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Chair of the Board

- Voluntary (unpaid)
- Remote (although ideally able to visit Lewisham Toy Library in person at least once a month)
- 1-4 hours per week

Who we are

Since we began in 1972, our purpose at Lewisham Toy Library has been to inspire children through play, because when children play, they thrive. At our inclusive Toy Library, we support and nurture the development and education of children across the community. Membership is available to all families, childminders, carers and non-profit groups in and around Lewisham. We provide a significantly reduced cost membership for those on income support, as we believe every child should have access.

Over the years, our model has shifted significantly from providing outreach in church halls to our current financially sustainable model, based in a dedicated retail unit at the heart of the borough, Lewisham Shopping Centre so that we are easily accessible to as many families as possible.

We are run by a Board of Trustees which at present, comprises 7 members who meet on a monthly basis to ensure the smooth running of the library. We have 2 paid members of staff who are our Toy Librarians who oversee the premises and day to day running of the library along with engaging with and serving our members, and supporting our dedicated volunteers.

Who we are looking for

We are seeking a new Chair, who will help us to drive forward with our ambitions with the Toy Library to reach even more families across Lewisham. We are currently located in a unit in Lewisham Shopping Centre and are looking to move to larger premises now that our membership has significantly grown and are keen to pilot more outreach work. This will be a rewarding and exciting opportunity to lead the Toy Library in a new direction.

We welcome applicants from all ethnicities and genders.

We are keen to increase the diversity of our board so that it is representative of our members and the local community – we welcome applications from everyone, and encourage applicants from black and

minority ethnic backgrounds to apply.

Being the Chair of the Board at a community-focused organisation like the Lewisham Toy Library requires a combination of strong leadership, strategic oversight, and a commitment to the organisation's mission and values. The chair should also be someone who is approachable, open to feedback, and who leads with integrity.

Why are we recruiting a new Chair of the Board of Trustees

Our two co-Chairs have reached the end of their tenure and we would love to find a replacement Chair who has the time (1-4 hours per week) to commit to the Toy Library and the vision to steer the Toy Library in a new exciting direction.

Responsibilities

- Provide leadership for the board of trustees in their role of setting the strategy and policy of the organisation
- Plan the annual cycle of board meetings and set the agendas
- Chair and facilitate the board meetings
- Represent the organisation at appropriate events, meetings or functions
- Act as a spokesperson for the organisation where appropriate
- Liaise with the Toy Librarians to keep an overview of the organisation's affairs and to provide support as appropriate
- Review and appraise the performance of the Toy Library Manager

Essential experience and skills

1. Leadership Skills

- **Visionary leadership:** The chair needs to set a clear direction and inspire others, helping the board and staff work together toward the organisation's mission and goals.
- **Motivational:** Encouraging active participation from board members and staff, fostering a positive, collaborative culture within the organisation.
- **Decision-making:** Ability to make informed and effective decisions quickly, particularly during critical or challenging moments.

2. Governance and Strategic Oversight

- **Understanding of governance:** The chair should have a solid understanding of governance principles, ensuring the board operates ethically and within legal boundaries.
- **Strategic thinking:** Helping to shape and implement long-term strategies for the organisation, including fundraising, community outreach, and sustainability.
- **Risk management:** Being able to identify potential risks and challenges and guiding the board in developing strategies to mitigate them.

3. Communication Skills

- **Clear and effective communication:** The chair must be able to articulate the organisation's vision, goals, and challenges to a variety of stakeholders, including board members, staff, donors, and the community.
- **Diplomacy and negotiation:** The chair may need to navigate conflicts or differing opinions, ensuring healthy dialogue and consensus-building.
- **Publicspeaking:** Representing the toy library in public settings, whether at fundraising events, meetings, or in the media.

4. Financial Acumen

- **Budgeting and financial oversight:** The chair should have a strong understanding of financial reports and be able to guide the board in overseeing the organisation's budget and resources.

5. Collaboration and Team Management

- **Building and supporting the Board:** Ensuring the board works as a team, with clear roles and responsibilities, and that each board member's skills are maximised.
- **Staff relations:** Building strong relationships with the management team and ensuring effective communication between the board and staff.

6. Community Engagement and Advocacy

- **Understanding the local community:** An awareness of the diverse needs of the Lewisham community and how the Toy Library can best serve them.
- **Advocacy skills:** Promoting the Toy Library's role and advocating for its support at local levels, potentially engaging with policymakers, local businesses, and other organisations.

7. Organisational Knowledge and Mission Alignment

- **Commitment to the Toy Library's mission:** A strong passion for the Toy Library's goals, which likely involve supporting children's development, education, and providing affordable access to play resources.
- **Awareness of relevant policies and laws:** Understanding relevant legislation, especially concerning child welfare, safeguarding, safety, and data protection laws, to ensure the Toy Library operates within legal frameworks.

8. Problem-Solving and Crisis Management

- **Ability to handle crises:** Being prepared to manage unexpected issues, whether related to financial challenges, staff conflicts, or operational disruptions.
- **Creative problem-solving:** Offering solutions during times of difficulty and helping guide the organisation toward positive outcomes.

9. Time Management and Organisation

- **Efficient time management:** Juggling various responsibilities, from chairing meetings to overseeing board initiatives and external relationships.
- **Meeting preparation:** Preparing for board meetings, ensuring all necessary documents are distributed, and making sure meetings are focused and productive.

Desirable experience and skills

- **Voluntary sector leadership:** Experience in leadership roles (paid or voluntary) within the voluntary sector
- **Fundraising knowledge:** Ability to lead or support fundraising efforts and understand how to develop sustainable income streams for the organisation.
- **Grant management and compliance:** Knowledge of grant application processes and the ability to ensure financial accountability within the organisation.
- **Local knowledge:** awareness of services available to families in Lewisham