



Hackney Playbus

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

CHARITY NUMBER 1163792



“What can I say about the Playbus? I just think that the people that work there are amazing. Always I have felt welcomed. They give me many advise about my child’ s development and they teach me some skills to have more confidence on my parenting life. They are always happy to help and chat with me when I have some problem to resolve. I have met many lovely moms there that I love to chat with. My son love to go there, when we arrive to the Playbus he is the most happy baby in the world.”

HACKNEY PLAYBUS

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Thanks to the hard work, creativity and commitment of our staff and volunteers, Hackney Playbus continued to make a real impact this year. We made strong progress across many areas, while maintaining a steady programme of service delivery — despite the challenges of weather, logistics, and the occasional mechanical hiccup!

We were delighted to welcome two new team members: Lot, who joined our Early Years team, and Dee, covering the Volunteer Programme Coordinator role during maternity leave — already both invaluable to our service delivery. Our Volunteer Programme continues to grow, with more parents getting involved and supporting our work.

At the same time, the needs facing families — from social isolation to housing insecurity and financial hardship — continue to grow. Families increasingly look

to Hackney Playbus not only for support from our team, but for the sense of community they find at our sessions.

Despite the challenges, families frequently remind us of the joy and value they find in Playbus sessions. Professional partners also tell us that working with Playbus is a vital way to reach families who might otherwise miss out on services. This year, we've made real progress in partnership working, helping bring services directly to families as you'll read throughout this report.

Our financial position strengthened this year too, marking the beginning of a stronger focus on securing multi-year grants. Funding from Reaching Communities and City Bridge Foundation has given us the stability to fund core costs and continue delivering our services in line with our strategic aims.

Chair's Report

We were also honoured to be named Charity of the Year by Latham & Watkins LLP, receiving a substantial donation alongside generous support from many other donors. A particular highlight was installing ten solar panels on the Playbus roof, funded by Hackney's Community Energy Fund — an exciting step towards sustainability.

We continue to learn and grow as an organisation. A whole-team workshop at the start of the year focused on embedding our core values and deepening our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion — work that will continue into 2025–26.

Lastly, we will be saying goodbye this year to our amazing long serving Co-Director of Strategy and Finance, Claire Kelly. Claire has been with the Playbus for 18 years and has worked tirelessly to ensure that the



Playbus and its staff and volunteers can continue to enjoy delivering much needed services to families in Hackney and beyond. There have been many changes over the 18 years, but Claire has led the organisation through good times and bad. We are all immensely grateful for her time with us and hope she leaves knowing what an amazing job she has done for the families of Hackney.

Karen Davey
Chair of Trustees



Our Mission

Hackney Playbus believes that all children under five living in East London should share the same opportunities to grow, thrive, and reach their potential.

Our mission is to provide play, learning, and support to socially excluded families in East London, to encourage children's early years development, and to strengthen families and communities.

We do this by:

- improving access to play and learning experiences for children in their early years
- connecting families to support services
- providing a welcoming and relaxed setting to bring families together in their local community
- supporting parents and carers to develop their parenting knowledge, confidence and skills

Playbus & Groups Programme

Hackney Playbus provides a wide range of play and learning opportunities for babies and young children, both at the Playbus and at our baby and toddler playgroups at St Peter's Crypt. Our sessions create a welcoming and relaxed environment where parents and carers can enjoy quality playtime with their children, learn about helpful services, and connect with a supportive community that shares in both the joys and challenges of early parenthood.

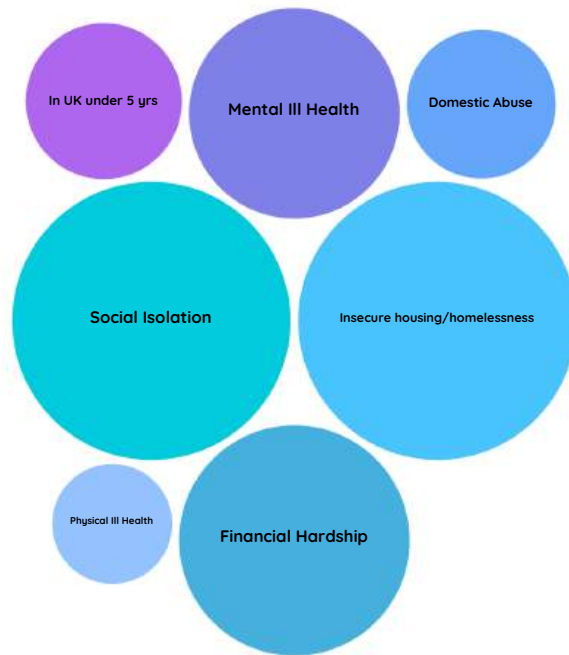
This year we ran a programme of 5 weekly Playbus sessions across Hackney, bringing our mobile service to 8 different locations. We also held weekly playgroups at St Peter's Crypt during term time, where could families enjoy a warm lunch generously provided by Shoreditch Trust and Humdinger's Cafe - and served by our amazing Hackney Playbus volunteers!



Children under 5	631
Families	500
Playbus Sessions	235
Playgroups	82

Our Outreach and Referrals Programme is designed to connect with families who experience the greatest barriers to accessing early years support. We take a proactive, hands-on approach—working in partnership with Playbus families to carry out direct community outreach where we can, while collaborating with other services and groups to make sure that families who need our support are able to access it.

We choose the locations of our regular Playbus sessions based on where we can have the greatest impact, and focus our outreach in nearby neighbourhoods to make sure local families know about the Playbus and feel confident to attend. Playbus families played an important role in this kind of community outreach this year, spreading the word in their hostel accommodation and on local estates to help us reach more families and strengthen our presence in the community.



Circumstances faced by families referred to Hackney Playbus 2024-25

Outreach & Referrals Programme

We also worked closely with a range of groups and services who support families across Hackney, strengthening ties with grassroots organisations like Ezer Leyoldos Jewish family support service and Kingsmead Somali Women’s Group, as well as with services providing material support, such as Hackney Foodbank and Hackney Baby and Children’s Bank. These partnerships helped us raise awareness of our project, while developing referral

pathways for families who could benefit from more focused support to attend Playbus sessions.

Year	Referrals	Referral Partners
2024-25	46	13
2023-24	26	12



57%

Of families came to Hackney Playbus through our Outreach and Referrals Programme

Health & Wellbeing

Funding from Healthier Hackney and Kings Park Moving Together helped us celebrate and strengthen the many ways Hackney Playbus makes it easier for families to enjoy activities that support their health and wellbeing.

Throughout the year, we created space for families to enjoy active play together. Children bounced on trampolines, crawled through tunnels, zoomed around on play vehicles, practised tummy time, chased giant bubbles - and much more!

These fun, engaging experiences supported children's physical development and encouraged families to come out and take part—often led by enthusiastic little ones eager for their next visit!



“I hardly ever go anywhere with the two little ones, but on Thursdays, we take as much time as we need to walk to the Playbus.”

93%

Of children take part in MORE physical activities than before because of Hackney Playbus

Many families also joined thanks to the support of our Outreach and Referrals Programme, which helped new parents feel informed, welcomed, and confident to take part.

We shared easy, low-cost ways to be active beyond our project—through songs, games and playful routines—and signposted families to free local activities like dance classes, cycling projects, and adventure playgrounds.

To support wider wellbeing, we partnered with health visitors, occupational therapists, and HENRY (Healthy Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young) to offer advice around children’s development, nutrition and physical health. Children also enjoyed

helping to prepare healthy snacks at our sessions, giving them a chance to explore new foods and build a positive relationship with healthy eating in a fun, hands-on way.

By bringing families together in the community, we created space for connection and shared learning. Parents swapped tips, encouraged each other to try new things, and often made plans to meet up outside of sessions - to visit the park, go swimming, or attend other groups together. The friendships formed through Hackney Playbus helped families feel more confident and supported, opening the door to even more opportunities for health, wellbeing and connection.

98%

Of parents have made new friendships with other parents and carers through Hackney Playbus



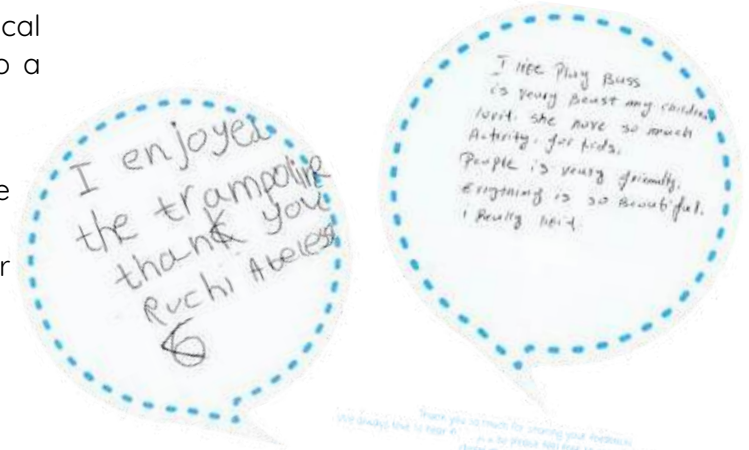


Summer Programme

Our summer programme gave families a fun way to spend time together during the summer months. We hosted summer parties at three of our regular Playbus locations, planned in collaboration with families who shared their ideas and helped shape each event. We enjoyed face painting, music, shared food, and making smoothies with our pedal-powered blender. Each celebration had its own atmosphere and activities, reflecting the wishes of local families—from an inflatable play park to a big bubble show!

Thanks to funding from Awards for All, we were able to make these events extra special, creating memorable moments for families to enjoy close to home.

Throughout the summer holidays, we continued to run weekly sessions at all five of our regular Playbus sites. With support from Universal Board Games, we added activities for older siblings, making the sessions welcoming for the whole family. We also shared information about free local events and activities, helping families stay connected, and supported throughout the summer.



“Playbus being open in the holidays is the best thing that can happen. The bus and its location is practical and easy to go to. The fact that it's free and offers so much is inspiring as the children have so much to do!”

Temporary Accommodation

We work closely with families living in temporary accommodation and asylum hotels, carrying out regular, proactive outreach to ensure families feel welcome and included at all our sessions.

Thanks to funding from the Hackney Marshes Neighbourhood Leadership Group and Kings Park Moving Together, this year we were also able to deliver a project especially for families living in temporary accommodation by running Playbus sessions within the grounds of a homeless hostel in Lower Clapton.

Families in temporary accommodation are subjected to challenges that can seriously affect their health and wellbeing—overcrowded rooms, no safe space for children to play, shared facilities, strict no-visitor rules, and limited access to services or community support.



“Teaming up with the Playbus absolutely helps us reach families we wouldn't have otherwise. It's really important that we have more of a presence in these community spaces as it takes away that power imbalance that can sometimes happen in more clinical, healthcare settings.”
Specialist Speech and Language Therapist

These conditions make it harder for children to thrive and for parents to access the help they need when they need it.

Bringing the Playbus to the hostel created an accessible, welcoming space where families could come together to play, connect, and access support on their doorstep. Children took part in fun, engaging activities that supported their learning and development, while parents had time to talk, share experiences, and build confidence in their parenting skills.

To make support more accessible, we partnered with a range of health professionals and local services, who came aboard to offer advice in the friendly and informal setting of the Playbus.

“I really enjoyed the health visitor, they really gave me great advice and relieved me of my concerns with my child, especially as I can't get through to my own health visitor.”

Support Services Onboard

- Specialist Health Visitor (Homelessness and Vulnerably Housed)
- Hackney Here to Help - for support with financial hardship
- HENRY (Healthy Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young)
- Specialist Speech and Language Therapist (Early Years)
- Children's Occupational Therapist

Many families received direct advice and referrals they might otherwise have struggled to access.

Some families have since gone on to attend our regular programme of Playbus sessions—creating a longer-term link to play, support, and community.

95%

Of parents and carers feel they know more about how to support their child's needs

Linking to Services

We continued to strengthen our role in connecting families with support—through signposting, partnership working, and by bringing services directly onto our sessions.

We've built a well-established programme of visiting health professionals over the years, with regular visits from health visitors, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists now a routine part of our offer.

These visits make early support more accessible and help families receive specialist advice in a trusted, familiar setting.

88%

Find out about helpful support services through Hackney Playbus



“I really enjoyed the speech and language therapist, she was really understanding of all my questions and answered me well. She also led me in the direction of getting a referral for my child which was a relief.”

Building on this strong foundation, we focused this year on expanding access to support for families experiencing financial hardship—developing similar pathways to help with housing, benefits, debt, and energy advice.

A key part of our work has been developing community-based models that remove barriers to support. Through our ongoing partnership with Shoreditch Trust, families can access advice and assistance alongside our playgroups at St Peter’s Crypt, while our continued advocacy for families in temporary accommodation contributed to the launch of a new advice drop-in at The Edge, developed in collaboration with Hackney’s Systems Convenor for Families in Temporary

Accommodation. Running alongside our Playbus session at Rowley Gardens, the drop-in at The Edge brings together housing and benefits advice, Family and Children’s Hub practitioners, and health services—making it easier for families to access help within their own community.

We see these projects as powerful examples of cross-sector collaboration, with voluntary and statutory services working together to support some of Hackney’s most marginalised families. By continuing to support initiatives like this, we hope to see systems improve so that more families can easily access the help they need early, and on their own terms.



74%

Of parents have spoken to a visiting professional who could help them during a Hackney Playbus session

It's been a fantastic year for the Hackney Playbus volunteering programme! We've welcomed new faces and continued to enjoy the support of our long-term volunteers. Together, they bring incredible energy and care to every part of our work –whether on sessions or behind the scenes.

A big development this year has been taking on the coordination and delivery of the community lunch at St Peter's Crypt. A hearty meal is generously provided through our partnership with Shoreditch Trust and Humdinger's Café, while Hackney Playbus volunteers manage the rest: setting up the space, preparing extra sides, serving lunch - and tackling a mountain of washing up! It's a busy service each week, and we're incredibly grateful to our volunteering team at St Peter's Crypt for the energy and effort they put in to make it all possible!

Volunteers make a big difference in our play sessions too. By getting involved in activities and offering one-to-one support when needed, they allow staff more time to connect with parents and offer support. As sessions get busier, their help has been more valuable than ever.

It's been particularly lovely to welcome more Playbus parents onto the volunteering team this year. They bring with them fresh ideas, language skills, and a wealth of knowledge about what families need and value—helping us to deepen our connection with the families we support in the community.

Volunteers

19

We've had some lovely moments to recognise our volunteers this year, including a special end of year event made possible by a generous donation from a member of the Haberdashers' Company.

It was a wonderful evening that brought everyone together to show our appreciation for all the time, care, and energy Hackney Playbus volunteers give to their community. The Deputy Mayor of Hackney joined us to present each volunteer with a token of thanks, followed by a fantastic meal and much merriment!

We're so grateful and proud of everything our volunteers have brought to the programme—taking on new roles, building confidence, and becoming an integral part of the Playbus team. We can't wait to carry this momentum into the year ahead!



“It feels good to be a part of my local community and to be able to give back.”

“Volunteering with Hackney Playbus has helped to build my confidence and social skills.”



Grants 2024-25

London Borough of Hackney -
Community Infrastructure Grant
London Borough of Hackney -
Healthier Hackney Grants
BBC Children in Need
Reaching Communities (The
National Lottery)
City Bridge Foundation
The Haberdashers' Company
The Clothworkers' Foundation
National Lottery Awards for All
England
Garfield Weston Foundation
Kings Park Moving Together (Sport
England)
Hackney Parochial Charities
DWP Household Support Fund
SunBabies Nursery Trust
South Hackney Parochial Charities
West Hackney Parochial Charities

Financial Summary

ACCOUNTS 2023-24

The accounts presented in this annual report are from the previous financial year 2023-24. They show increased income from all sources, more than compensating for losses in the previous year. This was the year that we started to really focus on multi-year grants, reinvest in infrastructure, rebuild our team and build our resilience for future years.

GRANTS INCOME 2024-25

Once again our delivery programme was sustained via a wide range of grants, 40% of which supported our core costs, 24,000 (7.5%) supported key requirements such as IT, the cost of installing solar panels onto the Playbus and DWP Tesco vouchers for households facing food poverty. 77% fell into the multi-year category. Grant income was up 6.5% from the previous year, with much of the funding for the subsequent year in place before the year end.

EVENTS INCOME 2024-25

Bookings income fell by 11% as we focused on our core delivery programme including delivering summer sessions with our partners Universal Board Games, thanks to a grant from Awards for All.

DONATIONS INCOME 2024-25

Yet another successful Hackney Half Marathon brought in £10,200 before costs. We are deeply grateful for substantial donations from the Ennismore Foundation, Bellway Homes, Dentons LLP, Weil Gotshal & Manges LLP, Wasserman Music Ltd., Natalia Grosvenor the Duchess of Westminster, Simon Cartmell of Route2Advisors, Jessica Bennett who donated her leaving fund to Hackney Playbus, former trustee Matt and volunteer Karim who raised match funding from the



companies that they work for, and to Latham & Watkins LLP who voted us as their Charity of the Year.

We continue to be supported by many loyal donors for whom we want to extend a massive thank you! Donations income was up by a massive 69% from the previous year!

INCOMING RESOURCES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Donations	36060		36060
Grants	41106	232611	273717
Charitable Activities	14038		14038
Bank Interest	929		929
Other Income	0		0
			324744

EXPENDED RESOURCES

Raising Funds	1011	11150	12161
Charitable Activities	8775	247706	256481
Depreciation	4266		4266
			272908

BALANCE SHEET as at 31st March 2024

Fixed assets:	
Tangible assets	38392
Current assets:	
Debtors	0
Cash at bank and in hand	102530
Creditors:	(4497)
Net current assets	98033
Total assets less current liabi	136425
Net assets	136425
The funds of the charity	
Restricted income funds	35628
Unrestricted income funds	100797
Total funds	136425

Hackney Playbus Team

Staff

Alexandra Drăgan
Amjid Hussain
Anja Nyberg
Ann Middleton
Claire Kelly
Claire Lindsay
Dan Cockrill
Devicia Desbonnes
Feygl Singer Hobbs

Georgina Robertson-Signor
Jaime Dowling
Jayne Garner
Jennifer Gregory
Kelda Holmes
Lizzy Idowu
Lot Couldrick
Misba Patel
Sabana Siddique
Sara Blakemore
Simona Attardi

Volunteers

Andres Bravo
Caroline Hughes Christiana
Adebayo Olanrewaju Deborah
Knight Fredrecia Mitchell Hanna
Andemichal Jermaine D'Arcy
Juliana Faleye Karim Chedid
Kulthoom Summer Lisa
Clements Mortiz Herle Ray
Khan Robert Jones Valeria
Evans Wegatha Kibrom Zarah
Omerji Zeynep Aultun

Trustees

Annabelle Burns
Cllr. Anntoinette Bramble
Eva Brooks
Julie Anisiobi
Julie Le bon
Karen Davey
Mia Johnson Hall
Rachel Pullen
Stuart Hunt
Tim Wooldridge
Yolanda Browne

**With thanks to the
incredible team of
people whose passion,
kindness, creativity, and
commitment make this
work possible!**



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