



**coram** | better chances  
for children  
since 1739

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A voice that's heard

Spring Newsletter 2025

Dear Friends,

**Children growing up in care often lack the stability and support that we all need to thrive.** They are often moved across different placements and parts of the country, sometimes miles away from their family, friends, school, and community, which can have a harmful impact on their wellbeing and life chances.

Then when young people approach 18 and leave the care system, they often experience a 'care cliff', where their placements are abruptly stopped, and they experience a lack of emotional and practical support that every young person needs to thrive in adulthood.

**Coram Voice** champions the voices of children and young people in and around the care system, ensuring they know their rights and get their views heard in decisions that matter most to them. The charity's approach recognises that children and young people are experts in their own life and understanding their lived experience is crucial to ensuring they get the support they need.

Through the Coram Voice's helpline and advocacy service, thousands of young people each year are supported to get their voices heard and to access their rights in relation to their safety, housing and entitlements. Coram Voice also runs the largest survey of its kind, exploring the views and wellbeing of thousands of children in care and young care leavers, and works with local authorities to help improve the care system based on their responses.

2025 marks the **50th year of Coram Voice**, a milestone that celebrates our dedication to creating better chances for children at a time when the demand from for our services grows daily. Every child should have the chance for the best chance to thrive in adult life and we will continue to work tirelessly to make that happen for children now and for the next generation.

**Brigid Robinson**

Managing Director of Coram Voice



# Getting young voices heard

Thanks to the kindness of our supporters, we directly helped over 155,000 children, young people and families last year. In this edition of the Coram newsletter, discover how through our advocacy support, helpline, writing competition and surveys, we get young voices heard in matters that concern them.

Through the Coram Voice helpline and advocacy service, thousands of young people each year are supported to access their rights in relation to their safety, housing and entitlements. Coram Voice hosts a national annual creative writing competition, 'Voices', for care-experienced children and young people to amplify their voices further and showcase their talents.



Credit: monkeybusinessimages

The cost-of-living crisis and growing pressures on services mean that more and more children and young people are falling through the gaps, unable to access the support and services they need. This is where Coram comes in - we are there to fight for better chances for every child, now and forever.

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# 50 years of Coram Voice

Established by social worker Gwen James in 1975 as the Voice for the Child in Care and joining the Coram group in 2013, Coram Voice



created the National Advocacy Helpline and pioneered specialist advocacy services to support children in and around the care system to understand their rights and have their views considered in the planning of their future.

It has also played a key part in championing the entitlements

enshrined in the 1989 Children Act and has inspired policy developments and continues to do so including through Bright Spots, the largest and most systematic research on the views and experiences of children in care.

**Coram Voice is the first and longest continuing charity dedicated to the Voice of the Child in Care.**

With 2025 marking 50 years of getting young voices heard in the decisions that matter to them, we are calling for a renewed commitment to listen to and act on the views of children who depend upon the support of those services, realising their right to be heard.



Credit: LeoPatrizi

- 1975** **Coram Voice established as the Voice of the Child in Care by social worker Gwen James followed by the first advocacy cases and helpline**
- 1987** We deliver the first **visiting advocacy service** to secure children's homes
- 1995** **Launch of our London-wide specialist advocacy service**
- 2001** First edition of **Sorted & Supported**, our guide for young people, explaining their rights as care leavers
- 2005** We formed the **Alliance for Child Centred Care** and launched our specialist advocacy unit to support those with disabilities.
- 2012** The groundbreaking **Homeless Outreach Project** launches in London, ensuring young people receive support from children's services
- 2013** Voice of the Child in Care joins the Coram group as Coram Voice and our **Bright Spots programme**, a partnership with the University of Bristol, launches to understand children's care journey from their point of view
- 2014** **The Door Is Closed** report provides evidence of children who are homeless because they are not provided with the services they are entitled to.
- 2015** We launch **Voices**, the only national writing competition for children and young people in care.
- 2017** Coram Voice becomes the home for **A National Voice** – the only organisation run by and for children and young people in and leaving care.  
**Your Life Beyond Care** survey was co-produced with care experienced young people to capture care leavers' experiences
- 2019** **New Belongings programme starts supporting eight local authorities and their care leavers to improve leaving care based on care leavers views**
- 2021** Coram Voice work directly with the Independent Review of Children's Social Care to gather the views of over 300 children in care and care leavers  
Research on the impact of the pandemic on care leavers wellbeing published
- 2022** 10,000 Voices is published, the most systematic evidence of care experience ever produced
- 2024** **Disability, disparity and demand** report shares insights on numbers and experience of disabled children in care and care leavers  
**The Door is Still closed report** shows that – 10 years after the first analysis - homeless 16 and 17-year-olds continue to be denied care
- 2025** Coram Voice marks **50 years of the Voice of the Child in Care** with the launch of the Coram Voice Care Ambition



# Be inspired by the voices of children and young people

**Voices 2025**, the only national creative writing competition for children in care and young care leavers, is open for entries until 23 March 2025. The theme of this year's competition, sponsored for the fifth year running by UK management consultancy Cadence Innova, is **'My Voice.'**

Entries will be judged by an expert panel of acclaimed children's authors. Judges for the 2025 edition are due to be announced shortly, alongside a group of young judges who were finalists in previous years of the competition.

Mali, aged 8, was our winner of the Primary category in 2024. She said this about her big win:

“Wow, what an adventure! I can't believe I won the Coram Voices Competition with my poem, 'Different?'”

My poem was all about how life, school, and challenges are different for children like me who are adopted and have experienced care. It was like putting my feelings into words and sharing them with the world.

**It's not just about winning; it's about showing people what it's like to walk in my shoes.**

I'm so thankful for this opportunity to share my story and connect with others who understand. It's like finding a special place where I belong.”



# Coram Voice is calling for change

**Coram Voice has marked 50 years since it started out as the voice of the child in care with an event at the House of Lords attended by over 150 young people, ministers, MPs and Lords and sector leaders.**

Hosted by the Rt Hon. Baroness Butler-Sloss and chair of the Education Committee Helen Hayes MP, the event also saw the launch of 50 years of getting young voices heard, a new report setting out how Coram Voice has pioneered advocacy services to support children in and around the care system since being established in 1975 as the Voice for the Child in Care.



Speakers included minister for children and families Janet Daby MP, A National Voice trustee Johnny Hoyle and Coram Voice Managing Director Brigid Robinson. The event was also addressed by Youth Advisory Board and A National Voice member Rose Flavin, who challenged attendees to make change happen today for children and young people today.

She said: "I am here as a young person. I am not asking for change – I am demanding change, and every single person in this room has the power to make change happen. Children in care are the most vulnerable in our society but they are so neglected. I came across Coram Voice when I was at my lowest. They helped me with advocacy and today I stand proud as part of A National Voice. Coram Voice are brilliant in what they do, but they need more support."

Attendees were also invited to sign Coram Voice's pledge, committing to listening to children and young people in or coming out of care and ensuring that all who are dependent upon the care system can get the help they need.

# What does it mean to be 16 or 17 years old and homeless?

Ten years ago, the study 'The Door is Closed', which examined the advocacy case work of Coram Voice, found that children were being allowed to become or remain homeless because local authorities were failing to give them the support they are legally entitled to.

'The Door is Still Closed' report, published in December 2024, finds that little progress has been made in the intervening decade. Examination of legal rulings, case work and published reports shows that all too many homeless 16 and 17-year-olds are still being left unassessed, unsafe and denied the support and security that all children need.

Mina\*, who had to leave her family home at 17 due to physical and emotional abuse, shared her experiences.

With nowhere to go, Mina approached her local authority for support but they turned her down. She ended up

sofa-surfing at friends' houses whilst trying to study for her A-levels and was reliant on her friends' families for food and clothing. Mina says she had "tried so hard" to escape her family situation, only to find there was no support to fall back on when she was alone. She said:

“I thought: if I'd come out earlier when the abuse was worse, would they have taken me more seriously? What about children who don't have friends with spare rooms? What if they feel they have to stay in an unsafe home or sleep rough?”

Eventually, Mina was able to access advocacy support from Coram Voice and her advocate successfully fought for Mina's local authority to take her into care and give her access to safe housing.

The report finds seven barriers to children receiving the support they are entitled to and makes several important recommendations to ensure homeless 16- and 17-year-olds can access the care and support that they are entitled to.

**Read the full report here:**  
[www.coram.org.uk/resource/the-door-is-still-closed/](http://www.coram.org.uk/resource/the-door-is-still-closed/)

\* Names, images and some of the details of the young people and staff mentioned in this appeal have been changed to protect their identities





"I don't think you understand what this opportunity has done for me in this space. I can't wait to grow in it".

**Young Ambassador  
Summer 2024**



## Voices in Action – putting young people at the centre

Voices in Action, a programme managed by Julia Mayer, is a dynamic area of work across the Coram group. It brings together the work of CCLC's legal work, Coram Voice's advocacy support and Coram's participation team to champion young people's rights and campaign for change. Our focus is to amplify the voices of young people impacted by school exclusions and/or homelessness and housing needs.

Our Young Ambassadors are aged between 16-25 and come from across London. They have all experienced school exclusions and/or homelessness/housing issues, and some of them have been directly supported by Coram. Voices in Action empowers ambassadors to utilise their experience on School Exclusions and Housing rights in a variety of ways.

### **Peer Education**

Voices in Action takes a rights-based approach to supporting young people.

Our ambassadors have worked with Coram's Solicitors and Advocates to develop rights-based Peer Education Programmes to support other young people in relation to their housing rights and rights around school exclusions.

### **Policy and Campaigning Work**

The Young Ambassadors have been part of several projects, including creating a series of short films to raise awareness of the issues around school exclusions. Our ambassadors led a participatory grant-making programme, delivering funding to organisations for homeless young people. They have also consulted on website developments, been involved in public speaking opportunities as well as policy consultations with partner agencies.

The Voices in Action Ambassador Groups meet on a weekly basis on the Coram campus, and are paid London Living Wage for consultation work and workshop delivery.

# Coram Children's Legal Centre updates



Credit: damiraudic

## Child detention powers scrapped

Powers to detain children without a time limit were brought in with the Illegal Migration Act 2023, though it had not yet commenced. This included allowing the government to lock up children arriving in the UK alone.

In 2023, Coram Children's Legal Centre worked with partners leading efforts to limit the child detention powers and we are now delighted to see them repealed. The scrapping of the powers preserves the status quo of the Immigration Act 2014. This means unaccompanied children can only be detained for 24 hours in airports and other short-term facilities, and children in families can

only be detained for 72 hours or a week if personally authorised by the minister and in special facilities and with certain safeguards.

CCLC's managing director of legal practice and children's right, Rosalyn Akar Grams, commented: "We applaud the government's decision to scrap child detention powers. Babies and children do not belong in immigration detention. This is a crucial step in upholding the rights of children affected by the immigration and asylum systems."

We look forward to continued engagement with the government on protecting children in the asylum and immigration system including unaccompanied children who arrive in the UK alone.

# High Court ruled in favour of a mother and her severely disabled child

The claim was brought by an asylum seeker and her severely disabled five-year-old child. The child experiences frequent seizures and requires close supervision and full adult support for daily life activities. The claimants live in a hotel room provided by the Home Office and went to court to challenge the inadequacy of that accommodation.

The Home Office acknowledged that the accommodation was inadequate but argued that it was “impossible” to comply with the mandatory order sought by the family.

However, the Court stated that it had been ‘left in no doubt’ about the need to grant a mandatory order and that the Home Office had failed to establish impossibility. It pointed to a pattern of other systemic failings and mandated the Home Office to find suitable accommodation by 24 February 2025.

The claimants were represented in Court by Garden Court Chambers, instructed by CCLC.



# Research on vital support for children in care and care leavers with disabilities

Currently, national data on children in care and care leavers does not include information on disability. Consequently, recently published data obtained by Coram Voice represents the first national snapshot of disabilities recorded by professionals among children and young people in the care system. Coram Voice's report finds that many children in care and care leavers with disabilities could be missing out on vital support.

## Key findings:

- There is significant disparity between local authority data which records that 13% of care leavers have a disability, and self-reported data which found 27% of care leavers reported a disability or long-term health condition\*\*

- Evidence of significant variation in the percentage of children in care who were recorded as having a disability in a local authority, ranging from 3% in the lowest proportion to 32% in the highest. The difference was even more pronounced in care leavers with 1% vs 36%
- The percentage of young people self-reporting a disability or long-term health condition is rising over time from 22% in 2017 up to 32% in 2023

Professionals highlighted that support for disability tends to focus on physical health or learning impairments where the need for ongoing support or adaptations can appear more obvious. Some practitioners acknowledged that some disabilities are invisible and reported feeling less confident in their understanding of neurodiversity.

However, young people who shared their views expressed that for them disability can be multifaceted and include conditions, such as neurodiversity, which can make day-to-day life more difficult. Mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, reported by young people are not





included in the 'disability codes' used by local authorities. Receiving a diagnosis was helpful for some young people in managing their needs but stigma associated with having a disability was also a concern for some young people.

Susan, a care-experienced young person who has a brain injury, autism and visual impairment, said: "I did try raising it with the care home and my social worker, that I needed support in school, but because I was in a separate part of the school for special educational needs students, they thought that was enough, but it wasn't. The moment I turned 16 was a real downfall for me as a disabled child in care. I suddenly had to manage going to medical appointments on my own as a

vulnerable 16-year-old, and I just didn't go anymore, so my physio stopped, I missed so many vaccinations, I didn't go for eye tests. I couldn't handle it on my own"

Susan is now in a supported living placement, which has been "much better" for her: "I have support workers come in every day and they're autism trained, mental health trained, and physical needs trained," she said. Susan says she would like to see a 'protected characteristic' introduced around children in care with disabilities to ensure the safeguarding of children.

**To discover Coram's findings, read the full report here: [www.coram.org.uk/news/coram-voice-disability-report/](http://www.coram.org.uk/news/coram-voice-disability-report/)**



# Foundling Hospital Digital Archive launches

Almost 100,000 pages of records from the Foundling Hospital have been made available online for the first time, bringing to life the previously untold stories of over 20,000 children who grew up at the Hospital and of their birth mothers.

The digital archive launch is the culmination of Coram's five-year programme, *Voices Through Time: The Story of Care*, made possible by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Coram

has digitised 405 volumes in the archive, almost a quarter of the entire collection, spanning 1739 to 1899. Nearly 6,500 volunteers from around the world helped transcribe the digital pages to enable detailed searching of their contents.

The digital images and their transcripts are free to access online. In addition to the records about the children, the digital archive contains intimate and moving petition letters from mothers seeking the admission of their children

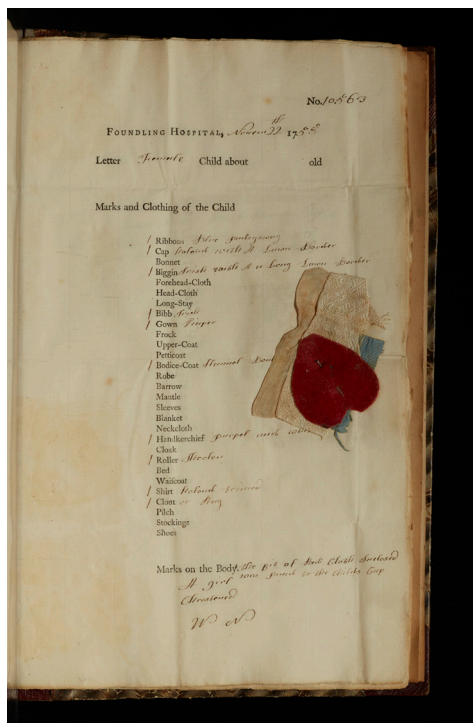
into the Foundling Hospital, and books containing tokens left as a symbol of the connection between mother and child.

The digital archive provides a rich historical resource for research into the lives of working-class women across England, and the history of education, childcare, employment, medicine, disability, textiles, and more. Family historians will find details of children, parents, Hospital staff, and apprenticeship masters and mistresses. The site has had over 160,000 views in the few short months it has been live.

Dr Carol Homden, CEO of Coram, said: "Through these extensive and detailed records, we are able to discover the untold stories of thousands of children who were raised at the Foundling Hospital in the 18th and 19th centuries, and hear rare first-person accounts of the issues faced by women who had no source of support in the harsh environment before the welfare state. It enables us to learn more about the evolution of social attitudes to children's rights and welfare and the role Coram has and continues to play in pioneering good practice and developing children's services since 1739. We are enormously grateful to the thousands of volunteers who participated in the programme, care-experienced young people who have shared their own stories, and to The National Lottery Heritage Fund in enabling us to preserve this precious archive for future generations."

Alongside the digital archive launch, Coram also unveiled Echoes of Care: The living history of Coram and the Foundling Hospital, a new immersive art installation exploring the past and present of the care system. The exhibition at Coram Campus in Bloomsbury, London, is the creative culmination of the Voices Through Time programme. It integrates words, images and audio produced by care-experienced young people across five years of creative projects, with details of the lives of Foundlings and their mothers. The exhibition runs until the end of March.

Visit the digital archive at [archives.coram.org.uk](https://archives.coram.org.uk)



# Get involved!

Coram has many exciting events coming up in 2025, so why not sign up for a walking, running, swimming or cycling challenge and help create better chances for children?

We still have a small number of spaces available for this year's **Oxford Half Marathon** on 12 October 2025! This course is fast and flat, and guides runners through the winding streets of Oxford.

Alternatively, you can join us at the **Royal Parks Half Marathon**, also on 12 October 2025, which is central London's first half marathon! The route will take you through Kensington Garden, Hyde Park, St James's and Green Park.



If you are looking for something different, you can browse all of the challenge events that Coram has to offer by following the QR code below.

**If you would like to speak to somebody about signing up, email [challengeyourself@coram.org.uk](mailto:challengeyourself@coram.org.uk)**



Over the festive period, we asked our supporters to send messages of care to the children and young people that we support. We received an overwhelming response, and we just wanted to say a massive thank you to those who participated!

## Keep up to date through our channels:

Website: [coram.org.uk](http://coram.org.uk)

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

Instagram: [Coram.uk](https://www.instagram.com/Coram.uk)

Youtube: [Coram](https://www.youtube.com/Coram)

X: [Coram](https://twitter.com/Coram)

If you have any questions, please contact our supporter care team on

Tel: **020 7520 0330**

Email: [supportercare@coram.org.uk](mailto:supportercare@coram.org.uk)