

TOYHOUSE MISSION STATEMENT

Toyhouse makes a difference.....

by supporting the wellbeing of families locally and throughout the community. With over 45years' 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
The Toyhouse Centre
92 St. Paul's Way
London E3 4AL
Telephone: 020 7987 7399
Email: info@toyhouse.org.uk
Web site: www.toyhouse.org.uk
Facebook: [toyhouselondon](https://www.facebook.com/toyhouselondon)
Twitter: [ToyhouseLondon](https://twitter.com/ToyhouseLondon)
Instagram: [Toyhouse92](https://www.instagram.com/Toyhouse92)

Toyhouse Impact Report 2024



**Building Firmer Foundations
For
Over 45 years**

Enabling service delivery

Message from the Chair - Sue Cox

Like everyone else, Toyhouse has experienced significant challenges over the last few years. We emerged from a global pandemic to an environment of cutbacks and reduced funding streams, while realising the need for Toyhouse services was increasing, with local families facing difficulties of re-engaging with the wider community during a cost-of-living crisis. To manage this situation Toyhouse established a new Strategy for 22-25, with a key focus on 'Listening to the Local Community'. Senior staff have worked tirelessly to identify and apply for funding; with support of dedicated committee members plus input from staff and users, we have reviewed and adapted our services to ensure we meet the needs of local families. The Impact Report highlights the range of wonderful services delivered by Toyhouse over the last year.



Due to hard work, dedication, and resilience of the amazing Toyhouse staff team, our brilliant Sure STEPs Peer Support workers and volunteers; alongside generosity of both old and new funders who contribute to Toyhouse, we are still active; so now we look to the future. In the light of this, we have

employed two new part time Project Workers. These staff enable us to extend and develop our range of services, ensuring we continue to 'make a difference' for local families. this is my last message as Chair as my circumstances have changed and I no longer live in Tower Hamlets. It has been my privilege to be involved with Toyhouse on and off over the last 30 years - as a user with my own children, committee member, and then Chair. It is a fantastic organisation to be involved with and I would recommend it to anyone thinking of joining the committee. I end with a big THANK YOU to everyone involved with Toyhouse - keep up the fantastic work.

Management Committee

Members:

Patron: Cath Armstrong
Chair: Sue Cox
Treasurer: Val Whitehead
Vice Chair: Sian Harris
Secretary: Joy Hastings
Kalsoom Khan
Toby Evans
Zenith Rahman
Halon Iqbal
Renee Lawrence
Fatimah Jobber

Senior Staff Members

Pip Pinhorn: Manager
Julie Morgan: Deputy Manager
Mohammad Selim: Finance Officer

Co-ordinator: Supporting Young Families: Service & Strategy
Tugela Barnes

Play & Family Support Team
Afia Begum, Dilara Begum & Natasha Forbes
Project Wokers:
Hena Begum & Mumtaz Begum

Partnerships & Funders



Save the Children.

Save the Children
Supporting Toyhouse with events

the switch

BARCLAYS

Funding from Postcode Society supported our Sure STEPs Programme



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

East End
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



LBTH Mayors Community Fund grant for Toy Library Support work & Cook, Community & Culture



ELBA: Supporting Christmas events

LBTH Children & Family Centres commissioned Toyhouse to run Physical Play sessions,



Supported by

The National Lottery®
through Awards for All

Awards 4 All: Funding to pilot our new Early Years Active Play Project



A Small Grant from Wakefield & Tetley to support our core operating cost



Toyhouse makes a difference

Our Thanks to those who have helped Toyhouse this year:

Individual Donors / Gift Aid pledges

ELBA
Gateway Housing
Travis Perkins
James Noe
Ken Morgan
Family & Friends of Staff & Management Committee members
Voluntary Sector Children's Forum
Wakefield & Tetley Trust
Cath & Bob Armstrong
Postcode Society Trust
Mile End Play Pavilion
Morgan Stanley
Start4Life programme
British Land

Volunteers & Peer Supporters

East End Community Foundation
TH Children & Family Centre Hubs
LB Tower Hamlets Mayors Community Grant Programme
BBC Children in Need
Barclays
National Lottery Awards for All
Save the Children
St Hilda's Community Centre
St Paul's Way Medical Centre
Donators of used toys
CAF/Give As You Earn/Just Giving
Blue Lizard
Canary Wharf
Harca

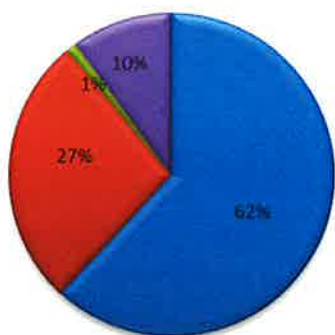
A complete set of Annual Accounts is available from Toyhouse



Message from the Treasurer: Val Whitehead

This year we have increased our income & reduced our deficit & we have had significant successes in recent funding bids so that the prospects for the next year look very positive, however we will still face challenges ahead in continuing this trend in the longer term. Many thanks to all the hard work from our dedicated staff & volunteers for all their work & to our generous funders and donors who make this possible

Toyhouse Income 2023-24



- LBTH & Public Health
- Trust & Foundations
- Commissioned TL
- Self Generated

Over 3000 people have been involved in Toyhouse services during the last year

The Toyhouse Centre



WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN!!!

Since its inception 45 years ago, Toyhouse has always held the needs of the youngest children and their parents as central to service provision. Over the years, research evidence has increasingly demonstrated just how important it is to start as well as possible - to build **Firm Foundations**, when building both tower blocks and human beings! The Central Government launch of the "Start for Life" initiative in March 2021 was recognition of the need to prioritise the **First 1001 Days**, but sadly took 2 years to become an emerging reality locally. I distinctly remember being invited to my first meeting in March 2023, since when the pace of day-to-day Toyhouse working life has been relentless. We were thrilled and relieved to be awarded funding in late 2023; and so 2024 has been incredibly busy; rolling out the range of services we are now funded to deliver, and which you can read about in this **Impact Report**. Toyhouse needed to be both agile and tenacious, driven by our commitment to be supported financially, enabled to facilitate appropriate services that address needs preventively - **even before they first emerge**; - rather than later, when problems are deeply embedded and harder to unravel. Now we need to secure funding over a longer time period so we can focus on **service delivery** rather than the need constantly to replenish our coffers. Meeting the needs of the new generation deserves nothing less!



Some interesting Stats about Toyhouse & our services:

- ◆ 19% are White British
- ◆ 36% are European
- ◆ 27% are Bangladeshi
- ◆ 37% are Asian

Community Toy Libraries

TOY LIBRARIES

We were pleased to be awarded funding from the **Mayor's Community Grants Programme**, enabling us to provide support to 12 community Toy Libraries currently delivering play & toy loan services for local families. Toy Library provision closed for 18 months during the pandemic then, via an Innovation Grant from Save the Children Fund, we were able to provide direct support so 6 were enabled to re-launch; the others were gradually able to re-open via significant voluntary effort. For the last year, *this* Grant has enabled us to provide face2face support plus training to new



Librarians; also we provide advice via email or phone. A Newsletter is now a feature and wear & tear replacement of some stock is in the pipeline. Toy Libraries for pre-schoolers facilitate a wonderful setting to support early learning, develop social skills plus encouragement for language acquisition.
Supporting Toy Libraries: Pip & Julie

- 'It's so helpful him coming to Toyhouse, when he gets home I can see the confidence. It's good for him to play and meet other children.' (T & S)

We have 12 Member Toy Libraries: 6 are based in schools; 2 in Special Schools; 1 in an Idea Store; 3 in Voluntary & Community settings.



A new look for the Toyhouse Centre

The Toyhouse Centre has been included in a street art project to brighten up St Paul's Way. A big Thank you to Harca, Global Street Art & Gateway. The feedback from families has been very positive

Volunteering

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

James Noe & Family

For many years James & his family have generously donated toys for local families. We continue to be very grateful for the generous gifts, chosen by his children, & given to the children we work with.



British Land

Two teams of volunteers from British Land joined Toyhouse. On a lovely sunny day in June the first took families on a trip to Greenwich Park and the second team gave the Toyhouse Centre a fresh coat of paint, making it look much brighter.

Opportunities like this are really important to Toyhouse and the families we work with, providing new experiences for both children & adults alike.

Barclays Bank

Toyhouse was very grateful to staff at Barclays for their generosity in donating toys for the families we are working with. With budgets tight there is little spare money for those extras. Everyone was really thrilled when boxes were delivered to the Toyhouse Centre. The children and families who received the toys were thrilled & we received so much positive feedback and thank you cards from the children.

Volunteering @ Toyhouse Project

Toyhouse is very fortunate to have an active group of volunteers supporting many of our projects. This enables Toyhouse to offer a wider range of services to more local families. All our volunteers are parents and live in the local community, providing a more personal link and connections for the families we support.



Active Peer Support Volunteers

Elisa, Iishita, Kate, Mumtaz, Zoe & Hena

Volunteering @ Toyhouse

Nazmin, Shazna, Shakara, Leonilyn, Sume, & Ayesha

Family Wellbeing-Physical

ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY



Physical Play is essential for a child developing balance, coordination, reaction time, building stronger muscles 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 risks' 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 & Volunteer Shazna

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 to an extensive outside play space, in addition to the purpose built Play Pavilion. This project runs in term time Mon & Wed 10-11.30

Staff: Natasha & Dilara
Volunteers: Nazmin, & Ayeshea



We are please to announce Awards 4 All are now funding this project, enabling local



families ongoing opportunities to support their well-being and meet others from the local community

Connecting with the local community

Both Active Play sessions offer Toyhouse the opportunity to reach the wider community. Being based at opposite ends of the borough enables us to listen to more families, hearing their views and ideas on what they would like to see for their young children

Benefits for Early Learning

STORIES, SONGS & RHYMES

This fun, energetic session remains popular with families. Each week, a new story is introduced and retold together using sounds and actions. There are parachute games, puppets, nursery rhymes, musical instruments and dancing! The session has been planned to maximise communication between parents and their babies and toddlers, in a playful and enjoyable way, as a way of boosting children's language skills and parental confidence. Concerns about young children's speech, language and communication delay after the Covid-19 pandemic have been widely reported for several years. Most recently, there is a reported rise in the number of children missing communication milestones at age 12 months, causing concern locally and nationally. It was with this in mind that Stories, Songs & Rhymes has now been tailored to be part of the Bright Beginnings initiative with LBTH's GP Care Group. In addition to the usual hour of lively, interactive storytelling and music, we now offer an extra, targeted half-hour for referred families whose children have concerns raised about their speech & language development.



Facilitator: Tugela & Natasha

INVITED TO STAY & PLAY



This weekly session, for invited and referred families, provided an opportunity to play and make social connections in a smaller group, bringing parents from across communities together. Sessions enabled manageable, small-group socialising between parents and children when many remained nervous of larger social gatherings post-Covid. It provided valuable opportunities for babies and young children to interact, developing speech, language and play skills supported by parent and a variety of play resources. Parents received consistent, emotional and psychological support from the facilitators. Crucially, parents were able to support each other, sharing advice and experiences. This session has been particularly valuable for families who have faced additional challenges during the first years of parenthood, who have benefitted from the consistent and sensitive support of Toyhouse workers and trained Peer Support Volunteers. Tugela & Mumtaz PSV

With n NEW funding via Bright Beginnings from September we have introduced a new session for referred families with children 9mths-18mths with a identified developmental delay at the 12 month check.

Listening to the youngest Children

BABY SENSORY & RHYME TIME

The ever-popular Baby Sensory & Rhyme Time session runs weekly and welcomes parents & carers with pre-crawling babies. Each session, our community room is transformed into a cosy sensory play space, with a changing variety of high-quality toys and sensory play resources. Each session ends with a lively round of nursery rhymes and songs, accompanied by lots of delighted baby squeals! The session offers a peaceful, welcoming environment for parents & babies to play, relax and make vital social connections in the early days of parenthood. Many families return weekly and form supportive friendships during this session. We offer calming classical music, gentle lighting, as well as home-made cake and hot drinks for parents. As one mum told us: *'it's been a lifeline, especially in those early weeks when you're not sleeping, you've not eaten, you can come here and be taken care of for an hour'*. Feedback from families tells us that they value the small size of the group, which allows them to build meaningful, lasting relationships with Toyhouse staff & other families.

Tugela & Sume

Dad - 'We've really loved it here at **Story, Songs & Rhymes**, it's her favourite session. You've been incredible.'



'Toyhouse has been amazing. In my darkest hour, I could come and sit here, and know A would be cared for, and be surrounded by love. It has been a real life line' (R & A)

BABY MASSAGE



Toyhouse has 3 members of staff who hold the International Association of Infant Massage qualification. Our courses have proved very popular with many new parents being recommended by those who have previously completed the course. Our partnership work with St Pauls' Way MC enables us to reach new families pre- & post birth we aim to run Baby Massage classes 6 times per year.

Touch is the first sense to develop and the last to leave us. Encouraging parents to use "nurturing touch" on their baby strengthens the bond between them; Baby Massage courses show parents the strokes for a full massage, discussion time builds peer support networks and friendships, with many finding this the first time they are able to meet other local parents and build social networks.

Julie, Pip & Afia (Certified Infant Massage Instructors)

Wellbeing



Creative Cook Club & Summer Workshops

A fun healthier lifestyle project, running afterschool for primary aged children together with their parents/ carers and interests. Each week they are able to explore healthy alternatives to high sugar/fat foods, from across the world. With the children deciding what to cook, including ways to adapt these to healthier ingredients, cooking methods.

In the summer holidays the project is adapted to workshops, enabling more children to access, making use of local open spaces for play & games. Cook Club has supported Toyhouse to hear the views and ideas of local primary age children, helping us shape services to meet local needs and interests. This project is incredibly popular and we always have a waiting list for the courses and workshops.



Facilitators: Afia & Julie

"Sorry Meabh and I missed the Cook, Community group party, it was such a special lovely group with great people. Natasha & Lyn made it all come together in such an inclusive, caring atmosphere where it felt so nice and safe to share our stories. One of the best things I've done since Motherhood". Love & Thanks Meabh & Lou

Cook, Community & Culture Course

Funded by LBTH Mayors Community Fund, this project will aim to bring a wide range of parents with pre-school children plus people aged over 50yrs in a 5-week course during which they will explore a variety of ways in which we might appear to be different. We will bring people together through the medium of food across cultures, both day to day and celebratory

events, with the aim of building wider understand and stronger links within the local community.

Participants will take their experiences and learning back to their own family and community building wider understand, social connections & friendships

Facilitator:

Natasha.

Volunteers: Lyn & Shakara



Partnerships

Toyhouse has had a longstanding link with **St Paul's Way Medical Centre**. We have been working in partnership with them, providing

Play & Information session in the waiting area during the ante-natal clinic and the baby 6-8 week check sessions. These sessions have been very successful in reaching families at the earliest points

"I have never worked with the Toyhouse, but have heard great things from my team"

Practice Manager, St Andrews Health Centre!



Save the Children invited Toyhouse families to the launch of Lego Christmas event. Traveling by mini bus to the Lego flagship store in Leicester Square, great fun was had by all.

Reaching the community

- 2279 child users, 58% boys & 42% girls
- 1491 total adult users with 10% of these being male carers
- 1535 total users are of Asian origin - 40%
- 647 users are White British; 17% total users
- There are 80 Facilitators (many are volunteers)

Over 3000 people have been involved in Toyhouse services during the last year



For a second year Toyhouse have been very fortunate to work in partnership with the **Half Moon Theatre** offering more varied opportunities for families at the Toyhouse Centre, their Creative workshops for families with pre-school children were a great success. They were able to explore, themed

movement, story & songs & the families really enjoyed the sessions. All were given the chance to attend a theatre performance.

Video Interaction Guidance (VIG)

This year, Tugela has been training to deliver Video Interaction Guidance (VIG), a strengths-based intervention designed to promote quality, attuned interactions between parents and very young children. Research shows that attunement between caregiver and child in the first 1001 days is vital to laying firm foundations for children's learning, development and emotional wellbeing.

Sure STEPs Peer Support

SURE STEPS & THE PEER SUPPORT VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME



Our trained Peer Support Volunteers (PSVs) have continued to support local families. We have made several successful new matches this year. Participating families face a variety of challenges, most notably high levels of anxiety, which we continue to see in unprecedented levels since the Covid-19 pandemic. Families are often also socially isolated, especially those who are single parents or have children with additional needs. Therefore, the flexible, informal support offered by our PSVs can make a real difference. Support is offered either over the phone - via text message or calls - or in person, encouraging isolated families to get out and about in the local area, or accompanying them to sessions at Toyhouse.

PEER SUPPORT TRAINING

Toyhouse held 2 training courses for those wanting to become Peer Support Volunteers (PSV). The first course was in November-December and the second during April-May and resulted in 12 people completing the training and some now actively involved in supporting local families. The course runs for 8 sessions, exploring areas mums-to-be and new families may be struggling with, reasons for these difficulties and how they can offer support. Our next course is due to start in October.

Pip, Julie & Tugela

*"If I could do this course at Toyhouse over and over again, I wouldn't think twice!
It's a safe, inclusive, fun, sad, happy - and pretty much all!"*
Mellow parent



"Thank you so much for all the support, knowledge, kindness, gifts and cake you have given us in the over the past year - in Baby Group, Massage, Story & Rhyme time. Coming to Toyhouse has helped me connect to the community & feel more confident as a new parent"

EARLY SUPPORT



BRIGHT BEGINNINGS

'In the spring, Toyhouse was approached and asked whether we could offer sessions for families who had been identified as likely to benefit from a group work input, in particular focusing on opportunities to develop social communication, speech & skills. Following

discussion within the team, we presented 4 possible options! Some linked to universal services, whilst others are wholly targeted. The first launched in The Toyhouse Centre in August, outlined elsewhere in this report as it is a variation on "Stories, Songs and Rhymes" - an instantly successful session!

The second session, again in The Toyhouse Centre, launched in the early autumn, is a play session for referred families, during which we show short film clips and provide other information to support parents increased understanding of the importance of communication and interaction with their young child.

We plan to start session 3 & 4 later in the autumn, basing them elsewhere in the Borough, but linked to universal services Toyhouse delivers. We are pleased to be working with the **Bright Beginnings** team on this Pilot programme and hope to contribute to positive outcomes; both for the families and for the research!

Special Early Family Support

This is a new development, funded via the Central Government "Start for Life" Programme, but linked to work Toyhouse previously undertook for 15 years via the Home Visiting Mobile Toy Library service, for the families of pre school aged children with special needs. This new service can receive referrals for those



identified at the 20week scan, or later, who either have a named, or as yet unnamed, cause of developmental delay. The service provides emotional support to the parents in their home, plus relevant toys & resources to encourage their interactive play & engagement with the child. The project aims to reduce isolation, promoting the well-being of parents, despite the challenges of caring for a baby with additional needs.

Pip, Mumtaz & Hena

Baby Sensory & Rhyme Time

'There's nothing else like it in Tower Hamlets
Everyone is so welcoming and friendly.' - mum



START 4 LIFE

MELLOW PARENTING

When funding became available via the **Start for Life** programme, Toyhouse was delighted to be able to continue our annual facilitation of the in-depth, for the 14x weekly, whole day session, Mellow course for parents, together with their pre school aged child; but with a specific focus on babies & toddlers aged 6-24months. Toyhouse has 3 staff qualified to facilitate Mellow and the 2024 course, run by Tugela & Pip, began recruiting at the turn of the year, running from March-July, beginning with 9 families. The end of course evaluation yielded both very positive comments & statistics, but also the 7 participants who finished all recorded significant positive improvement in their parenting strategies leading to increased confidence & satisfaction in their parenting role!

The next Mellow Parents course launches in November 2024 & we already have nearly a full cohort!

Course Facilitators: Pip, Tugela & Julie
Children's Group: Afia & Natasha
Parent Volunteer: Sume



MELLOW BUMPS & BUMPS +

Toyhouse has been funded to continue offering Mellow Bumps this year, with one 6-week course delivered successfully, another started in September. This highly regarded course is evidence-based, which focuses on antenatal bonding with baby, emotional aspects of becoming a mother, and new-born development. The course is especially useful for vulnerable pregnant women, working closely with referring professionals such as Perinatal Mental Health services, Gateway Midwives & Children's Social Care throughout the course. We also welcome self-referrals. This year, extending support to participants by offering Mellow Bumps Plus, a sensory stay & play session for MB families after babies have arrived. Facilitated by the same staff who delivered the course, this small, welcoming session filled with familiar faces has become a lifeline for more vulnerable families. Some of our Mellow Bumps Plus families have faced homelessness, relationship breakdown or ongoing health conditions, but continue to attend as regularly as possible. We look forward to welcoming a new cohort of Mellow Bumps Plus families. **Facilitators: Tugela & Natasha**

Advice from a parent on the Mellow Parenting course:

"You should definitely go on this (Mellow Parenting) course; it will be a rollercoaster journey of enlightenment, laughter, tears, joy and fun. You will meet other parents that may, or may not, be going through the same as you; - but you will definitely learn, whether it's about You, your child, or your family."