



coram

better chances
for children
since 1739

Impact Report

2024/25



"As a committee we rely on your expertise and your evidence to make sure that we can make strong recommendations to the government."

Helen Hayes MP, Chair of the House of Commons Education Select Committee

Foreword

As the scale of the challenge for children has become ever more visible, Coram is continuing to grow its services, to advance policy and to transform practice to meet the needs of the next generation.

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 UK Covid-19 Inquiry. Schools from across the country are subscribing to Coram Life Education's SCARF curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education, to help them address this legacy and the changing pressures on young people in the digital-first era.

To help meet growing demand from families dealing with school exclusion, we have updated our online exclusion hub and extended our pro bono legal clinic. We also achieved a major step forward through a landmark High Court ruling on legal aid that will enable more families to access legal support.

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.

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 affected 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 United Kingdom 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, as we prepare for the silver jubilee of the Coram Shakespeare Schools Festival next year.

The transfer of services of the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years to form Coram PACEY strengthens and complements our existing work with parents and with providers. We have continued to raise awareness of the costs of childcare in high profile reports by Coram Family and Childcare.

These have informed parliamentarians and policy makers of the acute issues for families, notably in the extensive briefings and oral evidence that we have provided in relation to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

198,447 DIRECT BENEFICIARIES



641,082 CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS



127,542 PROFESSIONALS **3** MILLION ONLINE VISITS

It is to inform, champion and realise such change that we are developing the Coram Institute for Children. Our aspiration is for the Institute to be recognised as an independent research organisation ahead of its launch in October 2025.

This report addresses achievements against our seven strategic outcomes for children. We are eternally grateful to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and to all the companies, trusts and individuals who generously support us, and to our staff, volunteers and trustees who work so hard for all that we do.

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

Ivor Crewe

Professor Sir Ivor Crewe
President



Carol Homden

Dr Carol Homden
Chief Executive Officer



A fair chance

Coram works tirelessly to ensure that children have A Fair Chance in education and access to justice through legal advice, information and representation, strategic litigation, alongside our research and policy influencing work.

Accessible free legal information

Coram Children's Legal Centre's Child Law Advice Service provides legal advice and information on family, child and education law affecting children and families in England. Our website is packed with how-to guides enabling hundreds of thousands of users to be better equipped to address their issues. We also provided more than 13,000 enquirers unable to access a solicitor with direct personal legal advice tackling key issues including special educational needs and disabilities and both private and public law issues of contact and residence.

Legal aid representation

Our Legal Practice continued to deliver high quality legal casework across education, family, immigration, community care, and public law recognised by LEXCEL for 30 points of good practice despite the very significant financial challenges of running a legal aid practice. For many children, this has unlocked the support they need with consistent tribute paid to the level of client care shown by the Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC) team.

School Exclusions

In a case widely reported in the media, the High Court earlier this year opened the prospect of granting legal aid to many families appealing school exclusion following a case brought by CCLC senior solicitor Sabrina Simpson (see opposite). In response to the litigation, the Lord Chancellor amended her policy to remove a categorical ban on legal aid being granted in cases concerning a disproportionate interference with the right to education, providing a clear path to enabling children and families to receive legal aid funding when challenging a permanent school exclusion.

CCLC litigation on support for disabled children

In addition, the High Court ruled that the Home Office had breached its duty to provide adequate asylum accommodation to a mother and her severely disabled 5-year-old child following a successful judicial review initiated by CCLC.

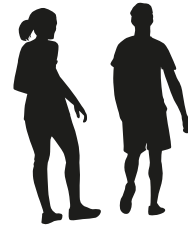
The claimants went to court to challenge the inadequacy of the accommodation provided and the High Court agreed. While this is a welcome outcome, the Court noted this was not an isolated incident with systemic issues continuing to impact disadvantaged children.

"I have tears in my eyes. This case has opened doors – this is music to my ears. It has been a long time coming. You took on this case so that children can now have a chance and feel listened to. I'm just thinking about all the families who can now get legal aid. I feel so good – we have literally made history!"

Mother of claimant

13,477

CALLERS
ADVISED



1.2 MILLION

USERS OF THE CHILD
LAW ADVICE SERVICE

Protecting migrant children

The new government has committed to increasing legal aid rates for asylum, one of the longstanding calls in our policy work to ensure children in the UK have a fair chance in accessing the independent representation they need.

In addition, following work in the previous year, the government has withdrawn powers in the Illegal Migration Act 2023 to put babies and children in indefinite immigration detention and removed powers to take unaccompanied children who seek safety in the UK out of the mainstream care system. In addition, CCLC was the only child-focused stakeholder involved in winning concessions on the introduction of eVisas.

Covid Inquiry

In September, Coram was named a core participant in the Covid Inquiry announced by the then Prime Minister in 2021. Module 8 covers the impact of the pandemic on children across society, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and from a diverse range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

As a core participant and supported by Jenner and Block, Coram is provided with evidence, can make opening and closing statements at any hearing, suggest lines of questioning and apply to the Inquiry to ask questions of witnesses.

International impact

Coram International's work this year featured a formative and baseline evaluation on UNICEF's Access to Justice for Children programme, involving a global study on UNICEF's Reimagine Justice for Children Agenda and eight case studies covering all regions of the world. We conducted a formative evaluation of UNICEF's Parenting Programme in Cambodia and an Assessment of Programme Effectiveness of the UN Joint Programme for the Elimination of Child, Early and Forced marriage in Türkiye.

We also worked with the Government of Türkiye to introduce emergency and temporary foster care, continued our work on drafting the Child Protection Law for Cambodia and Provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services in Eastern and Southern Africa, supported by practice and training resources.



"Until now there has been no legal aid readily available for school exclusion hearings, which means that most parents must attempt to navigate this complex and often traumatic process alone. At Coram's school exclusion clinic, we provide free legal advice and representation to families alongside dedicated lawyers from corporate law firms who volunteer their time. The landmark High Court case we brought this year has given new hope to families that they can get that vital support and has been able to raise awareness of parents and young people about their legal rights. My personal experience of raising a child with special educational needs and the challenges I faced navigating the education system, particularly as the parent of a Black boy, have been key drivers in my role. I firmly believe that all children should have a fair chance to reach their full potential, regardless of their background or needs."

Sabrina Simpson

Senior Solicitor, Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC)

Looking ahead

Completion of the baseline evaluation of Ukraine's Better Care reform and the Covid Inquiry contribution in the UK will form key priorities in the coming year along with the continued development of the pro bono clinic and new resources as part of the school exclusions hub.

A loving home

All children need loving secure families, and Coram works to support all those who need adoption, foster care and kinship care, providing national and intercountry expertise to secure best practice in matching as well as specialist therapeutic support.

Finding adopters

This year, Coram Adoption was awarded its fifth consecutive Outstanding Ofsted rating for services to children, young people and families, with Ofsted noting the agency's "highly competent, experienced and knowledgeable professionals who are totally committed and passionate about providing the very best quality of care." We placed 70 children with adoptive families including 16% placed through early permanence, where adopters are dually approved as foster carers, to provide stability for a baby or young child whilst the courts make a decision about their care. Our outreach ambassador helped to raise awareness of adoption amongst Black African and Caribbean communities with 37% of our newly approved adopters from diverse backgrounds, exceeding the national average of 11%.

Big Adoption Day

Coram also initiated and led voluntary adoption agencies across the UK in the Big Adoption Day to highlight further the need for more adoptive families to come forward. We collaborated with the National Theatre on its new production of Ballet Shoes, Noel Streatfeild's classic tale about three adopted sisters, and hundreds of adopted children and families attended the show, with backstage tours and activities. Broadcaster James O'Brien led a panel discussion around the themes of the show and shared his own experiences of being adopted.

Inter-country heritage adoption

Coram Intercountry Adoption Centre (Coram IAC) is the UK's only specialist adoption charity of its kind and is also rated Outstanding by Ofsted. In the last year, Coram IAC hosted the EurAdopt conference taking place for the first time in the UK, and approved 41 new adopters choosing to adopt from their country of origin or parents' origin. 28 placements were made, meaning these children are no longer residing in institutions and are settled in supportive families in the UK, who share their heritage and can promote their wellbeing and cultural needs.

Supporting children and families in the region

Our regional adoption agency, Coram Ambitious for Adoption, continued to provide the services for nine local authorities in London and in Slough, and delivered Coram's Step Up programme to provide bespoke and intensive family finding services to reduce delays for individual children with the evaluation demonstrating improved timeliness for them.

Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund

Coram signed an open letter to the Education Secretary, alongside Adoption UK, CVAA and Kinship to call for the government to reconsider the reductions to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) and to ensure continuing access to vital therapeutic support for children in adoptive and kinship families.



1,500 ADOPTERS SUPPORTED

247 CHILDREN IN ACTIVITY DAYS

Securing national matching for children

Coram's Adoption Activity Days (AADs) enable approved adopters and children waiting to be adopted anywhere in England to interact in a fun and supportive environment. We ran 10 AADs, attended by 247 children with dozens of matches created for those who have waited the longest with the value further evidenced by the independent evaluation conducted by Adoption England.

Coram's Be My Family team hosted three national exchange days, where 477 children were profiled to prospective adopters to boost the chance of matching and First4Adoption.org.uk supported 93,206 users of our digital resources.

"I would recommend Adoption Activity Days to other prospective adopters, they should be mandatory. AADs help you to overcome a 'blinker' way of thinking and open you up to something more beautiful."

Adopter

Creative Therapies

Coram's Centre for Creative Therapy and Parenting supported 340 children this year, through a variety of projects including specialist assessments and interventions for adoption and Special Guardianship Orders, and creative therapies in schools.

199 professionals were trained on different aspects of therapeutic expertise, and a free Family Harmony Toolkit was launched for professionals working with families to reduce the impact of harmful conflict on children's mental health, which has seen almost 1,000 downloads so far.

Community of Practice

We continued to provide the Independent Review Mechanism for Adoption and Fostering for the Department for Education as well as the Secretariat and Data Service.

CoramBAAF supports the UK's leading community of practice for social work professionals in adoption, fostering and kinship care with all local authorities benefitting from its membership services, books and practice tools including the *Adoption and Fostering Journal*.



Ofsted
Outstanding
Provider

Miranda and Hamish*

Adopted a little boy Archie* through Coram

"From the very first call with Coram, the team were so encouraging. Our social worker is fantastic - just knowing we can contact her when we need support is so helpful. When we think back to that moment of seeing Archie's photo for the first time it makes us feel very emotional. We knew when we read his profile that we really wanted to move forward.

We got to know Archie's foster carers really well, they were incredible. We feel so lucky that Archie was so loved by them and we stay in touch today and visit them when we can.

Archie's needs and identity are key. We are open to the fact that Archie might want to meet his birth family one day and we'll always be there to support him. We've had some support from Coram with Archie's life story work which has been really amazing. There were a few challenges at his school so we contacted our social worker and as a result, the school agreed that all staff would get training on adoption, which is fantastic. Archie brings us so much love and joy. He is very affectionate - he tells us he loves us every day, and us him. He is tenacious, curious and very sociable. We feel privileged to have him in our lives and he has grown into a beautiful little boy. It took time to find our son, but it was worth the wait. We are so happy, he is the best thing that has ever happened to us."

Looking ahead

Piloting the development of an integrated multi-disciplinary team as part of the Adoption England commissioning programme and further developing our own Sibling Time and Complex Identity resources to meet emerging need.

* Names have been changed to protect anonymity

A voice that’s heard

Coram is committed to ensuring that children and young people have a voice that’s heard in the decisions that matter to their lives, in practice and in policy. We marked the 50th anniversary of the formation of Coram Voice as Voice for the Child in Care with the launch of our Care Ambition, co-produced with young people.

Access to advocacy

Coram Voice is the first and longest continuing children’s advocacy service. We work to ensure that all young people in and leaving care get the help they need to convey their wishes and feelings and to provide a growing number of Independent Visitor services to support children in residential care. Our specialist advocacy service also extended the number of non-statutory advocacy cases particularly focused on homelessness, educational exclusion and special educational needs and disability.

50 years of getting young voices heard

We marked the 50th anniversary of Coram Voice as Voice for the Child in Care with a parliamentary reception hosted by Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss and chair of the Education Committee Helen Hayes MP, attended by the Minister for Children and Families Janet Daby MP alongside many of our young people, two of whom delivered speeches with heartfelt eloquence on the importance of advocacy and being listened to.

We launched our Youth Advisory Board and the new Care Ambition, calling for a commitment to a triple key that would unlock the future for children in care and care leavers including the creation of a national youth voice mechanism and measurement of wellbeing and the extension of advocacy support to more children and young people.

Specialist impact

Our specialist advocacy project supporting children and young people with learning difficulties and/or autism informed and was featured in the Social Finance report Independent advocacy for independent lives launched in February. The report included a cost-benefit analysis of advocacy and recommended extension of non-statutory advocacy for people with learning disabilities.

Message for the Minister

A National Voice is the national children in care council. In the Autumn of 2024 following the general election, the young people launched a consultation to gather the views of care-experienced young people, asking what they would want the new children’s minister to focus on to make their lives in care better.

325 children and young people from across 45 local authorities took part, sharing their priorities, personal experiences, and powerful messages for change. The top three priorities identified in the final report were better mental health support, needing to be listened to in decisions about their lives, and the need for good relationships.



“I think a lot of care experienced people don’t have a platform where their voices are heard. Our Councils are there to support us and give us the best life and to do that they need hear about issues that we are facing.”
(ANV Ambassador)

Grand Campaign success

The Grand Campaign was launched to ensure that all care leavers in every local authority in England are receiving the full support they are entitled to. Following the Campaign, the Department for Education has updated the ‘Children Act 1989’ recommending that the setting up home allowance for all care leavers should be a minimum of £3,000. Updated guidance ensures there is clear information for young people and the local authorities that work with them on what they are entitled to, a great success for A National Voice and the ANV Ambassadors who worked on the Campaign.

Listening and engaging with care experienced people

Our ANV ambassadors also worked with the Local Government Association to create a guide for councillors, council officers and other organisations on engaging care experienced individuals in co-production, consultation, and training. The guide includes practical examples from our resource bank and a series of videos created with young people about ‘feeling listened to’. In Care Leavers Week our third Amplify event brought together young people from across England and showcased the work of children in care councils and care leaver forums in England through the ANV awards.



Rose
A National Voice ambassador

“Being in care is all I can remember – since I was taken into the care system at two years old, I’ve experienced lots of different types of placement including living with foster families, residential care and a therapeutic placement. I’ve been moved around so many times over the past two decades that I’ve lost count. I’m passionate about doing all I can to make a difference and improve care for others. That’s why I joined Coram Voice’s youth advisory board, to use my voice and experience to help influence the future of children’s services. I’ve also recently helped to develop the charity’s ‘Grand Campaign’ (see opposite), highlighting my own experiences and campaigning for every council to offer at least £3,000 to every care leaver, provide clearer guidelines and also give care leavers more freedom to spend the money as they wish. Longer-term, I would love to pursue a career as an advocate or social worker. In the future, I can hopefully help other young people to have a more positive experience in care. I can’t change what has happened to me – but I feel determined I can make change happen for other young people.”

Looking ahead
In the coming year, we will pilot the extension of independent visitor support to care leavers and work to realise our Care Ambition including by contributing to the work of the All Party Group on Care.

A chance to shine

We work to ensure all children have a chance to shine, build their aspiration and be proud of who they are through creative writing, performance and cultural learning programmes.

25 years of unlocking creativity and opportunity

For the last 25 years Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation (CSSF) has been transforming young lives through the unique power of Shakespeare, supporting young people to raise their aspirations and develop their confidence and skills through live performance in the world’s largest youth drama festival.

On stage impact

Supported by our coordinators and professional theatre facilitators, schools spent several months developing a reimagined Shakespeare production with their young people which culminated in around 8,000 young people performing in 57 professional theatres across the country. We worked with 143 primary schools, 153 secondary schools, and 34 SEND settings across England, Scotland and Wales (and companies visiting from Spain and the USA).

The post-festival evaluation completed by 134 teacher-directors was overwhelmingly positive about the festival’s impact on young people. All teachers (100%) agreed that their students had developed their teamwork and oracy skills, while 99% agreed that students had boosted their creativity and 98% agreed that students were more ambitious. Teachers also noted improvements in students’ attendance and academic achievement.

Film futures

Some 787 young people also participated in our Film Festival programme which saw teachers trained by CSSF support students to create a short film based on a Shakespeare play, increasing access for rural and SEND pupils.

In addition, 987 young people participated in a standalone workshop offering an engaging introduction to Shakespeare’s plays, exploring key themes and characters, and deepening students’ understanding of texts they are already studying.

Building skills for young people and teachers

The ‘Season of Reimagining,’ a three-year creative project for the Theatre Festival, was the shaping force for the programme, as 225 teachers were trained in our creative pedagogy and cutting-edge rehearsal room techniques in workshops across eight hub cities devised in collaboration with award-winning directors Danielle Kassaraté and Adele Thomas.

This was completed with the new Technical Theatre Skills Workshops at the Criterion Theatre in London’s West End to give young people the chance to work alongside professionals and explore lighting, sound, directing, and stagecraft, deepening their understanding of the possible behind-the-scenes careers in the industry.



“One of our pupil premium children had poor attendance below 80%, low attaining English and very little confidence to almost being a school refuser the previous year. He now has 98% attendance... and even days he enjoys English”

Arnett Hills Junior School, Hertfordshire

Coram Tomorrow’s Achievers

Coram Tomorrow’s Achievers (CTA) provides specialist masterclasses and resources focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Maths (STEAM) for 5-12 year olds. Reaching 127 young people this year, the programme goes well beyond the school curriculum to stimulate children’s curiosity and help schools to raise attainment and aspiration.

In August 2024, CTA ran the annual Coding Club for young people at Barking and Dagenham Virtual School on Campus at The London South Bank University. The young people were able to learn from lecturers and student ambassadors about how to create and code robots, working as teams to solve a problem by coding. They built their robot over three days and then presented their work to an audience in the lecture theatre.

Voices awards

The Voices writing competition is the only one dedicated to children and young people in and leaving care. Winner Evan has worked to champion the opportunity by sharing his poetry and journey of resilience and transformation, supported by his foster family, and how he found his voice through creative arts at www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUgJloCJJbk. Having received his own award from presenter Peter Capaldi in 2024, Evan returned to support a workshop and hand out awards to other young people at Voices 2025 hosted by care-experienced presenter Ashley John-Baptiste.



“This has made me more confident. It was the best thing in The World.”

Denisas, 11, Northamptonshire

My Voice

Aymen, age 9, winner of the Primary Category

This is my voice, The sun in the sky, To me it’s my choice, My voices makes me fly.	The sun glares at me, It is always around, There for all to see, My voice is my sound.
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Like the sun shining bright. Sometimes it’s a blaze, My voice is my right, Filling my days.	Moving with grace, My voice, full of glee, Like the round sun in space, MY STRENGTH, MY ENERGY
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The sun is so fine,
It is mostly yellow,
Sometimes it will shine,
Makes you feel mellow.

Looking ahead

In the coming year, we will mark the silver jubilee of the Coram Shakespeare Schools Festival with the publication of our new strategy All The World’s Our Stage, bringing the magic of performance to more young people in care and publishing the anthology of the Voices writing competition.

Skills for the future

More than 600,000 children benefit every year from the Coram programmes in schools, whether delivering personal, social, health and economic education or providing one-to-one reading support in the classroom.

Children's wellbeing in the digital age

There is mounting evidence of the risks to children's mental and physical wellbeing associated with their online activity – in particular, use of smartphones – and the work of Coram's SCARF curriculum and direct delivery in school through our 14 affiliated delivery partners has never been more needed.

This year, Coram Life Education (CLE) worked with Newcastle University, teachers and parents to establish mechanisms to enable children to develop more responsible and respectful online behaviours and manage the amount of time they spend online, enabling them to maintain a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

In response to school demand, we launched Wellbeing Warriors in the Online World, aimed at helping children aged 9-11 to recognise the impact of online behaviours on their mental wellbeing, understand the different ways our decisions are influenced online, including through influencers and online advertising, and develop critical thinking skills in relation to online influences. More than 3,000 pupils across ten regions benefitted from the workshops in the first six months, with educators reporting high levels of student engagement.

We have now created a parents' and carers' workshop to help them manage online issues affecting their children and are working with sector experts, including the 5Rights Foundation, Smartphone Free Childhood, and Health Professionals for Safer Screens, to take forward our work in this rapidly evolving field.

Wear Your SCARF

SCARF provides a whole school approach to wellbeing and more schools than ever before took part in our national Wear Your Scarf Day helping children to develop with the ways they can look after themselves and others. The resources were expanded to feature new early years materials to help schools in ensuring children start well.



Children across the country say: "We love it when Harold the giraffe visits our school."

624,285 CHILDREN IN 2800 SCHOOLS

5,680 CHILDREN SUPPORTED BY READING VOLUNTEERS

781 YOUNG PEOPLE HELPED 10,904 OTHERS

Choosing reading

We know that one of the most effective ways to reduce socio-economic disadvantage, raise academic attainment and improve wellbeing is to encourage children to read for pleasure – to choose to read. Coram Beanstalk has over 50 years of experience in encouraging children to become confident readers.

The 2025 National Literacy Trust annual reading report showed that just one in three children and young people said they enjoy reading, the lowest level over 20 years. We are working to change this and through our one-to-one, in-person sessions help to improve reading attainment, with 86% of participating primary aged children and 90% of participating secondary age young people reported as making progress in their reading.

"The children's confidence and enthusiasm with reading is growing each week and [our Reading Helper] makes her sessions extra special with little activities linking to current themes. We truly appreciate the time and commitment – it is making a real difference in our pupils' learning journey!"

Young people helping others

580 young people aged 14+ were trained to act as reading leaders in their schools, helping younger pupils to grow in reading confidence whilst gaining recognition in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and vital skills for their own careers.

In addition, a further 781 young people gained skills for their own lives whilst supporting more than 10,000 others through co-training, creative production, peer research and legal advice.



Nina Capek

Head Teacher, Haddon Primary and Nursery School

"We've seen a huge amount of change in our community over the last few years. We now have greater diversity of pupils across the school and are above national average for disadvantaged children on pupil premium and children with special educational needs and disabilities. So, there has been a real need for lots of work around inclusion and aspiration, and Coram Life Education's SCARF resources have been key to this.

We always say that Personal, Social, Health and Economic education is the absolute golden thread of the curriculum and features across so much of what we do. The SCARF values go hand-in-hand with our school values around determination, respect and achievement.

The SCARF resources are high quality and delivered consistently. Everything we need is there – lesson plans, worksheets and supporting videos. It gives our teachers a structure to draw upon which is so useful in a small school where I am very mindful of staff wellbeing and workload. We know we'll be covering everything we need to in an age-appropriate way for our pupils. It's also given us more confidence delivering Relationships, Sex and Health Education, enabling teachers to know how to handle more difficult questions, and giving us a framework to communicate with parents.

The children really like the lessons, they always talk about them and love meeting Harold the Giraffe when the visits happen! The children are now more aspirational and inclusive – they understand that everybody's different and know how to treat people. We're proud that our two most recent Ofsted reports reference the strength of personal development at the school and praise the children's manners, so it's really part of our whole ethos."

Looking ahead

In the coming year, we will develop our personal, social emotional development SCARF resources for early years and extend these and Reading Leaders at secondary level as we deliver a programme of events to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Coram Life Education.

No matter where

Throughout the year we worked with government, local authorities, social workers, carers and families to deliver best practice services and systems for children and young people nationwide.

Childcare cost and availability

In March, Coram Family and Childcare (CFC) published the 24th national childcare survey, the leading source of information on the cost and availability of childcare across the country.

The survey's main finding, that working parents of children under three in England now pay less than half of last year's cost for a part-time nursery place since the government roll-out of childcare support, was covered extensively by news and media outlets throughout Great Britain.

However, our 19th holiday childcare survey, published last July, set out that costs in Great Britain had risen by 6% over the previous year, with working parents now facing an average bill of £175 per child per week – over £1,000 for the six-week break.

Our research into the barriers to take-up of the disadvantaged two-year-old early education entitlement resulted in the government updating statutory guidance to state that additional charges made by childcare providers must be voluntary for parents accessing a funded place, and fees must be published on websites, making a real difference to families struggling with costs.

Holiday activities and food programme

Coram Hemsall's continued to partner with the Department for Education to support delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF), providing healthy meals, enriching activities, and free childcare places to children from low-income families, benefitting their health, wellbeing and learning. Local authorities report that over 628,000 children and young people attended HAF over Summer 2024, and over 270,000 over Christmas 2024.

Childcare Works

Coram Hemsall's has been working for DfE via the Childcare Works consortium, supporting local authorities and providers to deliver the early years entitlements expansion and wraparound childcare programme. Following launch of the national wraparound childcare programme last September, over 50,000 places had already been made available by February 2025.

Supporting Parent Champions

Parent Champions are volunteers who give a few hours a week to talk to other parents about the local services available to families. CFC's 42 Parent Champion schemes reach almost more than 40,000 families a year, thanks to the amazing work of more than 424 volunteers, parents and carers – you can read more opposite about the difference they have made.

41,491 FAMILIES SUPPORTED BY PARENT CHAMPIONS

54,904 PROFESSIONALS USING CORAMBAAF RESOURCES

94% OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE UK IN MEMBERSHIP OF CORAMBAAF

Championing best practice in children's social care

CoramBAAF is the UK's leading membership organisation for professionals working across adoption, fostering and kinship care, providing information, guidance, training and resources to support our members and influence policy to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Earlier this year we published the new Kinship Care Assessment, reflecting growing awareness of the complexity and importance of kinship care when children can't remain at home with their parents. The new assessment amplifies the voice of the child and focuses on the relationship between them and the prospective kinship carer, drawing out strengths and highlighting support needs. It enables a relationship-based process that gathers and analyses the information required to inform decisions about a child's future care.

We also published a revised version of the Child's Permanence Report (CPR) tool, which enables adoption agencies to plan for the child's future. It is designed to be used at key stages of the adoption process, as a source of information through matching and ultimately as a resource for the child into adulthood (adopted adults have a legal right to a copy of the document.) We developed the new CPR and accompanying documents alongside a working group of practitioners, and we have also consulted birth parents, intermediary services working with adopted adults, and other stakeholders as part of the development.

We also developed the Adoption Support Plan (ASP) England form, designed to be used at key stages of the adoption process, whether during matching, when reviewing the placement prior to the adoption order being made and as a basis for future adoption assessments post-order. You can find out more about where we delivered over the last months at corambaaf.org.uk



Selda Aygun
Parent Champions Coordinator, Islington

Islington was the winner of the Parent Champions Scheme of the Year Award, in Coram Family and Childcare's Parent Champion Awards 2025.

"I have worked as the coordinator for Parent Champions Islington for the past 18 years, upskilling and empowering parents, and seeing the changes which create a better start for children. We focus on supporting residents with children under five, sharing key messages around health, early education and home learning as well as helping shape future services. In the last 7 years we've had nearly 140,000 contacts with parents across a wide range of communities. Take-up of parenting courses has increased by 60% and take-up of free early education for 2-year-olds is up from 64% to 77%.

I am bursting with pride and joy that we have won this award! I am so proud to have set up and to be running such a successful Parent Champion scheme within Bright Start Islington that is deemed the best in the UK. Thank you for Coram's input and continued support, and to the best Islington colleagues I could wish for. And a very special thank you to our fantastic Bright Start Islington Parent Champion volunteers who are doing an amazing job of sharing information and increasing take up of early years services, making a huge impact on our communities living in Islington."

Looking ahead

In the coming year, we will advance the work of the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) across England and Wales as part of Coram, providing support to more than 13,000 registered childminders in their vital work in supporting children.

A society that cares

Coram works to use insight gained through our service delivery and wider research to achieve impact in both policy and practice – changing lives, laws and systems to build a society that cares as the dedicated Institute for Children.

Research results

The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill requires local authorities to offer family-group decision-making in which the wider family, friends and community network come together to plan for a child at risk of harm or abuse. This has been informed and inspired by Coram’s research on Family Group Conferences (FGCs) as a key model.

The Randomised Control Trial demonstrated the potential to divert children from care in the [jointly published research](#) commissioned by Foundations to support filling the gap in national evidence and to launch a national data collection of local authorities in England.

The Door is Still Closed

Our ‘[The Door is Still Closed](#)’ report examined Coram Voice and Coram Children’s Legal Centre’s case work to set out that too many homeless 16- and 17-year-olds are still being left unassessed, unsafe, and denied the support and security that vulnerable children need, 10 years on from our previous analysis.

The report made a series of recommendations for local authorities developed with young ambassadors and we held a joint roundtable with Ofsted and the Children’s Commissioner in May to consider how policy and practice can be made better.

Disability, disparity and demand

The [new report on disability and care experienced children & young people](#) was based on a Freedom of Information request to all local authorities in England and the experiences of young people and care leavers, and set out key disparities in the understanding, measuring and recognition of disability as well as significant local variations in services. The report generated a great deal of interest in sector press and resulted in many offers to share findings at events.

Bright Spots results

The Bright Spots surveys remain the most systematic data on the subjective wellbeing of children and young people in and leaving care and in the coming year, to mark Bright Spots’ 10th anniversary, we will publish a new report analyzing all of the direct comments made by children and young people.

Research advancement

Our Youth Insight researchers published their work on Complex Identities with a forum featuring a response by Professor Susan Golombok of the University of Cambridge.

Coram has continued its partnership with Newcastle University with the development of several PhD applications and developed a Memorandum of Understanding with University College London to advance public policy ready research as a partner to their London Office.

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RESEARCH REPORTS, POLICY BRIEFINGS & PRACTICE TOOLS

Coram in Parliament

Over the last 12 months we have also been prominent in shaping and influencing debate and legislation impacting children and young people. The Coram CEO Dr Carol Homden CBE gave evidence to the [House of Commons Public Accounts Committee](#) hearing into the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill, and [we have also submitted written evidence](#) setting out where, while we broadly support the Bill’s measures, it can be further improved.

CoramBAAF head of policy, research and development James Bury gave evidence to the Commons Education Committee’s [enquiry into children’s social care](#). And in January this year, we government changes to limit child detention powers.

Voices in Action

Coram’s Voices in Action programme enables young ambassadors aged 16-25 with lived experience of homelessness, school exclusion, immigration and care to co-develop policy recommendations and get young voices heard in decisions that matter, including the Parliamentary launch of the Inclusive Education report.

We also submitted evidence to the Education Committee’s inquiry into children’s social care, making our recommendations for change based on the experience of the young people we work with. A National Voice also submitted their evidence, setting out directly to the Committee the views of young people impacted by legislation.

International reform

Coram International published a meta-synthesis and meta-analysis of evidence on child marriage in South Asia, which identified, critically appraised, synthesized and compiled all available, relevant evidence on ‘what works’ to prevent child marriage in the South Asian Region. The results were presented at a pan-Asian network meeting.

“The research Coram does is stunning and has been so important and useful in my work in the House of Lords”

The Lord Storey CBE



Olivuh Xavier

Coram Voices in Action young ambassador

“I was forwarded the application to join Voices in Action by my leaving care advisor, who understood my passion for advocacy, content creation and facilitation and saw my potential as a hardworking, considerate, and empathetic individual.

This opportunity has enabled me to advocate for others, helping to reduce the stigma faced by many young people, and to educate and inspire. It has empowered me to do more and go beyond, while also reminding me of what I want to do going forward in my future career to create safe spaces and facilitate to other like-minded individuals. I have done this myself as a young person who falls under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella, having suffered from mental health conditions throughout life, had a tough hand at school and in previous accommodations.

Throughout my time as a housing rights and school exclusions ambassador, I have contributed many ideas for content of the projects for the young people we support. I have taken part in Coram training and consultations for external organisations who work for young people. Most important of all, I have directly supported many other young people and children who have come from a similar walk of life as I.”

Looking ahead

In the coming year, we will work with key leaders of the care-experienced movement in the development of the Speaking for Ourselves programme to document their history.

Voices through time

Coram is the first and longest continuing children's charity, established as The Foundling Hospital in 1739, and our archive contains precious records of the 27,000 children who were amongst the first to grow up in care. Thanks to the support of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the archive has been digitised and is now available to the public via coramstory.org.uk.

Preserving the past

The digital archive is a vital new resource for academics and family historians alike and illuminates key themes across time of separation and loss, education and health, work and connections through a dynamic timeline. The site has already had more than 40,000 record views so far, opening new avenues for research and understanding.

Coram Society

Coram's programme of public events explores these eternal themes and issues of today engaging the public in our continuing mission. Key moments included the premiere of *A Portrait of My Parents* by photographer Philip Sinden and the delivery of a guest lecture on *The Long March to Women and Children's Rights* highlighting the learning from the archive at Newcastle University for International Women's Day.

In Conversation discussion events were held between Nicola Horlick, a champion of women in the City and care-experienced trustee Rachel Malik, and between the Rt Revd Bishop of London and Lady Hale in our *Inspiring Women* series with distinguished leaders of our time. Bestselling author and historian Hallie Rubenhold came to Coram Campus to speak about her most recent book with award-winning writer and broadcaster Maddy Pelling, providing fascinating insights into how to investigate and tell the stories of forgotten voices.

100,000 PAGES TRANSCRIBED
OR 23% OF THE
ENTIRE ARCHIVE

44,406 RECORD VIEWS
SO FAR

405 VOLUMES DATING
FROM 1739 TO 1899

Creating a new future

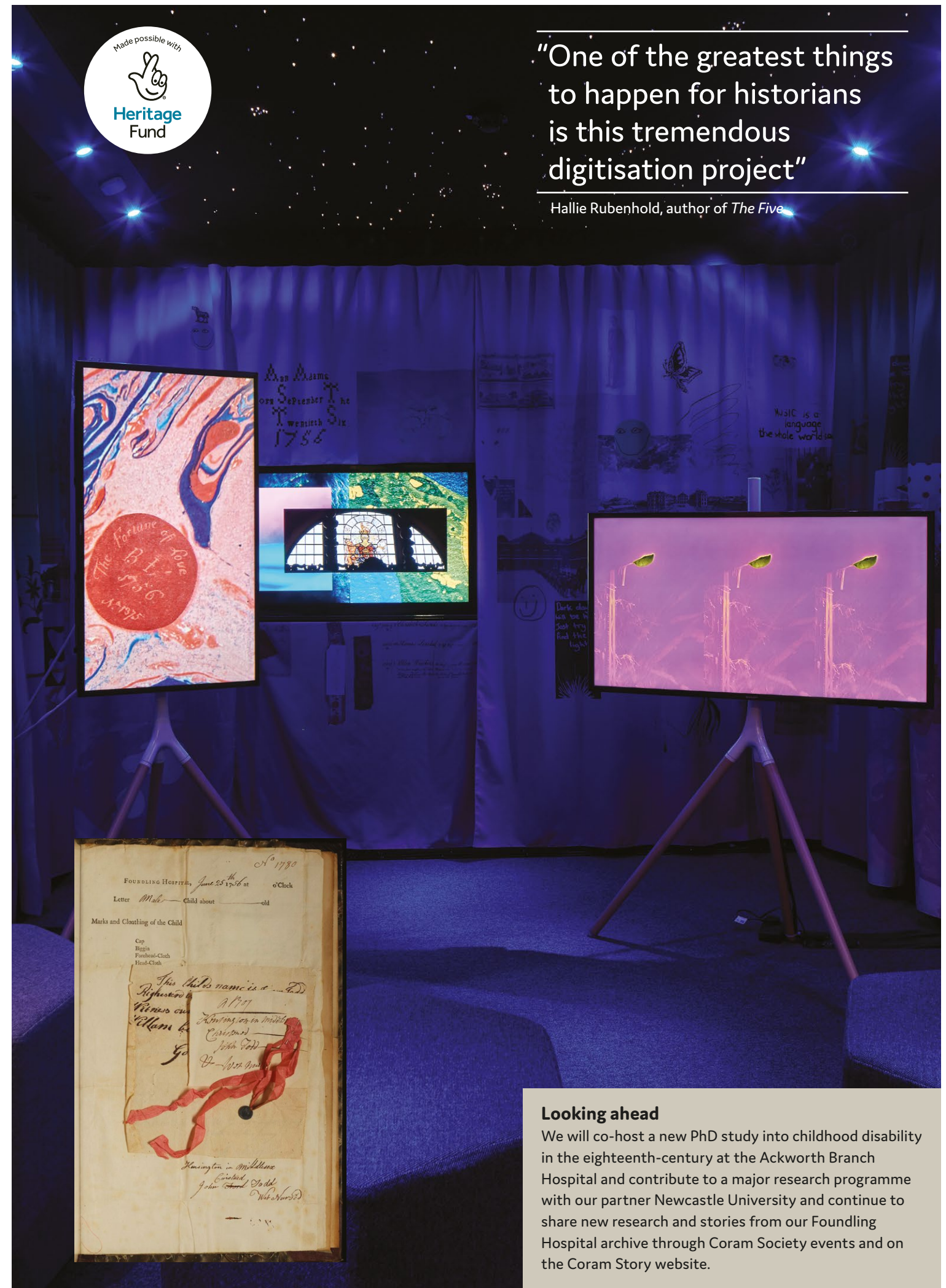
Throughout the four-year programme, young people with experience of care today engaged with the records and reclaimed their history, reflecting in creative ways on the learning of the past for the future of care. This included Letters from Lockdown, responding to the poignant Petition Letters written by mothers unable to care for their child, and a social media campaign telling the *Real Stories of Care* to tackle the stigma which continues today.

The culmination of the journey was the immersive installation *Echoes of Care: The Living History of Coram and the Foundling Hospital* created by The Liminal Space mingling words, images and feelings of past and present and featuring a multi-layered sound and light experience. The eight messages to the future written by Billy can still be seen on campus.

The positive impact of the programme was evaluated and also features in a literature review published by Coram, calling for more research into the benefits of creative programmes for young people beyond the school curriculum.

"For me being a part of *Voices Through Time* was a way for me to connect with how things were in the past and see how they have helped shape the future we have... we still have a long way to go until things are where they need to be."

Billy



"One of the greatest things to happen for historians is this tremendous digitisation project"

Hallie Rubenhold, author of *The Five*

Looking ahead

We will co-host a new PhD study into childhood disability in the eighteenth-century at the Ackworth Branch Hospital and contribute to a major research programme with our partner Newcastle University and continue to share new research and stories from our Foundling Hospital archive through Coram Society events and on the Coram Story website.

Champions for children

Coram's work is only possible with the support of thousands of volunteers and supporters who work with us as champions for children by giving their time, lending their voice and raising funds.

Volunteers stepping up

Last year across the country, 1,291 Coram Beanstalk volunteers helped 7,002 children and young people children to become confident readers whilst independent visitors walked by the side of children in care as part of the community of Coram volunteers.

Marathon effort

52 runners took to the road for the London Marathon in 2024, complementing other challenges such as the three peaks and London Landmarks and raising more than £143,000. The team included our very own Lisa Handy from Coram Life Education who was followed in 2025 by adoption social worker Laura (seen below).

Riding the distance

The riders of Club Peloton travelled 1500km in this year's Knight Frank Cycle to MIPIM joined for the first leg by 17-year-old George Monk whose father, Will, took part for many years. Club Peloton granted Coram over £213,000 in 2024/25 so thanks to all the riders who raised that and cycled far and wide.

Music matters

Music has always been at the heart of Coram and the annual Handel Birthday Concert organised by governor Philippa Dodds John remembers the composer's great philanthropy to the charity and provides a platform for young musicians whilst raising funds to continue our music therapy work.

Comment and commitment

The children of Trevor-Roberts School raised their voices in our Christmas Celebration, compered by adoptee and broadcaster, James O'Brien who also hosted discussions on the issues facing children on his show on LBC, whilst many writers, actors and directors all extended their help enabling young people take to the stage.



5,478 VOLUNTEERS



Foundation support

Multi-year and endowment support makes it possible for Coram to sustain and develop expertise, impact reach and results by developing services to meet emerging needs. We are most grateful to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Pears Foundation, Justice Together Initiative, National Lottery Community Fund, Comic Relief and the Hadley Trust for their long-term support. We are grateful to Oak Foundation and Mission 44 for their support in tackling homelessness and in addressing educational exclusion.

Individual impact

It is the support of thousands of individuals that enables Coram to target help to where it can make the biggest difference and to raise the issues in policy as well as practice and the Christmas Appeal in 2024 was dedicated to supporting children in finding the loving home they need with creative work and advertising media support from JCDecaux, the Kimpton Fitzroy and Squirrels and Bears.

Pro bono support

Our work in giving children greater access to justice is made possible by KIND UK and the educational exclusion legal clinic benefitted from extensive support from Linklaters, DLA Piper, A&O Shearman, Skadden and Baker McKenzie.

Gift of kindness

Other such key acts of kindness include the work of Fitzroy London in inviting guests to support the appeal and hosting the awards for the Voices writing competition, giving children a night to remember with support from St Giles Hotel.

Capital development

The Coram Campus is the birthplace of care and today home to many other organisations, conferences and training days in addition to the work of Coram itself. We are most grateful to the Pears Foundation and others supporting the development of Gregory House to create new space for our enterprise and creative work with young people, the new studio café and the new home for the Coram Institute, which will open in October 2025.

Your help

We simply could not do what we do for children without the tireless support of staff, volunteers and supporters. Thank you.

"We are immensely proud to support Coram's work because our family foundation has gained so much from their community and the expertise they have to offer."

Lily Noall-Churchill, Kenora Foundation



Looking ahead

In the coming year we will extend our corporate partnerships in the legal sector, participate in the Big Give, and hold a gala night for the silver jubilee of the Coram Shakespeare Schools Festival at the Criterion Theatre.

Building the future

In the coming year, we will inaugurate the new building for the Coram Institute for Children, the only think tank dedicated to the future of children, working with partners and young people to learn from the past, assess current issues and offer solutions to create better chances for the next generation.

Research that sets the agenda

We will publish the **20th Holiday Childcare Survey** in July, and then the **national Childcare Survey** in March 2026, the most widely quoted analysis in the sector, setting out the cost and availability of childcare nationwide and featuring the role of childminders for the first time.

The research programme will feature the next stage in the longitudinal study on attachment in adoption, the completion of a baseline study to inform care development in Ukraine, the continuation of the pilot control trial into systemic practice in Early Help for the Department for Education and multiple practice evaluations.

We will host PhD students and partner in a major study on the history of care with Newcastle University, continue to collaborate with the UCL Policy Lab and London Office, act as knowledge partner to the Churchill Fellowship, and develop our joint work with City St George’s University across health social care and data science.

Insight into impact

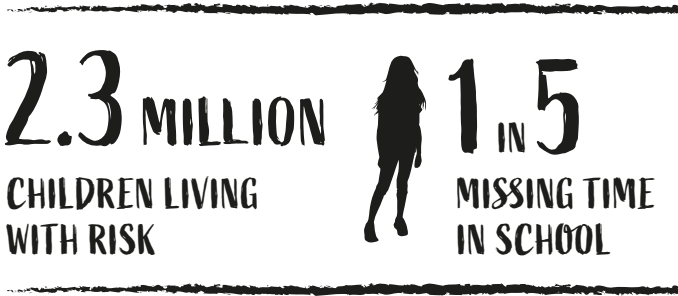
We will convene exploration of **the role of AI** in relation to intersectional issues in children’s social care and publish the Innovation Collective report to inspire and inform transformation in children’s services, crossing the boundaries between sectors and systems.

We will publish **The Voice of Care**, a qualitative analysis of all the feedback received from children and young people in care over ten years of the Bright Spots surveys of children and young people in care and care leavers, asking them what would make their lives better, in the culmination of the 50th anniversary of Coram Voice as the first and longest continuing champion of advocacy for children and young people in care.

We will develop new practice tools and standards anticipating and advancing the families first agenda, supporting the UK children’s services community in the development and delivery of best practice, addressing lives, laws and systems.

“I believe the Coram Institute for Children is uniquely able to bring together those who can make a difference in children’s lives today and set a new agenda for the children of tomorrow.”

Professor Sir Al Aynsley-Green
First Children’s Commissioner for England, former President of the British Medical Association



Informing law and policy

We will continue to act as a core participant to the Covid Inquiry and engage with MPs, peers and government as the **Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill** continues its progress into law. We will offer evidence-led briefings to improve the legislation and its impact on children and young people, including on children’s social care, child protection, the school system and the impact on migrant children and work in partnership with local authorities across the country to inform implementation and guidance.

We will continue to champion Voices in Action, working with young people in tackling school exclusion, expanding our pro bono legal clinic, and provide curriculum resources to support schools in advancing wellbeing. We will work to build sector capacity in addressing homelessness among young people and welcome new members to the Coram group to help build their skills and leadership in communities.

Building support and understanding

As part of the **25th anniversary of the Coram Shakespeare Schools festival**, we will put Shakespeare on trial at the Criterion Theatre London in December, with lawyers, actors and young people coming together to bring a gallery of his most famous characters to life in court, blending theatre and the law for a thought-provoking and entertaining evening.

Our **Christmas campaign for 2025** will focus on ensuring every child has a loving home, highlighting the experiences of children and young people who have benefitted from Coram’s adoption services, our support for children in care and care leavers, and the work of our Creative Therapies team supporting the emotional resilience of children, young people and their families.

We will convene the Big Adoption Day and run a programme of activities to mark the centenary of the 1926 Adoption Act, starting with a major parliamentary event in January 2026.

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

“My work is about ensuring that professionals are equipped to meet young people where they are, not where they are expected to be”

Zoë Lambert

Zoë Lambert
Youth Insight researcher, adoptee and trustee of Coram Intercountry Adoption Centre

Over the last year, Zoë has completed her work as one of the first Youth Insight researchers, helping to shape the development of the Coram Institute and contributing postgraduate level research on identity. Her paper *“Beyond Labels: Understanding the Complex Identities of Youth in the UK”* was showcased to a Future of Youth forum with academics, commentators and practitioners.

The Complex Identities framework will now inform a new training programme for practitioners to help them to support young people navigating fragmented identities. Zoë was informed by direct experience as an intercountry adoptee and is now a trustee of Coram Intercountry Adoption Centre. She says: “In the present day, identity is not a fixed point - it’s a negotiation.”

This portrait of Zoë is by photographer and adoptee Philip Sinden, which will be on display in the new studio café which opens on the Coram Campus in October 2025.



-  coram.org.uk
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“The child is a person and not an object of concern and I give my personal thank you to Coram because they have always understood that”

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Butler-Sloss GBE,
member of the House of Lords