



Annual Report
October 2010

Merry Go Round Toy & Leisure Library

Merry Go Round Toy & Leisure Library is a registered charity which runs two toy libraries. Our first toy library, Merry Go Round, opened 11 years ago and is based in Exeter Scrapstore on the edge of Belmont Park in Exeter. This proved to be so popular with families, carers and children that in November 2006 we opened another branch, Carousel Toy Library, in West Exe Children's Centre in St Thomas.



The toy libraries are open not only for families with children aged from a few months to early teens, but also for any groups or individuals involved in providing daycare for children. You may be a foster parent or childminder, or involved in a group activity such as afterschool club, playscheme or preschool. Anyone who looks after children is welcome to become a member!

Toy Libraries are exciting places to visit, like an Aladdin's cave full of things you want to take home; they are centres for lending the best toys and games which adults and children can enjoy together.

Many of our toys promote inclusion, with some specially designed for children with disabilities. We also have a wide range of resource books and multicultural toys.

We are happy to give advice about specific toys for individual children, or alternatively what resources would suit group play.

Registered charity no. no.1100532



Volunteers

Our volunteers and committee members come from a wide range of backgrounds, with different skills and abilities, many with that most important experience of being a parent.

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers for both toy libraries, whether to work with the children and families directly or to assist with fundraising or committee work.

Tasks in the toy libraries include

- helping to set up
- checking toys which are returned
- cleaning toys
- helping keep tidy during the session
- welcoming customers
- occasional cataloguing etc.

To ensure that vulnerable children are protected, we carry out a vetting procedure which involves security checks by the Police, and character references.

Merry Go Round Toy Library

Merry Go Round Toy Library is based in Exeter Scrapstore. We are open twice a week throughout the year for families, groups and anyone who cares for children. During sessions, children can try out toys before hiring them.

We have a wide selection of good quality toys, games and resource books for hire, and are happy to offer help and advice about meeting the needs of individual children. We also have larger inclusive toys suitable for groups.



More toys can be borrowed for special events such as parties; you can also book toys if there is something you particularly want.

We make no charge for breakages, but do ask for toys to be returned in a clean condition.

Visit our website to view online catalogues to search for specific toys, look at the toy lists for ideas for older children, parties or for children with little or no sight, or come and see for yourself.



How Much Will It Cost?

- Family membership £4.50 per year
- Group membership £15 per year

There is a weekly fee for each item borrowed. Rates start at 30p per week. More expensive toys are £1 per week.

Returnable deposits are required for some toys.

Groups can borrow toys and play equipment by the half-term at reduced rates.



Opening Hours

Tuesdays: 1pm-4pm

Thursdays: 10am-1pm

Contact

Tel: 01392 436777

Email:
fiona@mgrtoylibrary.org

Website:
www.mgrtoylibrary.org

Visit us at

Exeter Scrapstore
Gordon Road
Exeter
EX1 2DH

Our Toys Include

Duplo, lego, sticklebricks, stilts, circus skills set, puzzles, board games, garages, toddler and baby toys, water toys, cars, dolls' houses, metal detector, pop-up tents, craft and cookery books, tunnel, sit-and-rides, marble run, multicultural toys and dressing up clothes, workbench and tools, small world play, oil wheel projector, glitter ball, road safety set, skittles, parachutes, table-top cricket, rounders, musical instruments, Poi, etc, etc !!!

Carousel Toy Library

Carousel Toy Library is a branch of Merry Go Round, based in St Thomas on the west side of the River Exe. We operate from a specially constructed space in the hall of West Exe Children's Centre.

Our co-ordinator is Fiona Daughton, who is helped by a management committee made up of members and volunteers.

We provide high quality toys for a nominal fee to children aged from a few months to early teens. Some toys are specially designed for children with disabilities, others aim to promote multicultural awareness. We also have a resource library of books for parents and carers.



Carousel is open mainly for families but groups or individuals involved in providing daycare for children are also welcome to join.

A wider range of toys suitable for groups can be found at our Merry Go Round branch.



How Much Will It Cost?

- Family membership £4.50 per year
- Group membership £15 per year

There is a weekly fee for each item borrowed. Rates start at 30p per week. More expensive toys are £1 per week.

Returnable deposits are required for some toys.

Groups can borrow toys and play equipment by the half-term at reduced rates.



Opening Hours

Thursdays 10am-1pm

Contact us

Tel: 01392 279361

Email: fiona@mgrtoyllibrary.org

Website:
www.mgrtoyllibrary.org

Visit us at

West Exe Children's Centre
Cowick Street
St Thomas
Exeter
EX4 1HL

Our Toys Include

Duplo, sticklebricks, juggling balls, spinning plates, puzzles, board games, inclusive toys, garages, tractors, multicultural toys, dolls, toddler and baby toys, water toys, cars, dolls' houses, tea sets, farm sets, pop-up tent and tunnel, loopies, sit-and-rides, marble run, small world play, skittles, small parachute, musical instruments, Poi, a variety of books on family matters, health, disability awareness, craft activities and cookery etc, etc !!!

Merry Go Round Toy and Leisure Library Chair's Report for the 2010 AGM

Fiona and I have been in communication about what we are both detailing in our reports and I do hope that we have got it right.

Where did that year go I ask! It has been a busy and productive year for the Toy Library and one I believe that has raised our profile out in the communities of Exeter and further afield. We are just about to begin our 12th year of providing the Toy Library service for groups and families and one that I believe will probably be our most challenging.

All the sectors working with children and their families are moving towards a time of uncertainty with the Government's spending review and the impending cuts to everyone's budgets. This is not a happy place for people to be in but I believe that because we are all in this together, we will have the strength and knowledge between us to continue to deliver services somehow for the residents of Exeter. I am attending meetings and Fiona and I have discussions with various people in the sector so we keep our fingers crossed for the coming months.

The toy library continues to be well attended and enjoyed by many people across the City of Exeter and this fact enables us to continually find funding and support for the project. Other voluntary and statutory bodies have a knowledge of the Toy Library and are most positive when talking with them and these partnerships are vital to our future.

You will no doubt have heard of The Big Society. The Toy Library is already delivering ingredients to the Government's new project. Both our Toy Libraries are working in and with communities, enabling families to access toys for loan and then to enjoy playing with their children. The Big Society is challenging us to think differently and this for us will be about our delivery of the service and the funding available to us. It does give us the opportunity to play a bigger part in the delivery of our service and to look at funding streams to enable us to do this. A lot of work and thinking, but it could be very exciting and perhaps allow us to work with new partners in this brave new world into which we are all being thrust. As your Chair, I will do my best to help the process so that our toy libraries continue to do the special work they have carried out over the last 11 years.

I know Fiona is mentioning the following but I need to say that we have had a very good few months joining together for our fundraising events. These have been very productive but also a lot of fun, despite the 6am start for the Car Boot Sale. These events have worked very well for us and we will continue to carry them out.

I have to thank my committee for being supportive and committed as usual and I am very lucky to have you all around the table. My daughter, who is in P.R, said to me that it is important to have Radiators and not drains around the table. Oh so true but I know that we have all radiators! We have to say goodbye to Bev and Jo who have been wonderful on the committee, but we wish them luck in their new charitable ventures in Exmouth. We do need more Trustees on the committee. Fiona, as always is a star, and cheers me up when perhaps I am thinking 'oh dear' so I have huge thanks to her. Nicky is another shining star and originally came as a volunteer member of the committee and look where she is now. When Fiona is not around, she is there when I need her. Thank you Nicky.

Well I will close my report now, (hooray everyone says), but my thanks as always and we will get through the next year together I have no doubt.

Pat Cusa (Chair)

Merry Go Round Toy & Leisure Library Toy Library Co-ordinator's Report for the 2010 AGM

The toy libraries currently have a total number of 215 members, representing 1058 children who have access to our toys and play equipment. In our Merry Go Round Toy Library we have 132 families and 10 groups, whilst 73 families belong to our Carousel branch.

The past financial year (April 09 to March 10) was a busy one for both toy libraries. A total of 1026 visits were made to Merry Go Round by families and groups borrowing toys. There were also 603 visits to Carousel, which opened for 47 weeks last year with an average of 13 families visiting per session. (see separate statistics sheets).

We have been out and about over the summer taking publicity stalls and children's activities to different Playdays in the Park, including Exeter's Respect Festival, the National Playday at St Thomas Pleasure Ground and the Riverside Playday which were very popular. The events are great for fundraising and letting the local community know about our services, as well as providing some fun things for children to do. I would like to thank all the volunteers who helped, and also everyone from West Exe Children's Centre which joined forces with us to advertise their services.

We have started a programme of visiting local childcare groups to give parents and childcarers more information about our services. This has resulted in an increase of memberships by families who previously didn't know about us. More visits are planned throughout the year.

Carousel Summer Stay & Play was very popular this year, with an 'Out of this World' theme! There is a separate report, which includes photos, if you would like to know more.

We have really stepped up with our fundraising activities this year – we have had a collection outside Morrison's, run a very successful Toy Sale and Coffee Morning in Belmont Park and various stalls at playdays, but most memorable was running Matford Car Boot Sale. The latter took real dedication as we had to be there for 6am on a Sunday morning!

I would like to say a big thank you to all the committee and volunteers who have helped in so many ways both at fundraisers and in the toy libraries. Thanks to Jacqueline for putting together our last newsletter and all the children and members who contributed. A special thanks is due to Bev Abbott who is standing down as our secretary, and Joe Abbott for mending all the toys which were loved to pieces by the children. They have both helped in many other ways, including fundraising activities, and their culinary expertise was very much appreciated at the fundraising dance at Stoke Hill Infants School and the last toy library Christmas meal which they hosted. We will miss you, but know that your volunteering skills will be put to good use in your future endeavours.

I would also like to say a very big thank you to Nicky, our toy librarian at Merry Go Round, Pat Cusa our chair, Liz Edwards (relief toy librarian and stay & plays) and all the other staff and volunteers who help cover the toy libraries in the holidays, run the Stay & Plays, and fill in at short notice if we need cover. They have worked extremely hard over the last year, and I am sure all the children who borrow our toys really appreciate having the toy libraries open right through the year.

Fiona Daughton (Toy Library Co-ordinator)

October 2010

Merry Go Round Toy & Leisure Library Treasurer's Report for the 2010 AGM

Financial statement

Merry Go Round Toy Library

As at 1st October 2010:

£150	cash
<u>£5839</u>	bank
<u>£5989</u>	total

Carousel Toy Library

As at 1st October 2010:

£82	cash
£10594	bank
<u>-£755</u>	commitment to unpaid salaries
<u>£9921</u>	total

Annual Accounts

The annual accounts for the period 6th April 2009 to 5th April 2010 were inspected by an independent examiner (Veronica Mathieson, Finance Manager for Exeter CVS) on 29th July 2010. The independent examiner stated that her examination showed proper accounting records had been kept and the accounts agreed with the accounting records.

A copy of the report and the statement of accounts are available for anyone who would like to look at them. The annual return was submitted to the Charity Commission on 24th August 2010. This can be viewed online.

Our overall income for last year was £22,203 with expenditure of £18,995, showing a surplus of £3207.

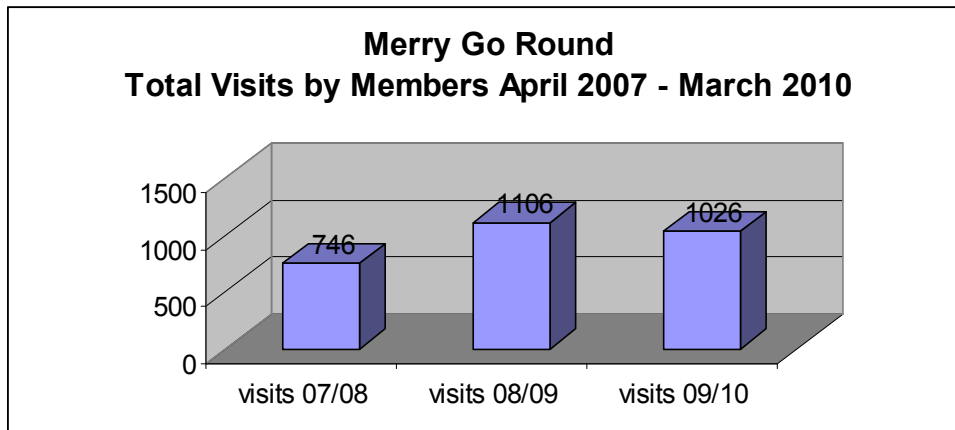
Grants and donations

We would like to offer a big thank you to the following for their financial support in the current financial year:

- Exeter City Council
- West Exe Children's Centre
- Exeter Play Association
- The Norman Family Charitable Trust
- Cllr Rob Hannaford
- Eastgate Rotary Club

Sally Dymond (Treasurer)

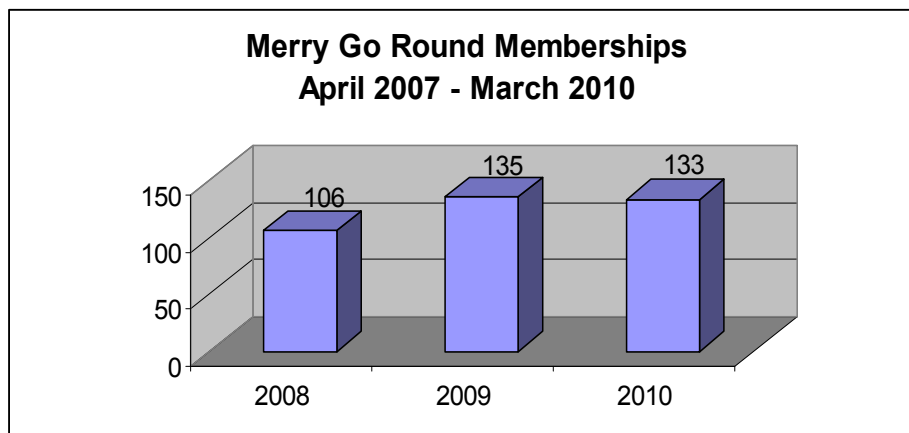
Merry Go Round Toy Library Statistics April 2010



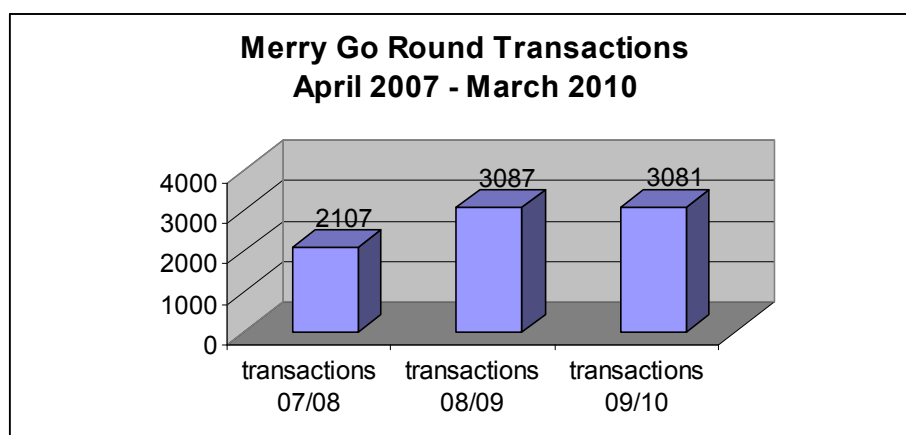
We have had a busy year at Merry Go Round, with 1026 visits by members borrowing toys. Figures do not include visitors who just wanted information about the toy library or those just returning toys. Visits are slightly lower than in the previous year (1106) which had a record 48% annual increase, but shows we have still had 37% more visits compared to 2007-08 (up from 746 to 1026). Some families are now borrowing toys for longer periods so do not visit as frequently.



There are seasonal variations which annually follow the same pattern, with a slump in December and the early part of the year due to closures over the Christmas holidays, but overall we are busy throughout the year.

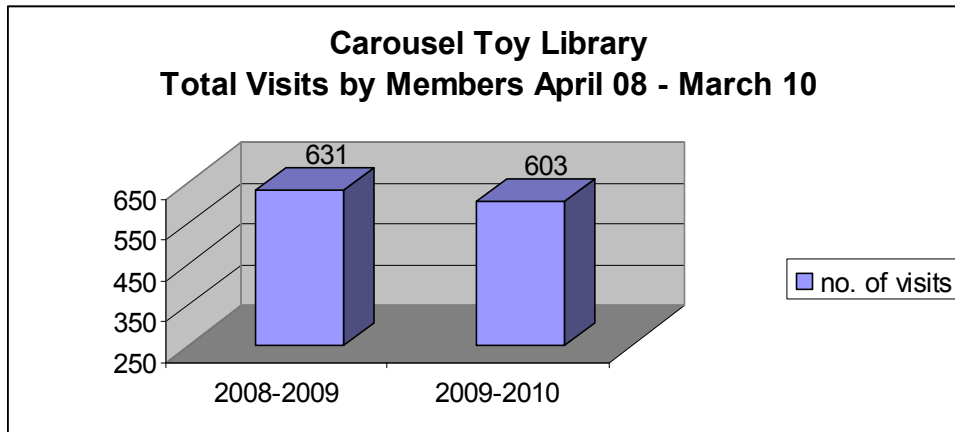


From April 2009 to March 2010, 121 families and 11 groups either joined or renewed their membership of Merry Go Round, maintaining the rise in memberships shown in the previous year. Memberships represent a total of 1022 children who had use of our toys and resources during the last year.

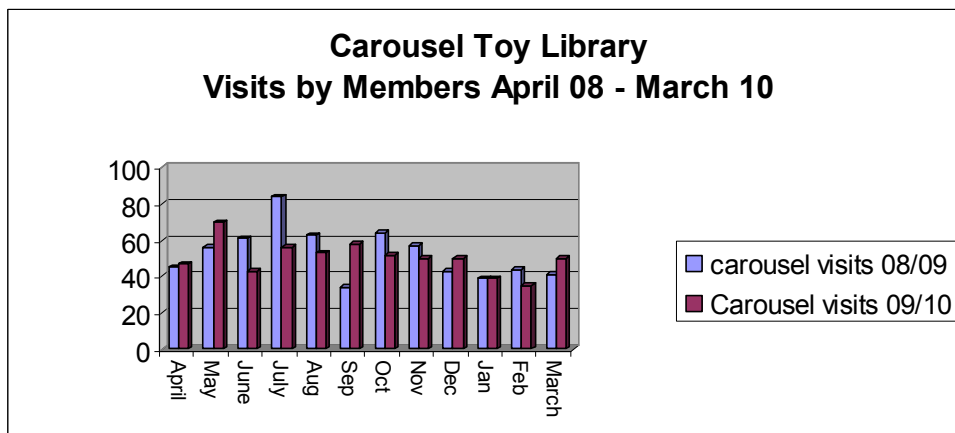


The number of transactions ((number of toys borrowed, deposits returned and overdue fees) was 3,081 in the financial year 2009/10, almost identical to the previous year. Looking at the graph, it can be seen that over the last two years we have increased and then maintained the number of transactions (a 46% rise compared to 2007/08).

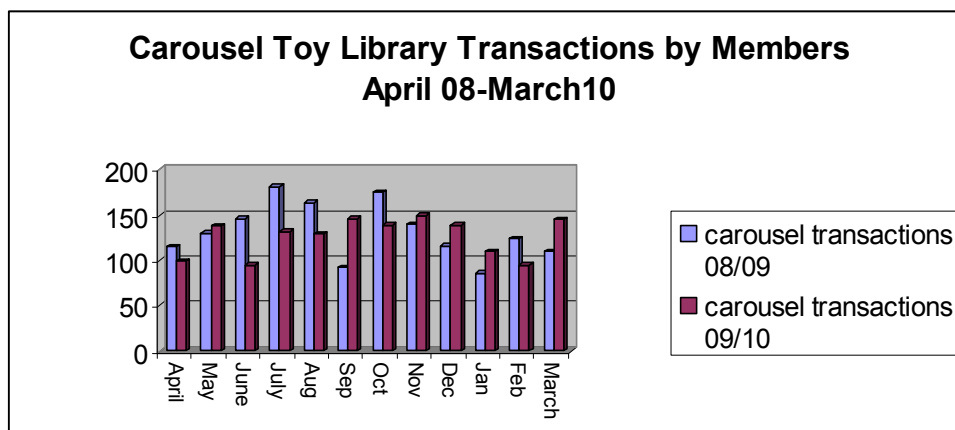
Carousel Toy Library April 2008 – March 2010



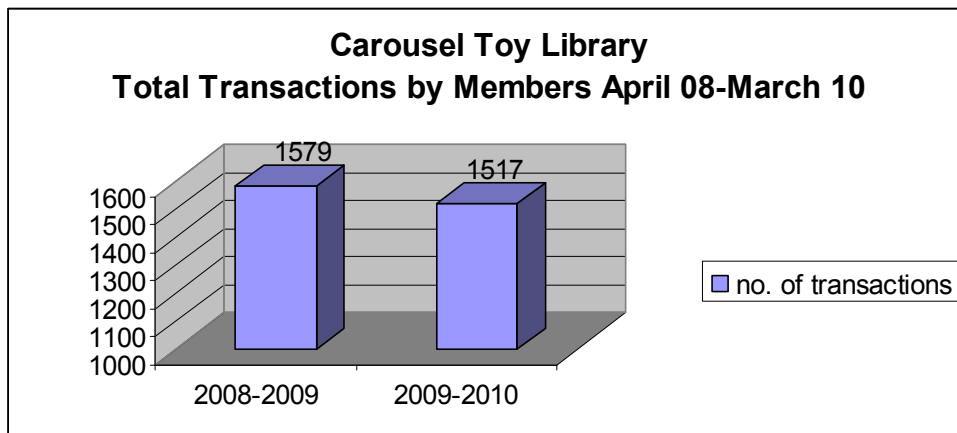
Over the last year there have been 603 visits to the toy library by families borrowing and returning toys compared to 631 visits in the previous year. This is a slight decrease of 4% compared to the previous year (see graph above) with some families now borrowing toys for longer than a week, so visiting less frequently. We were open for 47 weeks last year with an average of 13 families visiting per session. Figures do not include families who were just returning toys or only wanting information about the toy library. In addition to our normal services, we held four Summer Stay & Play sessions which had an average attendance of nearly 14 children plus parents each session, up from an average of 11 children per session in the previous year.



Both loans and visits have a seasonal variation, with dips in the New Year after the Christmas break and at Easter. Closures were for Christmas and Easter holidays, polling day and stockcheck.



As can be seen on the graph below, the number of transactions showed a slight decrease compared to the previous year (4%) which again links with families borrowing toys for longer periods. Transactions represent toys borrowed and deposits returned. Different services within West Exe Children's Centre also borrow toys and resources for use with the children and families they are working with, and signpost families to our services.



We ran activities at some of Exeter's Playdays and Fun4Free days in the parks, in conjunction with displays about the Children's Centre, which were very popular and promoted use of the Centre. We will be doing this again this summer as well as running Summer Stay & Play sessions for family members, in addition to our normal toy library service.

Review of Carousel Stay & Plays Summer 2010

'Out of this World'

This summer the toy library provided 4 structured play sessions with a strong art/craft base in addition to its normal sessions for borrowing toys. These aimed to promote interaction between parents and their children of different ages, giving them the opportunity to play together and have fun using resources from the toy library.

Children were free to choose from a range of toys and activities; a separate area was set out with baby toys, with other toys including small world, role play, construction and sensory toys set out in the room. Playdough, painting and craft activities were provided at each session followed by a healthy snack and physical play. We finished each session with a circle time with lots of singing.



Families were able to play in the garden after snack time for the first session but due to bad weather we put out soft play equipment in the hall for the last 3 sessions, both of which children enjoyed:

"He particularly liked the soft play session as he enjoys physical activities"

"Outdoor play area brilliant when weather allows"

"Lovely outdoor play area – shame weather only allowed us to use it once."

This year we had 'Out of this World' as our theme, which proved to be very popular. Children and parents worked together to make space helmets, rockets, planets, space shakers and all sorts of other

space related things. Families also contributed to a wall display which showed off their work. Craft activities were geared towards different age ranges and abilities, with a variety of things to make each session. This meant both toddlers and older children had fun making things with their parents:

"Good choice of craft theme – all the space things went down very well! Nice for them to have something to take home. Really helpful that lots of the preparation has been done beforehand – makes it



much better for kids to get going straight away and easier for parents coming with younger children too!"

"My eldest child loved the craft tables"

"Haydn enjoyed all sessions. He liked cutting and sticking and taking home the finished projects"

"Great craft activities"

"Well organised, great craft activities"

"The stay and plays are fantastic and the children love the chance to get creative and make different things (6yrs, 4yrs and 6 weeks)"



We aimed to provide sessions which parents with more than one child could enjoy which mostly seemed to work:

"I am really pleased with the stay and play. It is just perfect for kids of different ages. Mine really look forward to coming back to the next one. Thanks (5yrs and rising 2)". However one mum commented that although her eldest child loved the craft tables, there wasn't enough for her 7 month old baby to do which is something we can address for next time.



One problem we found was we had very limited space for the number of families attending (22 children and 12 adults in the first session) but it still worked well as the sessions were very organised:

"Great sessions. Could have done with a bigger room the first few weeks, but was still great fun. Loads of great things to do"

"Well structured but children also have plenty of time for freeplay"

"Very friendly, well organised"

"Liked the structure of sessions and nice to finish with singing"

"I like it because we make things and there are toys to play with" (Nicko aged 5)

We also bought a safety gate so we could leave the outside door open, which helped keep the hall cooler

We didn't provide much adult seating (which one parent commented on), partly due to lack of space but mainly because we wanted parents to be on the same level as their children. However we did provide beanbags in the baby area.

Overall there was an average of 17.5 children and 10 adults per session, with the first two sessions being busiest (22 children and 12 adults in week one), dropping to 15 children and 8 adults in week four.

During the four weeks, 13 different families attended (23 different children) with most coming for more than one session.

Ages of children ranged from newborn to 7 years, with the majority of children aged between 2 and 3 years.

Suggestions for improvements to our service

"None. Very friendly and professional – thank you for providing regular educational entertainment for my daughter"

"None. Apart from more sessions don't know what we'll do on Tuesdays now for the rest of the holidays"

"Sessions to encourage sibling play, aiding different aged brother and sister to play together and share (4yrs and 7months)"

Conclusion

We met the aim of providing activities which parents/carers and children of different ages could engage in and have fun together. The sessions were very busy but even though they were in a confined space they still worked well as the staff were very organised and had prepared for the sessions in advance. For future sessions we need to consider reducing the numbers of places or using a larger venue. There were lots of different things to do, with a wide range of freeplay and structured arts and crafts activities to choose from which made good use of the toy library resources as well as the outdoor space and soft play equipment.

"Look forward to next year! Thank you"

