



coram | better chances
for children
since 1739

Marking 100 years
of the Adoption of
Children Act

Spring Newsletter 2026

Dear Friends,

It was 100 years ago that the groundbreaking 1926 Adoption of Children Act was passed into law in England and Wales, enabling the transfer of parental rights and responsibilities from birth parents to adoptive parents for children who could not be cared for within their birth or extended families. It ensured adoptive parents held full parental rights, protecting children's security in a loving home within adoptive families. It also paved the way for the creation of adoption agencies and marked the start of formal adoption practices.



At that time, Coram, as the Foundling Hospital, continued its work with residential and fostering care and it was not until 1972 that Coram registered as an adoption agency, finding families for children in care. Today Coram Ambitious for Adoption is an Ofsted Outstanding rated independent adoption agency, sitting at the heart of national practice and innovation.

In the intervening 100 years we have seen deep social change that has affected adoption. We've moved from the almost complete severance of family ties to birth families, to now greater transparency and more potential for post-adoption contact. While 100 years ago most adoptees were from single mothers, pushed by social and financial pressures to give up their infants, the increased availability of contraception, the legalisation on abortion and the softening of attitudes to birth outside marriage meant the change in profile and numbers of adoptees. Most adoptees now are not relinquished, but are children who have experienced, or are at risk of, abuse and neglect and are placed into the care and protection of local authorities. We're marking this auspicious centenary milestone with a programme of events throughout 2026.

We want to recognise progress and celebrate the amazing people who have provided secure and loving families for the most vulnerable children. Now more than ever there is a need to improve understanding of adoption and its evolution in the UK and welcome a new generation of adoptive families for the children who are waiting for this unique permanency offer. Our journey continues and, as ever, none of this would be possible without your wonderful support, so a huge thank you on behalf of the team and the families who have adopted through us.

Cathrine Clarke

Managing Director, Coram Adoption & Families

The centenary of adoption

As we celebrate 100 years since the Adoption of Children Act was passed, we also take time to look to the future too. Over the year, we will undertake events and conferences, while publishing a book on the history of adoption, a special edition of Coram BAAF's Adoption & Fostering Journal and other research into the issues affecting adoption. We are also creating a new collection of personal testimony, featuring the voices of those who have experience of adoption from across the decades. Visit adoptionstory.org.uk to find out more.

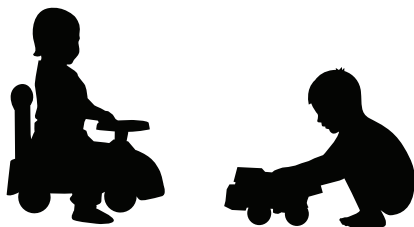
While much of this issue focuses on our work in adoption, there are other important stories about our work with young care leavers, the 40th anniversary of Coram SCARF supporting children's wellbeing, and our very own CEO Dr Carol Homden being made Dame Commander of the British Empire in recognition of her tireless work to support children, young people and families.

We do hope you are inspired by what you read and the impact your support is having. We truly cannot do it without you, so a heartfelt thank you to you all.



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Adopter case study: Tom, Alice, Cassie & Caleb's story

Tom and Alice adopted twins Cassie and Caleb* through Coram. They adopted through early permanence, fostering the twins from the age of four months. Now, a year later, Alice shares her experiences of the process and how life has changed for her family.

"I think I always wanted to adopt. Growing up I had a few friends who were adopted and I thought it was a beautiful thing and as an adult I thought 'I'd love to do that.' As we didn't have any children of our own, my husband and I discussed the idea of adoption and we decided to look seriously into it.

"The biggest concern we both had was how intrusive the approval process might be, but our social worker was great, helping us prepare by letting us know in advance what we would be talking about in the sessions. She also explained why what she was asking was linked to caring for a potential adopted child. By the end, we both agreed that we really enjoyed it!

"After thinking we would only be able to adopt one child, we were shown the profile of twins. A boy and a girl. They have been with us for a year now. Before they came, I thought 'baby brain' was something that only happened to birth families! Now I know that it comes with sleep deprivation. Feeding every two to three hours is intense and with twins it's much more exhausting! But what a joy. Even within a month of them moving in with us, there was such a significant change in their development and wellbeing.

"We've been blessed to see so many firsts – first smiles and giggles, first crawling and walking. Their first birthdays and Christmases were with us. Now they have really sassy personalities. We love that we are able to nurture them and help them grow and heal. The thought of them not being with us is devastating. They are 100% our children."

*Images, names and some of the details of those mentioned have been changed to protect their identities.

“Adoption is the most beautiful thing. If you are thinking about doing it, do it. It is scary but it will change your life for the better.”

“Glow in the Dark” wins first prize at international film festival

Glow in the Dark, a short film re-imagining the narrative around youth homelessness co-produced by Coram’s Voices in Action, Coalesce Studios and homelessness ambassadors – who have lived experience of homelessness, won the prestigious Piccadilly Lights Spotlight Prize (PLSP) at the 2025 Big Syn International Film Festival Awards in November.

The winning film was screened in full at the iconic Piccadilly Lights, Europe’s biggest screen, and focuses on the remarkable ambitions of these young people who have experienced homelessness - from aspiring lawyers to fashion designers - and their tenacity in working toward their dreams despite major obstacles.

Louise Mumcular, Policy and Practice Officer, Youth Homelessness at Coram, said: “We are thrilled to be awarded the PLSP. We have shown that young people, no matter what their circumstances, have the potential to shine bright. With a growing number of young people experiencing homelessness – official statistics indicate over 100,000 last year – our society is missing out on an incredible resource. Youth homelessness is a system failure, and change is urgently needed. To end youth homelessness, youth-specific solutions are needed,

from stronger family support services, to equality in benefit entitlement and pay, and access to affordable, safe and secure housing.”

Athian Akec, a Participation Intern at Voices in Action who worked on the film, said: “We are really privileged to make this film which highlights the resilience, drive and inspiration of young people with experience of homelessness. We asked young people who they wanted to be and what emerged was the ambitions of future human rights lawyers, fashion designers, writers and social workers. These remarkable young people had already taken steps to achieve their dreams despite experiencing homelessness. If we just invested in young people, we could really improve things for all these innovators, designers and thinkers who don’t have the resources and support they need.”

Watch the film here - www.coram.org.uk/glowinthedark/





Coram Institute report finds that wellbeing rates are declining for young care leavers

A new report, published by the Coram Institute for Children, draws on 27,000 responses from the Coram Voice Bright Spots surveys with children in care and young care leavers in over 70 local authorities between 2015 and 2024.

The surveys, co-produced with children and young people, aim to understand what makes life good for children and young people in and leaving the care

system. The report highlights how vital relationships and safe homes are to care-experienced children and young people's wellbeing.

One in three (32%) young care leavers report having low wellbeing, according to the analysis. This figure rises to 47% for care leavers with a long-term health condition or disability.

Care leavers report lower scores on life satisfaction, happiness and sense of purpose than their peers in the general population, and rates of low wellbeing for care leavers have increased from 29% between 2017 and 2020 to 32% between 2021 and 2024.

Whilst 84% of children in care aged 8-18 say that their life is getting better and around four in ten (39%) of children aged 11-18 have very high wellbeing, wellbeing scores decrease with age and there is a stark drop-off in wellbeing rates for young people who have left care.



Young people commented that leaving care meant losing relationships they had come to rely on, which in some cases left them feeling alone and unsupported. One in five care leavers (19%) said they felt lonely often or always, compared to one in 12 of their peers in the general population. This figure was higher for care leavers with a long-term health condition or disability (29%).

Alfie-James Waring, a Coram Voice care-experienced consultant, said:

“For care-experienced people, wellbeing is not just about feeling happy, it is about having stability, safety, and people who listen. Growing up in care, I learned early on how to survive, not how to feel. There were times I had to hide my emotions just to get through the day. That is why it is so important we talk about wellbeing for care-experienced young people. Conversations like this remind us that we are not alone and that it is okay to put our wellbeing first. It is a way to break the silence that the system sometimes leaves us with, and to start changing how care is seen and delivered.”

Read the full report: www.coram.org.uk/news/one-in-three-young-care-leavers-low-wellbeing/

Big Adoption Day &

Coram's programme of events to mark 2026 as the centenary year of legal adoption in England and Wales got underway with a major parliamentary event on 19 January, while Big Adoption Day two days later saw the launch of our new partnership with charitable social enterprise and leisure operator GLL.

The parliamentary event, attended by well over 100 MPs, peers and sector professionals and hosted by former governor Baroness Butler Sloss, included fantastic contributions from adopted young people Mali (a 2024 Voices creative writing competition winner) and poet Luke Wright. Attendees also heard thoughtful

contributions from President of the Family Division Sir Andrew McFarlane, Lord Cameron, via audio message, and the CEO of Adoption UK Emily Frith.

In her speech, Coram CEO Dame Carol Homden, reiterated her call for more and better support for adoptive families, and Coram governor and co-chair of the APPG for Adoption and Permanence Lord Russell made concluding remarks referencing the Lords debate happening that same night in Parliament, in which he also called for reversal of cuts to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) and namechecked Coram's longstanding expertise in adoption.

To mark Big Adoption Day 2026, GLL and Coram have announced a new partnership, offering 500 free three-month memberships to GLL operated Better leisure centres for adoptive families in London and across the country. The partnership launched at an event at Sobell Leisure Centre in Islington, where adoptive families enjoyed the centre's new active play zone including treehouse playrooms, climbing and a sensory room.

The free memberships are open to adoptive families across England and Wales, who adopted through Coram



Parliamentary event

or another voluntary adoption agency within the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA).

The partnership between Coram and GLL has been informed by the report by Coram and mental health charity Stormbreak, which was published last year by the Local Government Association. It warned that care-experienced children and young people are a 'hidden group' whose needs and experiences are often overlooked in physical activity policy and provision. It called for them to have better access to physical activity.

Big Adoption Day is an annual campaign led by the CVAA and Coram. Adoption agencies across the UK host in-person and online events in their local areas and celebrate the real-life stories of families who have adopted, to encourage anyone interested in exploring adoption to find out more.

There are currently 3,000 children waiting to be adopted across England, of which half have been waiting more than 18 months since entering care. There is an urgent need for more prospective adoptive parents to come forward to provide permanent, loving homes for these children.



Dame Carol Homden, CEO of Coram, said: "We are delighted to collaborate with GLL this Big Adoption Day and to highlight this wonderful offer for adoptive families across the country. We know this will make a huge difference for families, enabling them to enjoy activities together and helping to boost their physical and mental wellbeing."

Joseph Rham, Customer and Communities Director at GLL added:

"We are delighted to be supporting Coram and the work it does raising awareness and facilitating adoptions across the UK. We know the huge mental and physical benefits that access to sports, fitness and wellbeing activities can have on all sections of society. When we became aware of the research undertaken by Coram showing that care-experienced children often miss out, we wanted to help, both by promoting Big Adoption Day and providing free access to our leisure facilities to adoptive families."



Angela, Sulabh and Leonardo's story

Angela and Sulabh adopted their little boy Leonardo (aged almost seven at the time) after meeting at a Coram Adoption Activity Day. Activity Days are informal events delivered by specialist staff that enable approved adopters to discover whether they feel an emotional connection with a child, rather than simply relying on a written profile, and importantly give the children the same opportunity.

"We went to a "fun day" as Leonardo calls it in 2019" says Angela. "We were lucky enough to meet Leonardo and we fell in love with him with a force that was unexpected."

"Leonardo is very good at football," remembers Sulabh, "and he was practising his shots and I joined in. It really was an instant connection..."

At the end of the activity day, Angela and Sulabh expressed their interest and things happened very quickly.

"It's the second time I've fallen in love in my life," says Angela. "First with Sulabh and now with Leonardo. As soon as I met him it was love at first sight. I didn't expect it to be that way but that's definitely how it happened. He chose us and we've been happy as a triangle family ever since."

"We're forever grateful to Coram for providing us with the platform of the activity day where we met Leonardo."

Wear your SCARF day

Coram SCARF – 40 Years of Supporting Children’s Wellbeing

2026 is a landmark year for Coram SCARF as we celebrate 40 years of supporting children’s wellbeing. To mark this milestone, we are realigning our brand to better reflect our mission and impact. Formerly known as Coram Life Education, we are now Coram SCARF, a name that captures our commitment to helping children thrive through high-quality PSHE education and wellbeing resources. SCARF stands for Safety, Caring, Achievement, Resilience, and Friendship, which are the core values that help children build essential life skills, emotional resilience, and positive relationships.

Our evidence-based programmes equip teachers with engaging, practical resources that make PSHE meaningful and impactful, supporting children to develop confidence, empathy, and positive mental wellbeing. We work in partnership with schools to create safe, supportive environments where every child can flourish.

2026 will be a year of celebration and action. One of our most exciting initiatives is Wear Your SCARF Day, taking place on Friday 13 February 2026 during Children’s Mental Health Week (9–15 February). Schools, families, and

communities are invited to wear a scarf and celebrate the SCARF values. More than a fun activity, the day sparks important conversations about mental health, kindness, and resilience. We provide free activity packs, lesson ideas, and inclusive resources to help schools make the day meaningful.

As one Year 5 pupil shared: “Wearing my scarf made me feel proud because it reminded me that we all care about each other in our school.”

Throughout the year, we will also celebrate our 40-year legacy with our annual conference, the launch of a commemorative song, a new podcast, and a showcase event at the House of Lords in November. Each will be highlighting four decades of empowering children to flourish. Building on this momentum, in 2025 we hosted a roundtable on children’s digital wellbeing, chaired by Baroness Kidron, reinforcing our commitment to safeguarding children in a changing world.

Thank you for supporting Coram SCARF. Together, we can help every child feel safe, cared for, and ready to achieve.





The launch of the Coram Institute for Children

The Institute is the UK's very first 'think and do' centre solely dedicated to advancing the life chances of children and young people, both at home and internationally, and committed to turning insight into impact in both policy and practice.

It incorporates Coram's existing portfolio of research activity and has at its heart the views and experiences gained from delivering services to

hundreds of thousands of children and young people, informed by our experience as the country's first and longest continuing children's charity since being established as the Foundling Hospital in 1739.

Coram has a lengthy track record of delivering research, with two established research teams: Coram Research, Impact and Evaluation, who for more than 15 years have partnered

with national and local government, the NHS, think tanks and other third sector organisations to deliver large evaluations of significant policies and programmes; and Coram International, which has worked in almost 100 countries, promoting and improving children's rights through policy and practice reform.

Participatory research with children and young people to ensure their voices are heard is at the heart of our research, and we use a variety of methods to ensure their voices are included.

Max Stanford, Head of Coram Research, Impact and Evaluation, said:

“This marks the start of our ambition to be a leading centre for research and insight working directly with children and young people to influence policy and practice through robust, inclusive research and evaluation.”

Find out more at www.coram.org.uk/institute/

Coram granted independent research organisation status by the UKRI

On World Children's Day, Coram was delighted to announce that the charity's application to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) for recognition as an independent research organisation (IRO) had been successful, and that we are now eligible to bid directly for research grant funding from the seven research councils of the United Kingdom, in what is thought to be a first for a children's charity.

Coram has an existing track record of delivering high quality research, both in the UK and internationally. We work across the UK and in nearly 100 countries worldwide, partnering with national and local governments,

UK What Works Centres, the UN, think tanks and other third sector organisations to deliver change for children and young people.

Dr Carol Homden, Coram CEO, said:

“Coram's ambition is to make positive change happen for children and young people and we are proud to achieve recognition for the quality and contribution of our research as the only IRO dedicated to children and young people. We look forward to playing our full part in the research community and to contributing to UKRI's goals for world class research and ideas, helping to build research capacity and to turn insight into impact.”

The need for early years funding reform

A Coram PACEY survey of almost 3,000 childminders in England highlights widespread concern over early years funding rates with many childminders struggling to keep their business financially viable.

The national average hourly rates for early years funding are set at £11.54 per hour for children under two, £8.53 per hour for two-year-olds and just £6.12 per hour for three- and four-year olds (2025-26). There is widespread acknowledgement that the three- and four-year-old rate is insufficient to cover delivery costs. Childminders operate at much smaller ratios than nurseries (being mandated to have no more than three early years children per adult, including a maximum of one baby under the age of one) and are therefore less able to offset the losses from three- and four-year-old rates through gains from the rates for younger children.

Headlines from the latest survey demonstrates this impact, with many unable to maintain sustainable childminding businesses. For instance just 4% of respondents said the three- and four-year old rate is adequate to run their business sustainably (compared to 90% for the under-two



rate and 71% for the two-year-old rate), while 70% said the current approach for early years funding does not work well for their childminding business and a further 69% said the current approach for early years funding prevents them from meeting families' needs for childcare across all age groups.

The survey also highlights overwhelming support for funding reform, with 90% of childminders wanting funding rates that reflect the distinct way they operate compared to nursery settings and 89% would be more likely to offer funded places for three- and four-year-olds if the funding rate was higher.

More detail can be found on the Coram PACEY website.

www.corampacey.org.uk/almost-3000-childminders-call-for-early-years-funding-reform-in-england/



Dr Carol Homden made Dame Commander of the British Empire

Coram Chief Executive Officer Dr Carol Homden has been announced as Dame Commander of the British Empire in the New Year Honours List 2026, for services to children and families.

The citation states: "Carol has been Chief Executive of the Thomas Coram Foundation for Children (Coram) since 2007. Since then, she has been the driving force behind the delivery and evolution of the Coram Group's contribution to supporting children, young people and families. Her mission is that all children, particularly the most vulnerable, should thrive. In this, she personifies the principles of Thomas

Coram who founded the charity 300 years ago."

Dr Carol Homden said: "It is humbling and overwhelming to receive such an honour. It is my privilege to work with dedicated staff, volunteers and supporters across health, education, law and social care as we together strive to support children and families who experience adversity to create better chances for children now, and advance research and policy to build a better future for society."



Could you be a Charter Patron?

Your generosity is helping children and young people thrive every day, and we are so grateful for your support. Every gift, of any size, is vital in creating better chances for children.

For supporters who feel able to go a step further, Coram's Charter Patrons are a small group of individuals who pledge to donate over £1,000 each year.

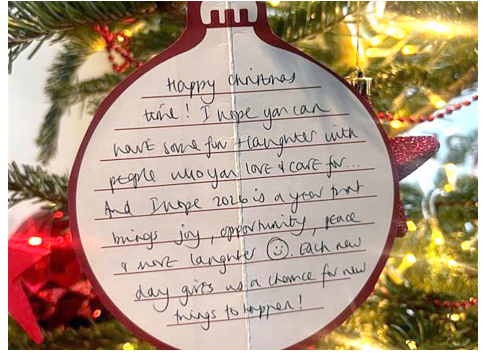
The annual Charter Patron reception allows members and their guests an opportunity to hear directly from our leadership team about the impact of their support. These evenings are hosted by our CEO, Dame Carol Homden DBE, PhD, and often take place in the historic Foundling Museum.



You can find out more at www.coram.org.uk/ways-you-can-give/join-our-charter-patrons/ or you can contact our Charter Patron Manager, Rachael Corns, on rachael@coram.org.uk or 020 7520 0306.

Festive messages of care

Over the festive period, we asked supporters to send in messages of care for children who found their loving home through Coram's services; the response was overwhelming, with over 60 messages returned. The messages were shared on social media and displayed on our Christmas tree on Coram Campus.



On behalf of the children and young people who read these messages of care, thank you so much. Similarly, if you chose to donate to Coram over the festive period, we are so grateful for your support in creating better chances for children.

Are you looking to take on a challenge in 2026?

The Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge could be just the one for you! Tackle 24 miles and more than 1,700 metres of ascent as you conquer the three highest peaks in the Yorkshire Dales. This demanding yet rewarding one-day trekking adventure is perfect for anyone eager to push themselves while raising vital funds for Coram. Sign up today and take on the challenge!

Date: **Saturday 11 July 2026**

Registration fee: **£45**

Minimum fundraising target: **£260**

Sign up at [www.coram.org.uk/
training-and-events/
yorkshire-three-peaks/](http://www.coram.org.uk/training-and-events/yorkshire-three-peaks/)



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