

Game Changer

Exploring out-of-school youth club, sport
and play opportunities for children &
young people with special educational
needs and/or disabilities

GAME
CHANGER



JOHN LYON'S CHARITY

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Foreword

Dr Lynne Guyton, CEO, John Lyon's Charity

Over the last decade, I have seen first-hand what is possible when inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities is approached with the right intentions, partnerships and investment. Through our focus on cultural inclusion, John Lyon's Charity has helped develop meaningful partnerships between schools and Arts organisations that have created genuinely life-changing opportunities for children and young people. This work reflects a belief that sits at the heart of our grant-making: that every child and young person should have access to high-quality opportunities, regardless of their learning or access needs.

Yet despite this progress, I have also seen how much further we still have to go. Too often, children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities are excluded from out-of-school activities and, with that, lack opportunities to play, build friendships, participate in sport and develop their independence – to name a few! Game Changer marks the beginning of an important new chapter in John Lyon's Charity's work on inclusion, exploring how we can help ensure that all children and young people have equitable access to opportunities beyond the school day.

Game Changer does not suggest that inclusion is simple. In fact, the conversations that informed this report reminded me just how complex the challenge can be. Many organisations are already responding to the pressures of a stretched sector, often while working with limited capacity, funding and specialist expertise. We have seen and heard the good intentions of many organisations and, whilst those intentions matter, they are not enough on their own. Organisations need the time, training and additional resources to adapt their practice appropriately and sustainably for the longer term.

I am grateful to the families and organisations who contributed to this work. Their feedback has shaped the recommendations within Game Changer and should continue to shape what happens next. I hope this report provides a shared starting point for practical, realistic and sustained change across the sector. There is much more work to be done, but I am confident that, by working together, we can create game-changing opportunities for the children and young people who are too often excluded from the everyday experiences so many take for granted.



Executive Summary

This initial Game Changer report responds to disparities identified by John Lyon's Charity in the quantity and quality of out-of-school opportunities available to young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The findings present a clear and, sadly, unsurprising picture: children and young people with learning and access needs face significant barriers to accessing opportunities outside school, despite growing commitments from the Youth Sector to be more inclusive.

Across this consultation, families consistently reported that there were simply not enough accessible opportunities available either after school or during the holidays. **87% of parents and carers said there was insufficient youth, play, sport, and recreational provision**, while almost **half reported that their child was not regularly accessing any activities outside school at all**. Opportunities to access weekend activities were particularly sparse, highlighting that for many young people, the challenge is not choosing between opportunities but finding opportunities at all.

Families repeatedly emphasised that there was **no single type of provision that works for every child**. While specialist settings were often valued for their expertise, safety, understanding, and one-to-one support, families also recognised the social and developmental value of inclusive mainstream opportunities. Many families wanted access to both specialist and mainstream provision depending on their child's needs, confidence, and the activity itself. The decision for families is not simply specialist versus mainstream provision, but how their child can have equitable access to the right opportunity at the right time.

Families also spoke about the difficulty of navigating services and identifying suitable opportunities for their children. Most relied on word of mouth, schools, parent networks, and social media rather than formal systems such as Local Offer websites. **Parents and carers repeatedly requested clearer, more honest communication from organisations about what support they can provide, who activities are suitable for and whether settings can confidently meet individual needs**. Importantly, families valued transparency over organisations attempting to present themselves as a universally accessible offer.

The feedback from youth organisations suggests that access to opportunities is uneven depending on the level of support a young person requires. **The majority of organisations**

reported supporting children with mild or moderate needs, and opportunities reduced significantly for those requiring higher levels of support. The number of opportunities for young people also drops off after the age of 18, highlighting a further lack of opportunities for young adults once school-based support ends.

Both families and organisations described significant barriers to meaningful inclusion. **Families highlighted concerns around staffing, training, transport, cost, waiting lists, communication, and confidence in whether settings could safely support their child**. At the same time, organisations described being stretched by staffing pressures, limited funding, insufficient training, and fear of "getting it wrong". Many **organisations felt willing to be more inclusive, but lacked the confidence, capacity, or specialist support required to broaden their offer sustainably**. Even where organisations reported confidence in delivering inclusive opportunities or engaging significant numbers of young people with learning and access needs, this was not always supported by strong partnerships or established networks, and approaches often appeared more reactive than strategically proactive.

Despite these challenges, the research has identified good examples of inclusive practice already taking place across the sector. Organisations described using **quieter spaces, small-group delivery, buddy systems, additional staffing, sensory tools, social stories, and co-production to improve access to opportunities**. Partnership working has also been an important consideration, with mainstream organisations highlighting the **value of specialist organisations providing advice, mentoring, and referral pathways**. For most organisations, meaningful inclusion is most effective when they are supported to build confidence gradually through stronger partnerships, ongoing learning, and by setting realistic expectations.

Overall, the findings of this initial Game Changer consultation suggest that the Youth Sector is motivated and increasingly committed to inclusion. However, the focus is substantially weighted towards young people with mild to moderate needs, leaving an opportunity gap for those requiring more intensive support. Although organisations are willing to develop inclusive practice, delivery can be inconsistent, under-resourced, and not always effective in engaging families. Game Changer highlights the importance of stronger partnerships, improved communication with families, a focus on workforce development, and more realistic expectations for organisations to embed inclusive practice over time. Most

importantly, it reinforces that meaningful inclusion is built on trust, consistency, honest communication, and ensuring children and young people can access opportunities where they feel safe, welcome, and able to thrive.

Recognising the capacity challenges faced by many organisations, the Game Changer recommendations are not intended to suggest that every organisation can, or should, immediately offer fully inclusive activities. Instead, they set out practical starting points that can improve access now, alongside longer-term aims that organisations can work towards as capacity, partnerships, and experience develop.



- **Embed co-production and lived experience in design, delivery and review:**

involving children, young people, parents and carers in the design of delivery longer-term.

- **Build an organisation-wide culture of inclusion:**

embedding inclusion across leadership, staff teams, trustee boards, understanding behaviour expectations and the impact on day-to-day delivery.

- **Invest in workforce development, local networks and specialist partnerships:**

giving staff the training, peer learning, referral routes and specialist advice needed to build confidence and capacity.

- **Communicate clearly and honestly about inclusive offers:**

replacing terminology such as "SEND friendly" with specific information about suitability, support, access and limitations.

- **Adapt delivery around young people and families:**

designing activities around routines, travel, sensory needs, family capacity, and whole-family support.

Recommendations & Considerations

John Lyon's Charity recognises that despite the ambition of organisations to be more inclusive, many voluntary sector organisations are working with limited capacity, resources, confidence and specialist expertise. As a result, the Game Changer recommendations are not intended to suggest that every organisation can, or should, immediately offer inclusive activities. Instead, these recommendations are intended to set out practical starting points that can help improve access now, alongside longer-term aims that organisations can work towards over time as capacity, partnerships, and experience develop.

Embed co-production and lived experience in design, delivery and review

Families often feel that services are delivered to them, rather than developed with them. Co-production should therefore be treated as a core part of longer-term inclusive practice. Organisations should involve children, young people, parents and carers at the earliest stages of planning, and continue to work with them as provision develops.

Initial actions

- Recognise lived experience as expertise, including the insight families hold about what feels realistic, accessible and meaningful.
- Ask children, young people, parents and carers for feedback before activities are designed or changed.
- Create varied ways for families and young people to contribute, including informal conversations, surveys, focus groups, visits, trial sessions and feedback after activities.

Working towards

- Ongoing and embedded co-production processes that include the planning, delivery and review of activities.
- Properly resourced co-production, including staff time, accessibility support, translation or communication support, and recognition of families' time where appropriate.
- Families seeing that their feedback has influenced changes, so co-production feels meaningful rather than tokenistic.



Build an organisation-wide culture of inclusion

Inclusion needs to be embedded across the whole organisation to provide the foundations for meaningfully inclusive practice. Children and young people with learning and access needs are more likely to feel welcome, safe and able to participate when inclusion is reflected in leadership, staffing, behaviour expectations, family communication and day-to-day delivery.

Initial actions

- Identify a named inclusion lead within senior leadership, while making clear that responsibility for inclusion sits across the whole organisation.
- Honestly review organisational culture, policies and practice, including where current provision may unintentionally exclude young people with learning and access needs.
- Promote consistent expectations across staff teams, sessions and behaviour management so families and young people can build trust over time.

Working towards

- Responsibility for inclusion being embedded across an organisation, including a lead within the trustee board and ongoing staff development opportunities.
- Ongoing external reviews of inclusive practice, including consultation with families and partners, to remain accountable for maintaining/improving inclusion.
- Relevant lived experience within staff and volunteer teams being utilised where appropriate, and ongoing consideration of how employing visible role models can strengthen organisational inclusion.



Invest in workforce development, local networks and specialist partnerships

Mainstream organisations cannot be expected to meet every level of need alone. Inclusive practice is stronger when staff have training and specialist advice, and when local organisations understand how their offers connect together. Mainstream providers should build ongoing relationships with specialist organisations that can offer practical guidance, mentoring, referral routes and support to build internal confidence over time.

Initial actions

- Identify training and capacity needs across staff and volunteer teams, focusing on practical approaches to communication, sensory needs, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Create regular opportunities for staff and volunteers to reflect on practice, share learning and build confidence.
- Identify local specialist, school-based and community organisations that could offer advice, referral routes or partnership opportunities.

Working towards

- Strong and ongoing relationships between mainstream and specialist organisations that provide mentoring, advice and practical support.
- Strong local networks so organisations can signpost families clearly, with smoother transitions between opportunities.
- Regular opportunities to share learning and inclusive practice across youth, sport and play settings so effective approaches can be replicated.

Communicate clearly and honestly about inclusive offers

Families are often making decisions while already stretched, and unclear information or language can make trying a new activity feel too risky or overwhelming. Organisations should be transparent about what support they can provide, who an activity is suitable for, and any limitations families need to understand before attending.

Initial actions

- Review marketing materials, websites, and social media content to ensure families can easily understand what the activity involves and who it is suitable for.
- Replace generic labels such as "SEND friendly" with specific information about access, staffing, support levels, capacity and limitations.
- Provide direct contact options, and named individuals, so families can ask for specific information.

Working towards

- Consistent communication tools and approaches, such as FAQs, visual guides, social stories and photographs of spaces and staff.
- Trusted routes for sharing opportunities through schools, parent carer forums, carers centres, family hubs, Local Offer platforms and community networks.
- Clear signposting and referral processes when an organisation cannot safely or confidently meet a young person's needs.

Adapt delivery around young people and families

Rigid structures, timings and programme offers do not work for families with children and young people who have learning and access needs. Participation is affected by routines, travel, sensory environments, health appointments, communication needs and capacity. Organisations should be prepared to adapt delivery models around the needs of the cohort and, where appropriate, individual young people.

Initial actions

- Review session times, locations and attendance expectations against the realities of family life, including travel, transitions, routines and the preparation required to attend.
- Make small physical and sensory adaptations where possible, including quieter spaces, visual information, sensory resources and consideration of lighting, sound and smell.
- Ask families what would make attendance easier before assuming what support is needed.

Working towards

- Fully flexible and adaptable offers that take into account families' fluctuating needs.
- Whole-family inclusion, including sibling access, parent/carers peer support and opportunities for respite where appropriate.
- Specialist sessions that provide a safer or more meaningful route into participation, while also creating pathways into wider mainstream activity where appropriate.

Our Commitment

The Game Changer consultation highlights that, despite the will of delivery organisations, and some positive steps towards inclusion, more needs to be done together. John Lyon's Charity recognises that to improve access to out-of-school opportunities for children and young people with learning and access needs more investment, stronger partnerships, and a realistic understanding of the true cost of inclusive delivery is required. The Charity will use its role as a funder, convener, and advocate to support both specialist and mainstream organisations to develop provision that is honest, accessible, and responsive to the needs of families.

The Charity Commits:

- to continue to **support both specialist and mainstream provision**, recognising that families value choice and that meaningful inclusion requires a range of specialist, mainstream, and blended opportunities.
- to **support new opportunities for children and young people who are currently least well served**, including those with higher level support needs.
- to **"accept the cost" of inclusive delivery**, including higher staffing ratios, training, sensory resources, planning time, family engagement, and adapted monitoring and evaluation.
- to **support mainstream organisations to build inclusive practice gradually**, allowing them to start small, test approaches, learn from families, and develop confidence before scaling provision.
- to **invest in training, workforce development and peer learning opportunities** for grantees, including opportunities for organisations to share learning across boroughs and sectors.
- to **encourage stronger pathways between specialist and mainstream organisations**, so that young people can access the right setting at the right time and organisations are not expected to meet every level of need alone.
- to use the Charity's convening role **to strengthen local networks, connecting organisations** so that provision is better coordinated.
- to **hold grantees accountable for communicating clearly and honestly with families and themselves**, including advertising on local directories and being transparent about who their activities are suitable for, what support is available, what limitations exist, and how families can prepare their child to attend.
- to **review its own funding opportunities to ensure existing grant programmes support inclusion** and prioritise the creation of more opportunities for young people with complex needs outside of school.
- to advocate for and **raise awareness of the importance of out-of-school opportunities for children and young people with learning and access needs**, calling on decision-makers and other funding bodies to invest in the sector to develop and expand these opportunities.



1 Background & Context

John Lyon's Charity gives grants to benefit children and young people up to the age of 25 (or up to 30 for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities) who live in nine boroughs in North and West London: Barnet, Brent, Camden, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Kensington & Chelsea, and the Cities of London and Westminster.

Since 1991, it has been committed to transforming the lives of children and young people by creating opportunities to learn, grow, and develop through education. The Charity has distributed over £242 million in grants to a range of organisations that seek to promote the life chances of children and young people through education, with around £15 million in grants distributed each year.

Over the years, the Charity has identified significant disparities in both the quantity and quality of opportunities available to young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. To date, the Charity has focused particularly on championing inclusion within the Arts and culture sector. Over the last decade, through its **Perspectives series**, it has challenged special schools and Arts organisations to reflect on how they work in partnership to provide young people with access to Arts and culture. Through this work, the Charity has evolved alongside the sector, embedding and promoting best practice within its own grant-making and strategic priorities.

Following the success of the Perspectives series, which demonstrated that meaningful progress in cultural inclusion is possible with the right leadership and support, the Charity is now broadening its focus. Through feedback from grantees, the Charity has become increasingly aware that mainstream youth and play organisations are seeing growing participation from young people with learning and access needs, often with varying levels of support required and without sufficient resources in place to respond effectively. While many organisations have adapted in response, others continue to face significant challenges.

The **Game Changer** initiative extends the Charity's focus beyond the classroom, exploring opportunities for young people with additional needs outside the school day, including Youth Clubs, sports groups, play settings and other community-based recreational activities.



2 Methodology: Capturing Lived Experience

In keeping with the Charity's approach of working with rather than to the sector, Game Changer consulted youth organisations through a combination of surveys and in-person discussions. For the first time, the Charity also consulted families at scale through a dedicated family survey and a series of smaller focus groups, ensuring their experiences helped shape the findings and recommendations of this work.

2.1 Surveys

Game Changer began with surveys throughout summer 2025 to better understand the experiences of families with children who have learning and access needs, alongside the community organisations supporting them. Surveys were distributed through social media, school networks, and via voluntary and community sector organisations. Through the surveys, the Charity captured the experience of **75 youth organisations and 357 parents/carers with one or more children with a special educational need or disability**.

Organisation Survey: Responses represented organisations working across multiple communities in the Charity's boroughs. Most organisations surveyed would be considered mainstream providers. Around two-thirds (63%) said that they work with only "some" children and young people with learning and access needs ("some" refers to fewer than one in five participants have learning and access needs). A smaller proportion (20%) said that "many" children and young people with learning and access needs accessed their provision ("many" refers to more than one in five participants), while 11% worked exclusively with this group. A further 7% reported that they did not currently work with children and young people with learning and access needs and were therefore not asked to complete the full survey.

The type of organisation responding included:

69%

Youth and play settings



20%

Sports organisations



11%

Other settings
(including supplementary schools)



Family Survey:

Responses represented families from both the Charity's boroughs, pan-London and nationally:

53%

of respondents had a child attending school within the Charity's Funding Area

35%

(one third) of responses came from families living outside London.

31%

of responses were from parents living in Ealing and Harrow. This is likely due to stronger local dissemination of the survey through family support groups and parent carer forums, which vary between boroughs.

26%

(one quarter) of families had more than one child with learning and access needs, highlighting the complex challenges for many of the families engaged with this consultation.

2.2 Focus Groups

Sector Focus Group: In November 2025, the Charity hosted a roundtable with **17 organisations** to explore the survey findings in greater detail and identify how gaps in provision could be addressed both individually and collectively. Participants were primarily mainstream providers with varying levels of experience supporting young people with learning and access needs. Discussions were facilitated by specialist organisations, including **Caxton Youth Organisation** and **Saracens Foundation**, creating space for practical advice, peer learning, and examples of effective inclusive practice.

Family Focus Groups: In early 2026, the Charity carried out a series of small focus groups and one-to-one interviews with parents and carers to explore themes from the survey and from the Sector Focus Group. Sessions were intentionally kept small, with no more than three participants per group, to encourage open conversation and honest feedback. In total, **nine parents/carers** took part, providing specific perspectives into the day-to-day experiences of families and the barriers they face. The Charity is grateful to those families that gave up time in their busy schedules to talk to us in detail about their own personal experiences. A clear take-away from this approach was that families are too often '*delivered to*', not '*delivered with*', and that they would welcome more co-production opportunities to engage with organisations.



*"Thank you for just **being open** and having this sort of forum for us parents, so we can share our views. And also, I feel like in the projects that you're part of and that you support, you should see that return on investment and yeah, we just appreciate it."*

*Even though we've given you our time, **we appreciate you putting it out there to invite us to give our views as well because we are often not asked. Normally it is 'here's an event, just come enjoy and go'. We are hardly asked about our experience. So, I do really appreciate your time as well. Thank you.**"*

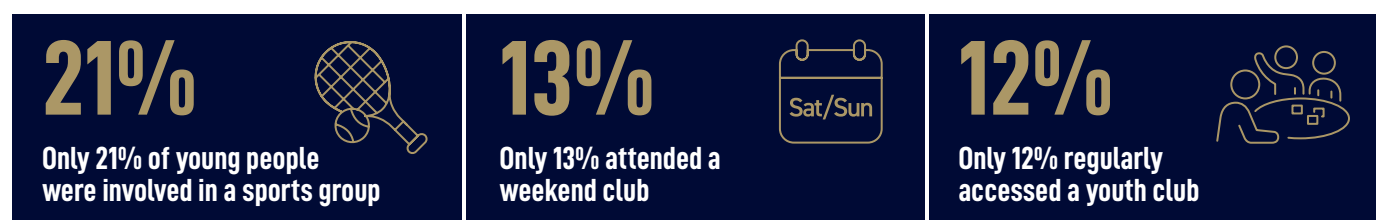
3 The Current Picture: Provision Being Accessed

For many families, the challenge is not choosing between opportunities, it is finding opportunities at all.

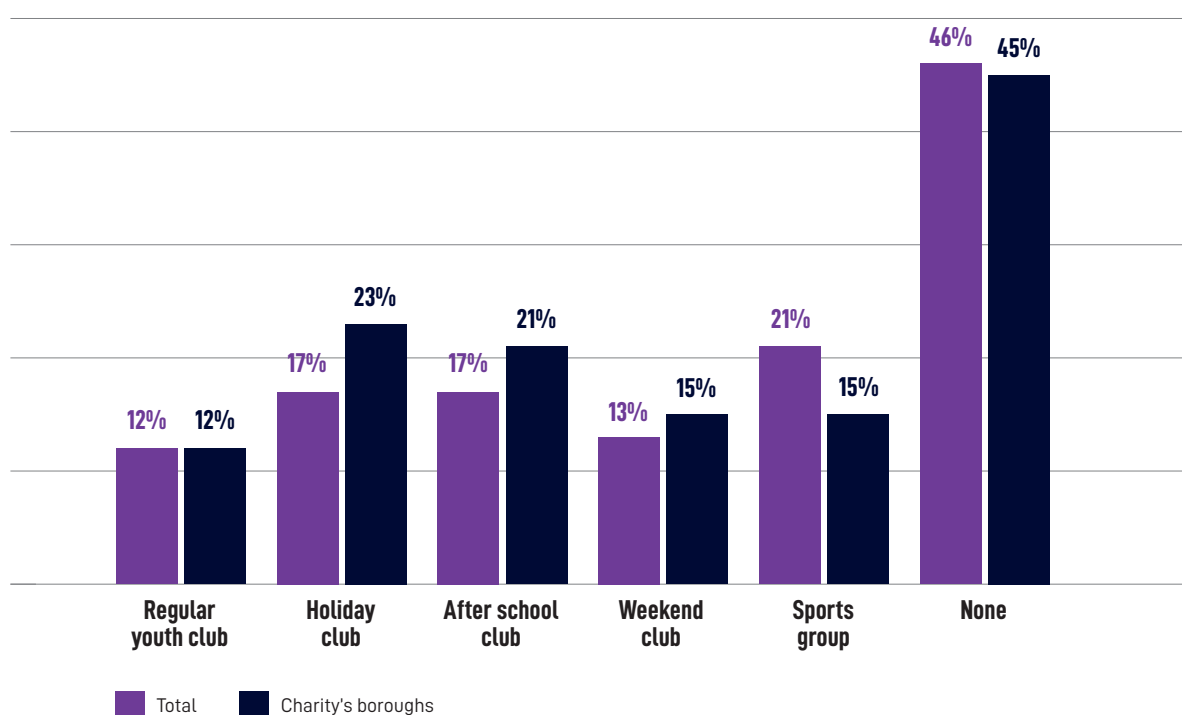
Across the survey responses and the Focus Groups, families were clear that there are simply not enough opportunities outside of the school day for children and young people with learning and access needs. Across all survey responses, **87% of parents and carers said there was insufficient youth, play, and recreational provision**, a concern echoed in the Charity's boroughs (84%).

What is perhaps more concerning is how many young people are missing out on opportunities altogether. Regardless of location, **nearly half of families surveyed (46%) reported that their child was not accessing any activities outside of school**. Participation in regular activities such as after-school Youth Clubs, sports groups, weekend provision, and holiday activities remained consistently low across both the boroughs and nationally.

The surveys found:



Types of services families are accessing



Where young people were accessing provision, this was more commonly through after-school and holiday activities than through weekend opportunities, suggesting **that many families experience a particular lack of support at weekends**. The organisation survey reflected a similar pattern, with more organisations delivering activities after school and during school holidays. However, even where holiday provision exists, availability is still limited when considered against the extended periods during which young people are without school-based interventions. Mainstream organisations delivering holiday programmes are often supporting larger numbers of young people, with no guarantee that places will be available for children and young people with learning and access needs. In the past two financial years, the Charity has awarded only 10 School Holiday Activity Fund grants (6% of the total awards made) to six organisations and one special school for provision exclusively for young people with learning

and access needs. This is a relatively small proportion of the total number of grants awarded, highlighting the gap in provision and an area in which funding organisations could encourage more applications.

There were some differences depending on who organisations worked with. Organisations supporting children with more complex needs were more likely to deliver shorter interventions over the holidays than providing regular opportunities after school. This reflects the cost and capacity required of organisations to deliver regular ongoing activities over one-off or shorter-term interventions. Despite this, parents/carers consistently highlighted a need for more holiday activities through the Family Focus Groups, with parents/carers suggesting the holiday periods provide little respite for their young people or the wider family.



4 The Current Picture: Who Can Access Opportunities?

While many organisations are making positive steps towards inclusion, opportunities are far more limited for young people with higher levels of support need.

There is a notable disparity between the relatively high number of organisations reporting that they have an inclusive offer and the low number of families reporting that their children are accessing activities. This disparity becomes clearer when looking at which groups of young people organisations feel equipped to support.

The survey data shows that organisations are working with young people across a range of needs, but **most providing opportunities for those with mild and moderate needs rather than severe or profound needs:**

86% reported working with children with **mild** needs

46% with **severe** needs

83% with **moderate** needs

14% with **profound** needs



Provision for young people with profound needs was particularly limited, with only 14% of organisations reporting that they currently support this cohort.

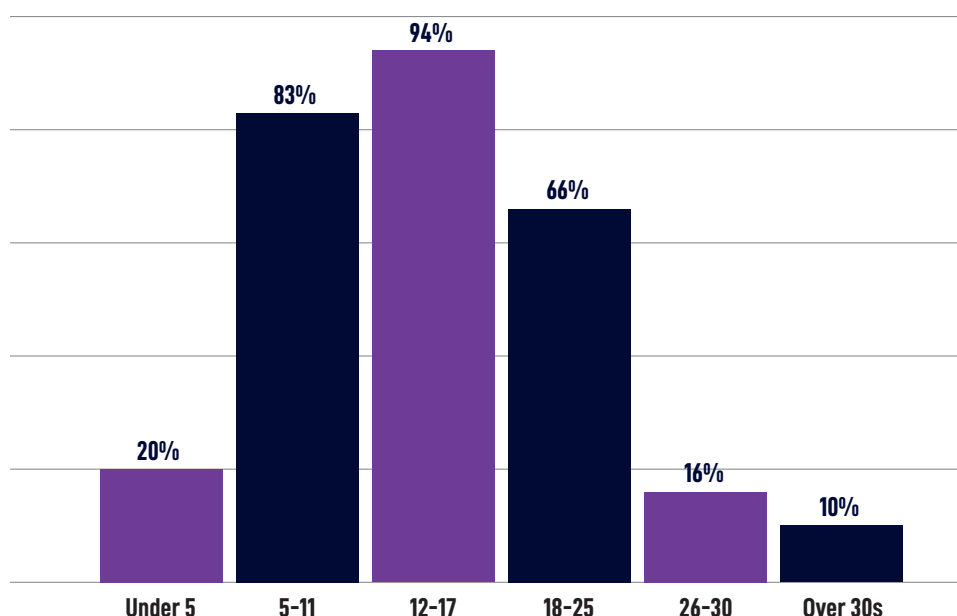
The Sector Focus Groups included discussion around **children and young people with more complex needs requiring higher levels of staffing, specialist knowledge, or individual support, which will lead to lower levels of confidence** in delivering to this cohort. For some organisations, it was suggested that a more realistic and responsible approach may be to strengthen partnerships with specialist providers rather than attempt to meet every level of need independently. Naturally, specialist organisations working exclusively with children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities were far more likely to report that they support those with severe and profound needs. However, these organisations represent a much smaller part of the overall Youth Sector and operate significant waiting lists.

These findings were reiterated in the Family Focus Groups with parents/carers highlighting how it is 'easier' to find opportunities for children and young people with less complex needs.

The surveys and focus groups combined also suggest that there is no shared understanding across the sector of how terms such as "mild", "moderate", "severe", or "profound" are being defined in practice. This means organisations may be describing very different levels of need when responding to the survey, making consistency and confidence harder to assess.

Provision reported in the organisation survey also varied by age with most organisations supporting children and young people of primary and secondary school age, with far fewer opportunities available for younger children and adults. Notably, many children under five will not necessarily have a formal diagnosis so it would be expected that there would be less provision than older age groups.

Age of children and young people served



More concerningly, the sharp drop in provision beyond the age of 25 points to a wider cliff-edge in opportunities for young adults with learning and access needs. This often coincides with the point at which school-based structures, trusted relationships, transport arrangements, and regular routines begin to reduce or fall away for young people. Without accessible community-based opportunities, young

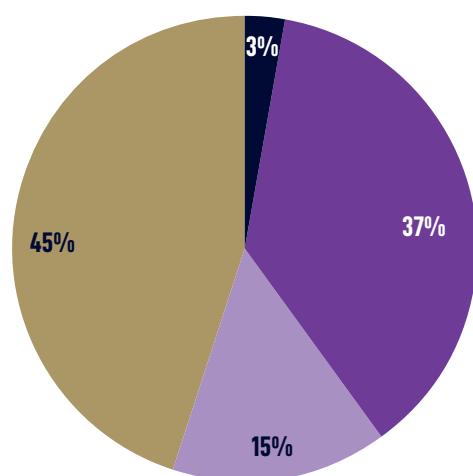
people risk becoming increasingly isolated from peers and local networks at a transition stage when independence, confidence, and social connection are especially important. This highlights a need for clearer pathways into youth, play, sport, and recreational opportunities that can extend beyond school age.

5 Choice – What Families Are Asking For

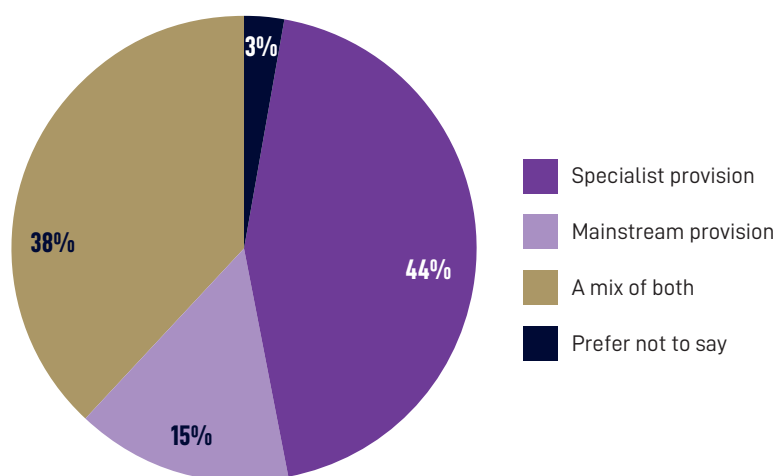
Families want access to the right opportunity for their child, whether specialist, mainstream, or a mix of both.

To better understand where families would prefer their children to access activities and support, the surveys asked parents/carers whether they favoured specialist provision, mainstream provision, or a combination of both.

Family preference



Family preference Charity's boroughs



Across all responses, **families showed a preference for specialist provision, or a combination of specialist and mainstream provision**, rather than mainstream provision alone. This was particularly the case within the Charity's boroughs, where 44% of parents and carers favoured specialist settings and 38% favoured a mixture of both. Families spoke positively about the confidence and reassurance that specialist settings can provide, highlighting staff expertise, a stronger understanding of individual needs, and access to one-to-one support. Many also described these settings as safer and more welcoming, with children more likely to feel understood, supported, and able to participate fully.

"Mainstream usually doesn't work and makes it feel like any problem is ours. Not the provision. I rarely feel like that with SEND provisions."

"SEN groups are truly inclusive, he isn't on the outside being treated slightly differently, he's in the middle of it with all the other children"

"My child needs one-to-one and most places can't accommodate this. [Mainstream provision] staff aren't SEN trained and they can be unwelcoming to him as well."

Parents and carers also shared concerns about some mainstream provision, describing experiences where activities were not genuinely adapted to meet their child's needs or where inclusion felt superficial. In some cases, activities were perceived as overly simplified rather than appropriately tailored and challenging. For these families, specialist provision was often seen as the setting where children were most likely to be meaningfully engaged and supported to thrive.

At the same time, many **families did not want an either/or approach**. Nearly **half of respondents (45%) preferred a combination of mainstream and specialist provision**, with 38% of families within the Charity's boroughs sharing this view. Parents and carers valued the social opportunities mainstream settings could offer, including the **chance for young people to build diverse friendships, participate in community life, and be visible within mainstream spaces**. Many felt strongly that inclusion depends on children and young people being seen, welcomed, and actively included in everyday settings.

"[I] passionately believe young people with disabilities should be included wherever possible rather than hiding them away, but recognise the extra help needed can require separate provision. At the same time, inclusive mainstream settings, when properly supported, allow [my son] to experience a broader social world, develop confidence, and build friendships with a diverse range of peers. These opportunities are invaluable in promoting his sense of belonging and independence. Ultimately, having access to both allows us to choose what's most appropriate depending on the activity, environment, and his wellbeing at the time."



The Family Focus Groups often reiterated parents' and carers' reflections on how children need spaces where they can be themselves. They recognised that in some mainstream environments **families may feel judged or unaccepted**. They also recognised the limits of current mainstream provision, particularly where organisations lacked the training, staffing, or resources needed to provide consistent support. As a result, many described mixed access as the most realistic approach, with the right setting depending on the activity, the environment, and the individual child.

Notably, the limited availability of specialist provision means many families rely on mainstream services by necessity rather than choice. This, again, highlights the

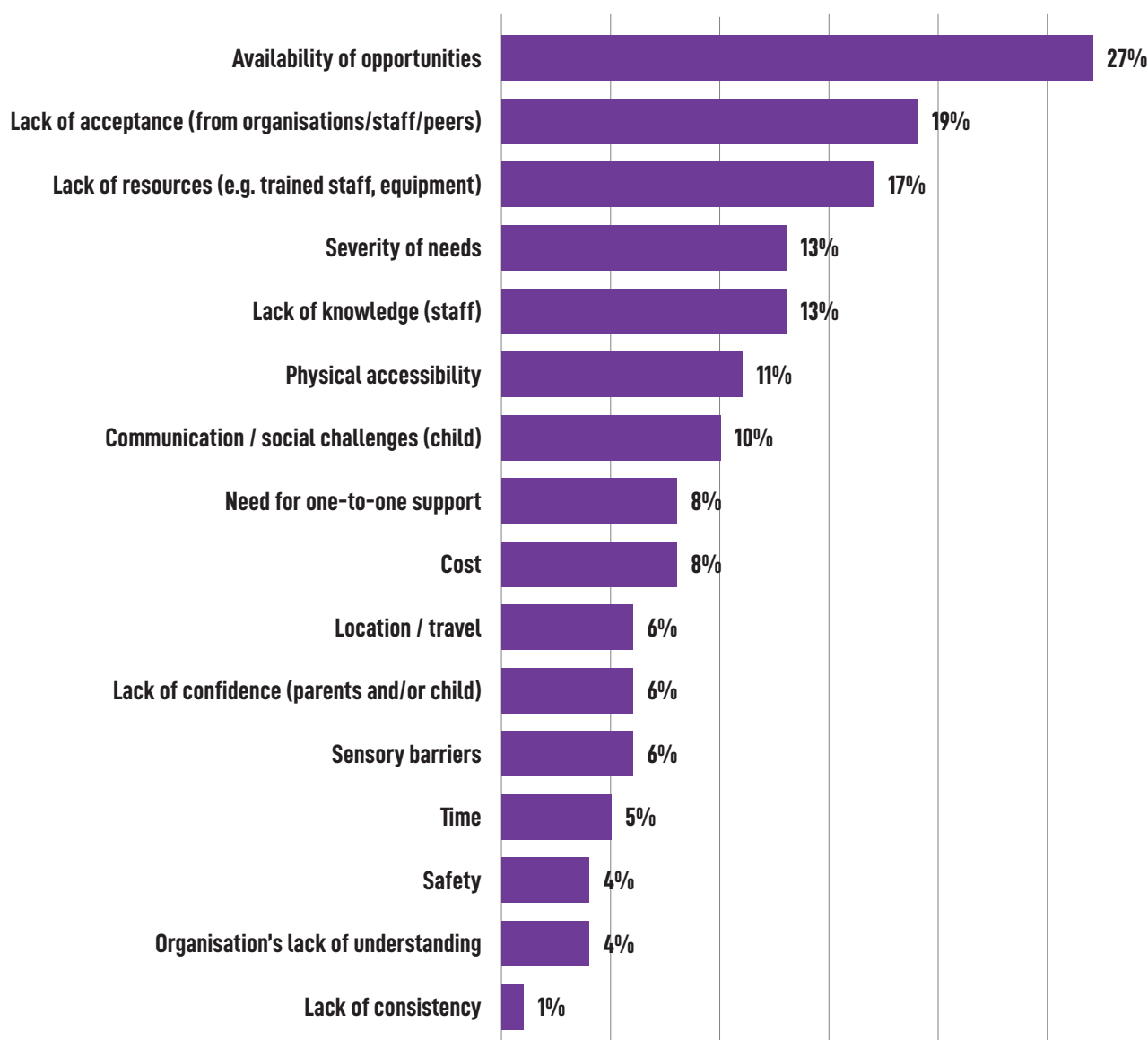
need for more partnership working between organisations, to take pressure off specialist organisations where possible, and to upskill mainstream organisations to deliver inclusive practice.

For John Lyon's Charity, this suggests there should not be a singular focus on funding either specialist or mainstream provision alone. Both areas contain clear gaps and opportunities for development. Alongside targeted support for specialist services in areas of limited provision, there is also a role for the Charity in encouraging all mainstream organisations it supports to work towards more inclusive practice.

6 The Barriers to Meaningful Inclusion

For many families and organisations, meaningful inclusion is limited not by ambition, but by capacity, confidence, and access to the right support.

Barriers for families



When families were asked an open question about the barriers that they face in accessing activities, several themes emerged, including:

- **Availability** of opportunities and suitable resources
- Lack of **acceptance and understanding** from organisations, staff, or peers
- Concerns around **staff knowledge, confidence, training and capacity**
- Physical **accessibility** of activities
- The **severity of needs** (including communication and/or social challenges) and the requirement for **one-to-one support**
- **Cost, location, transport, and timings** of activities

The strongest theme around barriers was the low availability of suitable and appropriate opportunities. Parents and carers frequently highlighted **concerns whether staff had the knowledge, confidence, and capacity to support children's needs**, particularly those with moderate or higher levels of need.

Alongside this, families described a range of **logistical barriers including cost, location, transport, and timings**. Travel was often raised as a significant challenge, particularly where suitable provision was limited locally, and families may have to travel some distance, or where young people relied on transport support that is often unavailable outside school hours. For some, participation in mainstream activities was only even possible if they arranged and funded additional one-to-one support themselves.

"My child needs one-to-one support and groups I have approached either don't have the experience or staff numbers to be able to do this. The one local place that can, (an after school and holiday club provider) has a long waiting list. My child has been on their list for 2 years and they cannot offer him a space for a holiday club yet."

"Environments can often be overstimulating or unsuitable for someone with communication differences, which can lead to exclusion even when physical access is present."

"[My child] can't get there by himself – [provision is] often too far away from home so parents need to transport children there. And we're not always free to do it so they miss out."

Confidence and trust were another common theme across the surveys and the Family Focus Groups, and while not always described as the biggest barrier, **concerns about safety, understanding, and consistency** were linked to wider perceptions around the quality of provision. Parents worried about whether their child would be welcomed, supported appropriately, and able to participate meaningfully. Some parents/carers also spoke about **the**

emotional and practical impact of trying new activities, explaining that every new setting often requires significant communication, preparation, and reassurance for both the child and the wider family. Consistency was also seen as a common barrier, with parents/carers preferring familiar staff and clear communication to help them feel more confident in accessing activities.

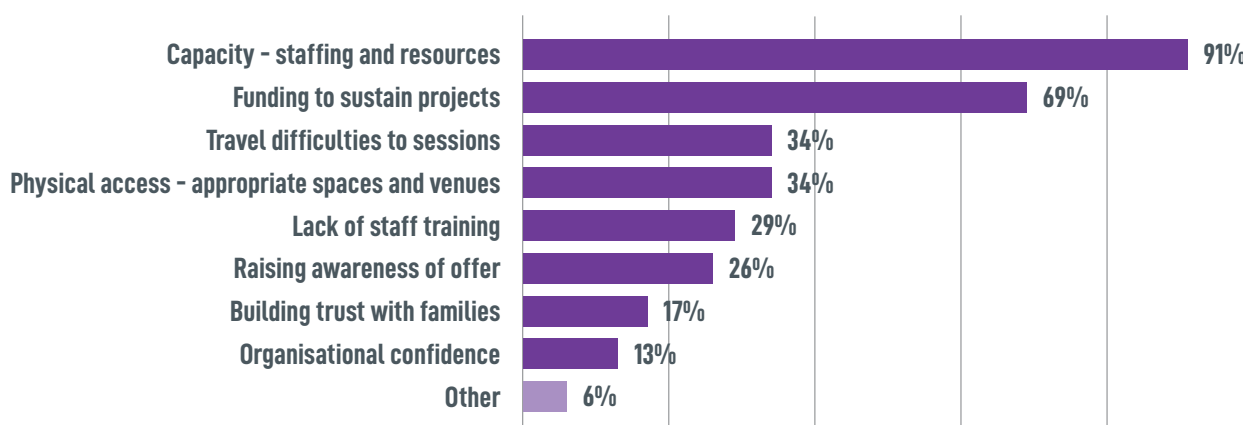
"I would also feel quite nervous to leave [my child] anywhere or also anxious to try out new things as it's really hard to find things and places she is comfortable in."

"My worries are mainly based on a lack of confidence that she will be supported, or that she's at the stage of development where she will actually benefit. Lack of knowledge about what's offered and whether it's suitable for her and her stage of development. Whether I will have to also take an active part in order for her to meaningfully engage (I may not want to!)"

"For example... new venue, a new team, I don't know where to park... don't know if the team will 'get' my child etc - so consistency of venue, team, time etc makes a massive difference - as the child and parent therefore feel more at ease which means fewer behavioural challenges."

"Due to funding and lack of training, most places say they can't meet our needs. Need a lot of understanding, being comfortable with the fact that this is going to be very slow progress. Understanding that just because it doesn't seem to you that it's going anywhere, it can still be meaningful to the children."

Barriers for Organisations



Organisations reported that **the biggest challenge to delivering more inclusive provision is capacity**.

A significant 91% of organisations said staffing and resources were a barrier, while 69% highlighted the **difficulty of securing sustainable funding**. Alongside funding pressures, organisations also identified a number of practical challenges, including:



Physical accessibility
of venues



Limited staff
training



Transport and
travel difficulties



Raising awareness
of their offer

Further discussion in focus groups highlighted additional barriers including:

Language and confidence:

- Some organisations described a fear of "getting it wrong" when supporting young people with additional needs. Staff confidence, particularly around language and appropriate support, was identified as a barrier to broadening provision.

Peer acceptance:

- A number of organisations noted that children and young people are not always fully accepting or understanding of peers with learning and access needs, creating less welcoming environments for young people.

Inclusion within competitive activities:

- Some organisations, particularly in sports settings, felt that competitive or performance-based activities can make inclusion more challenging. In certain cases, separate activities or adapted sessions were considered necessary to ensure meaningful participation.

Communications:

- Organisations reported struggling to advertise their services effectively, often lacking staff with communications or digital skills. While many shared activities through Local Offer websites, these platforms vary significantly between boroughs and can be time-consuming to maintain and update.

These findings highlight that **organisations are often willing to be inclusive, but stretched in their ability to do so confidently and appropriately**. Many organisations will already be working within clear limits around staffing, expertise, and physical space, particularly when delivering in areas with little youth activity.

Interestingly, only 17% of organisations in the survey identified "building trust with families" as a challenge. This is lower than the Charity's wider experience would suggest and may indicate that organisations underestimate how cautious families can feel when accessing new provision, especially where inclusive support is not clearly communicated. It may also reflect that many organisations are focused on how they can support those young people they are already engaging, rather than proactively improving access for those families that have not had the confidence to approach them in the first place.

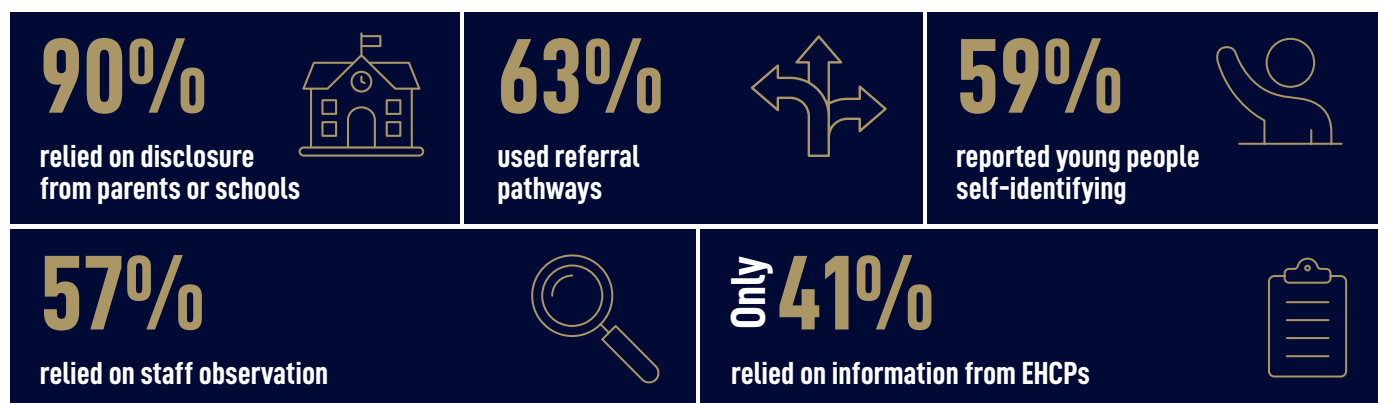
"Staff capacity is an issue as programmes take longer, cohorts often need to be made up of fewer young people, which also adds pressure on capacity as staff still have overall targets to meet for funders and commissioners."

"It takes a lot of time and effort to connect and maintain engagement and in building trust and confidence. Each year around 50% of children are new to us making it difficult to build and maintain regular connections."

"We generally do not have the resources available to provide these services to our beneficiaries and therefore can only accept individuals on a case-by-case basis as our provision is not exclusively SEND or specialist. If we have the resources available at our fingertips, we would be confident and it would please us to provide these services to all"



Notably, the surveys showed most organisations said they became aware of young people's needs through informal or relational means:



This reliance on disclosure through relationships highlights how inclusion depends on trust and communication with families. This also suggests that many organisations are still operating reactively, responding to needs once identified, rather than proactively promoting themselves as inclusive settings from the outset.

However, many organisations feel relatively confident supporting young people within their current offer, but less equipped to broaden that support without additional training, partnerships, or resources.



CASE STUDY:

Hornimans Adventure Playground

Hornimans Adventure Playground is working to build a more inclusive community service where children and young people with a range of learning and access needs can play alongside their peers and feel they belong. In recent years, the playground has seen an increase in the number of children using the service who need additional support, with around 40% of children now requiring some level of support.

Hornimans' commitment to inclusion is shared across the organisation, from trustees and leadership to staff delivering sessions. Several staff have lived experience of disability, alongside relevant training and practical experience. Hornimans also works with local schools, the council and Short Breaks services, so that where a child needs more support than can be provided through existing resources, the team can work with the family and relevant services to explore additional opportunities.

Hornimans' specialist Saturday sessions have been developed to provide a quieter introduction to the playground. This gives staff time to get to know each child and understand their strengths, interests and individual needs. The team works closely with parents and carers to make adjustments, build trust and, where possible, support children to move into mainstream sessions. In the first year of the project, 15 children successfully transitioned to mainstream provision. In recognition of this work Hornimans received the Young Kensington & Chelsea award for Best Work Supporting Underrepresented Groups.

As the work has developed, Hornimans has established partnerships with a local specialist autism school and an Autism Resource Base. Although still at an early stage, these partnerships have supported an increase in the number of children with more complex needs accessing the playground.

The main learning from Hornimans' experience is that inclusion is not only about running a separate 'SEND session'. It requires building a whole-team commitment, strong relationships with families and a willingness to find a way forward for each child. Not every adjustment will work immediately, and some children will need additional funded support, but the starting point is always to ask what can be done to help that child take part.



Lyn's story

Lyn is 15 years old and has Down's syndrome. She attends a local specialist school and is supported by the local Early Help Service to attend Hornimans' after-school community adventure play sessions. Through Hornimans' specialist sessions, Lyn has been able to take part in play alongside her peers while also developing practical and early work-related skills. She now helps with small but meaningful tasks during sessions, including food preparation and other responsibilities around the playground. Since taking on these roles, Lyn's confidence has grown. She has a sense of purpose and responsibility, and being part of the team helps her feel valued and capable. Her mum has shared that seeing Lyn develop in this way has given the family hope for her future.

7 The Starting Point: What Good Inclusion Can Look Like

For many organisations, meaningful inclusion begins with small, practical steps built over time.

7.1 What Organisations Are Already Doing

Across both the surveys and focus groups, participants consistently recognised the important role that out-of-school activities play in supporting young people with learning and access needs. Organisations reported using a wide range of approaches to make

their activities more inclusive. The most **common adjustments were providing additional staff** (74%) and **investing in staff training** (63%), showing that many organisations recognise inclusion as something that requires both time and resource.

Other approaches included:

36% Providing **specialist staff**

31% **Adapting monitoring and evaluation** processes

30% Making **physical adaptations** to spaces

29% Running **specialist sessions**

23% **Adjusting timetables** and delivery models

16% Using **Makaton**

However, 10% of organisations reported making none of these adjustments, which may reflect the wider staffing and capacity pressures needed to effectively deliver inclusively. Despite many organisations taking practical steps towards inclusion, the findings also show that the sector is often developing this work in isolation. **Over 60% of organisations said they were not part of any learning or support networks** focused on inclusion, potentially limiting opportunities to share expertise, build confidence, and learn from specialist organisations. At the same time **more than three-quarters (77%) of organisations said they seek professional advice to strengthen their provision**, which may be a less cost effective approach to sharing expertise across the sector.



"We approach our work not as disability specialist practitioners, but as youth workers who want to support the needs, wants and interests of our young people by meeting the young people on their level and empowering them to go further. Essentially, we are qualified youth workers who use youth work, informal education, process driven curriculum and mutual learning with a few additional adaptations to ensure access. We start from a strengths-based and person-centred approach and look beyond diagnoses. We don't pathologise, we include young people in conversations, we are led by their wishes, and we believe in the youth work process. The strongest asset of our club is the youth workers; they are highly skilled, talented, dedicated and compassionate."

"Family engagement is absolutely critical. Building trust and working in partnership with families has been a huge component to successfully integrating young people with additional needs into our programming. We have created a specialist session on Sundays for these families and work hard to create a pathway for those young people to participate in our more regular universal sessions."

"One of our most effective approaches has been to deliver quieter, small-group sessions alongside our main youth provision. We've also established early communication with parents, co-produced activity plans, and trained youth mentors in inclusive practices and trauma-informed care."

Alongside the methods identified in the survey, organisations shared additional successes in the Focus Group. These approaches ranged from small adaptations to wider organisational changes designed to build confidence and accessibility over time. Examples included:

- Volunteer coaches providing one-to-one support and buddy systems
- Quiet spaces and individual support plans for young people
- Clear thresholds around the level of support organisations can realistically provide
- Partnerships with accessible venues, including special schools and PRUs
- Limiting group numbers to better support children with additional needs
- Employing staff with lived experience, helping strengthen communication and understanding with families
- Investing in specialist training and tailored risk assessments
- Building relationships with families gradually over time to strengthen trust and confidence
- Developing an organisation-wide culture of inclusion, including leadership and trustee buy-in
- Using practical tools such as sensory equipment boxes, visual communication aids, and social stories

A consistent theme throughout discussions with organisations was **the importance of partnership working between mainstream and specialist providers**. Many organisations felt that meaningful inclusion is most effective when supported through ongoing relationships, shared expertise, and clear referral pathways, rather than organisations working in isolation. Examples of partnership working included:

- Specialist organisations advising mainstream providers on practical adaptations and inclusive delivery
- Ongoing mentoring and support relationships between specialist and mainstream organisations
- Clear referral pathways when a young person's needs exceed an organisation's capacity or expertise
- Involving frontline staff with direct experience of supporting young people with additional needs in session planning and decision-making

In the Focus Group there were also calls for a practical inclusion assessment tool, similar to safeguarding audits, to help organisations better understand their capabilities and thresholds for support.

Organisations also highlighted the value of **specialist sessions as a gateway into broader participation**. In some cases, young people initially attended specialist-only activities before gradually building the confidence to access mainstream sessions alongside their peers.

When organisations reflected on their wider commitment to inclusion, responses were generally positive. However, not many organisations reported involving young people with learning and access needs in delivery, collecting and sharing inclusion data, publicly expressing their commitment to inclusion, or investing time to deepen organisational understanding of inclusive practice.





7.2 Recommendations from Families

The focus groups gave families the opportunity to reflect not only on the barriers they face, but also on what good support and meaningful inclusion can look like in practice. Their feedback highlighted a number of practical ways organisations could improve access to opportunities for children and young people with additional needs.

Providing equitable opportunities may require organisations to deliver exclusively:

Families highlighted that some children and young people, particularly those with higher levels of need, may not be able to participate safely or meaningfully in fully integrated settings. Whilst specialist sessions are exclusive and not open to all, they provide a practical way of creating safe, appropriate and relevant opportunities that young people would not be able to access otherwise. Families reported that:

- Safety can be a concern where activities bring together young people with very different levels of need, particularly where children are non-speaking, or have limited mobility to protect themselves.
- Organisations should recognise that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will not all engage in the same way; some may need shorter

sessions, quieter environments or more structured support, while others may thrive in more active settings.

- Specialist sessions can provide a gateway opportunity into wider mainstream activities where this is appropriate for the young person.

“He can’t move around by himself. When he’s in a busy space with very active children, he can be knocked over or hit by accident. He still needs chances to take part, but not somewhere that puts him at risk.”

Considering Scheduling & Routines:

Families stressed the importance of designing activities around the realities of daily life for children with learning and access needs. Transitions, travel, and emotional regulation can all make participation difficult, particularly at the start and end of the day. Parents highlighted that:

- After-school clubs can be difficult to access where travel is involved and time is limited
- Short activities are often not worth the preparation and effort required to attend

Clubs and opportunities based on the school site can work particularly well because children are already familiar with the environment and routines. Families also suggested that stronger partnerships between schools and external providers could help create more accessible and sustainable opportunities.

"If [an activity] is provided within the school or very close to the school, where the child doesn't have to come back and change the mode and everything, that would work well. Plus, the setting already would be a suitable setting and venue for the child... if the private provisions can work within the school's after-school club, that would work better."

Family Needs & Respite:

Parents and carers highlighted the importance of activities that support the whole family, not just the child attending. Families valued opportunities where:

- Parents and carers did not need to stay on site throughout the activity, providing valuable respite
- Parents could build peer support networks with other families
- Siblings and wider family members could also participate

"The best thing for me as a special need parent has been meeting other parents. And I think anything that facilitates parents/carers to get together, any sort of structures that facilitate that support or activities are really, really helpful. Because I've learned more from other carers than I have from professionals. I know a lot of carers will say that they've got the lived experience, they've got the expertise. I think it's a big bone of contention."

Cost, Funding & Equity:

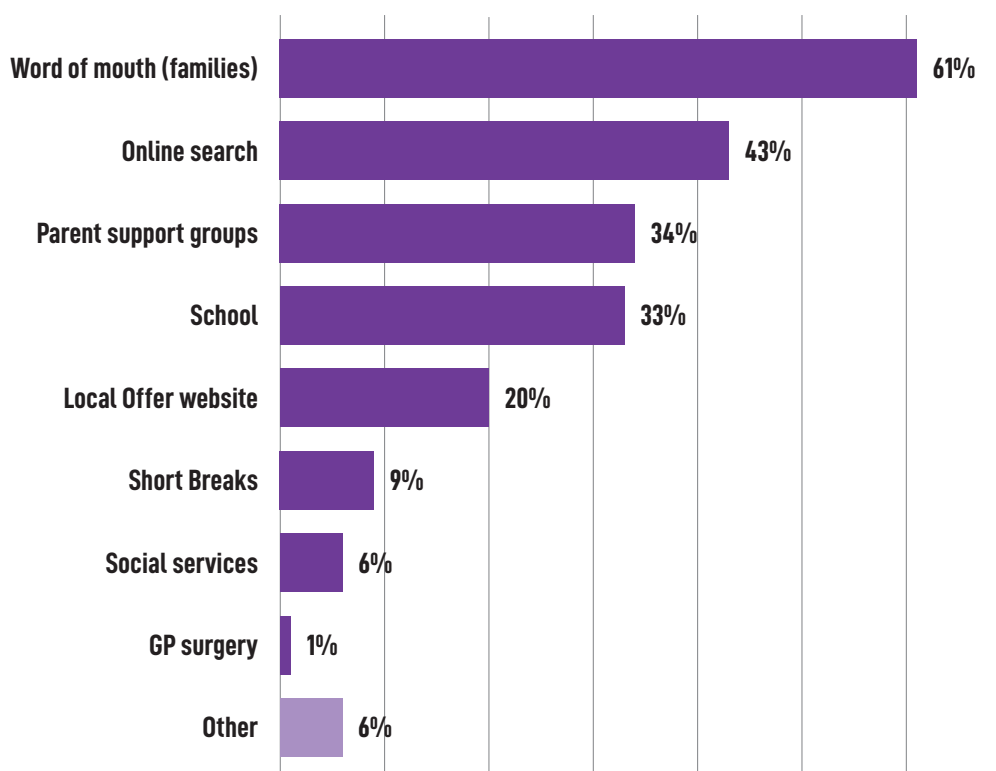
Families reported that specialist or adapted activities often cost considerably more than mainstream alternatives, creating financial barriers. Several parents also highlighted frustrations around eligibility thresholds for funded support, particularly where access was linked to benefits rather than the level of need or wider family circumstances. At the same time, some families and organisations recognised that fully free provision can sometimes lead to lower engagement or inconsistent attendance, suggesting there is a balance to be found.

"Because we had a household income, we weren't entitled to a lot of stuff. A lot of that is based on benefits. One of my friends whose son is not high on the spectrum at all, because she doesn't work and her husband has a low income, they are entitled to a lot more classes and a lot of more opportunities than I am."

8 Needle in a Haystack: How Families Find Opportunities

For many families, finding the right activity relies less on formal systems and more on trusted recommendations.

When asked how they find suitable activities for their children, consistently families said they relied on peer networks, particularly word of mouth and parent support groups. This highlights the importance of trust and shared experience when families are searching for opportunities, especially where confidence in mainstream provision may already be low.



Another common approach was families independently searching online, both via Google/websites and increasingly on social media. However, the findings suggest that many organisations, including those with established inclusive practice, are not clearly communicating this offer through their websites or marketing materials. As a result, opportunities can be difficult for families to identify unless they are already connected to the right networks. Families repeatedly explained **that confidence comes from knowing an activity has been “tried and tested” by other parents** with similar experiences.

Schools were also seen as an important source of information for parent and carers, reinforcing the value of stronger relationships between community organisations

and special schools when promoting activities and making referrals. Other resources mentioned specifically included the National Autistic Society, CAMHS, Contact Ealing, and assisted living facilities.

Perhaps most notably, **only 20% of families reported using their Local Offer** website to find activities. Given that Local Offers are intended to act as a central information point for families, this may reflect wider concerns about the visibility, consistency, and usefulness of these platforms. There was also a strong sense that Local Offer websites are not currently functioning as an effective “shop window” for activities. Many parents either did not know what the Local Offer was or felt the information provided was limited, inconsistent, or outdated.

During the Family Focus Groups, parents and carers also highlighted how **language and communication barriers can make it even harder to judge whether an activity will be suitable for their child**. For some families, limited or unclear information increases anxiety about trying new settings and reinforces reliance on trusted recommendations from other parents.

Focus group discussions highlighted several ways organisations could improve communication and build confidence for families. Families highlighted the importance of:

- Clear and detailed information on websites and publicity materials
- Visible representation of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities taking part in activities on social media
- Social stories and visual information to help children prepare for new experiences
- Opportunities recommended through trusted networks, including schools, carers' centres, and parent groups
- Co-production and feedback processes that make families feel listened to
- Staff and volunteers with lived experience, helping build trust and understanding

"The first thing I do is go on someone's website and try to download as much information as I can before I call."

Crucially, families felt that many organisations do not clearly explain who their inclusive offer is actually suitable for. **Parents wanted more transparency and specificity about the support available, rather than broad statements that an activity is "SEND friendly" or "inclusive."** Families said organisations should be clearer about:

- Which young people they can confidently and safely support
- Whether venues are physically accessible
- Whether staff have experience supporting particular needs
- What practical support is available, including changing facilities or one-to-one support

"If they're going to say they're SEND friendly – who are they SEND friendly for? Can a child with ADHD come? Can a wheelchair user come? Do you have changing facilities?"



Importantly, families did not expect every organisation to meet every need. In fact, many parents preferred honesty and clarity over organisations attempting to present themselves as universally accessible. This reflected a wider theme also raised by organisations themselves: meaningful inclusion depends on understanding an organisation's own expertise, capacity, and limitations.

Families consistently valued a mixed landscape of specialist, mainstream, and blended opportunities. However, they also recognised that organisations need realistic expectations about who they can support safely and well, and that strong partnerships and referral pathways are often more valuable than trying to be "all things to all people."

CASE STUDY:

Harrow Special School Partnership

The Game Changer Family Survey found that **84% of respondents with a child educated in Harrow felt there were insufficient out-of-school opportunities available for their child**. Young Harrow Foundation (YHF) identified a similar picture locally in 2024, finding a significant gap in provision for secondary-aged disabled young people and a lack of Short Break opportunities for families.

As a result, YHF secured funding from Harrow Council, Harrow School and the DVS Foundation to deliver an after-school pilot programme. The pilot supported disabled and neurodiverse young people through structured activities including cooking, fitness, arts, skating and sessions focused on increasing independence. It helped address key barriers to participation by operating from a school site, providing an accessible, familiar and trusted environment for young people and their families. The pilot brought together a number of mainstream partner organisations to deliver a range of activities. However, YHF identified that future provision would need to be led by a single specialist organisation to achieve more meaningful and personalised outcomes for young people.

Inspired by John Lyon's Charity's Collaboration and Replication Fund models, YHF worked closely with the Charity to identify suitable out-of-borough providers capable of delivering longer-term, twice-weekly after-school activities at Shaftesbury and Kingsley Special Schools. Action on Disability (AoD) was identified as a well-placed organisation to deliver this work, bringing decades of experience in creating opportunities for young people with learning and access needs. AoD was successful in its application to John Lyon's Charity and has been delivering the programme since October 2025 at Shaftesbury, and since February 2026 at Kingsley Schools.

AoD has led the programme but continued to partner with local organisations including the Lumi Foundation to offer yoga sessions, and with Bikeworks to provide accessible cycling opportunities. YHF has facilitated further connections with its member organisations to support delivery in future terms, including end-of-term dance parties with icandance, photography workshops with Refocus Collective and specialist arts-based sessions

with Turtle Key Arts. With this approach the programme, is continuing to expand both the range and depth of activities available, broadening the experiences offered to young people with learning and access needs.

Recognising the importance of maintaining partnership working, YHF is facilitating regular meetings involving the schools, Harrow Council and John Lyon's Charity. To date, this collaborative approach has helped address practical barriers, including transport challenges and restrictions on the use of school facilities outside school hours. Through YHF's coordination, there is also potential for one school to secure additional funding to deliver a summer holiday programme.

The cross-sector partnership has already produced positive results, with encouraging feedback from both schools and parents. Importantly, the model has resulted in a genuinely collaborative way of working, combining specialist expertise with local. It demonstrates how effective partnership working can help develop a more varied, engaging and accessible after-school offer for young people in an area where limited local provision previously existed.



9 The Role of Funding Organisations

When survey respondents were asked to describe in their own words the role that funding organisations like John Lyon's Charity can play in supporting their work:



Given the time in the Focus Groups to unpick how funding organisations can support delivery organisations to deliver more inclusively, organisations asked for the following:

- Allow organisations to start small; set realistic targets;
- Funders should visit settings to understand impact;
- Support costs beyond direct delivery (e.g. training and infrastructure).

As this consultation has suggested, young people with severe or profound needs and those requiring higher levels of individual support, face the biggest barriers to access. More funding is needed in the sector to prioritise these gaps which, naturally, comes at a cost. It depends on staffing, training, accessible venues, transport, equipment, planning time, family engagement and the confidence to adapt provision long-term. Funding organisations have an important role in recognising these costs and supporting organisations to build inclusive practice sustainably. John Lyon's Charity and other funding organisations need to be considering the following:

- Accept the cost of inclusive delivery, including higher staffing ratios, specialist training, accessible equipment, sensory resources and adapted monitoring and evaluation.
- Support infrastructure costs such as local opportunity directories, partnership development, communications, referral pathways, staff reflection time and relationship-building with families.
- Allow organisations to start small, test approaches, learn from families and build confidence before scaling provision.
- Invest in local learning networks that bring mainstream and specialist organisations together to share practice.
- Use grant-making, convening and advocacy to champion realistic, honest and sustainable inclusive practice across youth, play and sport provision.

John Lyon's Charity has played a vital role in the growth and development of organisations like ours, providing long-term, trusted support that has enabled us to build capacity in this area of work, deepen our impact, and serve our communities more effectively. Building on this strong foundation, John Lyon's Charity is well-placed to champion greater inclusion across youth, play, and sports settings. This could include dedicated funding to cover the additional costs of inclusive delivery such as higher staffing ratios, specialist training, and accessible equipment as well as convening learning networks to share best practice. By spotlighting inclusive, community-led models and encouraging collaboration between mainstream and specialist providers, John Lyon's Charity can continue to lead the way in ensuring all young people, including those with SEND, have access to safe, joyful, and meaningful opportunities."

Conclusions

These considerations remind us that true inclusion takes time and significant investment, but it is achievable. As set out in our commitments, John Lyon's Charity will use its funding, convening and advocacy roles to support a wide range of out-of-school opportunities where children and young people feel welcomed, supported and able to participate in meaningful ways.

Game Changer is a starting point for this ambition and a call to others across the sector to ensure that access to opportunities is not limited by a young person's individual learning or access needs. By working towards the Game Changer recommendations, we hope that more organisations can make real progress towards creating provision that is more inclusive and accessible for all children and young people:

- **Embed co-production and lived experience in design, delivery and review:**

involving children, young people, parents and carers in the design of delivery longer-term.

- **Build an organisation-wide culture of inclusion:**

embedding inclusion across leadership, staff teams, trustee boards, understanding behaviour expectations and the impact on day-to-day delivery.

- **Invest in workforce development, local networks and specialist partnerships:**

giving staff the training, peer learning, referral routes and specialist advice needed to build confidence and capacity.

- **Communicate clearly and honestly about inclusive offers:**

replacing terminology such as "SEND friendly" with specific information about suitability, support, access and limitations.

- **Adapt delivery around young people and families:**

designing activities around routines, travel, sensory needs, family capacity, and whole-family support.

Thank You & Recognitions

We would like to thank the 357 parents and carers who completed the survey, and especially the families who joined our Focus Groups. We recognise that your time is so valuable, and we are grateful that you chose to share your experiences with us. Your honesty and willingness to speak candidly about both the challenges and successes you have experienced has been critical to the recommendations of this work.

Thank you to the representatives from the following community organisations who took the time to complete surveys and/or participate in focus groups as part of this research. A special thank you to Caxton Youth Organisation and Saracens Foundation for not only contributing to this research, but also for supporting the facilitation of the Focus Groups.

- A.P.P.L.E. (Acton Play Projects and Leisure Events)
- Action on Disability
- Afghan Association of London
- Alridha Foundation
- Baraka Community Association
- Barnet Mencap
- Bloomsbury Football Foundation
- Brentford FC CST
- BritSom
- Caxton Youth Organisation
- Centre for Armenian Information & Advice
- Connect Stars
- Covent Garden Dragon Hall Trust
- Dalgarno Trust
- E.A.S.E. (Empowering Action & Social Esteem)
- Ealing Anchor Foundation
- Earls Court Youth Club
- Education and Skills Development Group
- Fitzrovia Youth in Action
- Fulham Reach Boat Club
- Global Skills Centre
- Harrow Cycle Hub
- Harrow SENDIAS
- Higher Potential
- Hilltop Circle
- Hornimans Adventure Playground
- Ignite Youth
- KCBNA
- KEEN London
- Kids Can Achieve
- Kongolese Centre for Information and Advice
- Latin American House
- Learning & Development Centre Limited
- London Basketball Association
- London Sports Trust
- London Tigers
- Mind in Harrow
- My Yard
- North Paddington Youth Club
- NW5 Project
- PACE (Play Adventures & Community Enrichment)
- Paddington Development Trust
- Paiwand Afghan Association
- Phoenix Canoe Club Limited
- Phoenix Rising
- QPR Community Trust
- Queens Crescent Community Association
- Queen's Park Bangladesh Association
- ReachOut
- Regents Park Time Bank
- Resources for Autism
- Samuel Lithgow Youth Centre
- Saracens Foundation
- SEAPIA
- Sidings Community Center
- Snow Camp
- Somali Bravanese Welfare association
- Southall Community Alliance
- Sport at the Heart
- St Paul's NEWPIN
- Stonegrove Community Trust
- Sudanese Supplementary School
- Teit Ethiopia Supplementary School
- The Avenues Youth Project
- The Brunswick Club for Young People
- The Log Cabin Charity
- Track Academy
- Unitas Youth Zone
- Urban Partnership Group
- W4 Youth Limited
- Watford FC Community Sports and Education Trust
- Westbourne Park Family Centre
- YMCA St Paul's Youth Project
- Youth Action Alliance

Glossary & Definitions

- **Mainstream provision:** Support provided within mainstream settings enabling children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities to learn and participate alongside their peers.
- **Specialist provision:** Tailored support provided in specialist settings, exclusive to children and young people whose needs are best met through more intensive, specialised approaches, resources, or expertise.
- **Learning and access needs:** A broad term used in this report to describe children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- **Inclusive practice:** An approach to planning and delivering activities that actively removes barriers, adapts support, and enables children and young people with different needs to take part meaningfully and safely.
- **Meaningful inclusion:** Inclusion that goes beyond attendance or access alone, ensuring children and young people feel welcomed, understood, supported, and able to participate in a way that is valuable to them.
- **Co-production:** A way of designing, delivering, and reviewing services with children, young people, families, and practitioners, so that decisions are shaped by those with direct experience of the issues being addressed.
- **Lived experience:** Knowledge and insight gained through direct personal experience, including the experiences of children, young people, parents, carers, teachers, staff, or volunteers.
- **Local Offer:** A local authority resource that sets out services, support, and opportunities available for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families.
- **Social stories:** Short, clear visual or written guides that help children and young people understand what to expect in a new activity, place, or situation.
- **Makaton:** A communication method that uses signs and symbols alongside speech to support understanding and expression.
- **EHCP:** An Education, Health and Care Plan, which is a legal document setting out a child or young person's special educational needs, the support required, and the outcomes being worked towards.
- **Short Breaks:** Services or activities that provide children and young people with enjoyable opportunities outside the home while also giving parents and carers a break from caring responsibilities.



JOHN LYON'S CHARITY

GAME CHANGER