

Open letter to Welsh Government – toy libraries

Introduce a nationwide network of toy libraries in Wales

The first toy library was started in Los Angeles in 1935 in response to the Great Depression and the first one in the UK was started in London in 1967. Unfortunately, here in Wales, toy libraries are still very few and far between.

Toy libraries have a multitude of benefits. They can help save families money; provide children with new and different sorts of toys and play equipment which can help stimulate their imagination and help their development; can help reduce clutter in homes; can act as a community hub helping give children and families another opportunity to come together in their communities, reduce the amount of toys going to landfill, reduce plastic consumption and therefore also in a small way help reduce some climate emissions.

Toys are also greatly beneficial in promoting movement through play amongst children. In 2019, the World Health Organisation released guidelines stating that children should sit less and move more. This is because of an increase of sedentary behaviour amongst children and their caregivers coming partly because of an increase in digital technology usage, particularly screens. Play was identified by the WHO as one of the main mechanisms to help children move more, benefitting their health in the short, medium and long term.

However, we know that not all children have the same access to toys which promote movement and play, particularly children from lower income backgrounds. A new nationwide network of toy libraries in Wales would help support a child's right to play (article 31 of the UNCRC), equalising opportunities for all children participate in play. In addition, Toy Libraries would help with the cost-of-living crisis and would help deliver Welsh Government's vision of a circular economy here in Wales as we move to becoming a truly zero waste nation. This would promote a children's rights approach, aligned with the articles set out within the UNCRC.

We the undersigned, call on Welsh Government to work with relevant organisations and experts in Wales to support the creation of a nationwide network of toy libraries.

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