



# Thomley

A place for people of all  
abilities and disabilities

## The difference you make



Annual Review  
2017





## About Us

Thomley was founded in 1997 (and established as a charity in 2001) by parents of children with autism, complex needs and other impairments. These families felt excluded from mainstream play facilities and wanted to create a safe, fun and inclusive place to spend time together – somewhere the staff and other visitors would be understanding and supportive, and where everyone would feel welcome.

## Our charitable objects

- Provide a wide variety of play, leisure, creative and vocational opportunities for disabled people
- Provide a welcoming environment for families, friends and carers of disabled people where they can find support and encouragement
- Create opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of disability amongst the wider community





## What we do

We provide play, leisure, relational and life skills opportunities for more than 9,500 disabled people each year (ranging in age from babies to pensioners) with a focus on children and young people. Because of how difficult it can be for families with disabled children to access play facilities, we make the experience as welcoming as can be. There is no formal criteria that defines disability in our eyes – if parents think their children would benefit from a visit they are welcome to come.

## The Thomley difference

One of Thomley's unique features is that we support people at every stage of their developmental journey. Many of our visitors have been coming to Thomley for 10 years or more, progressing from soft play, games and arts to sports, cooking classes and workshops. There is a level of acceptance at Thomley that people tell us they just don't find anywhere else.



## A year in review

The highlight of 2017 was the grand opening of our new Pavilion, a multi-use space (with kitchen) that we used to host a wide range of events and activities. The Pavilion was a major factor in our success last year, as we saw more than 9,500 visitors come through our doors – a new record for annual attendance that we are understandably proud of. Our Services Team worked harder than ever to bring new and fun experiences to our visitors – the kinds that they might otherwise miss out on altogether.

We see a time in the near future when more than 10,000 disabled visitors will pass through our doors each year. We are working hard to prepare for this continued growth in our visitor numbers – as statutory services for disabled people continue to erode – by both consolidating our existing services and being focused and cost-effective in offering new ones. To this end, we are revising our strategic plan and are taking steps to diversify our income streams to help us maintain financial sustainability in the years ahead.

**Anna Fox, Chair &  
Warren Koehler, Chief Executive Officer**





## Celebrating what's been achieved in 2017

In January 2017, our new Pavilion opened. The space provides a “calming environment”, as one of our visitors put it, and is a nice relaxing place to have lunch, come for a break from a busy atmosphere or meet other families. It has also given us a space that has enabled us to offer an even wider range of activities for our disabled visitors and their families, from hosting birthday parties and holiday events (including our Christmas Fayre) to after-school clubs and workshops.

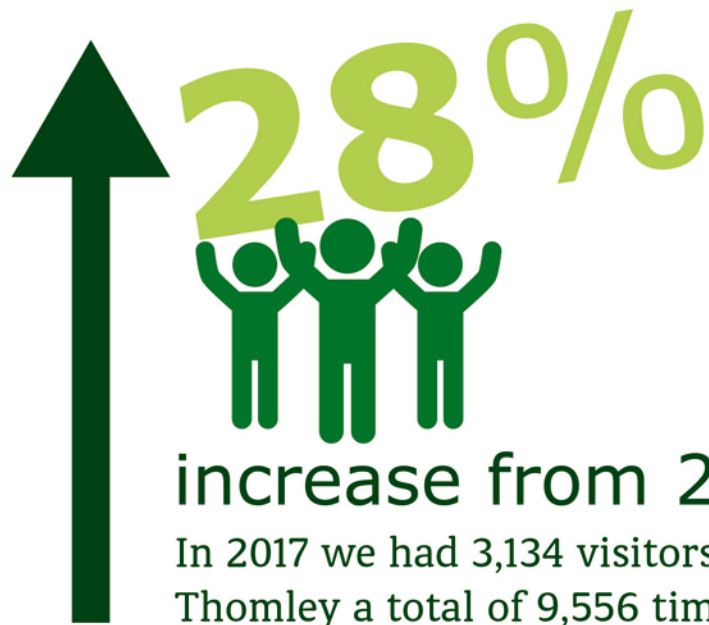
The Pavilion has also allowed us to free up rooms in other parts of Thomley that we were using as makeshift lunch areas. These rooms have been converted to an exercise space, games room, arts space and a second kitchen used for additional cooking workshops.

We would like to thank the following funders for their support with the Pavilion development:

CHK Charities Ltd • Garfield Weston Foundation  
A G Scouller Charitable Settlement  
Wolfson Foundation • The Clothworkers' Foundation  
Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust  
Peter Harrison Foundation • ACT Foundation  
Joyce Chapman Trust • Shanly Foundation  
Helen Robertson Charitable Trust  
Buckinghamshire Community Foundation  
South Oxfordshire District Council  
Circus Ball Committee • The John Apthorp Charity  
Baily Thomas Charitable Fund



# Facts and figures



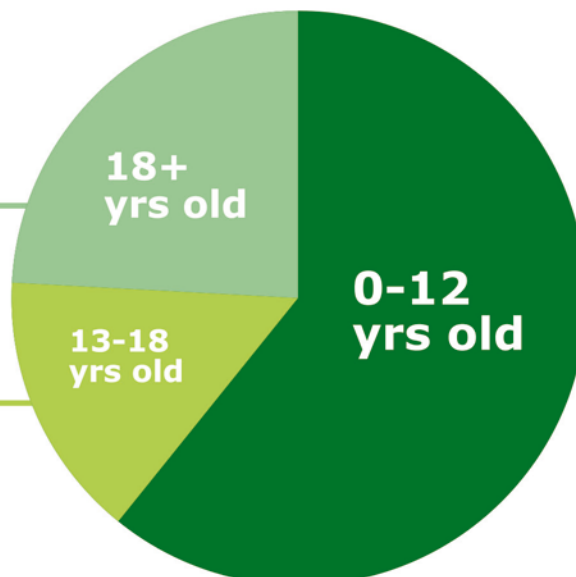
24% of visitors are adults aged 18+ yrs old.



61% of visitors are children aged 0-12 yrs old.



15% of visitors are young people aged 13-18 yrs old.







## Dea's Story

“When you are little and have a disability, you go to a soft play centre and people don't really pay too much attention to you. But when you've got a severely autistic person who's an adult, flapping and screeching – which is what Thom does – people look,” Thom's mother Dea explains. “There aren't that many environments that are comfortable for us in the big, wide world.”

Dea and her family have been coming to Thomley since Thom was nine years old – now more than 10 years ago – and the difference that Thomley has made in their lives has been profound. Michael (13), Thom (19) and his sister Laura (21) get opportunities at Thomley every day that they would otherwise miss out on altogether.

There is always lots for Thom to do, whether that is soft play (still his favourite activity), swinging or trampolining on wheelchair-accessible equipment outdoors, or participating in cooking classes inside the new Pavilion, which opened in early 2017.

Thom has profound and multiple learning disabilities with complex medical needs. He does not perceive danger like other people do and left unattended he is at risk of





aspirating. Experiences like going out to enjoy a family meal at a restaurant are pretty much impossible for him and his family.

“The Pavilion has made such a difference for us – being able to get food and to have a social and supported environment where you can visit with other families and just relax and be yourself is amazing,” Dea says.

While it is true that people are more aware of autism and disability than ever before, and some mainstream facilities have begun to make themselves more accessible, the reality is that there still isn’t enough out there for families like Dea’s.

Once a month, their local soft play centre has an hour-long session for disabled people. At their closest cinema, there is a monthly autism-friendly screening.

“That is our you-can-go-there-and-not-be-judged moment. That is three hours out of a month. That’s it,” Dea says. In the winter half-term, Dea brought Thom to Thomley six times. “There just aren’t any other places like Thomley anywhere around us.”

Dea’s daughter Laura has also been coming to Thomley with her family since she was 10. As she got older, Laura became one of Thomley’s volunteers, before moving into a casual Play



Worker role. She recently finished college and was at loose ends trying to figure out what she wanted to do next. Thomley staff worked with Laura to create an apprenticeship opportunity at Thomley, which she started towards the end of 2017.

“Laura comes home from work and says ‘It makes me feel so important going to Thomley; it makes feel that I am wanted and valued’. She’s never felt that at school or at college,” Dea says. “It is just amazing how having this experience affects her: she has purpose, she feels wanted, she has responsibilities and she is doing really well because of Thomley.”

Thom will be going to college soon and the family had planned to move to a small seaside town once he’d completed his education. But Dea says their plans have changed: “The reality is that I can’t move away from here. And the reason I can’t move away from here is because of Thomley and what it provides for our family. I don’t think people realise that there should be Thomley times 20 all over the UK because there’s nothing else anywhere around us like this.”

“The magic of Thomley is that we can all come as a family and everyone can get something out of it,” Dea explains. “Thomley is a place you can always come and feel safe and welcomed.”





## Erin's Journey: A Parent's Perspective

We wanted to thank the staff and supporters at Thomley. Our daughter Erin completed full time education in July and has been attending Thomley since then. We have been delighted with the progress Erin has made since she began her weekly visits to Thomley.

It has been a four-month journey, fully supported by the Thomley staff who have made adaptations to planned events to enable Erin to access activities at her own pace. Initially, Erin was anxious to leave the car, so arrangements were made so that a more accessible entrance could be used and Erin gradually became accustomed to the Thomley environment.

For several weeks Erin brought her own tricycle to use and this helped the transition into the building and encouraged her to fully utilise the outside area. She is now entering the Thomley site with ease, using the toilet facilities and accessing the outside area needing only limited support. She is





developing independence and confidence to move from the Pavilion (where she initially completed all her activities) and has begun taking cooking classes in the kitchen! I am certain that Erin will gradually be able to make full use of all that Thomley has to offer, the art room, the little gym (she loves a trampoline) and even chill in the TV room!

Erin really benefits from being in an environment where there are other young adults, both leaders and service users. Social isolation is a real danger for Erin as she finds new environments challenging and this means that she is limited to where she will go and what activities she is able to engage in.

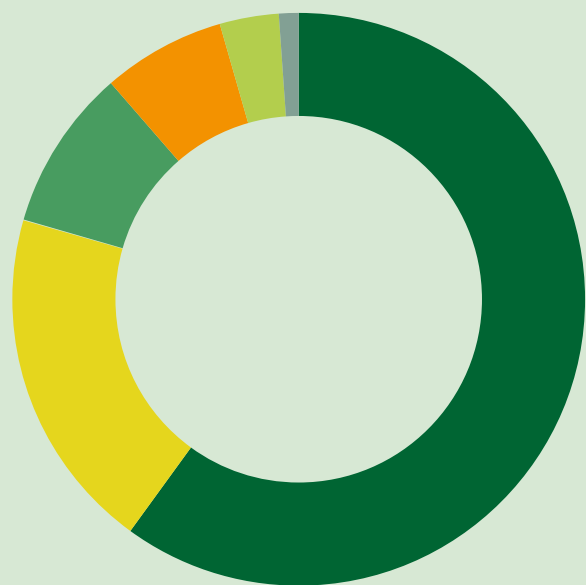
The spaciousness of Thomley means that Erin never feels crowded and there is always a quiet place to go when she feels anxious. Erin looks forward to her days at Thomley so thank you to all the staff who have helped make this such a success.

Jackie Park - Erin's Mum



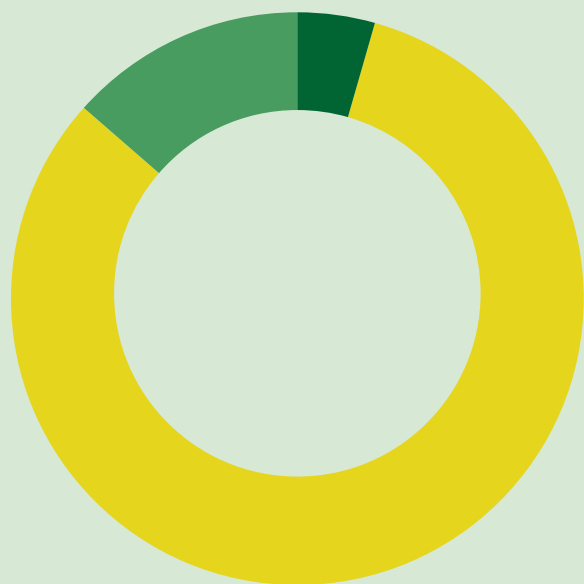


# Services Cost Summary



## Income

Trusts and Foundations	£290,813
Visitor Contributions	£93,934
Statutory	£44,788
Individuals and Gift aid	£33,200
Community & Corporate	£16,705
Other Income	£4,200



## Expenditure

Direct Services	£365,509
Management and Admin	£59,810
Capital Site Investment	£20,380

## Financial summary

Our focus in 2017 was on extending our services, and piloting additional opening hours to meet expected growth in visitor numbers, resulting from the opening of our new Pavilion in January. The Services Team was pivotal in finding ways to offer more activities and programmes than ever before to meet this growth while staying within budget. We also undertook a reorganisation of the management team over the summer that resulted in the elimination of one full-time role. The cost savings realised from this reorganisation were allocated to direct service delivery.

## Reserves policy

Reserves held by the Charity are currently £140,000 (as of 1st March 2018). These are unrestricted funds and are held in accordance with The Charity Commission’s guidelines. These reserves enable the Charity to continue as a going concern and represent an average three months of expenditure. The current aim of the Trustees is to maintain our reserves at this level in order to retain our ability to continue to provide a wide range of exciting activities for our visitors. The Charity continues to actively fundraise from trusts, foundations, individuals, and the community, as well as from companies and businesses local to us.

Our most recent full accounts can be found on the Charity Commission website, under our charity number 1089224.





## Trusts and Foundations

The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust  
 A & S Lass Charitable Trust • Alchemy Foundation  
 Barbara Ward Children's Charity  
 Bartle Family Trust • BBC Children in Need  
 Big Lottery Fund - Awards For All  
 Bishopsdown Trust • Bouttel Bequest  
 The Carrington Charitable Trust  
 Cumber Family Trust • Douglas Arter Foundation  
 The Dulverton Trust • DWF Foundation  
 EJB Rose Charitable Trust  
 Eversly Charitable Trust  
 The Finnis Scott Foundation  
 Garfield Weston Foundation  
 The Gerald Micklem Charitable Trust  
 The Grey Court Trust • The Haremead Trust  
 The Hedley Foundation • The Henry Smith Charity  
 Henry Sale Foundation  
 The John and Ruth Howard Charitable Trust  
 Kytes Trust • The Lynn Foundation  
 May Trust • Mobbs Memorial Trust Ltd  
 The Geoffrey Morrell Trust 2000  
 PE Lennard Charitable Will Trust  
 The Percy Bilton Charity • PF Charitable Trust  
 The Pharsalia Charitable Trust  
 The Postcode Community Trust  
 Reuben Foundation  
 The Robert and Margaret Moss Charitable Trust  
 Rothschild Foundation  
 Rugby Benevolent Fund  
 The Sandra Charitable Trust  
 The Shanly Foundation  
 St Michael's and All Saints' Charities  
 The Sobell Foundation • The Souter Charitable Trust  
 Syder Foundation • Thomas Curtis Charitable Trust



## Statutory Supporters

South Oxfordshire District Council  
 Buckinghamshire County Council

## Corporate Supporters

Advanced Sports Ltd • DRG Care Council • Kubota  
 Lucy Electric • Natwest Bank • Omni ISG – Thacker  
 Quanta • Thame Cars • Fisher German LLP  
 Department for Work and Pensions

We would also like to say thank you to the many individuals, of which there are too many to mention, who gave so generously to Thomley.





**Patron: Ken Bruce**

**Fundraising Ambassador: Josephine Fitzalan-Howard**

**Company Directors / Trustees: Anna Fox (Chair), Wendi Coles, Andrew Lockhart,  
John Lubbock, Maurice Pullen, Pam Rose, Gill Porter-Smith**

**Chief Executive Officer: Warren Koehler**

**Finance Manager: Cecilia Guntrip**

**Services Manager: Joe Kitchen**

**Play Co-ordinator: Anna Capitani-Dutton**

**Senior Play Worker: Amy Appleton**

**Head of Fundraising: Paul Lawrence**

**Trusts and Foundations Manager: Carey Du Gray**

**Receptionist: Faye Perrottet**

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