



5 GET THE PEOPLE

This Guidance Sheet provides an introduction to the subject of finding the right people to staff your new toy library. Whether it's the potential of local volunteers, setting up a steering group to help you get organised or considering whether you should hire paid staff, the following information will give you some ideas on how to find people to structure your toy library and make your project a working reality!

Volunteers

Toy libraries usually begin as voluntary exercises, and therefore it is important to give consideration to the potential of local volunteers when you first start to think about the staffing needs of your library. Volunteers can bring a variety of skills to your project, a wealth of knowledge, fresh ideas, and many different kinds of experience. Significantly, volunteers will reflect the diversity of your local community, and help to keep your project on track

Potential roles for Volunteers

Before you recruit volunteers you need to know what tasks you will want them to do. The following list offers some suggestions on roles volunteers could perform which will aid the smooth running of your project:

- Administration - preparing new members' packs, database and IT tasks.
- Fundraising - organising events, writing funding bids, cake stalls (but please check out food safety regulations first!)
- Publicity - producing newsletters, designing posters / leaflets, website design.
- Repair & Maintenance - repairing toys, checking / cleaning toys.
- Supporting - welcoming people, making refreshments, helping with crafts and activities.
- Toy Loan - setting up library sessions, booking toys in/out, cataloguing toys.

Top Tip



Ideally, if volunteers are going to be significantly involved in delivering the library's services then they should be included from the start. If volunteers are involved in all aspects of planning, setting up and the subsequent running of the toy library, they will feel involved and have genuine ownership of the project.

Finding Volunteers locally

There are a number of channels through which you can find volunteers. Exploring as many of these options as possible will allow you to cultivate a diverse and knowledgeable group of volunteers who will be an asset to your library.

Some ways to start searching for volunteers would be:

- **Recruit your members** - users of the library will provide the best resource, and you can often encourage them to volunteer by offering guidance, support and relevant training.
- **Ask your local religious communities** - members of different faiths are usually involved in their local community
- **Contact local places of worship.** Religious leaders will be able to advise you on how their community might be able to help.
- **Advertise** - you can advertise for volunteers on community websites, social media, advice centres, careers offices, community centres, councils for voluntary service (CVS), GP/dental surgeries, health / leisure centres, libraries, schools or shops.



Finding Volunteers Nationally

In addition to local volunteering opportunities, there are also ways to search for volunteers nationally. These are a great place to start:

- **National Volunteer Database** - allows you to advertise your requirements by contacting your local Volunteer Bureau who will add your opportunities (www.do-it.org.uk).
- **REACH** - recruits and supports people with managerial, technical and professional expertise and places them in part-time, unpaid roles in voluntary organisations across the UK (www.reach-online.org.uk).
- **Community Service Volunteers** - CVS is the UK's largest volunteering and training organisation. It can find volunteers, create a volunteer programme, or offer professional development for staff. (www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk)

Setting Up a Steering Group

The motivating force behind toy libraries has often been the motivation of one person! However, it is important to involve others from the very beginning. Why not set up a small steering group and allocate various jobs to different individuals?

A steering group is often the first stage in any community project and can be a helpful means by which to involve the local community during your library's creation. Made up of volunteers who have put themselves forward or been nominated by the library's users, a steering group's aim is to decide upon a mission statement for the library, and its members will collectively make decisions which will affect the library's operation. In this way you will share the burden and draw on the differing expertise of other people.



Hiring Paid Staff

Paid staff can bring many advantages and as your toy library develops you may feel any expansion in service demands the time and stability they can bring.

Hiring paid staff can bring many rewards - namely, you won't have to rely on the goodwill of volunteers to deliver your service. It is important to remember that paid staff are not always going to be reliable and will sometimes move on to other opportunities! Hiring paid staff will generally create a greater level of stability which your members may benefit by seeing the same faces.

Checklist

Have you:

- Considered the valuable contribution volunteers could make to your toy library?
- Decided on the roles and responsibilities you will need volunteers to take on?
- Thought about where you can find volunteers locally?
- Thought about setting up a steering group?
- Considered taking on paid staff, and thought about the responsibilities this will bring?

Smart Play Network Members Support

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 on how to become a member please refer to our website: www.smartplaynetwork.org.