**Toy Library Report period 2013-** How we’ve helped

Thursday mornings see families from Ross and the surrounding villages converge on the Toy Library/ Stay and Play Group for a couple of hours of “me time” for both the children and their carers! We must have found the magic mix of fun and relaxation for all because more than 60 young families accessed the Toy Library in 2013 despite school holiday closure. At least 50 families return on a regular basis, Parents quote “the group is welcoming and has a lovely atmosphere providing much needed support for both new and experienced parents”.

Despite some inclement seasonal weather our reputation for being the “sunshine group” still remains and much of our success can be put down to the idyllic venue at the Ryefield Centre where access to a stimulating sensory garden enhances the indoor facilities.

We have been fortunate in gaining weekly help from a Home-Start Volunteer who kindly offers a welcoming drink to carers on their arrival. She also prepares a nutritious snack for the children, assisting the families and supporting staff. This additional help has enabled our group coordinators to provide confidential 1-1 support for those parents that are experiencing difficulties around parenting issues. (See outcomes in application)

A health Visitor now holds a baby weighing and advice clinic during the Toy Library hours, many of our families access this facility. In addition to this a Breast Feeding Clinic is also being made available, resulting in new mothers & babies joining our soft play area for a little relaxation amongst the soft cushions before leaving for home.

Our young children are supported by a variety of carers; not only mums but we regularly have Dads, Grandparents, other family members as well as Home-Start Volunteers (providing respite support). Due to various funding cuts in local facilities we now have a regular number of child minders who enjoy what we offer their children. This diversity of adult carers helps create an atmosphere where their youngsters develop confidence & curiosity whilst playing & having fun in a safe secure environment.

Every Thursday has a special theme which incorporates all activities from the craft to the inside & outside toys offered to the families; even the snack is included in our planning! As well as the obvious seasonal calendar when we offer simple and gift making, planting seeds & making bird feeders we have also received visits from a storyteller from the local library who delighted the young children telling stories and rhymes with the help of musical instruments and puppets.

The aim of the Toy Library remains that of making each and every Thursday morning a memorable one for both the children and their carers. Where each person feels valued and comfortable in their surroundings and what is offered, whether picnicking outside, enjoying singing & action rhyme time, taking an imaginary journey with tiny trains & cars, producing fabulous objects with messy paint & glue, digging in the sand or splashing about in bubbly water, even enjoying a relaxing cuddle together after learning to ride a trike. We believe the RossToy Library truly offers a haven for young families in the future.

Date – 27th January 2014