary School**

# Coram Beanstalk wants all children to choose to read

There is a wealth of research showing that when we read because we want to – not because we are being told to or feel we have to – it makes a significant difference to how successful we are in education, how good we feel and how well we do in life.

Yet an estimated 1 in 4 children leave primary school unable to adequately read.<sup>3</sup> Since being founded in 1973, Coram Beanstalk has helped more than 250,000 children to build their reading ability, confidence and enjoyment, enabling them to thrive into adulthood.

On 3 February, we welcomed Her Majesty The Queen to Coram Campus

for a celebration marking the 50th anniversary of Coram Beanstalk. The former Duchess of Cornwall became Patron of the charity in 2013.

During the visit, The Queen met children from Ark Brunel School in North Kensington, one of the charity's longest school partnerships, and the longest serving volunteers from across



<sup>3</sup> Now the whole school is reading, supporting struggling readers in secondary school. Ofsted Report.



the country. Pupils from Ark Brunel participated in a group reading session led by the poet Joshua Seigal.

Her Majesty also met the family of Susan Belgrave, the charity's founder, who passed away in 2019, and the staff, volunteers and supporters - including the Very Group - who help to continue its work today.

Exploring the wider work of the Coram Group, Her Majesty met Lucy, who received support from Coram's Legal Practice to access safe accommodation, and heard winning submissions from Coram Voice's national creative writing competition for care-experienced children and young people.

Carol Homden, Chief Executive of Coram said "Coram has been committed to ensuring that all children

have the love, education, security and opportunity they need for life since Thomas Coram founded the charity to support children abandoned on the streets of London. Coram Beanstalk was the first to help schools to create readers with the support of trained volunteers and the need for its work is as pressing as ever as children recover from the pandemic."

Amy Lewis, Head of Coram Beanstalk, said: "As we enter our 50th anniversary year, I was delighted to welcome Her Majesty The Queen to celebrate the work of wonderful volunteers who support children in local communities across England and to see first-hand the difference that makes to children's lives."

# Jennie shares her experience as a *Coram Beanstalk* reading helper

As a retired teacher with dyslexia I knew immediately I had to be involved!

**Being a dyslexic, retired teacher the vivid memory of struggling to make sense of words, let alone read a book is still very real to me.**

Sadly, I was regarded as “backward” at school (dyslexia was pretty much unknown then) until a wonderful English teacher recognised my struggle and arranged one-to-one sessions where we would read plays together in the lunch break. She changed my life - enabling me to achieve an education and become a teacher myself.





During my teaching career I totally understood what many children were going through - some had little or no encouragement, let alone books to enjoy at home.

Those children in particular needed time and interest from an individual. They needed to see books as fun and as a door they could unlock to a wonderful world for escape, knowledge and imagination.

**So when I saw a programme about Coram Beanstalk I immediately wanted to be involved.**

As a retired teacher I am able to visit my school and introduce a child to this wonderful world of literature without having to worry about progression through a reading scheme - hopefully that will happen naturally as the child catches the love of reading - we can just have fun together, enjoying books! And what could be nicer than that?!

The training to become a Coram Beanstalk reading helper was excellent. It taught me so much about first approaching books with a child. I wish I had it years ago! It has helped me with reading with my own granddaughter and caused me to adjust some of the practices from my traditional teacher training.

**I look forward to this great opportunity to help unlock the wonderful world of books to those children who could so easily just give up and miss out on this vital skill for life.**



If you would like to find out more about being a Coram Beanstalk Reading Helper, please visit [beanstalkcharity.org.uk](http://beanstalkcharity.org.uk)

After Jennie retired as a teacher, she was still keen to have an impact on children in her area. Becoming a reading helper enabled her to do this. As someone living with dyslexia, she could really identify with children who struggled with their reading as she had experienced the same thing in her childhood.

Our reading helpers are the heart of Coram Beanstalk. Their enthusiasm and dedication to inspiring young readers is the reason we are able to support so many children to improve their reading.



# Performing Shakespeare helped Robbie develop a passion for reading

Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation (CSSF) provides young people with an opportunity to engage with the magic of Shakespeare and gain the skills and confidence to thrive. To date more than 300,000 children and young people have taken part in the Theatre Festival.

One such young person, was Robbie\*, 11, from Saints Peter and Paul RC Primary School in Knowsley. His headteacher told us about some of the challenges faced by young people in their community:

**“Our school is situated in a hard community. Children’s home lives can be chaotic and many of them see quite negative things.”**

For Robbie, the idea of standing in front of a crowd, reciting lines of Shakespeare was scary. In fact, as the project began, Robbie wasn’t keen on the idea of learning lines or rehearsing at all:

**“I didn’t like reading that much before. I thought it was boring. When I saw how many lines I was going to have to learn as the narrator I thought ‘Oh no, this is going to be really hard.”**

The Festival gave Robbie an opportunity to develop a passion for reading, however. Working with his

teachers and CSSF’s expert facilitators in a supportive environment, Robbie discovered that reading isn’t boring at all. By the end of the project, he came to love reading, revelling in the opportunity to perform for his audience:

**“I like the reaction I get from the audience and the role I play in telling the story. There were lots of hard words but our teacher helped us to understand them. Lots of people made mistakes pronouncing words at first but we all laughed about it and learnt the correct way to say them together. No one was made to feel silly.**

**Taking part in the Festival has helped me to get better at reading. I felt more confident in the reading test for my SATs. I’m used to reading more on my own now. I really like non-fiction books about space and oceans.”**



It's clear from Robbie's story that the Festival can change young people's perception of themselves. Through the Festival, children develop confidence in their abilities and expand their world.

Joanna Mousley, Robbie's headteacher, agrees:

**"The Festival is helping to transform the lives of children at our school. To stand on a stage and soak up the admiration of an audience gives children an incredible feeling of pride."**

Lots of our children have very low confidence. As soon as they find something difficult, they want to give

up. The Festival gives them a real sense of achievement. They have to work hard to not just learn their lines but understand them too. They need to make sure they turn up to every rehearsal. They need to get along with other people. They need to overcome their stage fright.

By taking part in the Festival, children realise they can achieve. They aspire to greater things and have the ambition to pursue their dreams."

\* Child's name, image, and some of the details have been changed to protect their identity.



# To me, from me

Coram Voice is a leading children's rights organisation, championing the rights of children in care and care leavers. Last year, Coram Voice supported 8,800 young people in and leaving care through advocacy and independent visitor services. This work supports care-experienced children and young people, giving them someone to turn to when no one else will help.

Each year, we hold the Voices creative writing competition for children and young people in care and care leavers, showcasing and celebrating their creativity and talent. 'To me from me' by 'L' aged 24 took third place in the Care Leaver Category (18 – 25 years old) in 2022.



*You're nine when you're told  
you're going into care,  
the social worker arrives and  
he taxi's you there.*

*It all feels scary  
and you feel so alone,  
as you stand in the doorway  
of the place they call home.*

*You're there gripping tightly  
to the only belonging you could save,  
Ziggy's your safe place  
and he makes you feel brave.*

*They teach you the basics  
like care and personal hygiene,  
you think they're rich and posh  
because they own their own fridge  
and washing machine.*

*But somehow that makes it harder,  
and you're back to fight or flight.  
They say you're rejecting and controlling,  
you're anxious avoidant at it's finest.*

*They can't understand how to help you  
whilst you're fighting for survival.  
There's years of struggle and hurt  
as you try process the past.*

*You worry you're completely broken,  
everything's going too slow and too fast  
You cry and you hide and you hate  
yourself, for months you beg to go home.*

*You keep secrets firmly hidden,  
because you still somehow want your mum  
but you start building good memories,  
you begin to settle after a while.*

*Eighteen months pass by  
and you finally learn how to smile  
then they tell you that you're moving,  
they have a long-term placement ready.*

*And you're back in that doorway,  
gripping on to your teddy.*

*This time you have suitcases,  
no bin bags are in sight.  
you pull down on your sleeves,  
to hide the secrets of your story.*

*You're simultaneously sixteen and nine,  
and the world still feels really scary.*

*But you end up doing amazingly well,  
you go on to your degree.  
You study Psychology and trauma  
and begin to understand your history.*

*The loneliness of being a care leaver  
breaks you, you hate the way you feel.  
But you start to accept friends as family,  
and gradually you start to heal.*



# Supporter Spotlight

## Newport Cathedral Choir

Newport Cathedral Choir recently completed a sponsored PEACE walk across the Severn Bridge in aid of Coram. Their amazing efforts raised over £1200 (at the time of writing).

Emma, the Director of Music at the choir, told us:

“At the Cathedral, peace and justice are central to our mission as is our youth outreach work. In particular, we work with the young people in the choir - providing musical and educational opportunities for them, providing financial support, a sense of

belonging and a community to be part of. The choristers were so delighted to be raising money for children less fortunate than themselves and to hear about Handel’s link to Coram and the benefit concerts he put on to raise money for the Foundling Hospital. How fitting that they, who know all about the benefits of music in a child’s life, should be raising money for Coram, just like Handel did hundreds of years ago!”

A huge thank you to Newport Cathedral Choir. Your wonderful efforts will help to create better chances for children now and forever.

## Hilary Pownall's brave Wing Walk

Hilary took to the skies, bravely doing a Wing Walk to fundraise for Coram. She has been inspired by her mother, Florence, who was admitted to the Foundling Hospital (the predecessor of Coram) at nine months old in 1925 and stayed until 1939.

Hilary said, "Through the care of my mother Coram gave her love and education which was reflected in her love and care for me. With no children myself, I wish to raise money for Coram to continue their work supporting children today."

She has also previously run a Half Marathon in aid of Coram and is a volunteer transcriber, digitising records from the Foundling Hospital archive as part of our Voices Through Time programme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thank you so much Hilary for all your hard work and dedication.

**If you have been inspired by Hilary and Newport Cathedral Choir to follow in the footsteps of some of our earliest supporters like the composer George Frideric Handel and fundraise for Coram, please visit [coram.org.uk/support-us/fundraise/](https://coram.org.uk/support-us/fundraise/) or contact our Challenge Events Executive, Sarah, on [sarah.grant@coram.org.uk](mailto:sarah.grant@coram.org.uk)**



# Will You Leave the Gift of Better Chances for Children?

Leaving a gift in your will is a personal and impactful way to make a lasting difference to children and young people. Coram has been helping children since 1739, directly supporting over 140,000 children, young people and families, and with your help, we can continue this legacy of creating better chances - now and forever.

This Remember a Charity Week, 11 to 17 September 2023, we are encouraging supporters to take advantage of our two quick and simple free will writing services. By leaving a gift in your will you can create better chances for generations of children.

Steve Clunes, former children's services professional said, "I worked in the delivery of services to children and young people. Through this, I got to know first-hand the

desperately sad circumstances and awful challenges many young people face when their start in life has been blighted by neglect, abuse, chaos and trauma. Coram, through its invaluable work with adoption and support, offers a lifeline to these young people and a chance to experience the love and care that most can take for granted. Giving through your will is easy – and I am proud that my legacy will help continue this wonderful work."

**Scan the QR code below or visit:**  
[coram.org.uk/ways-you-can-give/gifts-in-wills](https://coram.org.uk/ways-you-can-give/gifts-in-wills) to find out more.

**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](mailto:rachael@coram.org.uk).**



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