

Case studies: How can the arts and creativity support people who are shielding or vulnerable during Covid-19?

Letters in Lockdown

Coram

National (based in London)

“I didn’t think I’d like it but now I feel really relaxed ... love it!”

Introduction

Letters in Lockdown was a series of six creative writing workshops, delivered in partnership between Coram and the Royal Literary Fund via Zoom. Coram was originally founded in 1739 as “The Foundling Hospital” and participants explored material from the organisation’s historic archive and used it as inspiration to write their own letters, on a different theme each week. This included writing letters to people who have influenced them, discussing how Covid19 has impacted them and their hopes and aspirations for the future. The participants also experimented with “mail art” to add additional layers of meaning to their work. Alongside the workshops, we held 5 “drop in” sessions, where participants could share their work, receive feedback from the peers and receive support. At the end of the project, an additional celebration session was held where participants shared their completed letters with senior representatives from Coram, the Royal Literary Fund and each other. The letters are being posted/couriered to Coram (one is a letter in a bottle so could not go through the normal post) and will be displayed once lockdown has sufficiently eased. The pieces will also be incorporated into our “Story of Care” website, which will be relaunched early in 2021.



Funders

The writing tutor was funded by the Royal Literary Fund. Organisation, sourcing of archive material and session facilitation was done by Coram staff, as part of the NLHF project, “Voices Through Time: The Story of Care”.

Who is it for?

Young people with experience of being in care, aged 16 to 25.

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

Combatting loneliness and improving mental health for isolated and vulnerable young people.

Where is it happening?

Nationally

Are you working in partnership?

Our project was delivered in partnership with the Royal Literary Fund.

How many people took/are taking part?

13

For how long has it been happening?

May–June 2020

What were/are the main outputs?

The pieces created will be exhibited and digitised versions included on our website

Evaluation:

Participants were asked to complete an online survey and their responses to individual sessions were recorded. The final report will be completed soon.

What have been the challenges and successes for you?

This content is free to access and can be shared with wide audiences. We know some of the dance content has been shared as far afield as Australia. Challenges include the artists learning to use new technology and adapt their approaches to work from home and in front of a camera for the digital content. It needed to be high quality content AND make for good viewing quality and this took effort and practice. Success include reaching greater numbers for workshops than we would have done if it was a group meeting.

Further information

Coram is a children's charity which is committed to improving the lives of the UK's most vulnerable children and young people. We've created better chances for children for nearly three centuries, and today we are a group of specialist charities helping more than a million children, young people, professionals and families every year. Find out more at www.coram.org.uk

We support children and young people who need stable families, fight for those who are marginalised or at risk, and work with schools, local authorities, and young people themselves to increase skills and build resilience and sustainability.