London Early Years Foundation Sustainability Stategy





2 London Early Years Foundation - Sustainability Strategy

Contents

Introduction	3
About LEYF	4
How do we define sustainability at LEYF?	4
Transforming children's lives by tackling inequality in Early Years across the UK	5
Social leadership	6
The 3 pillars of sustainability	7
The 8 principles that underpin the LEYF approach	8
The journey so far	9
Strategic and operational delivery structure	10
Ensuring sustainability through Green LEYF funding	11
Sustainability Gardens	12
Sustainable partners	13
Certification: moving towards net zero	14
What is the LEYF sustainability ambition?	15
Priority Sustainable Development Goals	16
The Green LEYF Priority Sustainable Projects	17
Aligning our ambition	18
Work with us	19



Introduction

Welcome to the LEYF Sustainability Strategy. We are delighted to be in a place where we can set out our approach to sustainability and the steps we will take to get there.

Sustainability is finally moving to the centre of political and public agendas. This is good news as we face huge global issues including climate change, environmental degradation, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, pollution, food insecurity and food waste, poverty and disease. This may seem completely disconnected from the world of nursery children, but a central tenet of Early Years education is to prepare children to undertake their roles and responsibilities as responsible global citizens.

Five years ago, we started to think much more deeply about how we would make the three legs of the Sustainability Stool more balanced across LEYF. These legs are economic sustainability, social sustainability and environmental sustainability. Each leg of this stool is equally important, to ensure a robust and coherent sustainable approach.

As a social enterprise, our business model and social pedagogy is designed to support disadvantaged children. It is the economic leg of the stool. The social leg of the stool is inbuilt into our operations and practice, our campaigns against child poverty and our advocacy for Early Childhood Education and Care for all our children, recognising them as our future global citizens. However, when we reviewed our work, we noticed we were less focused on environmental sustainability and decided we needed to do more. We started small, trying to eliminate single-use plastic, but soon realised we needed a more coherent approach, so we set about completing the ISO 14001. This was how we examined our organisational operations, practice and procurement to help us make decisions through a stronger sustainability lens.

The result was 'Green LEYF' and an organisational approach to getting all three legs of the Sustainability Stool steady and strong. Every step we take towards this ambition is a step in the right direction and small changes make a big difference. We are delighted that you are all supporting our every move.



©London Early Years Foundation



June O'Sullivan MBE Chief Executive

Every step we take towards this ambition is a step in the right direction and small changes make a big difference. We are delighted that you are all supporting our every move."

About LEYF

LEYF has the ambition of changing the world one child at a time. LEYF is a registered charity that is self-sustaining through our social enterprise model.

Our social purpose is to give London's children the best start in life through the highest quality Early Years education, especially those who otherwise may not be able to access or afford it - thereby addressing the three systemic challenges that prevent children from achieving their full potential.





How do we define sustainability at LEYF?

Early Years is a natural place to begin the conversation about sustainability, where children and colleagues are partners in the learning process and encouraged to be critical thinkers and take action for sustainable development and lead a culture of change.

The LEYF approach to sustainability is framed within the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by the United Nations (2015) which are underpinned by the 3 pillars of sustainability: economic prosperity social equity and environmental integrity.

Sustainability at LEYF means examining how we provide children from disadvantaged families access to quality, affordable Early Years education and care as well as addressing

Six



50% of our nurseries run

on entirely green renewable energy.



how we help build a community of sustainability-informed children, staff and parents.

Sustainability is embedded into every element of LEYF including the governance, pedagogy and operations, which drives holistic and transformational practice and understanding that motivates and empowers children, colleagues and parents.





Energy efficient LED lights, motion sensors and timers are used throughout all of our nurseries.

Transforming children's lives by tackling inequality in Early Years across the UK

LEYF's ambition is to transform children's lives by providing ~10,000 children with access to high quality and affordable Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), thereby more than doubling our reach over the next seven years and especially targeting support for the most disadvantaged children in London.

As we scale, our ability to enrich the experiences of individual children will increase, as we have more surplus available to invest in innovative services and initiatives.

We will also use this unique replicable model to act as a catalyst for driving sustainable, systemic change in Early Years.



Note: (*) F is forecast, P is projected; (**) Surplus would be reinvested to scale our social impact (by expanding nursery provision in deprived areas, increasing the number of 'funded only places, and enriching the individual experiences of our children most in need through innovative services and initiatives).



We will also use this unique replicable model to act as a catalyst for driving sustainable, systemic change in Early years.

Social leadership

The work we do in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is driven by a social purpose – by the desire to make a genuine difference. We want to make the world a better place by giving children the best possible start in life. That means we need a model of leadership that puts social purpose at the heart of leading. This is what the social leadership model is all about.

This is where social leadership starts and ends. Social leaders must have a clear understanding of how ECEC, and their organisation, contributes to a better society. Not everyone has to have the same social purpose articulated in the same language, but social leaders do need to articulate how and what they do every day that is helping to makes the world a fairer place.

In ECEC, social purpose can only be realised if the social pedagogy is aligned. A social pedagogy is a vision of how learning happens in the ECEC organisation to support the fulfilment of the social purpose. For example, in LEYF, the social purpose

centres on increasing the social capital of children and families so that they are well connected socially, feel belonging and know how to access social services and opportunities. The social pedagogy at LEYF is deeply aligned with this purpose.

ECEC has to be part of the solution to the huge global issues we face: poverty, lack of education, climate change, environmental degradation and so on. Social leaders commit to integrating sustainability into every element of their leadership – from articulating the social purpose to living the social pedagogy and organisational culture. In our model, we use the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a way that social leaders can get a handle on sustainability.



June O'Sullivan Mona Sakr SOCIAL JEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE An Introduction

Social Leadership in Early Childhood Education and Care: An Introduction by June O'Sullivan & Mona Sakr

Click to find out more

Early Childhood Education and Care has to be part of the solution to the huge global issues we face: poverty, education, climate change, environmental degradation...



The 3 pillars of sustainability

The 3 pillars of sustainability are based on the Brundtland Report (1987), which was very careful to identify the importance of the '3 Es' of sustainability: environmental regeneration and stewardship; economic prosperity; and equitable societies.

This description helps us see how the economy and our natural resources are firmly interlinked and underpinned by fairness, and this is important if we begin to think of ourselves as guardians of our children's futures.



The economic pillar of sustainability

The economic pillar of sustainability is shaped by the LEYF business model of a charitable social enterprise operating a triple bottom line. This model promotes a way of providing all children with access to a high-quality nursery irrespective of their backgrounds, because high-quality Early Years education and care mitigates educational disadvantage which can negatively impact children's life journeys. Our social purpose is to change the world one child at a time, and this is delivered through our cross-subsidy fee model which allows us to subsidise at least 35% of children to attend our high-quality nurseries, 75% of which are sited in areas of deprivation.

Our economic model is underpinned by a value-led approach that fosters high levels of employee well-being, social and ecological sustainability and viable financial performance. The wellbeing of staff is central to economic sustainability and as we are not for dividend organisation, all our surplus is reinvested in places for children, training for staff, and support for staff families. We endeavour to pay fair salaries and provide good benefits through pensions, support benefits and a career pathway from entry qualifications to an Honours degree through to training and development and, together, foster a fairer society for children.

> 35% of children who attend a LEYF nursery would otherwise not be able to attend a nursery.

The social pillar of sustainability

Our understanding of social sustainability has shaped our inclusive and equitable business and pedagogical model.

We do this by endeavouring to provide access for all children to LEYF nurseries irrespective of their background or learning needs, supporting the wellbeing of our staff and promoting fairness and equity for children, their families and staff. For example, through active campaigns such as increasing the number of men into childcare, raising the issue of child poverty, developing the EY Chef Academy to respond to the increase in child obesity and food poverty. Our pedagogy promotes harmonious relationships and community engagement as key to how we support children, families and staff. Environmental sustainability is understood throughout LEYF as the way we look after our planet.

The environmental pillar of sustainability

Environmental sustainability is understood throughout life as the way we look after our planet. ECEC is a natural starting point and children are much more competent and thoughtful than we give them credit for. Indeed, if sustainable development is relevant to children's lives, then we need to prepare them for their role in dealing with problems they are facing. We want to educate our children to become interested in curious about the wider world and learn to take responsibility about how they can be kind and respectful to their environment, nature and wildlife, and learn about the impact their decisions can have on the planet. We have designed this around '8 Rs', which are built into our Pedagogy, Operations and Governance.

The 8 principles that underpin the LEYF approach

The 8 principles that are underlying the LEYF approach to Sustainability stem from Permaculture – Permaculture is a way of creating practical sustainable and self-sufficient ways of living – it includes principles that align with a holistic approach that can be altered to different scales.

1	Reduce	Decrease consumption of food wastage, materials and resources	
2	Reuse	Use materials many times and for different purposes	
3	Repair	Fix things rather than discarding them or repurposing them	
4	Recycle	Be aware of alternatives to discarding rubbish and educate children about the importance and impact they can have through this	
5	Rot	Let things go back to the earth to enrich the next crop of plants while also providing a habitat for insects and small rodents	
6	Respect	Nurture understanding and respect of nature and natural processes, and reduce the extent to which they are violated; showing consideration and compassion for all people and animals	
7	Reflect	The habit/skill of being thoughtful, asking questions and wondering about experiences	
8	Responsibility	Being trusted to take care of something or to do something worthwhile - be socially and economically sustainable, e.g. Fair Trade and local markets to promote community well-being	



'The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies.'

- Gertrude Jekyll

The journey so far

The LEYF journey to becoming a more sustainable and environmentally focused organisation hasn't happened overnight. We started many years ago, focusing on how to deliver the best outcomes for all of our children.

We examined our work against the Sustainable Development Goals (2015) and started to explore how we operate against these ambitious targets.

Education is a very powerful pathway to sustainability, but it depends on adults who understand how to integrate sustainability into every element of their leadership, pedagogy and operational practice. Sustainability is not a subject or part of an environmental programme; it is central to the child's whole experience and needs to be part of a broad and inclusive quality education. We began by defining what we mean by sustainability and seeking the support from across the organisation. We know that change needs support at every level if it is to be anchored securely across the organisation and amplified across the wider sector. We sought the support of our Board of Trustees, cascading our ambitions to strengthen sustainability all the way through the organisation. We needed a collaborative approach where staff at the grassroots were engaged and involved. We wanted to use our change model to understand every step necessary towards making the values of sustainability clear, well understood and appreciated, so it would reflect in our behaviours, and practice organisation-wide sustainability from a values, behaviour and practice perspective.

Our organisational ambition of changing the world one child at a time anchored our sustainability ambition and put the voice of the child right at the centre.

We initially began looking at 'little wins' that would have a big effect.





Removing single-use plastics where possible, changing all milk deliveries to glass bottles so they could be reused and recycled, banning glitter, placing wormeries and composters in every nursery garden to reduce food waste etc.

We know that to create change, we need to inform staff. Our teachers were excited to understand about sustainability more confidently and to help this process we built the first Level 4 CPD Qualification in Sustainability in the Early Years and supported this with two books: one on social leadership and the other on testing ideas for sustainability in a nursery. Our parents wanted to be more involved, so we created a Parent Committee to hear their voices. We also developed a network of partners who share our sustainability ambitions and are willing to support our journey.

Our organisational strategy is a step towards putting our values and ambition into action. We have all come together to build this approach around the child, our future global citizens and our responsibility to prepare them to lead the changing world they will inherit.



Nick Corlett

Nick Cortlett Sustainability Manager

We have all come together to build this approach around the child, our future global citizens and our responsibility to prepare them to lead the changing world they will inherit.

Strategic and operational delivery structure

When looking at how we wanted to implement and embed Green LEYF, we have taken a twopronged approach - cascading from the top while also working with the grassroots of the organisation to grow from the ground up. Sustainability is an ongoing strategic focus and we are actively always looking at ways we can improve and influence the sector.







Ensuring sustainability through Green LEYF funding



- Partnership contributions
- Green LEYF nurseries
 building improvements
- Integrating sustainability into organisational growth



The best classroom and the richest cupboard is roofed only by the sky."

> - Margaret McMillan





LEYF works alongside suppliers to help reduce the amount of plastic that comes into the nursery.

We repurpose any plastic that comes into our nurseries into provocations or activities for the children. Single-use plastics have been reduced by eliminating unnecessary shoe covers and plastic gloves.



Sustainability Gardens

The LEYF Pedagogy emphasises the importance of enabling environments for our children, and the LEYF Sustainability Garden will have children, the LEYF Pedagogy and sustainability at its core.

The outdoor spaces will be transformed into environmentally friendly havens of endless learning opportunities led by the Green LEYF team. Free play and child-initiated exploration of the natural environment engages children to a greater extent than adult-led activities, so our gardens need to be carefully designed and planned with all children, staff, and the biodiversity of the local community in mind.

Through the Sustainability Garden, we will build our children's cultural capital by providing them with experiences that may not otherwise be accessible to them. We also appreciate the role our teachers play in creating awe and wonder in the natural environment. Our plans to create Sustainability Gardens will build on this and promote sustained shared thinking as teachers and children together develop a greater understanding and respect for nature and the world around us.

The LEYF Sustainability Garden will be an environmentally friendly, engaging, aesthetically pleasing, and open-ended teaching space. Resources will be made from recycled or repurposed materials; the companies we work alongside will undergo sustainability threshold checks to ensure they are guided by the 3 pillars of sustainability. Families and communities will be involved throughout the process, in line with the home learning and multi-generational strands of the LEYF Pedagogy. The Sustainability Garden will be designed to support the nursery to achieve its zero waste goals through various initiatives, including:

- wormeries
- composters
- water tanks
- mud kitchen
- seasonal growing allotments
- learning opportunities to assist our children to become change agents for the future.

Our goal is to have each of our nurseries' outdoor spaces be unique and different from anything our children have seen before. Many of our children live in highrise flats and have limited access to green spaces, therefore it is especially important that they are provided with



50 Fantastic Ideas for Nursery Gardens by June O'Sullivan & Clodagh Halse

Click to find out more

Risk in a supportive environment is positively linked to well-being, resilience and mistakes, which offer protection against negative effects of failure in the future.

- The LEYF approach to Urban Outdoor Learning

access to a nursery garden space that allows them the opportunity to develop their physical skills, learn outdoors and connect with nature. The Sustainability Manager and LEYF Pedagogy Coaches will act as representatives for the nurseries to guide them through the process and help deliver spaces that allow these one-of-akind teaching experiences to happen.



©London Early Years Foundation



LEYF Eco Champions

This is a Level 4 qualification endorsed by NCFE/Cache, the awarding body that will be issuing students with a certificate when they have completed the programme and is the first of its kind to focus on Early Years sustainability.

The aim of this qualification is to explore how to introduce the principles of sustainability through pedagogy, process and practice, enabling Green Champions in Early Years settings.

The eco-champions lead the development and delivery of Green LEYF across their individual nursery and create a network within LEYF for best practices around sustainability. This course has now been extended to include external students and this will, in turn, enlarge the network of informed Early Years practitioners.

They have all completed the Level 4 qualification, Sustainability in the Early Years, and work with the Sustainability Manager to continue what they have learned. They lead workshops for parents and engagement within the community, and support the delivery of all things green.

Interested in the CACHE endorsed Level 4 qualification – Developing Sustainability in the Early Years?

Click to find out more

Sustainable partners

LEYFs sustainability journey is ongoing and we are proud of the partners who we work alongside. This is to ensure honesty and transparency as we engage in an active and collaborative approach to the sustainable suppliers we work alongside, to ensure that our targets are aligned for better outcomes for the planet.

We consult and advise on future projects and help our partners be more greenminded. This includes speaking at their internal events, consulting around strategy and goals, and aligning them with their own organisation, helping them develop their own sustainability strategy as well as give an Early Years perspective and how they can be part of LEYF's green journey. We look forward to welcoming on new partners along our journey and expanding our ever-growing network.







Hope/Findel

"At Findel, we recognise our responsibility to protect the planet for current and future generations. Our £18m sustainability-linked loan is an education supplies sector first and aids us on our mission to create meaningful change.

It's therefore important to us that at the foundation of our ESG programme sits a wellestablished and successful integrated ISO Management System, and we are thrilled that not only has our carbon reduction pathway been approved by Science Based Targets, we were also awarded with a Silver EcoVadisrating in 2021, placing us in the top 25% of companies for sustainability."

Michelle Burns, Key Account Manager for Hope





Bikeworks

"Bikeworks has been trading as a social business for 16 years with a wide range of incomegenerating products and services. We have scaled, pivoted and used our entrepreneurial dynamism to respond to opportunities as well as knowing when it's time to stop others. Thankfully, underpinning every service is impact on our beneficiaries, clients and our internal team. To me this is working sustainably."

Jim Blakemore, Director of Bikeworks

Watch more about Bikeworks

Other sustainable partners

Please click the logos to find out more:





Watch more about TMT





Fashion Enter

"FEL has sustainability at the heart of its business operations. As a genuine not-for-profit social enterprise, FEL has created an ethical factory both in Haringey, London and Newtown in Wales that has a leading status in the Fast Forward audit as well as being SEMTA approved. These two audits have allowed a deepdive into the technical, social and ethical expertise of the factories, and they are the only factory in the UK to achieve a leading status."

Jenny Holloway, CEO Fashion Enter

Watch more about Fashion Enter



Certification: moving towards net zero

Planet Mark

As part of our short- and long-term goals, our organisational carbon footprint is going to impact future decisions across all of LEYF. Planet Mark has allowed us to take a base carbon footprint of select nurseries to gauge where we can improve on these sites as well as invest back into our nurseries to have a better impact on the environment. We are currently undertaking the second carbon footprint of the organisation and have included more nurseries to see where and how we can reduce our footprint further to help towards our net zero goals. This is also having an impact on future nursery acquisitions and how we design our nurseries regarding environmental impact.

ISO 14001

This is an internationally agreed standard that sets out the requirements for an environmental management system. LEYF has recently been certified, which allows us to ensure that sustainability is interwoven throughout the entire organisation at all levels. This important certification has already allowed LEYF to put in place different systems and measurements to reduce our waste in all nurseries and also make sure we are using our resources as efficiently as possible. By putting the ISO 14001 in place, we are able to reduce our impact on the environment and ensure that sustainability continues to be embedded within LEYF.



Children's voices

Stop putting plastic in the oceans, throw the plastic in the recycling, and that's not nice and the fish will get sick."

Child at Marsham Street Nursery

The worms eat our fruit and turn it into worm tea that helps our flowers turn pretty."

Child at Bushy Tails Nursery Watch more about our wormeries

Can we have lots of sticks to build Stick Man?"

Child at Carlton Hill Nursery

I want trees in our pre-school garden because I don't have them at home."

> Child at New Cross Nursery

What is the LEYF sustainability ambition?



Amplify sustainability best practices throughout the Early Years





All LEYF nurseries have **1-2 water tanks**

where possible to catch and reuse rainwater.

230 litres

Our average water tank is 230 litres and, during rainy periods, is emptied and refilled on a continual basis.

Our water tanks provide all the nourishment for our plants

while also being used in provocations and during water play.

Priority Sustainable Development Goals

A community of practice is a system devised in the early 1990s to support learning among practitioners in a social environment. It is increasingly popular as a means of personal development and social and group learning.

Communities of practice are places where the learning and practice combine, as teachers rethink their existing beliefs, gain new professional knowledge and skills, and learn from each other. This improves their practice and professional confidence. Learning requires an atmosphere of openness and trust and strong bonds that allow for learning, which includes challenge and discussions.

Communities of practice are not limited by former structures but need to be organised with agreements about confidentiality and how knowledge is shared. They can be staff meetings, operations meetings, or subjectspecific networks across geographical boundaries.

A community of practice has 3 characteristics:

- 1 The area of interest. A community of practice is not merely a club of friends or a network of people, it has an identity defined by a shared interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to that interest, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people.
- 2 The community. Members engage in joint activities and discussions, and help each other, share information and build relationships that enable them to learn. Having the same job or the same title does not make for a community of practice unless members interact and learn together.
- 3 The practice. A community of practice is not merely a community

Communities of practice are places where the learning and practice combine, as teachers rethink their existing knowledge.

©London Early Years Foundation

of interest-people who like certain kinds of movies, for instance. Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems. This takes time and sustained interaction.





The Green LEYF Priority Sustainable Projects

Objectives	SDGs	Priority projects	
Strengthen and share the LEYF social enterprise model	Goal 1 Goal 4 Goal 8	 Embed sustainability ambition against the organisational strategic plans Build Green partnerships Develop Green Procurement Plan Develop 'Guiding Principles' for how to implement sustainability across LEYF 	
Promote inclusive, ambitious and nurturing relationships and environments for children, staff, parents and communities	Goal 2 Goal 3 Goal 5	 9 LEYF Sustainability Gardens All nurseries to have ongoing projects to help clean up their local area 	
Work towards becoming net zero by 2030	Image: Constraint of the second sec	 Nurseries are actively working towards zero waste, offsetting carbon emissions from COT External carbon offsetting projects working alongside RHS, Woodland Trust 	
Establish the approach (including pedagogy, operations and governance) to weave sustainability throughout the entire organisation	Goal 9 Goal 10	 Integrate sustainability into the LEYF Pedagogy Deliver and expand the Bikeworks initiative Create a Social Leadership programme 	
Amplify sustainability best practice throughout the Early Years sector	Goal 11 Goal 16 Goal 17	 Speak at EY Conferences Build Green partnerships Lead Sustainability Community of Practice Networks 	

	Success metrics
	 6 new Green partnerships* Achieve Planet Mark Carbon Footprint measurement
	 6 of the 9 nurseries with sustainable gardens completed
ng	 5% carbon emissions reduction Complete and Embed ISO 14001
'e	 85% of nurseries have Eco- Champion Level 4 qualification - Developing Sustainability in EY
	 24 events attended/spoken Green LEYF marketing PR plan

Aligning our ambition

Aligning LEYFs ambition annually with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Ensure the Green LEYF Sustainability approach is woven through the governance, pedagogy and operations throughout the entire organisation

Amplify sustainability best practices throughout the Early Years







Work with us

If you would like to get involved or find out more about:

• Work with us

We are always looking at new opportunities to broaden the Green LEYF network - please get in touch

• Become a sustainable partner Are you a sustainability-focused business or have an Early Years focus?

• Sponsor a project

Would you like to sponsor one of our upcoming Green LEYF projects or sustainability gardens?

- Join our social network and be a part of our community of practice Please get in touch and let us know
- Participate in the Level 4 qualification, CPD or training opportunities

Please let us know your requirements and we will get back to you as soon as possible

Sustainability advice
 Are you looking at starting your own

sustainability journey and would like some guidance?

Please email green@leyf.org.uk with the subject heading of what you would like to know more about.





LEYF is impelled by the need to provide best quality education and care every day in our nurseries, as we know this will make the biggest difference to children's futures.

www.leyf.org.uk

London Early Years Foundation 121 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4LX



green@leyf.org.uk







