



# Parent Champions

Southwark



Parent Champions are parent volunteers who give a few hours a week to talk to other parents about the local services available to families. Coram Family and Childcare developed the Parent Champions programme in 2007 to help 'hard to reach' parents who miss out on vital information about how to access local family services. In Southwark, our scheme currently has twenty-one trained Parent Champions across the borough. Here is an update on the current activities of our Parent Champions:

## Prior to Lockdown:

**National Parent Champion Conference organised by Coram:** Three Southwark Parent Champions and our Parent Champion Co-Ordinator attended the Conference, at Coram Headquarters in Central London. It was very interesting to meet other Parent Champions and Co-Ordinators from across the country and share ideas about some of the projects they have been involved in and are planning.

Originally, Coram were funded by the Department for Education to promote Parent Champions schemes across the UK; with a focus on childcare and early years' services. However, this funding came to an end in April and Coram anticipate that this may lead to other opportunities for Parent Champions to support families. It is expected that Coram will use funding from Trust for London to provide training for Parent Champions on becoming Parent Advocates. More information is awaited on this. In Southwark, our Parent Champions are already involved in a number of different projects in addition to Outreach, including Keeping Families Strong events. This has allowed the Parent Champions to develop personally and to build their confidence. We look forward to hearing more about other opportunities which may be offered by Coram.

**EPEC Parent Group Leaders:** Some of our Parent Champions were successful following interview to become potential Parent Group Leaders ("PGLs"). These PGLs will in future deliver the EPEC (Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities) Being a Parent parenting programme to other parents. Unfortunately, we were unable to start their twelve week training as planned in April, due to the Covid-19 restrictions on face to face meetings.

## During Lockdown:

Our Parent Champion Co-Ordinator has been in regular contact with the potential PGLs, delivering weekly training video group sessions on the content of the Being a Parent parenting programme. They are all keen to get started with their formal PGL training next term!

There have also been several video meetings with the Parent Champions during this period. The Parent Champions have had some of their own challenges, including changes to work commitments, childcare responsibilities and pregnancies. Information has continued to be shared with the Parent Champions about the services available to families in Southwark and they have continued to share resources with their networks of parents in our community, albeit digitally. Some Parent Champions have also been involved in a variety of projects/surveys during this period:

**Film Project:** Some of the Parent Champions (and some of the other potential PGLs) have contributed towards a series of short films of fun and creative things parents can do during lockdown with their children and to prepare for return to school and nursery. This project has been shared with the National Network of Parent Champions in case other schemes would also like create something similar. We are encouraging other Southwark families to take part in this project / future films: <https://www.walworthlivingroom.org/activities/southwark-films>

**Campaign for Better Childcare:** Coram will support parents to identify issues that are important to them, regarding childcare and parents' work in their communities and help them learn how to campaign effectively to bring about positive change.

**Youth Service Review:** Several Parent Champions took part in a video meeting to give parent's views on review of youth services in the borough.

**Connectivity survey:** Parent Champions contributed to a survey to help the council understand the scope of the issue that families face when accessing online services.

**Co-Production workshops:** Parent Champions have taken part in video meetings, hosted by Our Healthier South East London and King's Health Partners, with professionals to discuss ways to improve access to services for Southwark families via signposting by GP surgeries. The most recent of these meetings was attended by some of the new Social Prescribers who are keen to liaise further with Parent Champions and to improve their local knowledge in order to provide appropriate support to families.

**Healthy Start Training:** A webinar was provided by Public Health on the Healthy Start vouchers around who is eligible, what they can be used for and how to support families and pregnant women in applying.

**Open University Free courses:** Our Parent Champion Co-Ordinator provided the Parent Champions with information about free training currently available online with Open University on a range of topics. One parent champion has fed back very positively about a course she has completed - Primary Science; supporting children's learning – so other Parent Champions have been encouraged to consider some of these courses for themselves. The details can be found here as it might be something to share with other parents also: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue>

## Looking forward:

**Family Council and Parent Advocates:** Some Parent champions have been invited to take part in the upcoming workshops for parents and carers who have experience of being supported by any service across Children and Families, looking at their experiences of working with professionals and how these can be used to build positive relationships. It is hoped that these workshops will contribute towards forming a new Family Council and creating a charter around respectful partnership working. Some of the Parent Champions have also expressed an interest in finding out more about the Parent to Parent Peer Advocacy; where these Parent advocates will use their own experiences to help empower parents by supporting them to understand the Child Protection process, express their views and actively contribute to plans for their children. More information can be found here:

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/childcare-and-parenting/family-council>

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/childcare-and-parenting/parent-to-parent-peer-advocacy>

**Royal Literary Fund:** Coram have put us in contact with the Royal Literary Fund (“RLF”) regarding a potential future project which some of the Parent Champions may take part in. The RLF were working with a group of Parent Champions in Camden before the lockdown happened. An author spent time with the group and they shared experiences and put these into words. They are keen to continue to offer this, helping Southwark Parent Champions also reflect on their situation and write their stories.

**Adverse Childhood Experiences / Resilience:** Parent Champions were involved in a previous event at Peckham Theatre which included the showing of the Resilience film. Some of these Parent Champions have confirmed that they would like to take part in a proposed video meeting in the future to show this film to raise awareness of ACEs and facilitate discussions with staff across the Southwark Children and Young People workforce.

**New Parent Champions recruitment:** We already have some other parents who are keen to become Parent Champions. Coram were due provide Train the Trainer training to Parent Champion Co-Ordinators in March, but this was postponed due to Lockdown. Coram are working on a format to deliver this virtually. It is hoped that we can soon move forward with recruiting and training some more Parent Champions across the borough.

**Contact:** For any queries, please contact;

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