



Respected and protected

securing a better future
for all children



coram

better chances
for children
since 1739

Foreword

The UK has a long and proud history of supporting and pioneering children's rights and welfare both in this country and across the world.

350 years after the birth of our founder, Coram believes that now, as much as ever, those rights need protection. Children must be better supported to act as agents in their own lives and to navigate the new risks they face if we are to secure a better future for us all.

Thomas Coram challenged the prejudices of a society which tolerated child poverty and abandonment as necessary evils, stigmatised unmarried women and their illegitimate children, saw violence, addiction and servitude as mainstream, and was yet to recognise the need for girls even to receive education or have rights of inheritance.

In the early 18th century, at a time when thousands of infants were abandoned in London alone because their mothers were unable to care for them as a result of poverty or illegitimacy, Thomas Coram campaigned seventeen years for a Royal Charter, enabling him to establish his charity 'for the care and maintenance of exposed and deserted young children'.

That children's lives are significantly better in the UK than they were three centuries ago is not in doubt but the cycle of emotional deprivation and loss, tangible inequality and deliberate exploitation still places young lives at risk. This must not be tolerated as if it were inevitable.

In too many countries, including our own, some still children remain "exposed and deserted". Whenever it occurs, the experience of violence and abuse can be life-changing.

There are 11 million children in the United Kingdom. This is the highest number ever but also the smallest proportion of under 18s in history; the few must not be overlooked by the many and children's interests cannot take second place to adult concerns.

As the first ever children's charity and the birthplace of children's social care, reaching more than a million beneficiaries each year, the Coram group has an exceptional historical perspective and works at the forefront of developing new ways to help children to thrive.

This call for change highlights some of the challenges facing children today, the changes that we want to see and what Coram is doing to effect that change. This forms part of the vision for 2040 outlined in our *Charter for Children* to work with others from our regenerated campus as a national centre of excellence for children.

We address the issues faced by looked after children, those in care and leaving care; those whose needs are not met and whose voices are not heard; children at risk of family

There are 11 million children in the United Kingdom. This is the highest number ever but also the smallest proportion of under 18s in history

breakdown or in need of permanent loving homes, who often wait too long for the support or placement they need; children denied the education they need to develop or lack support to realise their potential; and children with uncertain immigration status living in fear and insecurity. All children may be at risk if they are hidden from view.

We call for improvement in eight areas to ensure that all children have the best possible chance in life:

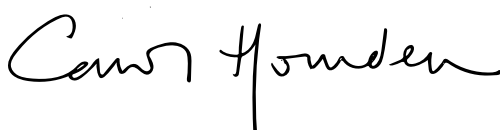
- Strengthening the **legal framework** for children.
- Ensuring the **voices of children** are always heard.
- Providing **secure loving families** for children who need them.
- Realising **access to justice** for all children.
- Making routes to **permanent status** accessible to children and young people.
- Building **positive social norms** in schools and ensuring timely and sufficient adolescent and mental health support.
- **Tackling educational exclusion** with greater support for schools in realising equality of opportunity for those with additional needs.
- Building capacity and **consistent quality** to ensure that children's needs can be met.

Children's rights are not an optional extra – they are the bedrock of society. Children must be respected and protected as current and future citizens if we are to secure the greater good.

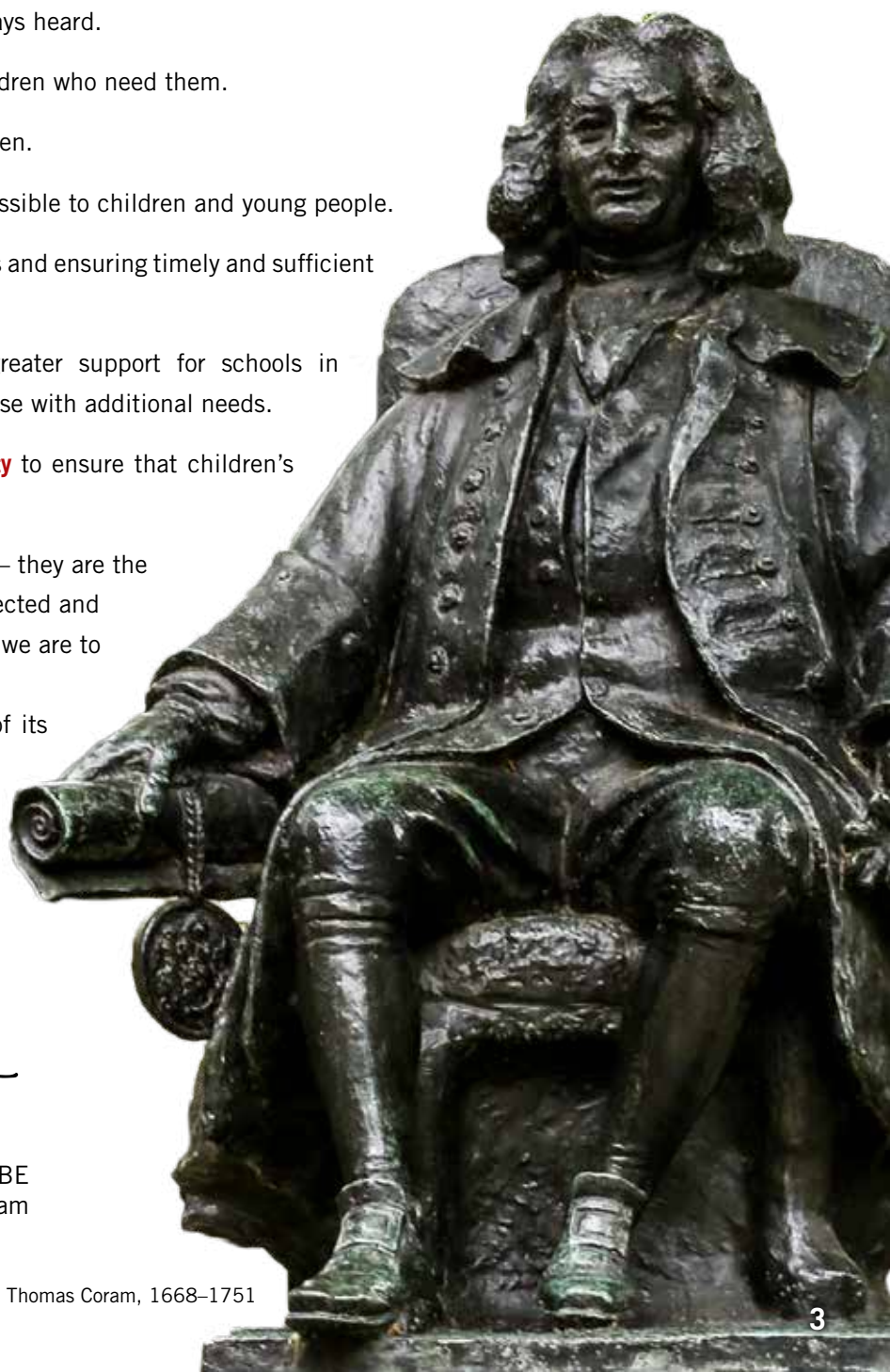
Coram today, walking in the footsteps of its founder, will not rest until every child is respected and protected with the safety, love, education and equality of opportunity to which they are entitled.

Will you join us and sign our pledge today?

Visit pledge.coram.org.uk



Dr Carol Homden CBE
Chief Executive, Coram



Strengthening the legal framework for children

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a broad treaty providing comprehensive protection for children's social, economic, cultural and civil rights.

Whilst the UK has signed up to the UNCRC, it is not incorporated in domestic law in England or Northern Ireland, and only limited rights are enshrined in Scottish law. In Wales, Ministers are required to have due regard to the rights contained in the treaty. The European Union (EU) has committed to the fundamental rights of children through the Charter of Fundamental Rights which contains provisions inspired by the UNCRC, including adopting the best interests principle, and the child's right to be heard.

As the UK prepares to leave the rights framework of the EU, it is an opportunity for parliament to ensure that vital rights for children are protected and continue to be promoted across a diverse range of areas, including: criminal and family justice, non-discrimination, child trafficking, sexual exploitation and health and safety.

If the gains achieved over three centuries are to be secured, now is the time to align the commitments of the UK nations and incorporate the provisions of the UNCRC into domestic law to ensure that the UK shows clear and unambiguous leadership as a champion for children in the world.

Withdrawal from the EU is the most fundamental constitutional change to the UK for a generation

The change we want to see

- Through the **full incorporation of the UNCRC into UK law**, the government can act expressly to protect all children's rights in primary legislation.
- To allow for adequate transparency and accountability, the government should introduce a **requirement for Ministers to have due regard to the UNCRC** and for child rights impact assessments to be undertaken prior to the introduction of primary or secondary legislation.

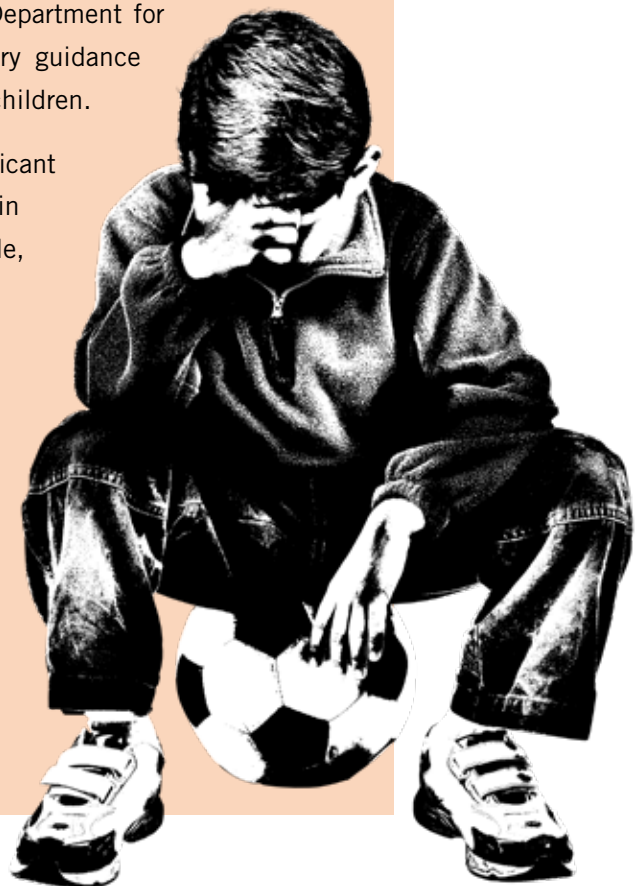


Now is the time to align the commitments of the UK nations and incorporate the provisions of the UNCRC into domestic law

- The **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights** should be brought fully into the domestic law of all UK nations, to ensure adequate protection for issues of centralised and devolved concern.
- **Children and young people can only exercise their rights if they are aware of them** and have access to well informed independent sources of advice, and government at national and local levels should secure that provision and ensure its widespread promotion.
- The government should undertake and **publish baseline studies against Global Development Goals** in line with international commitments, and continue to play a full part in tackling and eliminating violence against children.

How will Coram make a difference?

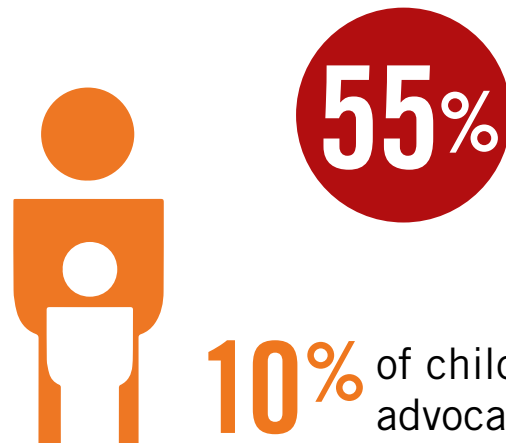
- We will work with the government to develop training and guidance on the UNCRC and undertaking **child rights impact assessments** for policy makers in Whitehall.
- Every year, we will train more than 1,000 practitioners in the UK about the rights of children, build the capacity of the sector with young people who are co-trainers and update **legal guidance for non-legal professionals** to ensure children are supported.
- By working directly with the Home Office and Department for Education, we will seek to ensure that statutory guidance adequately reflects the UK's legal obligations to children.
- By bringing **strategic litigation**, we will drive significant changes in the law, practice or public awareness in order to protect children's rights, with, for example, cases clarifying the law on the best interests of children in immigration cases.
- We shall use new digital tools to ensure young people are informed of their rights and can access them in relevant and accessible ways including **LawStuff**, produced by young people.
- We shall provide **socio-legal research**, consultancy, training and support to countries working to realise improvement in the rights, welfare, education and health of their children.



Ensuring the voices of children are always heard

At any one time there are more than 70,000 children in England reliant on the state for their care and well-being because their families cannot safely care for them, or they have suffered abuse or neglect.

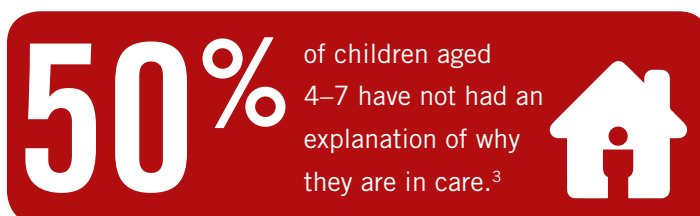
The complexities and inconsistencies of the system mean that many children – unaware of their rights and unsure of who to turn to for help – struggle to access support to which they are legally entitled, such as having a say in their care plans, an education, contact with their families, and financial support. The views of children and young people are too often overlooked in the decisions that affect them and time is not always taken to explain to them what or why decisions are made.



of children in care do not know that they can access an independent advocate.¹

10% of children in care used advocacy services.

Half of local authorities supported less than **7%** of the children they considered eligible.²



1 in 5

young people in care have low well-being, with teenage girls at particular risk.⁴

Young people in care who did not feel included in decisions made about their lives were **3** times more likely to have low well-being.⁵

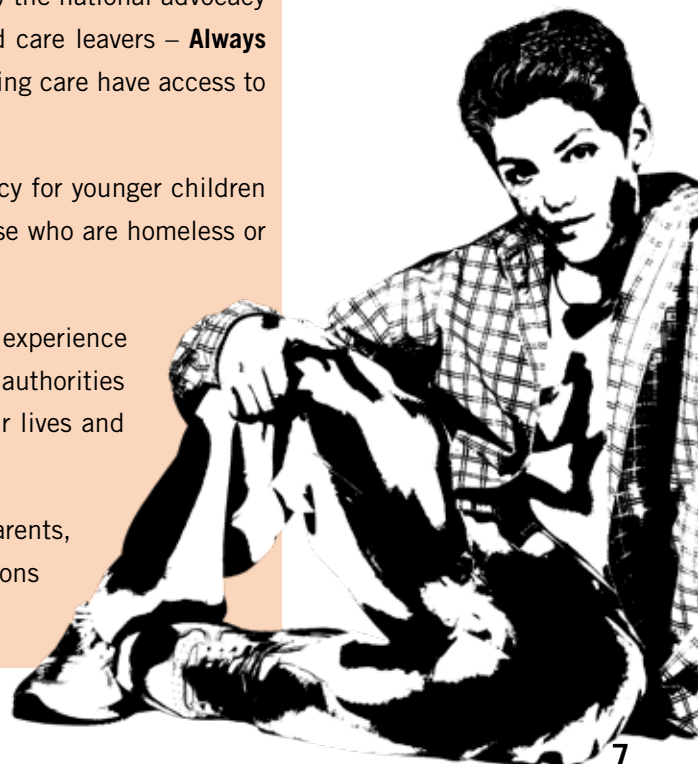
The change we want to see

- **A duty on local authorities to provide an 'active offer' of advocacy** to ensure that all children and young people are always offered advocacy support when they come into care and at key transition points or when there are concerns about a young person.
- **The right to an independent advocate enshrined in law** for all children and young people receiving or seeking care or support from the state, including those leaving care to adoption.
- **A requirement on all local authorities regularly to use subjective well-being indicators** to measure and understand how children in care and care leavers feel about their lives.
- **A new National Outcomes Framework and Statutory Guidance** for advocacy services to ensure a consistent approach to advocacy that goes beyond complaints, as well as published national outcomes which hold local authorities and providers accountable around the availability and quality of services.

The views of children and young people are too often overlooked in decisions that affect them

How will Coram make a difference?

- We will continue to provide advocates, a **national helpline**, and trained independent visitors for over 3,000 young people in foster care, children's homes, adolescent mental health settings and residential units.
- We will deliver (on behalf of the Department for Education) the national advocacy safety net and advice service for looked after children and care leavers – **Always Heard** – ensuring all children and young people in and leaving care have access to an advocate when they need one.
- We will build **new access routes** to information and advocacy for younger children and those with learning difficulties and by outreach to those who are homeless or marginalised.
- Our **Bright Spots** programme will continue to improve the care experience of all looked after children and care leavers by helping local authorities understand how children and young people feel about their lives and using what they say to inform service development.
- Our **Ambassador programmes** – The Adoptables, Young Parents, Young Citizens and A National Voice – will co-produce solutions with young people to address the issues they face.





Providing secure and loving families

Every child deserves to be part of a secure loving family. Recent statistics show a growing number of children who need the protection, either for a short time or permanently, of local authority care.

This rise has been attributed to problems in households, such as poverty, poor housing and substance misuse, and the lack of targeted family support or early intervention services.⁶ Where children are identified as being 'in need', effective and timely services must be made available to the family and/or the child.

Where children cannot safely live with their birth parents and are at risk or have suffered significant harm, then plans must be made and delivered that enable an alternative family life to be created for them that lasts for as long as the child needs it. If long-term foster care or adoption offers the best possible chance for a child, that decision should be made swiftly and inclusively, with support to the child's family of origin.

90 children enter the care system each day – a record high.⁷

74% of the **72,670** children looked after away from home are in foster care.⁸

4,350 looked after children were adopted in 2017, an increase of **1,250** from 2011.¹⁰

Last year, children were placed within an average of **16 months** from entering care, and adopted within **24 months**.⁹

3,690 children were placed under special guardianship orders in 2017, an increase of **33%** from 2013.¹⁰

1 in 4 mothers whose children were subject to care proceeding, faced repeat proceedings.¹¹

The change we want to see

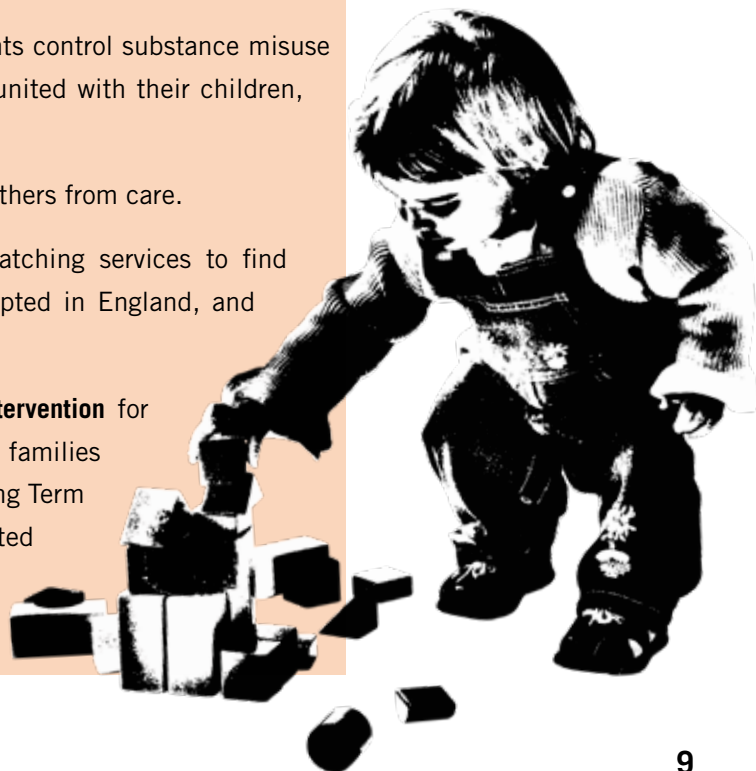
- **Implementation of best practice in early permanence** planning and placement for infants who have entered care in every area to minimise harmful delay for children and to provide a transparent process for birth parents.
- **Specific additional support** provided to first time mothers and young women from the care system involved in care proceedings about their child, including access to legal advice and therapeutic support.

- **A national priority for the recruitment of sufficient adopters** and foster carers and a national infrastructure to ensure more children can be matched and placed with minimal delay.
- **Direct applications to the Adoption Support Fund** for adoptive families from Independent Adoption Agencies, and the tailoring of support services available to address the distinctive needs of children subject to Special Guardianship Orders.
- The development of a **robust, child-centred framework** for the provision of quality foster care that addresses the current challenges and hurdles that impede this.
- Wider implementation of the **Family Drug and Alcohol Court approach** and other forms of sustained support for children from families featuring substance misuse.

10%
of children in care
experienced more
than three moves
last year⁸

How will Coram make a difference?

- We will provide outstanding adoption and fostering services and launch a new **Quality Mark** to support agencies across the country to develop and share expertise in Early Permanence.
- We will provide training, guidance and a voice to **1,000 professionals, foster carers and adopters** each year, developing peer support and integrated system approaches.
- We will continue to work in partnership to help parents control substance misuse and other related problems so they can be safely reunited with their children, through the **Family Drug and Alcohol Court**.
- We will work to **develop and pilot support** for young mothers from care.
- We will deliver **Adoption Activity Days** and other matching services to find adoptive families for up to 10% of all children adopted in England, and replicate this approach for fostering.
- We will provide **multi-professional assessment and intervention** for children and adolescents in care – whether they are in families through Adoption, Special Guardianship Orders or Long Term Foster Care, making sure that what we learn is replicated in residential or other settings where children separated from their families of origin now live.



Access to justice for all children

Children's rights are only a reality if children and young people are able to understand what they are, and can take action to exercise those rights in practice.

Thousands of vulnerable children and young people do not receive the support to which they are entitled and are reliant on advocacy and legal support in order to fight for their rights. Without this, many children are left unable to access the support, accommodation and services they need or unable to access the immigration system to secure their status. Public legal education and legal aid for those who cannot afford to pay for lawyers is a key part of any system that protects and promotes the rights of children.

Last year nearly **390,000** children were 'in need', supported by children's services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Thousands more were refused support.¹²

6,000 children dealing with immigration legal cases alone each year have no access to free legal advice and representation.¹³



The change we want to see

- **Increase in the scale and long-term investment in open access to free legal advice** for children, young people and families, leading to greater resolution of legal issues without cases going to court.
- **The Legal Aid Exceptional Case Funding system should be amended** so that any child who needs it can more easily access this vital safety net.
- **Access to free legal advice and representation** for all separated children with immigration cases and in any case where there is local authority involvement in private law proceedings.
- All children who present as homeless or at risk of homelessness should be **accommodated regardless of their status** under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (unless they make an informed decision not to be) or with their families.

12,000

16 and 17 year olds
present as homeless
to their local authority
every year.¹⁴

The increase
in unrepresented
individuals in family law
cases has led to an estimated

£3.4 million

additional costs in the
family court.¹⁵

How will Coram make a difference?

- We will provide telephone legal advice on family and education issues and online guidance to over **650,000 users**, working to ensure that all can access the help they need.
- We will continue to develop mobile-first digital legal information to address the needs of children and young people through **LawStuff**.
- We will represent children and families in almost **1,000 new cases each year** in asylum, family, community care and education law, challenging decisions to ensure children receive the support and protection they need.
- We will provide **outreach advice, information and intensive advocacy support** to help homeless young people move off the streets and into safe housing, to re-engage with the system and to access the financial, housing and educational benefits to which they are entitled.
- Together with our **Youth Rights Trainers**, we will train over 1,000 social workers, advocates and other practitioners a year on the rights and entitlements of young refugees and migrants.





Routes to permanent status for young people

Across the country, children and young people who have grown up here are living in 'legal limbo': they believe they are British but don't have the right immigration documents.

Thousands of children who have come seeking protection are given temporary permission to stay, only to be removed when they turn 18. Due to high fees, a lack of quality free legal advice, and a complex, inaccessible immigration and asylum system, these young people are unable to fully be part of the country they call home and find themselves unable to continue their education or access services.

As Britain rearticulates its relationship with the European Union, it is critical that any new rules governing the rights of European nationals in the UK after Brexit must be workable and fair, and take into account the rights of children and young people who have grown up in this country.



There are an estimated **120,000** children who are undocumented (without regular immigration status) in the UK, over half of whom were born here.

More than **two thirds** of unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the UK are **not granted refugee status** despite coming from conflict ridden countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea and South Sudan, and many face removal when they turn 18.¹⁷



Only **1 in 7** are able to overcome institutional barriers to secure permanent status.¹⁶

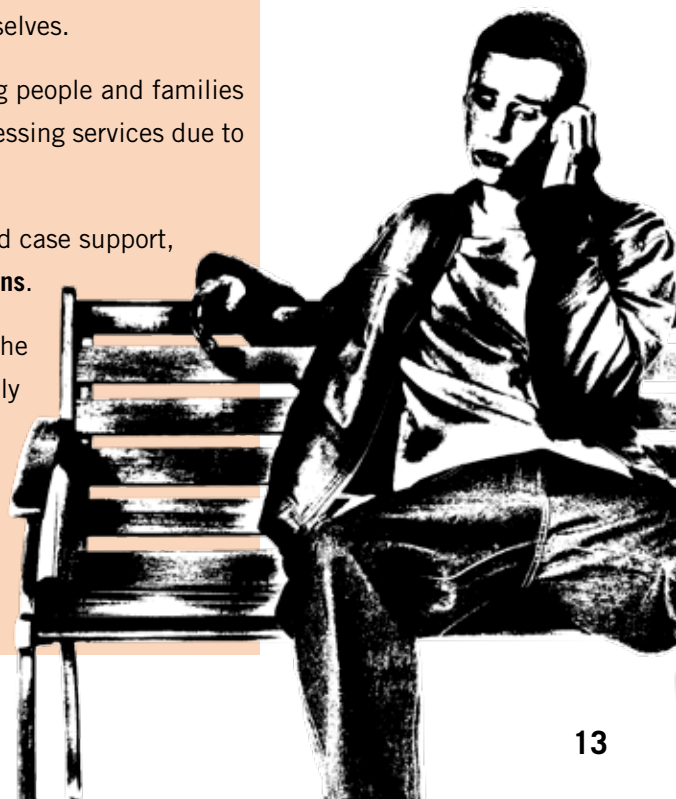
The change we want to see

- **Reform of the immigration and nationality systems** so that children and young people who are long term residents of the UK are able to regularise their status through timely, affordable processes and decisions on immigration that prioritise their best interests and need for permanence.
- European national children and families who can show five years' residence, including all EEA family members and those with derivative rights, are granted **settlement through a simple process** that is easy to administer with no application fee.
- All children in care and in custody are assisted to address their immigration issues and/or apply for citizenship, and are provided with **fully funded legal advice**.
- **A multi-agency assessment of best interests** of any unaccompanied asylum-seeking child that informs the outcome of their application for protection. Children who do not meet the threshold for refugee status should receive a decision on leave to remain that reflects their personal circumstances and best interests.

Thousands of children who have come seeking protection are given temporary permission to stay, only to be removed when they turn 18

How will Coram make a difference?

- We will advise over 1,200 individuals a year and train over 1,000 practitioners on the rights of young refugees and migrants, co-delivering training with **Youth Rights Trainers** who have experienced the immigration system themselves.
- We will provide **outreach immigration advice** to children, young people and families in London who are facing destitution or are blocked from accessing services due to their immigration status.
- We will work with pro bono lawyers to provide legal advice and case support, increasing the ability of children to make **citizenship applications**.
- We will co-chair the Refugee Children's Consortium and the National Asylum Stakeholder Children's forum, working closely with the Home Office to **improve guidance and processes**.
- Our **'Young Citizens'** ambassador programme works with young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to make a difference to the lives of others.





Sufficient adolescent and mental health support

As the first digital-first generation, children today face new risks and pressures. Peer influences and social norm expectations affect their relationships and safety.

Whilst most children are able to thrive, all too many experience anxiety and mental health issues. With adolescence starting earlier, we need new approaches to help young people to navigate the world they live in. If risk-taking behaviour, especially drug and alcohol use, begins at a younger age, it can compound harm and disadvantage later in life.

Schools and colleges have a front line role in promoting and protecting children and young people's well-being, enabling them to make positive lifestyle choices and support each other. Parents and carers need support in identifying troubling behaviour and to know how to help their children before difficulties become entrenched, or when referral to specialist services is not available.

For some children in care, the traumatic experiences they have suffered will require more intensive or multi-professional support to enable them to recover. This must be available to them more quickly in order to help them cope with multiple disadvantage and must also enable them to cross professional thresholds.

The average age that a child starts using the internet unsupervised has dropped from **11 to 9** years old.¹⁹ 

 **61%** of children come into care because of abuse or neglect.²⁰

Over half of mental health problems start by the age of **14** and 75% by the age of 18.²¹

An estimated **45%** of children in care have a diagnosable mental disorder²² (compared to 10% of all children).²³

The change we want to see

- **Increased prominence by Ofsted** to the “personal development, behaviour and well-being” judgement to ensure schools evidence and develop children’s well-being, leading to improved educational outcomes.

- **Statutory status for PSHE** (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) education, ensuring that teachers are given the training and curriculum time they need.
- **Greater focus on the practice of positive lifestyle management** and development of peer support using social norms approaches in adolescence.
- **Systematic guidance for parents and carers**, alongside training for teachers and social workers, so they can distinguish early signs of mental illness from usual adolescent behaviour and know how to refer to specialist support.
- Mental health assessments of children in care and care leavers which inform care plans and **trigger timely support for children and carers**, including targeted and specialist interventions for those that need them.
- **The needs and views of children and young people** in care and care leavers becomes integral to planning and commissioning arrangements, informing Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Health and Well-being Boards, ensuring services are in place to meet the needs identified by assessments.

How will Coram make a difference?

- As the leading provider of health, well-being and drugs education to over **450,000 children across the UK**, working in over 2,000 (11% of all) English and Scottish primary schools, we will extend reach to support statutory implementation of Relationship and Sex Education.
- Our **SCARF** (Safety, Caring, Achievement, Resilience and Friendship) online teaching resources will support a **whole-school approach** and help teachers embed a comprehensive well-being programme through the primary years.
- We will extend our targeted modules in **bCyberwise** (internet safety), Relationships Education, Time for Change and Alcohol Lessons for Life to strengthen positive social norms and skills development for children in transition to secondary school and enhance access to information for the parents of adolescents.
- Our **Adoption Support Gateways**, based in London, the South East and the East Midlands, will extend quick and easy access to a range of case formulation, therapeutic assessments and interventions for children in long-term placements.
- Our **psychologists, art and music therapists** will work with children who have suffered abuse, neglect and traumatising incidents, helping them through better sleep, 'mentalization', and the application of narrative in the therapeutic setting.



School inclusion and equality of opportunity

Education is a fundamental right for children. This education must be available freely to all children, regardless of their needs, ability or status, and include children learning about their own physiology and development.

Education must not be denied to any child as a result of delays, the lack of appropriate needs assessments or inadequate support provision. No child should be in a school which is unregistered.

School can be a positive place for children, providing security and support alongside opportunities to learn. But too many lose out on a fulfilling school education, because they have undiagnosed or unmet special educational needs, are temporarily or permanently excluded, or face bullying and stigmatisation. Poor literacy, social and communication disorders are over-represented amongst children and young people in contact with the criminal justice system. If needs cannot be met in any particular setting or they change, children and families must be able to rely on transparent process with clear advice, effective assessment and timely planning to secure educational entitlement.

35

children are permanently excluded every day. Thousands more are unlawfully excluded.²⁴

Children with SEN are **seven**

times more likely to be excluded than their peers.²⁶

The cost of exclusion is around

£370,000

per young person in lifetime education, benefits, healthcare and criminal justice costs.²⁵

3 out of 10

children in care aged 8-10 report being afraid to go to school because of bullying.²⁷

1 in 3 primary schools need more help with identifying children's needs in relation to Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).²⁸



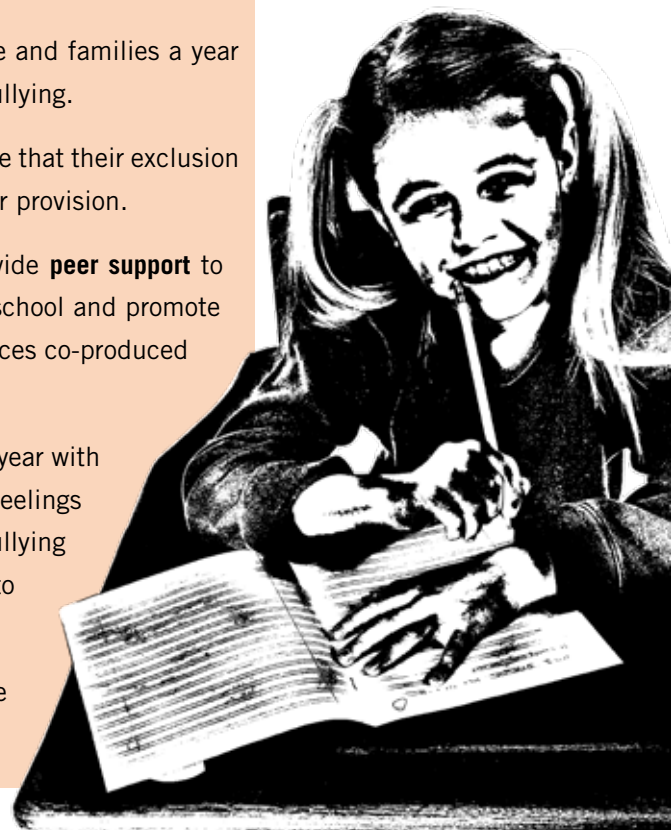
The change we want to see

- **A government commitment to ensuring that legal advice is available** in cases where children are at risk of school exclusion.
- **The provision of guidance on exclusion** written with and for children and young people.
- **Priority given to issues important to children in care**, including bullying, stigmatisation and carer engagement, by virtual school heads working with designated teachers.
- **A requirement for a full assessment of needs on the first occasion** that any child faces permanent exclusion.
- **Schools should have reliable access to swift and expert professional advice** that enables the child's needs to be met either in that school or in a setting that better meet those needs.
- **Clear guidance** that gives schools confidence to teach a comprehensive statutory RSE curriculum and to engage with parents and carers to address behaviour.

Poor literacy, social and communication disorders are over-represented amongst children and young people in contact with the criminal justice system

How will Coram make a difference?

- We provide **legal advice** to over 3,500 children, young people and families a year on education issues, including admissions, exclusions and bullying.
- We will offer a schools subscription service to help them ensure that their exclusion process is lawful and support local authority **SEND planning** for provision.
- We will extend our education champions programme to provide **peer support** to help adopted children and families with issues they face in school and promote wider use by schools of The Adoptables and Belonging resources co-produced with young people.
- The **Bright Spots** programme will build on its engagement last year with 2,300 children and young people in care identifying their feelings about school and the need for carer support for learning, bullying and stigma, helping local authorities work with schools to address these issues.
- Our new primary school **Relationships Education** programme will be extended to more than 200,000 children.



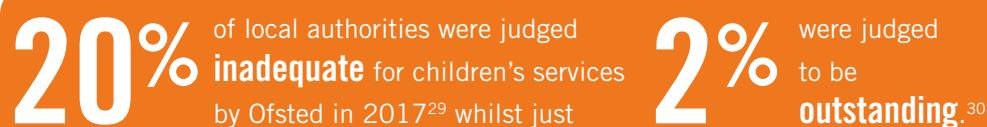


Building capacity and consistent service quality

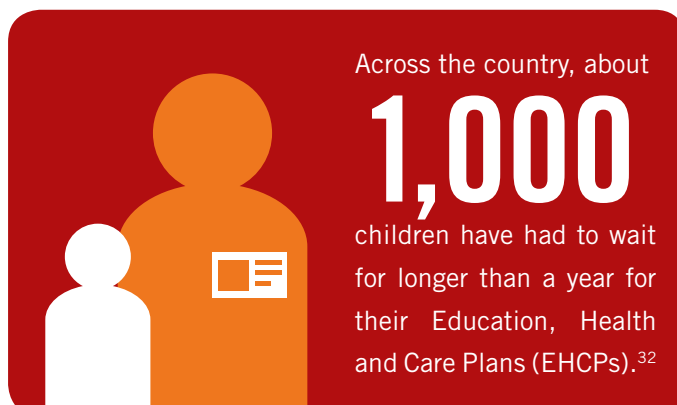
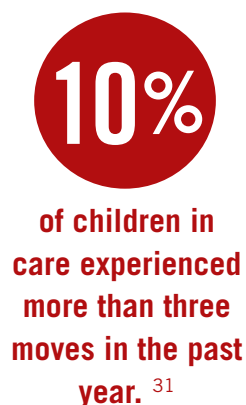
Across the country, children and young people experience different levels of access to the support they may need.

Whilst there will always be appropriate variations to reflect local circumstance, there are too many occasions when children experience a postcode lottery in relation to the availability of specialist help or the time it takes for plans to be made. Even when there is investment in professional development and “What Works” for particular groups is identified, its implementation can be challenging to achieve and compromised by underlying variation in the basic offer to children, workforce availability, geographical distances and resource variations.

As in the NHS, children’s social care must ensure a national consistent minimum standard in every area of its activity and be prepared to make the changes needed to raise the overall quality as well as consistency of access to support if all children are to have the best possible chance to thrive. There are inspiring examples of transformational change which show that improvement can be achieved. We will know we have succeeded when all areas are compliant with all requirements laid down in national standards, when public trust is evident, and when as many agencies/authorities are outstanding as require improvement.



The average time from their order before a child was referred to the National Adoption Register was **143.6** days in 2017/18, against a national standard requirement of referral by 90 days.



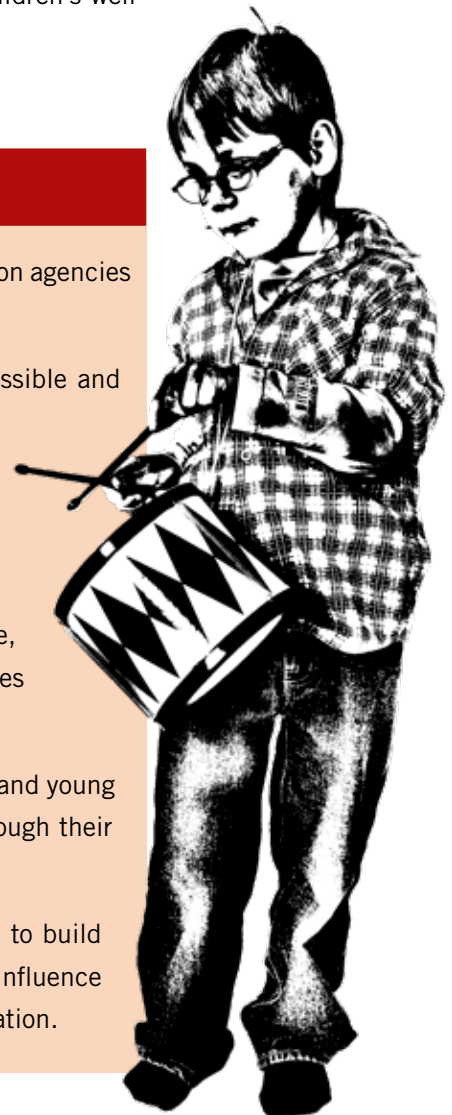
The change we want to see

- **A review of the local government funding formulas** to ensure that there is a fairer distribution of resources for children, young people and families no matter where they live.
- **Further development of new sustainable approaches** between local authorities and charities/social enterprises with financing and incentive structures for innovation.
- **Greater recognition of the achievement of excellence** by professionals for children through awards.
- **Effective and consistent use of data** to inform performance management and improve service provision to children.
- **The production by local authorities of an annual picture** of looked after children's well-being in their area informed by looked after children's perspectives.

Children's social care must ensure a national consistent minimum standard in every area of its activity

How will Coram make a difference?

- We will continue to provide **membership services** for fostering and adoption agencies to include specialist advice, forms and guidance for practice.
- We shall act as the leading publisher in the sector, and provide accessible and innovative training and development for some **5000 professionals**.
- We will partner with local authorities and independent agencies across the country, using diagnostic tools, improvement partnerships and communities of practice to support **sustainable best practice**.
- We will act as a laboratory to problem-solve, utilise and build evidence, disseminate learning and replicate **tested models of practice**, processes and products to effect positive change.
- We will act as a **co-production centre** to develop solutions with children and young people to the issues they face and enable the building of capacity through their social action.
- We will open the **Queen Elizabeth II Centre** and the Coram Story Centre to build public engagement with the experiences and needs of children and influence social and policy development to improve outcomes for the next generation.



Voices in action

The age of children being seen but not heard has passed. Structures such as Schools Councils, Youth Councils and Children in Care Councils are designed to provide opportunities for children and young people to influence the system that affect their lives. All too often, their influence is constrained by professional requirements or resource decisions and organisational priorities.

There continues to be no permanent structure or action plan to facilitate systematic participation of children in policy making. It is widely accepted that Brexit, for example – in both the referendum itself and ensuing discussions and consultations – has not engaged sufficiently with the voices of children and young people, the population who will potentially be most impacted in the long term.

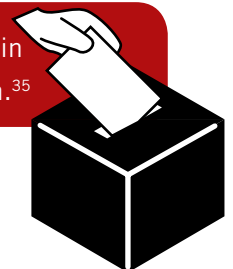
Whilst many organisations consult and seek to provide participation programmes, which are important, young people increasingly wish to set the agenda, not just inform it. Younger children and those with communication difficulties also need to have their voices heard to challenge preconceived ideas and achieve innovation. Co-production approaches are essential if young people are to be able to engage and create tools and solutions that can be applied by the organisations and professionals committed to their development and well-being.

19% of 8-10 year olds in care and 15% of teenagers do not feel listened to and included in the decisions social workers made about their lives.³³



Young people in care who do not feel included in decisions made about their lives were **three times more likely** to have low well-being.³⁴

71% of 18- to 24-year-olds voted to remain in the EU, compared to **48%** of those who voted in the total population.³⁵



74% of young people are interested in volunteering to help build their skills and social benefit.³⁶



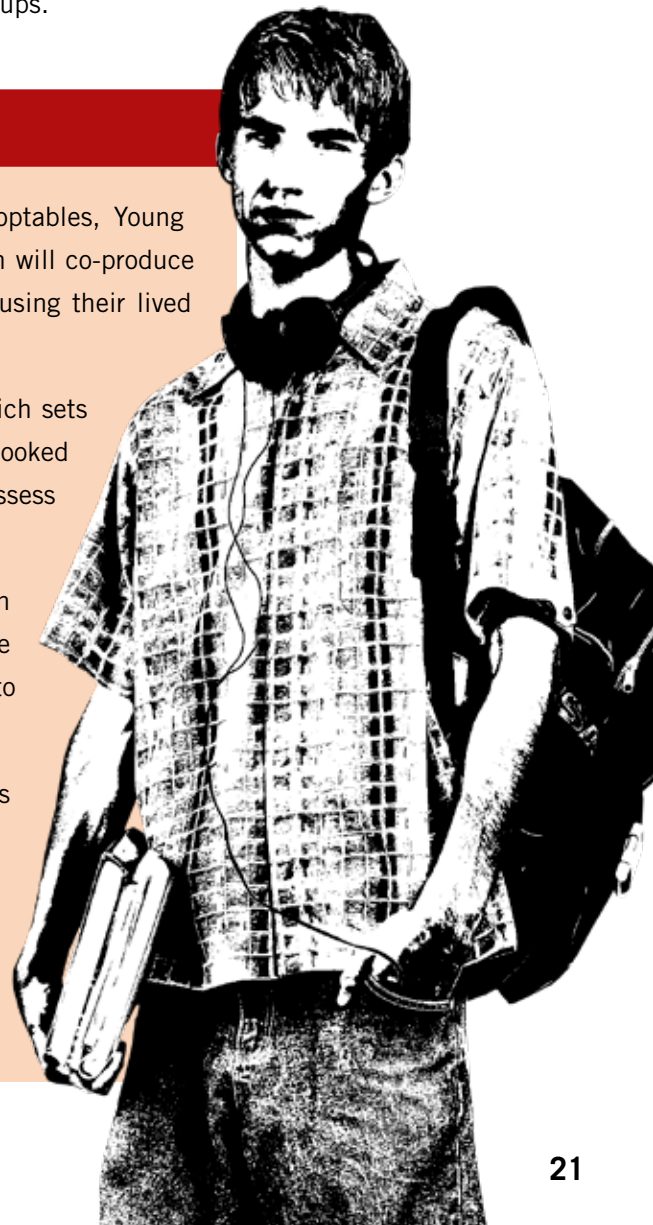
The change we want to see

- **Children and young people are seen as key partners** when it comes to programme and service development, with children and young people co-producing practical ways to address their issues and priorities with professionals.
- Article 12 of the UNCRC requires the UK Government to enable children under the age of 18 to express and have their views given due weight in all matters affecting them. They should be given **meaningful opportunities to be included** in discussion about future of the UK after Brexit so that their rights and opportunities are championed as part of the process.
- The government should put mechanisms in place to allow for the **systematic participation of children in decision making** at national and local level including young children, disabled children and children from disadvantaged groups.

Children and young people have the power to make a positive change in their own lives and the wider world. We have the privilege to work with them to secure it.

How will Coram make a difference?

- We will extend our **young ambassador programmes** – The Adoptables, Young Parents, Young Citizens and the new A National Voice – which will co-produce solutions with young people to address the issues they face using their lived experience to improve the system.
- We will work with young people to refresh the **LILAC Mark**, which sets out a standard for youth engagement in services that work with looked after children, and engage care experienced young people to assess the local authorities and services who wish to achieve it.
- We will gather the views and experiences of vulnerable children and young people with **peer researchers** and will disseminate and champion this evidence by convening and contributing to networks of influence.
- We will give children and young people opportunities to express their identity and build skills through heritage access, creative writing, and the **Voices awards**.
- Through the **Coram Story Centre** young people from care will explore the past and help the public to understand and inform the future story.



The Coram Group

Coram is the UK's first dedicated children's charity. We support children and young people from birth to independence from multiple centres across the UK, working as a group of organisations to create change that lasts a lifetime.

Coram is at the forefront of innovation, national standards, policy and practice development in early permanence and adoption support. This includes pioneering work in early permanence, adoption support, creative therapy and parenting programmes, as well as practice and impact research. Members of the Coram Group are:

Coram Adoption and Permanent Families

Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption

CoramBAAF

Coram Children's Legal Centre

Coram-i

Coram International

Coram Life Education

Coram Voice

Coram's **Queen Elizabeth II Centre** opens this year as a national centre of excellence for children providing new facilities for:

- Children's Rights Centre building greater access and outreach
- Centre for Impact advancing public understanding and application of evidence through partnership capacity for change
- Conference and Learning Centre for best practice training for professionals
- Coram Story Centre increasing access to our heritage as the birthplace of social care
- Co-production with young people to build new solutions to the issues they face.

To find out more about the legacy of Thomas Coram and Coram's vision for the future visit www.coram.org.uk

If history shows us anything, it is that change is possible and the future will require it. As a society we have many advantages and professional skills.

Do we have the courage and determination of Thomas Coram, to see the children who remain vulnerable and make the changes necessary to help them?

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Every child should be respected and protected

2018 marks the birth, 350 years ago, of Thomas Coram, England's first campaigner for children.

This was a man who could not, and would not, stand by while abandoned children and babies perished on London's filthy streets. For 17 years he fought doggedly to give them the protection and care they needed, lobbying society's most powerful and influential members, until, finally, he was granted a royal charter to establish the first dedicated safe haven for them.

Today, Coram is proud to continue his vital work and to address the inequality and deprivation that continues to blight young lives. We fight for children's rights. We find them permanent loving homes, we promote their voices, and we will not rest until every child is respected and protected.

Make your pledge

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www.coram.org.uk