



coram

better chances
for children
since 1739

Impact Report

2025/26

“Adopted. Different. Short they say.
In my uniqueness, I find my way.
I am different. A melody untold.
In my story, a brilliance unfolds.”

Mali, aged 11



Foreword

Over the last year, there has been intense debate around the risks posed to children’s health and wellbeing by early access to potentially harmful content online, and the government has now announced plans to restrict social media access for under-16s.

The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act has passed into law, and there are now set to be substantial changes to the organisation of fostering and children’s social care.

Throughout this period of change, Coram has played a key role in ensuring that children’s views and experiences are central. We contributed as a core participant to the Covid Inquiry Module 8 on the impact of the pandemic on children and generated new evidence and insights to inform the development of future services.

We achieved a key ambition by becoming the first and only recognised Independent Research Organisation dedicated to children’s issues and have regenerated Gregory House on the Coram Campus as the home for the Coram Institute for Children, with new facilities for young people and professionals to come together.

In the last year, we have reached more children and families than ever before by maintaining and developing our direct delivery services across our seven strategic goals. This includes expanding our work on bullying and conflict navigation, and additional professional services in early years and childcare.

None of this work would be possible without the dedication and expertise of our staff, trustees and volunteers and the support of so many individuals, local partners, trusts and foundations, and we thank them all.

There has never been a more important time to recognise the past and inspire the future, and we shall not rest until every child has the love, security, education and opportunity that should be theirs by right.

Professor Sir Ivor Crewe
President

Dame Carol Homden DBE PhD
Chief Executive



230,058
CHILDREN & CARERS
SUPPORTED DIRECTLY

739,041
BENEFITTING IN SCHOOLS
FROM OUR CURRICULUM
RESOURCES

1.8 MILLION
USERS OF OUR DIGITAL
INFORMATION

100 years of adoption

The Adoption of Children Act (1926) established for the first time in England and Wales a legal process by which the rights and responsibilities for a child could be transferred. Coram convened a national programme to mark the centenary which launched in National Adoption Week 2025, with the Adoption Story website, offering adopters and adoptees a platform to tell their moving and personal stories.

In January 2026, a special parliamentary event was addressed by the former and then President of the Family Division, adoptees and families, including the powerful poem by Mali (seen here), as we called on government and society to ensure adopters are recruited and supported so that children waiting can thrive in the loving lifelong families they need.

“I believe everyone ought, in duty, to do any good they can.”

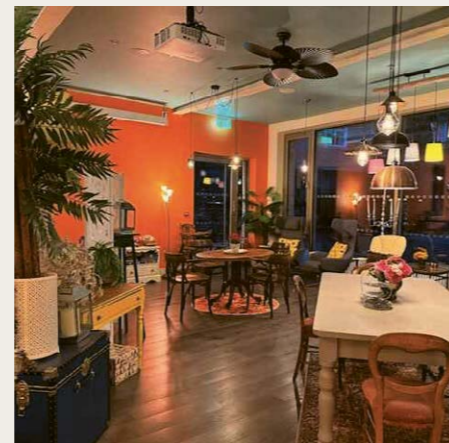
Thomas Coram

Year in view

This year, Coram achieved a key milestone in its history by increasing impact in national policy, media coverage and research recognition whilst expanding reach of delivery to children and families. We celebrated the silver jubilee of the Coram Shakespeare Schools Festival and welcomed Coram Leap Confronting Conflict, Coram Kidscape and Coram Family Lives into our family.

On World Children’s Day in November, we were delighted to announce the designation by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) of the Coram Institute for Children as the first and only Independent Research Organisation (IRO) in the children’s sector and opened its new home on Campus.

We were proud to be a charity partner for the Sunday Times Get Britain Reading campaign and chosen by Macfarlanes as their charity of the year, whilst also launching a national programme of research, debate and discussion to mark the centenary of the Adoption of Children Act 1926 and the Big Adoption Day to find loving homes for the children who wait.



“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 seen here with Helen Hayes MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee at the opening of the Coram Institute

Place for all who care

The creation of the Library of Care has been supported by Professor Sir Al Aynsley-Green and Bob Ward as well as the Wolfson Foundation. This complements the new Insight Lab, named for former President Lord Young of Graffham as well as the Pathways Studio Café, made possible by Pears Foundation to provide a social space for young people and professionals to come together.

Recognition of service

Coram CEO Dame Carol Homden DBE PhD was recognised in the New Year Honours for her service to children and families. The citation highlighted her “relentless pursuit of innovation” and noted that “her mission is for all children, particularly the most vulnerable, to thrive. In this, she personifies the principles of Thomas Coram who founded the charity 300 years ago.”

National moments

Coram’s parliamentary reception marking the centenary of adoption featured an address by Lord Russell of Liverpool, whilst Amy Lewis, Head of Coram Beanstalk, joined the Number 10 reception to mark the Year of Reading and Baroness Hallett, Chair of the Covid Inquiry, invited Coram to give oral evidence as a Core Participant in Module 8.

Creative voices

Dr Manuela Perteghella MP, Chair of the All-Party Group on Shakespeare joined Mike Tucker in celebrating the silver jubilee of the Coram Shakespeare Schools Festival, whilst journalist Ashley-John Baptiste co-hosted the Voices awards for children in and leaving care, marking the 50th anniversary of Voice for the Child in Care, now Coram Voice.

A fair chance

Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC) is the leading source of free legal information, advice and representation on community care, education, immigration and family law to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable children, young people, families, carers and professionals every year.

Free legal support

Coram's Child Law Advice Service was used by 500,000 online visitors seeking help on issues ranging from school admissions and assessment for special educational needs to family arrangement orders and contact. Trained legal advisers provided over 13,000 personalised advice sessions to more than 12,000 individual clients across telephone, email, and webchat. We are grateful for continued funding from the Department for Education (DfE) for a further year, ensuring continuity of service, 77% of users feel better able to resolve their issue as a result.

Legal aid representation

The Coram Legal Practice Unit provides representation under legal aid to some of the most vulnerable children, young people, parents and carers, in cases covering community care, immigration and asylum, education and discrimination and family law. Five hundred matters were addressed across advice, outreach support and cases progressed to court.

The team has been nominated in the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Awards and was again recognised by LEXCEL assessors for 30 points of excellence in delivery.

Legal reform

Senior Solicitor Rosalind Compton led Coram's work as a Core Participant providing the written submission to the COVID Inquiry module 8 on the impact of the pandemic on children with the generous support of Jenner and Block.

In April this year, we led a [letter to the Home Secretary](#) from children's charities urging the Home Secretary to [rethink plans to change indefinite leave to remain \(ILR\) rules retrospectively](#), expressing concern that the Home Office proposals set out in its policy paper [Restoring Order and Control](#) will be detrimental to the wellbeing and safety of children.

Setting legal precedent

We have also led the way in pursuing strategic litigation cases that set legal precedents that will help more children and young people in the future.

In a case led by Senior Solicitor Stefan Vnuk, the Court of Appeal in *R(Kone) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* found that a child with a British citizen father and mother with limited leave to remain in the United Kingdom should be granted indefinite and not temporary leave to enter. The case clarified a potential pathway to immediate settlement for a significant number of children who, under the Home Office's previous interpretation, were excluded. Whilst the Home Office has subsequently changed the immigration rules, this was an important case for highlighting an unfair anomaly which negatively impacted groups of children.

In April we welcomed the [Legal Aid Agency's decision](#) to grant exceptional case funding for representation in an Independent Review Panel (the specialist body that reviews the lawfulness of permanent exclusions) for the very first time, following a landmark court challenge brought by CCLC.

We have urged the UK government to be cautious in its use of language when talking about children, and to ensure policy to address child exploitation is grounded in evidence.

Tackling school exclusion

Exclusion from school can seriously affect a child's future – increasing their risks of harm by disengaging them from learning and driving increased stress in families. Supported by dedicated online resources, the Coram School Exclusion Clinic enables young people and families to challenge unlawful school exclusions and provides vital legal representation at independent review panel hearings. The work was supported through the year by Mission 44, and by the pro bono support of lawyers from partner firms including A&O Shearman, Linklaters and DLA Piper.



12,000
CLIENTS SUPPORTED
BY THE CHILD LAW
ADVICE SERVICE

Young ambassadors of Coram's Voices in Action programme published a powerful testimony on their lived experience in a new Zine to call for greater empathy and understanding of children at risk of school exclusion

"For too long, children who have nobody to care for them have been let down by systems that are meant to protect them."

Kelly Everett, Senior Solicitor



Successful judicial review

Kelly Everett, Senior Solicitor

As a result of the work of Senior Solicitor in Coram Children's Legal Centre, Kelly Everett, the High Court ruled that Hounslow Council unlawfully failed to recognise an 11-year-old child as 'looked after' and provide him with adequate accommodation and support under the Children Act 1989 after both parents passed away, leaving him and his sister in a squalid house and with informal care arrangements leading to neglect. CCLC initiated a successful judicial review of the case, which was upheld by the Court.

Kelly said: "This decision sends a strong and important message that children's rights matter, that the law must be applied properly, and that families and carers are entitled to expect accountability, clarity and fairness from public bodies when caring for children in need."

Looking ahead

In the coming year, we shall focus further on the impact of school exclusion in a new report based on our legal case work and recommending changes to close the existing loopholes in protection of children's rights.

A loving home

All children and young people need a loving home. Coram supports families through online, helpline and in-person services, delivering outstanding adoption services, and providing unique services to match approved families with children waiting and to support them through their journey.

Adoption

Coram Adoption, rated Outstanding by Ofsted, welcomes prospective adopters across Greater London and many surrounding areas and hosts the Coram Ambitious for Adoption regional adoption agency to deliver adoption services on behalf of nine local authorities.

Over the last 12 months, we have found new loving homes for 47 children waiting in the UK. Coram IAC is also an outstanding VAA and this year worked with 133 local authorities across the UK and placed 39 children - 26 intercountry and 13 from the UK.

Coram IAC welcomed a visit from the Philippines Children Services and accompanied the DfE on a visit to India, to enhance our working arrangements to be able to place some of the world's most vulnerable children who would otherwise grow up in orphanages in loving homes in the UK.

Big Adoption Day

Coram convened Big Adoption Day 2026 across all voluntary adoption agencies to support the recruitment of more adopters for the many children waiting for the loving home they need. We also launched a new partnership with charitable social enterprise and leisure operator GLL, offering 500 free three-month memberships to Better leisure centres for adoptive families in London and across the country. Coram's partnership with the National Theatre's production of Ballet Shoes saw 100 families taking to their feet to applaud its magical exploration of the themes of love and enduring relationships.

Fostering Connections

The fostering connections training for social workers and our Sibling Time events for children provide a new way for children to maintain connections that matter in their lives.



3,448 ADOPTIVE FAMILIES SUPPORTED

National impact

This work is complemented by the dedicated First4Adoption national gateway, enabling more than 1,728 enquirers interested in adoption to prepare with the First Steps course, as well as national Activity Days enabling children who are waiting to be matched with adopters no matter where they are, and the extensive resources and training for professionals provided by CoramBAAF.

Creative Therapies

Our experienced therapists have supported children, young people and families across London, through therapeutic assessments and interventions and is one of only five sites to be piloting a multi-disciplinary team approach in adoption support. We provided creative therapies across schools in our home borough of Camden, helping them to develop trauma-informed approaches.

Supporting families to thrive

In our mission to provide greater support to families no matter where they live, we welcomed the charity Family Lives into the Coram Group in April 2026 this year. Coram Family Lives delivers direct, accessible and non-judgemental help to parents and carers often before issues escalate into crisis, whether through digital, helpline or face to face services.

The dedicated team of specialist staff and volunteers received nearly 30,000 queries and over half a million users accessed our digital resources. Areas of support given include children's behaviour, school attendance, neurodiversity, parental conflict, separation, mental health concerns, domestic abuse, financial stress and safeguarding worries.



“Once we were approved to adopt, our social worker became like our bodyguard! We never felt alone and we were equipped with support and evidence-based knowledge...”



Ben and Adam adopted siblings Lydia and Spencer, and later another child, Jamie, through Coram

“In our initial research about adoption, Coram was spoken about very positively, so we came in for an interview which made up our minds to go with Coram.

Four years after the adoption, we decided to adopt through Coram again, as we love our children and love being parents. We understood this would need to be managed carefully around Spencer's and Lydia's needs, and it would throw up questions for them around adoption. Our social worker was great at involving Lydia and Spencer and giving us advice on how to handle the adjustment for them. It took a lot of care and consideration but it's gone really well.

Welcoming Jamie to our family has been incredible. There's a real love and tenderness between the three children. It's very busy but never boring!”

Looking ahead

In the coming year we will publish a new analysis of the trends and issues of families who access the support of Coram Family Lives helpline and develop further our support for adopted children in schools, in exploring their identity and Telling My Story.

All names changed to protect anonymity

A voice that's heard

Coram works to ensure that the voices, views and experiences of children and young people are heard in the decisions that matter, in their own lives, in policy and in practice, supporting care-experienced children and young people directly and addressing systemic issues of homelessness, disability and school exclusion.

Championing change

For 50 years Coram Voice has made sure the voices of care-experienced children and young people and those around the care system are at the heart of improving their own lives and the systems that support them. This year, we worked with 9,000 young people including 3,500 supported through advocacy in local areas. Non-statutory advocacy expanded to reach more of those in need and, with the support of Bernard Lewis Foundation, are pioneering the extension of Independent Visitor Services to care leavers.

Tackling youth homelessness

Our youth homelessness briefing, circulated to all parliamentarians and other relevant parties in September last year, set out the scale of youth homelessness and the particular risks for young care leavers, recommending that the entitlement to the over-25 rate of Universal Credit be applied from the age of 18, and to provide all care leavers with council tax exemptions, rent deposit and rent guarantor schemes.

"Following meetings with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and a roundtable event hosted by Rushanara Ali MP, we welcomed news that Government exempted care leavers from the local connection requirement in social housing, an issue making it more difficult for young people we work with to find a home."

We have supported calls for a specific youth homelessness chapter in the government's homelessness strategy and were pleased that our recommendations to address the work disincentive for people living in temporary and supported accommodation, was included and that the National Standards for the Provision of Children and Young People's Advocacy Services will extend entitlement to independent advocacy to homeless 16 and 17 year olds, who were previously excluded.

300 INDEPENDENT VISITORS SUPPORTED YOUNG PEOPLE IN AND LEAVING CARE

A National Voice

A National Voice (ANV) ambassadors are young people serving on our National Children in Care Council, leading campaigns that make a positive difference to the lives of children in care. Following their 'Grand Campaign,' DfE has now updated the statutory guidance confirming the expectation that care leavers receive a £3,000 Setting Up Home Allowance and have created new online information for care leavers to ensure that there is "No more confusion! Everyone should have a clear, written document outlining exactly what they are entitled to."

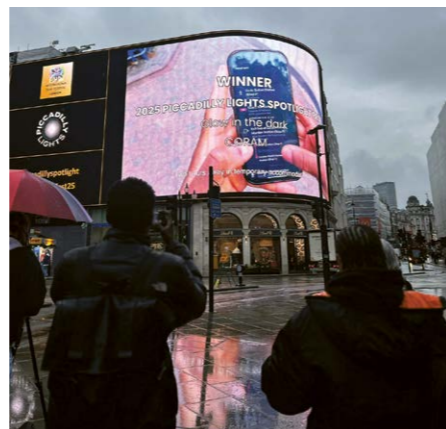
Our ambassadors delivered keynote speeches to 700 sector leaders and professionals at Fatima Whitbread's One Voice summit and produced a *Messages to the Minister* report and - with support from the National Lottery Community Fund - they will now select and drive their own national projects on topics important to them. The first three projects to be Amplified by Experience were chosen through workshops, consultations, and peer-led discussions at the *Amplify* event in May where groups from around the country shared ideas and recognised excellence in children in care councils, care leaver forums, and other participation groups. Details of the ANV awards can be found at coramvoice.org.uk.

Caring about Care podcasts

The podcast series "Caring about Care", shines a light on the history of the care-experienced movement. In the first episode, ANV ambassadors Dyllan and Salma talk to Jonny Hoyle who - 25 years ago - helped set up A National Voice, when he was 18, going on to be trustee of the charity and chair for eight years until it became a part of Coram Voice in 2017.

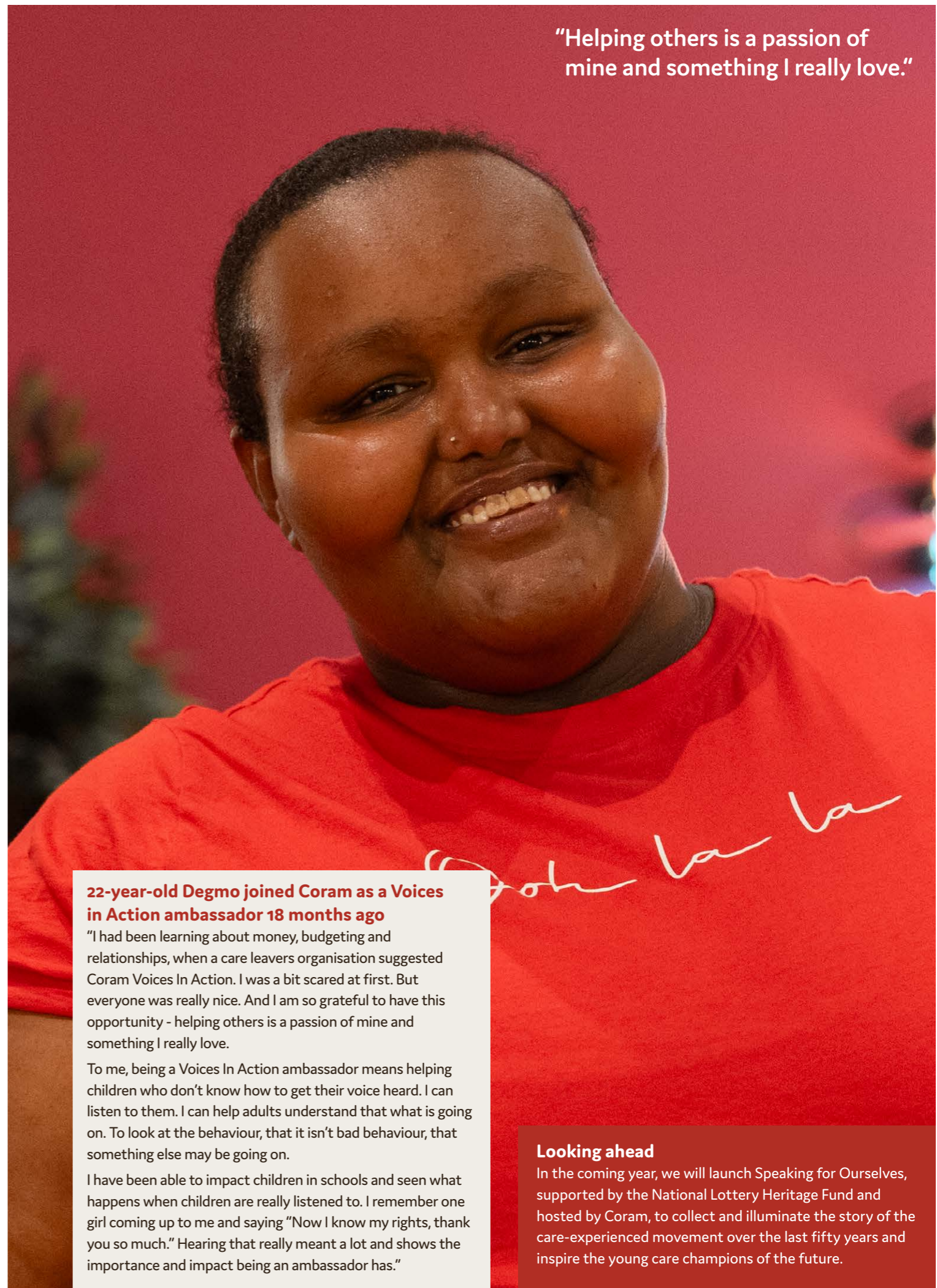
Voices in Action

The Voices in Action young ambassadors with lived experience of homelessness informed and co-produced our policy recommendations and created an award-winning film *Glow in the Dark* that was shown in Piccadilly Circus.



Young people of A National Voice briefed the Minister for Children and Families on their campaign for consistent support for care leavers, whilst Managing Director of Coram Voice and Young People's Programmes Brigid Robinson and young ambassador Jack Phelps attended a special reception at No.10

"Helping others is a passion of mine and something I really love."



22-year-old Degmo joined Coram as a Voices in Action ambassador 18 months ago

"I had been learning about money, budgeting and relationships, when a care leavers organisation suggested Coram Voices In Action. I was a bit scared at first. But everyone was really nice. And I am so grateful to have this opportunity - helping others is a passion of mine and something I really love.

To me, being a Voices In Action ambassador means helping children who don't know how to get their voice heard. I can listen to them. I can help adults understand that what is going on. To look at the behaviour, that it isn't bad behaviour, that something else may be going on.

I have been able to impact children in schools and seen what happens when children are really listened to. I remember one girl coming up to me and saying "Now I know my rights, thank you so much." Hearing that really meant a lot and shows the importance and impact being an ambassador has."

Looking ahead

In the coming year, we will launch Speaking for Ourselves, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and hosted by Coram, to collect and illuminate the story of the care-experienced movement over the last fifty years and inspire the young care champions of the future.

A chance to shine

Coram works to ensure that children can build their confidence, aspiration, identity and social equity by participating in creative programmes, making personal discoveries and expanding their horizons.

25 years of Coram Shakespeare Schools Festival

Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation (CSSF) this year marked 25 years transforming the lives of more than 350,000 young people through the unique power of Shakespeare, giving them the chance to shine on professional stages across the country.

Alumni, teachers, and wider communities shared their stories as part of our 25 Years, 25 Stories campaign exploring how they have been inspired by Shakespeare and our 2030 *All the World's Our Stage* strategy was launched by our youth board members at a special reception hosted by Dr Manuela Perteghella MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Shakespeare.

This lays out our bold ambition to expand access to drama, tackle educational disadvantage and ensure Shakespeare and the performing arts are given the space they deserve within a varied and balanced curriculum.

Taking a bow

This year's festival saw performances at 56 different theatres including three gala evenings led by patrons and alumni who shared the impact the festival has had on their lives. Teachers responding to our surveys recorded a score of 9.2/10 when asked whether they would recommend the Theatre Festival to a colleague.

The fifth year of our Film Festival was headlined by patron Alfred Enoch, who spoke about his experiences of being directed as a child actor and his approach to playing Shakespeare. Filmmaker Georgia Kumari Bradburn ran a workshop focused on inclusive practice.

Building creative capacity

2025/26 was also our busiest year ever for standalone workshops with more booked and delivered than ever before. This included a new workshop for a SEND school in Leeds – the first time they had taken part in an active workshop of any kind – with many of the young people accessing Shakespeare for the very first time.

"We are such stuff as dreams are made on"

Act IV, Scene I, *The Tempest*

More than 500 young people have attended our *Tomorrow's Achievers* workshops with the Criterion Theatre, opening their eyes to the opportunities and careers that theatre can offer.

Our *Playful Spaces* professional learning forum brought together educators from across the nation for a programme of workshops from leading directors, theatre-makers and experts in the world of education.

As our collaboration with Magdalen College Oxford entered its fifth year, we also grew our university partnership outreach programmes, including a new pilot with University of Durham which saw seven local schools take part in a range of activities at College of St Hild and St Bede, before performing in the college theatre.

Celebrating the Voices of care

Coram Voice's national creative writing competition celebrates the creative talent of care-experienced children and young people from across the UK. Supported by Transform and the Kimpton Fitzroy Hotel, the awards were hosted by Ashley John-Baptiste and our young co-host Ira Hakim. 172 young people took part, enabling them to connect with shared experience and be proud of all they have achieved.

Is Shakespeare Funny?

Our star-studded *'Trial of Shakespeare'* event at the Criterion Theatre in the West End provided a gala finale to the silver jubilee with leading KCs, A-list actors, comedians and academics performing a mock trial to raise vital funds and answer the key question - 'Is Shakespeare Funny?' and the judge deciding the case ruled in favour of actor Will Kemp and not for Shakespeare himself!



Our youth advisers co-hosted our Silver Jubilee reception whilst a cast of comedians and lawyers put Shakespeare on Trial and Baroness Lola Young celebrated the winners of the Voices writing awards

"It was exciting to be on stage. I had never performed in a play before or spoken in front of that many people. I really enjoyed rehearsals too, because they gave me more opportunities to talk to my classmates. I learnt that performing is something I can do, and I would like to do it again in the future."

OVER
8,000
PUPILS PERFORMING
ON STAGE IN THE
THEATRE FESTIVAL

3,500
PARTICIPANTS IN
OUR STANDALONE
WORKSHOPS

From classroom to stage

When Milly joined Belle Vue Primary School in Carlisle, Cumbria, she was struggling with her speech and could not make herself understood – by year three Milly had an EHCP and had begun speech therapy. After auditioning alongside 110 children, Milly was cast as Snug the Joiner in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and her teachers began to see a new side to her. Milly found an enormous sense of fun and community in rehearsals and was determined to make her character her own by experimenting with physical comedy. Milly's teacher, who has led the Theatre Festival for many years, says: "For children like Milly, the Theatre Festival can change their lives. It can be transformative for them - a gateway to the future. We aim to give as many pupils as possible the opportunity to participate. It is only through performing Shakespeare that they can really understand it and make it their own."

All names changed to protect anonymity

Looking ahead

In the coming year, Coram Shakespeare Schools will expand its targeted programme for care-experienced young people and university partners thanks to the support of the Inner Circle Education Trust and Coram Voice will mark 10 years of the Voices writing competition.

Skills for the future

Coram’s Centre for Life Education works with 3,000 schools nationwide every year, enabling some 600,000 children to gain the skills they need for the future through a love of reading, tackling bullying, building critical thinking and confidence in making friends, and in conflict navigation.

Coram SCARF curriculum

Over the last year we have fully updated the Coram SCARF curriculum, in line with the 2025 statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) guidance, reflecting lived realities of children and families and ensuring children across the country are benefitting from age-appropriate, inclusive and safe learning. Parents and carers gain reassurance and clarity about what is being taught and why, and teachers and professionals are better supported to meet statutory duties without increased workload.

Teachers and RSHE leads are consistently reporting increased confidence in meeting statutory requirements, and evaluations frequently describe SCARF as a trusted and reassuring source of support. Retention rates remain strong, with schools citing alignment with statutory guidance, a strong safeguarding focus and practical, classroom-ready resources as reasons for continued use.

Children’s online wellbeing

Coram SCARF has played a leading role reflecting the views of teachers and educators on the impact of the digital world on children’s health, education and wellbeing. In November last year, Baroness Beeban Kidron hosted a Coram SCARF round table in the House of Lords bringing together experts from across the children’s sector and parliamentarians to consider the latest research.

Coram SCARF’s response to the DfE’s ‘Growing up in the online world: a national consultation’, affirms our support for a minimum age of access for social media platforms, set at no lower than 16. While recognising children’s rights to participation and expression online, it is clear that platforms that are addictive by design expose children to significant risks that are not sufficiently mitigated, and evidence from teachers highlights clear negative impacts on wellbeing, behaviour, and education.

Getting children reading

Coram Beanstalk continues to enable children to develop a love of reading through volunteer reading helpers, and school and peer mentoring programmes. We are a lead strategic partner for the National Year of Reading 2026. We are also a charity partner in The Sunday Times Get Britain Reading campaign, which has generated a fantastic response with over 500 new volunteer applications, many of whom are now supporting children in Coram Beanstalk schools. At the London Book Fair, we had the opportunity to present to publishers and authors about the importance of reading for pleasure, and the role Coram Beanstalk plays in championing a more joined-up, child-centred approach.

Putting bullying back in its box

In January we welcomed Kidscape, the longest serving anti-bullying charity in England and Wales, into the Coram Group. For 40 years, Coram Kidscape has provided direct, practical support to thousands of children and young people experiencing bullying, their parents and carers, and the professionals who support them, combining prevention, early intervention and targeted help where it is most needed.

Confronting Conflict

Established in 1987, Coram Leap Confronting Conflict supports young people to develop the skills and confidence to navigate conflict in their everyday lives and contribute to stronger, more connected communities. This year, Coram Leap joined Coram to strengthen a shared commitment to ensuring every young person has the skills and confidence to manage their emotions, de-escalate challenging situations, and build positive futures through participatory workshops, including those co-facilitated by young people. In the last year, 1,888 young people benefitted from Coram Leap programmes. A ten-year evaluation of the Leadership and Enterprise Programme demonstrates the lasting, life-changing impact of this approach.



“We love the SCARF curriculum as it covers everything we want the children to learn. It encourages discussion, uses characters and stories well and is clearly planned and presented in a progressive way ensuring that all children across the key stages get what they need to promote healthy and safe relationships.”

Bromley teacher



Looking ahead

In the coming year, we will amplify our Coram SCARF leading RSHE and citizenship education resources to support and deliver PSHE from infancy to independence. We will celebrate the combined 40 years of Harold the Giraffe and Coram Life Education, of Coram Kidscape and Coram Leap Confronting Conflict in the combined goal to help children make healthy choices for their future and ensure that the next generation can face the uncertainties of the future with the skills they need for life.

No matter where

CoramBAAF is the leading professional membership organisation for local authorities and agencies working across adoption, fostering and kinship care providing professionals with the advice, training and development they need to provide high quality children’s services no matter where they are.

Updated forms for better practice

We launched a range of new and updated health and social work report forms across adoption, fostering and kinship care. We know how important our forms are for practice and therefore why keeping them relevant and up to date is essential. After piloting, throughout 2025/26 we published the finished forms for use by local authorities and agencies, alongside a suite of dedicated guidance notes and briefing sessions attended by thousands of social workers to support take up and implementation.

Addressing health disparities of children and young people in care

CoramBAAF worked with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) to deliver the new Initial Health Assessments (IHA) standards, published in 2025. The new standards aim to improve children and young people’s experience of IHAs, their outcomes and their health and wellbeing, contributing to a reduction in the longer-term health disparities experienced by children and young people in care.

Conference connections

Our national conferences were all sold out and featured keynote speakers by sector leaders and hands-on opportunities to address the concerns of practice. Dr Jahnine Davis, Kinship Ambassador for example laid out the agenda for the development of the Kinship Local Offer and we formed a community of practice to support local authorities in its development.

Consultation community

The views of members shaped the responses made on government proposals for changes to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund on which so many families depend, and the future of Fostering Panels, for example providing the most systematic assessment of sector readiness and response.



Dr Jahnine Davis, Kinship Ambassador addressed the CoramBAAF Kinship Conference whilst Professor Sir Anthony Finkelstein addressed our AI forum

150,066 PROFESSIONALS SUPPORTED

Specialist advice

All of CoramBAAF’s work is informed by the knowledge of our multi-disciplinary advisory groups in health, law, social work, and research and our specialist advice line supported more enquiries than ever before to support practitioners in addressing complex cases.

Court of Appeal intervention

We were given leave to intervene in a significant appeal regarding sibling contact given concerns that courts have been refusing placement orders and the possibility of adoption for very young children where ongoing sibling contact was required. We explained that prospective adopters receive training on the importance of contact in meeting a child’s identity needs and that many are willing to consider direct contact.

The judgement made clear that when making a placement order the court may ‘set the template’ for contact going forward to allow children to be placed for adoption without losing contact with their siblings.

Data for development

Coram-i was proud to be reappointed to continue to provide the sector level data collection and analysis in relation to adoption and special guardianship and to extend this to encompass the first national view of adoption support. In partnership with Social Finance, LGA, ODI and D2I, we are addressing the feasibility for a Centre for Excellence in Data Standards in children’s social care.

Insight into innovation

This work is complemented by the expertise and resources supporting leaders to improve children’s services and the outcomes they achieve for children through innovation addressing the defining question facing the sector - how can artificial intelligence (AI) and data be harnessed to improve outcomes for children and families, without undermining the relational, ethical and human foundations of practice?

In November, with the support of Hadley Trust, we hosted the national forum on *AI in Children’s Social Care: For Whose Benefit, and How Do We Know?* and are also providing high value forums to address the challenges of fostering sufficiency with new insight on the propensity to foster and the impact of contact on placement.



“A seat at the table has allowed us to be part of important discussions and prepare resources to support members through this period of changes.”

James Bury, Managing Director of CoramBAAF Policy, Research and Development

coram | better chances for children since 1739

We gratefully acknowledge those who have made The Queen Elizabeth II Centre
 THE QUEEN'S TRUST
 THE ZVM RANGOONWALA FOUNDATION
 GARDNER TOMES

Reforming fostering

CoramBAAF has been active in representing the views of members to the DfE since the publication in February of ‘Renewing fostering: homes for 10,000 more children,’ its proposals to reform fostering. Our fostering consultant sits on the DfE’s fostering advisory board and the co-chair of our Fostering Carer Advisory Committee has also represented the views of foster carers. We hosted the children’s minister, Josh MacAlister, seen here with James Bury, managing director of CoramBAAF policy, research and development and Emma Fincham, fostering consultant, and his team at Coram in February for announcement of the plan and subsequently briefed more than 600 members of CoramBAAF on key proposals.

Looking ahead

In the coming year, we shall extend our racial family justice network with the support of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to tackle the disproportionality experienced by families from diverse backgrounds and continue to deliver the leading national membership for children’s services at a time of unprecedented reform.

No matter where

Throughout the year we worked with government, local authorities and agencies, social workers, parents and carers to advance equality of access and best practice in early years and childcare no matter where children and families live.

Over one million children on holiday programmes

Since April 2021, the DfE has contracted Childcare Works HAF, a partnership between Coram Hemsall's and Mott MacDonald, to deliver national support for the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, providing healthy meals, enriching activities, and free childcare places to children from low-income families across England. Over 624,000 children and young people attended over Summer 2025, with a further 251,000 attending over Christmas and 367,000 over Easter. Over 10,000 clubs, events or organised activities operated across the country over the summer.

Moving the Box

Local authorities, partners and stakeholders, educators, early years professionals and childminders gathered on the Coram campus in March to share learning from the *Moving the Box* programme. Working in partnership across six local authority areas - Durham, Sandwell, East Sussex, Cumberland, Sefton, and Westmorland and Furness - the Coram Hemsall's-led programme has been developing a strategic approach to building confidence and potential among early years teachers working with children at risk of not achieving a Good Level of Development, a key plank of the government's opportunity mission.

Parent Champions

Parent Champions are parent volunteers who give a few hours a week to talk to other parents about the local services available to families to increase access to services. Coram Family and Childcare has run the programme since 2007 to help marginalised or isolated parents who miss out on vital information about how to access local family services. Delivered by parents for parents, last year Parent Champions supported more than 100,000 parents to access their entitlements and local services.

Childcare Works

The major national Childcare Works programme has been delivered for the Department for Education by Coram Hemsall's and Coram Family and Childcare in partnership with Mott Macdonald and has contributed to the creation of more than 105,000 new school age childcare places before and after school, realising the ambitious expansion of free childcare places for working families.

Magic of childminding

For some families, home-based care is the best option for their child, providing a nurturing environment for babies and those with additional needs in particular. Coram PACEY is the leading professional association supporting childminders in this vital role. Coram PACEY's *Magic of Childminding* campaign across England and Wales raised awareness amongst parents, stakeholders and supporters of the truly unique benefits childminders bring to children, families and their communities, creating demand, retaining existing childminders and inspiring the next generation of childminders.

Addressing tax changes

This year, Coram PACEY has led a sector coalition in providing evidence of significant concern across the childminding community about the loss of the current blanket 10% wear-and-tear allowance as a result of the *Making Tax Digital* programme by HMRC and DfE. Our survey of over 4,800 UK childminders helped to quantify the impact with 82% of respondents saying the change would leave them financially worse off and 93% supporting a delay in changes while stakeholders work with HMRC to improve support for childminders. As a result of our work, 11 MPs have raised parliamentary questions, and Minister for Early Education, Olivia Bailey MP has noted "We are aware of the strength of feeling amongst childminders and those who work with them. We have been talking regularly to Coram PACEY, HMRC and others to understand the issue, the effect that it is having on the childminding sector and to make sure that the concerns of childminders are clearly understood.

Chantelle Malcolm, Parent Champion volunteer, Camden

Chantelle won the Biggest Impact Award in Coram Family and Childcare's Parent Champions Awards 2026

"Since becoming a Parent Champion, I have established a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) WhatsApp support group as a safe and informative space for parents to connect and access vital information. I've supported co-production initiatives, including a focus group to improve the SEND offer in libraries. Through my role as Parent Champion, I have also had opportunity to share my lived experience to provide insight and direction to board members and senior decision makers.

"This award represents the voices of families navigating a system that doesn't always meet their needs. I'm committed to ensuring those experiences shape how SEND support is understood, delivered, and improved — because real change starts by listening to the people living it every day."



"I congratulate Coram PACEY on launching the *Magic of Childminding* campaign and welcome the spotlight it shines on the extraordinary dedication of childminders across England."

Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education

Stella Worwui-Ashiadey, Ofsted registered outstanding childminder

featured in Coram PACEY's *Magic of Childminding* campaign

"I chose to become a childminder to build strong academic foundations for early years children and prepare them to achieve their potential and have better life chances.

"I wanted to close the gap in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) childminder provision and offer a smaller and one-on-one early health, education, nurturing, care and safety provision for children who cannot settle, learn and thrive in other larger settings.

"It is magical to see children arrive with few words, then start to grow, develop and master life skills and knowledge. It is rewarding to see the children start to challenge you in conversation and displaying their communication skills and thinking critically - I love this growth. Some have speech delays and are waiting to be seen by speech and language therapists, yet during that period of waiting my intervention has helped them gain speech and language and be ready for school without specialist intervention."

Looking ahead

In the coming year, we will build upon the new *Magic of Childminding* report at the heart of a campaign to support recruitment and retention, and mark the 20th anniversary of the national network of Parent Champions.

A society that cares

The Coram Institute for Children is the first Independent Research Organisation dedicated to children and young people to be recognised by UKRI.

This research status across our UK and international Research, Impact and Evaluation teams means that we are now eligible to bid directly for research grant funding from the seven research councils of the United Kingdom and further grow our ability to build new insight.

Pioneering studies

Coram's Research, Impact and Evaluation team this year completed nine pieces of research, using mixed method, randomised control trial (RCT) and participatory designs, for what works centres, charities, governments and other external commissioners. The team also hold 13 live research projects, including a RCT in Systemic Practice in Early Help for the Department for Education and an RCT of a restorative peer mentoring service for the Youth Endowment Fund. Our work is distinctive for its extensive experience in peer and participatory approaches, including pioneering work integrating these methods within an RCT of restorative justice in the youth justice system. We support early career researchers through hosted PhDs and our Youth Insight Forum run by our young research fellow culminated in a forum on *Digital Futures: from risk to response*.

University partnerships

We launched a new partnership with University College London at the annual lecture with TCRU on experiences of migration.. Co-hosted PhDs with Newcastle University include new research into the lives of children in the Ackworth Branch of The Foundling Hospital. In the coming year we will deepen our partnership with City St George's University to address the intersections of health, children's social care, data science and informatics.

Cost of childcare

In September, on the day the final expansion of government funded childcare for working parents was rolled out, Coram Family and Childcare (CFC) released our report – 'Early education entitlements – the disadvantage gap' highlighting the inequity in the current system, meaning that all too many

77 RESEARCH REPORTS, BOOKS, PRACTICE GUIDES AND POLICY BRIEFINGS

disadvantaged children are missing out on early years education. It showed that families not in work or not earning enough to be eligible, would need to pay an average of £205 per week for a child under two, to get the same amount of early education that eligible families get for free. The report was widely covered across the media and led to an invitation for CFC to give oral evidence to the Education Select Committee's Early Years Inquiry in November.

The annual Childcare Survey and Holiday Childcare Survey continue to be the country's leading sources of information on the cost and availability of childcare. The most recent Holiday Childcare Survey achieved 690 media mentions throughout Great Britain over a six-week period and the annual Childcare Survey celebrated its 25th edition with a special analysis, looking back over a quarter of a century of childcare cost data.

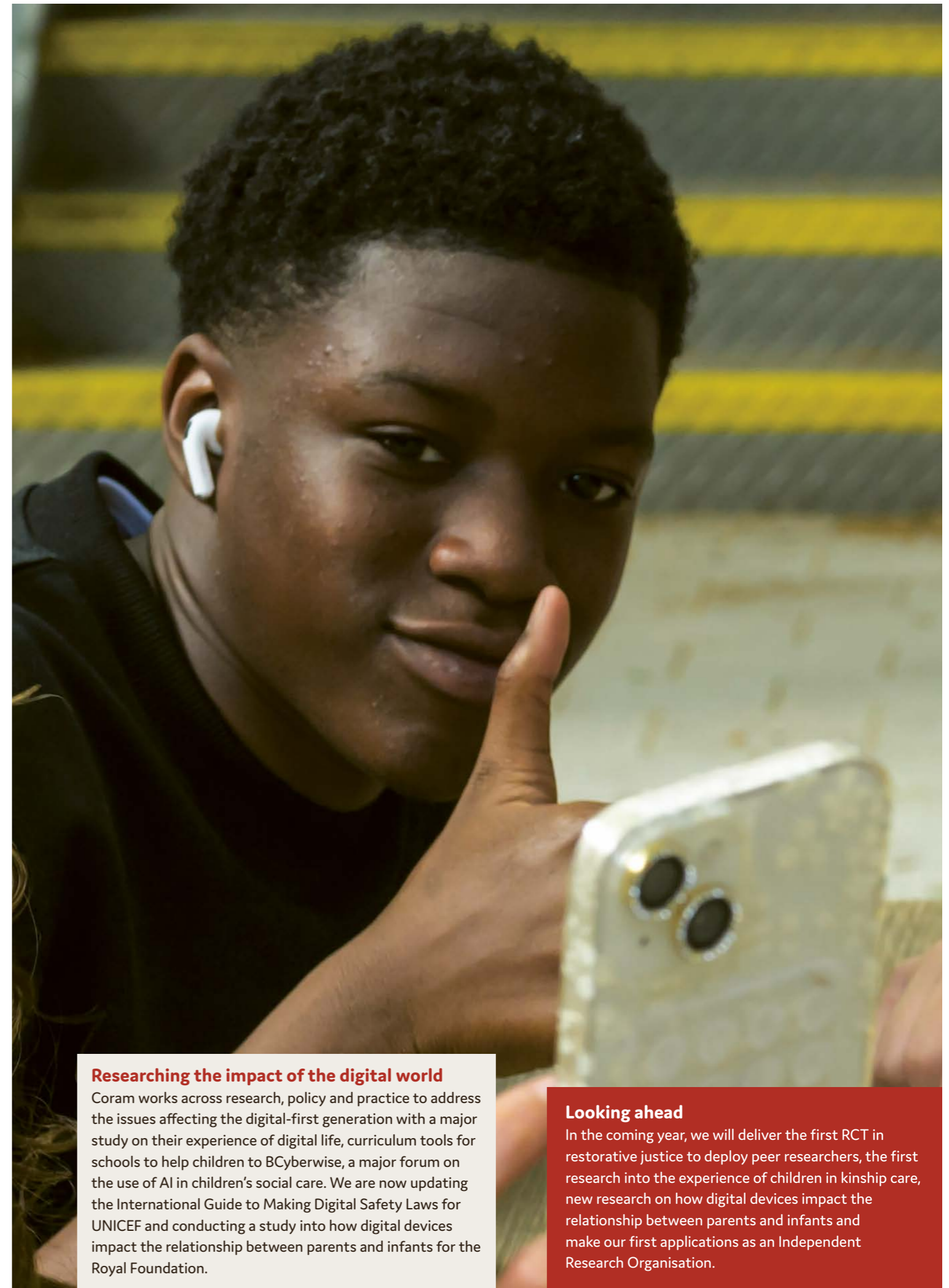
A global influence

Coram International works with governments, UN bodies, IGOs and NGOs around the world to design, improve and evaluate systems to protect and support children and young people. The team finalised a comprehensive evaluation for UNICEF Thailand on the strengthening of the country's child protection system and services at local level and in Ukraine, we completed an evaluation of the country's Better Care programme, a major initiative dedicated to strengthening families, communities, and the care system to ensure that all children can grow up in a safe, nurturing environment.

In the Caribbean, we have worked with UNICEF Eastern Caribbean and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (O ECS) to develop their regional child policy, to be used by all O ECS Member States and UK Overseas Territories to fulfil children's rights across education, health, child protection, access to justice and social protection.



Coram International hosted the Libya delegation (left), Lydia Hodges, Head of Coram Family and Childcare made extensive appearances in the media, and Head of Policy Anita Hurrell leading discussion at the annual lecture with TCRU



Researching the impact of the digital world

Coram works across research, policy and practice to address the issues affecting the digital-first generation with a major study on their experience of digital life, curriculum tools for schools to help children to BCyberwise, a major forum on the use of AI in children's social care. We are now updating the International Guide to Making Digital Safety Laws for UNICEF and conducting a study into how digital devices impact the relationship between parents and infants for the Royal Foundation.

Looking ahead

In the coming year, we will deliver the first RCT in restorative justice to deploy peer researchers, the first research into the experience of children in kinship care, new research on how digital devices impact the relationship between parents and infants and make our first applications as an Independent Research Organisation.

Insight into impact

Coram applies the insight and experience gained through our direct work with children and young people and leading-edge research to inform national policy, legal development and public understanding so together we can deliver better chances for all our children.

Influencing policy

Over the last 12 months, Coram has been at the heart of key national debates relevant to children and young people. The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act, passed into law in April this year, introduces changes relating to children in care and care leavers, and our briefing for the House of Lords during its passage through parliament included our views on staying close, setting up home allowance, corporate parenting duties, and intentional homelessness measures, and also called for independent advocacy for children on Deprivation of Liberty orders or those facing school exclusion.

We were also the first to give oral evidence to the Scrutiny Committee supporting its provisions for a unique identifying number for children to enhance safeguarding, and calling for greater emphasis on early years. We are proud to be part of the programme to advance Data Standards in Children’s Social Care to help create the framework that will be needed to realise the intentions of the legislation.

Our CEO Dame Carol Homden was also first to give evidence to the Covid-19 inquiry, considering the impact of the pandemic on children and we urged government to work more systematically with organisations in the field such as Coram in the event of future scenarios, and reiterated the call for a dedicated cabinet minister for children, to ensure that key questions for government are addressed more systematically.

Parliamentary process

We joined with Baroness Kidron (below) in exploring the issues and published our response to the government’s highly publicised consultation paper ‘Growing up in the online world: a national consultation’, confirming support for a minimum age of access set at no lower than 16 for social media services, and for making government guidance on restricting mobile phone use in schools statutory.



“Any parent who has a child with SEND knows that access to support feels like a battle. The government’s consultation represents an opportunity to change that – to a clearer guarantee of consistent levels of support based on the child’s needs.”

We published a Group-wide response to the government’s consultation on its proposals to reform the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system, addressing issues including changes to the SEND Tribunal, how to ensure children are best supported by the Universal offer, and the needs of children in and on the edges of care.

Advancing Bright Spots in practice

With the support of Hadley Trust, Coram Voice’s Bright Spots surveys have captured the views and experiences of almost 35,000 children and young people in and leaving care, creating the definitive data on their subjective wellbeing and what matters most to them.

In a new report, *From Surviving to Thriving*, the findings were aggregated and analysed with young people to identify the seven drivers of wellbeing proposed as the basis for measurement at both local and national level. As one young person said, “When I am included I feel part of it and happy.” (11-18 year-old).

16 local areas undertook *Your Life, Your Care and Your Life Beyond Care* surveys this year to understand how their children and young people feel about their lives and take actions to make their lives better. Many of these initiatives are shared through the Bright Spots Practice Bank to inspire further change.



Disability, Disparity and Demand

Analysis of Bright Spots surveys and a Freedom of Information data request from local children’s services revealed a significant disparity between recorded levels of disability and health issues and care leavers’ own accounts. We have shared the findings via blogs and podcasts and speaking at events with over 750 practitioners, managers and policy stakeholders. The work has informed both policy and practice, with the DfE planning a deep dive into their data to better understand the experience of disabled children in and leaving care. We were also pleased to see an increased focus on the experience of disabled care leavers in Ofsted assessments in 2025.

Looking ahead

In the coming year we will publish recommendations on ensuring a child’s right to a suitable education and work to embed wellbeing indicators in local authority systems.

A Community of support

This year thousands of people have been inspired to help children directly as reading volunteers, independent visitors and helpline advisers and 1,000 young people helped 18,000 others through their support as young ambassadors, co-trainers, and peer researchers. We have received over 15,000 gifts from our community of support from a wide range of donors to whom we are very grateful including sponsors of those who have cycled to Cannes, run the London marathon and climbed Kilimanjaro. We have been proud to join in partnership with many private and public sector organisations and in particular to be the charity partner to law firm Macfarlanes.



Her Majesty Queen Camilla is Coram's Patron and is seen here with volunteer Independent Visitor Natalie, and Carrie, the young person she supports

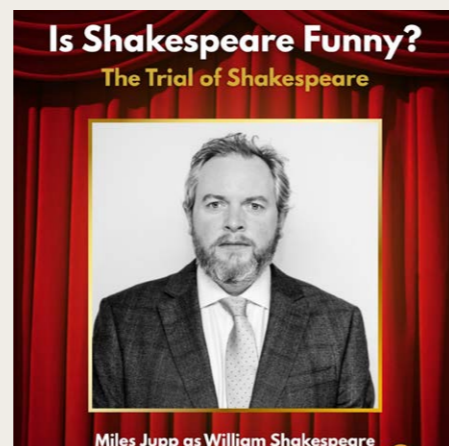
Natalie and Carrie

"I became an Independent Visitor volunteer with Coram Voice during the pandemic. Seeing stories about children stuck in difficult situations because schools were closed and safeguarding wasn't happening in the same way broke my heart.

"Things had been quite difficult for Carrie. She had changed foster carers a few times and the night before her birthday they placed her with a new person. She woke up on her birthday with someone she didn't know. It was a real tough

time for her. Her social worker was away. I was the only person she genuinely felt safe with. We've bonded massively through that whole experience. She's thriving now. She's got a job. Carrie and I were lucky enough to be invited to a special reception at Windsor Castle. The highlight was when The Queen asked Carrie if she'd like a photo with her. I'd been watching and she hadn't offered that to anyone else."

"And every time I come back from seeing her I just feel a bit happier inside."



"My personal experience gave me added motivation for taking part in Club Peloton's Cycle to MIPIIM ride ... I knew the charity worked in adoption. The challenge and the link to Coram appealed to me."

Ciaran, Knight Frank Cycle to MIPIIM participant and adoptive parent



Champions for children

LBC presenter James O'Brien led the Coram Christmas Celebration, whilst a host of comedians, including Miles Jupp, put Shakespeare on trial at the Criterion Theatre. Many young people, such as Tommy (seen top left) and Zoe Lambert (top right), generously shared their stories at events and in this Impact Report and we are very grateful to them all.

Climbing Kilimanjaro

Leading celebrity hairdresser Andrew Barton led a team to make the climb of their lives to the summit of Kilimanjaro. Together they raised £100k for Coram Kidscape to support children who experience bullying. We look forward to the film premiere of this great adventure later this year, as well as to a special concert by John Illsley, bass guitarist of Dire Straits to mark 40 years of Coram Life Education.



Taking to the road

80 riders took to the road with Club Peloton to cycle 1500 km to support adopted children. Riding for the first time was George Monk (18) making the journey in memory of his father, Will, who supported Coram for ten years. These challenges, our Christmas Appeal and the Big Give were supported by hundreds of generous individuals. Thank you.

Looking to the future

The next generation of children faces unprecedented challenges. The birthrate has fallen, yet more families and schools are under strain. Too many young lives are blighted by poverty, inequality and violence and, as the Milburn report has warned, all too many lack the stability, skills and opportunities to thrive as children and progress into work.

Coram is working to rise to these challenges at individual, sector and system level. In April, Coram Family Lives was formed to bring together the reach and expertise of family support helpline and place-based services with data, policy and research capability of the Coram Institute for Children.

Making change happen

We shall sustain and innovate in our direct services, reaching more children and families than ever before across our seven strategic goals, with particular focus on what matters most in their lives.

In the coming year, we shall build public understanding by marking the centenary of adoption with a special edition of our *Adoption & Fostering* Journal, the publication of longitudinal research on attachment, a national conference and dedicated archive on voices of adoption, and relaunch of the Search & Reunion website.

We shall support member agencies in modernising practice to ensure every child gets the right decision and the right placement for them.

We shall champion and enhance the fostering reforms and creation of regional care co-operatives, support the local offer for kinship carers and innovate in securing lasting relationships for young people in and leaving care.

Building a society that cares

We shall promote the *Magic of Childminding* and young people's advocacy and enable their Voices in Action to make a difference to policy and the services they depend upon. We shall undertake ground breaking research in the UK and beyond and help develop data standards and the ethical use of AI in children's social care.

We shall mark the 40th year of Coram Life Education by launching further all-through resources of Coram SCARF, enhance access to early education and to put bullying back in its box so children can achieve a good level of development and develop skills they need for the future from emotional connection and digital literacy to navigating conflict, leadership and enterprise so they can take their place as citizens of tomorrow.

2.3 MILLION
CHILDREN LIVING
WITH RISK

12.7%
16-24 YEAR OLDS NOT IN
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT
AND TRAINING

102,709
CHILDREN IN AND
LEAVING CARE

3,010
CHILDREN WAITING
FOR ADOPTION



Baroness Butler-Sloss marked the centenary of the 1926 Adoption of Children Act, also addressed by poet Luke Wright with his compelling poem about his own experience

"I went from shouting and screaming, to feeling heard, to placing boundaries and taking space for myself and to regulating my emotions. I stopped acting like a victim and focused on building myself to become a warrior."

Kai, now a Leap young trainer



Advancing Leadership and Enterprise

Kai is a graduate of Coram Leap Confronting Conflict's Leadership and Enterprise Programme, which over the past ten years has supported young people to develop key skills to navigate conflict, build confidence, and grow as leaders who positively shape their communities and create positive pathways for others.


To join us on this journey, visit coram.org.uk or contact Oliver.Rose@coram.org.uk.

“The true character of a society is revealed in how it treats its children.”


Nelson Mandela





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getting young voices heard

The Thomas Coram Foundation for
Children (registered charity no. 312278)
was established by Royal Charter in 1739.