

# THE TOY PROJECT

## November 2018 – November 2019

### November – December 2018

The two months leading up to Christmas is always the busiest time of year for us. We celebrate our birthday in mid-November, we attend lots of local community events, we hold The Big Iz Toy Give, we run Christmas activities and we give toys in time for Christmas to hundreds of children living in difficult situations.

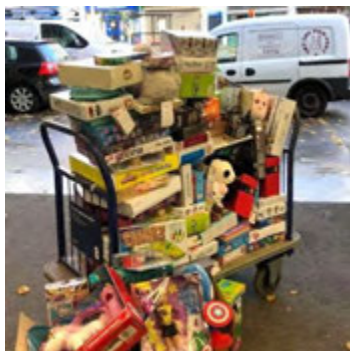
On the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018 we celebrated our 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. We have come a long way in five years, and it is hard to imagine that The TOY Project started life as a small operation run from home back in 2013.



This year we had referrals for toys for children in need from schools, refugee and migrant centres, homeless hostels, bereaved centres, prisons and hospitals and from organisations in Africa and the Caribbean. These include requests of support from teachers, doctors, community workers and families for Christmas presents for children living in difficult situations.

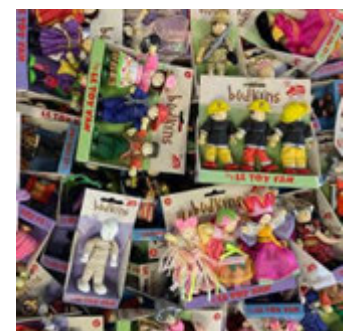
These organisations include NSPCC, GOSH, Olwin Kids Foundation, All in Mind, Whittington Hospital, Help On Your Doorstep, Solace Women's Aid, CHUMS, Akwaaba, Honey Pot, Sistah Space and HMS Pentonville PACT.

We prepared gift bags and shoe boxes of toys for all the children referred to us which were delivered or collected in time for Christmas. All the toys were brand new and came from public donations, school and church collections, from In Kind Direct, from the managers of Stonegate pubs and from Sylvanian Families UK. Specific items were bought by us where needed.



Many donations came from large toy companies and office worker collections. One thousand Budkins characters were donated by Le Toy Van, Mickey Mouse toys were donated by Disney UK via In Kind Direct and Sylvanian Families UK donated doll's houses.

These toys were given to a whole range of organisations for Christmas including to the children of fathers at Pentonville Prison, the children of refugees and asylum seekers in Islington via the Early Parenthood Programme at Manor Gardens, families via Help On Your Doorstep, Solace Women's Aid and organisations in Africa and the Caribbean.





Islington schools, families and workplaces held toy drives for us as part of the annual Big Iz Toy Give. Ladbroke Square Montessori School and Knightsbridge School also held their annual toy collections for us where they invited all their families to bring in their unwanted toys.

These toys were collected and redistributed to those that needed them including local schools, hospitals and community groups and some of the toys were sold in our shop.



Many customers chose to buy their Christmas presents with us this year so we stayed open on Christmas Eve to fulfil last minute present requests. Customers purchased stocking fillers, secret Santa gifts and Christmas presents. We were pleased to see that our customers are beginning to change their habits by no longer buying exclusively new toys as presents.

We won best window display in Archway for the second year running and won the prize of £100.



We sold our themed recycled toy hampers and preloved toys in recycled gift boxes.







We ran our annual Archway Bake Off at the Archway Christmas Market.

We saw a whole range of entries baked by local children and adults. These were judged by local business owners, our local councillor and winner of Celebrity MasterChef, John Partridge.

Wenzle's the bakers sponsored the Bake Off, paying for medals and providing cakes and gingerbread.



Meanwhile in December, Arsenal striker Alexandre Lacazette (number 9) played a game on our behalf and wore our name on the back of his shirt for the warmups. Families and children that we support were invited to meet Arsenal players including Nacho Monreal and Konstantinos Mavropanos.

Thank you to the Arsenal Foundation for organising both these events.



MONAT members ran a 10k in support of The TOY Project raising £1272.

We continued our partnership with Small Steps Project who run a programme supporting children and families living on rubbish dumps. Our preloved toys were sent to children in Uganda and Kenya in time for Christmas. We continued to partner with Small Steps Project throughout the year.



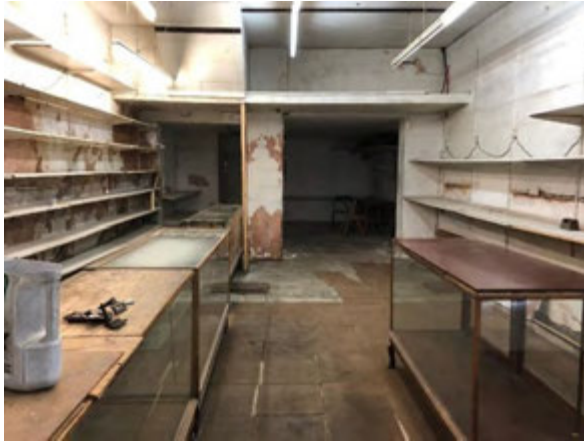
Our support with the council for the Disabled in Grenada continued by sending Christmas filled shoeboxes for over 100 children. These were given out at their schools and delivered to their village homes. MONAT Gratitude contributed to the shoeboxes by donating art materials and colouring books.





## January – February 2019

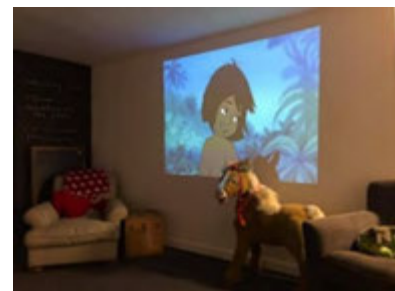
We were given the keys to our new shop in December and spent the Christmas and New Year period renovating the space from an old electronics shop to a second-hand toy shop and community space. Lots of hard work was provided by our trustees, volunteers and staff members to get the shop ready for our opening in January.



We had a bespoke price guide blackboard and signage inside designed and written by the Blackboard Artist and the shop's name and signage outside was designed and hand-painted by Archie from Irregular Signs designed and hand painted the shop's signage outside.



Our new shop, just a few doors along from our old one, provides much more space for the charity's needs. We now have storage space, staff facilities, a WC and a small kitchen and there is access at the back for deliveries. We created a space for a cinema and storytelling room where we can hold events for the local community.





In January, we attended the 2019 Toy Fair at London Olympia.

We enjoyed educating corporate companies and fair visitors about the importance of recycling toys and talked through what we do and how they can support us.

We made connections within the toy industry and this event marked the beginning of lots of exciting partnerships and new projects.



At the beginning of February, we packed up a huge truck of toys, books, games, scooters, bicycles and furniture to send to both Kenya and Uganda with Small Steps Project. Much of the furniture was donated by an Islington nursery that was closing down. A local couple also donated chairs, tables, slides and a panda bookcase.



St Ives School held a toy collection for us and delivered them to our new premises.

As we moved out of our Finsbury Park office at the end of February, we held a huge free toy event for teachers, the local community and our supporters. Toys were laid out in the communal hall and were given to anyone who wanted them!



We started running interactive storytelling sessions for local children with actor Tim McArthur and together created The TOY Project's very own storyteller and Pantomime Dame - 'The Dame'.

MONAT UK donated £1273 which funded our storytelling sessions with the Dame at schools, hospitals and community centres.

The Dame visited Hayward Adventure playground for children with specific requirements and their siblings, the Whittington Hospital children's ward, The Royal Free Hospital and the Bridge School.



We were given a grant through Islington Council to use the Pedivan as our means for toy collections and deliveries. Pedivan is local bicycle courier service that uses a cargo bike.

This move has meant we no longer needed our costly and polluting diesel van and has massive benefits for the charity. We save 30 hours of staff time per month, we have reduced our emissions by 100% and approximately £140 per month is saved by this switch.





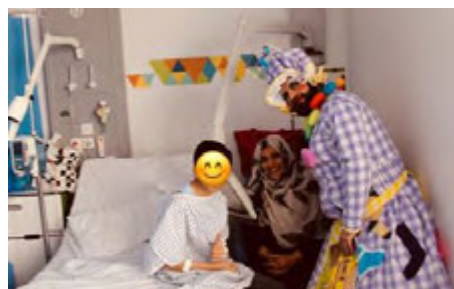
## March – April 2019

Throughout this year, we supported a number of hospitals, including our two most local hospitals – the Whittington Hospital in Archway and the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead.

At the Royal Free, we funded face painting sessions for special events and provided them with a ride in car for children to 'drive' themselves to their operations.

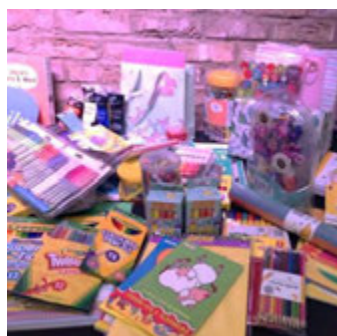
We funded a special visit by The Dame to the hospital and donated toys to their inpatient and outpatient departments.

At the Whittington, we worked closely with the play specialists on the Ifor children's ward and provided them with toys and equipment.



During this year, we supplied four new Little Tikes cars for their outdoor play area and we regularly dropped off craft and art supplies to keep children occupied during their stay in hospital.

We provided a ride in car for children to 'drive' themselves to their operations. We also funded face painters to visit the children staying on the Ifor ward and a visit from The Dame.



In March, MONAT UK held an event and donated hundreds of pounds worth of new art and craft equipment.

These were given to schools we support in London and in Grenada.





Our Charity Director and co-founder Jane Garfield won a Mayors Civic award for her hard work and contribution to the Islington community.

She was nominated by local councillor Sheila Chapman and collected her award at Islington Town Hall.

Our longest supporters, Arrow Valves, celebrated their 20 year anniversary in April 2019. They held a fundraising ball to raise money for The TOY Project and invited trustee Fran Howat to say a few words at their celebration.



They also held a silent auction and staff members completed a 20 mile sponsored walk to raise money for us. We are immensely grateful to company director Laura Ewers for the support Arrow Valves has given to the charity over the years.



We were pleased to welcome parents from the Bridge School to our shop in April. We offered discounted prices and free toys for their children with specific educational needs.

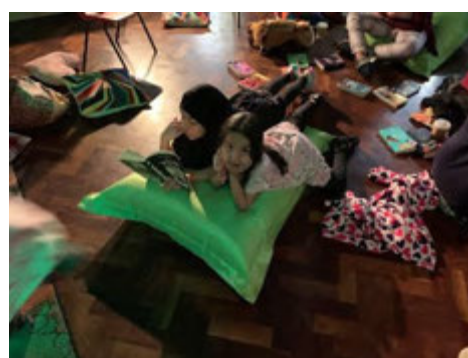
We bought specialist toys for the children attending play therapy in Kenya with Africa. These children have been rescued from living on the streets and are given a safe place to stay and therapy where needed.

To celebrate World Book Day 2019, we gave every child who visited the shop a free book.



We provided Forest School with outdoor equipment for their children to enjoy.

We supplied beanbags, cushions, rugs and books to Northview Primary School for their bedtime story night.



In April, charity director and co-founder Jane Garfield and teacher and volunteer Hazel Lambert travelled to Grenada in the Caribbean on a self-funded trip on behalf of The TOY Project.

They ran interactive puppet workshops to children attending six special needs schools.

All the puppets donated to the charity over the previous year were sent to Grenada beforehand to run these workshops.



We also supplied books, puppets, masks, face paints, school supplies, animal costumes and dressing up clothes to children at schools across Grenada.

We shared with teachers the importance of creative learning through books, puppets, face paints and costumes and were delighted to see the children's response was welcoming and enthusiastic as was that of the teachers.





## May – June 2019

Our visits to the shop from local schoolchildren continued this year.

Pupils from St John's Primary School come weekly with their teacher to take a trolley full of toys back to their school, we welcomed visits from pupils at the Bridge School on a weekly basis and we've also enjoyed visits from local nursery schools, who get to take away a book each as well as resources for their classrooms.



We had a special visit from the Year 4 class at Stroud Green Primary who visited us for a morning to learn about our charity and what we do.

The pupils learnt about the importance of recycling, reusing, upcycling and buying second hand. We then provided toys for the children to take back to their classroom to work on a creative recycled art project.



2019 saw the beginning of 'Window Wednesdays' where staff member Vincenza Dato changes our fantastic displays in the window of our shop.

Displays this year have included dolls houses, Playmobil, Barbies, and themed seasonal displays such as St Patrick's Day, Easter, Book Day and Christmas.





In June, the window of our shop was decorated in celebration of Pride Month and featured a fabulous rainbow coloured display to reflect the pride flag. We made our famous Daisy boxes containing diverse Playmobil families with same-sex couples.



Our toys reached children in the remote islands of Bocas Del Toro in Panama thanks to final year medical students at the University of Sheffield, Katie, Adam and Laura, who travelled there on their medical volunteering trip.



Three year old Sophie ran a mile for us and raised £17!

We attended lots of local fairs in the community this summer including Highgate's Fair in the Square and Alma Street Fair, Ambler Summer Fair and Archway Summer Fair.







One of the connections we made at the Toy Fair back in January was with 3Style Scooters. They have since generously donated scooters for us to distribute to organisations we support.

We have given scooters to schools, hospitals, hostels and individual children in need, here children enjoy their new scooters at Robert Blair Primary School and the Hayward Adventure Playground.

This year we continued our knitted Bunnies for India project and saw hundreds of bunnies being knitted in the UK for street children all over India.

Many people visiting India have taken these bunnies for street children and for organisations supporting play including The Toy Bank in Delhi.





## July – August 2019

This summer we were pleased to have four work experience placements join us at the shop for a day or week at a time this summer – thank you to Talia, Omar, Henry and Ishana.

We asked them to help us out on a number of different tasks related to their interests. This included retail experience such as how to make a sale and use the card machine and they also helped us out with sorting donations of toys as well as tidying up in the shop and in the storeroom.

We also showed them the range of activities that the charity provides by taking them along to drop off donations of toys at places like the local hospital, schools or families in need.



We were invited to launch of the Climate Action Fund to showcase what we do as a charity. The Climate Action Fund from the National Lottery will support communities in the UK to take local action on climate change.



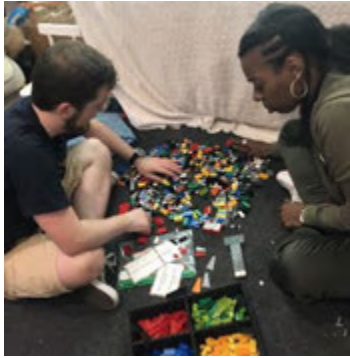
In July, Camden Council invited us to celebrate Pride Month by attending Pride London.

We ran a stall in the family area and our Dame provided fun and laughter through storytelling sessions on the family stage. We also supplied a face painter for the day, funded by Camden Council.





We organised training for our staff members Jane Garfield, Huw Steer, Jess Doyle, Angelique White and Hazel Lambert to be taught how to run Lego therapy for children with social communication and special educational needs.



This enabled us to start running free Lego workshops for children in the local community from July.

These sessions help children to develop their communication and group work skills as well as having fun whilst working together through building sets and participating in building challenges.

The initial sessions were funded by the Arsenal Foundation and were such a hit with local children that we decided to fund them ourselves on a permanent basis.



We now run three sessions per week and thanks to the success of these sessions, we have decided to start running Lego building sessions for over 50s too!





We sent lots more toys to Uganda and Kenya in Africa with Small Steps Project. We donated ride-on toys, rocking horses, art easels, a toy kitchen, a giant teddy bear and lots of other toys for the children to enjoy.



At the end of August, we met with hospital staff and artist Dean Rudd to discuss our latest project at the Whittington Hospital.

We would love to make the children's anaesthetic room more welcoming and child friendly to reduce anxiety and improve the overall experience of children going in for surgery.



Our work supporting families and communities in Grenada continued and we sent two barrels of books, soft toys and games for the Grenada National Council of the Disabled.

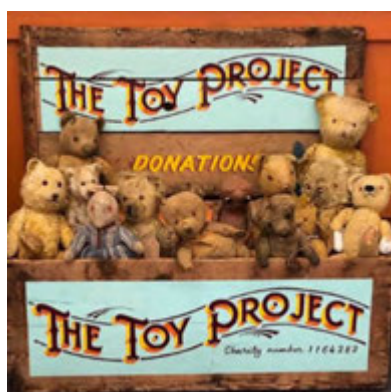


## September – October 2019

In September we attended the 2019 Hugglets Teddy Bear Festival where we hosted a stall, displayed our collection of 'golden oldies' vintage teddy bears and sold some of our teddy bears to raise money for the charity.

We assigned a project to each of our teddy bears for sale and 100% of the proceeds of the teddy bear's sale went directly towards funding that project. For example, thanks to the sale of a teddy bear at Hugglets, we were able to provide a special light projection to the children's anaesthetic room at the Whittington Hospital.

Thank you to Hugglets for giving us the space to talk to all their exhibitors and guests about the important work that we do. We raised a fabulous figure of £893!



In the autumn we set up our first toy library at Robert Blair Primary School. A toy library works exactly the same as a book library and pupils and parents can sign toys out to borrow them for a week at a time to take home and play with.

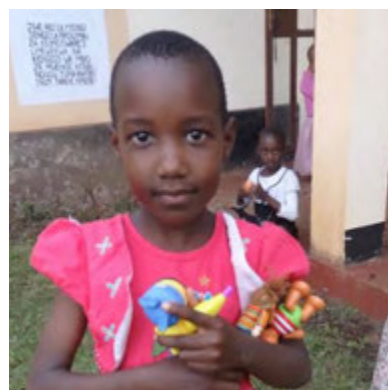
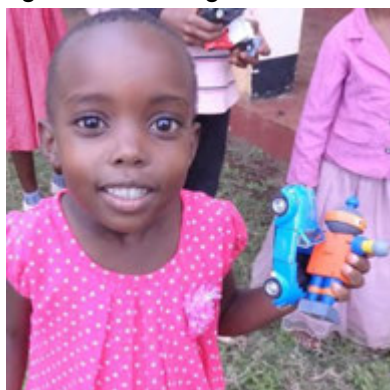
There are a wide selection of toys to choose from including jigsaw puzzles and board games. We hope to set up book libraries in all Islington schools over the next two years.

We provided toys to the Finsbury Park flood victims via Ambler Primary School. Around 250 properties were damaged or destroyed by the floods in only a few hours meaning that many children lost all their toys.

We provided Opera Infinity with toys to take to Kenya as they took their Opera singing workshops to the children living in orphanages.



We sent toys to Tanzania to the Equality in Tourism project which works towards enabling poor and marginalised farming women to benefit from the wealthy tourism industry in the Kilimanjaro region. The project runs in partnership with local women's empowerment organisations and we provided a whole range of toys for their children and grandchildren to enjoy including cars, small figures, colouring books and crayons.



In October we sent four barrels of books to Grenada to The Limes Pre-school to support their newly built library.

We donated toys to children and families living on the Woodberry Down Estate, birthday presents for children who attend Akwaaba Hackney and baby toys and equipment to mothers and pregnant women fleeing violence with the Happy Baby Community.

We sent knitted bunnies to The Toy Bank in Delhi, India for their safe space playroom, we sent bunnies to the Joshua Playing Project in Pushka, India and we also sent Lego to Pushka for children to enjoy at Shiksha Secondary School.





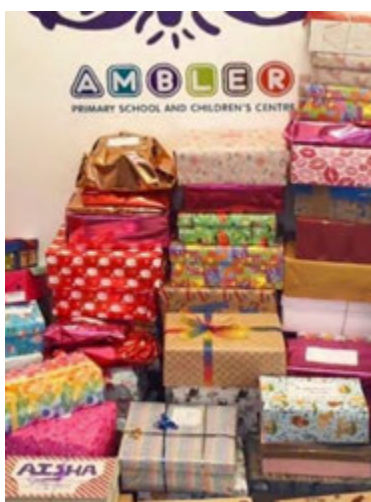
This year, our preparations for the busy Christmas period began at the end of September when MONAT UK held another amazing collection of toys for us.

They donated hundreds of new art and craft materials and supplies which will be used to support children and families living in difficult circumstances this Christmas including the children of fathers in prison.

Our Christmas preparations continued in October when we sent 160 shoeboxes full of toys for Christmas presents for children in Uganda with Small Steps Project. All the shoeboxes were filled with toys donated by pupils, parents and staff at Ambler Primary School.

We held a volunteer day with Veda London where volunteers helped us to pack, sort and wrap all the presents. Volunteers also helped us out behind the scenes at the shop by tidying and sorting our Lego and Playmobil.

Thank you to everyone at Veda London for coming along and helping us out!



This year has been another success story for us. We have supported so many children, families and communities and have thoroughly enjoyed bringing people and communities together through sharing, caring and saving their planet.

Emma Howat