

Toyhouse Impact Report 2022



Working in
Partnership
For over 43 years

Working with families

Management Committee

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Julie Morgan: Deputy Manager
Mohammad Selim: Finance Officer

SureSTEPs Outreach

Jo Pink

Play & Family Support Team

Afia Begum
Dilara Begum
Natasha Forbes

Message from the Chair

I ended last year's report stating 'Toyhouse will continue to adapt & develop services to meet the needs of local families as we emerge from pandemic; - exactly our focus in 2022!

A working party, drawn from Committee and senior staff, recently met to revise the Toyhouse Strategy. Service users, staff, volunteers, and Members told us what they wanted Toyhouse to deliver. This enabled us to set strategic goals, with a strong focus on meeting identified needs.

The refreshed

TOYHOUSE STRATEGY 2022-2025, launched at the AGM, supports delivery of goals identified as our priority.

As resources reduce and securing funding becomes challenging, developing partnership work is crucial.

Toyhouse is involved in the Tower Hamlets "**Stronger Together**" Initiative Working Party, looking to increase cross-sector collaboration. During the last year, Toyhouse has worked to re-open & re-vitalise 6x school based Toy Libraries via a "**Save the Children Fund Innovation**", building evidence demonstrating early community provision supports educational & social attainment.

This Impact Report demonstrates that, despite the challenges, Toyhouse continues to deliver services that meet local community needs.

I am pleased to support the Toyhouse team, whose hard work, dedication & commitment ensures Toyhouse continues to 'Make a Difference' for families. **Sue Cox Chair**

"This is the most amazing playgroup with such lovely, friendly staff, lots of toys and space. It is a life saver for carers and children, especially if you have young ones of different ages. Keep it going Guys! You do amazing work!" Parent

At a glance



Toyhouse has engaged with 2439 child users & 1450 adult users. Giving a total of 4019 service users over the last year.

370 service users are identified as having Special Educational Needs / Disabilities

"The MELLOW course has helped me most to think about myself - that I was forgetting. Also it reminded me of some of my childhood experiences,; & I reflected on the impact they have had on me as an adult"
Parent

Toyhouse currently has 27 Member Groups operating across Tower Hamlets. Half of these are Toy Libraries, whilst 12 cover a range of play & activity projects, plus more targeted & specialist family support



"I have been to Baby Play & Massage; the staff are super nice and supportive" Jenny

Over 100 children attend the **Creative Cook Club** & Summer Workshops over the last year. They explored healthier options, making yummy snacks to take home and share
Funded by BBC Children in Need



The LBTH Small Grants Fund **"Tackling Loneliness"** enabled us to focus on families hidden away during the pandemic. We were invited to present our successful work to various Policy and Strategy group working across Tower Hamlets

In Toyhouse Member groups There are 130 service facilitators, many of whom are local parents & volunteers

64 families have attended Baby Massage over the last 12 months enabling them to offer nurturing touch and relaxation to their babies



Toy Libraries

TOY LIBRARIES

The Toyhouse Centre has a well stocked Toy Library with a wide range of good quality toys.

These are available for children and their families to borrow during any of our play sessions, so families can continue the play & fun at home with all the family.

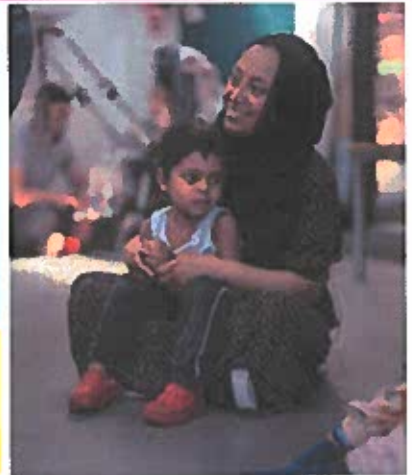
Toyhouse also supports 13 Toy Libraries running in other locations across the borough, supporting good practice in all Toyhouse member groups.



"My son has been pestering me all through the summer saying "I want to go to Jo's session. When is it Wednesday?" Since start of term, he has been asking the Head Teacher about it. When I told him it was today, he grabbed his Toy Library bag, had a big smile and couldn't get here fast enough!"

Khelna Toy Library user

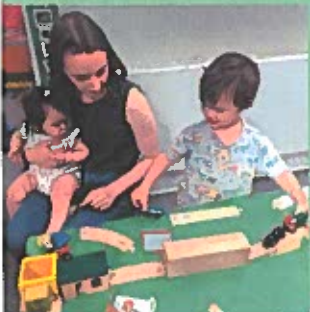
"My budget was really limited, and one really friendly lady said "would you like to borrow a toy?" and I said "Can I borrow it?" T.L. User



Khelna Toy Library

Toyhouse is commissioned to run a weekly Toy Library at Virginia Primary School (called Khelna). These sessions are popular with families who have children at the school but also with the wider community. Primarily children from 18 months to 3 years attend alongside their parent/carer, where they have the opportunity for varied play using different toys and skills.

The children loved borrowing and taking home a toy each week, and being part of the Save the Children project has helped to educate parents about how much learning can take place whilst playing! Importantly, post pandemic, the children have been able to practice sharing with others their own age, with many opportunities to develop their social and language skills. Regularly coming to the session has helped the children, and carers, better prepare for the next big step of nursery/school with many children moving on at the end of the summer term.



Benefits for Early Learning

Save the Children Fund Innovation

In Summer 2021, the SCF Advisory Board agreed Save the Children would fund Toyhouse to undertake an Innovation project, supporting 6x school based Toy Libraries in the north west locality of Tower Hamlets. In March 2020, all Toy Libraries had abruptly closed their doors, remaining out of action for 18 months. By September 2021, thinking the Pandemic was over, and noting a growing concern about the welfare & development of "Lockdown Babies", the plan was to work with school settings plus Parent Volunteers, to re-open "Stay & Play with Toy Loan" sessions. The aim was to build evidence demonstrating that regular, active engagement with a focussed pre-school provision was beneficial, supporting early learning, both in the session and at home; thus leading on to easier settling into more formal learning environments.

Each Toy Library had ongoing involvement of a Support Worker, consolidating the learning the new Volunteers accessed via a joint training course. This learning was supplemented by an allocation of new toys following an appraisal of existing stock, plus help to prepare these for loaning. We also devised short forms for parents & children to provide feedback on toys borrowed and playful use of them. Play & Information cards supported creative extension learning at home, whilst Toy Librarians recorded toys set out for each session, noting how children engaged with these.

At innovation outset, the arrival of Omicron variant was not expected! Sadly, this interrupted each setting more than once, lowering take-up during winter months.

However, much rich data was collected over the 10 month project, and is now being drawn into an evaluation report. We hope this will showcase to a potential funder the importance of providing very early learning & social skill development through playful activity, involving engagement & partnership work between home & community settings.



"Taking toys home is good because every week they're [her children] waiting to take new things home, learn new things. Every week my daughter is asking "What toy did you get today Mursalin?" So there is a big difference." Parent attending a toy library involved in this project.

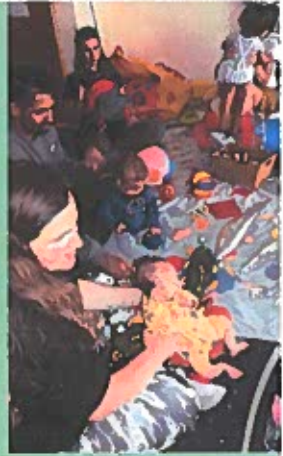
"I only have words of thanksgiving. I loved the Baby Group and it helped me a lot & my baby was developing very good. When we were going there we felt like it was our house. The worker, Jo, was like a sister to me. Many happy memories. Thank you so much" Katty Olaya parent

First steps

Baby Sensory & Rhyme Time

Families have been delighted to return to face to face baby group after restrictions were lifted. Initially, sessions were limited to a small socially distanced group, but gradually we were able to return to pre-pandemic conditions. It's been heart-warming to see the session back to normality, full of babies and carers. Families have appreciated the opportunity to connect with others whilst being supported by Toyhouse in our cosy friendly room. Word of mouth continues to be the most popular way to hear about the baby group and families like to tell us that is the best session out there!

Jo



1001 Days

The **FIRST 1001 DAYS** of a child's life, from conception to age two, is a window of opportunity. It is a time of particularly rapid growth and brain development. Leading child health experts agree that the care given during the first 1001 days has more influence on a child's future than at any other time in their life.



Baby Massage

Building attachment between parent & child is very important and Baby Massage is a great way to support this in a relaxed and empowering way. Toyhouse has 3 members of staff who are trained with The International Association of Infant Massage and have many years' experience facilitating courses & supporting new parents. We are able to provide a welcoming environment and a flexible approach to meet the needs of the local community, while linking with others working with new parents. Julie, Pip & Afia



"Thank you for your brilliant baby massage class. We loved it & have recommended it to lots of other people! We do massage twice a day and Toby thinks it's wonderful." Sarah, Charlie & Baby Toby :)

SURE STEPs Peer Support

Toyhouse has been engaged in programmes to support vulnerable families during the **First 1001 Days** since early 2015, with funding first coming from Public Health, then TH Children's Centres. During the pandemic further funding was secured from the National Lottery Community Fund and, most recently, from Compass Wellbeing. The service has been rolled out across the Borough in delivery partnership with Social Action for Health, but also Community Parents and the Parenting Team.



Through SureSTEPS, we recruit, train, match & support local people to act as **PEER SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS (PSVs)**, matched with a referred parent to be or parent who, for whatever reason, is struggling with parenting during the **First 1001 Days**. Since August 2018, under Julie's co-ordination, Toyhouse has been responsible for the delivery of our 8 x session training course, providing wide-ranging learning before people launch into supporting. This is supplemented by input at PSV Forum meetings, plus individual support & supervision meetings.

Thanks to a small grant via Compass Wellbeing last December, we have been able to train 2 more cohorts of PSVs, bringing the total number of courses delivered to 8. After successful completion of the training course and DBS clearance obtained, there are several ways in which PSVs can actively support referred families: Most commonly, it is by matching to support a referred family, but it can also be via involvement in one of our supporting group sessions.



Most trained PSVs have spent time supporting at least one referred family and some go on to support another family when the first no longer needs our active support. Some PSVs use the training as a personal springboard and successfully apply for paid roles in a range of people facing settings. The net

result is there are more people active in the community who have a good understanding of the earliest stages of life and what leads parents to be in need of caring support.

We currently have **20 trained PSVs** with **14 actively supporting a family**.

Toyhouse is currently in need of securing new funding to support this programme, ensuring both referred family and trained PSV receive the support they need to flourish.

"Becoming a Peer Support Volunteer with Toyhouse has been an immensely rewarding experience for me. Seeing the women I support start to trust me, share and bond, is an amazing feeling: - I think for both if us!

This has meant a change of career path for me from the commercial world into the charity sector. Thank you to Toyhouse for putting me on this new path; your support has been invaluable" Zoe - PSV

43 years of working in Partnership

"Thank you for taking the trouble to talk with me this morning, it was really helpful.... And inspirational to hear about the work Toyhouse does in Tower Hamlets.

**Jane Vertkin,
Regional Family Hub Advisor LBTH**

Toyhouse is working in partnership with the Half Moon Theatre presenting their Early Years Creative Play courses both at The Toyhouse Centre & Mile End Play Pavilion



"Please do send the details through re: Mellow Parenting - it's a great resource and we would be more than happy to promote this"
**Social Work
Professional: LBTH**

"We gained so much from the free Baby Massage course. This was a resource we would not have been able to afford so ultimately would have missed out. We used those new skills so much on our first 6 months. We also made good use of the Toy Library and access to the 2nd hand toys and books" **Debra—Parent**

"Thanks as always for your fabulous service and the support you offer"
**Louise from Perinatal
Mental Health team:**



"It was really wonderful for you to join us at our workshop on Tuesday and so lovely to see parents with such young ones so involved. They really appreciated your attendance and had much discussion afterwards!!"
Sam Hood-Social Prescriber

"Thank you for all your encouragement and support." **Fiona— Early Years Lead**

"I was told how amazing your services are during a sensory class I went to elsewhere with my baby. I was recommended to try your Baby Massage course and your weekly Baby Group with Sensory Play" **Sarah—Parent**

Across Tower Hamlets



"We really appreciate all your help with our Toy Library & look forward to hearing more from you soon"
Elizabeth Selby Infant school

Toyhouse is commissioned under the Children & Family Centres to facilitate 4 Active Physical Play sessions each week.

Funding also enables Toyhouse to provide the only Mellow Parenting Course in Tower Hamlets.

A local resident donated a vast quantity of LEGO to Toyhouse, which has been re-distributed to local families, who would not be able to afford to buy LEGO at shop prices!

"My first visit to Toyhouse was a very warm and welcoming experience from the second I walked through the door. It is no surprise the person I referred to you enjoys the sessions and speaks highly of Toyhouse. She was so pleased to see her son having such a lovely time engaging with all the other children & enjoying the singing"

Reean: FNP



Team Challenges & business opportunities are an important link for Toyhouse

"Thank you so much for your report. It is encouraging to know how much voluntary and community sector organisations such as Toyhouse have supported local residents during the pandemic"

Brenda Doku

"Thank you so much for all your support with our toy library. It has been very helpful to have your expertise & ideas."
Reha - Toy Librarian

"Covid was difficult, I think it's the reason for this speech delay. We didn't go anywhere so, no talking, no groups, because all the children's centres were closed, even playgrounds. that's why he didn't get to mix with other children, because he was just at home, so this [Toy Library] has made a big difference. He has just improved recently, just within one month or something like that. Fiona has said he's started speaking. He was alone by himself, but now he's playing with the group and each time I'm asking "who do you play with?" he's speaking their names: Ibrahim, Sarah. So that's a lot of improvement.
Parent Hague Toy Library

FAMILY WELLBEING



Active Physical Play

Physical Play is essential for a child developing balance, coordination, reaction time, building stronger muscle and improving emotional & mental wellbeing. Active Physical Play runs twice a week throughout the year and provides a safe environment for parents & their young children to explore a range of equipment &

opportunities. Importantly it is somewhere very young children can safely 'take risk' pushing & extending existing skills.

Facilitated by experienced staff who can support parents & children both within the session and by offering information to extend their knowledge of Play in the local area.. Held every Mon 10-12 noon & Wed 1-3pm

At St Hilda's Community Centre.

Afia, Dilara, Natasha & Volunteers: Shazna & Sumi

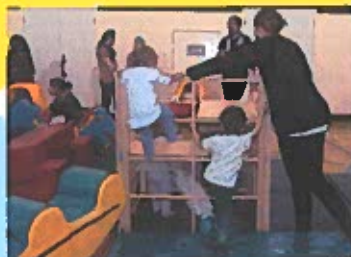
Early Years Active Play

Offering all the fun and benefits of our Active Physical Play session, but run at the opposite end of the borough in the Play Pavilion, Mile End Park. Early Years Active Play has the benefit of being located in a large play area enabling families access an extensive outside play space, in addition to the purpose built Play Pavilion.

This project runs in term time Monday & Wednesday 10-12noon

Staff: Natasha & Dilara

Volunteers: Nazmin, Nurjahan & Ayeshea



"So good to have somewhere to go for a bit more stimulation and activity with toys that are too big for my flat. Baba needs space to run around and I need human contact"

Parent Active Physical Play

Connecting with the local community

Toyhouse has built up a strong connect with the local community and now have regular donations of pre-loved toys, book & baby resources.

Our Toy Donation project has been a great way to interact with local people, while offering a very low or no-cost access to good quality items.

Both Physical & Emotional

Creative Cook Club

Funded by BBC Children in Need this club offers an alternative to high sugar, high fat snacks which children may eat after school. Each week the children decide what they might like to cook & then discuss healthier ways to prepare this snack. We have activities and crafts to make the learning more interactive and fun and food is

eagerly consumed before the children leave. This is a highly popular session with local families keen to take part.

Creative Cook Summer Workshops

During the school holidays we hold one off workshops, enabling more children to join in the activities. Weather permitting the last hour of the workshop is spent doing physical activities at a local open space/park. Taking along the snacks we have prepared and having a shared picnic after lots of physical games & races.



People's Postcode Trust funded

"Fizzical Fun for Families" project, enabling us to encourage 561 people to get out and be physically active together as a family after the pandemic lockdowns.

Thanks to the trained **Peer Support Volunteers** who have been actively supporting families during the last 12 months:

Lina; Farhana; Elisa; Claire; Tugela; Anne; Halon; Iishita; Zoe; Ruweda; Kate; Cait; Karina; Amanda

STOP PRESS

Toyhouse has been successful in our grant application to **Awards for All**.

This grant will enable us to facilitate **6 Meals & Deals** courses.



These will be informal sessions, looking at ways to save on shopping & meal preparation + economical ways to use leftovers to reduce food waste.

The first course will start in November & run over 2023.

MELLOW Parenting

Mellow Parenting course

Toyhouse is funded by Tower Hamlets Local Community Fund to a level where we are able to facilitate a full Mellow Parenting course once a year, across the winter months, supplementing the funding from Toyhouse reserves. Mellow is particularly relevant for those who experienced trauma in their own childhood.

We feel immensely pleased we were able to facilitate the 9th TOYHOUSE MELLOW PARENTING course face to face and with only losing one of the 14 sessions, in what was an unexpectedly challenging winter when once Omicron reared its ugly head. The level of anxiety identified in each of the participants was higher than we have ever experienced in the 8 previous courses we have facilitated; partly that might simply be a random aspect for those referred to this course, but we sensed this was exacerbated by the participants experiences through the pandemic and solation experiences during Lockdowns. The course concluded towards the end of March but we have offered continuation support throughout the summer term and beyond, via the wide range of Toyhouse services, including the invitation only Stay & Play session. Additionally, a senior staff member is available for one 2 one support.



Mellow is a very good course to go on and to meet others, share your experiences, your stories, your achievements and your woes. Parent

"I've been thinking very long & hard about how the Toyhouse sessions have helped me. And honestly it's been one of the highlights of having a child under 2! I've had a place to come to where it felt like family & without judgement. We were able to talk & share things that were both positive & negative. Having the calls & text messages to prompt & invite me felt a lot more dear. That's what I yearned for more while being a mum of a small child, as it can be so lonely, but having your messages & phone calls it really felt important to me. I would not have come out, even though I have a Children's Centre at my door step; with Toyhouse Centre it felt special, a place far from home — but still felt like home."

FB Mellow & Sure STEPs parent



Volunteering

Volunteering @ Toyhouse Project

Toyhouse has always had an active group of volunteers, who support staff in running a range of projects. This in turn give opportunities for them to develop new skills and extend existing ones, contributing fully to Toyhouse services. All our volunteers are parents and live locally, building further connections with the communities in Tower Hamlets.

Julie



Many thanks to:
Leonilyn, Nurjahan, Shazna,
Sumi, Ayeshea, (Somya who has now
moved on to paid employment) &
Shakara.

Families were very grateful to staff at **Barclays** for their generosity and making Christmas even more special.

Our partnership work with local people results in 2 new volunteer sessions at Toyhouse
Knitting & Sewing group
&
Walk & Talk group



Gateway Homes

From being employees charity of the year to the fantastic donation of toys, Gateway has supported the work Toyhouse is doing with local families.

James Noe & Family

Thank you to James & Family for always remembering Toyhouse at Christmas. It's lovely that his children choose the toys they donate for local children.



East London Business Alliance

Over many years Toyhouse has been very fortunate to be allocated some toys each Christmas to distribute to local families via the Elba Christmas Appeal, this has always made an amazing difference to many families

Toyhouse makes a difference

Our Thanks to those who have helped Toyhouse this year:

Individual Donors / Gift Aid pledges

ELBA

Gateway Housing

Job Retention Scheme

James Noe, also Marian & Andrea

Ken Morgan

Family & Friends of Staff &

Management Committee members

Voluntary Sector Children's Forum

Wakefield & Tetley Trust

Amazon Smile

Cath & Bob Armstrong

The Switch

Richard Wood

Postcode Society Trust

Morgan Stanley

Mile End Play Pavilion

Volunteers & Peer Supporters

East End Community Foundation

TH Children & Family Centres

LB Tower Hamlets

BBC Children in Need

Virginia Primary School

National Lottery Awards for All

Save the Children Fund

St Hilda's Community Centre

St Paul's Way Medical Centre

Donators of used toys

CAF/Give As You Earn/Just Giving

Guinness Homes

Blue Lizard

Individual donors

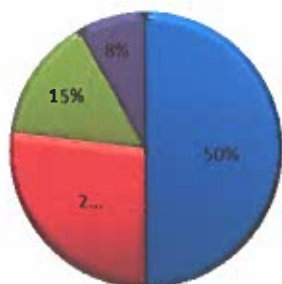
A complete set of Annual Accounts is available from Toyhouse

Message from the Treasurer: Val Whitehead

We had a significant decrease in our income in 21-22 compared to previous years as a result of the reduced pandemic support and increased difficulty in accessing significant funding sources. However, we have been able to use our reserves to maintain services to children and their carers and will continue to deliver services as we look for new funders in the increasingly difficult financial climate.

We get significant benefits from recycling second hand toys + individual donations as well as the larger funders listed here; and welcome all those donations which help us to serve our community.

Toyhouse Income 2021-22



- LBTH-EYS
- Trust & Foundations
- JRS & C-19 Support
- Self Generated



Partnerships & Funders



Save the Children.

Save the Children Innovation Grant. Supporting Toyhouse to work with Toy Libraries in Bethnal Green



People's Postcode Trust funded the "Fizzical Fun for Families"



BBC Children in Need funded us to run after-school sessions for children on healthy

East End
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Virginia School Commissioning Toyhouse to run their Toy Library



TOWER HAMLETS



Virginia Primary School

Nurturing, challenging and enabling each and every pupil



LBTH commissioned Toyhouse to run Physical Play sessions, Mellow Parenting & a small grant to tackle loneliness



Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership



A small "Fast Track" Grant from Wakefield & Tetley enabled us to set up a weekly Invitation only session, facilitated by PSVs



TOYHOUSE MISSION STATEMENT

Toyhouse makes a difference.....

by supporting the wellbeing of families locally and throughout the community. With over 40 years' experience of working with families through the medium of play, Toyhouse fosters attachment between parents and children, enabling them to interact together and share experiences. Toyhouse empowers individuals, families, volunteers and employees to develop the skills and resilience to achieve their aspirations.

.....early support for a better future



TOYHOUSE

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