



Creative Achiever Anthology 2026

Celebrating a decade
of *Voices*,
the creative writing
competition for care-
experienced children
and young people.

coram | better chances
for children
since 1739

Overview

Coram believes in getting young voices heard and that all young people should have a chance to shine and be proud of who they are. To mark the 10th anniversary of Voices, the creative writing competition for care-experienced children and young people, we are celebrating their creative voice and the difference that being a winner has had on their journeys.

This anthology celebrates the eight Creative Achievers awarded by our partners Transform, for *1,000 Voices of care*.

Themes across the years

2016: What Makes Me Happy?

2017: New Beginnings

2018: Who or What Makes Me Proud?

2019: Growing Up

2020: Dreams

2021: What Makes Life Good?

2022: This Is Me

2024: What Makes Me Different?

2025: My Voice

With thanks to

Transform

1,000 Voices of care

Welcome and Introduction

Multimedia Showcase

A video montage featuring highlights from the last ten years of the Voices competition.

Transform

Creative Achievers Awards

Celebrating the eight Creative Achievers selected from previous Voices winners by volunteers at Transform.

Interview Panel

A panel complete with previous Voices Judges and Alumni, sharing what the Voices competition means to them.

Coram's Creative Output

An introduction to the creative opportunities across the Coram group, featuring work from Coram Shakespeare Schools and Voices in Action.

Creative Achievers Showcase

Presentations of creative work from across Coram's creative opportunities.

Creative Output from the Creative Writing Workshop

Presentations of the creative work produced in 1,000 Voices of care's Creative Writing Workshop, for participants from Virtual Schools across London.

Call to Action

Carol Homden

The celebration will be followed by a reception with drinks and light refreshments

Entry 42 (2017.42)

Age 9, Primary

Jamie Davis



My First Match

My first match,
My breath I can't catch,
A hug to relax,
She helps me chillax,

Changing room disorder,
She's my best supporter,
Coach going mad like he oughta,
Gonna win – we gotta.

I'm part of a team,
My teams in Green,
Strip of white in between,
She washed it clean,

Out on the pitch,
Out positions fixed,
Opposite our enemies,
Same as us – different identities.

Kick off whistle,
The game on – it's official,
She supports me – It's that simple,
Kick pass header dribble,

Cheeky pass forward,
Defender wrong footed,
Change to press onward,
Perfect cross boot.

Header in muddy midfield,
Feet should be four wheeled,
A space is revealed,

The space is gaping,
Balls mine for the taking,
Legs are aching,
Crowd is baiting.

Four strides to the keeper,
Feels like a hundred meters,
Direct kick or a faker,
Knick now or later,

I'm rocking new Nikes,
Goalie trying to psych me,
Wanna tackle – try me,
Bang – top bins – bite me,

She's the loudest in the crowd,
Cheering me on proud,
Goal allowed,
I dabbled and bowed,
Man of the match I am crowned!

*From the entrant: I wrote my poem/rap about my first footy match for **** United under 10s. My foster carer takes me to all the training and matches and stands in the cold every Saturday morning. And she washes my kit. She helped me write this rap as well.*

Entry 73 (2024.73)

Age 8, Primary

Mali Charles

Winner

Primary

Different?

In the tapestry of life, a patchwork quilt,
I find my place, in hues of guilt.
Different, they say, for reasons galore,
Yet within, a spirit, resilient, and more. Adopted,
my tale begins, a journey unknown,
A heart, not birth, but love has sown.
Two dads, my guardians, proud and strong,
In their love, I find where I belong.
Short in stature, but tall in might,
A scar on my lip, a mark of a fight.
Age eight, I stumbled, kissed the ground,
Yet rose again, a strength unbound.
Crooked teeth, a testament to play,
At seven, I lost them, they paved my way. Ginger
hair, a flame that does ignite,
A beacon of difference, in the moon's soft light.
A girl, they say, in a world unfair,
Unequal treatment, a cross to bear.
When they jest, "so gay," my heart does ache,
For my dads, love's bond, they underestimate.
At three, like Matilda, I read with glee,
A world of wonder, a gift in me.
Two languages dance upon my tongue,
A symphony of voices, young and unsung. Vegan
by choice, compassion my guide,
In a world of choices, where love resides.
Yet in school's gaze, a lack of insight,
To trauma's whispers, they turn a blind sight.
Care experienced, a label I wear,
In the statistics, a burden to bear.
Lower outcomes, they predict and decree,
But within me, a spirit wild and free.
Different, they say, with a scornful glance,
Yet in my heart, I find my dance.
For in these quirks, in these details of me,
Lies a symphony of strength, a tapestry.
A girl with scars and crooked smiles,

A tale of triumph, of endless miles. Adopted,
different, short, they say,
In my uniqueness, I find my way.
So let them judge, let them misunderstand,
For in my heart, a strength so grand.
I am different, a melody untold,
In my story, a brilliance unfolds.

Entry 148 (2025.148)

Age 12, Lower Secondary

Elizabeth Lydon de Miguel

Winner

Lower Secondary

My Voice: A Journey from Silence to Song 🎵

Discovering my voice has been a journey. It was lost from birth and buried under uncertainty, whispers, and truths waiting to be expressed. I wasn't given the chance to speak, to be heard, or even to cry. My life began shrouded in silence, as though the world had placed a mute button within me before I could utter a sound. My story doesn't start with silence, but with a question: *Who am I?*

Adoption, especially at a young age, represents a paradox. The truth I grew up with is that I belong to two families. Life was a blend of two extremes, but there was also an ache, a pull toward the unknown. A question mark loomed over my existence: *Why didn't my biological parents fight for me?*

Adoption has made me stronger, but I've also become incredibly vulnerable. I was raised by a family that gave me everything they could, and more. They showed me unconditional love and acceptance. Yet, a part of me has always wondered if my birth family think of me. Do they wonder if I'm okay? Do they ask the same questions I do? What did they feel when they let me go?

My biological father, now gone, visited me when I was a baby. I don't remember him, but I wonder about the man he was. What did he hope for me? What did he feel when he had to walk away? Those unanswered questions swirl in my mind, yet I hold onto the fleeting moments I've been told about him—tiny connections that will never fill the gap in my heart.

I also communicate with my older sister through letterbox messages. It's not the same as hugging her or hearing her laugh in person, but it's a way to connect. Though we're separated by distance, I carry her with me in my heart, just as she carries me in hers.

It's strange, this dual existence. I speak the words of those who raised me, but also the words of the ones I never met. I sing their unspoken songs, songs of longing, of wanting to know who I am and where I come from. The weight of silence can feel heavy, but I've learned that my voice has always been mine, quiet and uncertain at times.

Adoption has taught me that belonging isn't about blood or DNA. It's about heartbeats—the ones we share and create. My voice is the sound of love that has carried me through every question and moment of fear. Today, I stand not as someone lost, but as someone found.

This is my voice—a voice that speaks of love, the questions I ask, and the strength I've found in the spaces between silence and sound. A voice that tells the world I am whole, I belong, and I will always be heard.

Entry 162 (2019.161)

Age 11, Lower Secondary

Adam Conway



DOES MY HEIGHT MATTER?

People think I'm not big, they think I'm rather small
I suppose that when I'm in a queue, I'm not really tall at all.
I always get rude comments, you look like a garden gnome
Or I think you had better hurry up to your little dolls house home.
When I go to the cinema and try to sit upon the seat,
It folds up and devours me, all you can see are my feet.
If I go bowling, the balls are as big as me,
As I try to roll them, I end up on my knees
Here's a message to those who don't know me, I'm really big inside,
I tower high above my head, next stop is the sky.
In this tiny head of mine is a clever brain,
I can add, spell, sing and dance, if I don't fall down a drain!
When I'm on my PS4, no-one can beat me
I am the 'Master' of the Universe for everyone to see
I put on a pair of my big shoes and stand up tall and straight
Then look them in the kneecaps and their bad behavior, I won't tolerate.
I suppose a lot has happened in my short history
Lots of stormy weather, combined with 'choppy' seas
But I can see land ahead and sunny skies there too
Cos I'm as BIG as anyone and that means as big as you!

Entry 160 (2025.160)
Age 17, Upper Secondary
Mateo Santiago Maurera



at last, he speaks

He first muzzled him at 4

when his father first decided he was dog and not boy, belt wrapped taut around his knuckles, he began to teach him the art of silence.

blackened bruising down his ribs, welts across his arms - he knew better than to scream,

But inside him, still that small voice, begging him to speak.

the boy knows even the weakest dogs can bite - the strays, the rabid, worthless ones, tied up at the post with their sadness frothing through their teeth -

And he wants to let his sadness turn him rabid, wants to be a creature so vile that the world turns him away - wants to know he deserved his fathers ire and violence, that he deserved to be a stray animal and not a child.

so when they take him away , when they tend to his wounds and pull the thorns from his back, he thrashes and growls -

bites the hands that hold him and draws blood with a violent shame.

He gnaws and scratches at the post he is no longer chained to - runs from safety straight into the jaws of an alcoholic middle aged man on the internet, some twisted version of his father, hoping to find himself in the straggled flesh-bits on his teeth.

but when he returns, torn open and ashamed, they hold the pieces of him in place until the skin begins to heal over -

and they tell him they want to know what's inside of him - that sickening storm that eats any thing that comes near it - and he wants so badly to feel something other than darkness,

so he lets them see it

he lets them hear it

muzzle torn, mouth open -

At last, he speaks - a violent river of blood and
torn flesh / years of a silent death at the feet of his father / innocence pulled apart as a bloodied
carcass to be disposed of

he speaks and his blood is witnessed by another being / his nightmares held by softer hands, his
sins forgiven.

at last, he speaks,
and healing comes slowly and painfully and all at once - he is 17 and is just beginning to know
what home means, or gentle touch

at last, he speaks, and he finds peace in the embers of a massacre

at last, he speaks.

Entry 58 (2024.58)

Age 17, Upper Secondary

Evan Amery

Winner

Upper Secondary

What makes me different?

Difference.

For years I knew difference as something to fear,
To fear all the bullies and the stories I'd hear.
So I hid in a closet, hid for my life,
I closed the door shut, away from the knife.
I stayed silent in hiding, praying to know,
To know someone like me, scared of their 'home'.
The doors they stayed bolted, locked at the seams,
But a friend ripped them open, for all to come see.
When the doors were flung open, I sat there exposed,
I knew not my safety, while everyone nosed.
When she found out my secret, she was so ashamed,
Of the person I was, of the person renamed.
She told me to go, go somewhere far,
I went to another, and went in a car.
My new closet was pretty, I painted it red,
But the red was a theme, the red stained my bed.
He loved me, I know, but love could not save,
Save me from lusting, and digging my grave.
He worried and worried, then worried some more,
Then, I was in a new room, asleep on the floor.
The floor was okay, and I got on my feet,
Spoke to some people, and admitted defeat.
The people went searching, for somebody new,
They searched for a while, they searched and found you.
You stood in your doorway and welcomed me in,
We sat on the sofa, you had a warm grin.
I told my hobbies, and the things that I like,
You told me about you, and about a new life.
When I came to stay, no differences were mentioned, You
saw me as a person, I felt reawakened.
You saw not my sins, you fought my depression,
You never got angry, and fought my suppression.
For years I knew difference as something to fear,
To fear all the bullies and the stories I'd hear.
But time has flown by and I'm a new person,
This new person I am, can say completely certain.
That difference is no longer something I fear,
It's something I welcome, now that I'm here.

Entry 92 (2019.92)
Age 21, Care Leaver
Sophia Hall



The Girl Behind the Glass

I waved at a girl I saw
Wonky teeth and eyes aglow
Staring at me through the glass
Clutching Miss Rabbit in her fist
And giggling a soft melody

I laughed at a girl I saw
Wicked tongue and a cheeky wink
Making a face towards the glass
Wiggling along to a song I knew
And twisting her truths into knots

I frowned at a girl I saw
Bruised lips and puffy eyes
Trapped behind a wall of glass
Gagged by shadows of the past
And screaming words I would not hear

I cried at a girl I saw
Torn shirt and desperate glance
Pounding fists against the glass
Sapphire lights with crimson tones
And the future choked by sirens

I reached out to a girl I saw
Ravaged skin and defeated air
Her hand joined mine upon the glass
Rush of heart ache merged to beat
And a flash of recognition

I look up to a girl I see
Reclaimed body and affectionate gaze
Familiar face in the glass
She nods "we're okay, go on your way"
And I smile at my reflection

Entry 123 (2018.123)

Age 20, Care Leaver

Nathan Henville



Let me just check that with Mike

The top of the hill is where I wish to stand
as I make my journey and I follow my plan
I feel myself sinking deep at times
but I catch, I latch, I hold on to what I know which keeps me inline.
Team after team dream after dream;
you see me but you don't listen.
You've got guidelines and cash pots that glisten.

Waiting game is what I play
I sit here silently and stalk my prey
but I remember once again I know my game.
Don't jump too quick, don't call too soon don't pester me
just wait a few moons,
but it's alright I'm certain she's just going to check with mike.

I left the pearly gates of family
to what seemed like another rollercoaster of tragedy.
Nervous I was; not nervous I am,
I think all these emotions are part of the plan
it's a whirlwind of pain but ultimately I have so much more to gain
I don't stand here asking for glory and fame
I merely stand here wishing to state my name
for I am not a statistic, I am not a number
I'm a young person who has the government as my mother.

I stand before you now proud and tall
I've been on this journey for many moons
but who would believe I could be you;
a normal person sitting down in a crowd, applauding a fine performance
but instead I'm part of something enormous.
A system that isn't all just broken, but a system that needs repairing
just a system that's got some wear in.

For the sake of the person I wish to become I
will not feel sorry for myself,
I will push and I will motivate myself.
For I'm so proud of whom I have become,

I'm nearly at the top of my potential.
Some would say I'm not but they're not here to see what's what,
but it's alright let me just check that with mike.

It's the last day today
the sky is clear and the sun is so bright,
the suns out, my face feels different;
I feel like a ray of light.
A glow comes from my skin as I stare at the last door
knowing that this is it, there shall be no more.
My path now is the path of my own
now I'll leave the government high chair and claim my personal throne,
for I have achieved so much more on my own
I thank those who helped me to find me and my destiny
so if there's nothing else to say I think I've found the best in me,
but that's alright let me just check that with mike.



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