

PLANIT PLAY

Creative Ireland Climate Action Project



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Creative
Climate Action



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



300 Participants
20 Workshops
10 Public libraries
2 Publications
1 Manifesto for Change

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1 Executive Summary

During 2024 the PlanIt Play team delivered twenty workshops in 10 public libraries throughout County Wicklow. The participants were comprised of adults and young people. The PlanIt Play project presented an opportunity for young people and adults in Co. Wicklow to co create a manifesto for change in regard to attitudes toward the toy industry. The project is a collaboration between artistic and ecological interventions with the aim of seeking some solutions that will move us towards a more ecologically sound toy production and consumption. Through attendance at educational and fun workshops hosted by the Wicklow Library Service participants were invited to consider possibilities around how we can move from a linear or even recycling toy economy towards a circular toy economy.



2 Introduction

2.1 Rational

Globally the toy industry is a €100 billion Euro industry, and in the region of €300 billion if games are included. According to the UNEP 2014 report the toy industry is one of the most plastic intensive industries in the world with almost 90% of toys in today's market being made from plastic (the world counts report). There are some staggering figures that claim that up to 80% of all toys end up in landfill (medium).

The fact that so many manufacturers, in many different jurisdictions, under differing regulations, using materials in ways that often cannot be recycled, and often recycled plastics cannot be used for toy production due to safety regulations means it is incredibly difficult for consumers to know if companies are making ethical and environmentally responsible choices in the production of toys.

Internationally there are some indications of some positive interventions in the toy industry. Lego are developing a sustainable Lego brick from sugarcane. Mattel and McDonalds are investing in toy recycling projects. Other toy companies have pledged to reduce plastic usage and to be more sustainable. To date though

these efforts, while widely publicised, have had limited impact. The majority of plastic reduction has been in the packaging and there are minimal opportunities in Ireland to adequately reuse and recycle toys. The EU Directive on single-use plastics - October 2021, and the EU - Emissions Trading Scheme, Phase 4 (2021-2030) both affect the toy industry but do not go far enough. In France, the Anti-waste Law for a Circular Economy, known as the AGEC law, introduced in 2020 includes over 50 measures to move towards a circular economy. Many of these measures may impact the toy industry and with political lobbying effective measures could potentially be adopted in Ireland.

Toy manufacturing, distribution, consumption and recycling is multifaceted and complex. Consumers sometimes find that their choice is limited and also making a positive environmental choice may be limited, or not possible, through the excessive price tags that sustainable products sometimes have or because desirable toys come with excessive packaging and non-recyclable parts. Researcher from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation found that some adults have a tendency to send toys, even those in good condition, to landfill

because of a lack of knowledge of, or ease of access to any other possibility.

The toy industry seems almost incomprehensibly large, like many industries it seems unfathomable that individual actions can make a difference. For these reasons it seems difficult to know where to even start in making improvements, but it is also for these reasons that joined up thinking is so crucially important.



2.2 Project Aims

We believe that through planting seeds of change in strong communities, roots develop that may have the capacity to grow. We can consider international success and best practice models and reflect on the possibility of the effectiveness of implementing these models in Ireland.

This project sets out to help people to rethink their lifestyle and habits of mind in relation to toy consumption, through educating participants about the connections between toy production and consumption and the impact on the biodiversity crisis. The goal is to give agency to participants by empowering them with knowledge, having their voices heard, and knowing how their actions can have positive impact.

This project is targeted towards consumers and users of toys. In that, the primary target audience may be parents/guardians and young people, however there is a broader reach to the wider network of family and friends who also purchase toys as gifts for the young people in their lives as well as themselves. The 'kidult' market represents about 11% of the toy market.

Several existing project strategies target one of these cohorts exclusively however it is our belief that this

strategy is not as successful as targeting both cohorts simultaneously.

The climate conversations summary report 2021 found the need for 'joined up thinking', this is in regard to multiple levels of decision making of production, consumption and policy making. "Because of that, youth participation needs to be seen in a wider context of public participation with community development, local authorities and policy-makers actively involved" (Climate conversations summary report, 2021).

It is clearly evident in this report that there are very positive attitudes towards changing behaviour for positively impacting the environment. What is not clear is how we can do this. The youth and adult responses show this desire, yet, like with many consumption practices there is so much conflicting information and the situation seems so vast it can be difficult to feel empowered to effect any change at all. PlanIt Play presents an opportunity for young people and adults to co create a manifesto for change in regard to attitudes towards toys; production, consumption and waste.

It is time for toy consumers and users to be given agency, to have their voices heard and to prompt policy makers and manufacturers to do better. It is a cop out to blame consumers for poor environmental purchasing decisions in a market which does not regulate manufacturing, and does not place responsibility with producers to offer choice. This project aims to bring together adults and young people so that they can learn together about the environmental impact of mass toy production and its climate impact with a view to:

Changing habits of mind and lifestyle choices around toy consumption

Moving towards a circular toy economy.



2.3 Project origin

Siobhán Enright

A number of years ago I was doing a toy clear out. My youngest child was about three years old at the time so we had come to a point where there were toys in the house that had been outgrown. Most were in good condition so I carefully cleaned all the toys that were no longer played with and rehomed the vast majority of them. In the end though I was left with a small number of items that I found troubling. They were small items, not played with by my children but also not easily passed on, parts of toy sets, items from party bags, some hard plastic packaging. Some items could be recycled but other items could not, they troubled me as they seemed too good to discard, yet, the only option seemed to be the bin. I couldn't bring myself to do that and so without an answer, I put them in a shoe box while I thought of a better solution. Over time the shoe box filled and I needed a another, bigger, box.

Throughout this period I observed my own children, how well versed they are in the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle mantra they have learned in school. Conversely though through their wider media consumption they are bombarded with messages tantamount to consume, dispose, consume. The inconsistency of messaging cycles really struck me. Our young people are being educated to be made aware of

environmental concerns but yet are being trained in capitalist consumption practices to an extent never seen before, they have no voice, no agency. As a parent I like many others also feel caught, I would like to make more environmentally responsible consumption decisions but so often I find there is a lack of choice in the toy market.

Toys we might say are a gateway to material culture, as they are one of the first material goods that many children will learn to desire and acquire. As such they are a training ground for consumption habits and practices that extend into adulthood. Children are seduced by engaging visual content from advertising, product promotion and online phenomena such as unboxing, encouraging excessive consumption without care or consequence concerning the environmental impact of these products or of excessive consumption. I felt alarmed, my feminist principles, academic interest in material culture, all found a shocking new lived reality. Disguised in a colourful world of plastic toys, exacerbated by increased disposable incomes and ease of access, many households find themselves living amid a sea of toys, many which may have been generously gifted by loving family and friends.

My pre parenting ideals seeming so naïve, like watching the tide roll in and feeling like I wanted to stop it.

After some time I began to wonder what I could do with the materials I had gathered. I had no plan or set aim, bar a desire to find expression for my frustration with the situation. I set about exploring the materials, constructing various sculptural forms. I experimented with abstract shapes and forms, mulling over each creation's potential. Multiple iterations later a character emerged, as it sat in my workspace, seemingly returning my gaze I felt a connection to this object. This character, this new toy, made from discarded pieces gave substance to my concerns. I followed this path, creating more characters and a series was created. My children were drawn to them, and then wanted to make their own, and in quite an organic way this box of once discarded items found a function, a use, and the PlanIt Play project was born.

I also observed something else in my children's thoughts and actions, when they have digested information regarding how individual actions can result in change, they have internalised this and requested our family to change our habits. This has led to us consuming a more

plant based diet, aiming to buy products with no palm oil and so on. When these ideas have come from our children, they have produced sustainable changes in our household. Changes that have had much more lasting effects than changes which are dictated to children by adults in their lives. Feeling the impact in my own home, I began to become more curious about the possibilities of taking these ideas into a wider public sphere to see if they resonate with others.



3 Core team

Siobhán Enright, Wicklow resident, is an artist and lecturer in the School of Media in TU Dublin on the Creative Digital Media degree programme. Siobhán obtained an undergraduate degree in visual media and subsequently completed a Master of Arts by Research, the thesis title 'Learning to desire: the car as technology, commodity and cultural form' reflects her interests in technology, gender and material culture.

Siobhán's visual practice is predominantly photographic although regularly draws on her multidisciplinary background, particularly through the use of mixed media and moving image. Themes of how materiality, consumption, and the environment are juxtaposed through the lens of the maternal experience are central to recent projects. She has worked in the capacity of a freelance photographer on commissions for national and international clients including Dublin City Council and The International Yeats Society. Recent projects where she has undertaken the post-production and editorial content include 'Continuum' commissioned for the Junction Arts Festival 2020, and 'Between two Poles' Funded by the Award Council 2021.

Janet McKennedy, Wicklow resident, is an Environmental Scientist and expert in the field of sustainability. Janet holds a Bachelor of Science, majoring in microbiology and plant science from UCC, a Graduate Diploma in Environmental Engineering from TCD and a PhD focusing on the Production of Biofuels and Byproducts from Marine Algae from Dundalk Institute of Technology. From 2014 – 2018 she developed and delivered science camps for children from ages 4 – 12 year olds incorporating all the areas of the sciences and from 2015-2016 she delivered lectures to primary school educators on Education Social, Environmental and Scientific Education in the Church of Ireland College of Education.

Michael Durand, Wicklow resident, is an artist whose practice is predominantly photographic. His work can be viewed as an inquiry into the everyday, presented through a variety of formats from installation, wall hung images and books. His work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in National and International spaces including; Gallery of Photography Dublin, Temple Bar Gallery Dublin, National Portrait Gallery London and Cite Internationale des Arts Paris. He has produced commissioned works for the EU Council of Ministers' Brussels, the European Central Bank Frankfurt, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council and Waterford Healing Arts Trust among other national institutions. A recipient of a number of Arts Council awards and bursaries Michael's work has been published as books and catalogues and his work is held in private and public collections in Ireland, Europe, and America including The National Photographic Archive Ireland, Central Bank of Ireland, Musee Niépce France, St. John's Municipal Collection Newfoundland and the MoMA book archive.



Michael Durand Siobhán Enright Janet Mc Kennedy



4 Outputs and Outcomes

4.1 Agreed Outputs:

1. The project team developed a series of fun, educational workshops based around critical inquiry and the circular economy that were delivered with support from the Wicklow Library Service. Twenty workshops were run across ten libraries.

2. Co creation of a Manifesto for Change. In the workshops participants learned about the circular economy and made their own toys (superheroes for climate change) from old and broken toys to take away from the workshops.

Participants were asked for their ideas on how we can move towards a circular toy economy and contributed to the cocreation of a manifesto for change through considering how we can change our habits, thinking and lifestyle choices around toy consumption.

3. Participants were invited to complete a short questionnaire after attending the workshops. The post workshop survey asked participants to reflect on the experience, to identify the effectiveness of the workshops, and its potential for helping people to rethink lifestyle choice and the potential for impacting behavioural change. This data was collated and analysed.

4. We designed an 80 page full colour printed publication that will be distributed through the libraries in County Wicklow. The publication incorporates the visual materials produced for the workshop delivery, workshop outcomes including images of the toys made and the manifesto for change. It acts as both documentation of the project and also a step by step guide for families to understand and implement the circular economy at home through making new toys from their old ones. In this way the project aims have the capacity to live beyond the duration of the project.

5. We designed a full colour printed double sided poster that will be distributed through the libraries in County Wicklow. The poster acts as a source of visual inspiration and includes an explanation of the circular economy, and a step by step guide for making toys at home.

6. We consulted with the Rapid Innovation Unit in the University of Limerick regarding product design. This was undertaken to explore the possibilities of materials and component development for use in workshops.

7. The project team contacted businesses to investigate the possibility of a second-hand toy markets and ask Irish

toy makers and sellers about their interest in and ability to take part in this idea.

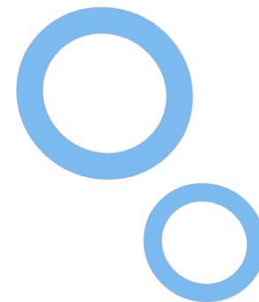
8. Potentially develop toy swap systems and toy libraries as an extension of the public library system.

9. We developed a toolkit for future workshop facilitators to deliver workshops.

10. We developed a toolkit for use in the domestic setting for families to implement the project aims at home.

11. We hosted a climate café at the end of the project inviting the public to share their thoughts on the project themes and future possibilities.

12. We have designed and developed toolkits and processes that are scalable to other counties or communities.





4.2 Agreed outcomes:

1. Toolkits for different cohorts increase the capacity and the reach of the project beyond the workshops and the life of the project. Resources will be provided for the wider public who wish to learn about the environmental impact of toy production and individual actions for change. A toolkit of resources will be provided for future workshop facilitators to deliver workshops.

2. Workshop participants learned about and increased their understanding of the environmental impact of mass toy production and its climate impact and considered the possibilities of a circular toy economy, with a view to changing habits of mind and lifestyle choices around toy consumption.

3. Through delivering workshops in the public libraries we reached a broad cross-section of the community, there was a diverse range of participants in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity and socio economic backgrounds. It was clear from the feedback that some participants were already very climate aware but also some participants expressed that they had never considered these issues. Reaching a cohort of the community that might not normally be engaged with climate action was a valuable aspect of the project.

4. PlanIt Play demonstrated how the bringing together of art practice and environmental science can create meaningful impact in terms of providing accessible and tangible ways for the public to engage in climate action.

5. Through focusing the workshops in a region we have connected a community and hope that the project will have greater impact in terms of behaviour change.

6. Through educating participants about the connections between toy production and consumption and the impact on the biodiversity crisis, the project set out to help people to rethink their lifestyles and habits of mind in relation to toy consumption. The goal was to give agency to participants by empowering them with knowledge, having their voices heard, and knowing how their actions can have positive impact.

7. The community focus forged connections at county council level, in receiving support from both the Wicklow Library service and the local Green Party elected representatives, the enthusiasm of the workshops participants was visible and the appetite for initiatives like toy libraries became clear.

8. Developing toy swap systems and toy libraries will contribute towards lifestyle change specifically in

changing attitudes relating to the value of second hand toys.

9. The publication provides an overview of the project, and as such can itself become a conversation starter to help people rethink their lifestyles. It will be a useful reference source for library visitors who will be offered the educational scientific information incorporated into the workshops as well as a how to guide, to transform their old toys into superheroes for climate action.

10. Encouraging Irish toy retailers to have a second hand toy section or toy swap section will facilitate people who wish to engage in more eco conscious toy consumption.

Classical
Classics

Superh



Name

What is your hero

your hero h

Power

What kind of
your hero have

How did they

Or they a com
hero or one
mistakes so

5 Project Evaluation

5.1 Workshop content development

In developing the workshop content, we brought together our research on toy production, consumption and waste along with solutions focused around the implementation of the circular economy, the creative activity and associated methods. In seeking to combine information on environmental and material science, and creative practice methods into a coherent succinct workshop plan.

We were immediately struck by the vast quantity of information there was to impart. This represented an issue for us on a number of levels. Firstly, the knowledge that much of the workshop time could potentially be spent on information delivery would mean that less time could be spent undertaking the activity. Secondly, we wondered about what the impact of imparting a lot of information at the start of a session might be. Might this distract, overwhelm or even confuse participants. At some point or other we had all experienced what we might call climate overwhelm, I describe this as the sense of overwhelm that can be experienced when one's awareness is faced with the scale and complexity of climate related issues. Similar to other forms of material consumption, toy production, consumption and waste is immensely complex. It cannot be solved by the actions that an individual might take, and

this knowledge can lead to feelings of disempowerment and at worst apathy. There are growing concerns about levels of climate anxiety in the general population and even more so among young people and vulnerable adults (Clayton, 2020). Within education settings in general there exists a duty of care and we became very mindful of our specific context. If we were to work with a single group of people over a period of time arguably we could take a very different approach, however given that we proposed to run numerous workshops, each with a different cohort careful consideration was given to participants wellbeing and mental health as well as to the integrity of the projects aims.

While research is showing rising levels of climate change anxiety (CCA), so too is research into positive impact of collective action itself and its buffering effect against CCA impairing impacts. "Pro-environmental behaviours and forms of climate engagement that help individuals foster a sense of agency, efficacy and active hope are protective factors for wellbeing, and co-benefits to collective action itself." (World Economic Forum

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/05/climate-anxiety-is-on-the-rise-heres-what-we-do-about-it/>).

In our experiences as creative practitioners and educators we also acknowledged that fear and shame tend to block inquiry and expression rather than inspire it. It would be counterproductive to tell participants their actions were something to be shameful of and then expect creative solutions to solve the problem.

“Don’t try to create and analyze at the same time. They’re different processes.” (John Cage).

We considered these issues for some time and pulled back to focus on our project aims and priorities, and how best to communicate these. Our aim was to engage our participants in a way that they might feel empowered to take action to embed some principles of the circular economy into their lives. We felt that focusing participants attention on action could potentially have the most empowering impact.

Methodology

In designing the workshops, we drew on specific practices deemed most appropriate to achieve the outcome. The aim was to engage the participants in an activity that could inspire critical thinking, conversation and action connected to climate change.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

We employed Universal Design for Learning (UDL) methods in our workshop delivery design, incorporating multiple modes of representation, engagement and expression. This was done through combining verbal explanations with supporting visual content, and then through learning by doing. UDL principles provide a framework for facilitating different learner needs for an optimal learning and engagement for all learners (CAST,2024).

Participatory arts practice

Participatory arts practice encompasses a range of arts practices including Community Arts, Socially Engaged Arts Practices, Activist Art, and are typically informed by political, social or cultural concerns. A key component is the involvement of the audience and the shift in emphasis from the artist as the sole creator of the work. The process is inclusive and collaborative, and has the capacity to empower participants through valuing their voice and experience.

Transformative art

Transformative art practice uses art as a tool for personal, social or systemic change. Emphasising art’s capacity to promote critical thinking, challenge the way things are done and inspire action. This results from the way

participation in a creative process can potentially prompt a critical re-evaluation of previously held attitudes and beliefs which can then precipitate a transformative change to participants thoughts and actions.

Key areas of crossover between art and science methods and practice.

In the areas of art practice and scientific methods there is a shared aim of attempting to understand, explore, critique and interpret the world we inhabit, albeit through different approaches. When combined however, they open up greater possibilities, creating a unique synergy with the potential of allowing the space to create new ways to communicate and solve problems

Specific methods adopted in both fields include:

Inquiry and exploration

Observation and documentation

Creative problem solving

Communication

Experimentation and iteration

Ethical responsibility

Project Evaluation

Bringing together these anti disciplinary fields offers an holistic approach to both the understanding of and finding solutions to the global challenge of climate crisis.

Workshop content design

We paired back to focus on circular economy as we felt this may drive positive agency amongst the participants.

Creating a Superhero character remained the central theme, and we created an overview of how to create a character creation as source of inspiration.

Finally our call to action; inviting participants to contribute to the Manifesto.

Initial Workshop Run

We ran an initial run of 8 workshops, after these we reviewed each of the sessions to see what worked, what didn't and to see what adjustments we could make before the next set of workshops.

We wanted to find more adhesive solutions, we set to work experimenting with various options.

Learnings

- After the first workshops based on feedback we decided to allow more time to deliver information at the start of the workshop.
- It was better to ask people to sign the photo release forms at the end of the workshop, it took time at the start and also by the end of the workshop we had built a level of trust and understanding about the project with the participants.
- We also realised the importance of discussing experimentation with the participants, as a process based, inquiry focused activity intended to yield a personal response our participants were given the challenge to create something without instructions. Some of the younger participants were undaunted by this, but as the ages rose so did a palpable sense of anticipation. A fear of an inability to be able to do it, a lack of trust or belief in their creativity. We could each sense the moments of tension where this existed, it would occur in the moments after we stopped speaking and handed over to the participants in the workshop. We sat with the discomfort, holding the space, and with each workshop gained a growing confidence in ourselves that this space was an essential part of the process. It is a space that represents transformation of

thought through transformation in action. In order to change our actions we must first change our mindsets, overcome limiting beliefs, expectations and cultural narratives. Creating cultural and behavioural change requires a lot of work on a broad scale but here we were seeking to evoke change in the individual participants, seeking to drive a change from within. This too is challenging, albeit possible. The first step was for our participants to create something from the materials at hand, no instruction, no limit, no path to follow. It requires openness. In order to facilitate this we talked a little about the crossovers between art and science, and reframed the perception of failure as a valuable aspect of problem solving. We explained that trying a number of times and ways is an effective method of finding solutions, experimenting is part of the process. We offered our expertise to the participants, and invited them to challenge us to find ways to help them achieve their ambitions.

- The older age group responded better to the idea of creating a superhero character. While the younger age group responded well to the visual examples provided but less so to the character development. Awareness of this helped us refine focus in each of the subsequent workshops.

Experimentation with adhesives and methods:

As the workshops progressed, as is usually the case, we became more familiar with what techniques were working and what didn't and in between workshops we tested various glues with various plastics to identify which were the most effective. Craft and jewellery glues were found to be the least effective. This is most likely as they are quite specialised and not designed for plastics. Additionally the drying times are much longer making them more suitable for a more controlled environment than the workshops space.

We also used a product called Fixits, a sustainably made product for repair and craft. However as the product requires boiling water to soften the material prior to use it was not feasible to use in the workshops.

We looked at Sugru, a comparable product, but after researching its use decided against using it as it has a rather long setting time.

It was found that the hot glue gun was universally more successful. We upgraded to a glue gun that heated to a higher temperature and this was more effective. This gun doubled as a melting/welding device to melt the plastic of the toy itself thus allowing it to be welded to another

material either as the plastic itself cooled or to use a nut and bolt or piece of string to secure it.

The smoother the plastic, the more difficult it was to get any glue to stick to it. In this instance we used sand paper to create roughness on the plastic which greatly improved their "gluability". Additionally it was found that there were conduit materials that glued very well to a lot of materials. An example of these were foam floor mats and cotton based materials which could be cut to any size and shape and glued well to most other plastics.

We also introduced a hand drill which facilitated the use of nuts and bolts in a relatively safe and effective way.

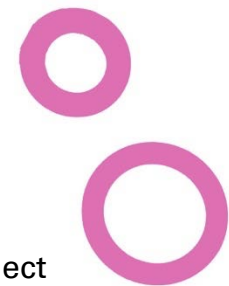
Workshop delivery plan

Introduce ourselves

Introduce the aims of the PlanIt Play project

Discuss the Circular economy, (using visual aid) with participation from attendees

Invite participants to consider the idea of a manifesto (using visual aid and flipchart) and welcome their thoughts on what could be added



Workshop content: show participants the various materials and point to visual aid of examples for inspiration.

Direct attention to the photographic light tent

Health and Safety briefing

During the workshops we floated in the space, making sure that at least one of us was at the tools station. This time was really interesting as we talked with the participants while they made toys. We had opening questions that acted as conversation starters, such as what kind of toys do you like? When participants, adults or children, mentioned something that we thought might be a potential idea for the manifesto we would highlight this to them and ask if they would like to share their idea on the board, or we offered to do this for them, prompting other participants to do the same. Many of the adults freely discussed their ideas, it was really interesting to see how the activity became a conduit for discussion. This is elaborated on further in the final section.

CAST (2024). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 3.0. Retrieved from <https://udlguidelines.cast.org> (accessed on 30/10/2024)

Clayton, S., 2020. Climate anxiety: Psychological responses to climate change. *Journal of anxiety disorders*, 74, p.102263.



5.2 PlanIt Play facilitators toolkit

PlanIt Play Creative Practitioners Facilitators Guide

This toolkit is designed for use with creative practitioners in mind. It is divided into a number of section headings that outline the materials and other resources required as well as a proposed workshop delivery outline.

Section Headings

Materials needed

Gathering materials

Sorting materials

Location

Set up

Workshop Delivery

Project Evaluation

Materials needed

Additional materials and accessories

Googly eyes, pipe cleaners, buttons, beads, scrap material, wool or string, wooden lollipop sticks (this list could be endless).

Paint markers are excellent as they work on almost any surface. If running a workshop a small investment in additional materials will be required.



Tools

Essential: Glue/s or method of attaching parts.
Useful tools; scissors, tweezers, screw driver,
pliers,
Sand paper. Small nuts and bolts.
String, wire.

A strong glue is needed. We found a heavy duty hot glue gun to be the most versatile tool. One with a metal nib has a dual function of being able to melt through plastic to create a small hole useful for nuts/bolts, string etc.

Superglue is also good. Supervision is essential and practice is required. Assess your own tools or ask to borrow some. Small tools for jewellery making etc are very useful. If you have access to a tool box, or know someone with one, see what might be useful.



Project Evaluation

Visual aids

Plan-It Play has designed three sets of visual aids for use in workshop delivery. Each of these focus on a different area connected to the workshop.

The Why? The circular economy

The How? Make a superhero

The What? Ideas for change

Paper for idea board

Large A1 sheets of paper are good for capturing ideas from the group as they work.

You can encourage the group to make contributions by adding the first ideas that you hear to the board

First Aid

Burn gel if using hot glue

General first aid kit

The Circular Economy

Use it

Then... make it into something new

Then... pass it on
play more

Then.... if it breaks, fix it
Keep playing

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PlanIt Play

Let's create a Manifesto

Repair and Resell

Buy 2nd Hand

Toy libraries

Make toys that are recycleable

Toy Rental

What are your ideas?

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Superhero

Name

What is your hero's name?

Is your hero human, animal, fantasy, a combination?

What emotion do they have?
Happy, Grumpy, Sensitive, Shy?

Power

What kind of power does your hero have?

How did they get them?

Or they a confident hero or one who makes mistakes sometimes?

Mission?

What is your hero's goal or mission?

How might they achieve this?

What is in their way?
A villian or do they need to overcome something personal?

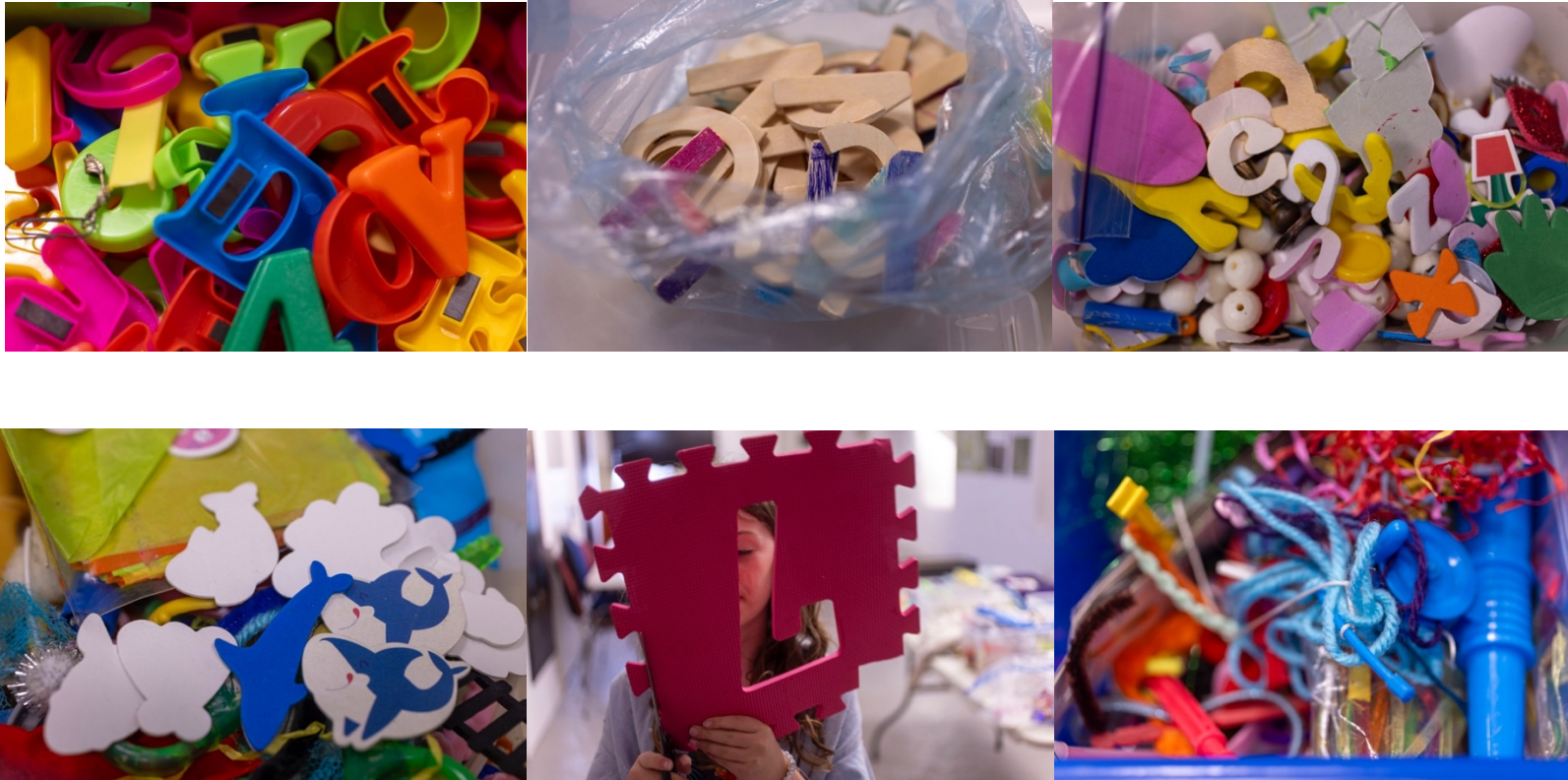
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**Gathering
Materials**
Old/broken toys

Put a call out for old and broken toys and toy packaging, and leftover art and craft materials. Ask workshop participants to bring to the workshop old or broken toys, toy parts, toy packaging. Ask friends, through community groups, or social media groups. Begin with a small call out as you may end up with more than you imagine.

We found that smaller toys make for the best source of materials to remake into a new toy, while larger toys were more suited for repair or upcycling. Toy packaging, especially the kind of packaging that often contains a surprise toy make a great base for a character. Being specific with the request helps as does providing visual images.



Sorting Materials

Before undertaking the activity it is useful to roughly sort the materials that you've sourced. We used these loose categories:

1. larger toys
2. Objects useful for bodies (balls, ovals, blocks etc).
3. Objects useful for limbs and accessories (tend to be smaller pieces)
4. Accessories (Googly eyes, Pipe cleaners, buttons, scrap material, wool or string, wooden lollipop sticks, etc) boxes
5. Glues and tools

We kept the workshop supplies in a variety of transparent storage boxes. These were ideal as they allowed for visibility of the contents during the workshops, and were easy to transport. We used a lot of recycled household containers to hold the smaller pieces or materials, accessories and toys. This helped with sorting materials for workshop participants to utilise during the workshops as well as being very practical for transport.

Location

This activity is adaptable to a wide range of locations, it can be done indoors or outdoors (weather permitting).

Access to electricity is needed if using a hot glue gun.

A number of tables, and old newspaper to cover them if needed.

A few chairs for those who want to sit down, but people tend to move about.

Consider the size of the space along with the number of participants and facilitators. A good ratio is 1 facilitator to 5 participants for a one hour session. However, this can vary depending on the age range and the length of time.

Set up

Preparation

Allow plenty of time to set up your activity. It is common for something unexpected to happen so give yourself time to deal with the unplanned.

In the workshops delivered by the PlanIt Play team we travelled to various workshop locations as such we often were not familiar with the space in advance. There can be issues of access, so give yourself time to deal with the unexpected.

Look at the space

Orient the activity so that when people come into the room there is a welcoming sense in the space, ensure that they can see everything easily.

If you are using supporting visual materials, ensure that they are in a place that is easily visible to the participants.

Be Spacious

Allow as much room as possible for the tables with the materials. If using hot glue, consider where the electric sockets are orientate the other tables around safe and easy access to the sockets.
Keeping glues and tools in one area allows for that area to be more easily supervised.

Participants will tend to move from finding a base shape (larger piece) to work with, then to smaller pieces for accessories, and at that stage over and back to the tools and glue area. Move around the space imagining how the participants will engage with the materials.

Organise materials Try to organise and group the materials, thinking about how the participants will use them.

Suggested areas

1. Glues and tools area
2. Accessories area
3. Larger pieces of toys (in boxes on the ground if you have a lot)
4. table top space

It's normal during a creative exercise for the materials to get messy, this is fine but it helps to plan where things will go in the set up and also to think about how the materials will be packed up and stored for the next session.

We had a large amount of materials and we found what worked well was keeping the items by size and use together.

Boxes with larger toys.

Boxes with objects useful for bodies (balls, ovals etc).

A separate area for accessories

A separate area for glues and tools

Some table space for each participant to work



Project Evaluation



Project Evaluation

Workshop Delivery

Welcome	As people arrive, welcome and thank them for coming. Take attendance	As people arrive you can invite them to look at the visual aids and to begin looking through the boxes.
Introduction	Introduce the facilitators, and briefly explain what they are going to be doing.	
Objective	<p>The circular economy How to make a toy Ideas for change</p> <p>The Why. The circular economy: you can engage your group by discussing the circular economy with them. We began by asking 'what do you do with a toy when you're finished with it'? And, 'what other options are there'? Ask if they have heard of the circular economy? what do they know about it? Can they think of other examples?</p>	<p>The How? Make a Superhero for climate action. How to make a toy. Explain that making new toys from old ones is the circular economy in action. Point to the examples of characters made from old toys for some inspiration. Then direct attention towards the various materials, boxes of larger and smaller items, accessories etc. Remind the group that being an artist or scientist is about experimenting, so, they might need to make a number of attempts to get something to work. Pay particular attention to health and safety of using glues and tools. We suggest that glues and tools remain in one area for ease of supervision.</p> <p>The What? Ideas for change. On the sheet of paper, write in the centre 'ideas for change', before your participants set to work. This can be left very open or you can also add in some of the manifesto ideas. Let everyone know where it is and that they can add to it when they think of something or add a star beside ideas already on it.</p>

Activity

Observe and support the group as they begin to explore the materials. It is normal that there may be a little lull at the beginning. Some participants will dive in, others may feel a little unsure in engaging in a process based activity that lacks instructions. You can offer some support to get them started by helping them look for a base to work from. Facilitators can help to get everyone started and then as people need help fixing parts together will move towards the tools area.

During the activity, talk with your participants about toys; the kinds of toys they like, what they like about them, interesting ideas will emerge that can be captured on the ideas board. When figuring out how to fix things together, it can take several attempts to get it working. When this happens, remind participants that this is normal, it's the challenging, exciting and rewarding part of art and science.

Time keeping

Decide on the duration of the session. Allocate an amount of time to each part of the session. Keep an eye on the time during the session and remind the participants when they are coming to the end, give 10-15 minutes notice.

Suggested timing for 1 hour session:
10-15 minutes: welcome, overview and objectives
30-40 minutes: main activity
5-10 minutes: closing activity

Closing

Gather your participants together. They might like to show one another what they have made. This is also a good time to point to any ideas that have been generated. Thank them for coming.

Tips

Multiple sessions

Additional elements

If you are working with a group over a number of sessions you could consider breaking up the content. This will allow for greater engagement and reflection. We suggest the following.

Through engaging with this activity the participants are embodying the circular economy

Session 1.

Discuss the circular economy and how it applies in the participants lives.

Discuss what you will be doing in each session.

Final part is to brainstorm the kinds of materials to be used for making toys, how the group will gather them, how long this will take

Session 2.

Design and make toys

Session 3.

Using the toy each participant created, follow the guide to creating a superhero character. A fun activity is to photograph the toy against a white piece of paper and use photo apps to drop this image into real world environments or in stop motion apps.



Project Evaluation

PlanIt Play at home

This is a toolkit for how to do this activity at home. It has been visualised in the publication.

Gathering materials

Method

Notes

Old/broken toys

Old and or broken toys are useful as is toy packaging, especially the kind of packaging that often contains a surprise toy.

The next time you are doing a toy clear out, begin by sorting the toys. Those that are in good enough condition can be rehomed. Other toys and parts of toys can be put aside into a box. The box can be added to over a period of time, adding bits and pieces that might otherwise go in the bin, particularly items like plastic packaging that you find on surprise toys.

Materials needed

Additional materials

Googly eyes, Pipe cleaners, buttons, beads, scrap material, wool or string, wooden lollipop sticks (this list could be endless), paint markers

A wide range of materials can be useful in making toys. If you have craft/art sets, keep any leftover pieces in a materials box. You can start simply, with some googly eyes, pipe cleaners and paint markers. Then as you go, see what you might need.

Tools

Essential: Glue/s or method of attaching parts.
Useful tools; scissors, tweezers, screw driver, pliers,
Sand paper. Small nuts and bolts.
String, wire,

A strong glue is needed. Superglue is good as is hot glue. A heavy duty hot glue gun is a versatile tool. One with a metal nib has a dual function of being able to melt through plastic to create a small hole useful for nuts/bolts, string etc.
Supervision is essential and practice is required. If you do DIY or art and crafts a glue gun has multiple uses but if this might be a one-time activity, using a good strong glue might be better. Look around your own home first for tools or ask to borrow some. Small tools for jewellery making, or fixing glasses etc are very useful. If you have access to a tool box, or know someone with one, see what might be useful. It is better to make do with what you have first and buy only if you need to.

Visual aids

Use the Plan-It Play publication for inspiration and information.
The Why? The circular economy
The How? Make a superhero
The What? Ideas for change

First Aid

General first aid kit
Burn gel if using hot glue

Set up activity

Location

This activity is adaptable to a wide range of locations, it can be done indoors or outdoors (weather permitting).

Access to electricity is needed if using a hot glue gun.

A table , and old newspaper to cover it if needed.

Organise materials

Roughly organise and group the materials that you have gathered.

Suggested areas

1. Glues and tools area
2. Accessories area (Googly eyes, Pipe cleaners, buttons, scrap material, wool or string, wooden lollipop sticks, etc)
3. old and broken toys, parts of toys, toy packaging
4. table top space

It's normal during a creative exercise for the materials to get messy, this is fine but it helps to plan where things will go when setting up. Keeping glues and tools in one area allows for that area to be more easily supervised.

Doing the activity

Begin looking through the boxes.

Tips for getting started:

Find a base shape for a character body, an oval, round or square body shape for the main body.

Start simple, add some facial features, stick on or draw eyes.

Build from success.

Some plastics stick together very easily, others are tricky.

Sanding down smooth surface a little can make it easier for the glue to stick parts together.

Look through the materials you have, what looks like an arm or leg. Maybe you are making a human like creature, or maybe its animal, or fantasy.

When figuring out how to fix things together, it can take several attempts to get it working, this is normal, it's the challenging, exciting and rewarding part of art and science. It can also be frustrating though...

Being an artist or scientist is about experimenting, so, you might need to make a number of attempts to get something to work. Creating without instructions, being led by the materials is called Process Art.

While making toys talk with your children about toys; the kinds of toys they like, what they like about them.

What do you both think of the circular economy?

Are there things you could do differently, maybe you already do some things that you aren't aware of.

REMEMBER:

Making big changes isn't on us alone, it's on everyone, the people who make and sell toys, governments and we can do a small part of this.

Tips

Additional elements

When you've made a toy there is more that you can do.

Write a story about your character.

Photograph the toy against a white piece of paper and use photo apps to drop this image into real world environments or in stop motion apps.



5.3 Workshop delivery

The PlanIt Play team delivered twenty workshops that were delivered in ten Wicklow libraries with approximately 300 participants including adults and children in attendance overall.

Dates of the workshop. Each venue held two workshops, one for 4-8 year olds and one for ages 9+. Adults were invited to attend the workshops along with the young people.

North Wicklow

Enniskerry Library 23/03/2024

Bray Library 25/03/2024

Greystones Library 26/03/2024

Ballywaltrim Library 28/03/2024

South Wicklow

Wicklow Library 22/07/2024

Tinahely Library 23/07/2024

Arklow Library 24/07/2024

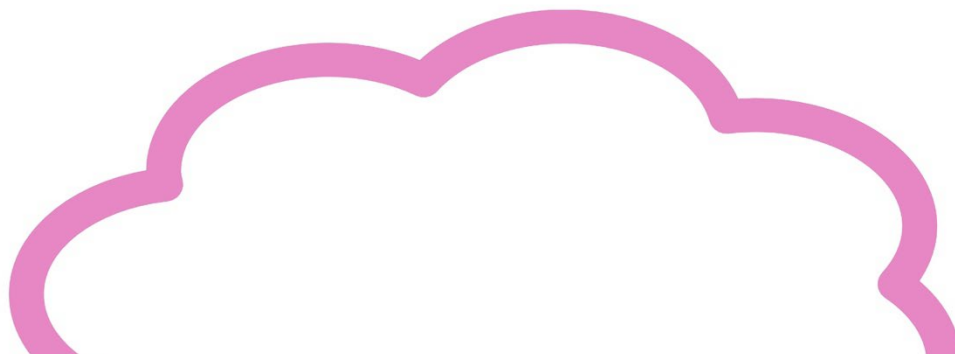
Rathdrum Library 09/08/2024

West Wicklow

Baltinglass Library 14/08/2024

Blessington Library 16/08/2024

After each workshop there was a reflection process around what went well and what could be improved. Through this process of experimentation, the workshops evolved. Post each workshop we also evaluated the data gathered.









5.4 Participant evaluation

Attendance at the workshops was managed by the library staff. There were 15 participants allowed to register for each workshop which often lead to waiting lists being generated.

During the Creative Ireland residency in Borris, Co. Carlow we had the opportunity to consider the design of the questionnaire more fully. We considered a number of elements, what information we were looking to gather, how to ask the right questions and how to capture the data. Initially the list was long, and the realisation was evident that time would be a key factor for the specific audience that we were working with. Through a presentation from the EPA their research showed 70% of the population surveyed were aware of environmental issues we learned a number of things that we were able to consider in our data collection design. This research in particular highlighted to us that there was little need in undertaking a pre workshop survey to gauge participants knowledge and awareness of climate related issues.

We felt that the best opportunity to gather data would be at the end of the workshop, that while people may have good intentions to complete a post workshop survey online the likelihood drops and the response rate would be lower. Given the nature of a family workshop we were

also aware that people would be preparing to leave and packing up their childrens' belongings and so given these factors we attempted to reduce the questions to the minimum and present the survey questions in the most accessible form possible.

We based our survey on the five questions set out in the Creative Ireland Evaluation Toolkit. We edited the Likert scale to include smiley face emojis, this visual response reduces the time the respondent needs to choose their answer, in place of writing the word or choosing the correct number that corresponds to each answer. It also becomes clearer to younger respondents how to choose their answer.

We edited question 5 to reflect the areas relevant to toy consumption to avoid confusion and finally we added a 6th question looking for a qualitative response to the questionnaire.

So having decided against the use of pre-workshop questionnaires, the participants were invited to share their perspectives and insights during the workshop. After completion, the questionnaires were completed with a series of questions reflecting on the impact the workshop had on their attitudes and behaviours.

The process and research time spent on developing the survey was worthwhile in the high response rate we received.

Survey results:

A series of questions were asked regarding changes in behaviour. Over 80 people completed the questionnaire but not all questions were necessarily answered by all respondents. We regularly observed adults completing the survey along with children in their company.

Quantitative analysis:

The charts below show that for all 3 statements over 80% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed. Almost the entire remainder gave a neutral response. Many of these neutral responses were supported by qualitative statements saying that they were already climate aware or words to that effect.

One individual strongly disagreed with the statement "I am more informed about climate change", strongly agreed with the statement "The creative aspect of this project made me feel more engaged with climate action" suggesting that the interaction with the workshop worked on a creative level rather than an information level for that individual. This reflects our observations within the various workshops. No two workshops were the same, as

would be expected in any environment where the participants, the location and the materials provided (toys) vary.

Qualitative analysis:

Results are shown in figure 1 which shows that of the options that were given, the most popular was trying to find ways to reduce climate impact by avoiding waste and the least popular was to be involved with groups focussed on climate action and supporting the environment. There was an option additionally to write freehand comments here and other areas which people expressed as ideas were:

"Informing and facilitating environmental activities for children"

"Inform others about recycling"

"Litter pick up in the playground"



Figure 1: Respondents commitments to climate change

Suggestions were made around what others could do to **facilitate the circular economy**:

“Would be great if library had drop off point for old broken toys that you could use for your workshops”

“Producers should be encouraged strongly to use more sustainable materials, unfortunately this is usually quite expensive to the consumer”

Some of the comments from individuals were very reflective where parents were glad of an opportunity to

facilitate an expression of their own climate consciousness with their children:

“I feel these events help encourage my kids appreciate the environment more and are less likely to throw their stuff away. They try reuse or pass them on to others”

“It helped me find ways to discuss my climate conscious choices with my kids”

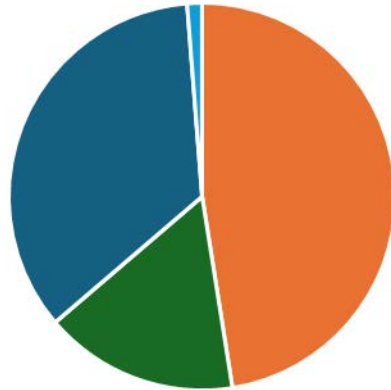
For others, it was an eye opener to them of what was possible and increased their awareness of their own childrens’ imaginative capacity for reuse:

“I’m delighted to see the kids learning new imaginative ways to use what they have at home and around them.”

“A really inspiring event, my childrens' ideas just kept on coming”

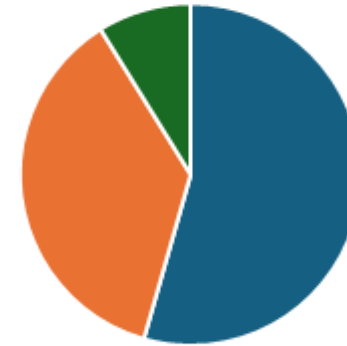
“It is so good for children to see the imaginative potential of their broken toys. My hope is that no toy is thrown out and it stays for generations to be played with. It is a wonderful child led project”

I am more informed about climate change



Agree Neutral Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The creative aspect of this project made me feel more engaged with climate action.



Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

I feel more empowered to take action after attending/participating in the workshop



Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



5.6 Consultation with the Rapid Innovation Unit

This was a very interesting collaboration that yielded research as well as practical advice that was employed throughout the workshop delivery.

Consultation with the Rapid Innovation Unit (RIU) in UL RIU collaborators

EmmaJude – Product Designer

EmmaJude is a PhD researcher with The Rapid Innovation Unit, at the University of Limerick, working on 3D printing to meet unmet clinical needs of female cancer patients. EmmaJude graduated with a BSc in Product Design & Technology from the University of Limerick and has experience in 3D printing for both medical device design and sustainability research.

Niall Murray – Environmental Scientist

Niall is an environmental scientist who has experience working in an environmental management consultancy, working in the field on air emissions monitoring. Niall graduated with a BSc in Environmental Science from the University of Limerick and was the winner of the ESAI Undergrad of the Year. Niall has experience designing and

implementing environmental plans for commercial companies.

Alice Shannon - Material Scientist

Alice is a PhD student working on new plastics for 3D printing suitable for medical applications. Alice has experience in sustainability projects and is currently working on recycling plastic bottles into 3D printing material. She teaches “environmentally friendly alternatives to plastic” as a guest lecturer. She has a degree in Applied Physics and a Master’s degree in Biomedical Device Materials.

At the outset of the project there were three areas that we aimed to consult with the RIU on, these were:

1. best methods/materials for combining old plastic toy parts together
2. environmentally sustainable workshop materials, ie, markers, glue, googly eyes etc
3. consultancy on the manifesto for change produced by workshop participants, your teams thoughts on

possible alternatives to plastic in toy production, alternate ways of making toys so they can be recyclable, how to Design Out Waste

Initially the RIU team responded with some information for our consideration.

1. best methods/materials for combining old plastic toy parts together.

There are many options for combining old toy parts, listed below are some examples:

- a. Plastic glue which will melt the plastic essentially welding the plastic parts together.
- b. A variety of 3D printed connectors so the toys can be disassembled and reassembled. These connectors can be printed from recycled plastic.
- c. Fixlts, these are a moldable bioplastic used to repair things.
- d. Small nut and bolts from other old toys such as meccano sets.

2. environmentally sustainable workshop materials, i.e., markers, glue, googly eyes etc

Workshop materials would also include:

Material	Price	Units	total
Plastic glue	€5	x5	€25
3D printed connectors		x10	€5
Hot glue sticks	€25	X1	€25
Glue gun	€30	X1	€30
Small drill or punch hole for any modifications.	€25	X1	€25
Eco-friendly paints https://jiminy.ie/collections/eco-paint/products/finger-paint-eco-conscious-packaging-free?variant=36707733897384	€20		
Paper			
Pencils			
Googly eyes			

3. consultancy on the manifesto for change produced by workshop participants, your teams' thoughts on possible alternatives to plastic in toy production,

alternate ways of making toys so they can be recyclable, how to Design Out Waste etc

There can be both production and systematic changes. Toys could be made out of recycled materials either from recycled plastic toys or other plastic that is produced and thrown away. Toys could also be made out of more sustainable materials such as wood or fabrics, so they will be durable, and recyclable.

The production of toys on a smaller scale for example through 3D printing where you can use recycled plastic and other materials.

Systematically, a method for plastic toy collection can be put in place in order for it to be accessible to parents and children to recycle their old toys. These toys can either be redistributed to other children or used as raw materials to be broken down and reused.















During our project development phase we took on board much of this information and then had a further meeting with Emma Jude Lyons. In our meeting we discussed a number of points:

1. The difficulty of finding the right glue for each plastic type
2. The potential of developing component parts for connectors
3. The potential of designing universal packaging

Project Evaluation

In follow up to this meeting, The RIU team advised us on potential glues to use. We supplied the team with a box of toys ,materials that were typically used in a workshop and they began work on developing connectors.

PLASTIC RESIN IDENTIFICATION CODES

	PETE	Polyethylene Terephthalate		soft drink and water bottles, food packaging, fruit, juice containers and cooking oil, shampoo bottles	Recyclable
	HDPE	High Density Polyethylene		milk, water, juice jugs, yogurt pots, soap dispenser, cleaning products, grocery bags	Recyclable
	PVC	Polyvinyl Chloride		pipe and window fitting, thermal insulation, car parts, trays for sweets, bubble foil, food foil	Non-recyclable
	LDPE	Low Density Polyethylene		frozen food bags, bread bags, food bags, shopping bags, magazine wrapping	Non-recyclable
	PP	Polypropylene		ketchup bottles, microwave meal trays, wall covering, syrup bottle, yogurt container	Recyclable
	PS	Polystyrene		cosmetic bag, plates and cups, CD cases, egg cartons, protective packaging	Non-recyclable
	OTHER	Other		5-gallon water bottles, other plastic including acrylicnoln, fiberglass, baby bottle	Non-recyclable

In our final consultation the RIU presented to us a series of connectors they designed and printed, that could be used to connect plastic parts to make new toys. These connectors are fantastic and show strong potential for future use.

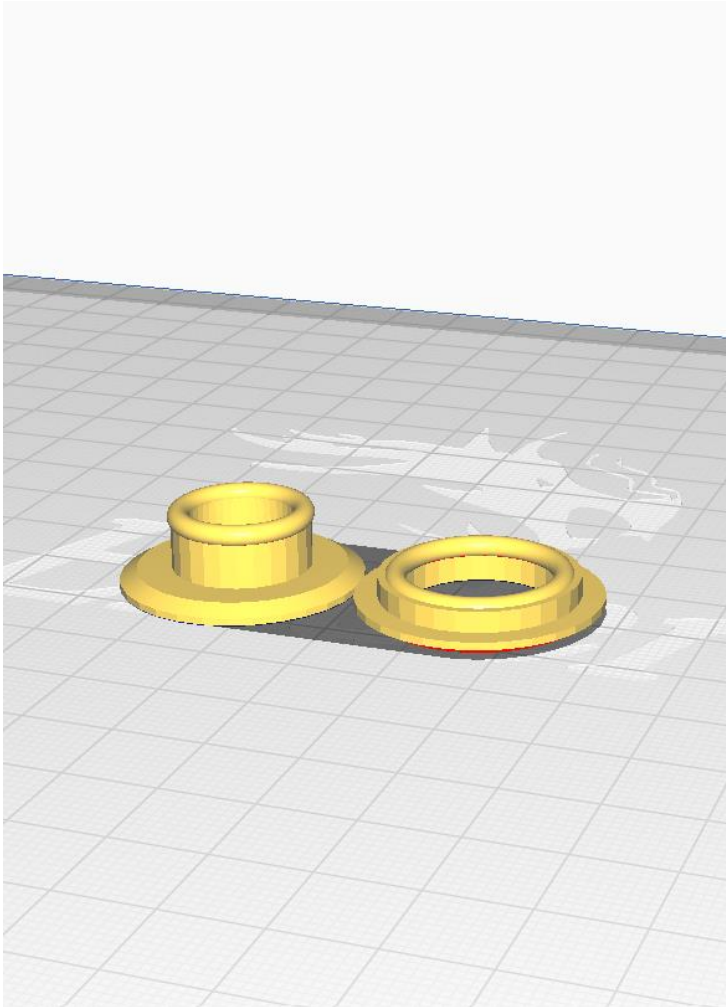
This kind of consultation brings to light interesting areas to consider, in particular it demonstrates one of the key points of the Creative Ireland climate action fund, the potential of bringing together those who might otherwise work in silos, scientists and materials specialists, and, artists and designers.

The output from the RIU demonstrates a potential for the capacity to produce a product that could be used in the manufacturing sector to make toys with replaceable parts or in the retail sector for those willing to repair their toys.

3D-printed Connectors

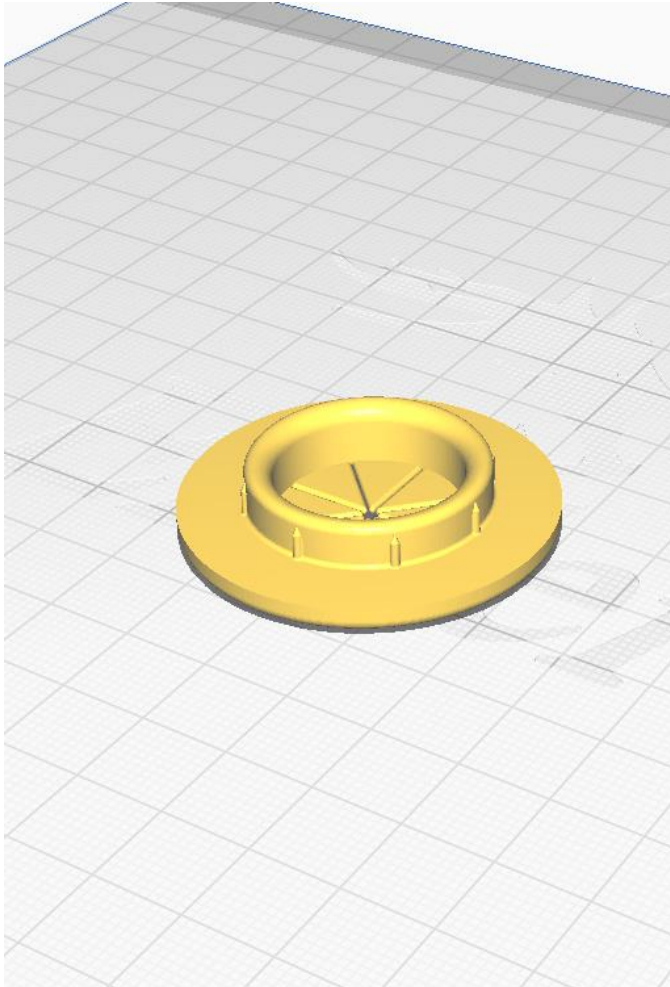
Plan It Play

3D-printed Connectors Plan It Play



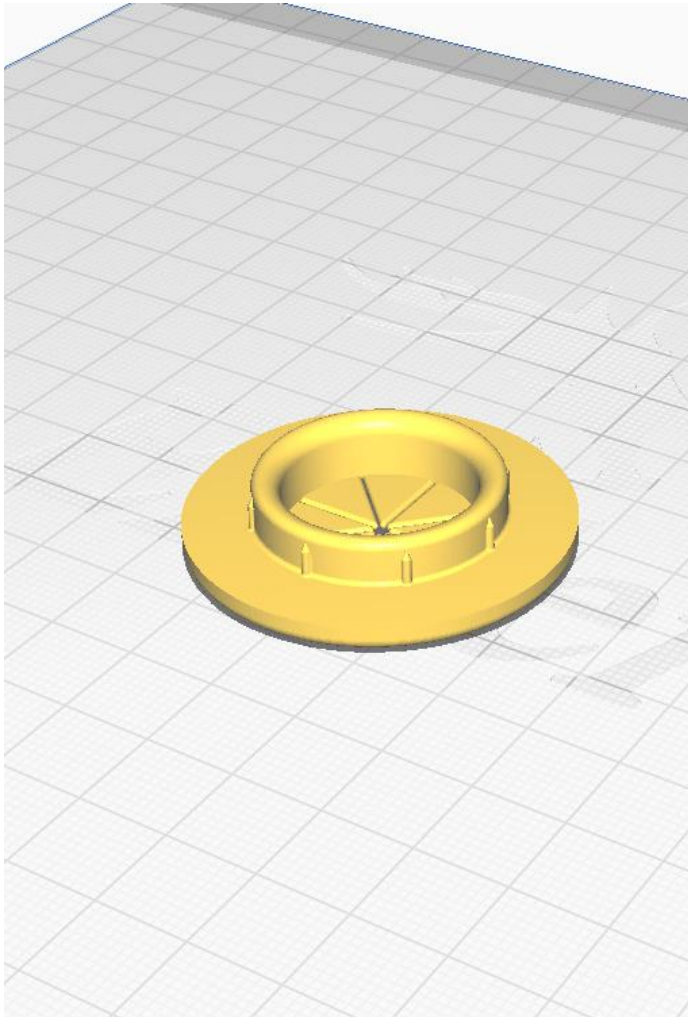
- Push through connectors
- Red – rigid PLA
- White – flexible TPU
- 2 different sizes
- Ø 17mm, 26mm

3D-printed Connectors Plan It Play



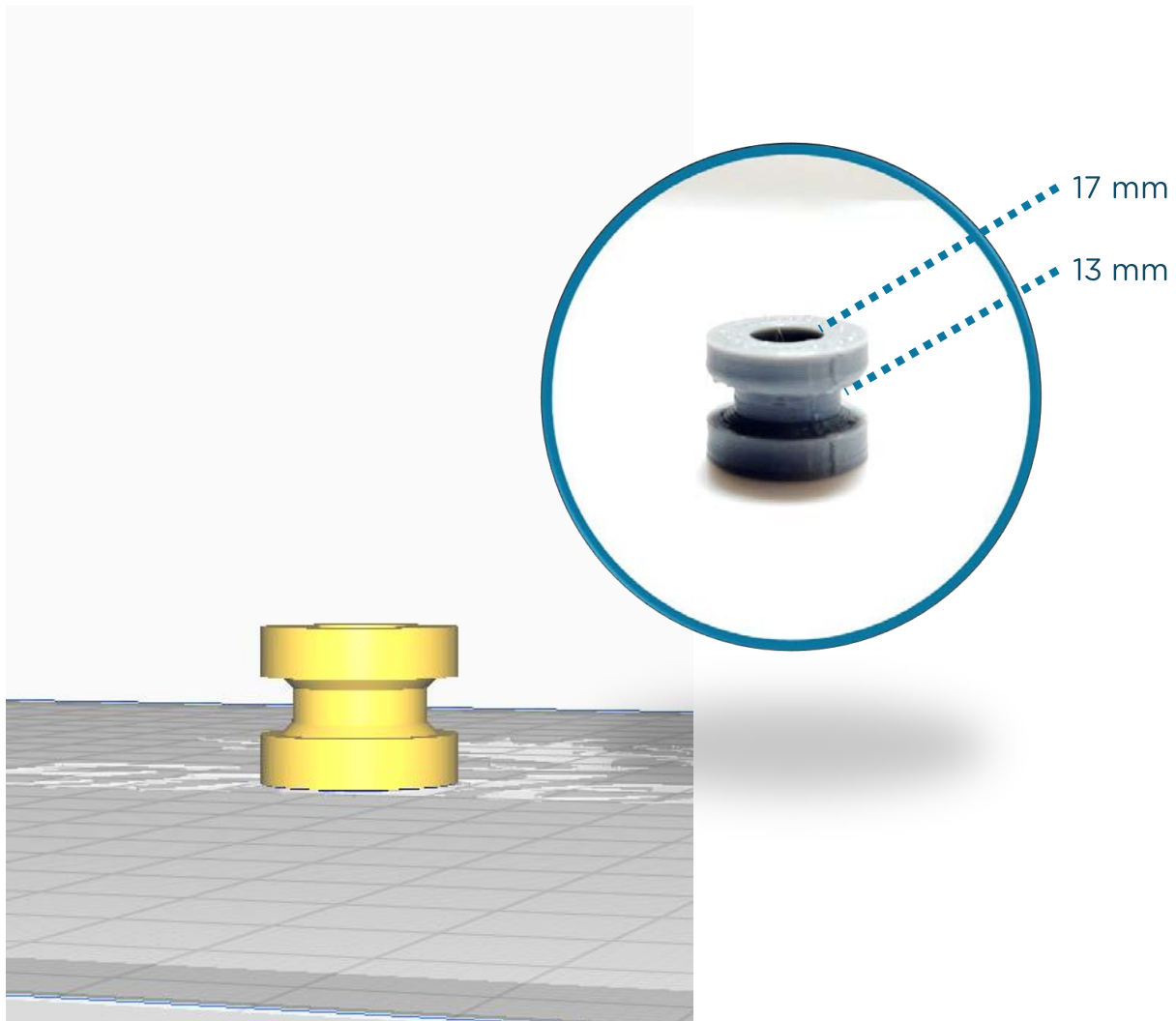
- Passthrough connectors
- Flexible TPU
- 2 different sizes
- Ø30mm, 13mm

3D-printed Connectors Plan It Play



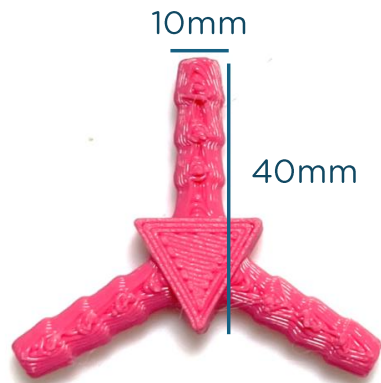
- Passthrough connectors
- Flexible TPU
- 2 different sizes
- Ø30mm, 13mm

3D-printed Connectors Plan It Play

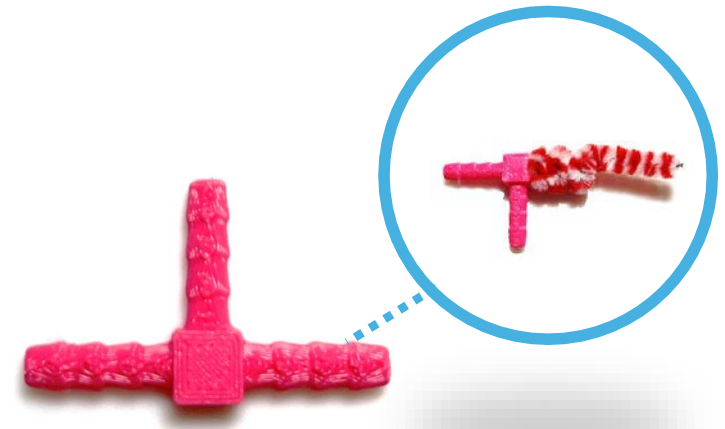


- Push through connectors
- Rigid PLA
- 2 different sizes

3D-printed Connectors Plan It Play



- 6 different variations
- 2- and 3-way connectors
- Rigid, PLA



You can wrap pipe cleaners around the arms

5.6 Connecting with the toy sector

We reached out to the Lego Corporation Sustainability Director but we have not received a direct response. Every year the Lego foundation focus on select countries to support and Ireland was not an area of focus this year. National Toy shop chains (Smyths, Ken Black) were approached to investigate the potential of incorporating the circular economy into their business model, but to date we have not received a response.

At a project meeting over Siobhán's kitchen table, Janet and Siobhán were expressing dissatisfaction regarding the lack of engagement from large enterprises, and Siobhán's younger child chimed in. She suggested that if the smaller retailers engage successfully and promote their engagement, then the large enterprises will follow suit. In an interesting way this echoed the projects aims of giving agency to a diverse range of voices, adults and children alike, and placing value on the views of young participants.

Following this suggestion we contacted local toyshops (Tales for Tadpoles, Dlulukaloo and Nimble Fingers). Tales for Tadpoles already sell second handbooks but feel that toys are not their prime area of interest. Vicky

Noble of Dlulukaloo was very enthusiastic and agreed to meet with us to discuss her experience.

Summary of conversation with Vicky Noble from Dlulukaloo

1. Vicky operates a toy rental scheme. Customers can rent most toys from the shop and pay a rental charge to rent a toy for a month in addition to a deposit. The deposit is usually the retail price of the toy, which is then returned when the toy is returned provided it is in good condition. If the customer chooses to keep the toy they will be refunded the rental fee. When Vicky first ran the scheme, she did not have a deposit but this came with occasional issues such as having to follow up with people to return toys or toys not being returned in good condition at times. Requiring a deposit has solved these issues however Vicky is conscious that this makes the scheme less accessible to people. She would like to find a solution to this problem. This could be in the form of a card machine that places a hold on the customers account, however this facility has financial implications on the retail outlet and

this facility would greatly benefit from a grant funding source or other form of incentive or assistance.

2. Dlulukaloo sells second hand toys (from the toy rental scheme) and donates a percentage of the profit to their chosen charity, Child Vision.
3. Previously Vicky has purchased 2nd hand toys from private sellers. However, since becoming VAT registered an additional barrier has become evident to Vicky in that she is required to pay 23% VAT on the resale of items. So while Vicky is open to engaging with the circular economy and sustainable toy retail practices, barriers exist that make it financially challenging for both the retailer and consumer. Many people would prefer to purchase a 2nd hand toy from a retail shop than from a private seller so there are strong arguments to incentivise or facilitate retailers to engage with the selling of good quality 2nd hand toys.
4. Dlulukaloo participated in national toy swap day. This was well received with many people bringing toys along toys, however the swap concept was not

always engaged with as some people wished to leave a toy rather than swap for another one.

5. We discussed that some work needs to be done in this area, maybe developing principles or guidelines for how to engage in toy swaps, so that a participating retailer doesn't become a place to discard unwanted toys.
6. Dlulukaloo is an active member of the Ireland Community Toy Libraries group on Instagram.
7. We discussed the viability of a toy retailer having a swap shelf, how it might work, what are the obstacles. What benefit there could be to the retailer as well as how to avoid it becoming a place to discard unwanted toys. Vicky felt she may be open to having a swap shelf for wooden toys, in good condition. The toys left on the shelf would need to be in good enough condition to be wanted by another child, otherwise there is no desire to swap. We discussed the possibility of if when a person leaves a toy to the shelf, there is nothing that they want at that time, they could be offered a token to use on their next visit. This would need a little thought to develop a workable system. A

limited space could be offered so that toys can only be left if there is an open space on the shelf.

Survey of Irish retailers and manufacturers:

We developed a survey to elicit conversation from Irish toy retailers and manufacturers. This was sent to a select group of small Irish businesses but the response rate was very poor. We need to expand who it has been sent to and follow up to see who else we can contact. It was sent in November and this may not have been an opportune time to engage with this cohort as it is their busiest time of year. We discussed how we would progress this part of the project and decided that to do this properly it would form a follow on project where the survey results could be acted upon.

Sustainability in Toy Industry in Ireland

Please complete the form below based on your extensive professional experience in the Irish Toy Industry. There are just a few questions and you are free to write as little or as much on each.

Many Thanks.

Janet and Siobhan

1. Please fill in your personal details here if you wish to be identified and contacted further in relation to our findings

2. How would you describe your involvement in the toy industry

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Retailer
☐ Manufacturer
☐ Both manufacturer and retailer

3. Are you interested in the sustainability of how toys are made and/or sold? If so, what do you do to make this happen?

4. Are there any particular obstacles that you've come across that make this difficult.

5. What policy or legislation changes that would help?

6. Anything else?

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Google Forms

Further thoughts:

1. If we would like toy retailers or any organisation to engage with activities like toy swaps, it would be important that the event is successful and beneficial for all parties so that there is a desire to repeat the activity. Success can be measured in many ways. At minimum success on the part of the organiser would include not being left with a lot of toys to have to store, find homes for or dispose of as this result may likely discourage a repeat event. Education is key here, perhaps through for example creating a helpful list of criteria for people to consider when choosing an item to swap and developing an understanding that it is a swap event meaning that engaging in the event means taking something as well as leaving something. Also perhaps a degree of monitoring or screening of items on the part of the organiser might help. This may be initially a hurdle for people but, the benefit will come in the form of a greater selection of toys in good condition which would hopefully create a desire to take something home. It may help to allow time in advance of an event for toys to be left, giving time for a degree of organisation. This may

not always be practical and as it also requires labour, entails a cost.

2. It is wonderful to see a retailer like Vicky Noble so engaged and invested in the principles of sustainability in the toy industry. It would seem that some policy changes and or financial or tax incentives could make a substantial difference to what dedicated retailers could bring to a circular toy economy.
3. It might be worth investigating the application of the Supplies of second-hand goods Act to see if there are potential solutions.

5.8 Potentially develop toy swap systems and toy libraries as an extension of the public library system.

Currently we are in conversation with Wicklow County library service and Wicklow County council about establishing toy libraries. We have contacted other libraries who have successfully set up a toy library for information to share to help stream line the process.

5.9 Full colour printed publications







6 Public engagement outcomes

When we ran the initial workshops we emailed the local schools in the area to advertise the workshops. We developed advertisements for The Wicklow County Library Service and these were shared on the social media platforms and were used to inform the public of the events and the booking process. We felt it was advantageous to use the established social media community who follow the Wicklow Library Service.



Public engagement
outcomes

After the workshops the Wicklow County Library Service social media accounts were used for public engagement on the successes of the events:



A full colour printed publication which can be found at the end of this report will form the focus of the ongoing public engagement for this project. This publication

includes a toolkit and instructions for future facilitators of this activity.

To launch this publication we held a Climate Café in Mermaid Arts Centre. This was advertised in the Mermaid Arts Centre programme. We also issued a press release to local papers and radio. Our press release was picked up by East Coast Local Radio and Siobhan and Janet were interviewed on the Declan Meehan morning show.



Book launch and climate café in Mermaid Arts Centre. The Climate café was hosted by special guests Sharon Keilthy founder of Jiminy toys, and associate director of Sustainability Works, Dr. Joanna Fortune Psychotherapist, Author and expert in creative play, Green Party Cllr Erika Doyle and Wicklow Library Service representative Vita Coleman. A drawing session connected to the themes of the project was facilitated by Bex Sheridan.



Public engagement outcomes



7 Any relevant findings

7.1 learnings from the project team

Some lessons learned by the project team were interacting with parents and children and thus forming a network of engaged individuals. Those who attended were not necessarily climate conscious but they were aware of the value of their library to their childrens' learning. The power of the library community was a revelation.

There were a number of experiments conducted in order to improve the effectiveness of the workshops. These are outlined below under what worked and didn't worked.

7.2 What worked/didn't work

What didn't work

Initially we had proposed that a Website would be developed as part of the project which would host material developed during the project, the plan-it-play manifesto, workshop outputs, along with materials for future facilitators.

However, over the course of the project we decided not to pursue the development of a website. While on one hand we felt that there is value in a legacy resource that a website could fulfil, we felt that this element was adequately met in the publication and that a website

would be most appropriate to implement in a future project development phase where the project could be scaled up through additional funding. In this way a website would function as part of the project delivery rather than in its aftermath. This realisation came to us for a number of reasons. 1. As the project progressed we were developing content that would have been used in the website. 2. By the time the content was developed we realised that the workshops were very successful in their own right. 3. The library network has very actively engaged members and we felt that reaching our audience through distributing a physical artefact such as a publication would have a higher reach than trying to attract the same numbers to a website. 4. Creating a successful website with reach would necessitate garnering an audience, which may prove difficult.

7.3 What other partners did you connect with or learn from

We connected with all of the Spark project teams present at Borris, Co. Carlow as well as at the Aviva, Dublin.

At the Borris event in particular, it was useful to hear from other partners around their experiences. Brainstorming ideas around outcomes and outputs was very productive.

Wicklow Library service

Working with the Wicklow Library service was very valuable to achieving the project outcomes and contributed to the success of the project. Vita Coleman, Librarian in Bray Library was our primary point of contact assisting us with the project and event coordination throughout the ten Wicklow Libraries that we held workshops in.

The Library are very experienced in delivering workshops and Vita Coleman had a wealth of knowledge to impart in terms of understanding the cohort, timing the workshops for maximum attendance, age range appeal, workshop duration, and advertising.

We took the advice to run workshops during school holidays as this is a time when regular scheduled activities tend not to run and families are looking for alternative activities.

Similarly, we took on board to run one workshop for a younger cohort, aged 4-8 and a separate session for ages 9+. The library have found that it is more difficult to attract the older age group and defining the event for the specific age range is more appealing to them. We too found this to be case, the session for the older age group tended to have smaller numbers sign up. However, as they engaged

in a much deeper way than the younger age groups it was more beneficial to work with smaller numbers.

Wicklow Libraries have a very active social media presence, with over 3,500 Instagram followers. For this reason we created advertisements for them to use to advertise the workshops. Hosting the workshops in the Libraries and having access to their wide network was a key factor in the strong attendance at the workshops.

The library provided us with some positive feedback

“The projects were creative and imaginative and gave a positive sustainable message in a fun way. They came with a great supply of materials...It was well attended and the children made some very interesting items from the recycled items.”

The sessions worked better in some branches than others, Enniskerry was possibly too small a space, other libraries such as Arklow and Wicklow had dedicated areas designed to facilitate activities and proved ideal locations. Staff that were in Bray when the workshops took place there reported that it was well run, that there were plenty of facilitators to manage the groups, and that participants all left happy.

Mermaid Arts Centre

We contacted Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray, to discuss the possibility of holding the launch event for the publication at this venue. They have been very enthusiastic about the project, as it aligns with their own strategic plan and have offered to host our event providing us with the space and staff to help manage it. They also promoted the event in their seasonal brochure.

We hosted a climate cafe, inviting families to attend the event in celebration of the publication launch. There was a toy swap and drop in drawing activity for children while the adults had the chance to have a cuppa and chat with our invited special guests, namely Sharon Keilthy founder of Jiminy toys, and associate director of Sustainability Works, Dr. Joanna Fortune Psychotherapist, Author and expert in creative play, Green Party Cllr Erika Doyle and Wicklow Library Service representative Vita Coleman. A drawing session based on the theme of the project was facilitated by author and illustrator Bex Sheridan.

RIU collaboration

This was a really insightful collaboration and we believe could be developed in future phases of the project

Any relevant findings

7.4 Key moments of impact for your project

Janet:

It is difficult to identify one key moment for the project for me. There were many. At the start of every workshop, there was a moment of anticipation and nervousness as the participants and their parents arrived. Would this be the one that didn't work? Both the children and parents also didn't know what to expect and wondering would this be a success or not. All of the workshops were successful. All of the children, bar one went home with at least one toy that they had created. One child just sat on the floor and happily played with the toys as they were.

A child in Baltinglass was working with an old broken toy and said to me "why would someone throw this away?" That comment generated a conversation between us on the circular economy at a level that really resonated with her.

In Blessington we had a group of older children in a session, none of who knew each other before the workshop but they organically created a community of superheroes together. It was amazing that they could develop that kind of collaboration in such a short time.

There were a number of the parents who attended who were also revelatory. One of the parents had not come in contact with the concept of the circular economy at all before. The idea that you could reuse something when it had fulfilled its original purpose had been fulfilled was new to her. If the workshop had not been in a library, she might not have been aware of it, thus demonstrating the value of the library network.

Images that Michael created were also really impressive to me, as well as to the children. How the images were superimposed onto existing images was inspirational. Siobhan and Michael came up with some wonderful ideas around sculptures that could be created based on the art pieces that had been created in the workshops. The notion of the long-lasting impact of this was revelatory to me.

Finally, when we were asked to run a workshop in the Lexicon library in Dun Laoghaire it was rewarding to know that the message had been relayed that this was a workshop worth running.

7.5 Creative Reflections

Janet:

As a scientific educator, with little contact with the artistic community, I learned a lot about the cognitive overlaps between the 2 disciplines. In both disciplines, the

importance of theory and design are paramount. Thus we looked at the characteristics of plastics and investigated how that knowledge could be adapted to create something new - a child's vision of a toy.

I consider myself to lack any artistic ability but this project has allowed me to investigate that part of my brain and help others to fulfil their aspirations. Throughout the project I continually expressed my creative inabilities and self labelled myself as not artistic. That withstanding, I felt empowered in my ability to help others create their artistic vision. Many of the children who attended the workshops arrived with a similar feeling of lacking aptitude but with a little encouragement and framing of the ideas by myself and Siobhan, they found their agency and inspiration.

7.6 Balancing the goal of climate action with the creative process and the value of the artistic output

The visual design of the workshop materials allowed for the information to be communicated in a clear, succinct, effective and accessible manner. The content stemmed from our team working together drawing on our collective knowledge and experience in the fields of art, science and education. This was arguably the result of a close working

relationship of the core project team rather than if we had chosen to outsource elements to an external partner.

Within the project workshops there was a symbiotic relationship between these elements in that the creative process of making a toy is in itself achieving the goal of climate action as it embodies the principles of the circular economy, additionally the creative activity became a conduit for conversations about the climate crisis. Each participant left the workshop with their creation and as part of the workshop had their creations photographed for the publication.

The publication brings together the elements of the co created manifesto by the workshop participants, the creations made over the course of the workshops, and creates a legacy artistic output for the project that invites readers to take inspiration from and perhaps be inspired by, to adopt in their own lives.



8 Conclusion.

Siobhán, Michael and Janet would like to thank all of the workshop participants who turned up with their old toys, engaged with open attitudes and helped to cocreate a manifesto for change. We felt privileged to work together and with the Wicklow communities to bring about this project.

PlanIt Play achieved their aims of giving agency to participants to seek solutions to creating a more circular toy industry.

We look forward to seeing how the publication is received and are hopeful for the possibilities of seeing this project develop to future iterations.

PlanIt Play showed the positive impact that can happen through trans disciplinary approaches to project collaboration.

Thank you to the Creative Ireland team, the Wicklow Library Service, The Rapid Innovation Unit, the Green Party representatives, Mermaid Arts Centre, as well as all of the other experts who engaged with us. This provided valuable support to expand and develop the project goals, providing inspiration, encouragement and guidance.

Conclusion.

