

90% of toys produced today are plastic and the vast majority of them end up in landfill, many still in perfect condition. While visiting her local library for a toddler group session where the children can play with toys, Jill Kennon, a business owner and mother of two, spoke to her friends about toy libraries and what a great idea they are. After researching their growing popularity in the UK, US and Australia, Jill and her friend Elaine Murphy Byrne decided to create a Toy Library in Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan.



Before starting the project, they engaged with the public and asked a number of questions e.g. "is this something you would be interested in?", "would you donate toys?", and "what collection times would suit?" Based on a great response from the public they then found a suitable location, a room in the recently renovated Carrickmacross Workhouse.

Initial funding for setup and rent was sourced through fundraising events and the team also ran a toy drive to gather enough toys for the initial opening. A Facebook page called Carrickmacross Toy Library was also set up to spread the word.

The project received assistance from Monaghan County Council which allowed the organisers access to other grants to cover start-up and running costs. Monaghan Co Co also provided support in the areas of promotion and advertising by including the Toy Library in reports and newsletters as well as promoting it on social media.

### How it works

To use the Toy Library people join as members. The small fee allows them to access a wide range of toys that are organised into categories of educational or fine motor skills, pretend play, dress up, musical toys and puzzles, with a focus on sustainable toys. Parents pick their desired toy on The Toy Library website and then collect it during opening hours (Friday 10am-12pm and alternate Saturdays 2:30-4:30pm).

They can then keep the toys for a maximum of 3 weeks and can either return the toys or choose new ones. The fee covers maintenance, rental and insurance costs as well as growing the toy collection.



The initial opening was in April of 2020 but, due to issues associated with Covid, the project was put on hold. The Toy Library relaunched again in September 2020 and has been a big success since then. Initially the Toy Library was quite small, just a room with a few toys opening on Fridays. Now, due to demand, it is also open on Saturday afternoons and there has been a great increase in both the demand of people looking to join up and also people donating toys.

There are currently fifty active members and over four hundred and fifty toys in the collection.

Jill and Elaine divide up the time together with the help of local volunteers and have more plans for the toy library to continue to grow in the future, including 'stay and play' and themed play sessions.



For more information please contact: [cep@epa.ie](mailto:cep@epa.ie)

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