



Thomley

Strategic Plan

2017 - 2021



The beginnings of Thomley was first realised in 1997 leading to it become a recognised charity and company limited by guarantee in Oct 2000.

It was conceived by a small group of parents of children with autism. These parents found that their children were excluded from local play areas largely due to the unavailability of appropriate activities/facilities, as well as their child's considered inappropriate behaviour. In response to their own experiences as parents, they were eager to lessen families' feelings of isolation in the challenges of bringing up disabled children. Thomley was established as a recreational and leisure facility for disabled children, their family, carers and friends.

Since its inception Thomley has extended this welcome to disabled people of all ages from babies to adults, their families, carers and friends at any stage of their diagnostic journey, whatever their impairment/ additional needs.

“It has changed our lives as we know it will always result in a positive outcome”

Vision

Thomley is the place for people of all abilities. It is the primary setting where disabled people of any age, their families, friends and carers will find the support, encouragement and opportunity to participate in a range of indoor and outdoor play, leisure and creative activities. By doing this, Thomley will contribute towards the development of skills useful for managing their day-to-day lives.

Aims

Provide a wide variety of play, leisure, creative and vocational opportunities for disabled people throughout their lives.

Provide an accepting environment for families and friends of a disabled person where they find support and encouragement for their caring roles.

Create opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of disability amongst the wider community.

Values

To achieve our vision we:

- are passionate about what we do
- are caring and supportive
- are professional
- collaborate and consult
- are accountable
- believe in quality

These values are supported through the following behaviours:

- Proactive in planning and developing our services
- Adaptable and flexible with the services offered
- Engage with all our stakeholders
- Focused on the needs and requirements of all our visitors
- Clear and effective communicators

“Activities are varied yet suitable and adapted as necessary. Very welcoming and open and accepting of all. Nothing seems too much trouble!”

Since Thomley’s inception, it has constantly increased the number of visits being made to the centre. Thomley currently welcomes over 7,320 visits a year made by disabled people alone. This figure does not include family members, friends or carers that equates to approximately a further 10,000 visits. A high percentage of visitors stay with Thomley for many years and together Thomley has seen sons and daughters grow and develop. The direction of the five-year strategic plan is to make sure that the charity is sustainable and continues to provide services and support for disabled people throughout their lives.

Through various surveys, consultations with visitors and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders Thomley has identified the need to extend its offer for young people and adults whilst maintaining core support for those younger visitors. Therefore, the initial focus of the five year plan is on direct service development. The charity knows of additional services that visitors would like to see at Thomley, e.g. residential short breaks, skills training, a “drop and go” short break service and carer training/advice workshops. These ideas will take shape further along in the strategic plan.

The plan focuses on building a robust business model that weathers an unpredictable future, builds visitor numbers and enable Thomley to launch into an expansion phase for future development.

To make sure the plan is achieved, key strategic areas have been identified and these will be worked on over the next five years giving Thomley the foundation for the next phase of development. The focus will be on:

- **Financial Sustainability**
- **Staff development**
- **Service delivery**
- **Site development**
- **Networks and Partnerships**
- **Communication and Marketing**

Financial Sustainability

The current model of funding is heavily reliant on trusts, grants and statutory funding. It will be necessary to create a much more balanced portfolio of income, and share risks across a wider range of income sources. The action plan to support this aim will detail activities that:

- Create long term supporter partnerships with local businesses and corporate supporters
- Develop a major donor and vice president programme
- Establish an inclusive community based mass participation event programme
- Use Thomley resources to generate income
- Continue to engage with a range of trusts and grants funding

Staff development

Staff are integral to the success of Thomley. They are the ones who plan and deliver activities and provide the support to all visitors, disabled and non-disabled. Thomley will invest in its staff, volunteers and trustees through:

- Undertaking a skills audit across the charity to inform future training and Continuous Professional Development plans.
- Putting in place ongoing recruitment processes to make sure Thomley has a reliable and consistent source of experienced and trained staff.
- Introduce a staff benefit package to retain staff
- Create an active volunteering, training and apprenticeship programme

Service delivery

Through discussions with visitors and analysis of surveys, Thomley is very good at supporting disabled people up to the age of around 12 years. From 13 years onwards, there is scope for improvement.

Feedback states that the charity needs to develop the concept of Thomley being an activity centre and not just a place to go to. The charity will:

- Develop the skills of play workers and volunteers so they are proactive in delivering activities that engage with all visitors
- Extend the breadth and standard of the outdoor play, sports offer
- Extend and provide more flexible opening hours
- Extend the range of workshop activities
- Achieve a quality standard recognition for Thomley's work
- Extend services to deliver a carers/parents support programme
- Extend services to make sure the service supports people with any type of impairment

“The staff are always approachable and can offer advice and support, they make everyone feel welcome. I expect the staff to be warm and friendly and supportive where/when needed in other words carry on as they are.”



Site development

To achieve the service development Thomley will need to make a start in undertaking the following renovations and developments across the centre:

- Redevelopment of the outside play space.
- Installation of a multi-surface sports pitch.
- Refurbishment of Manor Hall office space.
- Refurbishment of car parking space and outside courtyard area.
- Creating additional workshop space.

“Have more activities that challenge older children and teenagers.”

“Separate teenage and smaller children areas, teenagers like ball parks too! With such a large expanse of outdoors, perhaps climbing apparatus, zip wires etc”.

Networks and Partnerships

The overall shape of social care is towards a system in which responsibility for care sits with individuals and families. While the role of the state retrenching to a very basic safety net for only the poorest and those with the highest needs. This also means there will be increased competition for dwindling pots of funding.

To minimise the impact of this competition Thomley will develop partnerships with:

- Other not for profit organisations that compliment, enhance and extends the breadth of service provided.
- The local community to enhance the services being delivered for beneficiaries and extend the reach of Thomley.
- Local corporate organisations to develop lasting partnerships, contributing to future sustainability.
- Workshop providers who can deliver a wide range of experiences that beneficiaries would not generally have access to in the wider community.

Communication and Marketing

Thomley is a destination centre and not somewhere, people happen to drive by. Ongoing success relies on Thomley using a range of communication and marketing tools to keep in touch with potential beneficiaries. To make sure Thomley maximises its exposure it will focus:

- On main communication streams through Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn and the Thomley Website
- On increasing the output of promotional videos through YouTube and the Thomley website.
- On maintaining a presence through arranging packaged deals with local papers, radio, etc.
- On rebuilding its entire IT, data management, CRM and communication systems so they are totally integrated with each other with one point of entry.

Making this a reality

Each of these areas are supported by a detailed action plan that provides clear direction and expectations for all members of the Thomley team. The plans have been co-produced across all levels of the charity to make sure that staff all work towards agreed and shared outcomes.

These plans and the strategy will be reviewed annually to make sure they remain fit for purpose and are responsive to external changes likely to arise over the next 5 years.

By doing this now it is believed that the best environment will be created that will enable the charity to grow and become the first choice for leisure and play opportunities for disabled people of any age.

“Thomley is a fantastic place that enables our young people to participate in a huge range of activities that they otherwise may not get the chance to try. As a parent, I feel it is a safe environment in which we are all comfortable, ... and I know they will have a safe and fun day, so reducing parent anxiety!!”