



*Families and Community Together*

## **Innovative children's project gets funding boost from NHS Nottingham City**

Bulwell Community Toy Library in Nottingham has been given a vital funding boost by NHS Nottingham City, enabling a highly successful, long term children's project to keep running.

The project, called Language through Toys and Play, has been run by Bulwell Community Toy Library for nearly 10 years and involves experienced staff visiting children at home and using toys and play to encourage language, play and communication skills.

The children, aged between one and five years, are referred to the project via healthcare professionals such as health visitors. Referrals are also made by professionals working with children from both the public and voluntary and community sectors, usually when a child has mild speech and language difficulties.

Steve Parkinson from the toy library explains:

*"It's fantastic that we're going to be able to continue the project thanks to NHS Nottingham City. The project has made a big difference to families and children in the area, largely because Language through Toys and Play involves the whole family, not just the child, plus of course, the project is run in people's own homes, so they're always in familiar and comfortable surroundings."*

Steve continues:

*"The toys and play techniques used in the project are carefully selected, depending on the child's individual needs, with the aim of involving both the child and its parent/s or carer/s in play activities designed to encourage child development, including language, communication, thinking and imagination."*

*In addition, the project also inspires and enables parent/s and carer/s to play more regularly with their children and to value play as an important part of parenting."*

Rosemary Galbraith, Head of Children's Specialist Services, NHS Nottingham City, agrees with Steve that the Language Through Toys and Play project is making a real difference:

*"We are delighted to be able to support this project. The toy library has been around for a long time and it's very well known and trusted by local families, making it easier for them to benefit from the help it provides."*

*The project offers an early and preventative way to help children with mild speech and language difficulties, making it less likely that they'll need specialist attention from someone like a speech therapist later on."*

Steve concludes:

*"The Language through Toys and Play project is great for parents' confidence too. For example, one parent whose child was helped by the project now works part time as a Session Leader for the toy library. She's also recently completed the intensive training to become a Parenting Trainer too and recently co-ran a parenting course for local people with a Nottingham City Council social worker."*

*It's great to know that we're helping parents, as well as children, and thanks to NHS Nottingham City we'll be able to continue doing just that."*

A parent whose son has benefited from the project says:

*"My son wasn't talking as well as we thought he should for his age so the Health Visitor suggested getting the Toy Library project to come to the house and work with him. It was a real help and when he started school they couldn't believe he'd ever had speech problems and it meant he wasn't behind the others in the class."*

As well as running the Language through Toys and Play project the toy library also loans toys and play equipment to families for free or for a nominal charge. The toy library has been running for 30 years and also offers families a range of play activities and resources.

To find out more about Bulwell Community Toy Library or the Language Through Toys and Play project please contact Steve on 0115 975 3898 or email [steve@toy-library.co.uk](mailto:steve@toy-library.co.uk)