London Early Years Foundation (LEYF)

Sustainabilty Strategy

2026 - 2030

LEYF Nurseries

THE KING'S AWARDS FOR ENTERPRISE 2025 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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Section 1. Our ambition

Sustainability becomes part of who we are, not merely something we do.



Five years ago, LEYF published its first Sustainability Strategy, bringing together the three interconnected pillars of **economic, social and environmental sustainability.** Since then, we have made significant progress, as recognised in 2025 when LEYF received the **King's Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development.** However, sustainability is never finished. The next stage of our journey is more ambitious. **Our ambition is to become a sustainability-informed organisation.**

At LEYF, **sustainability and social justice are inseparable.** A sustainable organisation must be economically resilient enough to fulfil its purpose, socially just enough to widen opportunity, and environmentally responsible enough to protect the world children experience now and will inherit.

Being sustainability-informed means understanding how our choices affect **people, planet and prosperity,** recognising the connections between economic, social and environmental sustainability, and using that understanding to make thoughtful decisions and act.

See the connections.
Question the consequences.
Act with purpose.

This ambition belongs to everyone at LEYF. Sustainability should inform the decisions of our Board and leaders, the systems and choices of our Central Office colleagues, and the everyday practice of our nursery teams. LEYF teachers have a particular role, bringing sustainability to life for children. **Sustainability is not something we add to the pedagogy.** It is a lens through which we teach, helping children explore fairness, relationships, resources, nature and their local communities, and recognise their capacity to influence the world around them.

Our task for 2026–2030 is therefore not simply to do more sustainable things. It is to **Anchor sustainability-informed thinking across LEYF,** creating an organisation where children and adults have the knowledge, confidence and agency to question, learn and act. **Sustainability becomes part of who we are, not merely something we do.**



Section 2. Our journey so far





Our first Sustainability Strategy helped LEYF turn ambition into action. It brought greater focus to Green LEYF and strengthened the systems, knowledge and everyday practices required to advance economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Since then, sustainability has become increasingly integral to how we run our organisation, develop our nurseries, support our colleagues, work with families and communities, and deliver the **LEYF Social Justice Pedagogy.**

We have strengthened our environmental management and measurement through **ISO 14001 and Planet Mark,** while investing in biodiversity, nature-rich environments, water conservation, waste reduction, and the circular use of resources.

Across our nurseries, this is evident in sustainability gardens, eco-ponds, growing spaces, indoor planting, bug hotels, wormeries and composters, rainwater collection, and the reuse of clothing and resources. These everyday practices give children and adults opportunities to experience sustainability rather than simply talk about it. But our journey has never been solely environmental.

Our **social enterprise model** links economic resilience with social purpose. Our commitment to social justice, inclusion, professional learning, children's agency, and strong relationships with families and communities has deepened our understanding of the social and economic pillars of sustainability alongside the environmental. We have also learned that sustainability is not an additional activity within the curriculum. It is a **lens through which we teach the LEYF Social Justice Pedagogy,** connecting children's experiences of fairness, relationships, health, nature, resources, and community.

In 2025, this journey was recognised when LEYF received the **King's Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development**. We are proud of that achievement, but an award is a milestone, not a destination. Our first strategy helped us build sustainable practice. Our next challenge is **to Anchor sustainability-informed thinking** so that colleagues across LEYF understand the connections, question the consequences of their choices, and have the confidence to act.

Section 2. Our journey so far



Our journey continues

2021	Building sustainable practice - banning single use plastic, glitter, 3 Green LEYF sustainable partners, wormeries, composters, water butts introduced in all settings
2021	Introduction of the LEYF Sustainability Strategy as well the CACHE endorsed level 4 qualification - Developing Sustainability in the Early Years
2021-2025	Building sustainable practice
2022	Nursery World Eco-Friendly Award
2023	Planet Mark Award for Employee Engagement
2023	Development and implementation of the Level 6 Early Years Degree module - Leadership for Sustainability
2024	Launched the Community of Practice - Action for Sustainability in Education - to a worldwide audience making best practice accessible to all
2025	King's Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development
2026	Launch of the 2026 - 2030 Strategy, 12 Sustainable partners and growing, yearly carbon footprint reduction across a growing portfolio of nurseries
2026-2030	Anchoring a sustainability-informed LEYF

Section 3. Sustainability at LEYF

Three Interconnected Pillars
At LEYF, we understand sustainability through three interconnected pillars: economic, social and environmental sustainability. Each matters, but none works in isolation. Environmental choices must be economically viable. Economic decisions must support our social purpose. Social progress cannot be sustained if we ignore the environment children experience now and will inherit. Sustainability is therefore about connection, consequence and responsibility.

Economic Sustainability
Economic sustainability gives LEYF the resilience to fulfil our social purpose in the long term. As a social enterprise, we generate income, manage resources responsibly and reinvest in our people, places and pedagogy.

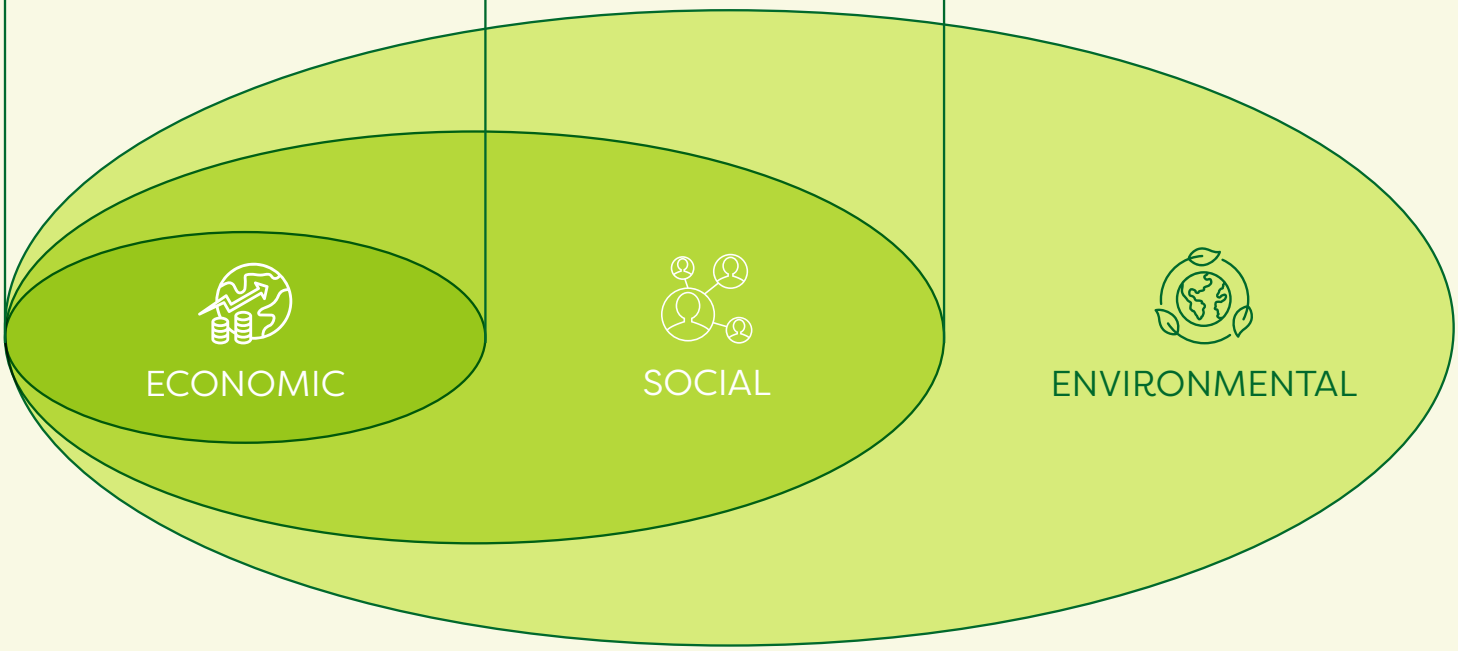
Our cross-subsidy model helps widen access to high-quality Early Years education, demonstrating how financial resilience can support social justice. Economic sustainability means focusing on value, not just cost. Decisions about food, resources, buildings, people and procurement should deliver lasting economic, social and environmental benefits.

Social Sustainability
Social sustainability is where sustainability connects most explicitly with social justice. It is about creating the conditions in which children, families and colleagues can belong, participate and flourish. It includes inclusion, children's rights and agency, workforce opportunities, strong relationships and connections with local communities.

A sustainable organisation therefore asks not only whether its environmental footprint is reducing, but also whether its decisions strengthen fairness, dignity, belonging and opportunity.

Environmental Sustainability
Environmental sustainability recognises our responsibility to protect and regenerate the natural world on which children and future generations depend. It shapes how we use energy, water, food and materials; how we reduce carbon emissions and waste; what we buy; and how we design and manage our buildings and outdoor spaces.

For LEYF, environmental sustainability is also pedagogical. Our nurseries provide children with opportunities to experience nature, investigate their surroundings and begin to understand the connections between people, place and planet.



One Decision, Three Pillars
The three pillars come alive when we use them together. Take food. Reducing food waste saves money and natural resources. Nutritious food supports children's health. Sharing meals builds relationships and a sense of belonging. Growing food connects children with nature. Composting returns nutrients to the soil. A routine part of nursery life becomes economic, social, environmental and pedagogical. This is sustainability-informed thinking: recognising the connections, questioning the consequences and acting with purpose.

Section 3. Sustainability at LEYF

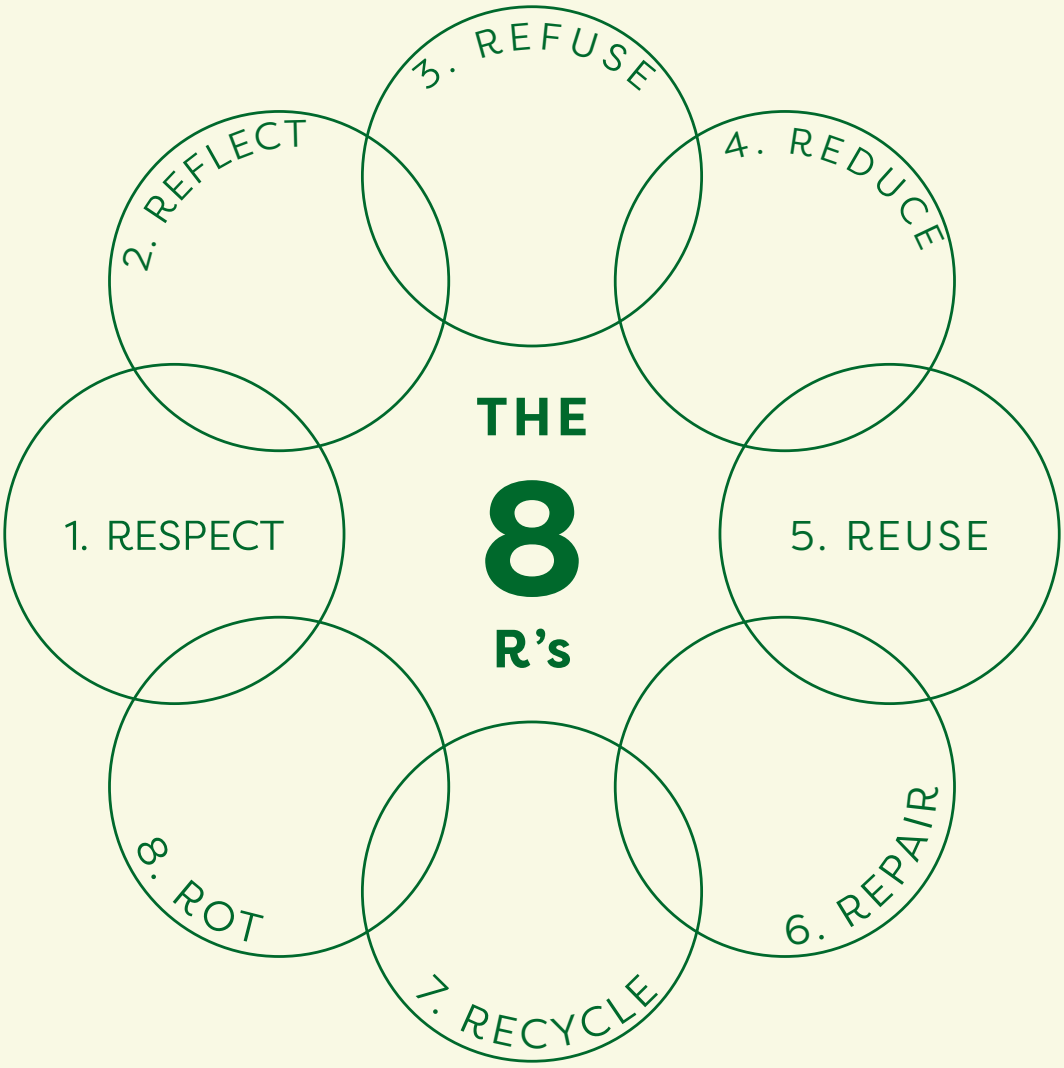
The 8Rs: An Everyday Thinking Tool

Our 8Rs of Sustainability help turn this thinking into everyday action:
Respect | Reflect | Refuse | Reduce | Reuse | Repair | Recycle | Rot

The 8Rs are more than a checklist about waste. They prompt children and adults to think about resources, value, relationships and responsibility.

Can we use less? Can this be reused or repaired? Who and what are affected by our decision? Have we reflected before acting? What responsibility can we take on?

Used across all three pillars, the 8Rs help us move from knowing about sustainability to thinking and acting sustainably.



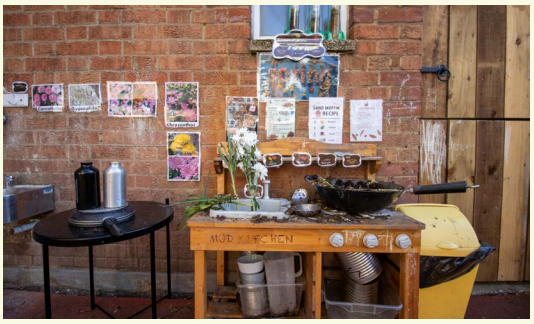
Sustainability Is Social Justice in Action

For LEYF, the three pillars ultimately converge on one question:

Are the decisions we make today helping to create a fairer and more sustainable world for children?

Sustainability means staying economically resilient, widening opportunity, using resources responsibly, strengthening communities and protecting the natural world. **That is why sustainability at LEYF is not an environmental programme. It is social justice in action.**

Section 4. Designing Sustainability into LEYF



Understanding sustainability is not enough. For sustainability-informed thinking to become part of everyday practice, we need to create the conditions that enable people to act on it.

At LEYF, we believe sustainability needs to be built into an organisation, not added on to it.

We use GLOP: Governance, Leadership, Operations and Pedagogy to ensure that economic, social and environmental sustainability shapes every level of LEYF.

G

Governance
Governance sets our purpose, priorities and accountability. Our Board considers sustainability across all three pillars when making decisions on strategy, investment, risk and organisational development.

This means asking not only “Can we do this?” but also “What are the economic, social and environmental consequences of doing so?” Progress against this strategy will be scrutinised through our governance arrangements and reported in our annual Impact Report.

L

Leadership
Leaders create the conditions in which sustainability-informed practice can flourish. At LEYF, Social Leadership is grounded in social justice and people's capacity to think, question and act with purpose. Sustainability-informed leaders move beyond compliance. They use evidence, conversation and coaching to help colleagues question practice, test ideas and learn from what happens. Their role is to foster a culture in which responsibility for sustainability is shared rather than left to a few enthusiasts.

O

Operations
Everyday operational choices have sustainability consequences. Decisions about finance, people, procurement, buildings, energy, water, food, waste and resources all connect the three pillars. Our environmental management systems, Climate Action Plans and Road to Net Zero provide important structures for action and accountability. But systems alone cannot create a sustainability culture. Colleagues also need to understand why decisions matter and where they have agency to improve them. The same expectation applies to the suppliers and partners we choose to work with.

P

Pedagogy
For children, sustainability is experienced through the LEYF Social Justice Pedagogy. It is not an additional strand or curriculum topic. Sustainability is a lens through which we teach all seven strands. Through Social Leadership, the Spiral Curriculum, Enabling Environments, Harmonious Relationships, Safe, Fit and Healthy, Home Learning Engagement and the Multi-Generational Community, children encounter ideas about fairness, belonging, health, resources, relationships, nature, community and responsibility. Within the Spiral Curriculum, Exploring Nature and the Local Community offers particularly rich opportunities for children to investigate relationships between people, place and planet.

Section 4. Designing Sustainability into LEYF

Designing the Conditions for Change

GLOP tells us where sustainability needs to be embedded in LEYF. Intentional design is therefore about more than buildings and gardens. We design systems, environments, relationships and learning that make sustainability-informed choices more visible and achievable. Our emerging research into designed environments and sustainability-informed practice is helping us examine how the places we create can influence what teachers notice, discuss and do.

A sustainability garden, for example, is more than an attractive outdoor space. When designed to support biodiversity, food growing, water conservation, investigation and participation, it creates opportunities for children and adults to experience the connections among the three pillars. Good design should not make sustainable practice dependent on exceptional individuals. It should create the conditions in which sustainability-informed thinking can become everyday practice.



Start a conversation

"Where is sustainability already built into the way we work, and where are we still relying on individual enthusiasm?

5. Developing and anchoring Sustainability-informed practice

A sustainability-informed organisation depends on its people. Everyone at LEYF has a part to play, though this will look different depending on their role. For a teacher, sustainability is evident in pedagogy and children's everyday experiences. For a manager, it shapes leadership, resources, people and relationships with families and communities.

For Central Office colleagues, it informs decisions on finance, people, procurement, buildings, food, communications and organisational strategy. What connects us is a shared responsibility to understand the economic, social and environmental consequences of our choices and to act on that understanding.

What Does Sustainability-Informed Mean?

Being sustainability-informed is more than knowing about recycling, climate change or the Sustainable Development Goals. It means seeing **the connections, questioning the consequences and acting with purpose.**

A sustainability-informed colleague can increasingly recognise sustainability in their everyday role, connect decisions to the three pillars, question assumptions, use evidence and reflection to make informed choices, and take action within their sphere of influence. We do not expect everyone to become a sustainability expert. We expect everyone to be sufficiently informed to **ask better questions, make better decisions, and help others do the same.**

The Particular Role of LEYF Teachers

LEYF teachers bring sustainability to life for children. Sustainability is not something we add to the LEYF Social Justice Pedagogy. It is a lens through which we teach.

Across the seven strands, teachers can help children explore fairness, relationships, health, resources, nature, community and responsibility. They can create opportunities for children to investigate, ask questions, participate in decision-making and take action. Our ambition is not simply for teachers to deliver sustainable activities. It is for them to recognise sustainability within the pedagogy they already teach and to intentionally use those connections to help children become sustainability-informed.

The 7A's



5. Developing and anchoring Sustainability-informed practice



Supporting Development

People will start from different points. Some colleagues may know a great deal about environmental sustainability but be less familiar with its social or economic dimensions. Others may already be advancing social sustainability through inclusion, workforce development or relationships with families, without recognising these efforts through a sustainability lens. Our role is to help people make the connections.

The Green LEYF Pedagogy Development Scales (LPDS) and the Climate Action Plans support colleagues to reflect on what they know, recognising what they already do, and identifying what they need to develop next. The 7As help translate that learning into change that can be Anchored and Amplified.

Eco Champions: Catalysts for Change

Our ambition is to ensure that at least one Eco Champion is trained in each nursery and Central Office team.

Eco Champions do not take responsibility for sustainability on behalf of everyone else. Their role is to help others become sustainability-informed. They will stimulate conversation, ask questions, share credible knowledge, and help colleagues use the three pillars to examine everyday practice. Using the Green LPDS, 7As and 4Cs, they will support teams in identifying opportunities for change, testing ideas, learning from what happens, and Anchor and Amplify successful practice.

Eco Champions therefore need more than environmental knowledge. They need the confidence to foster constructive conversations and to support learning and change. They are catalysts for a culture of sustainability, helping others build knowledge, confidence and agency. This is how sustainability moves from organisational ambition into everyday thinking, conversation and practice.

Start a conversation

“Where can you already see sustainability in your role? Which of the three pillars is easiest to recognise, and which might you need to consider more?

6. Turning understanding into action

Knowledge matters, but knowledge alone rarely changes practice. For sustainability-informed thinking to become Anchored, people need opportunities to think together, challenge assumptions, try things differently, and learn from what happens. The 7As provide the pathway for change. The 4Cs help us travel it together.

At LEYF, we use the 4Cs: Credible Cognition, Compassionate Conversations, Compassionate Coaching and Communities of Practice to help colleagues move from knowing to doing.

Credible Cognition



Change begins with knowing enough to ask better questions.

Sustainability is complex, and good intentions alone are not enough. We need credible knowledge and evidence to understand the economic, social and environmental consequences of our choices.

This might involve examining food waste, energy or water data, learning about biodiversity, investigating the social impact of procurement, or using research to understand how nature-rich environments support children's learning.

Credible Cognition encourages us to ask:
What do we know? How do we know it?
What else do we need to learn?

For LEYF teachers, it also means linking evidence to the seven strands of the LEYF Social Justice Pedagogy and asking what new knowledge implies for children's experiences.

Compassionate Conversations



Change grows through conversation.
Sustainability can challenge familiar habits, assumptions and priorities. It can also expose tensions between what is desirable, affordable, achievable and fair. Compassionate Conversations create space to explore those tensions thoughtfully and without judgement.

At LEYF, compassion is more than kindness or empathy. It means recognising what matters and accepting responsibility to respond. So the conversation does not end with identifying a problem. We ask:

Why does this matter? Whose perspective are we overlooking? What could we do differently?



These conversations can take place between colleagues, with children and families, in staff meetings, coaching sessions, Central Office teams, and around the Board table.

Compassionate Coaching



Reflection becomes powerful when people are supported to act. Changing practice requires confidence as well as knowledge. Compassionate Coaching uses questions, evidence, observation and encouragement to help colleagues examine practice, test ideas, Adapt their approach and learn from what happens.

The purpose is not to provide all the answers. It is to help people develop the confidence and agency to find and test better ones. Coaching is particularly important as we Apply, Adapt and Appraise change before deciding what to Anchor.

Communities of Practice



We learn more when knowledge is shared.
No individual, nursery or organisation has all the answers to sustainability.

Communities of Practice enable people to explore shared questions, exchange knowledge, challenge their thinking and learn from experience.

This happens within nursery and Central Office teams, between managers and Eco Champions, across LEYF's professional learning and research, and through our wider Action for Sustainability Community of Practice.

What one person or team learns can therefore benefit another. This is how successful learning can be Amplified.

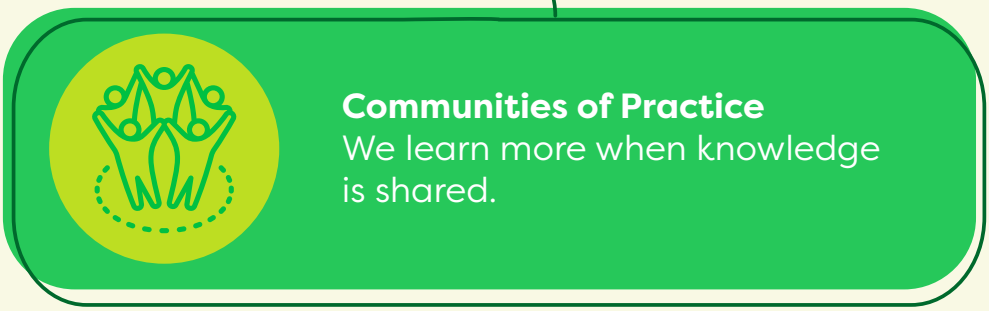
6. Turning understanding into action

The 4Cs in Practice
The 4Cs are not another sustainability initiative. They are a way to help people think, learn and change together. Take something as ordinary as food waste.









The issue may be food waste, biodiversity, procurement, recruitment, water, resources, or the design of a nursery. The process remains useful because it builds people's capacity to investigate and act, rather than simply telling them what to do.

Our ambition is to create a culture in which colleagues have the knowledge to question, the confidence to converse, the support to act, and the opportunity to learn with others. That is how individual action becomes shared practice, and shared practice becomes Anchored organisational change.

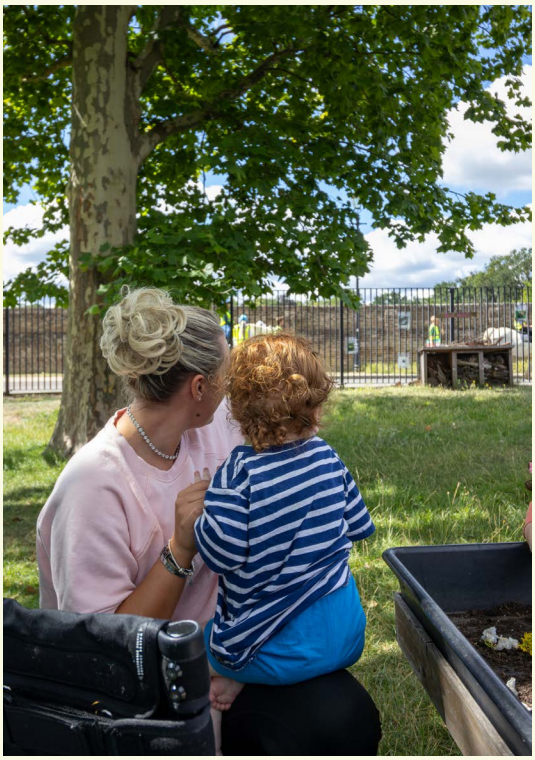
6. Turning understanding into action



Start a conversation

“Choose one sustainability issue in your nursery or team. What do we know about it? What conversation do we need to have? What support might help us act, and who could we learn from?

7. Children as citizens and environmental stewards



Children are at the heart of our sustainability strategy.
They will inherit the consequences of adults' decisions today, but we do not see children as merely citizens of the future. They are citizens now, with ideas, rights, opinions and the capacity to participate in the world around them. Our role is not simply to teach children about sustainability. It is to create opportunities for them to experience, investigate, question and influence it.

Sustainability Through the LEYF Social Justice Pedagogy
Sustainability is a lens through which we teach all seven strands of the LEYF Social Justice Pedagogy.

Children encounter fairness, agency and responsibility through Social Leadership; belonging and care through Harmonious Relationships and the Multi-Generational Community; and connections between sustainability, food, movement and wellbeing through Safe, Fit and Healthy.

Enabling Environments make sustainability visible through the spaces and resources children encounter, while Home Learning Engagement connects children's experiences with those of their families.

Through the Spiral Curriculum, children revisit and deepen these ideas as their knowledge and experience expand.



Exploring Nature and the Local Community
Within the Spiral Curriculum, Exploring Nature and the Local Community offers particularly rich opportunities for sustainability-informed learning. Young children are natural investigators. A worm, a puddle, a pile of rubbish, vegetables growing in the garden, or a building site can prompt questions about how the world works and our responsibilities within it.

Regular opportunities to explore gardens, streets, parks and neighbourhoods help children build relationships with nature, place and community. These experiences support learning far beyond environmental knowledge. Nature-rich spaces create opportunities for physical development, scientific investigation, mathematical thinking, imagination, language and social interaction. Research reviewed by Scott et al. (2022) reports evidence that children use five times as many words when playing outdoors as indoors, reinforcing the importance of outdoor environments for language, communication and social development. The local environment is not simply somewhere children visit. It is part of their curriculum.

"...children use five times as many words when playing outdoors as indoors"

Scott et al. (2022)

7. Children as citizens and environmental stewards

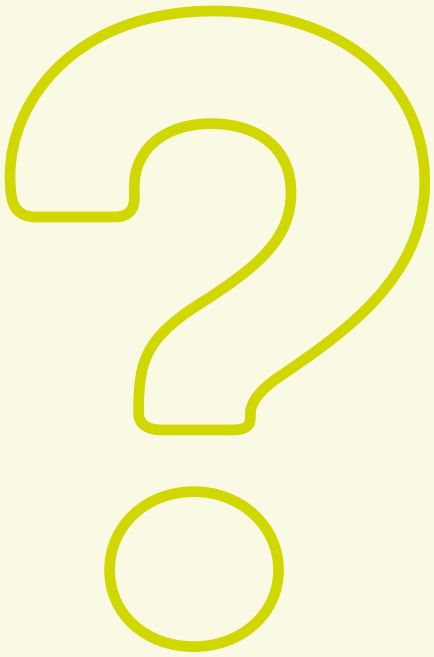


Children as Environmental Stewards

Children often notice things that adults walk past. Our research with young children as environmental stewards has reinforced the importance of giving them time, tools and permission to investigate their surroundings and to tell us what matters to them.

When children photographed and discussed their neighbourhoods, they noticed rubbish, animal waste, roadworks, buildings and neglected spaces. They also identified nature and places they valued. Their observations prompted questions about adult behaviour, responsibility and who should care for shared spaces.

Questions are the starting point of sustainability-informed thinking.



What is happening here?

Why does it matter?

Who is responsible?

Is it fair

What could we do?

Children move from observing their environment to understanding that they have a voice within it.



Environments That Invite Participation

The environments we design can strengthen this agency. Our sustainability gardens, growing areas, eco-ponds, trees, pollinating plants, wormeries, bug hotels and rainwater systems are more than green additions. They are living learning environments where children can investigate ecological relationships and participate in caring for the places they share.

Children should help shape these environments too. A sustainability-informed environment therefore poses two questions:

- **What can children learn here?**
- **What can children influence in this?**

7. Children as citizens and environmental stewards

"Children do not need to wait until they grow up to help shape a fairer, more sustainable world. They can begin where they are, with adults who listen to them and act alongside them."



Working with Parents and Families

Families are essential partners in this journey. We do not want sustainability to stop at the nursery door, nor do we want to dictate how families should live.

Instead, we want to create opportunities for shared learning and conversation. Everyday experiences with food, nature, clothing, transport, waste, repair, growing and community life offer practical ways for children and adults to explore sustainability together.

Families also bring knowledge, experiences, cultures and perspectives from which LEYF can learn. Sustainability-informed practice should recognise diverse circumstances and avoid making assumptions about the choices available to families.

Through Home Learning Engagement and the Multi-Generational Community, we can connect children's experiences at nursery with family and community life. Our ambition is for sustainability to become something that children, families and colleagues notice, question, discuss and act on together.

From Voice to Action

Listening to children is not enough if nothing changes as a result. Children can help redesign a garden, investigate food waste, decide how materials might be reused, take action on something they notice locally, or share their discoveries with families and communities.

The 7As help teachers recognise and support this process. Children can investigate and express their ideas, try out solutions, observe what happens and share what they learn. We do not need to teach young children the language of the 7As; we use it to recognise and strengthen their inquiry, agency and action.

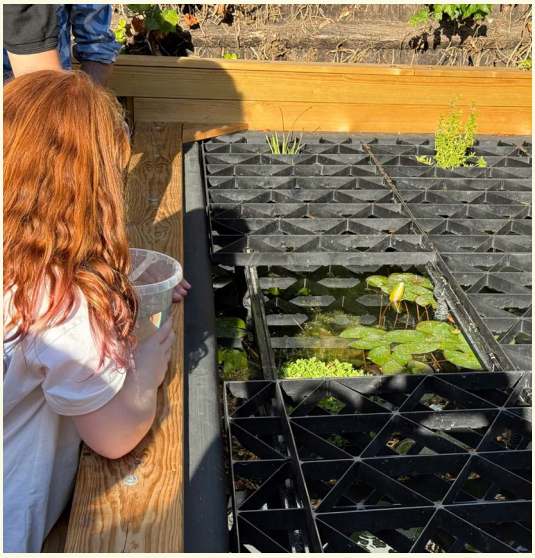
Our ambition is for children to leave LEYF curious about the world around them, compassionate towards people and other living things, confident enough to question what they see, and increasingly aware that their actions matter.

Start a conversation

"What are children noticing about their nursery or local community? What are they telling us matters, and what happens when we listen?

8. Learning, researching and amplifying





A sustainability-informed organisation never assumes it has finished learning. Sustainability is complex and evolving. New evidence emerges, circumstances shift, and what works in one nursery or community may need to be Adapted for another. At LEYF, research, reflection and conversation help us understand our practice, challenge assumptions and make better decisions. We then Anchor what works and Amplify what we learn through the London Institute of Early Years.

Research Starts with Practice

Our nurseries and teams provide rich environments for practice-based research. Questions can arise from everyday observations:

- Why are we wasting so much food?
- How are children using our outdoor spaces?
- How does the design of an environment influence sustainability-informed practice?
- What do children notice in their neighbourhood that adults overlook?
- How can we engage families in sustainability in ways that are useful, respectful and fair?

These questions can arise anywhere in LEYF. A teacher notices something. A child asks a question. An Eco Champion starts a conversation. A manager identifies a pattern. A Central Office colleague examines data. Through Credible Cognition, Compassionate Conversations and Compassionate Coaching, questions can become opportunities for investigation, learning and change. The 7As help us build on that learning: Analyse, Articulate, Apply, Adapt, Appraise, Anchor and Amplify.

Building Our Evidence

LEYF is increasingly contributing to the evidence base on sustainability in Early Childhood Education and Care. Our research addresses questions arising directly from our practice, including social sustainability, Social Leadership, sustainability-informed practice, intentional design and children's environmental stewardship.

Research helps us test our assumptions rather than simply assuming that something works because we believe it should. We ask:

What is happening? What does the evidence indicate? What are children and adults experiencing? What have we learnt? What should we do differently?

This strengthens Credible Cognition and helps us make better decisions.

8. Learning, researching and amplifying

From Practice to Research and Back Again
The London Institute of Early Years (LIEY) helps connect LEYF practice, professional learning and research. Learning generated in our nurseries can inform research and professional development. New knowledge can then return to LEYF, where teachers, managers and colleagues can discuss, test and Adapt it to their context. This creates a continuous learning cycle:

PRACTICE → QUESTION → RESEARCH → LEARNING → CHANGE → ANCHOR → AMPLIFY

The purpose is not research for its own sake. Research should help us improve what we do for children, families, communities and the planet.

Learning with Others
We know that LEYF does not have all the answers. Our Action for Sustainability Community of Practice brings together people from Early Childhood Education and Care to examine evidence, share practice, challenge thinking, and learn from one another.

We will continue to collaborate with researchers, universities, sector organisations, businesses and sustainability partners who bring diverse knowledge and perspectives. These relationships help us remain curious and open to challenge, while creating opportunities for LEYF's learning to benefit others.

Amplifying What We Learn
Learning becomes more powerful when it travels. A question from a child or colleague may lead to change in one nursery or team. Through evidence, Conversation, Coaching and reflection, that change can be tested and strengthened. What works can then be Anchored into practice and Amplified across LEYF. Through LIEY, research, publications, professional learning, conferences, partnerships and Communities of Practice, that learning can travel further.

Amplifying does not mean presenting LEYF as having solved sustainability. It means being willing to share what works, what does not, and what we are still learning.

Our ambition is to be an organisation that asks useful questions, learns from evidence, has thoughtful conversations, changes practice, and Amplifies its learning so others can build on it.

Start a conversation

"What sustainability question arising from our everyday work would be worth investigating, and who else could learn from our findings?

9. Our priorities 2026–2030



Our ambition is to become a sustainability-informed organisation in which economic, social and environmental sustainability shapes how we think, decide and act.

Six interconnected priorities will guide our work to 2030. They set our direction while giving nurseries and teams room to Apply and Adapt action to their own context.

Annual operating plans and Climate Action Plans will translate these priorities into specific actions, responsibilities and measures.

9. Our priorities 2026–2030



Priority 1: Anchor Sustainability Through GLOP

Our ambition

Sustainability will be intentionally embedded across Governance, Leadership, Operations and Pedagogy, ensuring the three pillars inform decisions at every level of LEYF.

We will:

- strengthen sustainability across governance, strategy, investment and organisational decision-making
- support leaders in creating the conditions for sustainability-informed practice
- use finance, people practices, procurement, buildings and operational systems to advance all three pillars
- ensure sustainability is visible across the seven strands of the LEYF Social Justice Pedagogy
- use Climate Action Plans to translate strategy into local action.

We will know we are making progress when:

Sustainability is increasingly visible in decisions, plans, leadership, operational practice, pedagogy and children's experiences.

Intended impact:

Sustainability becomes part of how LEYF operates, rather than something we do alongside our core business.

9. Our priorities 2026–2030



Priority 2: Develop Sustainability-Informed People

Our ambition

Every LEYF colleague will understand how their role contributes to economic, social and environmental sustainability and will have the confidence and agency to act.

We will:

- strengthen sustainability across induction, professional development and leadership learning;
- use the Green LPDS to support development and reflection;
- train at least one Eco Champion in each nursery and Central Office team to stimulate conversation and support learning and change;
- use the 7As to turn learning into action and Anchor successful change;
- use the 4Cs to build Credible Cognition, Conversation, Coaching and
- Collective Learning; and
- support LEYF teachers in developing sustainability-informed thinking through the Pedagogy.

We will know we are making progress when:

Colleagues can recognise sustainability in their roles, connect the three pillars, ask better questions, and demonstrate how their thinking translates into action.

Intended impact:

Sustainability-informed colleagues with the knowledge, confidence and agency to drive and influence change.

9. Our priorities 2026–2030



Priority 3: Accelerate Environmental Action and Our Road to Net Zero

Our ambition

We will reduce LEYF's environmental impact and strengthen our resilience to a changing climate.

We will:

- continue towards Net Zero by 2035;
- reduce carbon emissions and improve energy and water efficiency;
- reduce waste and strengthen reuse, repair, recycling and composting;
- reduce unnecessary consumption and single-use materials;
- strengthen sustainable food and food-waste practices;
- use responsible procurement to consider economic, social and environmental value; and
- maintain robust environmental measurement and reporting.

We will know we are making progress when:

Verified data demonstrates improvement in carbon, energy, water, waste, food and other agreed environmental measures against our baselines and annual targets.

Intended impact:

A lower-impact, resource-efficient, and climate-resilient LEYF.

9. Our priorities 2026–2030



Priority 4: Design Sustainable, Nature-Rich and Climate-Resilient Places

Our ambition

Our settings will be intentionally designed to support children's learning and wellbeing, biodiversity, climate resilience, and sustainability-informed practice.

We will:

- continue developing sustainability gardens and nature-rich environments;
- strengthen biodiversity, planting, food growing, wildlife, and water conservation;
- consider shade, heat, water, and climate resilience across our estate;
- apply our design principles when developing indoor and outdoor environments;
- involve children and teachers in shaping the places they use;
- use the 8Rs to inform decisions on resources and materials; and
- continue investigating how designed environments influence sustainability-informed practice.

We will know we are making progress when:

We can demonstrate improvements in biodiversity and climate resilience, alongside evidence that our environments influence children's learning and colleagues' practice.

Intended impact:

Places that help children and adults think, learn and act sustainably.

9. Our priorities 2026–2030



Priority 5: Strengthen Children's Agency, Families and Community Participation

Our ambition

Children will experience sustainability as active citizens, supported by relationships between nursery, home and community, able to investigate their world, express their views, participate in decisions and contribute to change.

We will:

- strengthen sustainability across all seven strands of the LEYF Social Justice Pedagogy
- give particular attention to Exploring Nature and the Local Community within the Spiral Curriculum
- create regular opportunities for children to engage with nature and investigate their neighbourhoods
- involve children in decisions about their environments and sustainability practices
- support children's environmental stewardship and action
- create respectful opportunities for families to share their knowledge and explore sustainability with us
- strengthen connections among nurseries, families and local communities.

We will know we are making progress when:

We see evidence of children's voice, participation, environmental stewardship and influence, alongside growing family and community participation in sustainability learning and action.

Intended impact:

Children who see themselves as capable citizens, connected to people, place and planet, with the agency to contribute to a fairer and more sustainable world.

9. Our priorities 2026–2030



Priority 6: Research, Collaborate and Amplify

Our ambition

LEYF will learn from its own practice, contribute to the evidence base, and Amplify learning that can strengthen sustainability across Early Childhood Education and Care.

We will:

- support practice-based sustainability research and inquiry
- use the London Institute of Early Years to connect research, professional learning and practice
- develop the Action for Sustainability Community of Practice further
- collaborate with researchers, universities, sector organisations, businesses and sustainability partners
- create opportunities for teachers, managers and Central Office colleagues to investigate questions arising from practice
- share our learning through publications, professional development, conferences and sector conversations
- use evidence to challenge our assumptions and Adapt our approach.

We will know we are making progress when:

Learning generated through research and practice leads to identifiable changes within LEYF and is Anchored and Amplified within and beyond the organisation.

Intended impact:

A stronger learning organisation that contributes practical evidence and ideas to a more sustainability-informed Early Years sector.

From Priorities to Action

These priorities set our direction to 2030. They are deliberately broad enough to respond to new evidence, opportunities and challenges throughout the life of the strategy.

The strategy sets our direction. Annual plans determine our next steps. Evidence tells us whether to Adapt, Anchor or Amplify them.

Our Climate Action Plans, operating plans and team priorities will translate the strategy into action. The 7As provide our shared pathway for change, and the 4Cs help us learn and change together.

In this way, the strategy remains a living framework rather than a list of commitments awaiting review in 2030.

10. Measuring our impact and looking forward



A strategy only matters if it leads to change. By 2030, we want to demonstrate not only that LEYF has delivered sustainability activities and achieved targets, but also that sustainability-informed thinking has become Anchored in how our organisation works.

Measuring What Matters

We will measure progress across all three pillars of sustainability.

Our **economic measures** will assess organisational resilience, responsible use of resources, social value, and the extent to which our social enterprise model continues to widen opportunity.

Our **social measures** will help us understand inclusion, workforce opportunities, colleagues' sustainability knowledge and agency, children's participation, and engagement with families and communities.

Our **environmental measures** will track progress on carbon, energy, water, waste, food, procurement, biodiversity, climate resilience, and our journey towards Net Zero by 2035.

But numbers tell only part of the story. We will also use research, observation, professional reflection, and the voices of children, families and colleagues to understand **what is changing, why, and whether it is making a difference.**

Learning as We Go

We will not wait until 2030 to assess whether the strategy has worked. Annual operating plans and Climate Action Plans will set out actions, responsibilities and measures. Progress will be reviewed through LEYF's leadership and governance arrangements and reported in our annual Impact Report.

We will use the 7As to Analyse and Appraise progress, and to Adapt when evidence shows that something needs to change. What works will be Anchored, and what others can learn from will be Amplified.

The 4Cs will help ensure that evidence leads to Cognition, Conversation, Coaching and collective learning, rather than to another report.

10. Measuring our impact and looking forward



What Will Success Look Like in 2030?

Success will mean more than reducing carbon, saving water, creating nature-rich environments, or reducing waste, important though these are. We will know we are succeeding when sustainability is evident in:

- our decisions, because the Board, leaders and colleagues consider economic, social and environmental consequences
- our culture, because colleagues can see the connections, question the consequences and act with purpose
- our pedagogy, because LEYF teachers recognise sustainability across all seven strands and bring it to life for children
- our children, because they experience themselves as capable citizens who can investigate, question, participate and influence
- our places, because they support biodiversity, climate resilience, learning and wellbeing
- our relationships, because families and communities are partners in learning and action
- our influence, because what LEYF learns is Anchored within the organisation and Amplified beyond it.

Our Continuing Responsibility

Our first Sustainability Strategy helped us build a sustainable practice. This strategy is about Anchoring sustainability-informed thinking.

Our ambition is to create an organisation in which people understand the connections between economic resilience, social justice and environmental responsibility, and have the knowledge, confidence and agency to act on that understanding. Children are at the heart of this responsibility.

The choices we make today shape their experiences now and the world they will inherit. But children are not merely recipients of that future. They are citizens with ideas, rights, voices and the capacity to help shape it.

Work with us



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

Green LEYF – are you looking at starting your own sustainability journey and would like some guidance?

Working with us – we are alwayslooking at new opportunities to broaden the Green LEYF network– please get in touch

Becoming a sustainable partner – are you a sustainability-focused business or have an Early Years focus?

Sponsorship opportunities – would you like to sponsor one of our upcoming Green LEYF projects or sustainability gardens?

Would you like to join our social network and be a part of our community of practice? Please get in touch and let us know

Are you interested in the Level 4 qualification, CPD or training opportunities? Please let us know your requirements and we will get backto you as soon as possible

Please email green@leyf.org.uk with the corresponding subject heading

Experiences in early childhood literally shape lives and are often the root cause of today's hardest social challenges such as addiction, poor mental health and homelessness.

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.

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