



**Thomley**  
A place for people of all abilities  
and disabilities

# Helping Hands



**Issue 3. Winter 2015**

## A message from our Director

Following our successful re-brand and ensuing publicity, we have reached many more disabled people and their families, many of whom had not previously known of a place they could go to as a family, where they would be able to relax and be themselves. In the past two months alone, two hundred disabled people and friends have visited Thomley for the first time to play, learn, socialize and work. We have also seen a remarkable twenty-eight percent increase in visitor numbers and we expect this growth to continue. We know that some of our more marginalized community members have still not heard about Thomley, so we will continue our targeted publicity campaign to ensure that no family with a disabled child remains isolated.

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***'We had the best family day out that we had ever had! Our son's needs are very mild, but his tantrums can be disproportionate to the triggers and he can be aggressive or destructive and run off during meltdowns. Our visit to Thomley was the first time we had been able to give him complete freedom knowing that he would be safe. It was like a breath of fresh air to be around people who understood and wouldn't presume that his behaviour was just a result of poor parenting. He spent most of his day in soft play, a place we usually struggle to visit in other venues.'***

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For some people with severe disabilities, the fear of going somewhere new causes extreme anxiety for all members of the family. So to help them feel welcome and safe before their first visit to us we have made a new film narrated by the warm voice of our Patron Ken Bruce, BBC Radio 2 presenter and himself father of a son with autism. The film not only shows people around our uniquely inclusive environment, but interviews parents about the challenges they face, and how Thomley has helped to overcome them. To watch our film visit: <https://youtu.be/PEaoWgrfNEk>

On a different note, I would like to invite you to our Annual General Meeting at Thomley on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at 12 noon. Please RSVP [claire@thomley.org.uk](mailto:claire@thomley.org.uk) if you intend to come. I will be here to personally thank you for being so supportive to Thomley, and to me, over the years. Hopefully, I shall also be able to introduce you to our new Chief Executive Officer, whom I shall be handing over the reins to in early 2016.

Please keep up your kind support which truly does help to change lives. You are helping us address the urgent needs of a rapidly increasing number of families who are experiencing cuts in every other area of their lives. Thomley is a lifeline to so many, and your support helps to avoid more costly crisis intervention further down the line, when families may no-longer be able to cope. Thank you.

*Claire Avelth*

# More £ notes for Music Box

Are you or someone you know an avid music lover? Can you help with the remaining £4,000 needed to build our funky new Music Box? If so, we would love to hear from you...

With multi-coloured porthole windows, our new, fully-accessible building will replace a deteriorating portacabin which currently sits right on the spot we want to build our new Café ... soon!

Many of our disabled visitors gain stimulation from music, and some respond more to music than any other activity. Whatever their ability, music is a form of expression in which everyone can take part - playing an instrument, sounding a beat, singing, dancing, or just listening. Music helps facilitate movement, coordination and motor skills, as well as self-expression and creativity.

If you are interested in funding our new Music Box building, please email our Director: [claire@thomley.org.uk](mailto:claire@thomley.org.uk)



## Non-stop Zumba!

In October WhollyFit in Aylesbury held a four-hour, non-stop Zumba challenge in memory of two young children; Kai and Jessica. More than eighty people took part, helping to raise £4,000 for Child Bereavement UK and Thomley.



## What our visitors say

Each year we conduct an evaluation to assess the impact of our work. We ask visitors to rate our service and tell us how we can improve. Here is a brief summary of this year's survey:

- 79% of visitors polled said their children were becoming more independent as a result of their time at Thomley; gaining confidence to make their own choices, becoming more adventurous and learning new skills.
- 73% said Thomley had provided them with more opportunities to exercise and to take part in sports and healthy activities.
- 66% said Thomley had improved their child's social skills, enabling them to develop and maintain friendships and helping them to feel more valued and accepted.

*'We value the warm welcome we get from staff. Thomley offers such a good range of activities, all on one large secure site, meaning we can spend several happy hours in one place. This is amazing considering we can't even spend ten minutes at local parks, where my child gets too anxious. Thomley has also given me a place to get support from other parents. If it were closer we would visit every weekend.'*

In response to feedback from this year's survey we are trialling a minibus service and shall be doubling the number of days we provide to disabled adults in 2016. We also intend to run a capital appeal next year to raise funds for new play structures on our field.

## Annual review and accounts

Our annual review for the period of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015 is now available to download from our website: <http://thomley.org.uk/about-us>

Our financial statements for this period will be published following our Annual General Meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January next year. Copies of our latest accounts are available upon request, or can be downloaded from the Charity Commission's website.

## Stay in touch:

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