

# Charlton Toy Library

## AGM report

1<sup>st</sup> April 2022  
to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023



Registered Charity Number: 285099  
Charlton House, Horn Fair Road, Charlton SE7 8RE  
Telephone: 020 8319 0055 • Website: [www.charltontoylibrary.co.uk](http://www.charltontoylibrary.co.uk)  
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## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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### **AIMS:**

To promote the principle that play does matter for the developing child.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To make play available and lend appropriate toys to extend the opportunity for shared play into the home.
- To provide play areas where children and adults can use a wide range of toys and creative activities.
- To offer an opportunity to socialise and exchange experiences.
- To offer a befriending and supportive service to parents and carers.

We aim to improve the current quality of life and future life chances of local children by providing a much-needed child-centred support service to families in our main premises at Charlton House and through our outreach service HomeStart and other child-centred groups as well as other hard-to-reach families referred by Health Visitors and other health professionals. We also offer a low-cost toy/book/games and child safety equipment loan scheme.

Many of the children we support through our Outreach Service live in families experiencing poverty and disadvantage, some have suffered domestic violence and many feel isolated. This has a huge negative impact on the children's well-being and development. Our intervention at an early formative stage in their development aims to break the cycle of deprivation by improving their literacy, numeracy, creative & social skills, thus improving their school careers and their future life chances and contributing to stronger, more cohesive communities.

## WHO WE ARE

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Charlton Toy Library is a registered charity offering an inter-linked support service for the under 5s community in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. We operate a toy, book and safety equipment loan scheme and a stay and play service in our main base along with a much-needed Outreach service to support disadvantaged families and children in desperate need.

Charlton Toy Library is a registered charity, governed by a constitution adopted 10th February 1982. It is run by members of a voluntary Management Committee (who are also the charity trustees), staff (a Toy Library Co-ordinator and an Outreach Worker) and volunteers, all helping to run play & borrowing sessions and giving help, support and advice to families.

All the money received from membership, loan fees and fundraising events is spent on toys and Toy Library running costs. We have an Equal Opportunities policy and aim to provide a good selection of multi-cultural and non-sexist toys and books along with impartial advice and support.

“CTL is a fantastic facility, congratulations on running such a great resource for children and parents.”

“I love this place SO much! Coming now with my third child, so it feels like a second home. A favourite place for all my girls. Thank you so much for everything. I was so pleased once you opened again after lockdown. Also, LOVE the singing sessions. Thank you!”

“I can’t thank the Toy Library for everything you have given my daughter, she has everything she needs! I pray for all of you daily.”

“The Toy Library has become part of our weekly routine and I hope it stays that way. We are grateful for all the help we receive and love all the amazing toys!”

## CHAIR'S REPORT BY JOHN STEPHENS

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This is my second year as Chair of Trustees of Charlton Toy Library (CTL) and it has been a year of both challenges and successes.

The financial position of our charity, like most similar organisations, remains precarious. We rely on a range of funding sources, including local fundraising activity, philanthropic organisations, and local authority and national funding streams. The current financial crisis has meant we have significantly increased running costs. Added to this, competition for funding within the charity sector has become more competitive as there is less money to go round. We are finding that securing funding, particularly for our core running costs, is difficult, and our trustee group is making applying for funding our top priority.

Overall in 2022-23 we supported 394 children within 248 families. Of these 33% of families accessed our services at no charge and around 11% paid a concessionary rate, 24% are lone parent families. Support for less-well-off families is particularly important given the current cost-of-living crisis and we will continue to prioritise this demographic. Around 35% of families are from the global majority. Another ongoing priority is to ensure that our membership is genuinely inclusive of the local community, and fully represents the rich ethnic and cultural diversity present in the Borough of Greenwich.

The Outreach service supports families who face barriers to attending CTL in person. During the last year, 189 children within 83 families received direct support via home visits. This support includes not just loan of toys, sensory equipment, books, safety equipment, clothes, shoes, cots, beds prams and buggies, but also a friendly and supportive visit from our Outreach worker Sharon Jay. We also succeeded in drawing down at short notice £5,700 of funding from London Borough of Greenwich to help address the cost-of-living crisis. Through a terrific effort Sharon was able to distribute these funds in the form of supermarket food vouchers to Outreach families during March and April 2023.

Our Outreach worker Sharon Jay very tragically lost her 17 year old son Ben to cancer early in 2022. Sharon is a loyal and long-standing member of staff and we continue to do our utmost to support her and cope with the impact of her bereavement. I would like to express sincere thanks on behalf of all trustees to Sharon for all her hard work and resilience in the face of such adversity.

During 2022-23 the continued appeal of our face-to-face offer post-pandemic at Charlton House has been apparent. This offer comprises toy and equipment loans and interactive stay-and-play sessions for CTL members on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and once-a-month Saturday sessions. Music sessions run by volunteer Susan Wainwright have been particularly popular and are often oversubscribed.

## CHAIR'S REPORT BY JOHN STEPHENS (cont.)

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As well as the regular weekly offer CTL has organised or participated in a range of community events across the year (details of which can be found elsewhere in this report). These events are important for a number of reasons. They provide a way of promoting CTL activity to the wider community, they allow us to interact with similar local organisations and potential partners, and probably most important they are a way of raising much needed funds. We are always grateful when CTL members come and support us at local events.

All of the activity at Charlton House, all of the community events, and much of the administration related to running a charity is organised, managed and supervised by our indefatigable CTL Co-ordinator Vicky Thomas. On behalf of all the trustees I would like to say a massive thank you to Vicky for all her incredible work and for always being prepared to go the extra mile!

I would also like to thank our group of volunteers who perform a vital role and without whom we would find it impossible to operate.

Finally, I would like to thank the trustee group for all their hard work during a year which has again presented some difficult and unforeseen challenges. Sadly we have said goodbye to Dani Kaltenbach, who is leaving the trustee group after 5 years. Thank you so much for all your work and support Dani, we are most grateful, and wish you the very best! Since March, we have recruited two new trustees, Bridget Gourlay and Jo Rollings. Both Bridget and Jo have professional charity sector backgrounds and I know they are going to be tremendous assets to the group!



### **Membership Statistics 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

Families using our main services & outreach service combined: 248 families  
Total number of children helped: 394 children and 271 adults

Outreach families supported (free of charge): 83 families  
Outreach children helped: 180 children

Families supported free of charge: 83 families (33%)  
Families paying concessionary rate: 26 families

Families from global majority backgrounds: 87 families (35%)

New families: 169 families

Lone parent families: 59 families

Grandparent members: 9

Childminders: 4

Families in the SE7 area: 93 families

Families in the SE18 area: 63 families



Our multi-faceted outreach project was in its 10<sup>th</sup> year of funding from BBC Children in Need and we have successfully secured another three-year grant to keep this much-needed support for struggling local families going. In total our very skilled and experienced outreach worker, Sharon, worked with 83 families and their 180 children. This accounts for 33% of our entire membership.

Referral for our services continue to come from many local organisations such as HomeStart, Family Engagement Support Workers from Children's Centers, Health Visitors, Social Workers, The Pre-birth Assessment Team, Best Beginnings Midwives Team, and others too. Some families hear about our services from friends already using our services and refer themselves.

This year we continued to work less with groups as many had still not re-opened after COVID, so Sharon visited most of these families in their own homes. The children supported had many and varied struggles to deal with: many experiencing the effects of low income, 18 had a disability, 23 children were in families experiencing domestic abuse, 33 children lived in situations where the family had no recourse to public funds of any kind. Our aim was to give these children some sense of a "normal" childhood... to just be kids... playing and having fun.

On her first visit to homes Sharon assessed what help was needed. She began by helping to improve the physical wellbeing of children by providing, completely free of charge, essential clothing, beds, prams, baby equipment, child home safety equipment and much more.

Once the safety and physical comfort of the children had improved Sharon then supplied the toys, books and games that families could not afford. These items kept the children constructively occupied. They learnt to play happily within the home, with their parents and with their siblings, improving behaviour and family dynamics. The books and play equipment stimulated their curiosity and improved their learning & development.

Sharon worked with parents and carers, helping them to understand the importance of play in their children's development. These measures together helped children develop and learn, making them better ready for school when the time comes.

## OUTREACH PROJECT REPORT written by trustees

So that you can appreciate all the work carried out please consider the following achievements...

- Sharon made 132 visits to families in their own homes.
- She also made almost 250 support phone calls to families between visits providing much needed help and advice.
- She helped 180 children between 1st April 2022 and March 2023.
- She delivered 358 toys/books and 195 items of child safety equipment.
- She delivered 73 large bags of clothing for children in 32 different families.
- She gave out Christmas presents to 59 children and 26 families received a £50 supermarket voucher each to buy food over the festive season.
- And, amazingly, in the spring, Sharon delivered £5,600 worth of supermarket vouchers to struggling families.
- Sharon helped families with whatever was needed to relieve some of the struggles and disadvantage in their lives such as housing problems and emotional and practical support.
- When needed we linked with other organisations to extend the range of help.

Before Covid quite a few families were coming in to use our main services at Charlton House. We are pleased to see that some outreach families are starting to venture back in to our main services again, where they can socialise with others and reduce their sense of isolation. We hope to see more and more coming in to play in the near future.

The new three-year BBC Children in Need grant will ensure the continuation of these much-needed services throughout the borough. We are truly honoured that the BBC continue to support our outreach service. Last year we celebrated our 40th birthday. We can now work on the next 40 years... so happy in the knowledge that this outreach part of our service is already secure for the next three years.



## TOY LIBRARY CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT by Vicky Thomas

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It has been a very busy and successful year again! I have enormously enjoyed working with our lovely members, our wonderful team of dedicated volunteers and our Trustees and our amazing Outreach Worker Sharon.

From 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2023, we organised several successful events:

- In April we organised an Easter Egg Hunt in Charlton Park, combined with a nearly-new sale at the Toy Library, which attracted a lot of local families.
- In May we took part in a Community Day, organised by CABAHS in the park and offered flower related crafts to children.
- In June we had a stall in the community tent at the TOGETHER 22 festival, which coincided with the late Queen Elizabeth's II Platinum Jubilee celebrations.
- In July we celebrated our 40th Anniversary with a big party at the Charlton Assembly Rooms. Delicious food and drinks were kindly donated by Daryl from the Swan Pub in West Malling and our 40th Birthday cake was cut by Chris Mason, CTL Member and BBC News Political Editor.
- At the beginning of September, a team of volunteers from Santander Bank visited the Toy Library and did a stock take of all our toys, books and safety equipment.
- In September we organised a successful nearly-new sale at the Toy Library.
- In October we had a stall at the Hornfair festival at Charlton House.
- In December we organised a Christmas treasure hunt in Charlton Park and the children met Father Christmas and received a small toy. Inside the Toy Library we organised a nearly-new sale. It was a great day!
- In January we had a visit from the School Crossing Patrol department and the children enjoyed learning how to be safe when crossing roads and loved dressing up and playing with the zebra crossing.
- In February we ran another successful nearly-new sale at the Toy Library.

## TOY LIBRARY CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT by Vicky Thomas (cont.)

- In March we welcomed local mum and children's books author Cara Matheson and her therapy dog Scout. Cara read extracts from her new book and the children enjoyed playing with the props and feeding treats to little Scout.

Other work I have been focusing on this year:

- I continued to support our Outreach service by procuring toys, clothes and safety equipment for our vulnerable families via advertising in local groups. I helped our Outreach worker Sharon organise the Christmas Toy and Food voucher appeal and I am always truly humbled by the generosity of our community.
- This year I became involved in fundraising, both by organising fundraising events and second-hand sales and by finding suitable grants that CTL can apply for.
- I updated our website and posted regularly on our Facebook and Twitter accounts.
- I developed and ran a survey to evaluate our services.

I would like to say a massive thank you to our wonderful volunteers Susan, Jack, Sophie, Julie and Ann as well as our Trustees who always offer their help and support. I am really looking forward to welcoming our members in the next few months!

Thank you,  
Vicky



## TREASURER'S REPORT BY JANINE KHOSHNEVISAN

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We finished the financial year 2022-2023 with a loss of £4,191, using up some of the profits made in 2020-2021 to employ a third member of staff to support the work of our longer-term employees.

We were very grateful to receive several outside grants this year. We would like to mention BBC Children in Need for the 10<sup>th</sup> year of funding towards our much-needed outreach service. We also received grants from the Co-op towards outreach membership, the Woodward Charitable Trust for some play session costs (for the next financial year) and Greenwich Supports who granted us £5,700 funding to support 20 families with supermarket vouchers for food.

We were also very grateful to receive numerous donations too... from Waitrose in Sidcup and from many people across our community who supported our Christmas campaign to ensure food for 40 families over the festive season, along with Christmas presents for their children.

Fundraising events have been very successful too in terms of both the enjoyment had by all and of the funds raised to keep the toy library going. We held an Easter event, a children's second-hand clothes, toys & equipment sales, an amazing Christmas event, and we attended many local festivals and events too. Thank you to everyone who helped out at these events, to those who donated items for sale and to those who came along.

Self-generated income has improved now that we are well past Covid. Fundraising has increased by 25%, membership fee income by 45%, toys loans have doubled and sales at toy library sessions have quadrupled. This is all a sign that the toy library is busy again and thriving. Expenditure increased due to the extra temporary employee. We also spent more on advertising our services, insurance, utilities and training. However, through careful budgeting we managed to reduce running costs.

As we move further away from Covid, the local community has continued to support us. We are incredibly honoured and grateful. We are especially pleased to welcome several new trustees on to the management committee, bringing new skills and working hard on building up our finances and on securing the long-term prospects of our services.

Our continued thanks go to Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust for their continued help-in-kind through the peppercorn rent of our premises and to the Atlas Business Group who continue to provide our internet services for free, as do Fire Action Ltd.

The funds that we raise are never enough to run the toy library and for this reason we would like to thank all those who help keep us going. Thank you to all our volunteers who help at sessions and events. Thank you to the local community for your continued support with both physical and financial donations. And thank you to all those organisations who help us too. Added together, your support and time helps to improve the lives of so many children and families across the borough. We could not do it without you.

These accounts have been successfully examined and accepted by our Independent Examiner, Caroline Sharp (ACA, DChA).

Janine



### CHARLTON TOY LIBRARY INCOME RESERVES POLICY

Unrestricted funds are needed:

- 1) to provide funds which can be designated to specific projects to enable these projects to be undertaken at short notice and
- 2) to cover administration, fund-raising and support costs without which the charity could not function.

The trustees consider it prudent that unrestricted reserves should be sufficient:

- a) to avoid the necessity of releasing fixed assets held for the charity's use;
- b) to cover 6 month's administration, fund-raising and support costs (currently approximately £20,000)
- c) to provide a pool equal to 10% of the average charitable expenditure over the preceding 2 years from which funds can be designated to specific projects (currently approximately £8,000).

# INCOME-EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT 2022-2023

<b>CHARLTON TOY LIBRARY Income &amp; Expenditure Account 2022-2023</b>				
<b>INCOME</b>	Restricted	Unrestricted		Previous year
BBC Children in Need	25,643.00		BBC Children in Need	26,597.00
Greenwich Supports	5,130.00			
Woodward Charitable Trust	1,014.00			
Fundraising		1,677.33		1,257.48
Membership fees		2,567.24		1,436.78
Toy loan fees		1,161.00		525.16
Safety equipment loan fees		124.25		9.83
Session sales		1788.05		134.36
Special events/parties		183.25		0
Donations		4,564.16		7158.92
Bank interest		112.21		3.47
Gift Aid		271.58		295.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31,767.00</b>	<b>12,449.07</b>	<b>44,216.07</b>	<b>27,618.00</b>

  

<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	Previous year
Advertising/promotional	0	497.5	497.5	34.27
Child Safety Equipment	693.33	8.95	702.28	834.22
Equipment	0	0	0	54.99
Fundraising expenses	0	418.85	418.85	120
General running costs	1489.36	3292.31	4781.67	5653.26
Insurance	0	1594.92	1594.92	1299.57
Management costs	0	30.78	30.78	61.74
Staffing costs	15251.42	16,977.01	32228.43	28653.2
Outreach welfare	5627.55	1962.5	7590.05	2,333
Toys books videos etc	0	0	0	24.84
Training	0	389.96	389.96	0
Travel	76.55	2	78.55	808.1
Volunteer expenses	0	75.11	75.11	0
Workshops & crafts	0	34.05	34.05	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23138.21</b>	<b>25,283.94</b>	<b>48,422.15</b>	<b>38,019</b>

  

<b>PROFIT/LOSS</b>	<b>8648.79</b>	<b>-12,834.87</b>	<b>-4,186.08</b>	
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<b>BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2023</b>			
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>	Restricted	Unrestricted	<b>Totals</b>
Current Account	9,366.95	1,767.13	11,134.08
Business Reserve		24,790.73	24,790.73
Cash in hand		100	100
6 unrepresented items	-150.11	-273.49	-423.6
	<b>9,216.84</b>	<b>26,404.37</b>	<b>35,621.21</b>

  

<b>REPRESENTED BY:</b>			
Balance b/fwd 2021-2022	588.05	39,244.17	39,832.22
Profit/loss for 2022-2023	8,648.79	-12,839.80	-4186.08
	<b>9,236.84</b>	<b>26,404.37</b>	<b>35,641.21</b>



We have:

- Re-opened our full range of services and found funding to continue operating during the most difficult period in the 40-year history of the toy library
- Introduced an online booking system for the Friday singing sessions to manage visitor numbers and keep everyone safe
- Organised an outdoor treasure hunt event in Charlton Park before Christmas
- Held two successful Nearly New Sales raising funds for our charity
- Supported 180 children through our Outreach Service, working across Charlton, Thamesmead, Woolwich, Eltham, Plumstead and Abbey Wood
- Provided 59 children with Christmas presents and 26 families (reaching 59 children) with Christmas food vouchers through our Outreach Programme
- Provided 122 food and essentials vouchers to 20 Outreach families to a value of over £5,600
- Provided 73 bags of essential clothing for 74 children

## ACHIEVEMENTS (continued) 2022-2023

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- Continued our Child Safety Equipment Loan Scheme.
- Established and/or maintained strong links with organisations across the borough including Home Start, the Midwife Team, Social workers, Family Engagement Support workers, Greenwich Children's Disability Team, Health Visitors, Best Beginnings, Quaggy Development Trust, Mama2Mama and many more.
- Promoted awareness and membership of our service among target groups, including black and minority ethnic and low-income families, asylum seekers and families suffering domestic abuse.
- Held regular management committee meetings via Zoom.
- Publicised the Toy Library to local groups and around the borough. Maintained our Facebook and Twitter accounts and developed a new website.
- Worked with and supported 6 volunteers throughout the year.
- Developed and ran a survey to evaluate our services.





Our plans for 2023-2024 are:

- Widen the support we offer to our Outreach families
- Reach more families in the Borough that would benefit from our Outreach services
- Re-establish support for women and children in Women's Refuges
- Maintain and improve links with relevant organisations across the borough
- Continue to increase awareness and use of our services particularly amongst black and minority ethnic and disadvantaged families
- Continue to maintain our Facebook and Twitter pages and our presence on relevant apps and website listings
- Increase the number of trustees on our Management Committee
- Hold regular committee meetings and AGM (online and/or in person)
- Continue to encourage good management committee representation
- Introduce Sensory Play sessions on a weekly basis
- Review regularly all Toy Library policies and procedures
- Secure more outside grants and funding to secure the long-term security of our services



### **The Management Committee**

John Stephens, Chair

Janine Khoshnevisan, Treasurer

Patricia Santome, Committee Member

Daniela Kaltenbach, Committee Member

Nahid Kausar, Committee Member

Liz Grace, Committee Member (March – Sept 2022)

Trustees and Officers are elected and appointed at the AGM by nomination method or co-opted by the Management Committee at a monthly meeting.

### **Staff**

Sharon Jay, Outreach Worker

Vicky Thomas, Toy Library Co-ordinator

Vanessa Covington, CTL & Outreach Assistant (until December 2022)

### **Volunteers & Fundraisers**

Susan Wainwright, Jack Wheeler, Sophie Durcan, Julie Pepperrell, Tess Wainwright, Ann Barlow, Jarmila Kubinova, Janine Khoshnevisan, Patricia Santome-Courtney, Daniela Kaltenbach, Nahid Kausar, John Stephens, Bhupinder Kaler.

**And to everyone else who has helped on a more informal basis... thank you!**

As always there are a huge number of people and organisations to thank for their support.

Thank you to all our funders and supporters:

BBC Children in Need  
Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust  
Charlton House  
The Royal Borough of Greenwich  
Greenwich Supports Team  
Home-Start Greenwich  
The Co-operative  
The Woodward Charitable Trust  
Fire Action Ltd  
Headstart IT  
Atlas Business Group  
Greenwich Midwifery Team  
Greenwich Social Workers  
Mama2Mama  
The Swan Pub, West Malling  
Waitrose in Sidcup  
Chris Mason, Political Editor BBC News

Thanks also to our Independent Examiner, Ms Caroline Sharp (FCA, DChA)

Finally, our thanks (and apologies!) to anyone else who has helped us this year and who we may have momentarily forgotten to mention!



## Signature

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I declare, in my capacity as Chair of the Management Committee, that:

- the Management Committee has approved the report above; and
- have authorised me to sign it on their behalf.

Signature

Full name

Position

Date