



Annual Report
November 2024

Registered Charity No 1100532

Contents

- Trustees, Committee Members and Staff
- Merry Go Round Toy Library
- Spinning Top Toy Library
- Volunteers and Committee Members
- Chair's Report
- Toy Library Co-ordinator's Report
- Treasurer's Report
- Annual Statistics and Monitoring Information
- Members' Feedback Report

Merry Go Round Toy Libraries

Trustees and Committee Members November 2024

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 Co-ordinator/Manager)

Staff Members

Kelly Allan (Cover Toy Librarian)

Fiona Daughton (Cover Toy Librarian)

Faye Winsor (Cover Toy Librarian)

Kerri Henderson (Cover Toy Librarian)

Merry Go Round Toy Library

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

Families and groups are able to browse and reserve toys online ready for collection or come into the toy library and choose.

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 £8 per year

Group membership £16 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 £1.50.



We make no charge for accidental breakages, but do ask for toys to be returned in a clean condition. We do check and clean toys again before they are returned to stock.

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 £8 per year

Group membership £16 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 £1.50.



We make no charge for accidental breakages, but do ask for toys to be returned in a clean condition. We do check and clean toys again before they are returned to stock.

Opening Hours

Fridays: 10am–1.00pm

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 toys 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 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, including the AGM and our summer and winter socials
- use their skills to support the toy library – some are officers e.g. Chair, Treasurer or Secretary, each of whom has their own responsibilities
- help with publicity
- link in with everything else going on in the project such as fundraising

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

To join and book toys, go to my.mgrtoylibrary.org, and for updates and photos visit our Facebook page at 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 2024 AGM

It's been another really busy year at the toy library, both during toy library sessions and behind the scenes to ensure that everything runs smoothly!

In recent years we have really enjoyed decorating a tree as part of the Princesshay Charity Christmas Tree Festival. It's becoming a bit of a tradition for us now! The trees are definitely worth a visit to help you get in the festive spirit. You'll find them located alongside the former Debenhams in Exeter. Here are some of our committee, a committee husband and young volunteers just after we had finished putting on the decorations last November!



We do love our social events, but it is challenging to find a time when we can all make it. Once again we met for our Christmas party in January! We enjoyed dinner, drinks and taking part in the quiz (which Kelly kindly put together for us) at Bill's!

In June we were once again part of the Respect Festival and our stall was located in the children's area. We provided circus skills, a play dough table, and committee member Helene made some fabulous tissue paper flowers with the children.

This year our Toy Librarian, Kelly, has moved on to pastures new. We thank her for eight years welcoming members, and her energy and expertise. We do wish her all the best in her new role. It isn't a goodbye thankfully: Kelly remains as a committee member and cover toy librarian; you'll still occasionally see her at Merry Go Round.



Welcome Faye and Kerri! Faye and Kerri are our new cover Toy Librarians and we are delighted that they are joining us. They will be welcoming toy library members at Merry Go Round and Spinning Top and helping them choose fun toys to enjoy at home very soon! Faye is shown photographed here but we have yet to get a photo of Kerri!

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. Importantly, next year Merry Go Round Toy Libraries will be 25 years old! Celebration planning is underway and we hope to see you there!

Alex Allan (Chair)

Toy Library Co-ordinator's Report for the 2024 AGM

The toy library service has been very well used this past year both at Merry Go Round and Spinning Top: it has certainly felt very busy! Both membership and the number of toys borrowed continue to steadily increase each year and I love welcoming new members to the toy library.

At Spinning Top there is a comfortable space available for families to stay and play with the toy library toys and I am delighted to see so many families enjoy this opportunity to play with their child, chat with the staff and play and chat with other families too. Spinning Top has become so popular with families that in January it was necessary for us to move to a larger room to ensure we could safely accommodate everyone: this really does make me very happy!



Our toys are borrowed many times and eventually they do start to show wear and tear. We are so thankful to Warburtons Community Grant, Hendy Foundation and Councillor Aves, who have provided funding to replace some of our most worn and loved toys for the toy libraries. We also have lots of fun new toys available to borrow as they provided funding to purchase some new toys suggested by our members!

We are very thankful to Councillor Ruth Williams who provided funding for some fun craft activities for children and their families at The Beacon 'fun days' over the school holidays. These events always prove to be very popular. This summer we made some jellyfish and tissue paper flowers.

I spent a fun day in March at the Volunteer Fayre which took place within the beautiful Exeter Cathedral. It was good to chat to so many people and forge some new connections. The committee and I are always keen for new volunteers to join us, and we have welcomed Marta, Faye, Anne Caroline and Leigh this year to our clan: they have all bought their time and skills to the toy library, for which we are most grateful. Ella also joined us on her work experience week from Clyst Vale and was a great help organising our toys.

Families generously donate toys that have been outgrown in their households. Some of these we use in the toy library and others for fundraising sales. We have a trusty pair of volunteers who work very hard to sort, clean, package up and price these toys: enormous thanks to Joy and Fiona! We always really enjoy taking part in fundraising activities and this year they have included the Christmas Fayre at The Beacon, two pop-up toy sales at the toy library (thanks Fiona for organising and manning) and two collections at Morrisons.

The toy library could not exist were it not for our committee and volunteers. It is always hugely rewarding and fun working alongside them. Everyone's valuable time and effort means so much –thank you all for all that you do!



Andrea Bristow (Toy Library Co-ordinator/Manager)

Treasurer's Report for the 2024 AGM

Financial Statement (all figures rounded to nearest pound)

At the end of September 2024, Merry Go Round had a total of £12,336 and Spinning Top had a total of £21,398.

The contingency account has a balance of £4,324, 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.

Annual Accounts

The annual accounts for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 were inspected by the Treasurer to check that proper accounting records had been kept and the accounts agreed with the accounting records. In addition, the accounts were independently examined to ensure our accounting records and annual accounts are supported by the records and accurately reflect the charity's financial affairs.

We would like to thank Exeter Community Accounting, our payroll provider, for their help and advice. We would also like to thank Di Wilkins for independently examining the accounts.

A copy of the statement of accounts is available for anyone who would like to look at it; these accounts will soon be available to view on the Charity Commission website. Our total income for last year was £25,306 with an expenditure of £24,884, showing a surplus of £422.

2023–2024 has been a much better year in terms of finances, with a surplus of £422 as opposed to a deficit of £10,393. This is partly due to our savings made by reducing staff hours and a small increase in lending fees; but mainly to the increased income from fund-raising and grant applications. Thank you to all the Committee members for giving their time at our various fund-raising events. A special thank you must go to Andrea our Toy Library Manager for her hard work and great success with grant applications in very challenging times.

Grants and Donations

We would like to offer a big thank you to the following for their support in the financial year 2023–2024:

- Angela Gallagher Memorial Fund
- National Lottery Awards for All
- Magic Little Grants
- Ward Grant – Cllr Williams (Exeter City Council)
- Locality Budget – Cllr Aves (Devon County Council)
- Hendy Foundation
- YAPP Charitable Trust
- Norman Family Charitable Trust
- Hall and Woodhouse Community Chest
- Gibbons Family Trust

In addition, we would like to offer a big thank you to the following for their support in the financial year 2024–2025 to date:

- Growing Communities Fund (Devon County Council)
- Warburtons Community Grants
- Ward Grant – Cllr Williams (Exeter City Council)
- National Lottery Awards for All

- Angela Gallagher Memorial Fund
- Locality Budget – Cllr Aves (Devon County Council)
- Devon Community Foundation
- Computers for Charities

Nicky Jeffrey (Treasurer)

Merry Go Round Toy Libraries

Statistics and Monitoring Information 2024

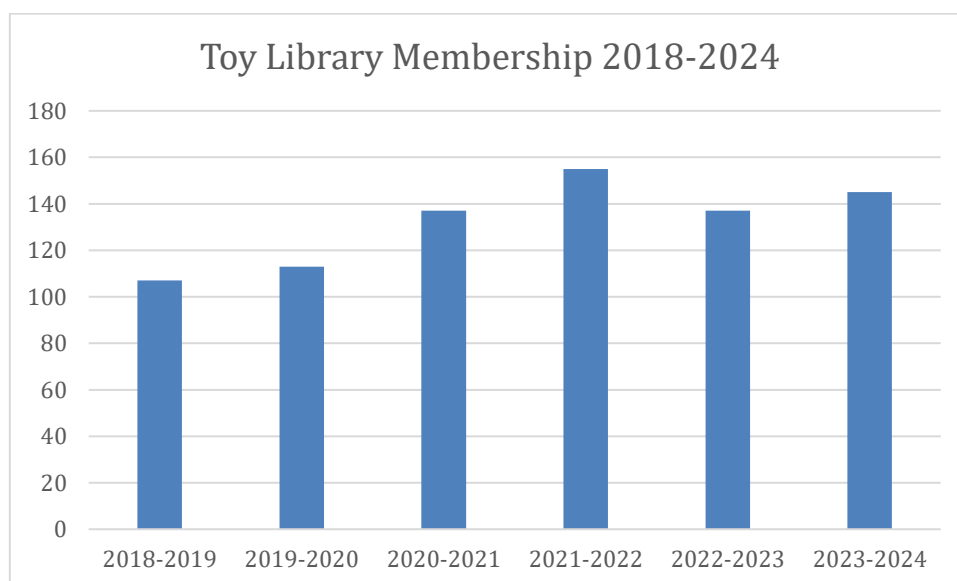
Memberships

Merry Go Round Toy Library membership allows families and groups to use either or both Merry Go Round and Spinning Top Toy Library. It is therefore not possible to differentiate membership numbers between the two libraries.

During the period 1st October 2023–30th September 2024, the toy library had 145 members either renew their membership or join. Members were mainly families, with 6 group memberships. Monitoring information shows this represented approximately 800 children aged from a few weeks up to 12 years old.

We can see from the graphs below that the number of members joining the toy library between 1st October 2023 and 30th September 2024 is above average. We believe the peak in 2021–2022 is due to more families staying close to home during the school holiday periods following the easing of Covid restrictions.

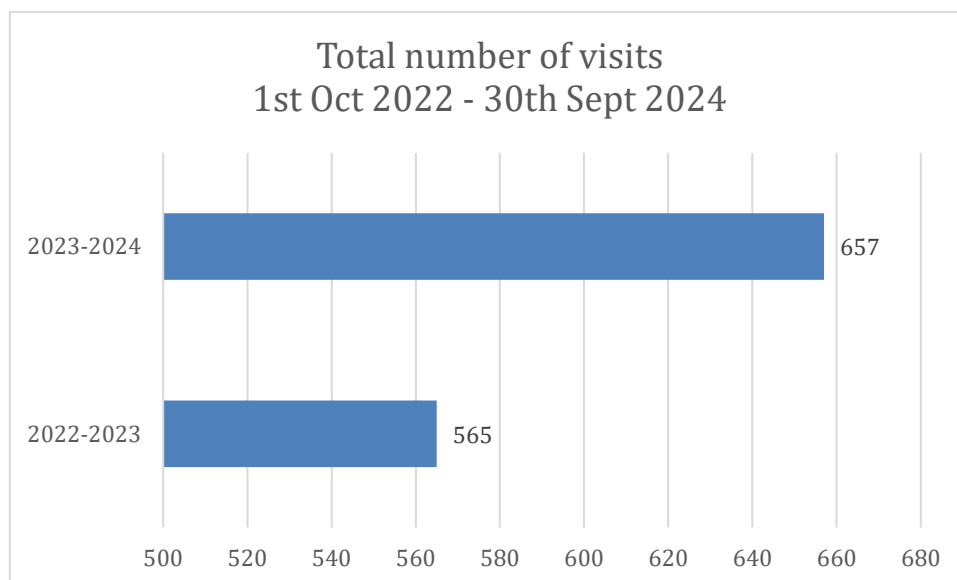
We do make members and potential members aware that a family member or friend is able to collect and return toys on their behalf. We want our service to be as accessible to as many families as possible.



Number of Visits to the Toy Library and Toy Hires

Merry Go Round and Spinning Top each open once per week throughout the year, with the exception of Good Friday and Christmas.

During the period 1st October 2023–30th September 2024, 657 visits were made to the toy libraries. Visits refer to the number of bookings/collections made and do not include visits to return toys, to play, or to find out more about the services. We believe this large increase in visits is due to the increasing popularity of Spinning Top: families choose to come to play and then borrow toys they have enjoyed playing with during the session.



During visits members borrowed 1,586 toys during the period 1st October 2023–30th September 2024, compared to 1,422 in the same period the previous year. Each toy hire is calculated for a 2-week loan period, and if a toy is out for 4 weeks it is recorded as 2 hires (2 lots of 2 weeks).

There is a continued annual increase in toy hire, showing 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. August was significantly quieter this year, with a larger number of our members away on holiday than normal, but July was far busier than previous years.



Monitoring Information

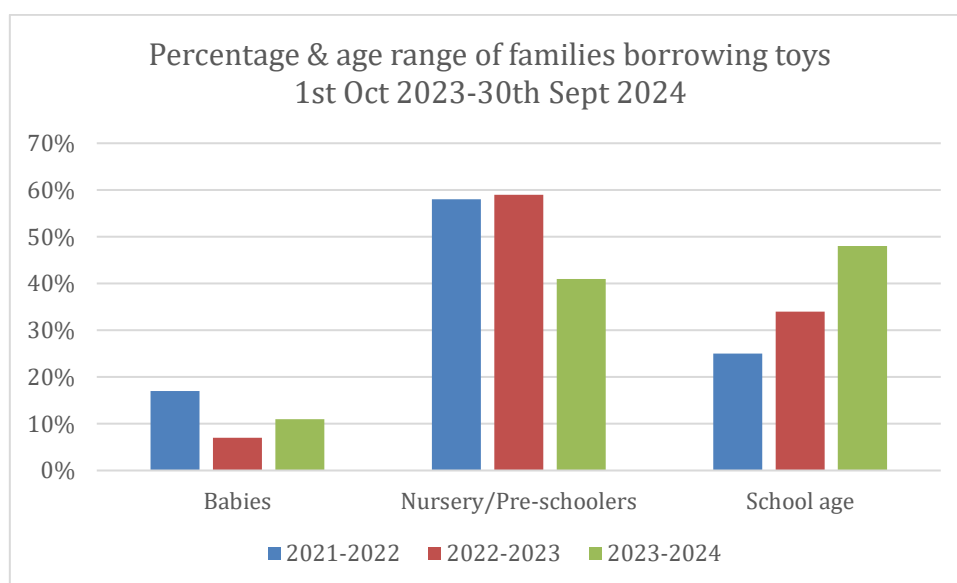
Over the last 12 months we asked family members to fill in monitoring forms. 103 families representing 461 children completed the forms.

Group membership has been used over the past year to support schools and events where many children are present. For analysis purposes we are only able to use information collected from family membership forms as 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, 48% (222 children) were of school age, 41% (188 children) were of nursery/preschool age and 11% (51 babies) were under 13 months old.

We have seen a continued large increase in the number of families with school-age children accessing the toy library service. We have promoted the range of toys we have for school-age children and contacted local schools to ask if they would include information about the toy library in their newsletters. Merry Go Round is open until 4.30pm on a Tuesday and several families visit us between 3.30–4.30pm on their way home to choose toys. Both toy libraries are open during the school holidays, with the exception of Christmas and Good Friday, which allows school-age children further opportunity to visit us.

We will schedule in some further visits to local baby and toddler groups to ensure that new families know about the service we offer.



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 44 children (10%) from our sample of family memberships were from minority ethnic backgrounds. These figures do not include group memberships or families who declined to give ethnicity information. We also know that some of our families with English as a second language did not complete forms.

The first language of parents/carers included German, Bulgarian, Dari, Turkish, French, Norwegian, Ukrainian, Malayalam, Mandarin, Spanish, Romanian and Persian. Once again this 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 including autism, language delay, global delays, Down's Syndrome, genetic disorders, ADHD and Williams Syndrome.

Families have been referred to us by the Step by Step group in order for children to access specific sensory toys to support their early years complex needs. These toys, which are too expensive for most families to be able to purchase, are often borrowed for several months at a time.

Inspire Wellbeing, a local company working with young people with autism and intellectual disability, currently use the toy library service to support their work with particular families. In addition, a local Special Educational Needs school borrows our toys to support its work with a group of children with autism.

Andrea Bristow (Toy Library Co-ordinator/Manager)

Members' Feedback Report 2024

During August and September 2024, our members were asked to fill in feedback forms when they visited the toy libraries 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 28 forms were completed by families, representing 47 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 100% saying these had helped their child gain new skills or promoted their development.

- *We really love using the toy library and think it has a really good range of toys to suit different ages and interests*
- *Watching him play with [the toys] and being able to play together has been joyful as has seeing how the toys have aided his skill development*
- *The toy library has given us access to a wide variety of toys that otherwise we would not have had.*

93% of parents/carers had gained more knowledge of how their children played at different ages and stages, with 90% saying borrowing our toys had increased the amount of interaction between them and their child.

93% 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.



- *Our son has been able to play with toys that we would never have thought to buy (either due to not known about or cost)*
- *Great service, invaluable in terms of meeting needs of children with complex needs and resources for less affluent families*

93% of members now bought fewer toys, which is better for the environment, ensuring toys are kept in circulation. Many members have informed us that they really enjoy using the toy library for its eco-credentials.

- *The Toy Library has helped us to save money and reduce our environmental impact*
- *Great for the environment and to try out things.*

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, choose or return toys as well as through email and social media. At Spinning Top, located at The Beacon, the majority of families now stay, play and chat which allows our staff to build relationships

and get to know individual parents/carers and children. In January it was necessary to move to a larger room at The Beacon to accommodate all these wonderful families!

Space is limited at Merry Go Round but we are now experimenting with bringing toys out and off the shelves for children to interact with during the session and there is a small space for a family or two to explore the toys and play.

- *We love the stay and play, it really stretches our daughter to see the other children playing with the toys and trying out new ones*
- *It's such a warm and friendly environment*
- *We love coming to play on a Friday and choosing new toys with the help of Andrea, who is both knowledgeable and kind and generous with her time*
- *Such a great service and very friendly and relaxed staff*

96% of our members told us that the online booking service is proving easy to use.

- *Website is really great, find it easy to navigate*
- *Really easy to extend the time you have toys*

Feedback this year has indicated that members would like further options to filter toys online by age. This is challenging as many toys are accessed by children of different ages and with differing abilities and needs: we do not wish to be too definitive. We will explore this further and see what we can do.



A 'wish list' on the website has also been suggested so that users can save items they want to borrow in the future. Unfortunately, there are some limitations as to what the system can do but we will certainly feed this recommendation back to Lend Engine. Overall, Lend Engine 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.

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/carers as needed.

Andrea Bristow (Toy Library Co-ordinator/Manager)

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT
MERRY GO ROUND TOY LIBRARIES
For Period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

Balances brought forward at 1st April 2023	£		
Merry Go Round Toy Library			
Bank Account	10,339.85		
Cash	10.44		
	<u>10,350.29</u>		
 Spinning Top Toy Library			
Bank Account	6,550.43		
Cash	7.79		
	<u>6,558.22</u>		
Contingency Account (designated funds for redundancies & sickness pay)	4240.49		
Total balance carried forward			21,149.00
<u>Income</u>			
Merry Go Round Toy Library			
Toy Hire and Membership fees	4,408.90		
Fundraising/donations	2,297.01		
Refunds/other	8.99		
Grants (see notes)	8,320.00		
		<u>15,034.90</u>	
Spinning Top Toy Library			
Toy hire			
Membership fees			
Deposits in			
Grants (see notes)	10,220.00		
Transfer from contingency account	-		
donations/fundraising	-		
		<u>10,220.00</u>	
Contingency Account			
Interest		<u>51.06</u>	
Total			<u>25,305.96</u>
Income from toy libraries plus starting balance plus contingency income			<u>46,454.96</u>
 <u>Expenditure</u>			
Merry Go Round Toy Library			
Salaries & oncosts	12,081.86		
Equipment	1,249.86		
Publicity/Administration	213.81		
Fundraising costs/memberships	320.68		
Insurance/utility bills/phone	906.14		
LendEngine fees	40.99		
PPE/zip wallets/batteries	16.00		
Other	3.08		
		<u>14,832.42</u>	

Spinning Top Toy Library		
Salaries & oncosts	7,289.23	
Rent	1,911.60	
Admin/Publicity	173.80	
Insurance	395.14	
Other/Repairs	281.89	
	10,051.66	
Contingency Account		
Transfer to Spinning Top	-	-
Total Expenditure		24,884.08
Surplus/Deficit		421.88
Closing balances as at 31st March 2024		
Merry Go Round Toy Library		
Bank	10,542.33	
Cash	10.44	
	10,552.77	
Spinning Top Toy Library		
Bank	6718.77	
Cash	7.79	
	6,726.56	
Contingency Account		
Total	4291.55	21,570.88
Expenditure plus closing balances		46,454.96

Checked by Treasurer Signed *N. Jeffrey* Date *30/4/24*
Prepared by Manager Signed *AL. Bristol* Date *13/5/24*

Notes: Most expenses this year paid from MGR account. All income from toy hires and memberships paid into MGR account.

Grants

Angela Gallagher Memorial Fund	£1,000	Awarded April 2023- Salaries and oncosts Merry Go Round (MGR)
Awards for All	£9,985	Awarded May 2023 - Spinning Top Salaries and Rent
Magic Little Grants	£500	Awarded May 2023 - Outreach visits
Ward Grant - Beacon Heath	£235	Awarded June 2023 - Fun Day craft activities at The Beacon
Locality Budget - Cllr Aves	£320	Awarded June 2023 - Replacement Toys
Hendy Foundation	£500	Awarded October 2023 - New Toys
YAPP	£2,000	Awarded November 2023 - Salaries and oncosts Merry Go Round
The Norman Family Charitable Trust	£1,000	Awarded November 2023 - Salaries and oncosts Merry Go Round
Hall and Woodhouse Community Chest	£2,000	Awarded January 2024 - Salaries and oncosts Merry Go Round
Gibbons Family Trust	£1,000	Awarded January 2024 - Salaries and oncosts Merry Go Round
total	£18,540	



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Merry Go Round Toy and Leisure Library

On accounts for the year
ended

31st March 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1100532

Set out on pages

1 and 2

Remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below *) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Date:

13.6.2024

Name:

DIANA WILKINS

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

None

Address:

BRIARWOOD, CHURCH ROAD
WHIMPLE, E DEVON EX5 2SX

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

None