

# 2022

TOY LIBRARY

## ANNUAL REPORT

WHERE IMAGINATION  
THRIVES

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# Chair's Report

I will start with saying a big Happy Birthday to the Toy Library as we celebrate 50 years of the service in Lewisham.

We have been very thankful that as we have entered our 50th year of operation that we have had no further national lockdowns to contend with and have largely been able to operate without any significant restrictions.

Our focus this year has been on recovering, recruiting (more on that later) and reconnecting with our members and the community

## Trustees & Volunteers

We have been very lucky to welcome Jill to our trustee board since last year's AGM and are looking forward to voting in Lizzie at the forthcoming AGM to join us also.

This year we have said goodbye to trustees Cait and Gita.

Cait and Gita were both voted in as trustees in the 2020 AGM and we thank them for their time with us. In particular for all of Cait's hard work on our business plan and for assisting myself with renewing our lease in the past 12 months.

Our librarian report will talk about our volunteers in more detail however it is important to note that volunteers are vital to the running of the Toy Library and assist our librarians in the day to day running of the shop, our volunteer numbers have not recovered from lockdown so we continue to be always on the lookout for anyone interested in joining as a volunteer.

For anyone interested in knowing more about volunteering or becoming a trustee of the toy library please do get in touch and we would be very happy to welcome you to the team.

## Librarian(s)

Magdalena remains the cornerstone of the Toy Library and continues to do an outstanding job as our Toy Librarian. Without her dedication we would not be able to run the service that we do.

We must also acknowledge the various changes and challenges she has had to take on board in her role over the past few years. In particular the immense pressure she has been under having to operate most of the time in isolation as we have returned to normal opening hours without or previous levels of volunteers.

We made it a focus to look at a trial recruitment of an additional Librarian this year to both ease the pressure on Magdalena and to see whether with another member of the team we could explore how to reach more members through community links and longer term through outreach projects.

As a result, we are delighted to welcome Jemma into our Librarian team. Jemma comes from an early childhood background and brings with her a range of skills in play and early years development and will be an excellent addition to the team.

We have initially secured Jemma for a 12 month period and will be reviewing the role and how we might fund this longer term over that period.

## IT & Marketing

You have hopefully noticed by now that we have launched our new logo and website. This was launched on the weekend of the 16th of July when we also took the Toy Library on a trip to Lewisham People's Day (our first outreach activity in over 3 years).

We are thrilled with the logo and rebrand which was created for us by Helen Holden, we feel it has really captured the essence of the library and is a step in the right direction as we try to grow our service to suit our growing membership base.

I would also like to take the opportunity to say a big thank you to Sara from our trustee board who has been both coordinating the rebranding and implementation of the new logo along with redesigning our website which is also looking fantastic and much more user friendly.

## Premises

Our hope was to move to another unit within Lewisham Shopping Centre this year as we are definitely outgrowing our current space.

This has unfortunately not been possible although it remains in the pipeline and we still have this for a goal for the future.

With Jemma joining our team, we will be looking at what else we can be doing in the current premises or potentially in the community. Our stall and toy sale at Lewisham People's Day was a success and we are keen to bring back both the toy sales and explore more ideas about how we can connect with our local community.

## Future Projects.

For the year ahead we are focussing on:

- Making use of our additional librarian role - we would ideally like to be able to keep 2 librarians in post so we need to look at how we fund this longer term and how we can develop and grow as a service with 2 librarians at the helm.
- Continuing to work towards a move to new premises. This is still in our sight however there is some work to be done on how we do this and how we fund it. '

We reach this AGM feeling more hopeful about the future and remain committed to running the service as best as we can for our members, our community and our team.

## Thanks

And of course we cannot forget to say a big thank you to - YOU, our members!

You continue to support us, celebrate us and motivate us to keep the library running.

Your generosity in donations of toys and money and your kind comments continue to fuel us and validate the work we are doing behind the scenes. We appreciate each and every one of you!

Please keep visiting, borrowing, sharing and promoting us to your friends and family!

Justine Vella - **Chair of Board of Trustees.**

# Librarian's Report

## Members

The 2021/2022 financial year started off strong and carried on with an average of approximately 40 new members every month.

We saw a big increase in new subscribers in Autumn 2021 as well as very steady numbers of membership renewals.

We currently have 611 active subscribers and over 1200 contacts.

We decided to keep the appointment system in place even though all of the other COVID measures have been removed.

This was dictated primarily by lack of volunteers.

## Volunteers

We were very fortunate to have Martin returning to the library to do his Wednesday shift and covering for the librarian during their annual leave.

We've noticed an increase in the number of members using their corporate volunteering days, to come and help run the library - thank you!

This Autumn will be saying goodbye to our wonderful volunteer Ashleigh, who started volunteering with us at the age of 14 as a Duke Of Edinburgh student and decided to carry on with us for 4 years after completing her work experience.

We wish Ashleigh all the best for the future and we will never be able to thank her enough for all the years of volunteering.

## Stock

We are currently nearing the 4000 toys mark and keeping a close eye on our stock levels as we are starting to struggle with the space.

We've been very lucky to have a huge amount of donations that allow us to refresh our stock regularly and remove tired looking items.

These are now being offered to our members free of charge in "old stock clearance box" to reduce further waste.

The library also received a selection of soft play items that are now available as a party hire and

proving itself very popular amongst younger members.

## Overview

This has been a very busy year for the library and it made us realise how heavily we rely on volunteers.

There have been a few unscheduled closures due to COVID and annual leave but it had not impacted our services and our members proved themselves to be very understanding of the circumstances.

I am pleased to see that the library is, once again, becoming a social hub for local parents and a buzzing, happy place we knew from before the pandemic.

We are very grateful to all of our volunteers and members for continued support and trust.

# Treasurer's Report

This financial year the Lewisham Toy Library has continued to feel the effects of the COVID-19 virus, albeit less so than the last year. We have started to see the return of prior members whose subscriptions had lapsed the previous year, as well as new members joining us for the first time which is a wonderful return. We have seen a drop in income from the previous year as we only received a small covid grant in this period, compared to substantial grants from Lewisham Council last year.

## Income

In the year to 31 March 2021, most of the Toy Library's income was from COVID- 19 related grants and the library was closed for a significant portion of the year resulting in dramatically reduced membership income. In this financial year, the library has slowly been returning to full capacity. As such, membership income has increased to £19,014, from £5,731 last year. This is also an increase on the year to 31 March 2020 which was the last period largely untouched by the pandemic. This reflects the support of our members and the work of our Toy Librarian in making the library a welcoming and safe place as we moved into the "new normal". In addition, we saw a return of the Party Hire, Toy sales and Shopmobility income streams as we were able to offer these services again to the public. Toy sales represents an ad hoc income from sales of surplus toys in the library as and when they need to be cleared, rather than any specific events as have been held in past years.

## Costs

Costs have been fairly consistent from last year, which is not unsurprising as a good deal of our costs are largely fixed rather than dependent on number of operations with a couple of exceptions:

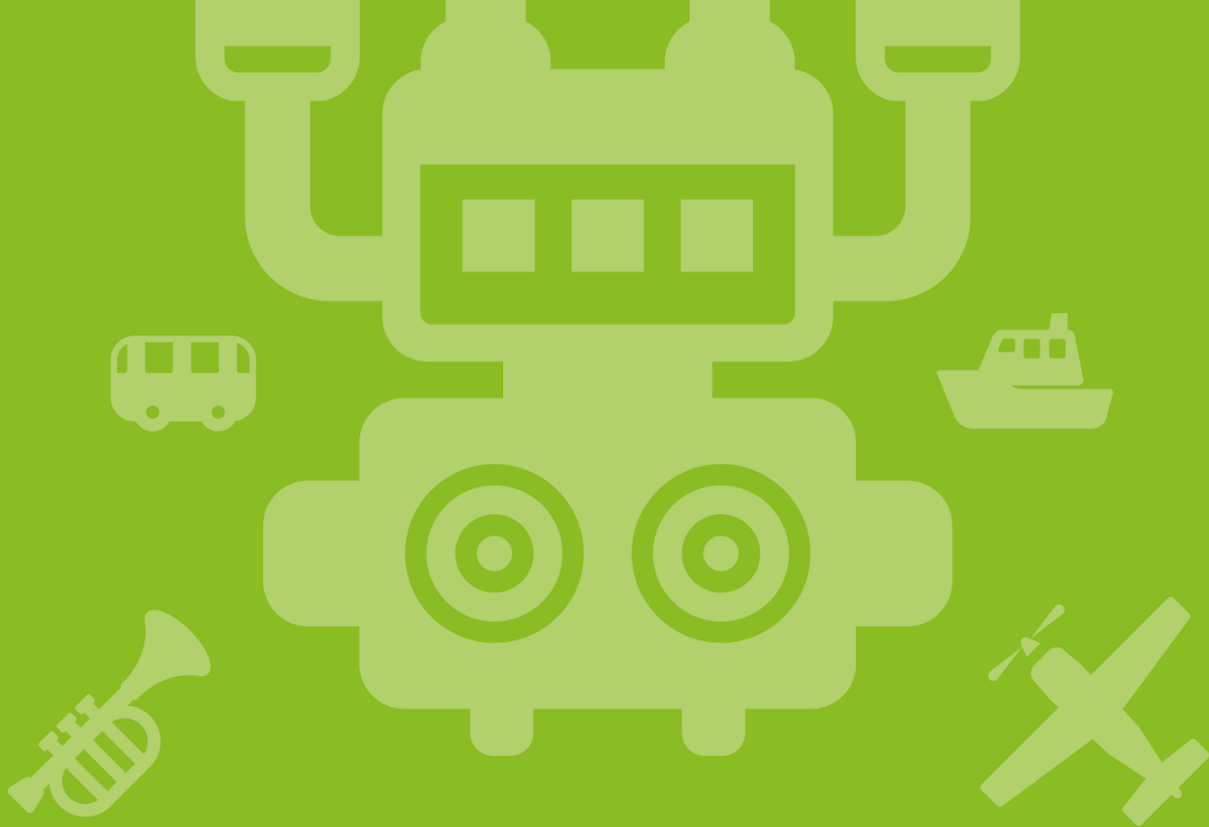
- Electricity was lower in the last year due to being closed for part of the year
- Business rates were nearly £7000 higher than in the previous year due to communication from the Borough being sent to the Library when we were closed in the Pandemic. This resulted in being billed in error. This was resolved and refunded in the following financial year.
- Advertising costs had been incurred as a one off expense in the year to 31 March 2021 for the carefully planned rebrand activity. There was no additional expense incurred in this financial year.

Our largest expense is our staff costs as always, which represents the salary of our Toy Librarian. This has remained consistent as hours have not changed in the period.

## **Reserves**

Reserves are healthy at the end of the year at nearly £74, 000. This is more than sufficient to cover 3 months running costs as per our reserves policy. As such, next year we will look to use part of these funds to cover the trial of the additional librarian on a fixed term basis. Such a position will be unsustainable by current income levels, so the post would have to generate enough additional funds for the library to become viable in the longer term. There is also the potential to use some of the reserves for the logistical costs that would be incurred if we were to move the Library to a bigger premises.





# WHERE IMAGINATION THRIVES



Lewisham Shopping Centre



Tues, Wed, Friday, Saturday



10am to 3pm



0208 297 2735



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