

Leadership Skills in Entrepreneurship.

(ECEY6012)

Content:

AI Statement.

Part A – Business plan/Power Point presentation (1075 words)

Part B - Academic research section (2137 words)

Reference list

AI statement:

I confirm that I have used <https://copilot.microsoft.com> for research and proof-reading purposes only.

Using prompts such as:

- check spelling and grammar.
- Find academic sources on benefits of play dated within 10 years
- Find academic sources on benefits of toys dated within 10 years

I can confirm that I have used <http://canva.com> for PowerPoint presentation template, images throughout and company logo.

I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes and other resources I used before and after the use of any AI tool which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Part A – Business plan/Power Point presentation

THE BORROW BOX



PLAY MORE, SPEND LESS!



Leadership Skills in Entrepreneurship ECEY6012

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The Idea



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The Borrow Box is a community-based toy library serving families with children aged birth - 5. My mission is to make high-quality play resources accessible to every family by offering a sustainable, affordable and inclusive alternative to purchasing toys.

Operating as a social enterprise, The Borrow Box will prioritise early childhood development through play, community wellbeing, and environmental responsibility.

Alongside lending a wide range of developmentally appropriate toys, The Borrow Box will provide a free, safe space where families can explore play together. These stay and play sessions will include simple activities that can be replicated at home. By enabling families to borrow rather than buy the service reduces financial pressure, promotes sustainable consumption and ensures children experience the rich variety of play essential for healthy development (Community Foundation Ireland, 2024).



The idea of The Borrow Box is built on the principle that play is not only fundamental to children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development (UNICEF, 2018; Welsh Government, 2022), it is a fundamental right as laid out in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which recognizes every child's right to rest, leisure, and play.

In Wales, this right is further reinforced by the first of its kind Play Policy (Play Wales, 2002) and later the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, which introduced the Play Sufficiency Duty.

However, many families, particularly those experiencing financial hardship have limited access to quality play materials (Compton, 2023).

The Borrow Box addresses this gap through an accessible, community-driven model because play is not merely a suggestion.



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A little bit about me

Whitebread *et al.* (2017) and Medeiros *et al.* (2024) both agree that play is a vital element of early childhood and that children make sense of their world through playful exploration.

I, like many who have worked with children under five, have witnessed the impact that play has on their development, especially during my work with children with ALN and communication delays.

These firsthand accounts are why I am deeply passionate about ensuring that all children have access to meaningful play opportunities, regardless of ability or their social or economic background.



(Canva, 2026)



I strongly believe in the company motto: “Play more – spend less.” This ethos is reflected in my current work with Flying Start and the ALN stay and play group I currently run. Where we use a Froebel inspired approach to create a rich play experiences that can be replicated at home – empowering families to engage in play without financial barriers.

As a parent, I’ve also had to be resourceful in providing play opportunities, especially when access to high-quality or on trend toys were limited. This personal experience has deepened my commitment to advocating for equitable play provision.

Market Research

Research indicates that only one other toy library currently operates in Cardiff. As part of developing this social enterprise, I engaged with the group, who generously shared insights in to the operational running of a Toy library as well as sharing their belief to be the only toy library of their kind in the whole of Wales (Banks, 2026).

International research shows countries such as New Zealand, Australia, and Sweden operate long-established toy library networks that are embedded in community services and have demonstrated positive outcomes for children’s development, parental wellbeing, and environmental sustainability . Together, these examples show that toy libraries can become a valued and effective part of family support systems (Chen, 2025).

Growing recognition of the value of toy libraries is reflected in recent advocacy from Friends of the Earth Cymru in their petition to the Welsh Government to explore national funding, highlighting the developmental, social and environmental benefits of toy libraries, emphasises how toy libraries reduce waste, ease financial pressure on families, and strengthen community play opportunities (Friends of the Earth Cymru, 2025).



(Canva, 2026)

Benefits to Early Years



Children's development relies heavily on play, through which young children learn and make sense of the world (Fan, Chong & Li, 2024). Access to toys and play materials is therefore a key contributor to early developmental foundations, supporting cognitive, physical, social and emotional growth (Cankaya, Martin & Haugen, 2024).

Early childhood theorists strongly emphasise the value of play materials. Piaget argued that children construct knowledge by manipulating objects and building schemas through hands-on exploration. Vygotsky highlighted how toys support imaginative play, social interaction and learning within the zone of proximal development. Froebel described play materials as one of his "gifts" - the tools for discovery that nurture curiosity, creativity, and early learning. Together, these perspectives reinforce the essential role of high-quality play resources in supporting children's holistic development.



(Canva, 2026)

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The Borrow Box is aimed at families with young children aged 0–5, who would benefit from a free or low-cost toy-lending service. According to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, one of the most deprived areas in Cardiff is Ely, which also contains one of the largest Flying Start postcode zones, indicating a high concentration of low-income families with young children (Welsh Government, 2024).

To reach this demographic, I plan to use existing connections with Flying Start to promote the service through their networks. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and potentially TikTok will be prioritised over printed posters or leaflets to avoid unnecessary costs. My preferred venue is the Ely and Caerau Children's Centre, but I will also explore local hubs and Flying Start community rooms to assess availability and affordability.

Targeted Audience



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Financial Considerations

Potential funding grants.

National lottery Community Fund

Offer up to £20,000 for community based projects in Wales.

Children in Need grant

Offers up to £40,000 for project that impact children's lives.

UnLtd Social Entrepreneurs Fund

Offers a start up grant for up to £8,000.

Perthyn Fund

Welsh Government grant for local projects up to £5,000.



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Outgoing considerations:

initial cost for toy – £ 5000 Estimated at this may vary due to donations/preloved items.

Premises: Cardiff Council Hubs are priced at £12 an hour. Possible ECCC or Flying Start community room cheaper.

Administrative/operational: Booking system – such as Lend Engine – currently free for up to 100 items, stationary, DBS checks, First aid training. Social media advertising. Public liability Insurance /GDPR/Professional Indemnity.

Hygiene products/repair cost

Wages.



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Summary

A toy library can provide families with access to a wide range of quality toys through borrowing rather than buying. It supports children's development, reduces waste and eases financial pressure on parents. By sharing resources, it builds community connections and ensures every child can enjoy stimulating, age-appropriate play opportunities.

As a growing social enterprise, The Borrow Box aims to become a trusted, long-term resource within the community, supporting families, strengthening community connections and ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn, explore, and thrive through play.

THE BORROW BOX



PLAY MORE, SPEND LESS!



Part B - Academic research section

The borrow Box is a social enterprise idea of a community toy library that offers an alternative to buying new toys and providing shared access to high-quality play resources, it supports children's learning and development. With its ethos of Play more, spend less, it reduces financial pressure on families experiencing low income, offering access to play materials, resources and toys that might otherwise be unaffordable. A This toy-library model also contributes to environmental sustainability by promoting reuse, reducing waste and extending the life of toys.

This part of the assignment explores these three interconnected areas of research undertaken - children's development, support for low-income families and sustainability. It will critically examine how a toy-library social enterprise could operate effectively in line with Welsh policy and framework.

Toy libraries offer children access to high-quality play resources and materials as well as a welcoming space that provide a variety of play experiences with both peers and adults. This supports a holistic approach to play-based learning similar to that promoted in non-maintained settings through the Curriculum for Wales. Play-based learning is widely recognised as one of the most effective drivers of children's development (Weisberg et al., 2020; Zosh et al., 2018). Frost (2025) describes play as "childhood's work," emphasising that it is children's primary means of learning about the world and themselves. Play Scotland (2026) further argues that play is more than practising skills for adult life; it is a behaviour that exists for its own sake and has a fundamental developmental role. From early brain development and bonding with caregivers to the autonomy of adolescence, play contributes to every stage of growth.

The importance of play is reinforced as it is seen a fundamental right laid out in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which recognises every child's right to rest, leisure, and play. In Wales, this right is further reinforced by the first of its kind Play Policy (Play Wales, 2002) and later the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, which introduced the Play Sufficiency Duty. This type of enterprise also supports the Welsh Government's Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) guidance, which prioritises inclusive, accessible and high-quality

play experiences for children aged 0–5. Access to toys and play materials is therefore essential for establishing early developmental foundations, supporting cognitive, physical, social and emotional growth (Cankaya, Martin & Haugen, 2024; UK Fostering, 2025).

Through offering rich play experiences and a wide range of materials, toy libraries support children's cognitive development by providing varied, open-ended resources that encourage exploration, problem-solving and symbolic thinking (Wang and Oyam, 2024). This reflects Piaget's constructivist theory, which emphasises that children learn through active engagement with their environment. Access to construction toys, puzzles and imaginative materials supports the development of schemas and early mathematical reasoning. Research on play-based learning continues to demonstrate strong links between hands-on exploration and cognitive growth (Weisberg *et al.*, 2020; Zosh *et al.*, 2018). Activities such as stacking blocks can help children understand concepts including cause-and-effect and spatial reasoning (Whinnett, 2017).

Play also enables children to practise and extend their language skills, building on their expanding vocabulary (National Literacy Trust, 2025). Resources commonly offered in toy libraries, such as role-play toys, books, puppets and storytelling materials support language and communication development. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory highlights how play in early childhood supports language develops through social interaction and adult scaffolding. Toy libraries can also extend these opportunities into family homes enabling children to practise communication in meaningful, everyday contexts.

Providing a space that encourages children to explore the world around them, engage in different levels of positional play and access safe equipment to support movement helps develop balance, spatial awareness and physical strength, which are key components of becoming healthy, confident individuals as emphasised in the non-maintained Curriculum for Wales.

According to UNICEF (2025), access to outdoor play is vital for children's overall physical health as well as their emotional well-being. Outdoor environments promote physical activity, reduce stress and support resilience. However, depending on the venue, a toy library may face limitations in space or access to outdoor areas, which can

restrict opportunities for active, outdoor play. This will be a consideration when looking for possible venues for the social enterprise.

Social and emotional development is another key area influenced by toy libraries. Shared borrowing experiences encourage co-operation, turn-taking and empathy, all of which help support emotional growth and future relationships. Research shows that play enables children to explore emotions, practise problem-solving and develop empathy through social interaction (Arda Tuncdemir, 2025). Toys themselves act as tools for developing social skills such as communication, co-operation and conflict resolution (Robillard, 2023; BasicFun!, 2024). Collaborative toy play further enhances children's ability to understand social cues and work effectively with others (EC Grow, 2025). Studies also show that toy-based activities support the development of emotional expression and social relationships, reinforcing the importance of accessible play resources for holistic development (Nhung, 2024). Bandura's social learning theory highlights how children learn behaviours through observing and modelling others and toy libraries provide rich opportunities for such interactions. They also support emotional expression and creativity through pretend play, consistent with Bruner's view that discovery and imagination are central to learning.

In summary, toy libraries play a vital role in supporting early childhood development across cognitive, physical, social, emotional and communication. Their impact is strengthened by alignment with major developmental theories and Welsh policy frameworks that prioritise play, inclusion and well-being.

Environmental sustainability

There is an estimated 1.7 billion pieces of plastic being thrown away every week in the UK (Sedgwick, 2024). With reports stating that out of nearly 7.5 million unused toys (most of which are still in working order) up to 3 million will end up in landfills over a 6 months period (Material focus, 2023). Toy libraries clearly support environmental sustainability by extending the life of toys and reducing plastic waste. Toys are a major contributor to household plastic consumption; advocates note that once children lose interest, toys often end up in landfill, adding to the global plastic waste problem. By

circulating toys within a community, toy libraries reduce demand for new products and embody principles of a circular economy - repair, reuse and share rather than disposal (Friends of the Earth Cymru, 2024).

With so little toy-circulation enterprises in Wales compared to other countries including New Zealand, Australia, Sweden and England, who operate long-established toy library networks that are embedded into the community and have demonstrated positive outcomes for environmental sustainability (Chen, 2025). Understandably Friends of the Earth Cymru and partner organisations argue that a national network of toy libraries would support the Welsh Government's sustainability and well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, particularly "a globally responsible Wales" (Welsh Government, 2015), by cutting waste and reducing consumption (Friends of the Earth Cymru, 2024). Mudiad Meithrin's nationwide toy library network similarly emphasises rescuing toys that might otherwise end up in landfill and redistributing them across Wales (Mudiad Meithrin, 2025).

Lake, (2025) insists that, with 90% of toys being made from plastic and there is a great environmental benefit to reuse over constant new purchases. This inspired Friends of the Earth Cymru in their petition to the Welsh Government to explore national funding, highlighting the developmental, social and environmental benefits of toy libraries, emphasises how toy libraries reduce waste, ease financial pressure on families, and strengthen community play opportunities (Friends of the Earth Cymru, 2025).

However, environmental sustainability is not automatic. Research on reuse systems shows that storage, transport and the need to maintain stock can create additional environmental impacts if poorly coordinated (WRAP, 2022; Zero Waste Scotland, 2020). Circular-economy guidance emphasises that reuse initiatives only deliver net benefits when integrated into wider systems such as repair cafés and community reuse hubs (Welsh Government, 2021; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2021). Under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, local authorities are expected to monitor actual environmental impact rather than assume benefits (Welsh Government, 2015).

Toy libraries in Wales have strong potential to be sustainable in environmental, social and economic terms and they align well with existing policy frameworks on play, well-being and sustainability. However, their sustainability is not guaranteed.

Toy libraries directly reduce the financial burden of play. UK families spend around £430 per child per year on toys, a cost that is particularly acute for low-income households (Friends of the Earth Cymru, 2024). By allowing families to borrow rather than buy, toy libraries spread the cost of high-quality resources across many users, making developmentally rich play possible even when disposable income is very limited.

By offering shared access to high-quality play materials, toy libraries reduce the financial burden of children's play while also creating inclusive spaces that support family well-being (Friends of the Earth Cymru, 2024; Honeycomb Toy Library, 2024). For parents facing financial hardship, this support is both economic and emotional, as access to stimulating toys can reduce stress, strengthen parent–child relationships and counteract the developmental disadvantages associated with material deprivation (Zosh et al., 2018; Weisberg et al., 2020; UNICEF, 2025).

The Honeycomb Toy Library, which is based in Grangetown, an economically deprived area of Cardiff illustrates how toy libraries can function as both economic and social support for families. Operating with minimal borrowing fees and supported by community funding, it offers stay-and-play sessions that create a welcoming and inclusive environment for local families (The Health lottery, 2026). Other organisations, such as the ToyBox Project, also contribute to meeting community needs. The ToyBox Project is a non-profit organisation that collects unwanted toys and redistributes them to children in need, with a mission to make play accessible to every child regardless of circumstance (ToyBox Project, 2025). Both enterprises have expanded greatly since starting up. This rapid growth demonstrates the significant demand for accessible play resources within Cardiff and surrounding areas, highlighting the ongoing need for community-based initiatives that support children and families.

However, reaching so-called “hard to reach” families may require more than simply offering a borrowing service. Cardiff's Play Sufficiency Assessment identifies persistent inequalities in access to play linked to poverty, disability, language and geography,

noting that local authorities must work to protect, develop and promote play opportunities across communities (Cardiff Council, 2025). Families living in rural areas may struggle to access toy libraries located in central areas (FOE. 2025). Irregular working hours, shift patterns and limited transport options further restrict participation. Therefore, effective engagement therefore depends on building trusting relationships, locating services within familiar community settings, and adopting culturally responsive, flexible approaches that reduce stigma and increase accessibility. As Crozier and Davies argue, many families are not inherently disengaged—rather, it is often the institutions themselves that are “hard to reach” when they fail to adapt to the lived realities of diverse communities Crozier, G. & Davies, J. (2017).

Locating services within trusted community spaces has been shown to improve engagement among families who may otherwise feel reluctant to access support. Studies find that when provision is embedded in familiar settings such as schools, health clinics, community centres, or early years hubs, families experience less stigma and greater comfort, which in turn increases participation. Co-location also strengthens relationships between practitioners and families by reducing the formality and perceived distance often associated with standalone services, making support feel more approachable and culturally aligned with community life ((Moran et al., 2020; Whittaker & Cowley, 2012).

Another significant challenge when starting a new venture is securing adequate funding. Research shows that financial constraints can limit innovation, reduce organisational stability, and restrict long-term growth. Studies consistently demonstrate that early-stage ventures struggle to access finance because they are often perceived as high-risk and lack the track record required by lenders and investors. These barriers are intensified by increasingly competitive grant environments and shrinking public funding streams, which create uncertainty and force enterprises to rely on short-term or piecemeal financial support. Academic work also highlights that funding systems frequently favour already established organisations, making it more difficult for smaller or community-based enterprises to secure sustained investment. As a result, many promising initiatives face stalled development or are unable to scale, despite strong social or economic potential (Cowling, Liu & Ledger, 2020; McKendrick et al., 2018). The

Honeycomb Toy Library have also openly discussed their own funding challenges and concerns for future sustainability.

Summary

Toy libraries offer clear benefits for families by widening access to play materials, supporting child development and reducing financial pressure but their long-term sustainability is often limited by reliance on short-term or insecure funding. Studies of community-based play and early-years provision show that initiatives dependent on grants or charitable income face ongoing challenges in maintaining staffing and resources, which can restrict continuity and limit their ability to reach the families who would benefit most. Funding instability is therefore a significant structural weakness, even when the service itself is highly valued and effective.

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