

# 20<sup>th</sup> LIBRARY 24

## ANNUAL REPORT

WHERE IMAGINATION  
THRIVES

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# Objectives and Activities

## *Our aims*

Our aim, as set out in our charitable objects, is to support and provide for the play and education of children within the London Borough of Lewisham by providing stimulating toys and play equipment. We cater for children from 0 up to around the age of 8. Our range of toys is vast and our toys represent the diverse community we operate in. We have toys for visually impaired children, children on the autistic spectrum and other special needs.

## *Our objectives*

Our objectives are set to reflect the aims of the toy library and to build on and develop the work we have done in previous years. In setting our objectives and planning our activities our trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance. Our objectives for this period were:

- Making use of our additional librarian role – we would ideally like to be able to keep 2 librarians in post so we need to look at how we fund this longer term and how we can develop and grow as a service with 2 librarians at the helm.
- Continuing to work towards a move to new premises. This is still in our sight however there is some work to be done on how we do this and how we fund it.

# Achievements and Performance

## *Chair's Report*

### **Trustees & Volunteers**

The board of trustees have worked hard this year to support the toy library, giving focus, together with the librarians, on how we can improve and innovate the toy library's offering to the community.

Our trusted team of volunteers continue to support the day-to-day running of the toy library, and we couldn't operate without them. Our volunteers are often the first people you'll meet when you come into the toy library and they're on hand, rain or shine, to help when we need them most. Thank you, volunteers, for everything you help us to achieve, and the hours you selflessly donate of your time!

We are always on the lookout for new trustees and volunteers. If you're interested in getting involved and have time and skills to offer, please do get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

### **Membership**

The 2023/2024 financial year started off strong and carried on with an average of approximately 50 new members every month.

We saw a big increase in new subscribers in Spring 2024 as well as a steady number of membership renewals. We currently have 792 active members.

It's lovely to continue to work with our members and support play at home – and to see their children grow!

### **Fundraising**

We were also thrilled to see our members kindly nominate us to their employees for donations- a big thanks to our anonymous member who nominated us to Rothesay Pensions, raising £2,500 to help us continue our work. We were also delighted to receive a donation from Tesco Bags for Help of £500 – thank you to all the shoppers who voted for us in-store. This donation means that we are able to buy some essential storage to keep us

organised! If you would like to fundraise for the Toy Library, please do get in touch. We'd love to help you!

### **Diversifying income**

Last year, we invested in soft play items for our members to hire out. We continue to invest in our range of large toys and take up has been really encouraging. Our soft play hire now raises an additional £1,063 which is a crucial source of income to keep the Toy Library going. Members can now hire out pickler frames, slides, giant Connect-4, ball pits and much more to add a special touch to birthday parties. We also hold a toy sale every three months which has raised £3,351 this year. The benefits of the toys sales are many: not only does it raise much needed income, the sales also to give families access to good quality, affordable toys.

At the end of the year, we needed to take the difficult decision to raise our membership fees for the first time in seven years. The cost of living crisis has impacted every corner of society so it was not a decision easily reached, however it was one that needed to be taken for the Toy Library to be financially viable. Thank you to all our members who agreed to continue their membership at the new rate, and an extra special thank you to those who made donations.

### **Librarians**

As ever, Magdalena continues to do an outstanding job as our Toy Library Manager. Her dedication and passion support the toy library to go from strength to strength, and she's always on hand to help members explore our range of toys. Olivia's role as a member-facing librarian has been a fantastic addition to the library, and we thank Olivia for being such a positive addition to the team.

Sadly, there were some instances of aggressive behaviour towards our librarians. However we were really touched by the calls of support and concern from our members – thank you to our community for making our team feel valued and appreciated. It really does make a huge difference.

### **Operations**

We continue to use Lend Engine to keep track of our stock and memberships and create reports to analyse any trends. With our stock continuing to grow, we are keen to focus next year on improving the experience for members when taking out or renewing the toys so please do get in touch if you can help!

## Social Media

In 2024, our social media presence experienced modest growth:

- Instagram: Followers increased from 680 in 2023 to 851 in 2024, marking a steady improvement. Our top-performing Instagram reel, featuring a video by local influencer @allfunadventures, achieved 2,427 views.
- Facebook: Follower count remained static at 641. Although our toy sale content reached 1.1k people, overall engagement declined compared to 2023.
- Content Challenges: We posted less frequently this year due to limited volunteer time for content creation and social media management.
- Twitter (X): Followers dropped slightly to 467, as we ceased active posting following the platform's transition under Elon Musk.

## Website

Our website, [lewishamtoylibrary.org.uk](http://lewishamtoylibrary.org.uk), performed strongly:

- Visitor Numbers: In 2024, the site received 38,399 visitors from 10,686 active users, who viewed an average of 3.5 pages per visit.
- Top Pages: The homepage remains the most visited page, followed by the party hire and membership joining pages.
- Data Comparison: Year-on-year comparisons are unavailable due to changes in Google Analytics methodology with the deprecation of Universal Analytics mid-year.

## Google Search Performance

Lewisham Toy Library continues to excel in search engine rankings:

- We hold the top position for all searches related to "Lewisham Toy Library".
- For broader terms like "toy library London," we rank third, surpassing many other London-based toy libraries.

## Email Communications

- Fewer Emails Sent: We prioritised quality over quantity, focusing on cleaning our database and sending mass emails only when necessary.
- Outstanding Open Rates: Emails achieved an impressive 75% open rate.
- Automated Features: This year, we introduced automated reminders for toy returns and membership renewals, enhancing the member experience.

## Premises

We are still none the clearer on where the Toy Library will be relocated to once the demolition of the shopping centre starts in 2025. We have yet to be given a clear date for when this phase of Lewisham's redevelopment will happen, the need for a new home is becoming increasingly urgent. The trustees continue to explore alternative venues and hope for more of a steer from the developers in the coming year.

## Future Projects

For the year ahead we are focussing on: -

- Continuing to work towards a move to new premises. This is still in our sight however we need to find the right space that suits the practical needs of the library and also our members, while ensuring it is a financially sustainable move
- Continue to diversify and work with partners so we widen our offering to the community, and generate more income to ensure our financial stability and reduce our deficit.
- Improving the user experience for members when borrowing, renewing or returning toys to make it an even smoother process for them, our volunteers and librarians
- Focusing on building our pool of invaluable volunteers and improving our systems to support for them
- Strengthening our marketing efforts, we aim to:
  - Expand Volunteer Support: Recruit new volunteers skilled in social media to improve the frequency and quality of our posts. We have tools like a Canva Pro license and a ready-to-use brand suite to support them.
  - Enhance the Website: Explore ways to make the site more functional by embedding:
    - Online booking experiences
    - A toy library catalogue
    - Registration forms for new members
  - Improve Content:
    - Develop blog posts to promote services to community partners.
    - Expand and optimise pages on party hire and donations.

We reach this AGM feeling more hopeful about the future and remain committed to running the service as best as we can for our members, our community and our team.

The board of trustees have worked hard this year to support the toy library, giving focus, together with the librarians, on how we can improve and innovate the toy library's offering to the community.

# *Toy Library Manager's Report*

## **Overview**

This has been yet another busy year for the library, which we are always grateful for.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our volunteers and members for the respect, love and support (and countless cups of coffees and hot chocolates) that you have shown us every day - it keeps us going :)

We've been very lucky to have a huge amount of donations that allow us to refresh our stock regularly and remove tired looking items.

We decided to keep the appointment system in place due to the space being very limited and the library getting busier every year. We were forced to close the 4th slot to make space for 'walk-ins' as we are getting an increased number of those and are conscious of the overcrowding.

## **Volunteers**

We have a steady number of volunteers, with Martin being our longest standing volunteer and Rochelle being our newest addition. We have seen a return of some of our volunteers from years ago.

Mark and Laura, who first volunteered with us 8 years ago, have come back for the summer, with Mark helping out beyond that and Laura going off to her TA's job.

We also welcomed back Ashleigh, who started with us as a 14 year old DofE student and continued to volunteer through her summer holiday when not in Uni.

We've noticed an increase in the number of students wishing to do their work experience with us as well as the return of DofE students.

And again a huge thank you to Lucie H. for the incredible effort put into sorting out a donation of Sylvanian Families and adding it to our stock for our older clientele to enjoy.

## **Stock**

We are currently nearing the 6,000 toys mark and keeping a close eye on our stock levels as we are starting to struggle with space.

We are also pleased to report that our Party Hire is extremely popular and brings a lot of joy to our community. It also makes us feel very privileged to be a part of so many special events.



# Financial Review

## *Treasurer's Report*

During the year to 31 March 2024, I am pleased to report that Lewisham Toy Library has maintained the strong base of sustainable membership income built up in the prior year, with membership income continuing to be higher than it was pre-pandemic. This is an outstanding achievement and testament to the support of our members, and dedication of our wonderful toy librarians and volunteers.

The Lewisham Toy Library must continue to focus on building sustainable sources of income to cover increased running costs, which have grown at a higher rate than income due to the cost of hiring a second toy librarian in 2023 (hired on a fixed term basis).

### Income

In the year to 31 March 2024, the toy library continued to operate at full capacity, with membership income remaining stable vs the previous financial year at around £26k. As noted in last year's annual report, this is an increase on the year to 31 March 2020, which was the last period largely untouched by the pandemic. Income from Party Hire and Toy Sale income streams was also stable vs the previous financial year, growing slightly from £3.8k to £4.4k.

The toy library also benefited from the following one-off sources of income:

- £4.4k grant income, of which £3.9k is unrestricted, and;
- £4.4k donations, £1.6k higher than the prior year due to one-off donations relating to a fundraising bake sale.

### Costs

Staff costs (toy librarian salaries) continue to be the toy library's largest expense, accounting for 78% of total running costs (up from 70% in the previous financial year). In the year to 31 March 2024, staff costs were £32k, representing an £8k increase on prior year driven by the first full year of second toy librarian costs being incurred. Remaining running costs were broadly in line with prior years.

## **Reserves**

Reserves continue to be healthy at the end of the year at £76.8k. This is more than sufficient to cover 3 months running costs as per our reserves policy. As such, the toy library has continued to renew the contract of the second librarian on a fixed term basis. However, it should be noted that the position is unsustainable by current income levels and the toy library must consider how it can use the position to generate additional income or find other funding for the position through grants and donations. Reserves should not be relied upon to fund the cost of the second toy librarian over the longer term.

# Structure, Governance & Management

The Trustees of the Toy Library are responsible for the overall management and control of the charity and meet monthly to guide, plan and review the work of the charity.

The Toy Library is an unincorporated association and all trustees and staff adhere to the governing documents (Constitution and Code of Governance) to ensure that the charity is delivering its objectives and is managed effectively.

The Chair of the board of trustees is responsible for the personnel management of employed library staff and the employed librarians are responsible for the management and guidance for the Toy Library's volunteers.

The Treasurer is responsible for overseeing the financial management of the Library and to assist with this, the charity employs a bookkeeper to prepare accounts and reports for monthly review by the Treasurer and Trustee committee

## **Trustee selection**

The board of Trustees seek to ensure that there is a good breadth and depth of skills and experience on the board to effectively carry out its duties. When recruiting new trustees we look for individuals who:

- Align to the aims of the Toy Library and have an interest in the work we do.
- Represent our local community and member base
- Bring skills or experience which will enhance the board of trustees and ultimately benefit the library and its members.

We advertise for trustees locally in the Toy Library, in local forums (e.g. Lewisham Local) and via our social media channels. Potential Trustees are invited to meet with the current board at a monthly Trustee meeting and from there are officially voted to the board by our library members at the next AGM.

All trustees give of their time freely and no remuneration or expenses were paid in the year. No Trustee or person connected with a Trustee received any benefit in relation to the Toy Library and their work as a member of the board.

# Reference and Administrative Details

## *Charity Details*

Lewisham Toy Library

Registered Charity Number: 271496

Address: Unit 46 Molesworth Street, London SE13 7EP

## *Trustee Details*

The following Trustees acted for the charity within the financial year covered by this report.

Trustee Name	Position held on board	Date appointed	Date of resignation	Appointed by
Jennifer Luk	Co-Chair	October 2019	N/a	AGM member vote 2019
Elizabeth Stevenson	Co-Chair	September 2022	N/a	AGM member vote 2022
Elisabeth Poirel	Secretary	January 2014	N/a	AGM member vote 2014
Joanne Harrison	Treasurer	May 2023	N/a	Board of trustees 2023
Justine Vella	Trustee	July 2019	N/a	AGM member vote 2019
Sara Hill	Trustee	November 2020	N/a	Board of trustees 2020
Emma Pello	Trustee	September 2021	N/a - sabbatical leave	Board of trustees 2021
Jill Hamilton	Trustee	February 2022	N/a	Board of Trustees 2021
Chitra Laras	Trustee	October 2024	N/A	Board of Trustees 2024

# Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

<b>Signature:</b> <b>Full name:</b> Jennifer Luk <b>Position:</b> Co-Chair of the board of trustees <b>Date:</b> 20.11.2024	<b>Signature:</b> <b>Full name:</b> Elizabeth Stevenson <b>Position:</b> Co-Chair of the board of trustees <b>Date:</b> 21.11.2024
<b>Signature:</b> <b>Full name:</b> Elisabeth Poirer <b>Position:</b> Secretary <b>Date:</b> 20.11.2024	<b>Signature:</b> <b>Full name:</b> Joanne Harrison <b>Position:</b> Treasurer <b>Date:</b> 20.11.2024
<b>Signature:</b> <b>Full name:</b> Justine Vella <b>Position:</b> Trustee <b>Date:</b> 20.11.2024	<b>Signature:</b> <b>Full name:</b> Sara Hill <b>Position:</b> Trustee <b>Date:</b> 21.11.2024
<b>Signature:</b> <b>Full name:</b> Jill Hamilton <b>Position:</b> Trustee <b>Date:</b> 20.11.2024	

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# Independent examiner's report

## To the trustees of

## Lewisham Toy Library

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I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Lewisham Toy Library for the year ended 31 March 2024.

### **Responsibilities and basis of the report**

As the charity trustees of Lewisham Toy Library 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 charity'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 that give me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

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.

**Caroline Sharp** FCA, DChA  
55 Canberra Road  
LONDON  
SE7 8PF

Date: **22 November 2024**



# Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	01-Apr-23	To	31-Mar-24
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## A. Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
Rothsay Life PLC	2,500	-	-	2,500	-
Bright Funds	1,381	-	-	1,381	-
Grant from Groundwork UK	-	500	-	500	-
Grant from Betty Messenger Charitable Trust	-	-	-	-	5,000
Other donations and gifts	4,322	-	-	4,322	2,771
Toy Library membership subs and fines	25,540	-	-	25,540	26,271
Toy sales	3,351	-	-	3,351	2,593
Party hire	1,063	-	-	1,063	1,233
Lewisham Lottery	274	-	-	274	436
Shopmobility	20	-	-	20	335
Bank interest	155	-	-	155	330
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	<b>38,606</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>39,106</b>	<b>38,969</b>
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>38,606</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>39,106</b>	<b>38,969</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
Staff costs	32,158	-	-	32,158	23,973
Volunteer expenses	-	-	-	-	145
Insurance	1,270	-	-	1,270	1,254
Electricity	1,615	-	-	1,615	772
Cleaning	156	-	-	156	127
Library expenses	2,452	-	-	2,452	2,066
Toys	636	500	-	1,136	504
Telecom Expense	295	-	-	295	371
Computer and IT	-	-	-	-	290
Independent examiner	750	-	-	750	2,500
Bookkeeping and accountancy	600	-	-	600	600
Subscriptions	251	-	-	251	137
Bank fees	631	-	-	631	522
Relocation costs	-	-	-	-	980
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>40,969</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>41,469</b>	<b>34,242</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>40,969</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>41,469</b>	<b>34,242</b>
<b>Net of (payments)/receipts</b>	<b>(2,363)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(2,363)</b>	<b>4,727</b>
<b>A5 Transfers between funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b> (see note 1 below)	<b>79,158</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>79,158</b>	<b>74,431</b>
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>76,795</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>76,795</b>	<b>79,158</b>



## Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period	01-Apr-23	To	31-Mar-24
from			

### B. Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B1 Cash funds</b>	CAF Bank	72,335	-	-
	PayPal	846	-	-
	Zettle	275	-	-
	Barclays	2,606	-	-
	Petty Cash	732	-	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	<b>76,795</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

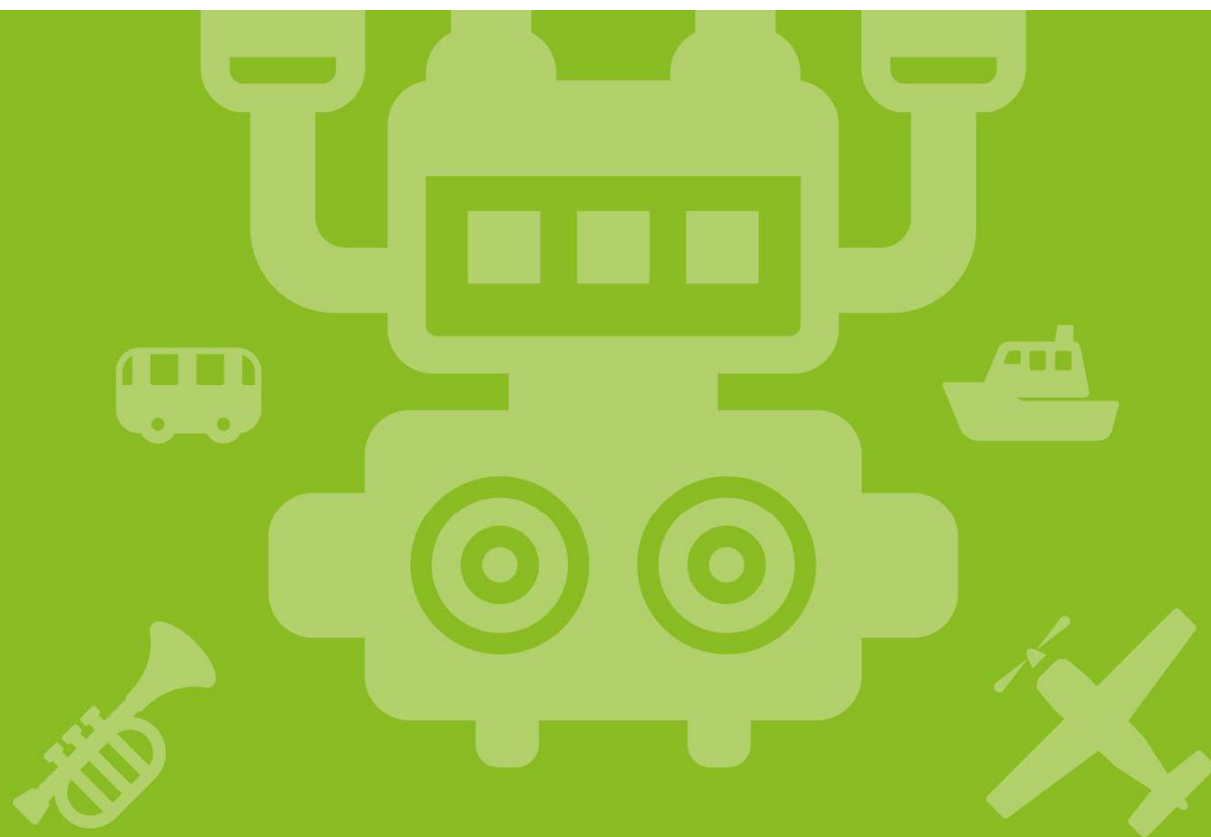
1. The Barclays accounts were not included in the 2023 accounts. The 2023 figures have been restated to include the cash balance as at 1 April 2022 (£289) in the funds b/f, and the income received during the year (£76) in donations. All Barclays accounts were closed in June 2024.

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
<b>B5 Liabilities</b>	Accrued costs - Electricity	Unrestricted	591	
	Accrued costs - Independent Examination	Unrestricted	750	

Signed on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	Jennifer Luk	20-Nov-24
	Joanne Harrison	20-Nov-24





# WHERE IMAGINATION THRIVES



Lewisham Shopping Centre



Tues, Wed, Friday, Saturday



10am to 3pm



0208 297 2735



[lewishamtoylibrary.org.uk](http://lewishamtoylibrary.org.uk)



[librarian@lewishamtoylibrary.org.uk](mailto:librarian@lewishamtoylibrary.org.uk)



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



[@LewToyLibrary](https://twitter.com/LewToyLibrary)