

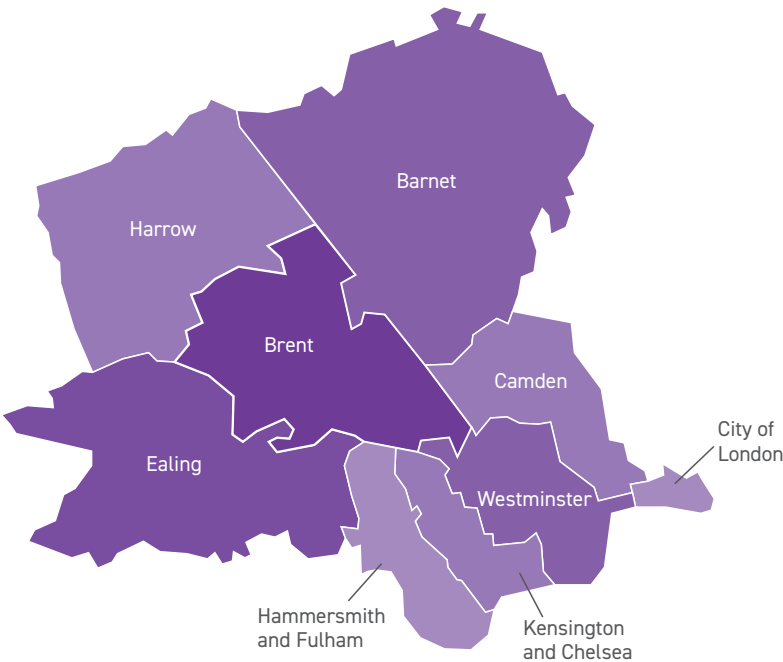
Our Commitment

John Lyon's Charity has identified three key areas that need to be addressed 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. The Charity commits:

- to continue to support both specialist and mainstream provision.
- 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.
- to encourage stronger pathways between specialist and mainstream organisations.
- 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.
- to review its own funding opportunities to ensure existing grant programmes support inclusion.
- 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.

About John Lyon's Charity

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 and Fulham, Harrow, Kensington and 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, with around £15 million in grants distributed each year.



About Game Changer

For too many children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities, opportunities to take part in activities outside of school are simply not available. As a result, families often struggle to find activities that are both suitable and able to meet a young person's individual needs.

Over the years, John Lyon's Charity has identified disparities in the quantity and quality of out-of-school opportunities for young people with learning and access needs. We know there are simply not enough accessible opportunities.

Game Changer explores these challenges for young people, families and organisations, and what we can do together to break down barriers to participation. Families need clearer, more honest information about what activities can offer and who they are suitable for, while youth organisations need more support to enhance their resources, skills and confidence.

For too many young people, the challenge is not choosing between opportunities, but finding one that works for them at all. These recommendations focus on practical changes that can improve access now, alongside longer-term investment in workforce development, stronger partnerships and better communication with families. Building more inclusive provision takes time, but every organisation can take steps towards meaningful inclusion.

Read the Game Changer report at: www.jlc.london



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Game Changer

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING OUT-OF-SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES

GAME CHANGER



JOHN LYON'S CHARITY

Registered Charity No. 237725

1 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.

2 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 behaviours 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.

3 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.

4 Communicate clearly and honestly about inclusive offers

Families are often making decisions while already stretched, and unclear information 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.

5 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.