



Annual Report
October 2012

Registered Charity No 1100532

Merry Go Round Toy & Leisure Libraries
Trustees and Committee Members October 2012

Officers

Chair: Pat Cusa

Vice Chair: John Staplehurst

Honorary Treasurer: Jude Green

Honorary Secretary: Nicolette Jeffrey

Committee Members

Laura Kerlake

Michael Parrot

Claire Russell

Merry Go Round Toy Library

Merry Go Round Toy Library first opened in 1999 in Exeter Scrapstore. It is open twice a week throughout the year not only for families with children aged from a few months to early teens, but also for any groups or individuals involved in providing day care for children.

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.

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 can also advise on which resources would suit group play.



Many of our toys are great for children with additional needs, and we also have a large selection of multicultural toys and books.

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



How Much Will It Cost?

- Family membership £5 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

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 use the contact page to ask a question.



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 toy library members.

We provide high quality toys for a nominal fee to children aged from a few months to primary age. 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 day care for children are also welcome to join.

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



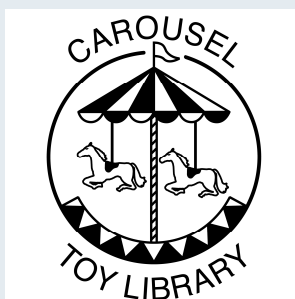
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Opening Hours

Thursdays 10am-1pm

Contact us

Tel: 01392 279361

Email: fiona@mgrtoylibrary.org

Website:
www.mgrtoylibrary.org

Visit us at

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

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



Volunteers and Committee Members

Volunteers

Everyone who helps our charity in a non-paid capacity is counted as a volunteer, including committee members. Apart from being on the committee, there are lots of other ways volunteers can support us including helping at fundraising events, toy library sessions or with publicity.

Volunteers use their specific skills as and when they feel they can – this can include making cakes for cake stalls, mending toys, taking leaflets and posters to toddler groups, helping at car boot sales, writing articles for the newsletter, updating toy databases, taking photos etc.

Tasks for volunteers helping 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

Committee members

Committee members need to be members of the toy library and are usually Trustees of the charity and as such have responsibility for ensuring the toy libraries are run in accordance with the law and our Constitution (we do have Trustee's Indemnity Insurance which covers against accidental mistakes).

Committee members:

- manage the staff, promoting good working practice and conditions
- make decisions about the running of the toy libraries
- make a commitment to attend meetings (approx every 2 months with refreshments) including the AGM and our summer and winter socials
- use their skills to support the toy library - some are officers eg Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer or Secretary, each of which has its own responsibilities
- produce the newsletter and help with publicity
- link in with everything else going on in the project eg fundraising

For more information please contact our Chair Pat on 01392 877907, see Fiona or Nicky in toy library sessions or email fiona@mgrtoylibrary.org. We also have a website www.mgrtoylibrary.org with information about our Charity.

To ensure that vulnerable children are protected, we carry out a vetting procedure for any volunteers working directly with children or families and also for committee members. This involves security checks by the Police, and character references.

Chair's Report for the 2012 AGM

May I extend a warm welcome to you this evening.

The AGM gives us time to reflect on our activities of the last year and look at the way forward for the next. I would imagine we are probably the smallest Charity here in Exeter, but I do believe that we do a great deal of good work for the residents of our City and the question I would ask is, do we shout loud enough about what we celebrate here tonight? Food for thought and something to look at later.

All Charities, including our own, continue to function in an increasingly difficult environment, having to face budget cuts across the board and of course, affecting everyday lives of the people who use our services. We have for quite some time held our hire prices enabling everyone to continue to use our service regardless of their means and incomes. We have always looked at our Toy Library as an accessible resource and I know that we must continue to look at this despite difficult times.

Our Charity has been fortunate over the years to have individuals and organisations who like us! I would like to publicly thank the following:

Councillors Hannaford and Newcombe, Eastgate Rotary, the Co-operative Community Fund, the Norman Family Charitable Trust and the ATASS Foundation. Exeter City Council continues to support us with grants for rent and core costs. Despite their own funding difficulties, they continue to support groups that work with Exeter residents. West Exe Children's Centre is supporting us with rent free accommodation and belief in our work. Sadly the Centre has experienced its own budget cuts, so can no longer help fund Carousel Toy Library financially, so we need to look at its future direction.



Presentation of cheque by Eastgate Rotary

At last year's AGM, we launched the idea of a Friends of Merry Go Round. I must report that very little progress has been made with this. I think that it will need more thinking around this and perhaps it needs to be looked at alongside other ideas of involvement and financial support.

My personal thanks must go to the Committee who continue to turn out and fundraise and attend committee meetings. We do also have some fun together so thank you very much for your commitment to the Toy Library because I know that you do all have very busy lives. We have had to say goodbye to Liz Ellis and Jacqueline Brooks during the year and we will miss their invaluable input into the project and wish them well for the future. To balance this we welcome Claire Russell and Laura Kerslake to the team, and they are also helping Fiona and Nicky have some time off and holding the fort in their absence. Despite this, we will need to add to our team so they are not too overstretched.

Fiona continues to bound around with endless energy and we are very grateful for her hard work and commitment to the Toy Library and this has been since 1999! Fiona and Nicky continue to work well as the Team and I will say that it has been good to see Nicky's confidence grow over the years since she joined the Toy Library. A huge thank you to both of you and I mustn't forget to thank your support teams at home!

The coming year will not allow us to be complacent and we will need to seriously look at our finances, but I hope that our magic wand will help us through alongside the commitment that so many of you give us. Thank you very much.

Pat Cusa (Chair)

Toy Library Co-ordinator's Report for the 2012 AGM

During the last financial year 169 families and child carers made a huge 1,601 visits to Merry Go Round and Carousel Toy Libraries. Members included parents, grandparents, child minders and a variety of childcare groups, representing 545 children from Exeter and its surrounds who had access to good quality toys, resource books and play equipment.

In September we asked members to fill in feedback forms to evaluate our services. The results showed that both children and parents/carers benefited in lots of different ways. As one parent said *"An invaluable service! The toy library is about more than just borrowing toys, it provides friendly advice and a place for children and parents to interact with others and find out about other things"*. Details can be seen further on in the Annual Report.

I'd like to say a really big thank you to our committee, toy library members and other volunteers, including Parents' Voice from West Exe Children's Centre, who have been very busy helping us with fundraising activities, including a mega table top sale of children's clothes and baby equipment and café.



Earlier in the year we decided to celebrate the Jubilee and the Olympics with our very own sponsored 'Jubolympics'; children and parents ran around Belmont Park with Olympic torches collecting medals, then each child was presented

with a certificate at the finishing line.

We also had a sponsored toddle and picnic at St Thomas Park, followed by parachute games and rounders which was great fun. It was lovely to see so many of our younger members enjoying themselves in the fresh air!



Other events have included a recycled clothes collection, a car boot stall and toy, children's books and cake stalls.

During the summer we provided activities, fundraising and information stalls at Exeter Respect Festival, which attracted thousands of local families. We worked alongside West Exe, Beacon Heath and Whipton Children's Centres, helping with lost children and providing a baby area and print workshop.

This was a really fun event and our

impromptu plate spinning and poi workshops were very popular with children and adults of all ages!

It is great to have the support of so many people, both young and old, in keeping the toy libraries up and running. This has included helping raise money in different ways (thanks Jude for the ongoing percentages raised from your card sales) to things like cleaning toys, taking photos, designing publicity materials, designing and hosting our website, and filling in feedback forms so we can find out how to make things even better!



Fiona Daughton (Toy Library Co-ordinator)

Treasurer's Report for the 2012 AGM

Financial statement (all figures rounded to nearest pound)

At the beginning of October 2012, Merry Go Round had a total of £10,978 and Carousel had a total of £4724.

The contingency account had a balance of £6083, being monies put aside each year to cover redundancy payments in case the toy libraries have to close.

Annual Accounts

The annual accounts for the period 6th April 2011 to 5th April 2012 were inspected by an independent examiner (Veronica Mathieson, Finance Manager for Exeter CVS). The independent examiner stated that her examination showed proper accounting records had been kept and the accounts agreed with the accounting records. We would like to thank Veronica and Exeter CVS for all the help and advice they give us with annual accounts and payroll.

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 25th June 2012. This can be viewed online.

Our income for last year was £19,958 with an expenditure of £19,186, showing a surplus of £772.

Grants and donations

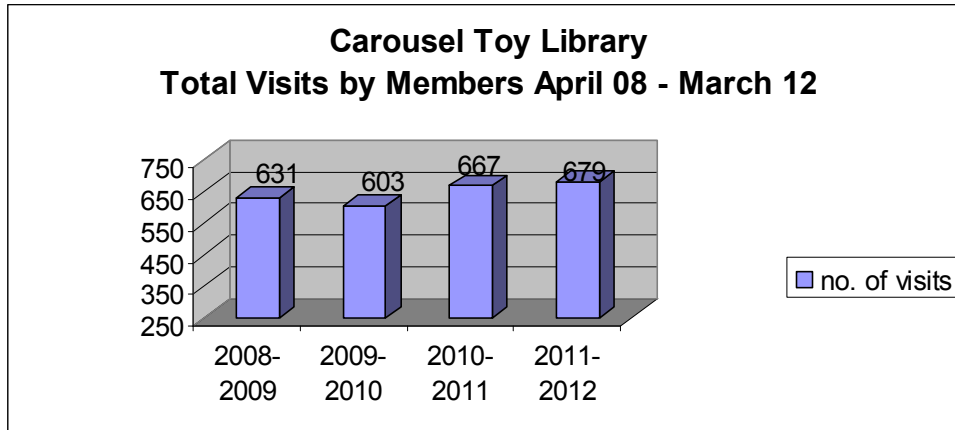
We would like to offer a big thank you to West Exe Children's Centre for providing free accommodation for Carousel Toy Library, and to the following for their financial support during the last 12 months:

- Exeter City Council
- Co-operative Community Fund
- The Norman Family Charitable Trust
- Cllr Rob Hannaford
- Cllr Vanessa Newcombe
- Eastgate Rotary Club
- ATASS Foundation

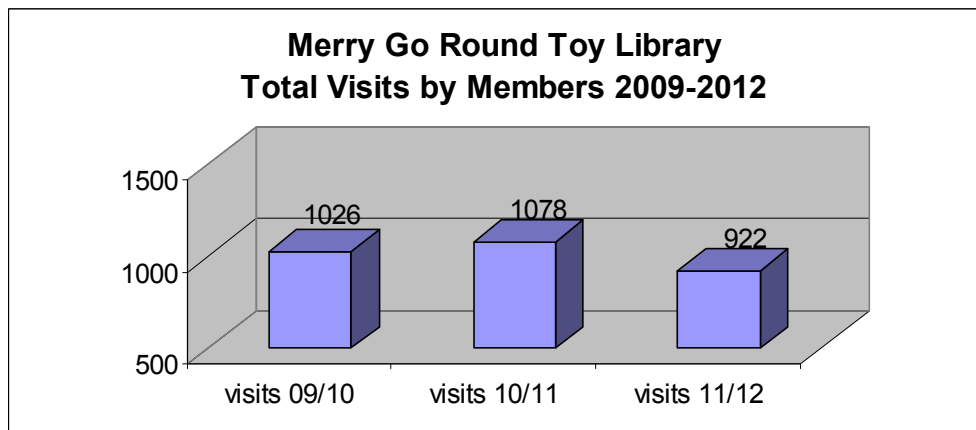
Sally Dymond (Treasurer)

Merry Go Round Toy & Leisure Libraries Annual Statistics April 11-March 12

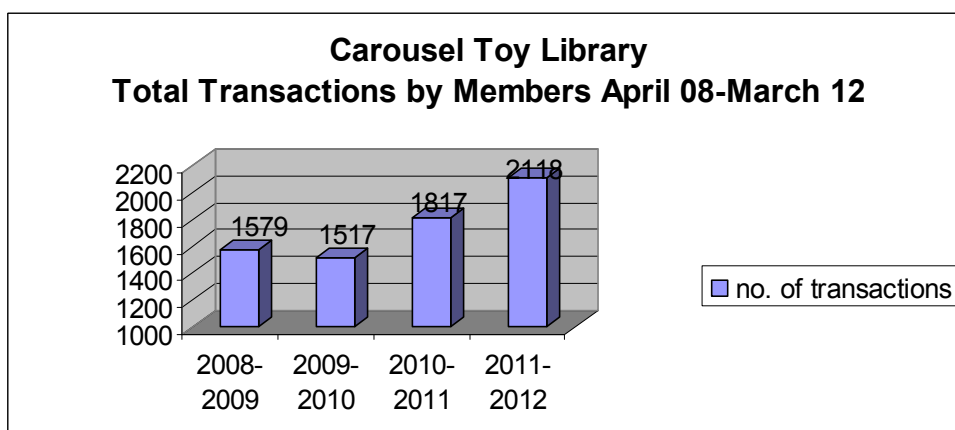
Between April 2011 and March 2012, 158 families and 11 groups/professional child carers joined or rejoined Merry Go Round and Carousel Toy Libraries, representing 545 children aged between a few months and early teens who had use of good quality toys and play resources.



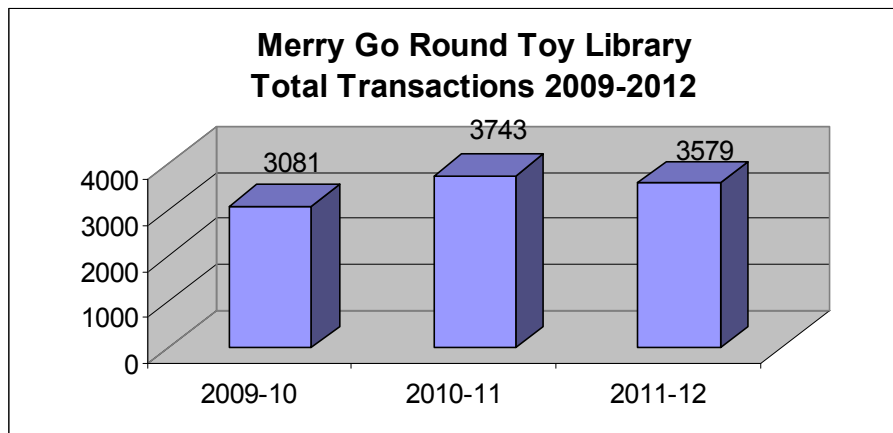
A total of 679 visits were made to Carousel Toy Library during the year by members borrowing and returning toys. This is similar to the previous year when 667 visits were made, and shows a consistent use of the toy library which only closed for 4 weeks during the year (for polling day, stock check and two weeks at Christmas).



Merry Go Round Toy Library showed a slight drop in visits over the year. A possible reason for this is changes to opening times of Exeter Scrapstore where the toy library is based. The Scrapstore closed on Tuesdays for part of last year, which is one of the days on which toy library sessions are held. Visits increased once the Scrapstore started opening again on a Tuesday and people realised we were still open on that day. Many members have also started borrowing for longer periods.



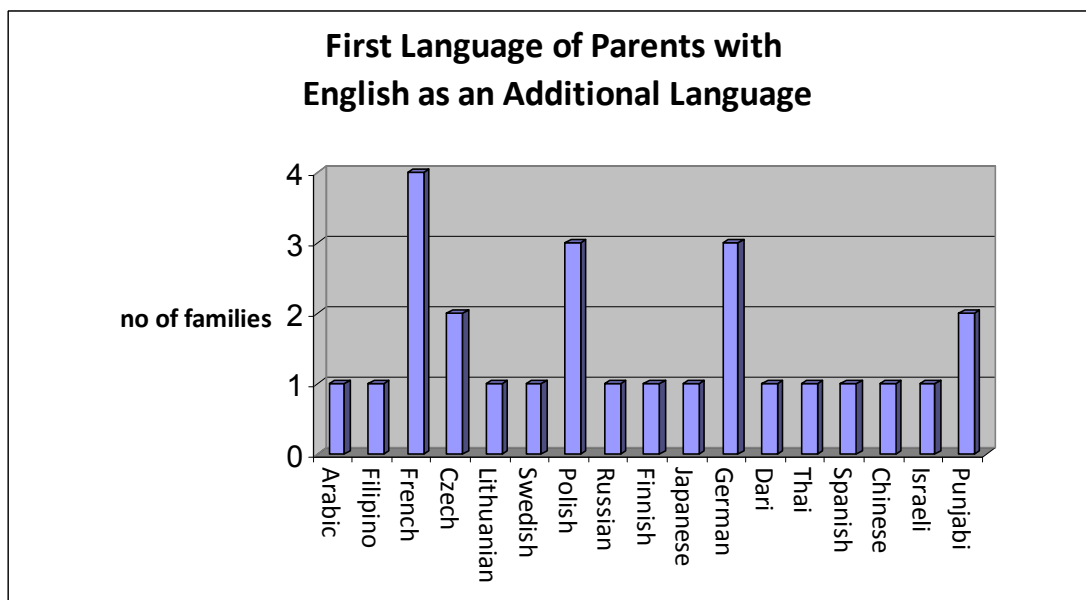
Although the number of visits to Carousel is similar to the previous year, the number of transactions (toy hire and deposit returns) has increased by 16%, with families borrowing more toys to take home than in other years, showing the need for the service is increasing, possibly because many families now have less money to spend on buying new toys for their children due to changes in the economy.



Transactions at Merry Go Round were slightly down, linking with a drop in number of visits, but showed a rise of 14% compared to 2009-10.

When families join or renew their membership with the toy library, they are asked to fill in a toy library monitoring form which asks about their children’s age, ethnicity and first language.

The forms show that although the majority of children using the toy libraries are white British with English as a first language, 18 children using Carousel and 50 children using Merry Go Round were listed as coming from a minority ethnic background, many with English as a second language. The chart below shows the wide variety of first languages spoken in the home which reflects the multicultural makeup of our members.



In summary, families, carers and their children aged between birth and early teens made a total of 1,601 visits to the toy libraries over the year, borrowing more toys than ever for children from a wide diversity of backgrounds. Advice was given on which toys were suitable for the needs and interests of individual children, with the opportunity for parents and children to try out good quality toys in a play setting before taking them home to play with together. Parents and carers also borrowed resource books on a wide variety of topics including family matters, healthy eating, health issues, crafts and diversity, and were given information about other local childcare services.

Fiona Daughton (Toy Library Co-ordinator)

Merry Go Round Toy & Leisure Libraries

Results from Feedback Forms September 2012

Feedback forms were handed out to toy library members in August and September 2012 to evaluate the services provided by Merry Go Round and Carousel Toy Libraries. 32 forms were completed by families who had been attending for at least two months; families who had only recently joined the toy libraries were not given a form as it was felt they would not yet be able to give accurate feedback.

Section A looked at ways the toy library had impacted on children and their parents/carers. All the parents/carers questioned said the toy library had helped them find toys which were right for their child's interest and level of development:

Great range of toys that my kids have been so excited about and wouldn't normally have necessarily played with.

Suitable toys for grandchildren when they visit.

Helping choose toys/activities.

Fiona is really helpful in helping me to look at and find toys relevant to my children's ages.

94% (30) said attending the toy library had helped their child gain new skills or promoted their development whilst 69% (22) found it had provided more opportunities for their child to play with other children:

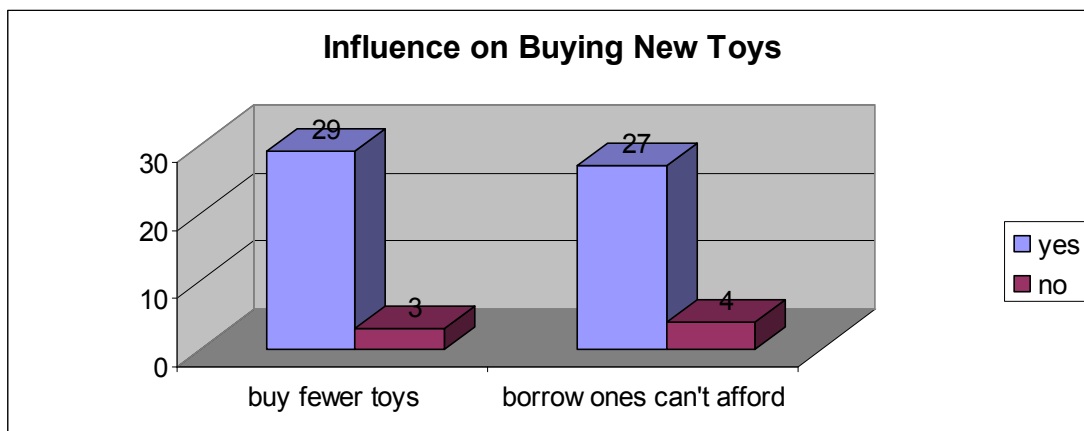
A great place to come and socialise with other toddlers and mums! He gets to play with lots of different toys.

Children enjoy coming in playing.

72% (23) found attending had helped their child learn about sharing.

75% (24) now have more knowledge of how their children play at different ages/stages and 47% (15) said that coming to the toy library had increased the interaction between them and their child.

Section B looked at the environmental and financial aspects of attending the toy library. 91% of parents (29) said they now bought fewer toys. This impacts on the amount of non-recyclable plastic which goes to landfill, as low quality toys with poor play value often end up in the bin very rapidly.



84% (27) said they had borrowed toys they wouldn't normally be able to afford.

It is great for people with limited disposable cash – we cannot afford to buy Charlie all the lovely toys we would like to, so the toy library is perfect!

Really love coming as we can borrow a variety of toys we couldn't usually, thank you.

One parent said they:

Also borrowed toys we wouldn't want to have at home on a long term basis eg too big or noisy!

Section C asked parents about other ways in which they might have benefited; 78% (25) valued meeting and talking to toy library staff:

The toy library is great and Fiona always has good advice, thanks!

Staff extremely helpful

Very friendly and helpful staff.

19% (6) had accessed childcare advice and support, whilst attending had given 56% (18) more time to play with their child, and 63% (20) had benefited through socialising and exchanging ideas with other parents and carers.

Because of coming to the toy library I've got to know a family who live in the same street as us. Whereas before we'd just say hello, now we meet up for the children to play.

Other comments included:

An excellent charity/resource centre for children of all ages and abilities

Toys very well looked after and clean.

Wonderful service, weekly regulars

Access to other organisations (Devon Grapevine for families from minority ethnic groups).

Wonderful service, wonderful people!

Conclusion

The comments and feedback were very positive, showing both children and carers benefit in lots of different ways from using the toy libraries. Having access to good quality toys and play resources which many couldn't afford otherwise, with advice about which ones are suitable for an individual child's age, stage and development, gives children more opportunities to learn and develop whilst having fun. Parents and carers can be signposted to other services, and the whole family gets a chance to meet other parents, children and carers.

An invaluable service! The toy library is about more than just borrowing toys, it provides friendly advice and a place for children and parents to interact with others and find out about other things. Thank you!