

A National Voice Awards

By Coram Voice, a registered charity



The majority of local authorities in England have a children in care council or care leaver forum. These groups do lots of work and projects to influence and improve services. However, knowledge of, and impact from, their innovation is usually confined to the local area because there are limited ways to share learning with other areas.

To combat this, **‘A National Voice awards’ invites local authorities to nominate the work done by their local children in care council.** There are five award categories. The entries are judged by a panel of young people and professionals. Winners are celebrated at an annual conference (‘Amplify’). Entries are shared nationally.

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Local authorities, their practitioners and wider policy-makers can learn much from children’s views and ideas on how to improve the system. Children in care councils and care leavers forums are one way to do this. They can provide a safe and inclusive space for children to have their voice heard.

Acting on children’s voice can lead to all sorts of positive developments in local authorities. However, we do not always hear about this work -organisations don’t routinely publish information about the outcomes or impact of their engagement work with children such as whether it leads to changes in policy or practice.

Amplify is an event run by A National Voice for care-experienced children and young people. The aim of the day is to provide an opportunity for children in care councils and care leaver forums to come together, share experiences and celebrate the amazing work that they do. The ‘A National Voice’ awards are held as part of the event each year. The awards champion and recognise the work of children in care councils and care leaver forums in England.

“The Coram Innovation Incubator brings together experts in different sectors and this collaborative space allows for knowledge sharing and cross-pollination of ideas, ensuring that views of children’s services practitioners are ‘baked in’ to the design of solutions.”

– North Yorkshire Council



Initiatives that actively work alongside children and young people to develop solutions to the problems identified are invited to nominate their work. The five award categories are: (1) **Campaign Award**; (2) **Participation Award**; (3) **Voice Award**; (4) **Collaboration Award** and (5) **Digital Award**.

The awards started in 2022 and have run every year since. In total 126 entries have been received.

The focus of the work children in care and care leaver forums do differs; some influence policy; some raise awareness of issues; some focus on practice change and others create new resources for services.

Each nominee must submit an application (either a short slide set or video). **Entries are judged by a panel of care experienced young people and professionals on the following criteria:**

- **Idea** – how children and young people decided what to work on
- **Involvement** – how have children and young people been involved in the project
- **Impact** – how has the project impacted on individuals, group or wider care community

In each award category there is one winner plus a 2nd and 3rd runner-up. Representatives and young people from children in care councils are invited to the Amplify celebration event where the winners are announced. The event is an opportunity to share ideas and learning.

Some of the past award entrants and winners are detailed here:

- Based on listening to the lived experiences of others, members of **York Children in Care Council** felt the housing service did not fully understand their corporate parenting responsibilities. To address this, a new housing protocol, informed by young people, has been introduced – it clearly emphasises the corporate parenting duties of housing colleagues. To make sure the work is embedded in practice, young people have developed training on corporate parenting, which they have delivered to staff.
- ‘Our Promise’ is a pledge to **children in care in Cumbria**– it is a list of promises made by the council. The Children in Care Council redesigned ‘Our Promise’ so that it is the best



To date there have been 3 in-person events; in total over 320 young people and professionals have attended. The awards are planned and chaired by A National Voice Ambassadors supported by Coram Voice.

The winning and runner-up entries are detailed in short films and case studies. These are circulated across England and accessible in the Coram Voice resource bank.

WOW. What a day, meeting inspirational and hard working members of fellow care councils from up and down the country. What a privilege to meet other [young people] who are actively fighting for change, and carrying out the change we want to see ♥ @CoramVoice so thankful to experience this.

Quote about Amplify (Female)

it can be – to make sure everyone knows what children in care want and need. They made sure the focus was on what children said mattered to them and what they want from their social workers and carers. A series of posters have been produced to promote the work. It has also been incorporated into staff training.

- **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough young inspectors** have focused their scrutiny on ‘family time’ services. Eight young inspectors inspected four supervised contact centres and made more than fifty recommendations to the services on things such as accessibility, furniture, resources and storage. They also recommended the centres were redecorated and paintings put up to brighten the rooms.