

How Coram came to care

Celebrating the work of Coram, Harriet Breen went to find out the history of the Coram Centre and its links with children and young people of long ago.

In the early 1720s Thomas Coram, a retired entrepreneur, was horrified by the many young children he saw abandoned on the streets of London - around a thousand babies and children per year.

Thomas Coram decided that he could no longer stand by whilst young children died. He spent the next seventeen years raising funds and support. This came from some of the leading artists and musicians of the day.

In 1739 The Royal Charter established the Foundling Hospital. The first foundlings were admitted on the 25th March 1741. There were 40 babies. The hospital was only for "exposed and deserted children". Then in 1756 the hospital had to accept all children presented to them. By this time the hospital now had 1,344 children.

On entry, all children were baptised with a complete new name.

Mothers would leave a token to identify their children. To protect their anonymity the tokens were never given to the children. Some mothers returned to collect their children and sometimes found that they had died years earlier.

In 1880 education became compulsory for children aged 5-10 years. This was later extended to 5-14 years old. After leaving school the children would be apprenticed, some as young as 11 years old. The girls were trained in domestic services and the boys joined the Army, Navy or a trade such as cobblers, butchers and blacksmiths.

The apprenticeships usually lasted 5-10 years. Some children were treated so badly or in such bad living conditions that they died. Children who did survive finished apprenticeships between the ages of 21-25 years old.

In 1948 the law came in that each child had to have a family background and that the children could be adopted by other family members. Extensive records have been kept all of those who were at the hospital going back to the 1920s. These are housed at Mecklenburgh Square in London. More records from 1741 are still available and stored at London Metropolitan Archive. People use these records to find out their backgrounds even today.

Now in 2007, Coram Family still offers fostering and adoption services. Additionally, Coram offers a variety of services to families. This includes a parent's centre which runs courses and training for parents.

They also offer housing support services, Family support and a young parents group which I attend. Coram family has helped me with training, childcare and general support in many ways.

Coram family helps all people, no matter what their background. They give people confidence, better parenting skills, a place to socialise and so much more.

Meet Coram staff

Judy Platts - Young Parents' Project Worker

Judy has been working at Coram since 2003. Judy ran the project for several years by herself, setting up the Friday drop-in, coordinating the hugely successful film classes, and doing many, many, many home visits to name but a few of her accomplishments. Judy is enjoying her maternity leave with her beautiful son, Harper, and will be back in early-May 2007.

Matt Stinson - Education Coordinator

Matt has been working on the project since 1995 when he moved over from Coram education Service.

Matt is originally from the United States where he trained as an English teacher before coming to the UK almost six years ago.

Matt teaches the English and IT classes. He was responsible for the highly enjoyable residential trip to Camber Sands last year, and he particularly enjoys playing silly games at the Friday drop-ins!

Amy Palmer - Young Parents' Project Worker

Amy came to Coram in October 2006 to cover for Judy. However, Amy first became involved in the project when she interviewed a number of young people for a research project. She was instrumental in setting up the Kentish Town Tuesday drop-in along with Sure Start.

Amy will be leaving us at the beginning of May to start a new job with Barnet Social Services. She will be missed very much!!!

Laura Gould - Crèche Manager

Laura came to Coram in 2003. She is in charge of organising all the crèches at Coram Parents Centre, and she always looks after the children for the project's crèches as well as helping with the Friday drop-in. (See [Helen's interview with Laura](#))

About this article

This article was written by Harriet Breen, a member of Headliners' Project Subway group at [Coram Parents Centre](#).

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[Thomas Coram](#) Details from Wikipedia

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