

Independent Person for Complaints

Information to candidates

We are seeking candidates who are committed to our objectives for children and young people and equally committed to the organisation and the development of our services. We recognise we are a predominantly white workforce and are genuinely committed to encouraging candidates from diverse communities in order to improve the services to the children and young people we help.

Our Core Purpose

Coram Voice exists to enable and equip children and young people* to hold the system to account, to challenge and support it to do its job properly and to uphold the rights of children and young people to actively participate in shaping their own lives.

Our Vision

Coram Voice strives for a society which recognises and willingly accepts its responsibilities to children and young people, where the inequalities and discrimination they currently face have been eradicated. Where those children and young people are fully engaged in all decisions that are made about their lives. Where the views, needs and feelings that they express are at the core of those decisions.

Our Values

- We are **child driven**, always asking what children and young people want us to do. By engaging them at all levels of our work, their views and experiences are central to shaping all our plans. We are tenacious and passionate champions of children's rights and we will not be distracted in our determination to do the right thing for children and young people.
- Second only to our dedication to children is our dedication to each other. Our work is defined and inspired by meaningful, supportive, mutually empowering **relationships** with and between children and young people, colleagues and partners. These relationships are powerful because they are authentic and human, where every contribution is equally valued and respected.
- We create a **friendly and supportive** working environment where work can and should be fun. We recognise that happy people perform at their best, and that people performing at their best are happier in their work. We celebrate our successes together and are open about our concerns and mistakes, supporting each other to grow and learn from them. We work flexibly, supporting each other in times of high workload or when life gets difficult.
- We accept **personal responsibility** for our work and we are accountable for delivering results against those responsibilities. Managers empower their people to take ownership of and make decisions on their areas of responsibility, ensuring that workload is manageable, that people are treated fairly, that they are supported and challenged to succeed. Everyone at Coram Voice is committed to modelling and championing these values, and managers have a particular responsibility for bringing them to life.

*We work with and for a range of children and young people who are potentially vulnerable to harm or exclusion from society, and who have a particular reliance on the state or its agencies for their rights and wellbeing, including children and young people who are looked after by the state, in need or who have severe and complex mental health problems, care leavers and young offenders. This is not an exclusive list.

Our Work

As of 1st October 2013, Voice became a member of the Coram group of charities and became known as Coram Voice. Coram Voice and the Coram group share services and together champion the cause of children dependent on the state for support.

Coram Voice is a national independent children's charity which was established in 1975 and has grown to become one of the leading agencies for children and young people in the UK. Around 60 employed staff, 100 freelance workers and 30 volunteers deliver services to children and agencies through our London headquarters and regional offices. Together they provide Coram Voice with a high degree of specialist expertise in the fields of advocacy, children's rights, mental health, complaints, secure accommodation and experience of working with children in care, in custody, in need and those who have recently left care.

We provide:

- **Advocacy services** direct to children and young people in care, in need, leaving care, involved in child protection processes, and children and young people with severe and complex mental health problems. Advocates around the country support children and young people to get their voice heard in decisions about their lives. This may be through the national helpline or through an advocate working directly with a child, for instance, to support them at a review meeting or to help them make a complaint about their care. Coram Voice provides visiting advocacy services to most of the secure units nationally, to Secure Training Centres, psychiatric hospitals, residential special schools and children's homes.
- **A National Helpline** to provide access for children and young people to advocacy and advice, with access to legal advice and links with other national helplines such as ChildLine.
- **Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)** to advocate for young people as qualifying patients under the Mental Health Act, in order to fully support them to get their views heard in matters relating to their mental health.
- **Independent visitors services** providing volunteer befrienders to children and young people in care.
- **Independent services:** Coram Voice is a major national provider of independent person services for complaints by children and for reviewing whether children should be locked up in secure units on welfare grounds.
- **Policy and campaigning** to create a better system for all children and young people looked after by the state, for their care to be more child-centred and to give young people a greater say in decisions about their lives.
- **Participation services** to ensure children and young people have a voice in the development and delivery of services and campaigns, and through the process, provide the opportunity to develop relevant skills which will be of benefit to them in their future lives.
- **Training, development and information** for young people, advocates and child care workers, offering courses in advocacy, children's rights and child-centered practice across a range of areas including the new National Advocacy Qualification.

The Coram Voice Helpline

This national service offers access to advice and advocacy to children across the country. We work with children and young people in care, in need and care leavers. Our mission is to ensure that all children needing advocacy support can access this, providing an immediate telephone advice and advocacy service, allocating a community advocate or making an active referral to another advocacy service. This advice and referral service is delivered by a team of skilled advocates, with back up from the advocacy team and our volunteers. The team and all Coram Voice advocates have access to expert advice and support from Coram Voice Specialist advocates and Coram Children's Legal Centre when required.

About the Independent Person role:

Independent Persons for Complaints work in a variety of roles, to provide an independent element to the formal Stage 2 investigation and Stage 3 review of complaints under the Children Act 1989. They give the complainant (who may be a child, young person or adult) the opportunity to express their view, ensure the child or young person's rights and best interests are at the centre of the investigation and that the investigation/review process is open and transparent. They write a report on the investigation/review which is submitted to the referring agency.

In this recruitment round, we are looking for **experienced Investigating Officers (IOs)** who have a genuine commitment to the rights of children & young people to have a voice in the way they are cared for, in decisions that are made about their lives and the services they receive.

Applicants will need to have good analytical, investigative and problem solving skills and be available to respond quickly and flexibly to referrals. We would welcome applications from candidates who have experience of working within statutory and voluntary agencies. A willingness to travel will increase the number of cases that could be allocated to you.

As associates you will be expected to submit regular claim forms and no payments will be paid upfront to cover costs incurred whilst carrying out casework or attending training. The nature of associate work means that we cannot guarantee set or regular working hours and complaints will be allocated dependent on associate's availability, location and the needs and demands of the individual case.

General considerations

- Please note that people employed by a local authority cannot work for Coram Voice in the same authority (good practice suggests that at least 3 years have elapsed since they were employed by that local authority).
- All posts are subjected to an Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service check and successful candidates will not be able to work unsupervised with children or young people until the completion of this process.
- All Coram Voice workers are required to comply with Coram Voice Codes of Practice and Code of Ethics.
- All successful candidates will be expected to complete our mandatory training courses. Whilst completion of the training is compulsory, flexibility with the timing of attendance is negotiable where there are exceptional circumstances.

Returning your application

- We cannot accept general CVs. When completing your application form, you need to address each point of the person specification and **demonstrate** how you meet it.
- Applications must be fully completed.
- If you are a current Coram Voice employee you may submit a supporting statement only addressing the person specification requirements for the post.

Closing date for receipt of applications: n/a - rolling recruitment