

THANK YOU FOR INSPIRING WESTMINSTER'S





Contents Page

Our Partners and The City Lions Team

04 The Year In Review

Of Creative Collective

Young Producers – Dress Codes at Kensington Palace

North Paddington Canalside Collaborations

Creative Careers Workshops

14 One-off Activities and Free Tickets to Enriching Experiences

6 Holiday Programme

Summer Takeovers

20 Mentoring Programme

22 Work Experience at Westminster

24 Experience of Work Weeks

26 Ways to Get Involved



Introduction

2025 has been an exceptional year for City Lions - from exhibitions at The Showroom Gallery, and catwalk shows at Kensington Palace to codesigned pieces of public art along the Canalside in North Paddington. As Cabinet Member for Climate, Ecology, Culture and Air Quality, I am proud of the energy and commitment our partners bring to this vital programme.

Together, we have provided over 2,100 unique opportunities for young people across Westminster through mentoring, work experience, holiday programmes, and more, helping them to gain skills and confidence in creative and cultural spaces.

At the heart of our work is the belief that culture, creativity, and opportunity must be accessible to all residents, regardless of background. By breaking down barriers, we are opening doors to industries that have often felt out of reach and supporting Westminster's cultural sector to thrive.

By broadening access and equipping young people with the skills, insights, and networks they need, we are helping to nurture the next generation of talent and ensuring that local organisations continue to thrive. None of which would be possible without the support of our partners.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to all our partners, and in particular DreamArts, whose dedication has been essential to our success.

I look forward to continuing this important work together, expanding horizons and helping young people realise their full potential.

Thank You



Councillor Ryan Jude,
Cabinet Member for Climate, Ecology,
Culture and Air Quality



The City Lions Team







Rob Davis



Sisley Hamer



Kiz Ayton-Green



Sydney Frankland



Our Partners

Accenture
Advertising Producers
Association

AEG Presents

Amazon MGM Studios ATG Entertainment Apollo Theatre Arcadis Ltd BAFTA

Baker Street Quarter Channel 4

CBRE UK
Child Graddon Lewis

Architects

Cycle Confident
Disney

Donmar Warehouse

DreamArts
East Architecture

Exhibition Road Group

Fashion Bytes Framestore

Gastronomous

Gorilla Circus

Global Fashion Management

Green House Sports
Handel Hendrix House

Heart of London Business Alliance Historic Royal Palaces
HSBC

Imperial College London

Laird & Good Company

London Transport Museum London Business School Lords Cricket Club

LS Events

Kids in Museums

Masterclass Theatre Royal Haymarket

Montagu Evans

National Gallery

Natural History Museum

Network Rail

North Paddington Youth Club

Oakray

ОММХ

OMNES Education

Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust

Paramount Pictures

Royal Automobile Club

Royal Opera House

Royal Society of Arts Regent's Park

Open Air Theatre Resonate Arts Saatchi Gallery Science Museum
Screen Community

Skydance

Somerset House

Society of Antiquities of London

Society of London Theatre

SPID Theatre

Spondy Lux Press

STEM Ambassadors
St Barts Hospital Heritage

Tate

The Cartoon Museum

The Crown Estate

theCoLab

The Bomb Factory
The Photographers'

Gallery

The Showroom Gallery

Three Mobile
Two Temple Place

Unloc

Victoria & Albert Musuem Westminster Abbey

Westminster Libraries

Westminster Music Library

Winter Wishes
ZSL London Zoo

WSP

City Lions 2025



2137 engagements



76 partners



46

mentoring pairs supported



8

programmes

myself in the future."

City Lions participant

"I would like to thank you for your amazing support with organising and supporting all the events. It's been a very successful experience... our students really enjoyed every single event, developed employability skills and learnt a great deal about the world of work and career planning."

"Thank you City Lions for all the

all provided me with, helping me

pioneer the best opportunities for

support and encouragement you've

Careers Lead, St Augustine's CE High School





exhibitions



110 work experien







406free tickets to cultural

experiences for City Lions

and their friends/family

The Creative Collective



The Creative Collective, established by City Lions and Children's Services, celebrated its fifth year of delivery in 2025. Originally developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Collective champions the untold voices of young people via creativity. Over the course of 10 months, it provides a platform for voices that are all too often unheard, offering young artists a space to use creativity as a powerful tool for self-expression and to share their perspectives, experiences, and opinions.

The Creative Collective continues to respond to the ever-changing world, exploring the issues that matter most to young people.

In 2025, young artists were invited to create artworks inspired by four themes, which were chosen by a public vote:



THE FUTURE



ROOTS & BELONGING



LOVE & UNITY



OUR WORLD

Over 200 young people engaged with the Collective across our open call for submissions and a series of workshops with professional artists. The workshops were facilitated by three artists: Carolina Khouri, Samar F Zia and Alice Odin and were held at St Augustine's, Harris Academy St John's Wood, Westminster City, Westminster Academy, King Solomon Academy and College Park secondary schools. Supporting young people to undergo a creative process to create their own responses to the Collective's themes

All submissions were showcased in the Creative Collective virtual gallery and selected artworks were exhibited at Westminster Reference, Maida Vale and Victoria libraries, as well as Westminster City Hall and The Royal Society of Arts. Over 10,000 residents visited our libraries during the time of our exhibitions. A final exhibition will be hosted at the Royal Albert Hall in December 2025.

To mark the fifth year of the Creative Collective, we partnered with local photographer Alison Jackson to host photography workshops and images will be on display on hoardings at the Ebury Bridge regeneration site in Pimlico for the next five years!



Young Producers

Dress Codes at Kensington Palace

Young people's voices are paramount to our work at City Lions and providing space for young people to take the lead is central to our mission. Over the years, we have worked in partnership with major cultural organisations to develop and deliver youth voice opportunities. These projects give power to young people to curate experiences that are relevant to them, whilst equipping them with essential skills such as teamwork, communication and problem solving.

In 2024, we started an ambitious year-long project in collaboration with Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) at Kensington Palace. HRP wanted to ensure their exhibitions were relevant for young people and for the first time invited a group of 'Young Producers' to co-produce their next international exhibition - Dress Codes, which opened in March 2025.

During the course of 12 months, more than 20 young people from City Lions worked alongside HRP and other industry experts to design the exhibition, highlighting stories they find most interesting and giving personal

"Dress Codes was an amazing opportunity to get hands on with a project of such scale ... I feel more prepared to enter the creative industries with the connections I have made... it was a completely unique experience."

Dress Codes participant

and contemporary responses to the exhibition. The Young Producers decided the 'vibe' they wanted for the physical space, designed fashion outfits, original music compositions, interactive quizzes and more, weaving their perspectives throughout the exhibition to make fashion history relevant to a modern audience.

All these items were on display as part of the exhibition, sitting alongside their historical influences.

These original co-produced items were launched with a fashion show at Kensington Palace, attended by friends, family and industry experts. Young people involved in this opportunity developed skills that will empower them to succeed in the creative industries, whilst being given an international platform in which to showcase their talents.

If you'd like our help to develop a focus group of young people for your programmes or integrate youth voice into your work, please get in touch: citylions@westminster.gov.uk

"This experience has been a wonderful journey, I've learnt so much while doing this."

Dress Codes participant



North Paddington Canalside Collaborations

Collaboration is at the heart of City Lions core values. During 2025, we have worked in partnership with other council teams and The Canal & River Trust to co-design and co-deliver public art projects along the Grand Union Canal. These form part of a wider strategy of works across the North Paddington Canalside spaces from Ladbroke Grove to Little Venice. These improvements aim to increase connections between the canal and the city, improve the quality of the waterfront, activate under-utilised spaces and enhance the biodiversity of the canal environment.

Community engagement is key to these canalside improvements. City Lions partnered with professional artists and local schools including Queen's Park Primary, St Mary Magdelene Primary, and St Marylebone Bridge, to produce co-designed public art projects, including murals on Great Western Road and Queen's Park, as well as a sundial restoration.

Artist Andrew Werdna worked with 15 Year 7 students from Paddington Academy in a series of photography and graffiti co-design workshops to produce his final design for the Great Western Road mural site. Following the workshops, young people were set a hands-on creative challenge: using disposable digital cameras, they explored and documented their surroundings, capturing the details and stories that stood out to them. The resulting photographs have served as a key source of inspiration for the final mural design where they feature on the murals to reflect authentic, local perspectives of the neighbourhood.

As part of these collaborations, 5 young people have had the exclusive opportunity to gained paid work experience co-delivering the Westway Canalside mural – working with professional artists who have co-designed each site to co-deliver the murals, gaining practical experience and creative skills.

During summer 2025, City Lions new Events Leadership Team (ELT) made their own mark on the North Paddington Canalside project with their contributions towards planning the North Paddington Canalside Festival. The event took place throughout September 2025. ELT played a key role in moderating the festival activity grant applications and facilitating their own activity as part of the finale for other young people to enjoy.



"The overall experience of painting the mural was extremely memorable! I felt that I was a part of something while painting. I have learnt that a lot of hard work goes into painting these murals but the dedication makes it worth while."

Paid work experience young person at the Westway Mural

Creative Careers Workshops

Across the school year, we deliver creative careers workshops designed to open up the world of the creative industries to young people. These sessions broaden students' understanding of career possibilities beyond the classroom and help them draw connections between what they learn in school and how it applies in realworld job settings. This year we've opened the doors to the creative industries even further by delivering workshops that showcase dance, theatre, screen and TV, architecture, heritage careers and many more.

Each workshop is designed to break down barriers to creative careers by offering a behind-the-scenes look at how creative organisations operate, highlighting different roles within the sector, and outlining potential routes into these professions. The workshops are hands-on and engaging, featuring interactive activities that allow participants to develop new skills. Young people also get the chance to connect directly with industry professionals - asking questions, hearing real stories, and receiving valuable guidance on how to take their first steps toward a career in the creative field.

In July, nearly 100 young people attended ATG's Get Technical at Moulin Rouge at the Piccadilly Theatre. A jam-packed auditorium was dazzled by the performers before an afternoon of demonstrations and talks focused on technical theatre roles. Professionals from Moulin Rouge took the audience through various job roles - from costume, hair and make-up to stage management, lighting

and sound - giving tips and advice for budding future off-stage workers. It was a truly inspirational afternoon, showcasing a different side of the theatre industry that is often unknown to many young people.

This year also saw our first collaboration with London Business School for an Enterprise Day. Fifty Year 10 students from local schools attended a jam-packed day at the school, hearing from world-class academics on entrepreneurship, leadership and got to grips with the basics of business from LBS alum - including a previous Dragons' Den winner. Following these inspiring talks, the students were challenged to come up with their own business idea – something that would solve a problem faced in their communities - and were guided in an afternoon of business development by current students and staff. The day culminated with students pitching their ideas to a panel of experts, with many of the business ideas being focused on wellbeing, activities for young people and safety. A group of budding entrepreneurs from Westminster City School were crowned victorious!

Additionally, we have delivered numerous other exciting workshops with organisations including BAFTA, Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, Society of Antiquaries, Child Graddon Lewis Architects, WSP, Framestore, Lord's Cricket Ground, FM Conway, Future of Food and The CoLab.

"Thank you for delivering such a fantastic workshop. The students thoroughly enjoyed it – it was engaging, and they had a lot of fun" Teacher, St Marylebone Bridge CE School "Wow, the show itself and the whole event were absolutely fantastic. I don't think I've ever seen a better overall production, and presentation like this before." Teacher who attended Get Technical. // 13

One-off activities and free tickets to enriching experiences

A core mission of City Lions is to lower barriers to cultural experiences and each year we realise this via our one-off activities and free ticket opportunities. In 2025, a significant number of free tickets were delivered in partnership with The Society of London Theatre as part of their Theatre for Every Child campaign – a mission that aligns strongly with City Lions ambitions. As part of this partnership, 397 discounted or free tickets were provided for top-class productions such as My Neighbour Totoro, Hamilton, Evita and The Phantom of the Opera.

We are proud to partner again with Somerset House, ATG Entertainment, The London Palladium, Royal Opera House and Winter Wishes who all provided tickets to iconic cultural activities such as ice skating, West End theatre productions and Winter Wonderland. Across the year, we saw 259 young people take to the ice at Somerset House, 406 attend a West End theatre production and 598 attend Winter Wonderland in Hyde Park.

2025 saw some exciting new collaborations that offered young people a chance to get involved with high-profile cultural opportunities. In January, we worked with New

Public and Nelly Ben Hayoun-Stépanian on Piccadilly: UnPlugged. Forming part of Art of London's Art After Dark Programme, City Lions young people worked with Nelly and ceramist professionals to create out of this world extraterrestrial-inspired pieces that were then displayed at the Cabinet of Curiosities in St James' Market Pavillion - part of the Piccadilly: UnPlugged programme of public art and events.

These opportunities allow young people to participate in enriching cultural experiences that they may not have experienced before, lowering barriers to access, and London's extraordinary cultural offer.

Set, camera, action!

Jack Ryan - film set experience

This year, for the first time, City Lions took five young people to visit a film set.

The film, a new feature-length Jack Ryan instalment starring John Krasinski, was being produced by Amazon MGM Studios in association with Paramount Pictures and Skydance. The young people were given unlimited backstage access to the production and were introduced to every department including VFX, props, costume (and 'break down' which is where they distress and age clothing), make-up and camera. Each member of the crew took the time to speak to the students about their role, how it contributes towards the overall production and answer any questions they had. They were also taken on to the soundstage to see the film being shot, before stepping foot onto the set itself and the frenetic activity of a live production.

On day two, young people were taken on location in Trafalgar Square. Here, they were able to network with a variety of film and TV professionals, learning how they honed their craft and got into the industry and have a go at operating some of the camera and sound equipment. They were even lucky enough to meet the star of the show – John Krasinski – and speak with him about his experience as an actor. With huge thanks to RHD Productions for this once in a life-time experience.



Holiday Programmes

Our Holiday Programmes provide a fantastic opportunity for young people to strengthen their interpersonal skills and gain exclusive insight into the creative industries through engaging, hands-on workshops and experiences.

This year, we delivered eight programmes: three across halfterm breaks, one at both Christmas and Easter, and three during the summer holidays. In total, 119 young people took part in these experiences.

These programmes are partially funded by the Department for Education's Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF). HAF supports families with children eligible for free school meals by ensuring continued access to nutritious food during school holidays. Thanks to this funding, we were able to run our Easter and August programmes across four days, instead of the usual three. Across these programmes, young people were able to express and challenge themselves in drumming workshops, story-telling sessions, photography masterclasses, outdoor team building experiences and zine making.

Throughout the year we've also been fortunate to visit some of London's top cultural institutions, such as the Royal Automobile Club, Kensington Palace, Handle and Hendrix House, The Victoria and Albert Museum, Tate Modern and the Royal Geographical Society.

If you would like to facilitate a workshop, please email citylions@westminster.gov.uk



"(I was surprised by) how quickly everyone became friendly, even though there were many new faces."

Holiday Programme participant

"(I learnt) sharing experiences helps you understand people more and see the world from other perspectives."

Holiday Programme participant



Following attendance at one of our Holiday Programme:

of attendees stated they felt more confident to try new creative activities

86%

of attendees stated that they were now able to see the link between creativity and wellbeing

32%

of attendees would ecommend the City Lions Holiday Programme to their friends

Summer Takeovers

As part of our summer HAF programmes, we worked with local cultural partners to deliver two takeovers at Two Temple Place in collaboration with Masterclass (Theatre Trust) and The Showroom Gallery.

At Two Temple Place, 13 young people worked with theatre professionals from Masterclass Theatre Trust to devise original responses to the unique history of Two Temple Place – a neo-gothic building. Across the four-day programme, these creative reflections were developed via storytelling, puppetry, print making, directing, set and costume design workshops, delivered by professionals. The result was a vibrant showcase performed in front of friends and family on the final day, including an original short film, fashion garments, musical performances and a puppetry show.

Our second summer takeover took place at The Showroom Gallery in Church Street and included a one-day workshop at Yes Make. Across four days, 14 young people got creative with numerous art mediums from photography to line-drawing, 3D modelling and woodwork, to create an exhibition inspired by sustainability and use of collective youth voice. Working with re-purposed materials, the group curated an exhibition, opening the doors of the gallery to their friends, family and public. Each member showcased their inspiring artwork, accompanied by a DJ from local organisation Habibi Nation.









Following attending a Summer Takeover...

80%

of attendees said that they were now able to communicate better with others

80%

of attendees said that they now feel able to work better in a team environment

"It was fun to work with new materials."

"My favourite session was the woodwork shop, (I could) step out of my comfort zone."

"(I enjoyed) being able to create a really fun performance for the guests to see."

Summer Takeover participants

Mentoring **Programme**

2025 marked our fifth year delivering our successful Mentoring Programme. Launched in 2020, the programme was created in response to the evolving needs of young people in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic - a time when many missed out on crucial moments of personal, academic, and social development. Designed for 14 to 16-year-olds, the programme helps young people develop self-belief, transferable skills, and explore future pathways with the support of a dedicated mentor.

Running from December 2024 to June 2025, we supported 46 mentor-mentee pairs who worked closely over a six-month period to help young people boost their self-confidence, unlock their creativity, and prepare for the future.

The programme supports mentors through onboarding and training sessions, detailed handbooks and resource materials, and a variety of shared experiences, including group meet-ups. This year these included a clay workshop at Two Temple Place, water colour session at The Saatchi Gallery and an exhibition visit at Kensington Palace. The programme wrapped up in June with a celebration event, where participants were recognised by The Right Worshipful Lord Mayor of Westminster and enjoyed a retro games themed evening of fun and connection.

This year's mentors brought a wide range of expertise from across the creative industries, including fashion, theatre, tech, music, events, architecture, museums and heritage

and visual arts. Our mentees included young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those identified by educators as being in need of support, encouragement, and new opportunities.

Several mentees also had the chance to gain hands-on experience by joining their mentors at high-profile work placements, including Child Graddon Lewis Architects, Laird and Good Productions, Kings College London, and

We're immensely grateful to all our mentors for their time, passion and commitment to both City Lions and the young people we support.

Interested in inspiring the next generation? Get in touch about mentoring opportunities: citylions@westminster.gov.uk

many others.

"I really enjoyed the programme I feel like I got to learn so much... do things I didn't think I was capable of. I got to build my confidence and learn professional skills which will become useful for the future. I feel more confident and take more pride in my work."

100%

of mentees rated their experience on the programme as excellent or good

100%

of mentees said their confidence had improved as a result of the programme

90%

of mentors would recommend mentoring with City Lions to others



"I have had someone to talk to who won't judge me and is there to help me feel confidence in the choices and things I do in my life."

"The best thing about being a mentor has been supporting a young person, seeing them grow in confidence and helping them to understand more about working in the sector. It has been a brilliant experience for me."

TOP 5...

areas in which mentee's felt their mentor supported them to develop in:



Careers support







Setting goals



4 Creative thinking



5 Communication

Work Experience at Westminster

The Work Experience at Westminster (WEAW) framework was developed in response to a commitment in the Fairer Westminster Strategy 2022-26 and has become integral to fulfilling the council's work experience offer.

The framework was designed to create a consistent approach to the council's work experience offer, creating a straightforward and transparent process for delivering a consistent high quality and meaningful experience, while ensuring that Westminster's young people are placed front and centre as the intended beneficiaries.

However, the demand for such placements has only continued to rise and so this year, City Lions in collaboration with partners and contractors, delivered a range of external opportunities which showcased their specific sectors and the multitude of careers that exist therein.

Thanks to the outstanding support from both our partner organisations and numerous teams across the council, a total of 110 work experience placements were provided to young people between September 2023 and August 2024, most of which were directly arranged on behalf of Westminster schools.

The post-placement evaluation completed by students who undertook their placements within the council revealed that:

- 97% felt that they had a better understanding of what local government does
- 95% felt their self-confidence has increased
- 94% felt their independence has increased
- 95% felt they had a better understanding of the world of work and the associated expectation
- 90% felt work experience helped improve their transferable skills.

"Overall amazing experience that I will truly cherish as it taught me a lot, especially working as a team in a professional work environment."

Work experience student with the Westminster
Registration Service

Students scored their placement on average of

4.5/5

We would like to give a special thanks to Masterclass, Montagu Evans, the British Fashion Council, CBRE, Arcadis, East Architecture, Apollo Theatre, Network Rail, Gorilla Circus and Cycle Confident for all kindly providing placements.

"Thank you so much for having me, I've had a real eye-opening experience in terms of my future career options."

Work experience student with the Digital and Innovation team

"Honestly, it was such a delight. Please get in contact if there are ANY opportunities to work with Westminster."

Work experience student with the Planning Policy / Town Planning and Planning Enforcement teams

We hope to continue expanding our work experience offer, as we strongly believe in the positive impact that meaningful placements can have on a young person's life.

In addition, any organisation looking to provide a work experience opportunity can also benefit in a variety of ways. These include:

- developing positive links with the local community
- provide an opportunity for staff to develop leadership and coaching skills
- raising awareness of career opportunities within a sector
- empowering the next generation to achieve a successful transition from school to the world of work
- raising the profile of an individual to thrive professionally
- a new and unique perspective and insight on your work and profession.

If you would like to get involved or to simply learn more about our work experience offer, please email: citylions@westminster.gov.uk



"I genuinely loved this experience and wish it was two weeks long."

Work experience student with the Public Realm team

"It was a splendid week, full of learning and discovering of new roles."

Work experience student with the Procurement team

Experience of Work Weeks

A core component of City Lions' careers support for local schools is our Experience of Work Insight Weeks. In 2025, we worked closely with our partners to deliver a series of tailored insight weeks and days for Year 10 students across Westminster.

Securing meaningful work experience can be a major hurdle for both schools and young people. With the rise of hybrid working and limited access to professional networks, many students miss out on this crucial stage of their development Recognising this challenge, we launched our insight days and weeks in 2021 to provide an accessible, impactful alternative to traditional placements.

These sessions are designed to reduce the barriers that can prevent employers from offering work experience, while still providing students with a rich introduction to the workplace. Through these experiences, young people gain exposure to a wide range of industries, explore potential career paths, and develop the essential skills needed to thrive in the world of work.

"They thrived on the opportunity to be hands on and actually work in real jobs, from being in the booking office to front of house roles selling the programmes and refreshments. The students were buzzing and super positive about the day and how much they learnt."

Teacher from St Augustine's CE High School



"It's absolutely

brilliant. I still have

to pinch myself that

we have access to

all these wonderful

opportunities and

in a way that really

St Marylebone School

and fresh."

Teacher.

how you curate them

does keep them alive

fantastic employers to deliver 20 unique workshops. These included workplace visits and in-school sessions across a diverse mix of sectors - ranging from theatre and conservation to photography, hospitality, technology, production, and event management.

More than 200 students took part, working alongside and learning from industry leaders at organisations such as Apollo Theatre, Lord's Cricket Ground, Royal Automobile Club, WSP, Three Mobile ZSL London Zoo, Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, Haymarket, AEG British Summer Time, Laird & Good Productions, OMMX architects and The Showroom Gallery.

"I was inspired by the photographers and designers in the production shoot, opening my eyes to a new sector of careers, I would love to do something within design and fashion now that I have experienced it."

Experience of work week participant

After attending our experience of work week:

81%

of participants said that they now have a better understanding of the world of work and associated expectations

83%

of participants said that they now have knowledge of routes into different career paths

74%

of participants felt that the experience of work days have helped improve their transferable skills



TOP 5....

skills participants felt they used /

developed during the weeks were:

Communication



Creative Thinking





Problem Solving



Researching



Teamwork



"(this was an) amazing opportunity to learn new skills which help you benefit in life."

Experience of work week participant



Ways to Get Involved Next Year

City Lions will be offering numerous opportunities for partner involvement and we would love to work with you again in 2026.

There are a number of ways your organisation can make a difference to the lives of Westminster's young people. The City Lions team can help you create, tailor and promote your programmes and support you through the whole process, whether you want to:



MENTOR A
YOUNG PERSON



PROVIDE A WORK
EXPERIENCE PLACEMENT



HOST A GUEST SPEAKER SESSION OR INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP



GIVE FREE ACCESS
TO ACTIVITIES,
EXHIBITIONS OR EVENTS



OFFER A DAY SHADOWING YOUR TEAM



SPONSOR ONE OF OUR ACTIVITIES OR PROGRAMMES

Contact us to help Westminster's young people discover their future: citylions@westminster.gov.uk





citylions@westminster.gov.uk

