



Local toy library wins national recognition for being at heart of community life in Nottingham

Nottingham's Bulwell Community Toy Library has beaten off fierce competition from around the UK to win support from a Government scheme set up to help community-led organisations like the toy library.

The toy library is one of only 300 organisations nationwide to be awarded support from the Government's Communitybuilders programme – out of over 3,000 applicants - a huge achievement for a small charity run by a team of just eight regular members of staff and a group of highly committed local volunteers.

Communitybuilders is a £70 million investment fund which provides loans, grants and business support to community-led organisations that provide a range of services to local people.

Initially, the toy library will receive business support from Communitybuilders to see how it can use its skills, resources and experience to generate an income for the charity - so it can become less reliant on short-term funding and provide bigger and better services to families living in the Bulwell area.

In the future, the toy library could receive financial support from Communitybuilders in the form of a grant or low cost loan to develop its services but this hasn't been decided yet.

The aim of the Communitybuilders programme is to create stronger, more active communities, by supporting organisations like the toy library, that are at the heart of the community.

In fact, the toy library has been at the centre of community life in Bulwell for over 30 years.

It provides a wide range of services for children and their families including toy library sessions where families can borrow toys and games for free, or for a nominal charge, depending on their financial circumstances.

It also runs free family play sessions for parents and carers with babies or pre-school aged children around the Bulwell area, and in other areas of the city including Bestwood, Basford and Toy Valley, seven times a week plus free after-school and holiday play sessions for children aged from 5 to 13 years.

In addition, the toy library provides specialist services to families in partnership with NHS Nottingham City free of charge, such as using play to encourage speech and language development in children.



Steve Parkinson, Project Manager at the toy library believes it won support from Communitybuilders for the way it involves local people in the organisation.

"The toy library is definitely a focal point for many families in Bulwell and many of them have used our services for generations, but beyond that, local people are also helping to run and develop the organisation.

For example, the toy library was set up by local volunteers three decades ago and is still run by a volunteer committee made up of 14 local people.

Plus, we also employ five local people and offer many more the opportunity to volunteer with us.

It's all down to local people that we've been recognised by Communitybuilders as an organisation that's vital to community life in Nottingham and hopefully with support from the programme we'll be able to go from strength to strength and help even more families and children."

A parent who regularly attends the toy library's family play sessions says:

"The sessions give me the chance to be a part of the local community and meet other parents and share experiences."

A child who often goes to the toy library's after-school and holiday play sessions explains why they like going:

"I can go out feeling safe and there's always something to do."

The Communitybuilders fund is managed by the Social Investment Business, Adventure Capital Fund (ACF) and Community Alliance, on behalf of two Government departments, Communities and Local Government and the Office for Civil Society.

There are three elements to the programme: Development, which comes in the form of bespoke business support and in some cases a grant of £2,000 for staff development and training; Feasibility, which includes additional business support and a possible grant to grow and develop the organisation and Investment, which takes the form of a possible low cost loan, given to organisations who are ready to expand their role within the community.



Facts and figures

- Over 300 families regularly attend the toy library's family play sessions.
- Around 755 children aged from 5 to 13 years go to the toy library's after-school and holiday play sessions.
- The toy library is currently helping over 50 children who have problems with speech and language delay.
- Around 370 people, including children, parents and carers, benefit from the toy library's services every week.

**To find out more please call Steve Parkinson on 0115 975 3898
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