



Lewisham Education Arts Network

LEAN Strategic Plan

April 2022 - March 2025

/LEAN

Lewisham Education
Arts Network

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LEWISHAM EDUCATION ARTS NETWORK

Strategic Plan 2022-25

1. Introduction

LEAN, established in 2000, has much to be proud of in achieving its primary ambition and purpose as an arts and cultural education support organisation, championing arts learning for children and young people across Lewisham through promoting the growth of creative partnership working.

LEAN is distinctive, in that it grew out of a grass roots belief that an independent and neutral organisation was best placed to support and advocate for arts and cultural education in the borough.

Since inception LEAN has worked with all those involved in the provision of creative opportunities for children and young people (CYP); artists and arts organisations, the youth sector, non-arts voluntary and community sector, health sector, early years practitioners, primary and secondary teachers and further and higher education.

Leading the local cultural education partnership, LEAN initiates, alone, and frequently in partnership, an extensive range of projects, services and activities empowering and inspiring our members to collaborate through the development of active networks, brokered support and facilitating collaborative working.

Vision

All Children and Young People in Lewisham have the opportunities and support they need to engage with arts and culture, and lead a creative life.

Mission

We champion arts, culture and creativity in Lewisham by supporting organisations and individuals to provide children and young people with equitable and relevant creative opportunities that develop their interests and fulfil their creative potential.

2. Values

The following values provide some guiding principles to who we are as an organisation, our identity and what we believe in and hold dear. Underpinning all the values below are the essential values associated with Equity, Diversity and Inclusion – see Equalities Statement.

- Integrity** We act with professionalism, openness and fairness. We are committed to being independent and a trusted “neutral” broker.
- Accessible** We offer a welcoming, accessible culture where no one is left out and all voices are heard.
- Collaborative** We believe that collaboration with a diverse range of, artists, arts organisations, schools and education providers is essential for a thriving inclusive arts, cultural and education ecology in Lewisham. By enabling and facilitating connections and partnerships, we build resilience, promote mutual understanding and respect and enable creativity and innovation to flourish across the sector.
- Responsive** We are responsive to the needs of the arts, cultural, youth and education sectors in Lewisham. We take positive action to be receptive and understand its concerns and aspirations, providing leadership, guidance and support, using the intelligence learnt to influence our strategies and practice.
- Reflective** We use evaluation and reflection as essential tools for improving what we do, making sure we learn from experience and have the courage to be honest with ourselves and those we work with, to think differently and do things in new ways.

3. Equalities statement

LEAN is motivated by a belief that every child has the right to access arts and culture, and to progress their interest and potential as far as they would like. We recognise that this is a matter of social justice.

We aspire to being an organisation that reflects the people we serve and is informed by Lewisham’s diversity: understanding, respecting, and celebrating differences in age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, education, physical abilities, race and religion and/or socio-economic group.

This requires us to be accessible, welcoming and an organisation that hears and values different voices and perspectives equally. To achieve this, we acknowledge our responsibility to enable people who have experienced barriers caused by systemic prejudice and inequality, and who, understandably, feel uncomfortable engaging with us and contributing to our work. To this end, we

will aim to be equitable in what we do and how we do our work, so we can be our best for everyone in Lewisham.

We know that embedding equity, diversity and inclusion is essential to our mission. We are committed to understanding and removing the barriers to access and progression which are being navigated by our young people and by the artistic community that supports them.

We are committed to action and to ensuring that the ways we work, the programmes we support, and the plans we make are fully inclusive. We know that staff and trustees must be committed to the actions we have identified, and that their behaviours must be consistent with them. We also understand that we must speak out and stand by our commitments and values, working with partners who share them.

We recognise that we haven't always got things right, and that being curious and rigorous about what we do and how we make decisions is an active journey which we will always need to take.

We are currently focussed on the following areas because we know we have work to do.

Anti-racism

We are working to become an anti-racist organisation. We are committed to proactively centring anti-racism across the whole of our organisation, in our policies, strategies, plans, and programmes by:

1. Listening to and learning from CYP, teachers, artists and practitioners from the global majority in our borough, amplifying their voices and perspectives through our programmes and networks.
2. Being proactive in understanding who our members are and considering how their lived experiences might be impacting on their access to our services, and acting in response to that.
3. Ensuring that our approach to Board and staff recruitment results in increased representation by people from the global majority.
4. Learning more about anti-racist recruitment practices and investing in staff and Board training, to ensure any new positions are advertised broadly, and applications structured to combat the unconscious bias that we know exists in all of us.

Access

We are committed to delivering accessible activity and operations, with the requirements of people navigating visible and invisible barriers considered and responded to by:

1. Ensuring that access is appropriately planned for and resourced as part of our delivered programmes, ensuring equitable provision and physical, social or cultural barriers to access are overcome.

2. Improving the accessibility of the information we make available via our website and other mechanisms.
3. Ensuring that our staff and board recruitment processes are accessible and increase diversity, learning about and applying new practices so that we ensure that people with a range of lived experiences are represented in our organisation.
4. Listening to the voices and perspectives of young people and those who work with and support them. Learning from the lived experiences of our creative programme participants, and professional networks.
5. Being discerning about who we work with. It is important to us that the values of our partners and collaborators align with our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, so will offer support where identified as being a concern.
6. Investing in staff and board training to ensure we can meet our commitments to access.

We are accountable to the actions we have identified. We will consider how best to collect data and monitor our progress, presenting this as part of our annual reporting processes.

If you have any questions or thoughts about this statement and the actions it outlines, please get in touch (see www.leanarts.org.uk for contact information).

3. Drawing from the past

For over 22 years, LEAN has supported the creative lives of children and young people (CYP), cultivating an essential role in the cultural and educational ecology of Lewisham and leading the vibrant and established Local Cultural Education Partnership. We have explored and honed a distinctive approach, enabling (often in partnership) the education, arts, creative and cultural sectors, frequently with the voluntary, youth and health sectors to foster relevant and quality opportunities for CYP, so that they can develop their creative interests and potential.

Opportunities for Children and Young People

LEAN has supported the cultural engagement offer to CYP primarily through our work with Lewisham's arts and cultural sectors. Sometimes our research has identified gaps in provision that we address through devising and delivering projects directly to CYP or facilitating partnerships.

Recently, listening to young people's views, we grew a creative careers programme culminating in *Army of Creatives*, a programme in schools that introduced 13-year-olds (year 9) to a broad range of creative professionals mostly from the global majority.

For a more established project, *Lewisham Live*, LEAN led a partnership of 9 organisations, that since 2008, has collaborated to hold an annual young people's music and dance festival, providing performance opportunities to 2000+ young performers in over 20 events to a 4000+ audience.

LEAN has a track record in leveraging funds for the creative sector to work with CYP e.g. we worked with the Lewisham Council *Headstart* programme to create a grant scheme for creative activity designed to build resilience in 10-14 year olds.

Workforce Training & Development

LEAN has supported the arts and cultural workforce, including arts freelancers, to access the networks, resources, peer learning, training, and advice they need to be resilient, inclusive, and provide excellent experiences for CYP. We know this support is highly regarded and should be continued through 1:1 advice and guidance, digital resources and information, newsletters and social media, and regular network meetings.

I just wanted to say thank you so much again for your wonderful advice. I've no doubt at all that your advice and the information you gave was the reason I was finally awarded the grant.

Creative Professional

When required, we have listened to our members and adapted services in response to their changing circumstances and needs. During the pandemic, in response to demand, Arts Freelancer Breakfast Clubs moved online, and their frequency increased.

From September 2022, LEAN is hosting an Arts Sector Fundraising Development Manager whose programme of support is building the strength and capacity of the sector to attract more funds into the borough.

Collaboration and Partnership

As a trusted impartial strategic partner and critical friend, LEAN has built the conditions that enable creative and cultural organisations to respond to the needs of local CYP. We have provided significant value to Lewisham's infrastructure by using our specialist knowledge of arts and education to broker and lead partnerships ensuring those from education settings, voluntary, youth and health sectors and arts, creative and cultural organisations can meet, exchange ideas, collaborate and develop exciting and relevant creative projects for CYP.

We have ensured that appropriate time, capacity, planning, and shared goals underpin our partnerships, and we recognise the challenges and benefits and ensure that all partners have a tangible role. Successful partnerships with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies have included; The *Rainbow Collective* (early years), *Lewisham Live* (an annual music and dance festival), *HeadStart* (Arts and Resilience Community of Practice), and *Bellingham Regeneration Arts Group* (BRAG).

A key strategic collaboration strengthening engagement between Lewisham's education sector and the creative sector has been LEAN's role as Education Partner for London Borough of Culture 2022.

We have ensured that 88% of schools are connected with the opportunities available to them, building a vibrant network of *Cultural Connectors*, arts engaged teachers who are now the conduit for creative opportunities in their school.

Advocacy

A key role for LEAN has been championing the views of Lewisham's CYP and those who support their creative engagement in arts and culture.

We have increased the profile of arts education in Lewisham, advocating for CYP's access to creative learning, by platforming and celebrating the exceptional creativity of our young people, and the expertise of the organisations, schools, teachers, and artists that support them. *Lewisham Live*, for instance, has become a recognisable brand, noted for its impact on a generation of our young people.

LEAN has published robust evaluations of our own programmes, such as, the impact of *Speak Out* that trialled drama workshops devised in partnership with Speech and Language Therapists, and provided evaluation expertise to others. We have profiled research highlighting the positive impact of arts and cultural engagement for CYP on aspects such as their learning, building cultural capital and health and well-being.

Impact and Engagement

- From April 2018-March 2022 we have directly communicated with 51,000 people via our newsletters, 1:1 support sessions, Breakfast Clubs, Training, Projects and Events. Our website was visited 146,339 times in that period.
- During the worst of the pandemic LEAN communications to our members rose dramatically and members seeking information and support visited our website 30% more than the previous year.
- On average, 80 people per year attend our annual conference that takes place as part of our AGM and explores issues of the day impacting on arts learning and engagement.
- In Spring 2022 an "Army of Creatives" flooded Year 9 lessons and assemblies in 12 secondary schools across the London Borough of Lewisham. The 30 creatives involved had jobs from across the creative industries. Each had connections with Lewisham, most were persons from the Global Majority and together they engaged with around 3,300 pupils.
- Since Autumn 2021 LEAN has been reinforcing relationships with schools as London Borough of Culture Education Partner for Lewisham. A network of teachers and early years professionals form the Cultural Connectors. 88% of Lewisham schools are represented by one or more cultural connectors.

Our learning from the past – what we must continue to do

Our work as a Local Cultural Education Partnership that enables, connects, and creates the conditions for great arts and culture to thrive in Lewisham can be strengthened and continued through:

- Building cross-sector partnerships that increase creative opportunities for CYP, with LEAN acting as a trusted impartial strategic partner and critical friend.
- Identifying gaps in provision for CYP through research and consultation, and continue successful projects that have demonstrated impact, e.g. the Creative careers programme that culminated in *Army of Creatives*.
- Supporting the arts and cultural workforce, listening to our members and adapting programmes as required, particularly as surveys and testimonials confirms the impact of this work.
- Levering in funds for the sector to engage with CYP in and out of schools.
- Strengthening relationships with schools by utilising the network of Teacher Cultural Connectors and developing a relevant programme of engagement.
- Strengthening our advocacy for arts engagement and learning by making it a strategic priority for the organisation using our website and social media and enhanced data and research demonstrating how the arts impact on the lives of CYP.

4. Considering the future

LEAN operates within an uncertain and potentially challenging external environment. Increasing national economic pressures impact on local funding and the communities LEAN serves. Greater social inequality and environmental concerns are forefront in the public's awareness, although the arts and culture are not prioritised in central government policies.

Nationally, arts and cultural policies have redistributed funding away from London. LEAN's work is also challenged by the lower status of arts in education, compared to "core" and STEM subjects. The introduction of the EBac and other accountability measures, such as Progress 8, incentivises schools to prioritise those subjects, to the detriment of the arts in schools, especially at GCSE and post-16. However, regionally, London remains supportive of its creative industries and encourages growth.

Although Lewisham lacks the larger-scale arts infrastructure of neighbouring boroughs, such as Lambeth and Southwark, there is a vibrant community of arts and cultural organisations, e.g. the Albany, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Horniman Museum and Gardens, and many much-valued smaller organisations, alongside independent arts practitioners, all providing rich assets for LEAN's work.

The successful bid for London Borough of Culture (LBoC) 2022 demonstrated Lewisham's commitment and ongoing support for arts and culture – also seen through its Main Grants programme, through which local artists and arts organisations are supported. Notably, the London Borough of Lewisham has supported The Albany as Lewisham's Arts and Culture Anchor organisation.

Locally, Lewisham is a borough with a rich and diverse culture, characterised by a growing population of children and young people (higher than average 0-19 year olds), which is ethnically and socially diverse and with areas of significant deprivation. It is also a borough with high levels of civic pride and support for the cultural sector.

Culture is important to Lewisham. It has helped shape the borough that we now know, supports the health and wellbeing of our residents, brings communities together and provides employment for many. The benefits of Council investment over a period of many years are apparent and we want this to continue.

(London Borough of Lewisham - Consultation on Lewisham Council future support for arts and culture – June 2021)

LEAN has successfully forged a place within the local arts and education ecology, demonstrating a good understanding of Lewisham's demographics and stakeholder needs, including the needs of schools, the wider education sector, arts and cultural organisations, artists and centrally, CYP themselves. They all share an interest in creative engagement opportunities, access to facilities, resources and information and to be connected to other network members and potential collaborators.

LEAN is a small organisation with few staff, all of whom are part-time. However, LEAN has a strong team with considerable expertise and established connections with schools and the wider education sector. LEAN can be agile and respond to decisions by planning promptly and decisively, without the encumbrance of complicated systems often employed by larger organisations.

We have successfully navigated challenges to retain core funding from Lewisham's Main Grants Programme which is secure, although reduced for the next 3 years, and have a track record of raising additional funding for specific projects eg Lewisham Live. Fundamentally, LEAN is an infrastructure organisation, doing little direct delivery, but rather enabling, developing, celebrating and advocating arts and cultural learning in the borough. Our role of Education Partner in LBoC has placed us in a pivotal position, and hosting the Fundraising and Development Manager (Arts) opens new possibilities for LEAN.

In considering the future there are clear areas of opportunity as well as challenges to be addressed:

Challenges	Opportunities
Sufficient staffing capacity and skills to meet demand and expectations	LEAN's role as the Local Cultural Education Partnership has potential for expansion and increased profile
LEAN's profile could be stronger and more visible	LEAN's profile increased as Borough of Culture Education Partner and legacy of Borough of Culture
Communications needs development	Good understanding of demographics and stakeholders' needs
Funding to sustain LEAN and support its programmes difficult; reduced local arts funding available, redistribution of arts funding away from London, few funding sources available for infrastructure organisations	LEAN has a track record of raising funds and finding new opportunities, especially through partnership. Hosting Lewisham's Fundraising and Development Manager opens further opportunities.
Need to build a strong relationship with the Albany as Lewisham's Anchor organisation	LEAN has proven track record of brokering and building partnerships
Nationally arts and cultural education has been a low priority for a number of years	Potential for increased support for arts and cultural education through new DfE Cultural Education Plan
Economic crisis is increasing disadvantage and reducing funding opportunities	Vibrant local arts community including many ACE/NPO funded organisations
Skills gaps in both staff and Board need addressing through sound succession planning	More engagement with digital production to reach more young people and younger artists
Organisational change must be planned and managed	Expanding direct engagement with young people to design and influence LEAN's work
	Being at the forefront of new practices in co-production to amplify the voices of CYP

5. Strategic aims

Strategic aim	Activities
<p>Aim 1: Access to opportunities for CYP</p> <p>Enable access to an extensive range of creative opportunities for ALL Lewisham’s children and young people</p>	<p>Devise and support cross sector collaborative projects with, by and for CYP, e.g. Lewisham Live</p> <p>Disseminate Creative Careers programmes offered by the creative sector to teachers, VCS and youth sectors</p> <p>Deliver alone and in partnership creative careers programmes building on recommendations from Army of Creatives</p> <p>Act as conduit for local and Capital-wide arts organisations to develop and offer creative activities to early years, schools and colleges (within certain parameters such as free, low cost or heavily subsidised)</p> <p>Explore and use direct engagement with young people to design and influence LEAN’s work in supporting access to creative opportunities for CYP</p>
<p>Aim 2: Workforce development</p> <p>Strengthen the resilience and capacity of the arts and cultural workforce, to provide excellent, inclusive and relevant creative experiences for children and young people</p>	<p>Maintain timely and high-quality information via: website, monthly bulletins, Twitter, Instagram, and other targeted newsletters</p> <p>Provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast Club (networking, support, information sharing) • Review Lewisham Youth Arts Network (networking, info sharing, policy development and partnership development) and develop and facilitate a relevant cross sector network • One to One advice sessions (bespoke support based on individual needs) <p>Support Lewisham Visual Arts Network (LVAN)</p>

Strategic aim	Activities
	<p>Through hosting the Fundraising Development Manager (Arts) provide advice, guidance, information, application reviews, meet the funder events</p> <p>Embed paid internships in project plans wherever possible to provide development opportunities for emerging participatory artists and arts administrators</p> <p>Provide placement and work experience opportunities for students and pupils to broaden their understanding of the arts learning and engagement sector for children and young people</p>
<p>Aim 3: connection & collaboration</p> <p>Strengthen engagement, collaboration and strategic partnerships between the education, youth, health, voluntary and community, the arts, creative and cultural sectors</p>	<p>As Lewisham’s Local Cultural Education Partnership LEAN will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand our reach, through initiating a new LCEP Strategic Partnership which would include key CYP arts and education stakeholders • Maintain and develop network of Cultural Connectors in schools • Provide forums to bring the creative sector together • Facilitate cross sector forums <p>The Fundraising Development Manager (Arts) will provide capacity and skills to develop high value partnership bids for collaborative projects e.g. Lewisham Live.</p>
<p>Aim 4: Advocacy</p> <p>Actively champion the perspectives and needs of Lewisham's young people and the artists and organisations that support them, celebrating and promoting the value and impact of creative engagement.</p>	<p>Generate content for social media that promotes children and young people’s (CYP) creative outputs, e.g. Lewisham Live</p> <p>Share and amplify content about CYP creative activities and work, generated by creative organisations, schools, etc.</p>

Strategic aim	Activities
	<p>Share research and evidence on the impact of creative engagement on children and young people’s personal and social development to change hearts and minds via newsletters, website, social media and in person at cross sector meetings and conferences</p> <p>Promote how creative careers are a viable option for Lewisham young people and profile local creative practitioners</p> <p>Deliver an annual conference (at LEAN’s AGM) that raises the profile of arts and culture in Lewisham and engages the arts education sector in Lewisham with high profile guests and in turn those VIPs to the Lewisham arts scene</p>
<p>Aim 5: Organisational resilience</p> <p>Ensure that LEAN is dynamic, relevant, able to adapt to changing circumstances, and remains resilient and financially secure</p>	<p>Maintain an active inclusive Board of Trustees that fulfil a range of skills to support the organisation</p> <p>Continually review our strategy and planning and the change we want to see, and how we will achieve that</p> <p>Deliver an organisational change project, focused on equity, diversity and inclusion devising and implementing an action plan (see Equalities Statement)</p> <p>Consider succession planning, in particular the strategic leadership of the organisation from April 2023 onwards</p> <p>Enhance our communications and engagement strategy, including by further improving our digital delivery capacity, and refreshing our online presence and tools</p> <p>Take steps to ensure LEAN is financially viable by developing and implementing financial, budgeting and fundraising plans</p> <p>Ensure that our operational and staffing structure is effective and able to flex in response to the evolving needs of the organisation</p>

Strategic aim	Activities
	<p>Through embedding paid internships and student placements learn from younger people, to better understand what young people want and how to reach them</p> <p>Maintain and enhance our profile through securing high profile guests for our annual event</p>

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