



coram

better chances
for children
since 1739

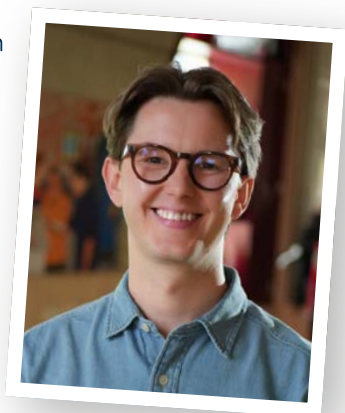
Every child deserves a chance to shine

Ensuring that children have the opportunity to build
the essential skills and confidence they need to thrive

Autumn Newsletter 2025

Dear Friends,

Coram knows that access to the arts is vital for children and young people, helping them to develop confidence and essential skills for life. Participation in the arts encourages creativity, communication, and problem-solving, and builds children's resilience and wellbeing. This year, Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation (CSSF) is celebrating 25 years of giving children and young people the chance to shine through performing Shakespeare as part of the world's largest youth drama festival.



Over the past decade, the decline in funding and narrowing of the secondary school curriculum have created a crisis of access to the arts for pupils in state schools. This reduction disproportionately affects those from less privileged backgrounds, widening the enrichment gap and limiting opportunities for children to develop essential skills. And yet the evidence from our work is clear: drama is not an 'extra'. It is essential to develop oracy, literacy, engagement in learning, and foster a sense of belonging.

In June, CSSF marked its 25th anniversary with the launch of a new 2030 strategy, **All the World's Our Stage**, at a special Parliamentary Reception in Portcullis House. Over the next five years, CSSF will expand its work with children facing disadvantage – including pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, those in care, and those in underserved areas. We will invest in teachers, whose practice opens new worlds for their pupils, through new training, networks and creative CPD.

Above all, CSSF is committed to providing accessible arts opportunities that ensure all young people, regardless of background, have the chance to shine and acquire the skills they need for life.

Your donations, encouragement, and advocacy have enabled us to continue our work, even in challenging times. You have helped nurture the next generation of storytellers, leaders, and changemakers through your generosity. On behalf of the team and 350,000 young people and counting, thank you.

Mike Tucker

Head of Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation

Giving Children the Chance to Shine Through Expressive Arts

At Coram, we continue to dedicate tremendous effort to supporting and advocating for children and young people throughout their journey from infancy to independence. Our commitment remains steadfast as we strive to create opportunities and provide resources that empower the next generation to reach their full potential.

In this newsletter, we will explore and celebrate our work within and around the arts, with a special focus on the transformative power of creative expression. We are particularly proud to highlight the positive effects that learning and performing Shakespeare's work can have on children and young people, helping to boost their confidence, communication skills,



and sense of belonging. At Coram, we believe that every child, no matter their background or circumstances, should have the love, support, and opportunity they need to shine and thrive.

It is with your generosity and support that we can keep providing better chances for children in many ways. On behalf of the children and young people that we support, and the Coram team, thank you!

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Celebrating 25 years of Coram



In 2025, Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation (CSSF) celebrates a remarkable milestone: 25 years of transforming young lives through the unique power of Shakespeare. What began in a single theatre in southwest Wales has grown into the UK's largest youth drama festival, with over 350,000 young people having stepped into the spotlight to say, "this is my story too."

At the heart of CSSF is a simple but powerful idea: bring the rehearsal room into the classroom and give pupils the chance to shine on a professional stage. Whether it's a Juliet in Newcastle

reclaiming her voice, a Malvolio in Norwich refusing to be laughed at, or a Macbeth in Portsmouth daring to choose a different path, these performances are more than just plays; they are moments of transformation.

This Silver Jubilee is not just a celebration of the past, but a bold step towards the future. Over the next 25 months, CSSF will work with 25,000 children and young people across the UK, offering them the chance to engage with Shakespeare in ways that build confidence, creativity, and connection. The anniversary campaign, titled "The Play's the Thing", is a rallying cry for



Shakespeare Schools Foundation

inclusive performance and a renewed commitment to tackling educational disadvantage.

The need has never been greater. Today, 42% of state schools no longer offer GCSE Drama, and the number of drama teachers has dropped by over 20% in the last decade. Yet the evidence is clear: drama is not a 'nice to have' – it's essential. It builds oracy, fosters wellbeing, and strengthens engagement with school and community. Last year, 100% of teachers involved in the Festival said their pupils grew in confidence. One teacher described the experience as "life-changing" for a student who had previously struggled with attendance and self-belief.

The anniversary year will feature a rich programme of events and initiatives. From a recent parliamentary reception, to our 25 Years, 25 Stories campaign featuring the experiences of alumni including comedian Maisie Adam and Channel 4.0 Lead Evie Buckley, towards a showcase of highlights from our Film Festival on Twelfth Night in January 2026, the campaign will spotlight the voices of young people, teachers, and bring them to a national audience.

At the centre of it all is a commitment to equity and inclusion. CSSF will

expand its work with care experienced children, those with special educational needs and disabilities, and those in underserved communities. We will deepen partnerships with regional theatres, many of which are cultural lifelines in their communities, and invest in the teachers who make it all possible through training, networks, and recognition.

As we celebrate 25 years of CSSF, we look ahead with ambition and urgency. We believe every child, regardless of background, should have the chance to shine - to be seen, heard, and celebrated. Because when a young person steps onto a stage, they don't just perform a role. They discover who they are, and who they might become.





Pictured: Elizabeth, age 12

Voices competition participants shine at awards ceremony



On Friday 30 May, Coram Voice announced the winners of Voices 2025, its national writing competition for children in care and young care leavers.

The evening was hosted by broadcaster, TV presenter, author and inspirational

speaker Ashley John-Baptiste, who is care-experienced, alongside former Voices competition winner, Ira Hakim, at Kimpton Fitzroy London. The night included moving performances from competition entrants, showcasing enormous talent.

Now in its ninth year, the Voices competition, sponsored by UK management consultancy Cadence Innova, part of Transform, is a unique and celebratory platform for children and young people in or leaving care to communicate their feelings creatively and contribute to the wider understanding of what it means to be care-experienced. With poems that were described as “masterful” and “emotionally rich” by judges including Baroness Lola Young and children’s author Patrice Lawrence, the young finalists impressed the audience with their enormous potential and talent.

Ashley John-Baptiste said:

“I’m passionate about the outcomes for young people who have been through the care system and giving them opportunities to unlock their ambitions and potential. That’s why I’m proud to support and host Voices. The competition is proof that there is immense untapped talent and that every child in care should dream big. It has been an honour to read their words and see so many young people performing live.”



The Voices 2025 winners were:

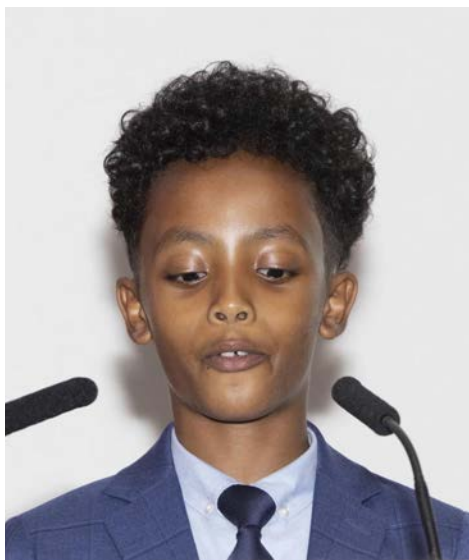
Winner of the Primary category:
‘My Voice’ by Aymen, age 9

Winner of the Lower Secondary category: **‘My Voice: a journey from silence to song’ by Elizabeth, age 12**

Winner of the Upper Secondary category: **‘at last, he speaks’ by Mateo, age 17**

Winner of the Care Leaver category: **‘The voice inside of me’ by Kerry, age 20**

Visit coramvoice.org.uk to read this year’s competition entries.



Pictured: Aymen, age 9



Highlighting expressive arts at Parliament

On 17 June 2025, Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation (CSSF) marked its 25th anniversary with a parliamentary reception at Westminster, a pivotal event designed to celebrate its legacy and advocate for the future of arts education in the UK.

The parliamentary event was organised to both celebrate CSSF's 25 years of transforming young lives through theatre and to present its new "All the World's Our Stage" 2030 strategy to policymakers. The event aimed to showcase the profound impact of CSSF's work, which has empowered thousands of young people from diverse backgrounds through Shakespeare, and to call for greater political and public commitment to drama and the arts in education. CSSF used the occasion to highlight its ambitious plan: supporting 25,000 children and young people to experience performing Shakespeare over the next 25 months, with a special focus on reaching SEND pupils, children in care, and those from underserved communities.

At the heart of the event was a call for more opportunities to tackle educational and social disadvantage, increase aspirations, and unlock the confidence, opportunities, and creativity of the next generation. CSSF argued that access to high-quality drama and creative arts is not a luxury, but a necessity for developing life skills, social cohesion, and academic attainment. Teachers involved in CSSF programmes have reported improvements in students' literacy, school attendance, behaviour, and motivation, as well as greater engagement with the core curriculum.

Through the parliamentary event, CSSF reaffirmed its belief that "the play's the thing" to unlock potential and build a more confident, creative, and inclusive society.



Evie's story:

Evie took part in the Festival in 2009, playing the lead in Anthony and Cleopatra. Though she wouldn't have naturally auditioned, being chosen helped build her confidence and sense of belonging.

The production was inclusive, student-directed, and featured a cast from all year groups and abilities. It was the first time Evie interacted with younger students, and she formed lasting bonds, even mentoring a younger pupil during rehearsals. She found the experience empowering, especially as it made Shakespeare feel accessible and allowed her to be herself while engaging with something traditional.

Performing in a professional theatre was nerve-wracking but thrilling - it was her first time on stage, and she loved it. Now the Digital Commissioning Editor and Channel 4.0 Lead at Channel 4, Evie regularly presents to large audiences and credits the Festival with helping develop her communication and leadership skills. Rehearsals felt like a haven of creativity and safety.

“For someone who was new, and kind of an outsider, it made me feel like I was part of the school. I felt a lot more included, and it contributed to my growing confidence to speak in public.”

Alex's story:

Alex, a former CSSF participant, took part in the Festival from 2014 to 2016 at Arts Depot, Barnet. Playing roles like Macduff, Richard III, and Horatio, and even trying some directing, sparked his passion for Shakespeare and theatre.

Now an English teacher, he brings that creativity and openness into his classroom. He encourages students to explore Shakespeare in their own way, making it personal, relevant, and engaging.

He credits the Festival with teaching him about teamwork, collaboration, and the power of community through shared performances and workshops.

The experience shaped not just his career but his personal life; two of his close friends from the Festival remain part of his life, with one set to be a groomsman at his wedding.

For Alex, CSSF was both formative and unforgettable.

“CSSF was one of the best parts of my secondary school life. The productions helped me to build my confidence and my love for literature, and to meet some of my best friends for life.”



Supporting all children to thrive – no matter where they live

Every child deserves a fair and equal chance in life, yet all too often, their future is shaped by the circumstances of where and with whom they grow up. Across the UK, many young people face a 'postcode lottery', encountering varying levels of access to vital support simply due to their location. The increasing number of children entering care has put significant strain on local authority services, making it still more difficult for vulnerable children to receive the timely and specialist services that can transform their lives.

Supporting Professionals and Services

Coram works in close partnership with local authorities and social work professionals nationwide, championing high-quality, accessible services for children and young people, regardless of their background. A cornerstone of this support is CoramBAAF, the leading UK membership organisation supporting professionals in adoption, fostering, and kinship care. Last year alone, CoramBAAF equipped over 50,000 professionals with expert training, resources, events, and advice, equipping them to deliver consistently high standards of care.

Championing Early Years and Childcare

Coram Family and Childcare campaigns for excellent early years education for all children, shaping national policy and parliamentary debate and receiving extensive media coverage. At a grassroots level, its Parent Champions programme mobilises parent volunteers in communities, helping families understand their rights and access the support they need.

Expanding Access and Inclusion

Coram Hemsall's continue their work through projects such as the Holiday Activities and Food programme, providing healthy meals, engaging activities and free childcare to hundreds of thousands of children from low-income families. Its Childcare Works programme is helping expand early years entitlements and wraparound childcare, making over 50,000 new places available since September 2024.

Earlier this year, PACEY joined Coram as Coram PACEY, which now supports over half of all registered childminders in England and Wales, helping nearly 100,000 children thrive. Coram PACEY is committed to halting the decline in childminder numbers by maintaining outstanding support for the workforce and benefiting from Coram's extensive expertise across disciplines, ensuring every child gets the best start in life.



Creative interventions report

We know the creative arts have the power to change lives for young people, building skillsets, confidence and improving wellbeing. New research from Coram looks at the effect of creative arts as an intervention for young people who are care-experienced or who have faced other disadvantages.

The positive impact is clear. Creative programmes lead to increased confidence, self-esteem and social skills.

The review, supported by the Hadley Trust, explores the evidence of the impact of creative programmes delivered outside of the national curriculum such as arts, music, theatre and multimedia. It specifically looks at children and young people with care experience and those experiencing broader disadvantages and exclusions.

Findings relating to care-experienced young people and those facing broader disadvantages were largely consistent.

The report makes a number of important recommendations for policy, practice, and research, based on the findings of the review.

Dr Carol Homden, CEO of Coram, said:

“*The findings of our review reinforce this message whilst highlighting that more research in this area is needed to help us better understand the longer-term impact of creative programmes, particularly around education and employment outcomes.*”

A young woman with long blonde hair and a slight smile is holding a large white rectangular sign in front of her chest. She is wearing a dark top and denim overalls. The background is a lush green hedge. The sign features the Coram logo in red, which includes the word 'coram' in a lowercase, rounded font, followed by a vertical line and the tagline 'better chances for children since 1739' in a smaller, sans-serif font.

coram | better chances
for children
since 1739

Our impact

Coram recently published its annual Impact Report showcasing the work we've managed to achieve over the past year with your support. Here are the highlights:

We know that the Covid pandemic continues to impact children's lives and this year we are contributing expertise as a core participant in the Covid Inquiry. Schools from across the country are subscribing to Coram Life Education's SCARF curriculum for personal, social and health education, to help them address this legacy and the changing pressures on young people in the digital-first era.

We have built a new education exclusion hub and extended our pro bono legal clinic. We have achieved a major step forward in access to justice through a landmark High Court ruling on legal aid for special educational needs and disabilities.



Our adoption services continue to lead the way in regional, national and intercountry matching for children who are waiting for the loving home they need. In particular, we are leaders in early permanence adoption, where adopters foster children before adopting them to limit the number of moves a child makes.

We are also proud to mark the 50th anniversary of Coram Voice as the first and longest continuing voice for the child in care and to have expanded our advocacy outreach to help tackle youth homelessness.

Whilst overall use of our digital resources is aided by the increasing use of AI, we are piloting new approaches, enabling professionals in children's social care from across all local authorities in the UK to consider the issues and advance their practice.

This year, we also completed the four-year National Lottery Heritage Fund programme to digitise the precious records held in our Foundling Hospital Archive, while we are also celebrating the silver jubilee of the Shakespeare Schools Festival.

You can read the full Impact Report on the Coram website at [coram.org.uk](https://www.coram.org.uk)

Building the Future

Looking ahead to Coram's future means reflecting on both ongoing achievements and the exciting developments soon to come. This year marks an important milestone: the inauguration of the new Coram Institute for Children. As the only think tank solely focused on children's futures, the Institute will collaborate with partners and young people to secure brighter opportunities for the next generation.

Key research remains central to our mission. We will release the 20th annual Holiday Childcare Survey in July, the definitive study on childcare availability and costs. In March 2026, we will also publish the national Childcare Survey, the most widely cited data analysis in this sector, providing crucial insights for policymakers and families.

Academic partnerships are another area of growth. We'll be hosting PhD students and working with Newcastle University on an important historical study of care. Our ongoing collaborations with the UCL Policy Lab and London Office, as well as acting as a knowledge partner to the Churchill Fellowship, highlight our commitment to shared learning. We are also expanding joint projects with City and St George's universities in health, social care, and data science.

Insight into Impact

We will convene thought leaders to explore how AI can address complex, intersectional issues in children's social care, and publish the Innovation Collective report, which aims to inform and inspire change in children's services across sectors. The upcoming "Voice of Care" report will analyse a decade of feedback from children and young people in care, spotlighting their perspectives in our landmark Bright Spots surveys. This milestone commences the 50th anniversary of Coram Voice, the pioneering advocacy champion for children and young people.

Informing Law and Policy

Coram remains an active participant in the Covid Inquiry, working alongside MPs, peers and government as legislation such as the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill moves forward. Through evidence-based briefings and sector partnerships, we help ensure law and policy benefit all children.

Our Voices in Action programme will continue to empower young people facing school exclusion; our pro bono clinic and curriculum resources will support schools to enhance wellbeing; and we aim to strengthen responses to youth homelessness and develop new leaders within the Coram group.

We shall not rest until every child has the best possible chance in life.

Remember a Charity Week:

8 -14 September 2025

As Remember a Charity Week approaches, we want to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who has considered leaving a gift to charity in their Will.

Leaving a gift in your Will is one of the most meaningful ways to support a cause you care about. It's a lasting legacy that helps charities like Coram continue their vital work long into the future. During Remember a Charity Week, we celebrate and thank all those who have made this wonderful commitment. Your gifts enable us to provide life-changing adoption services, advocate for children's rights, and create safe, nurturing environments where children can thrive.

We understand that deciding to leave a legacy is a deeply personal choice. That's why we want to say thank you, not only for your generosity, but for your trust in Coram to carry forward your values and compassion. Every gift, large or small, is a powerful statement of hope and belief in a better future for children who need it most.

"My involvement with Coram started through being an adoptive parent of a musically gifted son whose career



broadened both my and my late husband's appreciation of music and Handel...

We were deeply affected to learn of Thomas Coram's extraordinary ability to co-opt so many of London's great and good into supporting his ground-breaking and intensely caring work for orphaned children all those years ago. Inspired by all this – as well as by the Coram charity's far-reaching present-day work 'from infancy to independence' - we were moved to become regular financial supporters of the Coram Foundation. Four years ago, when my husband died, I revised my will and am committed to continuing my support through my legacy for Coram's essential work for children, young adults and families."

Carol, a dedicated supporter who has included Coram in her Will.

If you are considering leaving a gift to Coram in your Will, or would like to take advantage of our free Wills scheme, please get in touch with Rachael Corns on rachael@coram.org.uk or **020 7520 0306**, for more information.

Thank you!

We would like to extend our heartfelt thank you to all our incredible supporters for their ongoing generosity and kindness towards Coram. A special thank you also goes to everyone who took the time to write thoughtful thank you cards to the children and young people involved in Voices 2025. Your encouraging words have brought inspiration to many, reminding them that their voices are heard and valued.



From all of us here at Coram and on behalf of the young people whose lives you touch, thank you for standing with us to make a change that lasts a lifetime.

Take on the 2026 London Landmarks Half Marathon for Coram!

Are you on the lookout for your next challenge? Why not support Coram and run the London Landmarks Half Marathon! You could join over

18,000 runners on the only half marathon to go through both the City of London and City of Westminster. With an electric atmosphere, cultural landmarks and references to the city's

quirky and hidden secrets out on the course, this event is not to be missed!

Date: **Sunday 12 April 2026**

Registration fee: **£25**

Minimum fundraising target: **£350**

To apply, please scan the QR code or visit coram.org.uk/training-and-events/llhm to complete the application form.



Keep up to date through our channels:

Website: **coram.org.uk**

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

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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**