



SPEAKERBOX ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

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ABOUT SPEAKERBOX

We are **SpeakerBox**. We are , Southwark's Children in Care Council and officially turned 20 years old in 2023. We are managed by Southwark's Children's Rights service and sit within the Quality Assurance department. We are supported by one full-time Children's Rights & Officer, whose purpose is to champion the rights of Southwark's care experienced C&YP (aged 5-25). The Children's Rights Officer is also responsible for supporting some Children in Need who are subject to child protection plans.

As from April 2023, the Virtual School provided further support in the part funding of a second Children's Rights Officer. This was to assist with the demands of the service and to extend SpeakerBox's reach.

In line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) SpeakerBox encourages opportunities for C&YP to feel empowered in expressing their wishes and feelings, whilst ensuring their views are valued and not disregarded.

MISSION & PURPOSE

Empowering, upskilling and equipping our Southwark C&YP with the tools to self-advocate whilst amplifying the voices of all our care experienced C&YP. Doing so in partnership with the Virtual School.



OVERVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR

During the past year we worked in partnership with Southwark's Virtual School. The Virtual School were instrumental in supporting our growth. Their contributions helped finance fresh and innovative opportunities that upskilled and enabled our abilities to contribute to decisions that affect our lives. We have now come out of our shells, grown in confidence and are now able to participate more effectively and creatively. We have been able to demonstrate our new acquired skills through care planning, consultations, facilitating training and the recruitment of social work staff and students.

The Virtual School's generous contributions have enabled opportunities for us to expand our reach. We have now developed new platforms where we feel empowered in advocating, not only for ourselves, but all Southwark care experienced children and young people.

**"I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE VIRTUAL HEAD FOR FUNDING SPEAKERBOX SO WE CAN DO MORE WONDERFUL EVENTS THAT ALLOWS US TO LEARN AND GROW IN CONFIDENCE. SHE HAS GIVEN US CHANCES TO PARTICIPATE MORE. THIS HAS REALLY BENEFITED ME BECAUSE IT HAS MADE ME MORE CONFIDENCE TO SPEAK OUT".
ALICE, AGED 14**

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS

2022-23



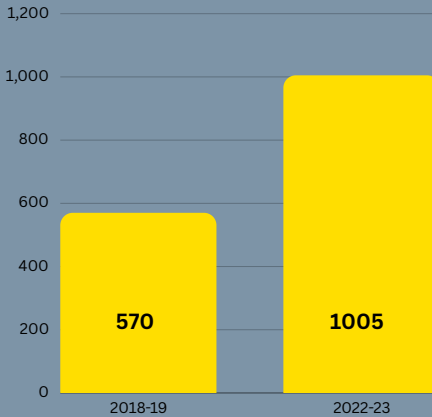
76%
ENGAGEMENT
INCREASE

THERE WERE **1005** ENGAGEMENT EPISODES

There were a total of **1005** engagement episodes where we (as C&YP), participated throughout the past year. We delivered training, campaigned, informed service delivery through consultations, and recruited social work staff. Our engagement increased by **76%** compared to our last highest record of 570 episodes back in 2018-19.

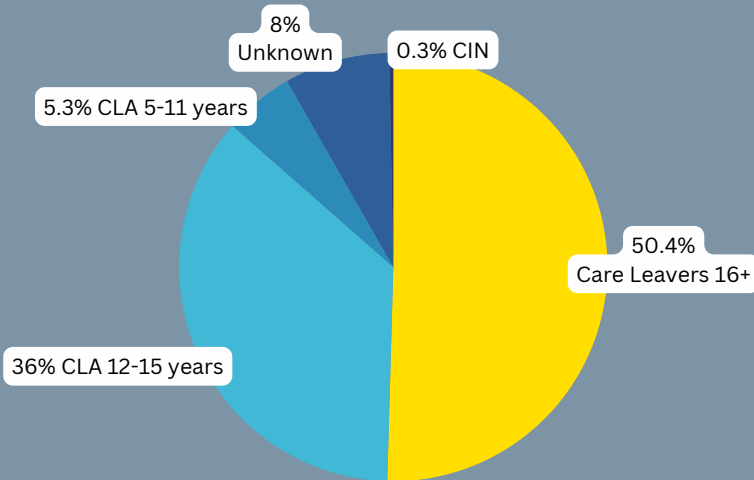
STATISTICS 2022-23

Number of Engagement/Participation Episodes by C&YP



76% increase in engagement compared to last highest record of 570 episodes back in 2018-19

Age Groups & Status of C&YP who Participated



50% of service engagement was made up of care leavers (aged 16 years+), whilst **36%** represented the engagement of C&YP aged 12-15 years. **5%** was representative of children aged 5-11 years. Males represented **36%** of the engagement, whilst females accounted for **64%**.

HOW WE PARTICIPATED?

CONSULTATIONS

- April 2022: We informed social work practice at **Care Service Day** Event.
- June 2022: We were consulted with the Commissioning Team on the **Sufficient Strategy**
- June 2022: We attended a focus group on **Race & Culture**
- July: We consulted with fostering in developing adverts to recruit new foster carers.
- Sept 2022: We met with **Ofsted** during their inspection visit.
- Jan 2023: We were consulted on the **Southwark's 2030**
- Mar 2023: We consulted with Commissioning on Advocacy and Independent Visitor's services.

CAMPAIGNING

- Aug 2022: We made a film with **London Bubble** and created a drama performance on 'Identity'. This kickstarted the development of our '**Identity campaign**'.

SPEAKERBOX MAGAZINE

- Throughout the year, we contributed to the SpeakerBox magazine. We wrote articles, created poems and submitted artwork.



RECRUITMENT

We sat on interview panels and helped recruit for the following roles -

- April 2022: **IROs**
- June 2022: **Audit Practice Service Manager & APT**
- July 2022: **Placement's Team Manager & Senior Placement Officer.**
- Nov 2022: **Audit Lead**
- Dec 2022: **Senior Social Worker**
- Jan 2023: **Child Protection Chairs**
- Feb 2023: **Children's Rights Officer**
- Mar 2023: **ART Senior Manager, Audit and Learning Lead, IROs, & Residential Manager.**

DEVELOPING & DELIVERING TRAINING

- Throughout the year we began developing our own '**Total Respect**' training.
- July 2022: We co-facilitated a webinar with Coram titled '**Staying Connected**'
- Throughout the year we shared our views and experiences at '**Skills to Fostering**'.
- Feb 2023: We developed and co-facilitated Care Planning Training with Southwark's **Principal Social Worker.**



ADVOCACY 2022-23

Coram Voice continued to provide independent advocacy advice and to our C&YP. Support was provided via their free phone advocacy support line, face to face in the community and across the country via their national team of advocates. This included their national Always Heard Advocacy Helpline and Safety Net Service.

124

**C&YP RECEIVED
ADVOCACY
SUPPORT FROM
CORAM VOICE.**

93

**C&YP WERE NEWLY
REFERRED FOR
ADVOCACY.**

14

**C&YP WERE RE-
REFERRED IN THE
YEAR.**

6

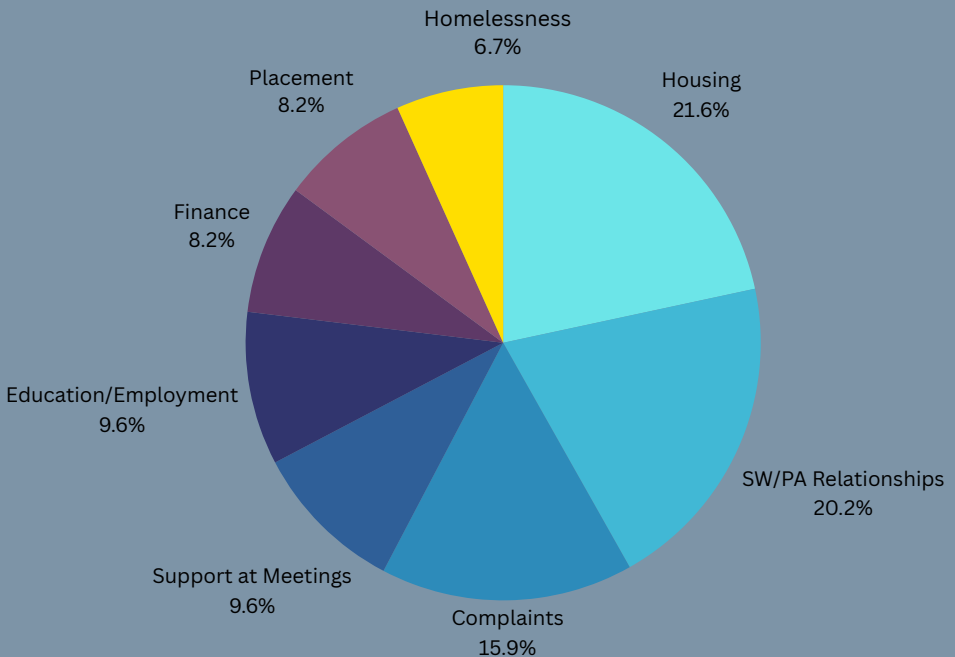
**C&YP RECEIVED
ADVOCACY SUPPORT
AT CHILD PROTECTION
CONFERENCES**





RAISED ISSUES THROUGH ADVOCACY

Issues Raised by C&YP



During 2022-2023, C&YP had identified **453** separate issues, covering **56** different areas. The issues raised by C&YP included challenges with **housing**, **finances**, and **relationships with social workers/personal advisers**.



TOP ADVOCACY THEMES

HOUSING: A high number of care leavers raised housing issues i.e., requesting moves from semi-independent accommodation, rent arrears, unsuitable accommodation, requests to move of Southwark. Coram Voice recommend that Children's Services develop a robust joint working protocol with housing to ensure a smooth transition for YP leaving care. Also, contingency plans to support YP through crisis or change of circumstances i.e., facing eviction or becoming a parent.

SW & PA RELATIONSHIPS: YP raised concerns about allocated social workers/personal advisors. For instance, some YP highlighted that some personal advisors were unfamiliar with Southwark's housing options and were unable to provide independent support in resolving issues. Some YP were unhappy with the low level of contact with social workers/personal advisors or not having an allocated worker. Coram Voice suggested implementing a drop-in service for YP to raise issues directly with team managers/heads of service.



WHAT WE GOT UP TO

Throughout the year we also engaged in activities that allowed us to have fun, acquire new skills and raise aspirations. Again, the Virtual School were instrumental in enabling these opportunities.



In June 2022 **The Choir Collective** was launched by **SpeakerBox Chair**.



In July 2022 **'What Work's'** asked a few of our **SpeakerBox** members to assist with making a **Young Advisor's** film on research.

Aug 2022: We watched **'Hamilton'** the musical, attended **'Lets Get Active'** a fitness mentoring programme and went to **Thorpe Park**.



Aug 2022: We made a film with **London Bubble** and created a drama performance about 'Identity'. This kickstarted the development of our 'Identity campaign'.



In Oct 2022 we attended a **photography workshop**, and performed at our **Care Celebration** Event.

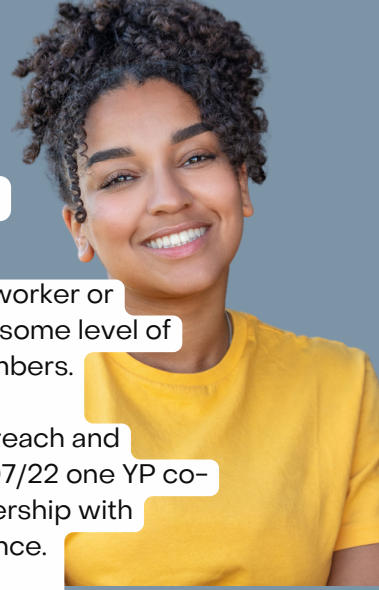


In Nov 2022 we were invited to attend the **'Black Panther 2'** film premiere in central London, and visited an **Escape Room**.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

DURING THE PAST YEAR C&YP'S ENGAGEMENT RESULTED IN -

- C&YP, particularly those experiencing change of worker or frequent placements moves, were able to sustain some level of consistency and stability with CRO and other members.
- SpeakerBox members were able to extend their reach and influence external agencies. For instance on 20/07/22 one YP co-facilitated a 'Staying Connected webinar' in partnership with Coram Voice. Since then YP has grown in confidence.
- C&YP (particularly under 12s) had fresh opportunities to engage with other care experienced C&YP, and developed new positive and sustainable relationships.
- C&YP developed and acquired new skills. For instance C&YP developed new skills in interviewing, presenting, photography and chairing their own meetings.
- C&YP developed confidence in self-advocating as well as advocating on behalf of others.
- C&YP had improved understanding of their rights.
- C&YP experienced improved emotional well-being.
- YP had improved aspirations and career paths



LOOKING AHEAD 2023-24

MOVING INTO THE FORTHCOMING YEAR, WE WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE WITH OUR CLIMB AND HOPE TO WORK TOWARDS ACHIEVING IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS-

TOWARDS THE END OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR WE RECRUITED A SECOND CRO TO EXTEND OUR REACH.

IMPROVED OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR C&YP TO ACQUIRE NEW SKILLS AND IMPROVED SELF-ESTEEM.

CONTINUED PARTNERSHIP WITH VIRTUAL SCHOOL WHILST ENABLING FRESH OPPORTUNITIES TO RAISE OUR C&YP'S ASPIRATIONS.

ACCESSING AND FACILITATING MORE STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR OUR C&YP.

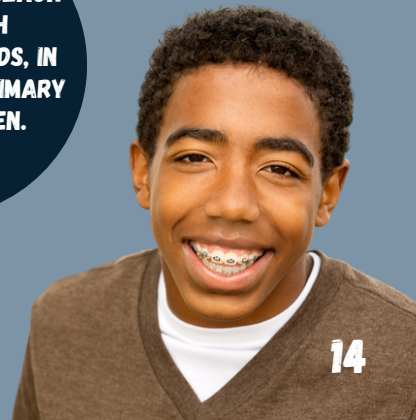
FACILITATING MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO TRAIN AND RECRUIT SOUTHWARK'S SOCIAL WORK FORCE & FOSTER CARERS.

INCREASED PAID AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS SERVICE

IMPROVED AWARENESS OF SPEAKERBOX WITH THE INTENT TO EXPAND MEMBERSHIP AND INCREASE ENGAGEMENT

IMPLEMENT OUTREACH FOR YP WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS, IN CUSTODY AND PRIMARY AGED CHILDREN.

TO ACQUIRE A CONSISTENT AND DESIGNATED SPACE FOR US TO BE TOGETHER.



C&YP'S FEEDBACK



"I really had fun with SpeakerBox; I got to meet other children like me. Before this week, i thought that I was the only person in care" It feels good not to be alone"

Child, aged 9



"I actually feel that my voice is being heard, and I'm making a difference...glad I'm a part of SpeakerBox"

YP, aged 17



"It's good to have somewhere to come to and feel a part of a family...because sometimes it can get lonely when I'm alone in my own flat"

YP, Aged 23



"I had so much fun this week during our SpeakerBox summer programme, I got to learn a new skill and I am so much more confident"

YP, aged 14



"Before sitting on interview panels with SpeakerBox, i was afraid to talk or interact with people I did not know...Thanks to SpeakerBox I've become more confident and now applying for jobs"

YP, aged 20