

Winner of the Care Leavers Age category  
**'Bruce' by Annabel, 21, London**

The judges Jenny Molloy and Luke Stevenson said: *"Bruce was a brilliantly written piece that took the theme in an imaginative direction. The author put across a real depth of feeling and emotion that made it stand out as the winner. It captured us from start to finish and stayed with us all day - a magnificent piece"*

## Bruce

His gentle nature, smooth chestnut fur drew me to him. His eyes had a deep warm feeling. He was caring, he knew how pain felt and wanted to rescue me. It was immediate. The feeling when I first set eyes on him was overwhelming. This tall handsome horse in front of me was to change my life. Every minor improvement built into a major step forward. He walked towards me head bent, we came closer slowly, instantly I felt safe. He rubbed his head on me, invading my space but not making me fearful. I was at peace. How could such a large animal project such a gentle secure feeling? That's Bruce for you.

Butterflies in my stomach but with a calm aura. I set out to take my first ride on Bruce. I tentatively approached him slipping his head collar on; he gave me an affectionate snort and instantly put me at rest. I walked him slowly towards the block, his large hoofs teetering along. He had poorly feet. He understood pain. Gently I coxed this giant over the cobbles tacking him up, preparing myself for my mount. As I climbed on he stayed very still, he reassured me that he would be my protector. This first riding encounter was to be the beginning of an amazing journey.

Ever since that first meeting Bruce has brought calm to my life. He encouraged me to speak openly whilst keeping me safe and calm. As I lay on his back I can feel his love seep through me. His ears listen tentatively to my every word, obediently following my every command.

I didn't ride Bruce I was Bruce. Never once when I sat upon Bruce's back did I feel I was his rider. I was always part of him I guided him through speech and movement I learnt to communicate without fear. I began to understand emotion and how my behaviour can and does affect others. He allowed me to lie on his back he trusted me too not hurt him and I trusted him to care for me. I began to see a point in life and realise I had people who loved me and wanted to help me. Bruce taught me that threw patients and gentleness I could succeed and fight my fears. He showed me that I could have a life.



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getting young voices heard

Coram Voice is a national charity which helps looked-after children get their voices and wishes heard when decisions are being made about their care.

Coram Voice is part of the Coram Group of charities which has been advancing the welfare, education and rights of children in the UK for over 275 years.

Coram develops, delivers and promotes best practice in the support of children and young people. Our vision is that every child has the best possible chance in life. Coram has been helping vulnerable children for 275 years. Today, we help children and young people develop their skills and emotional health, we find adoptive parents and we uphold children's rights, creating a change that lasts a lifetime.

**Find out more at [www.coram.org.uk](http://www.coram.org.uk)**

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All images are posed by models. \*Names have been changed to protect privacy.

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**VOICES**  
2016

Winning entries of Coram  
Voice's 2016 writing  
competition for looked-after  
children and care leavers



I work as an advocate for **Coram Voice**, a national charity which helps looked-after children get their voices and wishes heard when decisions are being made about their care.

For years I have seen incredible poems scrawled on scraps of paper all over the walls of the young people I visit. I have seen enough to know there is more to young people in care and care leavers than some stereotypes might suggest.

I started this competition to create a platform for the talent of children and young people and celebrate their voices.

I was absolutely overwhelmed with the quality and richness of the entries we received and what it meant to the young people who were shortlisted.

These brilliant pieces of writing go to show what I have always known - that children in care and care leavers are exceptionally talented, creative and resilient.

I hope you enjoy reading the winning entries of the Voices 2016 competition as much as we did.

For information about Voices 2017, please email [info@coramvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@coramvoice.org.uk) and we'll update you.

**Muna Adam,**  
*Coram Advocate for young people*

## Coram Voice wishes to thank the Voices 2016 judging panel

- **Eleanor Mills**, Deputy Editor of the Sunday Times
- **Paolo Hewitt**, Journalist and author
- The poet **Dreadlockalien** aka Richard Grant (Former poet laureate for Birmingham city)
- **Luke Stevenson**, Children's Journalist at Community Care magazine
- **Lisa Cherry**, author of *'The Brightness of Stars: Stories of Adults Who Came Through the British Care System'*
- **Jenny Molloy**, author of *'Hackney Child'*

### Winner of the Primary School Age category **'If,' by Adam, 10, Essex**

The judges, poet Dreadlockalien aka Richard Grant and author Lisa Cherry, said:  
*"This poem uses a traditional poetic format of personification. It shows how valuable friendships are to us all. Great metaphors and opportunities for us to reflect upon what our friendships mean to us."*

#### IF

*This is my poem about my friend. I miss him because he goes to a different school now.*

If my friend was a car,  
He'd be a sparkling golden Lamborghini Aventador,  
As bright and shiny as a diamond in the sky,  
Candy gold,  
Perfect in every way.

If my friend was a drink,  
He'd be a nice hot chocolate,  
Served with tasty, gorgeous marshmallows,  
Perfectly made with a smiley face,  
Ready to drink with pride.

If my friend was an animal,  
He'd be a golden Labrador retriever,  
Retrieving sticks from afar,  
Being loyal all day long,  
Playing with all his toys every day .

If my friend was a light,  
He'd be the brightest, like the sun,  
Lighting the room when it's dark and lonely,  
Placing an arm around that comforts you,  
Making a spark in my heart.

If my friend was a flower,  
He'd be a bright red poppy,  
Standing tall in your back garden,  
Resembling the soldiers,  
Remembering the war.



### Winner of the Secondary School Age category

#### **'My Heroes... My Happiness...' by Steven, Year 8, Luton**

The judges Eleanor Mills and Paolo Hewitt said: *"Both of us felt his use of poetic language was nicely sustained throughout, and his joy of finding love beautifully expressed and very moving."*

#### **My Heroes... My Happiness...**

I lay there like death lies over the darkness of the night like light jumps into the darkness of the abyss. My life being shadowed like the British clouds shadow the light and all that is good for this world. Being drowned into the depths of the ocean like a fish gets drowned in the depths of the air. My soul being burnt like the rain burns the fire to the deepest pits of hell. But still I am happy, and the two people who make this possible, Clint\* and Estelle\*.

When all feels wrong in the world I think of them and all is correct again. In this world of war and torment I think of them how much I love them and how they have helped me throughout my life.

They are my real parents and I love them with all of my heart. I have been with them for 10 yrs. now and when I think of them I think of my heroes...

Before I met these amazing people I was on a rollercoaster but now I am on a rollercoaster that now can only go up. I felt like hell was on my heart but then I was opened up to love again. I felt suddenly like there was a huge weight on my two shoulders and then I met these two people the weight was suddenly lifted. The only two people who were solely responsible for this. My heroes... Clint\* and Estelle\*...

I had felt a new emotion that I had never felt before. I was greeted by happiness. I was greeted by another feeling that I had never felt before when I met them... love. My eyes filled with tears of joy as I struggled to keep in the happiness. Warmness flooding through my veins. A sigh of relief as I felt as though I had found my safe haven...

Struggling to control my emotions as strangers became my friends and friends became my family. Could I have been there? Was I in heaven? Every day I asked myself these exact same questions. But then I have to come back into reality and realise that I was still in this same world of war and torment. But with these people helping me through my poisonous life I can do it and I will eventually become stronger and no longer crying my way to sleep every night...

My soul had been torn apart but now it has been sewn back together... by my heroes...

The past ten years of my life have been the best I have ever experienced. Our family is like the story of Romeo and Juliet except in our family the love is returned because there is always love and sometimes it is consistent and that is why I love my family and they love me in my family. They are my heroes. They are my happiness. I love them loads...