

Responses to the Walthamstow Toy Library questions submitted to the WEL AGM

15 September 2020

The questions have been grouped to avoid repetition of responses.

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QUESTIONS AROUND THE ENDING OF THE LEASE; THE SERVICES PROVIDED AT THE TOY LIBRARY AND PLAY CENTRE; AND WHAT ALTERNATIVE PROVISIONS THERE ARE

1. The Walthamstow Toy Library is a pillar of our community. It is invaluable to new parents and parents of young children, from offering advice sessions on infant feeding to providing much needed play for young children. Allowing new parents to find support and build community. Will you reconsider their forced eviction?

2. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such. The Toy Library was a 'lifeline' to me with two young boys very close in age it meant they could play safely and I could meet other parents. I have made lifelong friends through the Toy Library. When my youngest was diagnosed with Autism I needed the support of friends and I was also able to access the Special needs play group (TOPS) run by speech therapists which provided the essential support for my son's development at a crucial early stage. Taking away this vital community support is a travesty please re-think.

3. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent? This service has been a lifeline to many families at difficult periods and also provides an amazing service to our community supporting our local children to thrive.

4. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent? The Toy Library's services are universal - enabling access to all whatever their background. Where else will children get this equality of opportunity to play and learn? Are you aware that the Toy Library provides breastfeeding support to new mothers, healthy eating sessions for children, sessions for maternal mental health and by its very nature supports maternal mental health? Are you aware that as at 31 March 2020 the Toy Library had over 1000 active families/members? Where will these members go if the Toy Library is evicted? The Walthamstow Toy Library is a pillar of our community. Will you re-consider their forced eviction?

5. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent?

6. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent? I have been a member of the toy library since I had my twin boys nearly 4 years ago. It has been an invaluable yet affordable resource for our family, especially in the crucial first year of their lives. Twin club was an extremely important and enjoyable resource for getting to know and sharing experiences with other parents of multiples. It also provides a safe, enclosed space - essential when trying to keep eyes on two adventurous toddlers! We always go to the Mayfair and have attended countless kid's parties there. Please reconsider evicting the toy library, our community needs it.

7. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent? The toy library feels so valuable to me as a (relatively) new parent suffering from postnatal depression and I don't know where I would be without it - I have really missed going there and speaking to other parents in recent months and to think of it closed permanently would be a big blow to me and many others like me.

8. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent? The Toy Library has been and continues to be the only place I can go for support during these unprecedented times and my son absolutely loves being able to explore different toys, saving on landfill too!

9. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent? The Toy Library's services are universal - enabling access to all whatever their background. Where else will children get this equality of opportunity to play and learn? Are you aware that the Toy Library provides breastfeeding support to new mothers, healthy eating sessions for children, sessions for maternal mental health and by its very nature supports maternal mental health? Are you aware that as at 31 March 2020 the Toy Library had over 1000 active families/members? Where will these members go if the Toy Library is evicted? The Walthamstow Toy Library is a pillar of our community. Will you re-consider their forced eviction?

10. Please can you detail why it is necessary to evict the Walthamstow Toy Library - an established and vital charity and service for our community? Have you thoroughly considered all available alternatives and other ways forward that might allow the Toy Library to remain?

11. I've just had my third child and the thought of his foundation years without the support and community offered by the toy library is bewildering. What is the justification for taking this away?

12. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent? Are you aware that the Toy Library provides breastfeeding support to new mothers, healthy eating sessions for children, sessions for maternal mental health and by its very nature supports maternal mental health? The Walthamstow Toy Library is a pillar of our community. Will you re-consider their forced eviction?

12. I've heard the plans to evict the existing Toy library and I'm shocked. I would like to understand what is intended to take its place. The Toy library is essential to the local community and has been for years.

13. Why are you evicting the Walthamstow Toy Library and how do you propose to mitigate the hugely negative impact this will have on the local community? The Toy Library is a lifeline for new mothers and is an extremely well-used and well-loved resource. Please reconsider!

14. As a new mother living in Walthamstow, expecting my first child next month I was really looking forward to benefitting from the resources that I have heard such great things about at the Play Centre and Toy Library. Community centres like these form the backbone of our society. Are you aware that as at 31 March 2020 the Toy Library had over 1000 active families/members? How will the support network for young families and the friendships built be continued and nurtured if the eviction goes ahead?

15. As a new parent the Walthamstow Toy Library has been a life saver. Are you aware that as at 31 March 2020 the Toy Library had over 1000 active families/members? Where will these members go if the Toy Library is evicted?

16. The toy library is an essential part of the community. It has played a huge role in supporting new parents from all backgrounds and their children. The location is vital as it means it is accessible for those from all over E17. How will the group support the toy library and the community in continuing this service?

17. Why are Walthamstow Toy Library facing eviction from their current space at Comely Bank? The centre is an invaluable resource to the local community which we have used on many occasions in our 6.5 years as parents. We attended our NCT classes there, brought all of our children to stay and play sessions, sought breastfeeding support with our tongue-tied daughter, have hired the centre for birthday parties, hired toys and puzzles. It is inconceivable that this vital family resource might be lost from Walthamstow when there are so many young families living locally.

18. The Toy Library was a key support network for me when I was on maternity leave. They provide services that are in short supply elsewhere and are vital to parents. Would you reconsider the plan to evict them?

19. Are you aware of the huge number of families that use and benefit from the service? How do you propose to replace these vital services to the community? Will you re-consider their forced eviction?

20. As a parent of twins, the Toy Library was my salvage and sanity. Not only for hosting the twin club sessions - connecting me with other parents of multiples, but the facility itself was safe

- and set up for - roaming crawlers and explorers. What other venue can offer the safety for little crawlers to explore in the way they currently can at the Toy Library?

21. Why is the toy library being evicted from the site at comely bank? How is the impact of the eviction of the toy library being assessed in this decision? What alternative provision for families with young children is available?

22. Can I please ask why the toy library is being evicted as it feels as though their value to the community is being massively underrated. When my daughter was born, the library was an amazing resource where I could access breastfeeding support, support from other mothers as well as access to sensory equipment and learning of ways to interact with my daughter. Now due my second child, I'm hoping the toy library will be available to provide a safe location for my two children to play while I can access the support I will need. Where else do you suggest such a valuable community resource could be based in order to ensure access for all members of the community access?

23. The Walthamstow Toy Library is a pillar of our community. Will you re-consider their forced eviction?

24. We first used the Toy Library when our daughter was three days old, for a breastfeeding support clinic, as she wasn't feeding properly. We have attended countless other times for play sessions, drama groups, baby language classes and baby-clothes swaps. The Toy Library is a small charity, so please explain why you would evict them? Perhaps you could donate them a new, larger premises, if you need the space they currently occupy?

25. Are you aware that the Toy Library provides breastfeeding support to new mothers, healthy eating sessions for children, sessions for maternal mental health and by its very nature supports maternal mental health?

26. Why are you planning to evict the Walthamstow Toy Library? It is a lifeline to parents in Walthamstow.

27. Please advise why you are evicting a much needed service especially in these troubling times?

28. What I would like to know is when are the needs of children and families ever going to be given priority in Walthamstow? I'm sick of them taking a back seat to other things, especially new housing developments etc. This is a great chance to do the right thing and let a well-loved and well established institution. Continue to do vital work. It is no peripheral or a luxury to many people.

29. Will you re-consider the forced eviction of the Walthamstow Toy Library? The Toy Library is a vital part of the Walthamstow community. It is a irreplaceable service, offering a safe and inclusive environment where children can play and learn and parents can meet other parents and socialise. Not all children have such a place to play at home and this offers this to them. It is incredibly important that we don't lose this. Personally, the Toy Library was a lifeline for me during my recent maternity leave as a first time mum who was new to the area. I really cannot understate the importance of the service during those months. I really do hope it will continue to be able to be a big part of my child's life as he grows up - we will be lost without it and I know that I'm not the only one who feels this way.

30. Why is the Toy Library being evicted from its current space and what service is taking its place? Our borough is so lucky to have this resource: please don't force it out.

31. Are you aware that as at 31 March 2020 the Toy Library had over 1000 active families/members? Where will these members go if the Toy Library is evicted?

32. I am horrified by the eviction (massive rental fees) of Walthamstow Toy Library. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent? Coronavirus has hit women and parents of pre-school children particularly hard. This is an awful move at this time.

33. Why are you are evicting the Toy Library from premises that were purpose built? The Toy Library is a lifeline to hundreds of young families of all economic backgrounds in Walthamstow. We've already lost Tumble in the Jungle and the Peterhouse playgroup, the Toy Library is one of the last affordable options for local families with preschool age children to meet, socialise and find support. Can you give a valid reason as to why you are threatening the future of this much loved organisation that sits in the heart of our community?

34. The Walthamstow Toy Library is a pillar of our community. Will you re-consider their forced eviction?

35. Are you aware that the Toy Library provides breastfeeding support to new mothers, healthy eating sessions for children, and sessions for maternal mental health and by its very nature supports maternal mental health?

36. Walthamstow Toy Library and Play Centre moved into the Comely Bank Community Clinic 20 years ago, into a space that was purpose built for us. Your proposal to relocate services to our site will result in the Toy Library's eviction and the loss of a much loved and needed community group for families with young children. How can you work with the Toy Library to ensure that our services can continue to run at Comely Bank?

37. What is the proposed new purpose of the building? Why would such a hugely valued community resource be sacrificed in this way?

38. The Walthamstow Toy Library is a pillar of our community. Will you re-consider their forced eviction?

39. Why are you evicting the toy library and other services from their building? These are vital community supports especially at this time.

40. I am shocked that you would consider evicting The Toy Library. Since my son was born in 2018 it has been a constant support for me and my family. Nothing else exists like this locally and I feel so proud to have this in our area. Childcare places are few and far between in Walthamstow – and this centre fills a well needed gap for children who do not have childcare for many reasons, but need to socialise for their development. Where will these children and parents go and be supported locally – if you evict this charity?

41. Why is such an important community resource being evicted? The toy library is an invaluable service for those most in need, it offers not only an environmentally sound toy library but offers this universally and without any bias, anyone can access and use it. At a time when services are already being stretched or worse reduced taking away this life line for many parents and children seems naive at best.

42. Are you aware of the crucial services the Toy Library provides to parents and children at a particularly important time in their lives? Both for the development of our children and the mental health support it gives parents. The Toy Library has been a lifeline for my family both at the start of my parenting journey and during lockdown where they continued to support us. It's also rare that families from diverse backgrounds get to mix in a safe social environment something I believe is key for our family. If the library wasn't in such a central position I think this would have made it so much harder for us particularly as a family who don't own a car.

43. The TL&PC is much more than a playgroup and provides vital support for parents in Walthamstow. 4 days after giving birth in April 2020 I developed a fever. I rang the ward I was released from, but they said because I had a fever, they couldn't help (they didn't even ask if my C-section wound was weeping / were my breast hot or sore). I tried multiple numbers and the same answer. I tried the community midwives and left messages, but they never got back to me. Having previously been hospitalised with mastitis and treated for sepsis, I was beyond concerned that I wasn't able to get support. I turned to the Toy Library and they provided me with resources and support for how to treat mastitis and encouraged me to contact my GP for antibiotics (a simple step that the hospital hadn't informed me I could do). I was able to contact the Toy Library as I have been a member for three years and knew they would have sound advice. If the Toy Library is not there, what other services will be available to support parents in the same reliable, informal and approachable way?

44. Walthamstow has many, many baby classes that cost money. However there are limited free or affordable options, and none that open EVERY day. The loss of the TL&PC to residents on low incomes and those parents who are suffering from poor mental health and need a reliable place to go is huge and will have a knock on effect on other services. If the TL&PC is evicted, will the CCG ensure that such a reliable service is still offered?

45. Will you reconsider evicting the TL&PC from the building that was purpose built for them?

46. The toy library will be the second children charity that has lost its location in two years - the other being tumble in the jungle - that allowed local children from diverse backgrounds to socialise. With the increased housing development in the area, now is a time for an increase in children's service, not a decrease. What is the group doing to ensure local children's developmental and social needs are being met?

47. I would like to know why you are evicting the toy library after year of much needed support to the community. We very little support for parent by the government during Covid 19 the toy library is needed more than ever and we should be promoting the library more to low income families.

48. The toy library is in a purpose-built space where it has been for over 20 years on nominal rent. What has prompted the change to demand circa £100,000 rent for this space now? The toy library is more than just a play group. As a new mother it effectively operates as a drop-in centre. Parents who may have had little sleep and are operating on a thread can turn up, on the day, without the need to book or pay in advance, and be surrounded by others who are going through the exact same thing. The toy library is unique because it acts as a play centre rather than just a play group. You can turn up any day Monday to Saturday, sessions are run by staff who are EYFS trained, as opposed to a once-a-week session in a hall run by volunteers without a childcare background. I didn't return to my job after having my first child. The rest of my circle of mum-friends returned to work either full-time or part-time. The toy library gives those who are at home with their kids a place to belong, (and as we've all realised over the last six months it's really hard just staying at home!). I'm not trained in child care - I'm a corporate lawyer by background. So being able to bring my toddler and a new-born baby to a permanent, dedicated space that's set-up for their learning was a god send. I could feel comfortable breast-feeding my new-born whilst my toddler learnt the basics of growing-up - for example, learning how to sit down at a table and eat snacks, sharing toys, following basic instructions about sitting for nursery rhymes. He wasn't at a nursery because I wanted to look after him and his brother before they were pre-school age. So it was the toy library that filled this gap for them. As a result it also provides emotional / mental benefits for the parents who use this service, and brings the community of parents together. Helen gives people the opportunity to get involved and it enabled me to gain experience as a trustee. If you evict the toy library where do you envisage that parents will be able to go as an alternative to gain these much-needed benefits?

49. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent? The Toy Library's services are universal - enabling access to all whatever their background. Where else will children get this equality of opportunity to play and learn? Are you aware that the Toy Library provides breastfeeding support to new mothers, healthy eating sessions for children, sessions for maternal mental health and by its very nature supports maternal mental health? Are you aware that as at 31 March 2020 the Toy Library had over 1000 active families/members? Where will these members go if the Toy Library is evicted? The Walthamstow Toy Library is a pillar of our community. Will you re-consider their forced eviction?

50. Will you reconsider the enforced eviction of the Toy Library at comely bank? The Toy library has been a vital support for me and my family over past years and was a big factor in us choosing to remain in this area following the recent birth of our second child.

51. The Public Health England's Best start in life program is about improving outcomes for children, young people and family this closure will result in negative outcomes and widen health inequalities. It is these kinds of services that reduce health inequalities and help to ensure long term physical and mental health outcomes. Please can you comment? Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent? The Toy Library's services are universal - enabling access to all whatever their background. Where else will children get this equality of opportunity to play and learn? Are you aware that the Toy Library provides breastfeeding support to new mothers, healthy eating sessions for children, sessions for maternal mental health and by its very nature supports maternal mental health? Are you aware that as at 31 March 2020 the Toy Library had over 1000 active families/members? Where will these members go if the Toy Library is evicted? The Walthamstow Toy Library is a pillar of our community. Will you re-consider their forced eviction?

52. The Toy Library's services are universal - enabling access to all whatever their background. Where else will children get this equality of opportunity to play and learn?

53. 'What is the justification for evicting the Toy Library - a charity that supports vulnerable parents and children - at a time when many other services are reduced or closed and people need it most?' I, and many other local parents, have relied on the toy library when my children were small. Places like the Toy Library are a lifeline to people who have little support, whether your family members live too far away to help (my case), or if you're a mother who needs specific help with breastfeeding (friends of mine). To take this valuable service away at a time when people are suffering with heightened mental health issues, anxiety and depression due to the pandemic, is potentially devastating. There have been tragic cases of child deaths at the hands of their parents that have made the news in recent weeks. We can't allow anyone to slip through the net like this in Waltham Forest.

54. Why is the Toy library being evicted? It makes a huge difference in supporting parents in the local area - something which is currently already completely gutted due to COVID. I'd like to see the CCG's plan for otherwise addressing postnatal depression and loneliness.

55. This is about the toy library in Waltham Forest. This is a wonderful resource for postnatal parents, children and vulnerable families. It is hugely cherished and used by the community. Why are you evicting them from their current facilities at this current time of great need?

56. When I moved back to Walthamstow village with my 7 month old I felt very isolated. The Toy Library provided a safe indoor space in which my baby could explore toys, participate in activities, eat healthy snacks, sing and dance with other children and develop skills. It was a welcoming environment that allowed me to get out of the house, have a hot drink and speak

with other adults and parents. It was integral to my wellbeing at that very difficult point in my life. It continues to provide a safe space for my children to play and develop skills as they grow up. My children love going there. It is open every day of the week and during school holidays. It doesn't require booking so you can turn up when you feel able. It is affordable. It has provided a space to participate in other wellbeing activities i.e. yoga, singing, my son's birthday party, borrowing toys. It has introduced me to other resources in the community i.e. I went on a trip with other parents to visit the Barbican. In my experience it is always busy. I am extremely grateful for its presence and would miss it greatly if it were to close. It is a very valuable resource for new parents in the community. There are not many affordable indoor spaces that are safe and welcoming for young children in our community. Where do you propose the Toy Library moves? What are you planning to put there that provides as much value to the community?

57. The Walthamstow Toy Library is a pillar of our community. Will you re-consider their forced eviction?

58. The Toy Library has been a hugely important part of our family's life for the past year and a half since we moved to Walthamstow. How will you ensure that their wide range of services and support for children, breastfeeding mothers, and families at large continues if they're evicted from their current location?

59. How could you even contemplate the eviction of the toy library thereby seriously, negatively affecting the mental health of the parenting community of Waltham forest? The toy library in my opinion should be considered as an essential service and protected as such. It has provided a solid lifeline for me and many others I know. I have consistently met parents there while attending play sessions that say they don't know what they'd do without it. It has been at its current location for decades and I'm sorely disappointed that you'd even consider putting profit over people putting this particular charity in jeopardy. Please reconsider and try and raise the funds you need from elsewhere.

60. I would also like to submit a question in advance. I would like to know how the decision to evict the toy library was made and the details of the impact assessment conducted prior to deciding to evict the toy library at Comley Bank, particularly the impact on low income and vulnerable families.

61. I am incredibly disappointed to learn that the Toy Library is facing eviction as the centre was a life line to me in the early days of parenthood. The breastfeeding support I was given was better than any of the other services offered in the borough and the high quality play sessions a chance to meet other parents and prevented me from feeling isolated. Why are you considering evicting this wonderful small charity who the building was purpose built for? The toy library services helps so many families and is such a unique and special provision in in the borough.

62. Are you aware that the Walthamstow Toy Library provides breastfeeding support to new mothers, healthy eating sessions for children, sessions for maternal mental health and by its very nature supports maternal mental health? Will you re-consider their forced eviction? The Walthamstow Toy Library provides much-needed support for families of all kinds across Waltham Forest. I have found attending sessions there to be one of the most valuable, supportive and enjoyable experiences of being a new mum. I am convinced that the support they offer more than pays for itself in terms of child health and development, maternal mental health, and helping mothers to return to the workplace healthy and confident in themselves (thus hopefully reducing the gender pay gap). Closing such a service will negatively impact on the lives of women across the borough. This is an anti-feminist and discriminatory move, not only in terms of gender but also race, class and other protected characteristics. I consider it shocking and short-sighted that you would even consider forcing the Toy Library out of its current home.

63. What other purpose is the building going to be given if not the Toy Library which it was built for? 2. The Toy library has great value not only in terms of the service it provide parents but also for its value in promoting sustainability through the reuse of toys, is this loss in the community been fully taken into account?

64. I would like to attend the meeting, please, and I have a question to submit in advance. I am very concerned at the CCG's proposal to evict the Walthamstow Toy Library from their premises, and I would like to know what impact the CCG feels the loss of such a vital support system will have on maternal mental health, breastfeeding rates, and development and wellbeing in children under 5? It is well-evidenced that Early Years are crucial in a child's future health, happiness and success, and the Toy Library provides a vital local resource. My youngest child started school last year, but over the past 11 years I have been a regular user of the Toy Library, and my children have benefited hugely from the stimulation and socialisation it provided. When I suffered from PTSD and post-natal anxiety after my younger daughter was born, having a safe and friendly space to go was a lifeline. Toy Libraries ensure that children from less affluent background can still benefit from a range of stimulating toys and games, and in an era where we should all be more conscious of our ecological impact they also help to eliminate waste.

65. Are you aware that as at 31 March 2020 the Toy Library had over 1000 active families/members? Where will these members go if the Toy Library is evicted?

66. Please explain why Walthamstow toy library is being evicted from its premises...what do you plan to do with that building given that it is purpose built for the toy library? There are so few services in Walthamstow that provide breastfeeding and mental health support to mothers. It is NOT just a playgroup. I have used the services of Walthamstow Toy Library for 6 years now and you are severely underestimating its importance to the community. I urge you to reconsider forcing them out by increasing the rent to such a ridiculous amount that no charity could afford.

67. The Toy Library's services are universal - enabling access to all whatever their background. Where else will children get this equality of opportunity to play and learn? We have borrowed lots of toys from the library as well as benefiting from the play sessions. Where else can you rent toys?

68. Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent? We have used the toy library extensively since our son was born in Walthamstow last year. The drop in sessions have been so helpful in connecting with local families, and the toy sharing such a brilliant option considering financial/environmental/space issues that families are dealing with. It would be a great loss to the community if it was to go.

69. I am deeply concerned at the forced eviction of and/or rent seeking from the Walthamstow Toy Library. I did birthing, breastfeeding classes at the Toy Library, which is a purpose built space for child services. I've since been back many times to get toys for my baby and talk to other parents and expert staff - it's been invaluable during the pandemic. This is a rare community service. It fits with so many of the local authorities other objectives, bringing together the whole community, running a circular economy model, and supporting vulnerable families. Moreover my understanding is that the Comely Bank centre gave the Toy Library their building as a part of an agreement when they moved onto the site - it is horrifying that the arrangement is being abandoned now. My question is: what is the justification for this treatment of a small charity, and how will you make sure the services it provides to the Borough are funded and replicated elsewhere?

70. When I became a parent one of the most surprising things was how quickly my child moved through their developmental phases and simultaneously outgrew toys, but also thrived with new

toys better suited to their particular stage. For little ones, toys aren't an extra they are much like books -- an essential part of development. Like many parents in Walthamstow, we can't (and don't want to) purchase new toys for each phase, but would like to ensure that our child's home environment is stimulating, particularly during this time when access to playgroups and other activities is limited. I love the Toy Library so much both as an activity to attend and as an eco-friendly and affordable source of toys. I know many other parents do as well. How are you planning to ensure that the Toy Library continues to provide this vital service?

71. What has caused the decision to evict the Toy Library from their longstanding location at a time when families are struggling to access high-quality local early years play sessions?

72. Lockdown has already denied me the opportunity to spend my maternity leave doing as much as I can to contribute to my baby's development and build essential relationships with other parents. Since joining the toy library I have found visiting it an essential part of supporting my mental health and my baby's development. Why take it away at this crucial stage?

73. The play sessions and my interaction with other new mothers at The Toy Library were a key part of my recovery from post-natal depression, with this in mind please tell me why are you evicting the Toy Library from the Comely Bank when they provide such key services to pre and post-natal mothers in the community?

74. Why is the Walthamstow Toy library being evicted from its premises, effectively shutting down the service for parents of children of all ages? The toy library has been a big part of my maternity leave, giving me valuable support particularly in a time of crisis. If the library is shut down, many families will lose access to support and this will have a huge impact on postnatal mental health of young parents in the borough, for whom there is no longer sessions like breastfeeding support or new baby groups that can be a lifeline during the early months.

75. You claim your priorities include mental health, children and maternity services. You are proposing to evict Waltham Forest Toy Library which provides a wide range of well attended services for postnatal support, breastfeeding, vulnerable families and maternal mental health. Doesn't your proposal conflict with your stated priorities?

76. The Toy library is one of the few truly inclusive places for families with young children, why despite creating a purpose built space for them are you proposing to charge them rent that as a small local charity they could never afford? Will you provide an alternative space?

77. The toy library has done so much for me & my new mum friends - it's a wonderful part of Walthamstow community & helps support parents on low incomes. It's a must for mental health to get out & socialise with other parents in the community & the idea of renting out toys is a great way to sustain our planet of land fill. What are the reasons you would take this place away from us?

78. The Toy Library helps support all member of the community and is essential for the mental health and wellbeing of parents and children. I did Hypnobirthing classes there and attended breastfeeding workshops and feel devastated that a new wave of parents who have already been through the trauma of lockdown will have nowhere to go. I ask that you reconsider the forced eviction of the Toy Library and think of the negative effect to our community and strain on other local resources this may have. At a time where parents and children have been isolated and have missed out on vital socialisation, support, advice and for some a safe space what are your reasons for evicting a vital place like the Toy Library?

79. Why, given the hugely important role Walthamstow Toy Library plays in helping parents and healthy child development, the council is making it impossible for them to remain? As a mum of 3 I have been attending play sessions, child development seminars, breastfeeding counselling sessions, community events and birthday parties. At times it has been a lifeline during what can be a very lonely and stressful time. Given the fact that it is loved and recommended by so many

parents and hugely important to parents who don't earn a lot to provide toys, activities and socialising for their children, I can't understand why you would increase rents and force them out, except for your own profit I guess. Hopefully you can make me and others understand your decision.

80. I would also like to submit a question in advance. My question is in relation to the prospect of the toy library being evicted from its current home. The Toy Library is at the heart of our community, supporting families of all backgrounds and circumstances, it has over 1000 active members - how will you ensure a new home for the toy library that is fit for purpose, in an accessible and central location, and allows them to still serve the community they are so cherished by?

81. Why would you be trying to evict the Toy Library, a crucial part of our town's infrastructure, and one of the few services currently available to parents during this time?

82. Are you aware that as at 31 March 2020 the Toy Library had over 1000 active families/members? Where will these members go if the Toy Library is evicted?

83. I would like to ask why The Toy library can possibly be at risk of closure when they have thousands of active members who are reliant on the Toy library and all of the additional support and services they provide. Families are struggling, mental health issues are rising and the wide range of support that the Toy library provides is not available from any other provision, we need the toy library now more than ever! Please reconsider... as a borough cannot afford such a loss.

84. The Toy Library provides breastfeeding support to new mothers, healthy eating sessions for children and sessions for maternal mental health in an accessible location, especially for families accessing health services at Comely Bank. How can such a short-sighted attack on public health be justified, given that it provides services crucial to parental mental health and the space and support it offers creates an excellent grounding for early year's education?

85. The Toy Library was a very important and welcoming place for me to go during the anxious time of being a new Mum, I felt such a sense of community and the space was inclusive to all backgrounds. Why is this beloved place being forced to shut? Where will new mums go now, at a time when there's been so many cuts to other services such as Sure Start?

86. The Walthamstow Toy Library is a pillar of our community. Will you re-consider their forced eviction? The toy library has been the perfect place for babies and toddlers to find their feet and their confidence and losing it will be a huge shame, my daughter will be very sad to not be able to go back and see the friends that she made before lockdown enforced their isolation.

87. How do you plan to support low cost, high care support to kids, parents and carers when you evict the Toy Library from the Comely bank site?

88. I write as a former chair of Walthamstow Toy Library (1977-84) and employee (1984-85). I, my children and grandchildren have all benefitted enormously from the Toy Library services, which is why I am still in touch with the charity. I am particularly concerned about the impact the proposed closure will have on the health and wellbeing of the section of society it serves.

Hearing that you are considering closing the facility reminds me of 40+ years ago when we had to convince the then all male health council of the health needs of parents with young children, mainly mothers, and their children. This was not a question of a bunch of women wanting to gossip whilst their children "merely" played. The Toy Library was started by the health visitors who realised the health implications of new parenthood and the isolation it often brings, and understood the developing needs of young children through play. The Toy Library was also a safe environment where other problems, such as sleep, breast feeding and many more could be discussed.

My question now is, if you close the Toy Library, how are you going to replace the facility and all the needs that it meets? Or are you going to consider that the mental and physical health of the women and their young children are of low importance? I do not know the make-up and experience of the current CCG but I trust that it is able to understand the wider health needs of the young families who make up a significant proportion of our population.

89. Why is the Toy library being evicted? It helps support more than just young families, and children. It also helps support student volunteers and parents back into work.

90. Are you aware that as at 31 March 2020 the Toy Library had over 1000 active families/members? Where will these members go if the Toy Library is evicted? Why are you evicting a much cherished and important service used by postnatal parents and vulnerable groups at a time when these are needed more than ever, and such services are already reduced/non-existent.

91. The Centre has been active for several years serving the community and its families with a wide range of programmes. It has grown partnerships with other local organisations and attracted families from different backgrounds, promoting a truly equal ethos. If an eviction notice is served, what will be done to meet the needs of its members and how will the same level of services be provided at such difficult times?

92. Why a space that was supposed to be built for the toy library it's been assigned to something else unless they pay certain amount of money to keep it? The service provided for the community is unparalleled it's a place for kids and parents to socialise and maybe make new friends, it's a place where new mums can find refuge and council when it comes to breastfeeding, baby massage, baby yoga or simply a place to surround yourself and you kid of different options to play together in a very comfortable and safe environment, my son attended to the somewhere to belong group there and I have to say that it is amongst the most important and key services provided at the top library, The classes, the puppet shows, the play sessions, the singalongs and the location is so convenient, the village is right in the middle of Walthamstow and easy access for families living around upper, wood street, St James and central Walthamstow. So many good things for everyone in this community cannot just be replaced with anything else in my opinion.

93. My question relates to the Walthamstow Toy Library. I would like to know how the CCG can justify removing such a valuable community service and resource from its home of over 20 years, and shamelessly ask for an extortionate rent to allow them to stay. The toy library is a place for families to gather; their twin club on the first Saturday of the month provides an invaluable network of support for twin parents like me. They run workshops on breastfeeding and sleep where parents can get advice from experts and peers. Removing the toy library from its home at Comely Bank will leave a huge hole in the family community and will do a disservice to many families in the area.

94. Please could you outline the rationale for evicting a vital community service - the WTLPC - from its purpose built premises at Comely Bank Clinic? Could you show how services such as breast feeding support and wellbeing services for families with babies and small children will be provided elsewhere?

95. I would like to know why the Clinical Commissioning Group are considering closing the toy library in the grounds of Comely Bank clinic. I attended the toy library throughout maternity leave, my husband went every week. I could see easily that at a wide range of families of all backgrounds were enjoyable a very affordable and welcoming service. Many families cannot afford to pay for similar private sector services. This is short sighted as the Toy Library has a preventative public health role, supporting healthy child development through play and social interaction, providing support for breast feeding and healthy eating. Attending sessions like this also alleviates post-natal depression as it provides a low key social structure and support.

96.

- a) As a clinical commissioning group how can you justify such hikes in rent (thus effectively evicting the toy library) whilst as a group continue to address the health and well-being of new mothers and young children in the borough as the two appear to be in opposing directions?
- b) Where do you suggest the toy library moves to?
- c) If an alternative site cannot be found for the toy library, how do you propose to fill the gap in such a service which addresses the health and well-being of new mothers and young children? How will you reflect that in your plans for 2021?

RESPONSE:

The CCG is required to commission health services within NHS estate.

The Toy Library has enjoyed a long period of subsidised tenancy and, at the request of the charity, has been granted a number of extensions to the tenancy, on the proviso that it finds alternative accommodation so that the NHS can use the space.

The Toy Library has recently been given a 12 month plus an additional three month notice period. The latest agreement is comes to an end in June 2021 and the CCG can no longer justify providing this level of financial support to a single local charity.

The subsidy to the charity is worth £50k per annum of taxpayers' money. It is an arrangement that is not available to any other voluntary or charitable group within the borough.

The CCG proposes using the space in Comely Bank to provide much needed health services to the local community.

The CCG is aware of the services offered by the Toy Library and comparable services are provided by the local authority. Public health is under the remit of the local authority.

The CCG and the Local Authority commission a wide range of high quality services for women, children and families including breastfeeding support and maternal mental health services, HENRY and speech and language therapy (SLT) services are also available across the borough at a variety of locations.

For more information on these services please go to <https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/content/children-and-family-centres-0>

There are numerous locations across the borough that safely allow for small children to explore and learn. <https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/content/children-and-family-centres-0>

The CCG commissions a range of services to support maternal mental health across the borough. These services are available to local residents. More information can be found at <https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/0-19-service-maternal-mental-health>

The CCG will not revisit the decision to use the Comely Bank building for the provision of NHS Primary Care services. However the Toy Library will be supported to find alternate premises post 30 June 2021. The CCG and the Local authority are working with the Toy Library to support it to be relocated and co-located with other public health services for women, families and children.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE LEASE

97. The TL&PC is set within the grounds of Comely Bank. My understanding is that the plot was originally occupied by TL&PC and a grant was given to develop the site into what it is today, with provision for TL&PC included. Why are you evicting the TL&PC from their purpose built building and depriving residents in Chapel End, Wood Street and Walthamstow Central of a much needed service?

98. I would like you to explain and justify the decision to evict the Walthamstow Toy Library and Play Centre from its building at Comely Bank? Additionally if they were to stay why are you now asking for rent, and why such a huge sum? Do you have the rights to evict the Toy Library as I believe the building is theirs in effect? Their premises were purpose built for them? At a time when mothers, parents and children need support the most and have been significantly isolated due to COVID-19 this seems to be particularly poor taste in timing.

RESPONSE

The Toy Library previously occupied space at the old Comely Bank site under a lease held through Whipps Cross University Hospital Trust. The ownership of the Comely Bank site transferred to Waltham Forest PCT (WFPCT) at its establishment in 1999.

In 2005, the Local Implementation Finance Trust (LIFT) redeveloped the Comely Bank site and a new lease mirroring existing terms was entered into between WFPCT and the Toy Library. This new lease (agreed in September 2005) allowed for a peppercorn rent with a contribution by the charity for insurance, maintenance, rates and utilities; this ran until May 2014. The WFPCT was subsequently abolished under the Health and Social Care Act in March 2013 and all property related assets and obligations were transferred to other organisations. LIFT schemes such as Comely Bank were transferred to Community Health Partnerships (CHP), a nationwide landlord established specifically to manage LIFT properties.

During 2015, Community Health Partnership (CHP) contacted the CCG to identify that the novated lease had expired and this triggered an extended period of negotiation between CHP, the Toy Library, the CCG and LBWF Children's Services. These negotiations were unable to clarify whether the services provided by the Toy Library should be commissioned by LBWF Children's services. It was recognised by the CCG that the Toy Library would need time in order to review the options available and make a decision to either:

- **Secure alternative accommodation**
- **Secure funding sources to enable it to pay full cost rent**
- **Secure a contract for services from LBWF Children's services for its activities to gain financial support for the full cost of rent.**

As such the CCG agreed to subsidise occupancy for a further three years beginning 1 April 2015. Unfortunately, no progress was made by the Toy Library to secure its future and the CCG offered a further 3 year extension running to the end of March 2021. The CCG wrote to the WF Toy Library in March 2020 reminding them that the subsidy would be withdrawn from April 2021. In June 2020 it was agreed to give the Toy Library an additional three months to 30 June 2021 to find other accommodation.

The rent taxpayer subsidy (paid by the CCG) is worth £50k a year and is an arrangement that is not offered to any other voluntary or charitable group within the Borough

The CCG proposes using the space in Comely Bank to improve primary care health services to the local community.

QUESTIONS ON WHETHER THE TOY LIBRARY IS CLOSING

99. Why are you closing the Toy Library?

100. I am extremely upset to hear that the Toy Library is being closed. Please can you explain why? This is a very important institution that gives great support to families and children.

101. At a time of great concern about community cohesion, health inequalities and poverty, the Toy Library is a fantastic universal access resource for whole families. I would like to hear the CCG's comments and ideas for how the Toy Library can be sustained. How can the community get involved and help you to achieve this?

102. My question is - in this age of climate change, toy loaning is becoming increasingly important as we look to reduce waste, which includes reusing and borrowing toys. In addition, the toy library holds fundraising activities throughout the year that enable anyone to donate toys and buy them at the various events. Mail-order toy loaning services are popping up online. Why are you closing down a local service that enables members to borrow toys without a carbon footprint?

103. My question is 'what will the impact of the closure of the toy library be on low income families in Waltham forest?' in my opinion the toy library provides a unique service in the borough and much needed support for low income families, single parent families and others.

104. The Walthamstow Toy Library provides an essential service to new parents, families and young children in the key early year's stages, especially those on a low incomes, and is a welcoming, safe environment in which families can get peer support and advice - will you reconsider their forced eviction?

RESPONSE

The Toy Library is not being closed. The Toy Library is an independent organisation and has enjoyed a long period of subsidised tenancy. The building is being assessed for its potential to accommodate much needed primary care services for the local community.

The Toy Library is a charity and not part of the NHS CCG or Waltham Forest local authority. It is the responsibility of the Toy Library to determine its own future and its long term sustainability. Please contact the Toy Library for information on how you can support them.

The CCG and the Waltham Forest Council are working with the Toy Library to find alternate accommodation and to co-locate the Toy Library with other public health services for women, families and children.

The CCG is required by law to commission health services. The Comely Bank building is part of NHS Estate and is required to improve the provision of primary care health services in Waltham Forest.

QUESTIONS AROUND THE RENT AND FINANCES

105. I am very sad to hear that the Toy Library is being evicted. Who do you propose the next tenant to be and will you be charging them the same rent that you are asking from the Toy Library?

106. How can the council justify this huge hike in rent (which will result in closure for the toy library) while telling us they are supporting families and children?

107. Why are you imposing unmanageable charges/rates/rent upon the Toy Library charity which will effectively make it impossible to remain at its current site and provide its much needed service to the families of Waltham Forest? The Toy Library provides essential support for families throughout the borough - from free breastfeeding support clinics to low cost play facilities and sessions. It was literally a lifeline for my family after my son was born and we experienced feeding problems (due to tongue-tie) which I was supported through by Petra at the weekly clinic at the Toy Library. And later on we spent many happy play sessions there - where my son could learn and explore safely and I could socialise with other local parents. This support is was invaluable to my family and truly helped to maintain our mental and physical wellbeing.

108. I would also like to submit a question in advance with regards to the Walthamstow Toy Library. Comely Bank has been the home of the Toy Library since its original premises were knocked down to make space for Comely Bank. It is outrageous that they're suddenly being forced to pay £100,000 a year - a figure which is unreasonable in terms of market rate but also for a small charity. Will you reconsider the Toy Library's forced eviction?

109. My question relates to the Walthamstow Toy Library. I would like to know how the CCG can justify removing such a valuable community service and resource from its home of over 20 years, and shamelessly ask for an extortionate rent to allow them to stay. The toy library is a place for families to gather; their twin club on the first Saturday of the month provides an invaluable network of support for twin parents like me. They run workshops on breastfeeding and sleep where parents can get advice from experts and peers. Removing the toy library from its home at Comely Bank will leave a huge hole in the family community and will do a disservice to many families in the area.

110. As a local parent and concerned resident I would like to ask WF CCG what your rationale is for demanding a massive rent increase from the toy library and, in doing so, effectively evicting a much loved charity and community resource.

111. Why is the Waltham Forest CCG deciding to charge exorbitant (and clearly terminal) rent to the Walthamstow Toy Library, when it is such a key part of the Walthamstow community, providing affordable care and play for the community's youngest children, and the community's most vulnerable parents?

112. Walthamstow Toy Library is an amazing, affordable local hub that allowed me to have many lovely bonding experiences with my son as I dealt with severe post-natal anxiety and depression at their play sessions. It also allowed us to cheaply rent toys - a sustainable and environmentally friendly way to play. Why are you depriving other local parents and families of the same experience by charging them an extortionate and unrealistic amount of rent for the space?

113. Why are you evicting the Toy Library (the rent is not reasonable for a small charity) why is a community hub for young people from all walks of life? Covid-19 has shown us how important community's cohesion is, and the Toy Library is one of our local pillars - they were a very important part of my two daughter's life in Walthamstow.

114. Can you please tell me why you are effectively evicting Walthamstow Toy Library from its home of 20 years by increasing the rent to an amount which they are clearly unable to pay? The toy library has provided a lifeline for families, a community hub and an essential service for mothers particularly. At this time, when we should all be rightly concerned about declining mental health, to remove this service from some of our most vulnerable families is hugely damaging and wrong. It is well known that early years intervention is both practically and economically effective and to remove this service at a time of increased need is short-sighted and with potentially far reaching consequences.

115. The TL&PC is being asked for approx. £8k in rent per month. Will any new service run from the space be asked to pay the same, and will their final terms be made public so that the decision making is transparent?

RESPONSE

The Toy Library has enjoyed a long period of subsidised tenancy in the Comely Bank Building. The subsidy is worth £50k per annum and is an arrangement that is not available to any other voluntary or charitable group within the borough.

There is an increased need for space for primary care services in Waltham Forest and for funding these services.

The CCG proposes using the space in Comely Bank to provide much needed primary care services to the local community. Unlike the Toy Library, a GP tenant would be required to pay the commercial rent and all associated service charges. The rental agreement between any future tenants will be public information.

The CCG and the Local Authority are working with the Toy Library to find suitable alternate accommodation co-located with other public health services for families.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PUBLIC HEALTH

116. The Toy Library provides early support and community integration in a location where families are accessing breastfeeding support to new mothers, healthy eating sessions for children and sessions for maternal mental health at Comely Bank. Have you done a cost-benefit analysis of the short and long-term impact on public health of the separation of these services?

RESPONSE

Public Health is the remit of the local council not the CCG. The CCG is responsible for commissioning health services. This includes a range of services to support maternal mental health across the borough. These services are available to local residents. More information can be found at <https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/0-19-service-maternal-mental-health>

Waltham Forest Local Authority commission high quality public health services for the people of Walthamstow. This includes public health and care services for women, children and families. You can find out more about what services are right for your circumstances at <https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/services>

QUESTIONS WITH DIFFERENT ELEMENTS (AND RESPONSES)

117. If the Toy Library is evicted from the Comely Bank Centre it is extremely unlikely that it will be able to continue providing its service. Alternative services offering subsidised support to families on low incomes to enable equality of access to services and focussing on 'all round' early years health including breastfeeding support, mental health support and healthy eating initiatives are extremely thin on the ground in Walthamstow. Have you

- a) Done any modelling on the long term health, economic and inequality impacts of losing this service? **Response: Between them the CCG and the Local Authority commission a wide range of high quality services for women, children and families including breastfeeding support and maternal mental health services, HENRY and speech and language therapy (SLT) services. The CCG is also responsible for commissioning and funding a range of other essential health services.**

Waltham Forest Council provides public health and care services for women, children and families and would be best placed to provide a wider response to this part of your question

- b) Made realistic alternative service provision for the services which will be lost if the Toy Library closes?
Response: Waltham Forest Local Authority commissions high quality services for the people of Walthamstow. This includes public health and care services for women, children and families. You can find out more about what services are right for your circumstances at <https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/content/children-and-family-centres-0>

118. As a Walthamstow parent, and Comely bank clinic service user, I am dismayed to hear you are changing your agreement with the Toy Library, which the trustees of the Toy Library feel makes the charity unviable. Could you make clear?

- a) Your previous agreement & rent for the toy library;
Please see response to the questions regarding the lease and subsidised tenancy agreement.
- b) Your proposed new agreement & rent for the toy library
The CCG and Waltham Forest Local Authority are working with the Toy Library to find appropriate alternate accommodation for a modest cost.
- c) What you intend to put in the place of the toy library if the toy library leaves?
An expanding local General Practice to relocate.

119. Can the CCG explain the context surrounding the decision to increase the Toy Library rent, which effectively evicts them, and could they provide details of the impact assessment they have carried out regarding the decision with particular reference to the consequences for low income and disadvantaged families.

Please see the responses to questions around the lease, the finances, the services provide.

COMMENTS

120. Are the CCGs aware of the immense value that services like the Toy Library bring to young families and their communities? Although I live outside the borough, I have attended a session at the Toy Library and I saw first-hand how much it is valued by its users and how much it adds to children's Early Years development and social experiences. It also offers wider services to families, supporting health, wellbeing and personal development. More than ever these facilities are needed to support children's growth and support the social fabric of local communities. Walthamstow Toy Library is an exemplary project in these respects. I would ask the CCGs to please give serious consideration to how this important service can be maintained.

121. Please do allow the toy library to continue in its present location. It has been very helpful to me and my family.

122. I am a local parent and also a child clinical psychologist. The toy library had provided me, and the families I know, with invaluable support - from early feeding support, to play sessions, to a listening ear, to toy loans for children who otherwise might not have access to these opportunities. It is a crucial hub for parents and children in Walthamstow, and protective of both parental mental health (by facilitating connection and support) and encouraging of children's well-being. Losing the toy library would be a huge loss for the local community. I do hope you will reconsider.

123. It would be devastating if the toy library was to close. I did my NCT course there, and pregnancy yoga. I saw a breast feeding specialist there when my son wouldn't feed and I spent Wednesday afternoons there every week for a long time doing a baby sign course. Sometimes that baby sign course was the only reason to get up that day, the thing that got me out of the house and that hour there with those other mums was the only adult conversation I'd have all day. I spent many, many hours playing and singing and drinking coffee and talking to other mums at the toy library toddler sessions. To say it was a life saver is such a massive understatement. It absolutely got me through the first years of my children's lives. I can't rate it highly enough. It's welcoming and inclusive and helps countless parents make it through those first tough few years. It would be devastating for the families of E17 if it were to close.

124. I attended the toy library regularly when my daughter was growing and it was a valuable resource for someone like me suffering from mental health issues and resources like this are priceless.

125. The toy library has been an absolute godsend for our family. From providing breastfeeding support in the early days to providing a community and support network for us. We have made so many friends through this group which I believe is one of the best loved family groups in the area. It has also helped me when feeling low and disconnected as a new mum. I really feel this would be an incredible loss to the area and I actually can't believe such a loved and needed organisation is being forced to leave, especially in the current climate when we need community and support more than ever.

126. But I would like to register my vehement protest against the forced eviction of the Walthamstow Toy Library. It provides invaluable services to post-natal parents, many of whom have no other access to breastfeeding support, healthy eating advice, the range of toys and books, and the safe and welcoming space provided.

127. I moved from Manchester to London when my children were just shy of 3 and 18 months (another arrived not long after). The only people I knew were my husband and his parents. I was incredibly lonely and isolated. My mother-in-law, who helped set up the Toy Library when her own children were young, suggested I give it a try. This I did and what I found was a little oasis of friendship and acceptance. I was welcomed with open arms by both the staff and other users. I am still good friends with many of the people I met there 13 years ago. The work the

Toy Library does in reaching out to parents of young children is phenomenal, why would anyone want to close such a unique, valuable and worthwhile enterprise? Being a parent of young children is hard at the best of times, don't make it harder.

RESPONSE

Thank you for your comments