



Annual Report
October 2022

Registered Charity No 1100532

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Merry Go Round Toy Libraries

Trustees and Committee Members October 2022

Officers

Chair: Alex Allan

Honorary Treasurer: Nicolette Jeffrey

Honorary Secretary: Andrea Bristow

Committee Members

Joy Rogers

Kelly Allan

Helene Prestat

Senior Staff Member

Andrea Bristow (Toy Library Coordinator/Manager)

Staff Members

Kelly Allan (Toy Librarian)

Fiona Daughton (Cover Toy Librarian)

Merry Go Round Toy Library

Merry Go Round Toy Library opened in 1999 in Exeter Scrapstore.

During the Covid pandemic we adapted and now operate an online booking system. Families are able to browse and reserve toys ready for collection.

Our service is available for families with children aged from a few months to early teens and for groups or individuals involved in providing care for children.

Toy libraries are exciting places; 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.



How Much Will It Cost?

Family membership £6 per year

Group membership £15 per year

There is a weekly fee for each item borrowed. Rates start at 50p per week for books and toys. More expensive toys from £1.20.



We make no charge for accidental breakages, but do ask for toys to be returned in a clean condition. We then quarantine toys before cleaning them again.

Opening Hours

Tuesdays: 10am- 4.30pm

Contact

Tel: 01392 436777

Email:

coordinator@mgrtoylibrary.org

Websites:

my.mgrtoylibrary.org

www.mgrtoylibrary.org

Facebook:

[merrygoroundtoylibraries](https://www.facebook.com/merrygoroundtoylibraries)

Visit us at

Exeter Scrapstore
Gordon Road
Exeter
EX1 2DH

Visit my.mgrtoylibrary.org to join the toy libraries and book toys to take home.

Members can use either of our toy libraries, but do need to return toys to the library they were borrowed from



Spinning Top Toy Library

Spinning Top Toy Library is a branch of Merry Go Round. It first opened in March 2018 in the Beacon Centre in Beacon Heath. In March 2020 it closed due to Covid-19 restrictions and reopened in April 2021.

At the Beacon many families choose to stay, chat and play with the toys whilst visiting the Toy Library.

Our Toy Library Manager is Andrea Bristow, who is helped by a Toy Librarian, volunteers and a management committee made up of toy library members.



We provide high quality toys 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.



How Much Will It Cost?

Family membership £6 per year

Group membership £15 per year

There is a weekly fee for each item borrowed. Rates start at 50p per week for books and toys. More expensive toys from £1.20.



We make no charge for accidental breakages, but do ask for toys to be returned in a clean condition. We then quarantine toys before cleaning and returning to stock.

Opening Hours

Tuesdays: 10am- 4.30pm

Contact

Email:

coordinator@mgrtoylibrary.org

Websites:

my.mgrtoylibrary.org

www.mgrtoylibrary.org

Facebook:

[merrygoroundtoylibraries](https://www.facebook.com/merrygoroundtoylibraries)

Visit us at

The Beacon Centre
Beacon Lane
Beacon Heath
Exeter EX4 8LZ

We aim to facilitate children's development through play and lend them the best available toys.

Visit my.mgrtoylibrary.org to join the toy libraries, browse the catalogues and book toy to take home.



Volunteers and Committee Members

Volunteers

Everyone who helps our charity in a non-paid capacity is counted as a volunteer, including committee members and Friends of Merry Go Round. Volunteers use their specific skills as and when they feel they can.

Tasks for volunteers include:

- helping with social media and online promotions
- helping to design and distribute publicity materials
- hosting and managing our websites and email accounts
- helping with fundraising and publicity events
- mending or cleaning toys
- sorting donated toys
- organising events and toy sales
- taking photos for publicity

Committee members

Committee members need to be members of the toy library and are Trustees of the charity and as such ensure the toy libraries are run in accordance with the law and our Constitution.

Committee members:

- manage the staff, promoting good working practice and conditions
- make decisions about the running of the toy libraries, and make sure our charity is meeting its aims and objectives
- make a commitment to attend meetings (approximately every 2 months, currently held online on Zoom) including the AGM and our summer and winter socials
- use their skills to support the toy library - some are officers eg Chair, Treasurer or Secretary, each of which has its own responsibilities
- help with publicity
- link in with everything else going on in the project such as fundraising

For more information, please call us during toy library sessions, email coordinator@mgrtoylibrary.org. or look at our website www.mgrtoylibrary.org.

To join and book toys go to my.mgrtoylibrary.org and for updates and photos visit Facebook page www.facebook.com/merrygoroundtoylibraries

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 all committee members. This involves applying for a DBS and character references.

Chair's Report for the 2022 AGM

Both our toy libraries have been busy this year lending high quality toys and resources to local families and groups. Our priority is, and always has been, to improve the lives of children and families through play and I think this is something we do very well.

We have maintained a successful and accessible service through the use of online tools and member interactions. We have more families borrowing toys than ever before and our staff are on hand with advice if needed, as well as being a point of contact in the community.

During the Christmas season of 2021 we had fun decorating a tree in the Princesshay Charity Christmas Tree Festival and we are excited to be taking part again. It will be the 10th year, of the festival.

Greendale Farm Shop and restaurant served as a venue for last years Christmas 'do', albeit taking place in March! We all enjoyed the Al Fresco lunch and the children were particularly interested in the farm chickens.

Last year we worked alongside Exeter Scrapstore to raise funds to help pay for a new roof for the well-loved heritage building that has been home to both our charities for over 20 years. We are delighted to report that the new roof is now complete and fit for many more years to come!

Fiona Daughton, our Toy Library Coordinator and Manager of almost 23 years was thrown a retirement party in the Newtown Community Hut in July. Many faces from Merry Go Round Toy Libraries past and present were in attendance; there was a lot of cake and fun had by all! We cannot thank Fiona enough for all the commitment and energy she has devoted to the charity over the years. I do hope she feels suitably appreciated by one and all.



A huge thank you also goes to our committee for all their hard work over the past 12 months and to our staff and volunteers all of whom we could not do without. Your valuable time and effort means so much. We genuinely



could not do it without you! We are always seeking to engage new members to our committee and hope to find more people who would like to add their experience and ideas to this wonderful charity.

I am sure I speak for us all when I say how delighted we are that Andrea has taken the reins as Toy Library Manager. We look forward to seeing Andrea's further insights and ideas for the development of Merry Go Round Toy Libraries over the coming years. Thank you Andrea for all your hard work this year. Kelly continues to offer her energy and expertise as toy librarian, thank you for all your hard work Kelly.

I would like to wish the new committee and Merry Go Round Toy Libraries great success over the coming year and long into the future.

Alex Allan (chair)

Toy Library Co-ordinator's Report for the 2022 AGM

We have been incredibly busy over the past year with many new members and toy hires. Our toys are being borrowed for babies through to older children starting Secondary school. We currently have 174 active family and group members representing approximately 461 children. Our toys are popular with families both at home and for parties. Community workers and other groups have also borrowed toys for local events including for Ukrainian refugee families.



Our online booking system, with over 1400 categorised toys and resources available, is working well. Our catalogue of sensory toys has increased thanks to Magic Little Grants who provided funding for toys and several outreach visits to local baby and toddler groups.

Our staff offer support and advice to parents and carers both face to face and via social media and email. As illustrated in the feedback section later in this report, the comments made by parents and group organisers show how much our service and the support provided by our staff is valued.



Following the covid pandemic it has been fantastic to get out and about again and join in with community events which support children's play. It was great fun to provide circus skills activities and stalls at the 25th Respect Festival, we were thankful for the warm weather. Thanks to John Smith, the Tesco Community Champion, who kindly donated bubble machines and other toys which were enjoyed at our stalls. We are also very thankful to Cllr Ruth Williams who provided funding for some fun craft activities for children and their families at The Beacon 'fun days' over the Summer school holidays.

We are getting out and about once again and letting people know about our services. I had a lovely morning in July at St Michael's Church, Alphington at their 'Begin Well' event to let new and expectant parents know about the services and support available in the area. Fiona and some great volunteers enjoyed creating a display for the St Thomas Library 'Window on the Community' and for the Gallery36 'Get on Board' project.

We are thankful to have received many generous donations from families who have supplied us with toys that have been outgrown in their households. Some of these we use in the Toy Library and others for fundraising sales; our members tell us that they love to think of toys they have donated being reused and providing enjoyment to others.



We always really enjoy taking part in fundraising activities and this year they have included pop-up toy sales and baby and toddler car boot sales. Our members, committee and volunteers are great at coming up with ways to improve our services and new ideas for fundraising. It is always fun and very rewarding working alongside them so a huge thank you to them all for all that they do!

Andrea Bristow (Toy Library Co-ordinator)

Treasurer's Report for the 2022 AGM

Financial statement (all figures rounded to nearest pound)

At the beginning of October 2022, Merry Go Round had a total of £11,443 and Spinning Top had a total of £8,866. The Carousel account has been closed with the remaining money transferred to the Spinning Top account.

The contingency account has a balance of £4,234, being monies designated to cover redundancy payments in the event the toy libraries have to close, plus statutory costs for sick pay should this be required. The amount held here has been reduced as our long-serving Manager has left, so the redundancy costs will now be much lower.

Annual Accounts

The annual accounts for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 were inspected by the Treasurer to check that proper accounting records had been kept and the accounts agreed with the accounting records. We would like to thank Exeter Community Accounting, our payroll provider, for their help and advice.

A copy of the statement of accounts is available for anyone who would like to look at it. The annual return has been submitted to the Charity Commission and can be viewed online. Our total income for last year was £24,810 with an expenditure of £22,808, showing a profit of £2,002.

Grants and donations

We would like to offer a big thank you to the following for their support in the financial year 2021-2022;

- Local Giving (Magic Little Grants)
- HMRC Furlough grant
- Devon Community Fund – Thrive with Five
- Devon County Council - Reconnect, Rebuild, Recover grant
- Awards for All

We received a ward grant from Cllr Williams (Exeter City Council) to enable us to provide craft activities at The Beacon Fun days over the Summer holidays.

We also received a ward grant from Cllr Moore (Exeter City Council) towards funds for a new roof for Exeter Scrapstore.

Nicky Jeffrey (Treasurer)

Merry Go Round Toy Libraries

Statistics and Monitoring Information 2022

Memberships

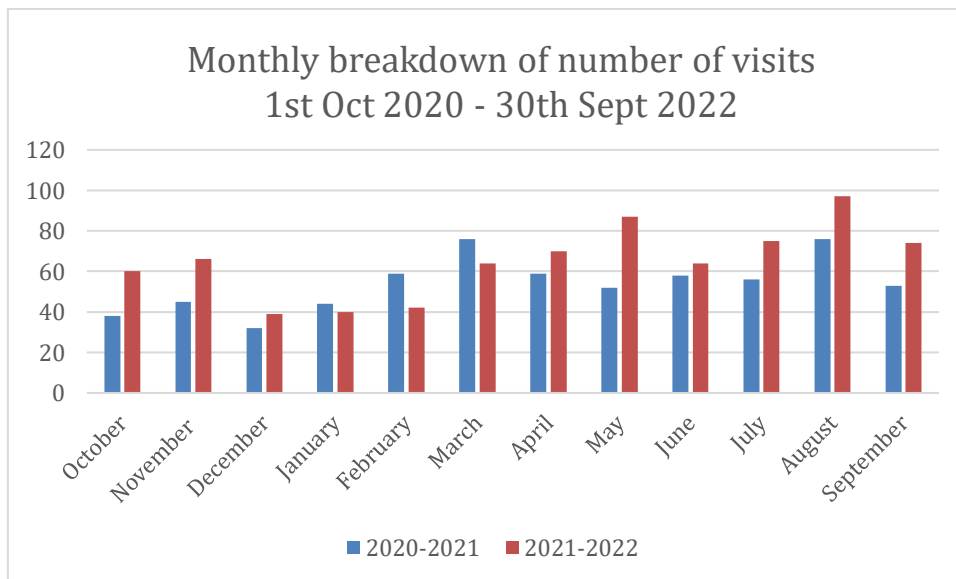
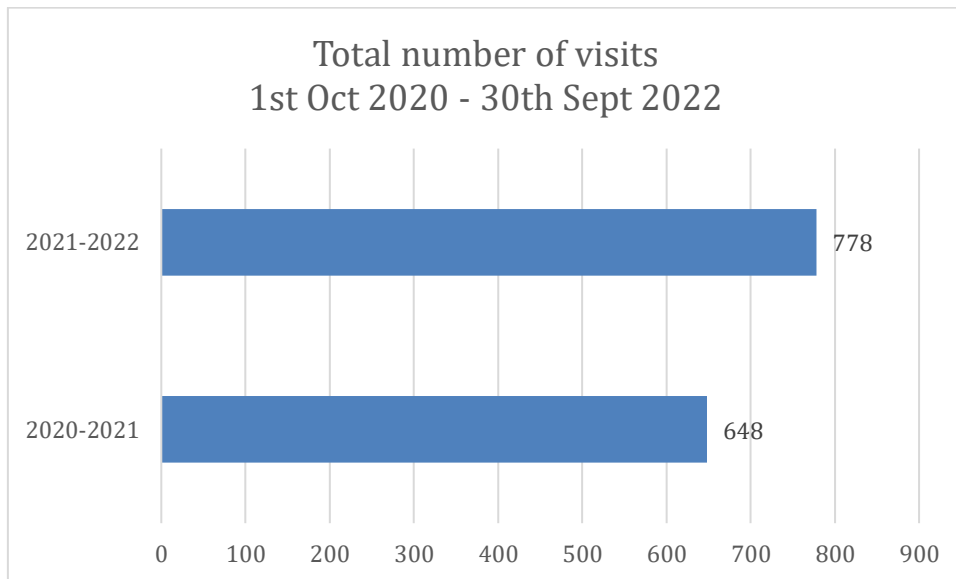
Following the closures during Covid lockdown, we were able to reopen Merry Go Round Toy Library in July 2020 and Spinning Top in April 2021. Membership allows families and groups to use either or both libraries, therefore it is not possible to differentiate membership numbers between the two libraries.

We can see from the graphs below that the number of members joining the Toy Library between 1st October 2021 and 30th September 2022 has increased by 20% and is continuing to grow. We currently we have a record number of families and groups using the toy libraries. We feel that the need for the toy libraries will continue to increase as more families feel financial pressure due to rising living costs.



Number of Visits to the Toy Library and Toy Hires

Merry Go Round and Spinning Top each open once per week throughout the year. The graphs show that in the last 12 months 778 visits were made to the Toy Libraries in comparison to 648 in the same period during 2020-2021. This is a 17% increase in the number of visits this year which is similar to the increase in membership (20%).



Visits refer to the number of bookings/collections made and do not include visits to return toys or to find out more about the services.

During visits members borrowed 1381 toys during the period 1st October 2021 – 30th September 2022, compared to 1361 in the same period the previous year. This is a small increase and shows that our service remains popular, accessible and well used by the local community. The graph below shows a breakdown of toy hire month by month.



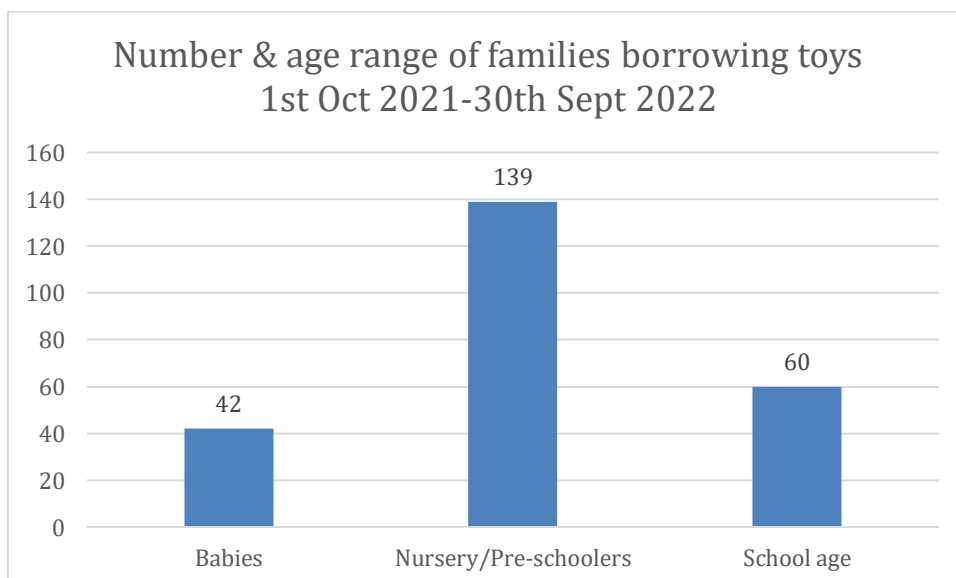
Monitoring Information

Over the last 12 months we asked family and group members to fill in monitoring forms. 118 families, representing 241 children completed the forms. Five groups, representing approximately 220 children also completed forms. Group membership has been used over the past year to support schools and events where many children are present.

For analysis purposes we were only able to use information collected from family membership forms. We ignored group information because groups were only able to provide partial information on ages, ethnicities and additional needs.

Not all families with membership completed monitoring forms. Analysing completed family membership forms, we can see that of those using our service 25% (60 children) were of school age, 58% (139 children) were of nursery/preschool age and 17% (42 babies) were babies.

This information is useful to inform us which types of toys to stock. Many toy libraries only cater for preschool aged children whilst we provide for children of all ages.



Ethnicity Information

We found 36 children (15%) from our sample of family memberships were from minority ethnic backgrounds. These figures do not include group memberships (which we know includes at least 20 Ukrainians), or families who declined to give ethnicity information. We also know some of our families with English as a second language did not complete forms.

The first language of parents included German, Mandarin, French, Greek, Pakistani, Italian, Georgian, Norwegian, Ukrainian and Arabic. Each year we see a different range of first languages which is a reflection of the transient diversity within Exeter and the need for a toy library service to support people who are new to the area. We will continue to make outreach visits over the coming year to let more people know about the toy library service.

Health and Social Needs

We found that children had a range of additional needs and disabilities. Some children were on the Devon Assessment Framework requiring additional support. There were also a range of health needs including: language delay; global delays; social needs; genetic disorders; hypermobility; low muscle tone and Prader Willi syndrome.

Andrea Bristow (Toy Library Co-ordinator)

Members' Feedback Report 2022

During August and September 2022, we asked members to fill in feedback forms when they visited the toy library to find out in what ways, if any, children and families were benefiting from using the toy libraries. We also wanted to hear any ideas for making things even better.

A total of 31 forms were completed by families representing 45 children who have borrowed and played with our toys. The children's ages ranged from a few months to 12 years.

An overwhelming 100% told us that using the toy libraries had helped them find toys which were right for their child's interest and level of development, with 97% saying these had helped their child gain new skills or promoted their development.

- *We love using the toy library and now lots of our friends do too*
- *My daughter loves using the wide range of toys on offer. Such a fab service.*
- *My son has really enjoyed the items we have borrowed so far and it has assisted in knowing what he likes.*

84% of parents/carers had gained more knowledge of how their children played at different ages and stages, with 77% saying borrowing our toys had increased the amount of interaction between them and their child.

- *We love it! It is a highlight of our fortnight deciding and collecting.*
- *Good activity in itself! Also learning about sharing and looking after toys.*
- *You were recommended by the speech therapist so that we could try different toys to support his language and interaction and you have really helped us.*
- *My son is difficult to entertain and the toy library has helped with this and he loves the variety of toys.*
- *We really appreciate the toy library and the many different toys they offer. My children are so excited when I say we'll go collect some toys from the toy library.*



87% of our members tell us they have borrowed toys they wouldn't normally have been able to afford to buy or have space in their homes to store. It is our aim to ensure that all children are able to play and have fun regardless of financial background.

- *With the cost of living increase, we cannot afford the interesting, fun toys our children would love to try but the toy library enables them to do this!*
- *Love the Toy Library. Allows us to explore toys we either couldn't afford or have space for.*

- *I love the toy library because it gives us the opportunity to try toys that are expensive and see if my child likes them without the financial gamble and it frees up space in the house because we can borrow large toys instead of storing them.*

Over 94% of members now bought fewer toys which is better for the environment.

- *I particularly like the fact that toy libraries promote environmental sustainability, with toys being kept in circulation instead of cluttering peoples' home/going to landfill.*
- *Such a good environmentally friendly way of giving my children new toys to enjoy.*
- *I use the library to reduce my waste/plastic use.*
- *We have really enjoyed using the toy library mainly for its eco-credentials - most toys seem to be used for 2 weeks and forgotten about and here we can actually return them for other children to use and borrow different ones.*

100% of the members who completed our annual feedback survey told us that they had benefited from talking to staff. We have regular contact with families in person when they collect and return toys as well as through social media. At The Beacon many families now stay, play and chat which allows our staff to build relationships and get to know individual parents and children.

- *We have consulted with the staff to find the most suitable toys. Thank you so much for all your help and support.*
- *Always amazing, helpful staff.*



Most members (87%) told us that the online booking service is proving easy to use. Glitches do happen and there are some limitations as to what the system can do, particularly with regard to searching, but overall LendEngine provides a fantastic non-profit service to our toy library. Our staff are on hand to provide online assistance for those who need it. We do always act on suggestions for improvements where we can.

In recent months many of our members said they have been missing the opportunity to stay and play since the Covid pandemic.

- *Nice if you could reopen for browsing/open play*
- *Any plans for Stay and Play?*

Limited space at Exeter Scrapstore and our new online booking system provide many logistical issues with stay and play. We are now experimenting with a new way of working at The Beacon, allowing families to stay, play and chat; so far this is working really well.



The feedback provided by our members is always helpful for making improvements. The annual feedback this year gives us confidence that we are meeting our aims and objectives: providing quality toys to local children; helping their development through play and having fun and giving advice and support to parents as needed.

- *We love the toy library!*

Andrea Bristow (Toy Library Manager)