



2 GET THE VENUE

This Guidance Sheet aims to provide a brief introduction to the subject of finding the right venue for your toy library project. Whether it's the suitable location, ensuring you have enough storage space or making sure your users will have the right first impression of your toy library, the following information will guide you through all the key factors you will need to consider when attempting to find the perfect premises!

Location! Location! Location!

Choosing where to have your toy library is one of the most important factors to consider, and any decision must be based on sound local research. The secret is to combine accessibility with a welcoming environment. You will need to base your choice on which venues are locally available, what kind of project you are planning and what you can afford.

Premises

Toy libraries are located in a variety of venues including:

- Community / Leisure Centre's
- Youth Centre's
- Family Centre's
- Schools
- Church Halls
- Hospitals and Clinics

Accessibility

How users will get to and from your toy library must be a major consideration. Think about whether your toy library is on a good public transport route. Parking is also necessary, not only for users, but also for your staff. It is also essential that your premises are accessible for wheelchair users and that buggies can easily get in and navigate the space!

Top Tip



Most toy libraries share premises with other community groups – this can be cost effective and will also give you a ready-made audience when you offer you launch your service.

First Impressions

Does your venue look attractive from the outside? It's important that users feel welcome and don't have to search through a maze of other buildings or feel uncomfortable on approach. Perhaps consider putting up signage to greet users, or brighten up any weary paintwork. Inside should be bright and airy—avoid a dark or gloomy room or users won't want to stay for long!

Health and Safety

Consider the health and safety implications in any potential site. What are the fire regulations? Do the windows have grilles or locks to prevent children opening them? Are there any potential tripping or potential hazards? A full risk assessment should be carried out on any premises you choose anyway, but avoid premises where you cannot see the potential to make 'child proof'.

Good Facilities

When deciding on your premises, it might be helpful to remember that a successful venue will be one with the following facilities available:

- Storage – secure and accessible.
- Tables or shelves to display toys and resources.
- An area for parents / carers to relax with a tea or coffee which is away from where children will be playing.
- Space to lay out more toys for children to try and for 'stay and play' sessions.
- A place to leave buggies.
- Adjustable temperature.
- Access to sinks/water for cleaning toys.
- Toilets, including nappy changing.
- Electric sockets (make sure they are safety sockets).



Storage Solutions

All stock should preferably be in the room where you are holding the toy library, but at least on the same level and easily accessible. Do not underestimate the amount of space toys will take up. Having the ability to choose what to put out is also important — try to avoid a space where you will have to stack everything. Hooks on the wall or behind door can provide extra space and shelving will utilise the most space.

Where to Start Looking?

There are three main sources of guidance when trying to locate premises:

1. **Your Local Authority** - most Local Authority websites will have information on available council premises to let and often links to commercial and private lettings in the area. Schools / libraries / leisure and community centres have the flexibility to let rooms within their own settings, and therefore it is best to approach them directly.
2. **Existing Voluntary Groups** - check around your local area, particularly local churches or community halls.
3. **Local Estate Agents** - will have a list of available property belonging to commercial and private landlords. It's easy to find these online.

Venue

There are a few key things you need to consider when deciding on a venue.

- **Rent** - you may simply be asked to contribute to costs or in the case of sole use, the whole amount. Some projects may negotiate a heavily reduced rent or you may even be lucky enough to get premises for free.
- **Heating / Lighting** - special rates can be arranged for charities-see your Local Authority.
- **Insurance** - SPN can point you in the right direction for competitive 'whole-project' insurance, including premises, contents and public liability.
- **Phone line & Internet** - ask to join a Wi-Fi network nearby or negotiate a special charity deal.



Checklist

Have you:

- Created a list of available premises and visited potential venues?
- Researched your area to check for other toy libraries?
- Checked that the facilities of any venue meet all your needs?
- Considered health and safety factors, including appropriate access?
- Drawn up a budget taking all costs in to account?
- Checked the conditions of lease arrangements?

Smart Play Network Members Support

As a member, you have access to telephone and email support. For more information about the topics covered in this guidance sheet, or any other queries you may have about your group, please contact us using: 0131 554 2620 or admin@smartplaynetwork.org

It is free to be a member of Smart Play Network, for more information check out our website: www.smartplaynetwork.org.