



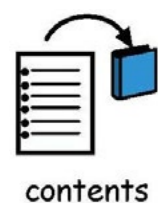
Supporting people with a learning disability



Annual Social Impact Report

2022 - 2023

Contents



<u>Foreword - Our Impact in 2022-23</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Introduction to Thera</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Thera's approach to impact management</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Theory of Change</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Our Impact Goals</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Our Impact in 2022-23 - The Highlights</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Thera's Impact in 2022-23</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Reflections and next steps</u>	<u>42</u>
<u>Methodology</u>	<u>47</u>
<u>Appendix A: Assessment of Social Impact</u>	
<u>Appendix B: Summary of Financial Information</u>	

Foreword - Our Impact in 2022-23



Welcome to the 2022-23 Social Impact Report for Thera Group. This was a year in which many people could get back to a more normal way of living without Covid-19 restrictions, opening up communities and opportunities again for people. We are pleased to share some of the stories of people getting out and enjoying life in this year's report.

However, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, made worse with the economic downturn and cost of living crisis, and with a backdrop of ongoing social care challenges, made this a challenging year for Thera Group and for the sector more widely.

We are once again immensely grateful to our staff teams and proud of the incredible work they have done in providing creative, person-centred care and support despite these challenges.



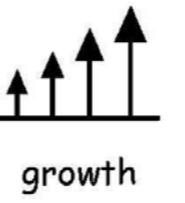
Thera's commitment to leadership by people with a learning disability and listening to the voices of people we support has continued, as you will see in the impact report that follows. We have been pleased to see Gig Buddies having a bigger presence at festivals and Equal Futures expanding the work they do, to enable more people to be supported by and feel part of their communities and make new connections. Our care and support companies have been successfully supporting people to reintegrate into their communities and achieve their goals, as you will see in the stories that follow.



Unity Works and Forward Housing, with the additional challenges faced in employment and housing, have not been able to reach as many people as planned. They have, however, continued to have an impact on those they work with, with Unity Works seeing a significant increase in the proportion of people they support who have been successful in finding a job. Unity Works has expanded its social enterprises with a new café in Hereford. Dosh continues to grow its financial advocacy and appointeeship support, which is even more important in the current climate, ensuring people still have the opportunity and funds to do what they want.

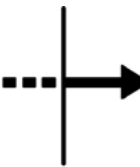


2022 has also been a year where we focused on health. Across Thera Group, we trained 675 people in RESTORE2™ Mini and STOMP from





health



continued

February to November 2022, to give them the skills and confidence to speak to health professionals and get people the treatment they need. Ansar Projects also developed the Know Your Body resources with CoppaFeel! and Orchid to support people to spot signs of cancer early and get help, which launched in October 2022.

Overall, whilst a challenging year, we have continued to make a difference for, and be led by, people with a learning disability. This report shares this impact across our 6 impact goals. We are grateful to those people that have shared their stories here and our staff teams across the country for giving people the opportunity to live the life they choose every day.

Jenny Garrigan

Director (December 2023)



Introduction to Thera



vision

Thera is home to a group of companies that support people with a learning disability to achieve their goals and live the life they choose. The group is led by Thera Trust and its charitable Vision:

Thera's Vision



leaders

Thera will show that people with a learning disability can be leaders in society.



control

Thera will be controlled by people with a learning disability.



manage

People supported by Thera can say how their Thera company is directed and managed.



choice

People with a learning disability will design the support they want from Thera.



respect

Thera will respect the rights and wishes of people at home, at work and in the community.



quality

People with a learning disability will check the quality of support from their Thera company.



charity

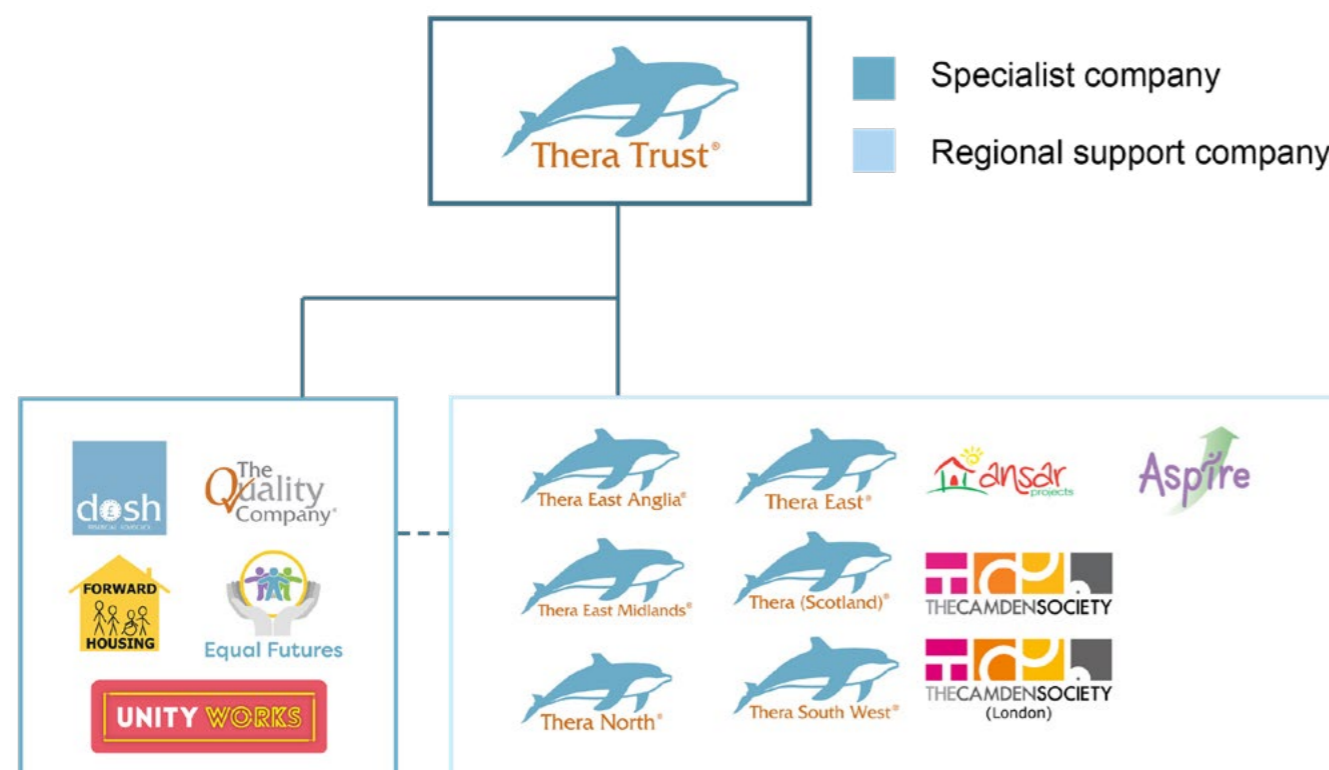
Thera Group will be led by a charity.



We make the Vision real through direct leadership by people with a learning disability in each company and through our culture and values. This means that each person designs and controls the support they receive from Thera. We believe that these things are at the heart of what makes Thera Thera.



Thera Group includes care and support companies who deliver day-to-day care in people's own homes through supported living, as well as support in the community and short breaks. Thera's care and support is checked by The Quality Company's peer quality assessors who have lived experience of a learning disability¹. In addition, Thera has a range of other specialist companies that support people in different areas of their lives including housing, finances, employment, training and social connections.



¹ The Quality Company is part of the Thera Group.

Thera's approach to impact management



check

Thera strives to make a difference for the people it supports across all its work. It is vital to us that we measure and report on how effectively we are doing this – so that we can keep getting better. This social impact report forms part of our impact measurement for the year 2022-23.



impact

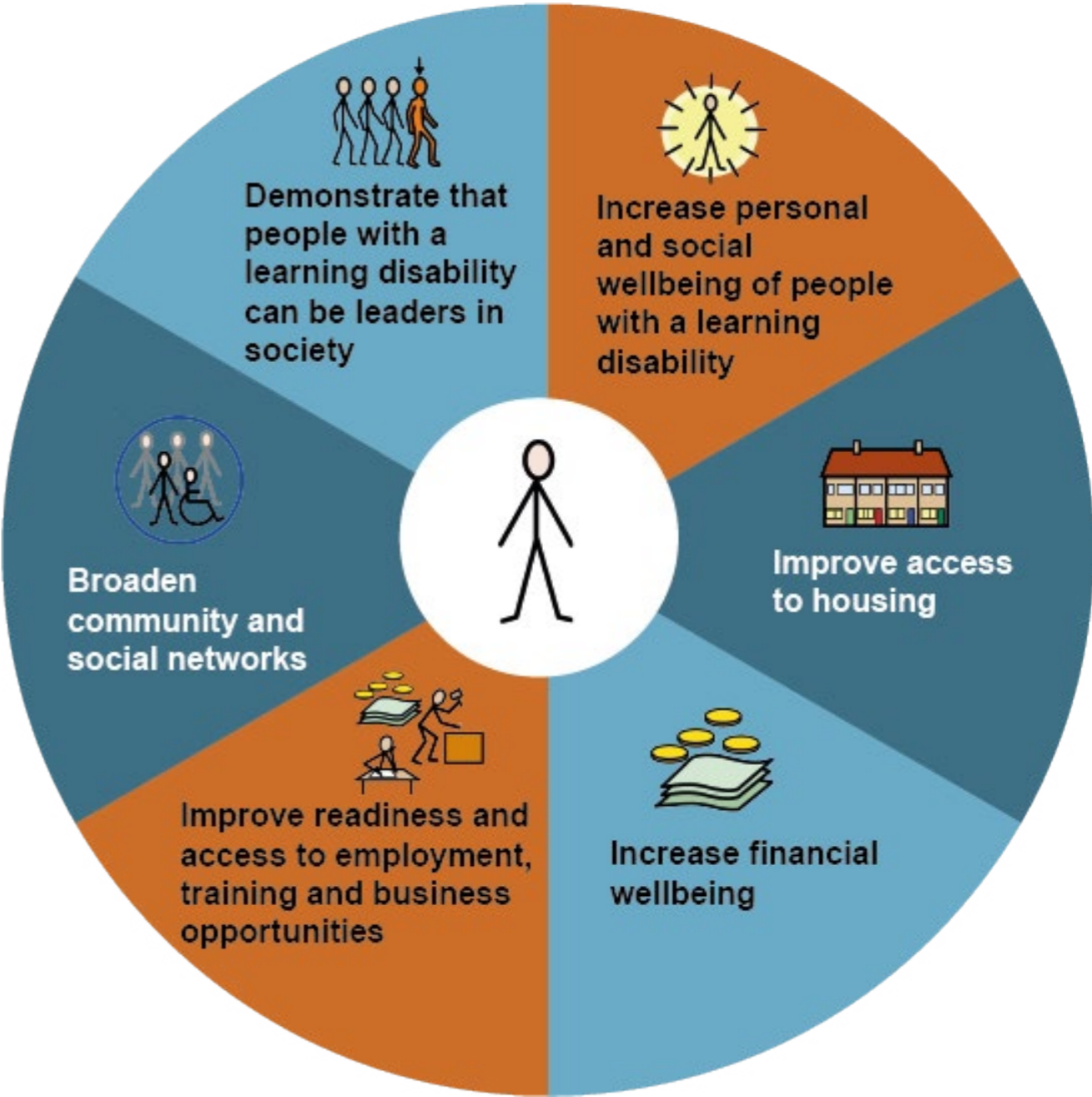
Our current social impact framework sets out six goals and is supported by a theory of change that illustrates how we achieve these goals across the Thera Group. This is independently assessed through the Impact Management Project framework and the results of this are presented in this report.



Theory of Change



Our Impact Goals



report

Our report aims to measure **our** performance and the effect of **our** activities, rather than assessing and passing judgement on the people we support. In supporting someone to achieve their goals, it is important to us that we respect their individual choices and lifestyle, including their right to change their mind. As such we do not report on their progress against their individual goals, but on our actions to support their right to choose and act in the way they want.

Independent assessment of social impact

This is the 8th year of having Thera's impact independently assessed and the 2nd year this has used the Impact Management Project methodology². This assesses each of Thera's 6 impact goals against 5 different metrics (what, who, how much, contribution, and risk).

One main indicator per impact goal is measured and compared to the past year's performance and external standards, to determine the effect Thera's work has had on people with a learning disability.

Summary of assessment

Thera's overall annual performance within its impact goals remains strong. 3 of 6 impact goals show strong year-on-year improvements. A further 2 impact goals show how Thera is maintaining its already high performance, while one impact goal, although down on the previous year, is still providing a positive impact. 5 of the 6 impact goals deliver a consistently strong performance against external benchmarks.

The cost-of-living crisis continues to provide a challenging external context that has influenced performance within impact 3 (housing), whereas impact 5 (employment and training), which had been affected last year, has shown strong signs of recovery.

Assessment outcome

Overall, Thera is contributing to solutions for people with a learning disability in the UK. This is the highest level of impact classification on the Impact Management Project's classification scale. 'Contributing to solutions' means that Thera's performance against its impact outcomes is improving the wellbeing of people with a learning disability.

These improvements for people with a learning disability are sustainable and important, support those who most need these improvements and would not happen otherwise.

² Read more about the Impact Management Project methodology on page 47

Thera's impact is also aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goals 1, 3, 8, 10 and 11.



See the Independent impact assessment appendix for full details of the assessment and methodology.

Our Impact in 2022-23 - The Highlights

Tera has been making a difference across these 6 impact areas in 2022-23:



Impact Goal 1: Show that people with a learning disability can be leaders in society

- **12 paid leadership roles held by people with a learning disability (-1 on 2021-22) including:**
 - 8 Service Quality Directors - each jointly leading a care and support company alongside the Managing Director
- **Leadership roles influencing company strategy and decision making:**
 - 7 voluntary non-executive directors, covering 44% of our company boards, bringing their lived experience and perspective to key decision-making (as 2021-22).
- **58 supported company members (as 2021-22) across 8 companies (as 2021-22) who vote at AGMs and influence how the company is run.**
- **Local projects led by people supported**

**Robin
Brady**
Adventures in
Social Impact

Independent impact assessment: Contributing to solutions

Tera has maintained its performance under impact goal 1 and continued to outperform the UK average for people with a learning disability in either employed or voluntary leadership roles.



Impact Goal 2: Increase social and personal wellbeing of people with a learning disability

- **Over 3,200 people supported in total across the Tera Group,** through specialist and direct care and support companies, impacting on people's wellbeing in a variety of ways.
- **Direct care and support provided to 1,825 (-42 on 2021-22) people, including:**
 - 775 people are supported for more than 30 hours per week (+2 on 2021-22)
 - 95% average overall quality rating, rated by assessors with a lived experience of learning disability (+2 % points on 2021-22)
 - 96% average quality rating for health and wellbeing (+1 % point on 2021-22)
- **Health, wellbeing and social initiatives run in local companies**
- **Training 675 people in RESTORE2™ Mini and STOMP³** to promote improved health and wellbeing, including better early access to healthcare services through recognising and reporting the soft signs of deteriorating health
- **Positive Behaviour Support to promote individuals' wellbeing, control and quality of life through bespoke approaches to support**

**Robin
Brady**
Adventures in
Social Impact

Independent impact assessment: Contributing to solutions

The previous year's performance was particularly strong, and Tera continued to show marginal growth in impact goal 2.

Importantly, personal and social wellbeing amongst people with a learning disability supported by Tera remains significantly above the average compared to similar UK measures.



Impact Goal 3: Improve access to housing

- **Purchasing and adapting houses to provide safe, accessible and personalised homes for people to live as independently as possible:**
 - 2 properties developed (-3 on 2021-22) creating:
 - 5 new tenancies for people to live in their own homes (-7 on 2021-22)
 - 0 additional properties purchased in the period
 - 188 new tenancies over the length of the programme

**Robin
Brady**
Adventures in
Social Impact

Independent impact assessment: Benefit stakeholders

Fewer new tenancies were created in 2022-23 than in the previous year. This was impactful for those individuals, but overall reach was below expected levels.



Impact Goal 4: Improve financial wellbeing

- **Providing individual financial advocacy to ensure people are as involved as possible in their money and have choice and control over how it is spent.**
 - 1364 people receiving financial advocacy (+95 on 2021-22)
 - 154 new referrals (-8 on 2021-22)
- **Advocating for better access to financial services more widely**

**Robin
Brady**
Adventures in
Social Impact

Independent impact assessment: Contributing to solutions

Tera Group has continued to grow the number of people it provides financial advocacy to. In 2022-23 this grew by 6.15% and reaches more people with a learning disability than are seen across the UK by other organisations in the same period.



Impact Goal 5: Improve readiness and access to employment and training and business opportunities

- **Providing supported employment projects that enable people to get work ready, find and stay in jobs.**
 - 430 people engaged with Unity Works programmes (-153 on 2021-22)
 - 88 people entered employment (+18 on 2020-21)
 - 106 people sustained employment for 6 months and 41 for a year (-35 and -62 on 2021-22)
 - 5 people supported to seek employment in Thera East Anglia (same as 2021-22)
- **Running social enterprises to provide training and employment opportunities**
 - 83 people supported on training programmes (+5 on 2021-22)
 - 3 people completed a Unity Works' accessible apprentice programme (-3 on 2021-22)
- **Delivering employer training and engagement work to improve access to jobs**
 - 6 employers trained
 - 92 additional employers supported
- **23 staff with lived experience of a learning disability employed by The Quality Company, delivering essential quality checks and developing skills (-1 on 2021-22)**

**Robin
Brady**
Adventures in
Social Impact

Independent impact assessment: Contributing to solutions

Impact goal 5 has been one of the strongest performing areas this year. Thera Group has experienced significant growth (109%) in the number of people participating in employment readiness programmes that go on to find work.



Impact Goal 6: Broaden community and social networks

- Supporting 32 people through building circles of support, befriending and social events with Equal Futures to enable them to access and engage with their local communities and achieve their goals (+11 on 2021-22)
- Running social events and supporting people to attend local gigs to develop social connections, including:
 - 57 pairs of Gig Buddies fully accessing gigs in Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Lothians (+20 on 2021-22)
 - 114 active Gig Buddies members
 - 80% say it has improved their social life (same as 2021-22)

**Robin
Brady**
Adventures in
Social Impact

Impact assessment: Contributing to Solutions

Impact goal 6 has also seen a significant improvement in the past year with an increase of 53% in people supported on the previous year.

48% of people supported by Gig Buddies said they 'strongly agree' that their social lives had improved since joining Gig Buddies (with another 32% saying they agree).

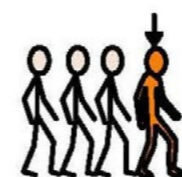
Thera's Impact in 2022-23



vision

1. Show that people with a learning disability can be leaders in society

People with a learning disability are often excluded from and not given opportunities to take on leadership roles and to be more visible in society. The Thera Vision says that people with a learning disability can be leaders and here we show how we do this and share some of the impact this has on companies, individuals and wider society.



leadership

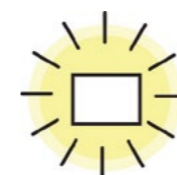
Leaders with a learning disability in Thera Group

- 58 supported Company Members across 8 companies who can vote on key issues for the company, including at the AGM.
- 8 Service Quality Directors (and 1 vacancy in this period) who each co-lead a care and support company alongside the Managing Director
- 4 other paid leaders working at board and director level
- 7 voluntary non-executive directors on company boards

$$\begin{array}{r} 2 \\ +3 \\ \hline 5 \\ \text{total} \end{array}$$

In total:

- **26% of paid senior leaders have a learning disability**
- **88% of company boards include someone with a learning disability**



new



board

The leadership roles above include the new role of Group Lead Director - Quality and Involvement, held by Andrew Bright (in a co-working role with Sara Danby). Andrew is a leader with a learning disability who has a long track record within Thera Group and beyond of creating change and advocating for the rights of people with a learning disability.

Following a general campaign to increase recruitment to Thera company boards, Service Quality Directors and Thera Trust's Head of Governance are now looking to further improve boards'

accessibility and support, so that people with lived experience can have the maximum impact.



members

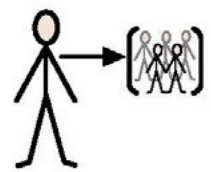
People supported by our care and support companies (as well as their families and local staff members) can also become company members, which ensures that companies are directly accountable to, controlled and led by people with a learning disability. In 2022-23 Service Quality Directors looked to start reengaging with company members in person and finding new members after the Covid-19 restrictions of recent years.



engagement

Away from the board table, many companies also encourage involvement from people they support in different ways, for example Thera North's virtual AGM and Aspire's regular Engagement Events that ensure people they support have direct access to their company's Directors.

Leadership of Thera's activities



involvement

Companies involve people they support in planning and leading their activities. Thera North's events are now regularly organised by people supported in the area; for example the North East events committee organised a summer ball in June 2022 (we reported on the planning for this in the previous report) and events committees in Cumbria and Lancashire have organised parties and a Sports Day.



attend

Lee becoming a leader

Lee has been supported by Thera North for a number of years but has more recently come out of his shell in social events and meetings. When he joined the first Our Futures planning event back in 2018/19, he was very shy and would only speak via his support worker. When the Covid-19 pandemic prevented in-person meetings, Thera North started arranging online social events. Being able to interact online seemed to suit Lee and he gradually began interacting more and showing his talkative side.



events

As we came out of lockdown, Lee was invited to join an events committee to help organise a Thera North sports day in summer 2022. Lee got involved in the events committee meetings, building on the confidence gained in online calls over lockdown. Lee used graphic facilitation notes, which Thera staff members had created, to help him find out about meeting minutes or presentations without needing to read lots of text.



confidence

As his confidence continued to grow, he volunteered to get more involved and ended up co-presenting the sports day awards, giving out prizes and standing up in front of everyone!



experience

Lee's experience led him to be a more active company member and share his opinions in meetings to influence how Thera North runs. He has also built his network and friendships and is looking to get involved in more Thera North committees in 2023 and 2024. He is also now exploring other voluntary and paid work opportunities to build on the skills he has gained.





Leadership beyond Thera



workshop



listen



impact

Thera's leaders also have an impact beyond the organisation. As a member of the Norfolk Learning Disability Partnership Board, David Parker, Service Quality Director for Thera East Anglia, attended a workshop to comment on Norfolk County Council's plans for an 'Ethical Framework' on delivering personalised support to people with a learning disability.

David was able to share the perspective of Thera, the people we support and his own lived experience, including the importance of really listening to individuals when deciding how they should be supported and where they should live – decisions that are traditionally not always led by the person themselves. Thus, Thera's leaders are having a direct impact on the quality of care and support and the opportunities created for other individuals and leaders with a learning disability.

2: Increase social and personal wellbeing of people with a learning disability



excluded



quality

Many people with a learning disability continue to be excluded from much of mainstream society and have more limited social connections and opportunities than the majority of the population. This can significantly impact on someone's wellbeing. Thera addresses this in day-to-day support and through specific projects.

Ensuring our impact on wellbeing through quality checking

The quality and impact of Thera's support is monitored through multiple methods, including peer assessment by Quality Assessors with a learning disability, who have this year completed 261 quality checks. The Quality Company is still feeling the effects of the pandemic on low staffing, meaning that they have not been able to visit everyone receiving support at home. Nevertheless, they have been able to assess against each standard. The data is on the following page.

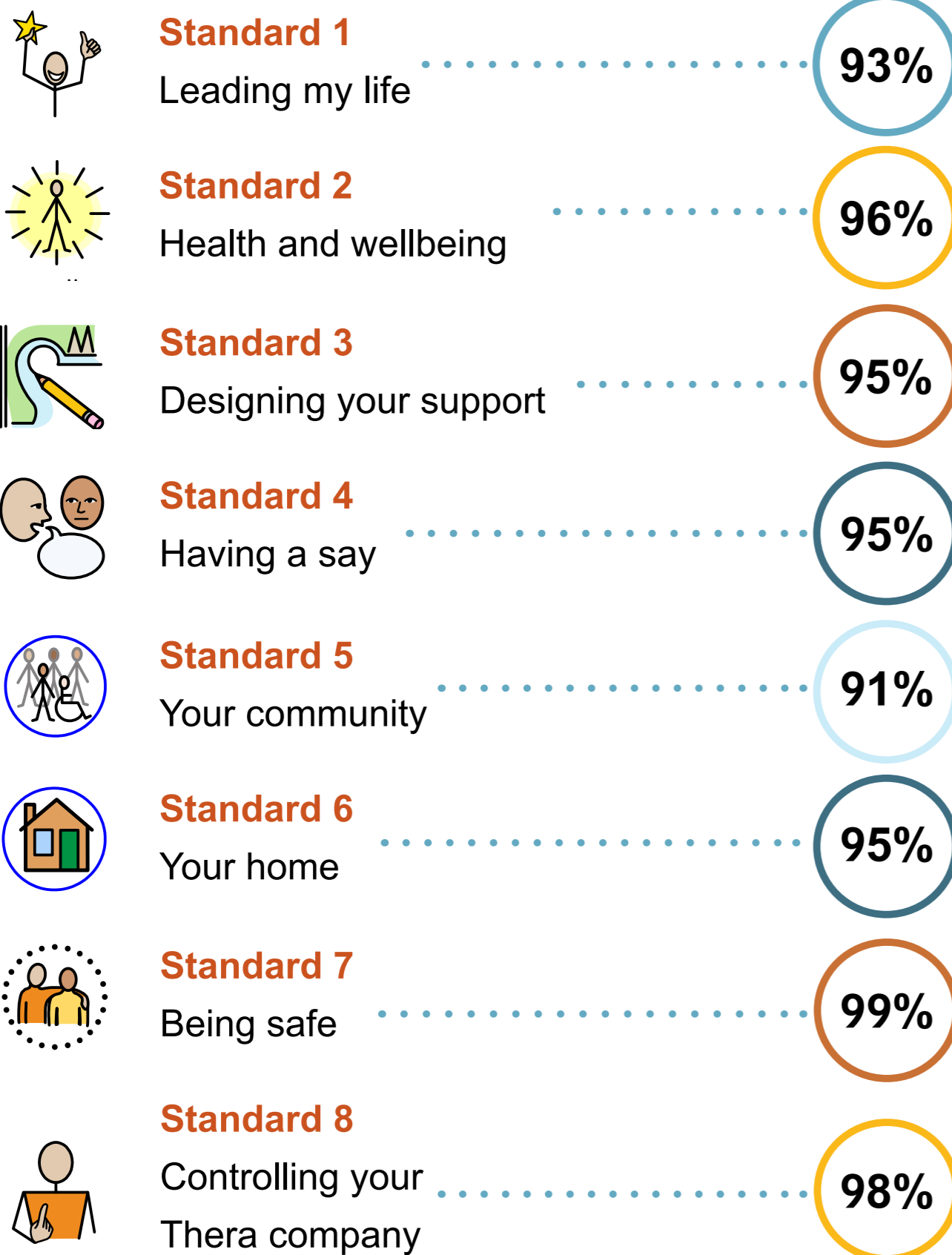


workshop

The Quality Company is also piloting the assessment of the support provided to people in the community through a series of workshops, which has given people the opportunity to talk about what matters to them, for example the different things that contribute to their wellbeing.



Our ratings for Quality Standards



wellbeing



approach

Increasing wellbeing through person-centred support and positive behaviour support (PBS)

Thera's 10 local companies providing care and support in people's homes and in their communities continue to promote people's wellbeing through their everyday support. This covers a whole range of activities based around the goals and interests of each individual, which have this year included more opportunities again after the Covid years.

All companies adopt a Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) approach to delivering support that begins with understanding what a good day looks like for a person and using proactive approaches to maintaining good wellbeing, rather than a reactive and restrictive approach.



chaotic



home



team



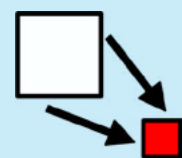
medication

Mary lived a chaotic lifestyle for most of her childhood and early adult life. She had various 'placements' for social care support, but never settled so these often broke down. She would often become overwhelmed with her emotions and sometimes misuse medication, needing hospital treatment.

In 2018, Mary moved to a new home in Oxford with two others and started being supported by The Camden Society. Her support team worked hard to get to know Mary and build her trust. Mary thrived in this calm and supportive environment, telling us she finally has a home – "This is the best place I've ever lived".

Mary's support team worked as part of a multi-disciplinary team including a psychiatrist, learning disability nurse, her GP and social worker. They used a Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) approach to get to know Mary, what was important to her, what made her anxious and what helped her feel calm, so that staff could help her to manage her mood pro-actively and regulate her emotions.

This support from a stable staff team that could build up a relationship with Mary allowed other interventions to reduce in time. She was able to stop taking much of the medication that helped manage her anxiety and no longer needed to see a psychiatrist.



reduced



read

As she has settled in, she has also been able to learn many skills at home, including eating at a table with a knife and fork.

She has reduced some of her coping behaviours, such as hoarding clothes. Mary has also learnt to get online and is more confident joining online meetings. She has chosen her own support workers and actively works with her Community Support Leader at The Camden Society to plan who supports her when.

Read more about [Mary's story on the Thera website](#), including planning her birthday party for the first time, becoming a regular theatregoer, joining a local self-advocacy group and working with animals.



project



wellbeing

Thera East Anglia have developed Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)⁴ through their 'My Happiness' project to ensure that people can take an active role in leading their life and controlling the support they receive. This is implemented through bespoke training and development for staff teams, monitoring key data and sharing success and learning.

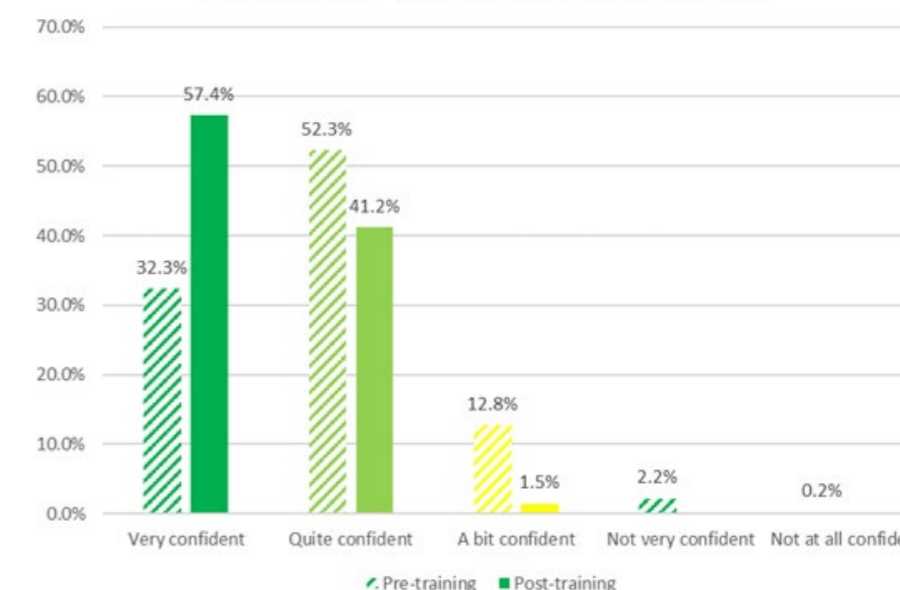
Thera North began supporting 10 people in Bolton in August 2022 and has found many opportunities to support people to improve their wellbeing. This includes using a PBS approach to people's support, which then enabled a reduction in the restrictions and medication used to manage people's behaviour. Alongside person-centred planning⁵, this enables people to choose what they do with their

⁴ PBS is an approach to support that promotes overall quality of life by understanding each person's individual support needs, communication, behaviour and life as a whole. It includes supporting people with anxiety, agitation or behaviours that may be seen as concerning to understand the cause and function of any complex behaviour and introduce comprehensive and recognised methods for improving wellbeing. Rather than focusing on managing behaviour through restrictions and medication, PBS looks to create a positive environment in which the person can continue to develop and thrive.

⁵ Person-centred planning is a way of planning **with** a person, not **for** them. It uses tools to help the person think about their lives now, and in future.

days and pursue their interests. Although there is still work to do, this has had a remarkable impact on the individuals concerned.

Overall, how confident do you feel supporting the person/people you support with their health?



Promoting health and wellbeing



health



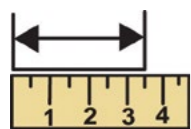
training

Thera has also had a particular focus on health in 2022-23, in order to tackle the significant health inequalities experienced by people with a learning disability (as shown in the [LeDeR report and elsewhere](#)).

Following the first RESTORE2™ Mini⁶ training project in 2021-22, Thera was awarded funding from NHS England to roll this training out, alongside STOMP⁷, to support staff, families and other professionals. This training was co-delivered by **15 trainers with a learning disability** and reached **675 paid and unpaid carers and people with a learning disability** from February to November 2022. We estimate that this **impacts at least 530 people supported across Thera Group** companies.

⁶ RESTORE2™ Mini and the SBARD tool support paid and unpaid carers of people with a learning disability to spot early soft signs of deterioration and raise concerns and ensure action is taken by the relevant health professional. See our 2021-22 social impact report for more details on our previous work on this project.

⁷ Stopping the Over Medication of People with a Learning Disability and/or Autism



measure

We undertook more in-depth impact measures for this project, which showed the change in people's confidence and knowledge before and after the training. Some people reported the continuing effects of this many months later and we will look to increase our measurement of long-term impact in future work.



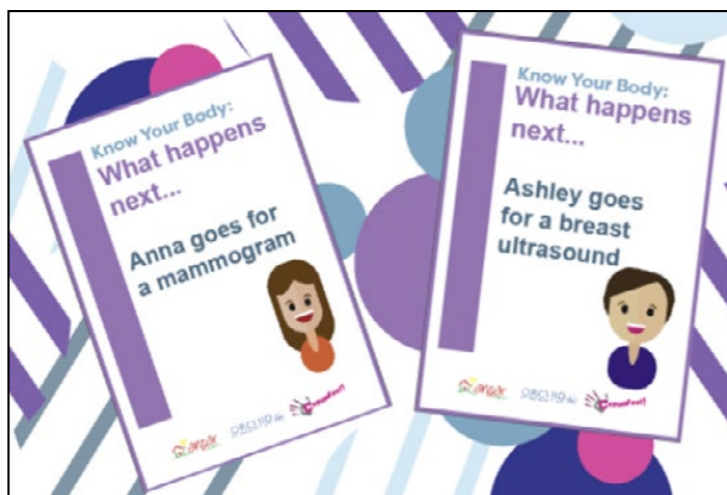
online



check

At the end of the project, we also developed an eLearning module for staff members, to help embed learning and practice across Thera Group.

In a separate project, another Thera subsidiary company, Ansar Projects identified the need for easy read resources to support people to check their bodies for changes that may be signs of cancer. They partnered with two national cancer charities – Coppafeel!, a breast cancer charity, and Orchid, a testicular cancer charity, to create the **'Know Your Body' resources** and tools which are available for anyone to download freely from Thera's website.



They have been well received and included as an example of good practice in the **LeDeR Action from Learning 2022-23 Report**.

"Having a trainer with a lived experience of a learning disability made it more poignant and easier to understand"

Follow-up survey,
20/01/2023



choice



advocate

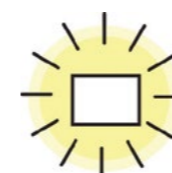
3: Improve access to housing

Many people with a learning disability continue to have limited choice in where they live and who they live with, as well as often lacking the adapted property that will best meet their needs. Thera seeks to address this by purchasing or leasing properties and adapting them to meet people's needs, through its subsidiary company Forward Housing.

Thera's care and support companies, as well as specialist companies Dosh Financial Advocacy and Forward Housing, and Thera Trust's development team, are regularly involved in advocating for people's housing rights. We advocate against housing that segregates people with a learning disability from their wider community and groups them together in campus-style housing, exclusive blocks of flats and rows of properties. We are increasingly engaging with commissioners and others to advocate for a personalised approach to finding the right housing for people as part of a community.



housing



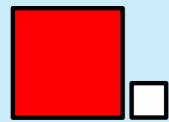
new

Despite ongoing challenges in the housing market, social care sector and housing renovations, Forward Housing was able to develop 2 properties in 2022-23, adapted for **5 people** to live in.⁸ These were people who already had support from a Thera care and support company but who need to move to a new property that better met their needs.

Challenges in the housing market, as well as some internal delays, meant that no new houses were purchased in 2022-23. Nevertheless, the development of the houses purchased at the end of the previous year meant we still reached a new high of **188 tenancies** created as homes that meet people's needs and enable them to live the life they choose.

⁸ These properties were purchased in 2021-22 but were not developed and ready for people to move into until April 2022, so are reported in this period.

Choosing a new home



big

Claire and Naomi⁹ lived, with a friend, in a large 7-bedroom house in Cambridgeshire, which was far too big for them, expensive to heat and had stairs that they were finding increasingly difficult as they got older. The Housing Association wanted to move other people in with them to fill the empty rooms, but they didn't want that. So in 2021, they began looking for a new place to live with the help of Forward Housing and their support team at Thera East Anglia.



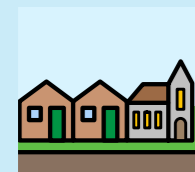
home

They found a bungalow on a quiet cul-de-sac in a village with friendly neighbours and local shops just a few minutes' walk away – it seemed perfect! The team worked with Naomi and Claire to re-design the property to meet their needs, with an open plan living/ dining/kitchen area and French windows looking out onto a secluded back garden. They each have their own double bedroom and share two level-access shower rooms.



decorate

After moving in April 2022, they chose how they wanted to decorate and make it personal. Now, Naomi and Claire describe their new home as having a warm and welcoming atmosphere, unlike where they lived before, which was very institutional, with long echoing hallways. They love using the garden and have enjoyed getting out and about again from their new place, since COVID-19 restrictions have eased.



village

Naomi and Claire like nothing better than to walk into the village centre (which Naomi now does independently), using local shops and dropping in for a cuppa at one of the many cafes. They have learned to make their way around the village and use the local buses to nearby towns for days out. The nearest train station also has direct trains to London, so days out visiting museums and exhibitions are a regular event, something which was just not possible where they lived before.

⁹ Name changed at the person's request.

4: Improve financial wellbeing



income

Having the income to meet your needs and access to money to enable you to get out and do the things you enjoy are essential for a good life. However, these things can often be a challenge for people with a learning disability that may depend on other people for support with accessing and managing money. All our care and support companies support people to spend their money to live the lives they choose. For people that need additional support with money, Dosh Financial Advocacy helps them to manage benefits, bills and budgeting with a focus on giving them choice and control.



increase

Dosh continues to increase the number of individuals it supports, with 154 new referrals taking them to **1364 people supported with financial advocacy and appointeeship**. Dosh restarted its Annual Review survey in autumn 2022 after a pause during the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁰ This showed:

- **96% satisfaction:** 83% of people are very happy and another 13% are happy with their support
- 87% of people say they can use their money to do the things they want
- 98% say Dosh keeps their money safe
- 94% say they are supported well to make decisions about their money



guidance

Dosh has also provided added value for these individuals and their circles of support through free guidance and resources, such as a new utilities factsheet to help people manage bills in the context of an increase in the cost of living. Dosh's new LinkedIn page allows it to increase its reach, serving 299+ people by March 2023¹¹.

¹⁰ Online survey completed by 98 people supported by Dosh, their support staff or family in September to November 2022.

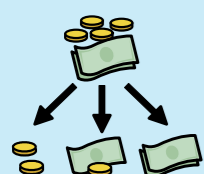
¹¹ Dosh is no longer reporting on the savings generated in the first year of support as this is too simplistic to be reflective of each person's goals. Please see the methodology section on page 47 for more on its approach to impact measurement going forward.



no money

Mark takes control of his money

When Dosh met Mark¹² in 2019, he didn't have any savings, he was in debt to his father for phone bills and not in a good place. He had no money to do things or go anywhere. He had recently started getting help to budget his very limited spending money from his support team, who would put cash in envelopes for each day to help him spread it out over the week, which was a great first step.



budget

When Dosh became involved, his Financial Advocate started to work with him to write a budget – something he'd not done before – and get him involved in making decisions about how to spend his money. She reviewed his bills and worked with Mark, his father and the phone company to clear up what he owed and move future bill payments to Mark's account so he had direct control of this and could budget for it more effectively. She also applied for additional benefits he was entitled to, to give him more income. She visited regularly and they discussed financial decisions together, working closely with his support team who knew him well.



trust

Mark was shy at first about saying what he wanted to do and was nervous about spending money, but regular conversations with his Financial Advocate helped them build trust. Over time, he began to understand more about his money and get more confident about speaking up. He also learnt how to use his own bank account and card and work well with Dosh, so he could make the most of this support and make it work for him.



savings

He now has healthy savings which he loves to spend! He is a huge fan of Arsenal so has been to a home game and even bought some merchandise, which he is very happy with!

Now, when Mark meets his advocate, he is chatty and usually has a list of things he wants. He works closely with his support worker to plan his spending and is able to budget his money over the week, moving on from daily cash envelopes to now using his own bank card as he wishes.

He also understands saving up for something, and he doesn't over-spend; he is proud to have some money for himself, something really quite new to him.

¹² Name changed at the person's request



independent

At the same time, and with Dosh support, he has become more independent in many aspects of his life. He now volunteers at a local garage two days a week and takes himself there and back on foot. He has also bought a new bike, which he enjoys using to go out for rides. His support team say he is a changed man and Dosh's support has been "completely life changing".



awareness

Awareness raising and wider advocacy

In addition to its work with individuals, Dosh raises awareness and encourages better access to money and financial services for people with a learning disability in wider society, for example through training to social care professionals in the Scottish Borders and Cambridgeshire, a presentation to young carers in Sheffield and by a [video](#) commissioned by Essex University and the UK Mental Diversity Law Network, in partnership with The Quality Company.



Our Dosh video can be seen at youtube.com/watch?v=NBSmcKMkUck

5: Improve readiness and access to employment and training and business opportunities



employment



developing

Many companies in the Thera Group employ people with a learning disability, and The Quality Company and Unity Works have a particular focus on increasing skills and opportunities for work. This comes in the context of a low employment rate of people with a learning disability known to social services, which remained at 4.8% in 2022-23¹³, the same rate as 2021-22.

Developing skills

The Quality Company employed 23 people with a learning disability, mostly as Quality Assessors. They have been engaging with extra training to enhance their ability to perform effectively in their current jobs, as well as to provide additional skills and experience to help with their career development. This has included new opportunities for some Quality Assessors, such as delivering RESTORE2™ Mini training.

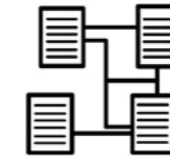
Ashley was one of those who took up this opportunity and was awarded the 'Rising Star' award for his contribution. He said:

'I have really enjoyed being a trainer as I have gotten to meet new people and learn new skills. This has also given me insight into what it's like to be a trainer and I would like to become a trainer myself one day for the Thera Group.

If any of my colleagues are ever given the chance to become a trainer, I would definitely be recommending it to them. I have loved being a trainer and I hope that I can be a trainer on another project someday'.

Ashley, Quality Assessor

13 NHS (2023), ASCOF <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/15/61FC2D/meas-from-the-asc-of-eng-2022-23-report.pdf>



system



employment

Unity Works

Unity Works saw a reduction in the number of people it supported overall, from 589 to 430 over the year, due to the reduction of short-term contracts previously received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Nevertheless, Unity Works continued to make an impact on the people it supports as trainees in its social enterprise businesses, through skills training and courses, and with employment support to those looking for work.

Unity Works has been using a new system to track trainees' learning and progress towards their goals and employment skills and will be developing this in 2023 and beyond.

Social enterprises developing trainees

Unity Works also runs a number of social enterprises, including cafes, the Mail Out distribution centre and Mill Lane garden centre. These continue to see successes and have enabled **83 people with a learning disability to gain employment experience and skills**.

At Greenwood café in Kentish Town, north London, trainees have also made a contribution to their local community by making 80 meals per week for a local food bank.



cafe



skills



improvement

James is a trainee at Jacksons café in Romford, one of Unity Works' social enterprise cafes. James joined Jacksons café in March 2022. He was looking to reinforce and develop new skills he had already worked on in college with the aim of securing work experience and/or paid work in catering.

Unity Works talked to James about which particular skills he wanted to develop. Whilst James was confident in many areas, such as knife skills, he hoped to progress in customer service and using the coffee machine and till.

Jacksons café operates a table service. Meeting and greeting new faces and taking orders was something that James struggled with at the beginning but after a period of shadowing other trainees and staff his confidence grew, and he is now able to greet and take orders independently. James has also built up his skills to understand money and change, as well as processing payments on the tablet used at the café.



confidence

Whilst James had learned the basics of making teas and coffees at college, using the coffee machine for more specialised hot drinks was something new for him. James was supported by Barista-trained staff to learn this step-by-step, so he could build his confidence using the machine.



qualification

Progressing in these 3 areas has increased James' confidence in interacting with customers and using technology in the workplace.

He has now started looking for work experience to put into practice these newly learnt skills. He will also shortly be enrolling in a NVQ Level 1 in Hospitality & Catering with Unity Works that will enable him to hone his skills further.

When asked what he thinks about catering, James said: "It's really good, and a great a skill to master. It helps me to give me more skills".



cafe

Aspire partnered with Unity Works to successfully launch a new café in the Hereford Council offices. They recruited their first trainee in May 2023, so we will share more about this journey in the next report.

Support for employment



support

Over the year, Unity Works has supported:

- 300 people with employment support, including support with job searches, applications and interviews
- 89 people to find work
- 100 people to access volunteering and work placements to improve their employability skills and confidence.
- 5 apprentices to complete NVQ level 2 and 5 into work



skills

Unity Works has helped deliver supported internships for young people with a learning disability at Berkeley Homes, Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust) and Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, supporting **47 young people to develop their employability skills and move to employment.**

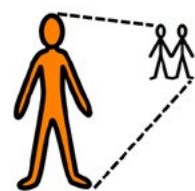
6 of these people were in work and another 4 had received job offers by the end of March 2023.



training

Unity Works has also worked with 6 employers to deliver disability awareness training, and this is something they hope to increase in future. They reached **nearly 100 employers** in total through training, guidance, support and 1:1 work with new recruits with a learning disability, improving accessibility in those organisations and increasing opportunities for people with a learning disability.

6: Broaden community and social networks



isolated

A lack of community connections and friendships can lead to isolation, and loneliness which impact mental and physical wellbeing and quality of life. People with disabilities, in particular those with a learning disability, are at more risk of isolation as they may find social skills difficult or need support to travel or make friends.¹⁴ This isolation of course got worse for many people during the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁵



community

Many of Thera's companies help people to broaden their community and social networks, for example by providing the right housing, money and support to give people the best foundation and enable them to get out and about. Care and support companies are working with people to rebuild confidence to go out and reconnect with people after the lockdown periods.



map

Ansar's Champions of Excellence (ACE, a team of people with a learning disability) have been undertaking community mapping to identify places in the local community and highlight key things like accessibility, cost and other useful feedback. This is now being developed into a pictorial map and is regularly updated and reviewed by the ACE team. It will be shared with everyone supported by Ansar in future, so they can find new opportunities in their communities.



connection

In addition, Equal Futures and Gig Buddies specialise in support to build social and community links, by facilitating connections beyond paid support and traditional services.

¹⁴ Tilly (2019), [Experiences of Loneliness: People with a Learning Disability and Barriers to Community Inclusion](#) | SpringerLink; Emerson et al (2021) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7403030>

¹⁵ Mencap (2020), [Mencap responds to ONS statistics on the social impact of COVID-19 for people with a disability](#) | Mencap; Hft (2021), Hft | [Loneliness not limited to lockdown for adults with learning disabilities](#)



community



volunteer

Equal Futures

Equal Futures connects people with a learning disability with people in their local community to create a circle of support that helps someone achieve a goal and have control over their life, or simply to make friends and enjoy life.

In 2022, Equal Futures matched many people with volunteer befrienders, including supporting 13 new people in Lanarkshire, a new area for them. In total, they worked with 32 individuals with a learning disability in this year, as well as 46 family members.



friends



bingo



public transport



confidence

Andrew building confidence to get out

Andrew is a young man who works part-time in a café at his old high school, which he loves. He was looking to make friends and see people outside of work and family, so Equal Futures worked with him to find a befriender. He was matched with a local student, who shares what they have been up to:

“From our first initial meeting Andrew I and got on extremely well. It seemed we had very similar personalities and enjoyed doing the same things, which has made going on days out together extremely easy. Within a couple of weeks Andrew and I had built a good relationship with one another. One of our favourite activities to do together is the bingo! Andrew tends to be luckier than I am though.

On our days out we have been using public transport, as Andrew didn't feel confident using it alone before, especially with routes he wasn't familiar with. However, in a short couple of weeks Andrew feels his confidence has increased tenfold and he believes he is much more comfortable now using public transport alone and using routes that he maybe would not have ventured on before.”

They continued to see each other throughout 2022-23, enjoying lots of activities together, which has helped Andrew build up his confidence and social skills. Although they sadly had to stop meeting up after the year as his volunteer was no longer available, Andrew is working with his Equal Futures coordinator on more ways to build his circle of support and connections.



gig

Gig Buddies

Gig Buddies have enjoyed a year without Covid-19 restrictions where more people have felt confident to get out and about again across Glasgow, Edinburgh and the Lothians. They enjoyed the ‘Dounne The Rabbit Hole’ festival weekend in Perthshire, which saw 45 people camping for a long weekend in July 2022. Gig Buddies saw a significant increase of active members, up to 114 by March 2023 (from 74 at the beginning of the year).



Gig Buddies conducted a survey of its members in autumn 2022 to find out how they felt about Gig Buddies and the impact it had on their lives:

- **96%** say they enjoy being a Gig Buddies member
- **80%** say their social life has improved since joining Gig Buddies
- **76%** have made new friendships through Gig Buddies
- **72%** are more confident going out since joining Gig Buddies
- **80%** say Gig Buddies gives them the opportunity to get out more to different places
- **80%** have been to new places with Gig Buddies
- **70%** feel confident going back to those places without Gig Buddies

“I got involved as a member of Gig Buddies because for me, having autism and learning disability, it's quite challenging for me to go out to music events ... Everyone has the right to go to a music festival and have a good time. I've made a lot of new friends and I've been to a lot of gigs ... a big thankyou to Gig Buddies for getting everyone involved, they're forever in my heart.”

- Joseph, Gig Buddies Edinburgh member

This has been our biggest year yet! We've put on more events, welcomed more members from across Scotland and partnered with even more venues and festivals than ever before. It's been a non stop year and we're proud to give you a look back on everything we've been up to. Here's our 2022 in numbers...

5 INCREDIBLE FESTIVALS



WE GAVE AWAY 150 EDINBURGH FESTIVALS TICKETS

45 OF US SPENT 4 CRAZY DAYS AT DOUNE THE RABBIT HOLE

56 TICKETS TO THE YEARS BIGGEST GIGS

"THANKS TO GIG BUDDIES I HAVE A GROUP OF FRIENDS"

2 COMMUNITY LED OPEN MIC NIGHTS



WE PUBLICLY FUNDRAISED £3252

2 KILT WALKS

1 AMAZING 24 HOUR LIVE STREAM



"GIG BUDDIES HAS THE TIME FOR WHAT I WANT TO DO. THAT MEANS A LOT"

ACROSS 3 AREAS
GIG BUDDIES EDINBURGH GIG BUDDIES WEST LoTHIAN GIG BUDDIES GLASGOW

WE RAN A TOTAL OF: 102 EVENTS! TOTAL ATTENDANCE OF: 826

WE NOW HAVE: 174 MEMBERS

55 INCREDIBLE VOLUNTEERS

GIG BUDDIES EDINBURGH 74
GIG BUDDIES WEST LoTHIAN 50
GIG BUDDIES GLASGOW 50

What's been your 2022 Gig Buddies highlight?

Meeting you all at the world tour! - Paul Henshaw

Meeting Paul at the world tour! - Liam, Glasgow

The Ladyboys and doing the Kiltwalk - Sarah, Edinburgh

Guitar singalong at Doune The Rabbit Hole - Andy, Volunteer

Meeting my friends - Niamh, West Lothian

It would be Doune The Rabbit Hole - Robert, Edinburgh

"IF IT WASNT FOR GIG BUDDIES, I DONT KNOW WHERE ID BE NOW"

GIG BUDDIES IAN AND ANDY GOT OUT TO 26 GIGS!

We would also like to send our thanks to;
David Solomon's Charitable Trust,
Arnold Clark Community Fund
The Rix-Thompson-Rothenberg Foundation
The Stevenson Charitable Trust

Reflections and next steps



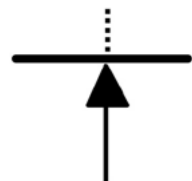
challenge

Challenges

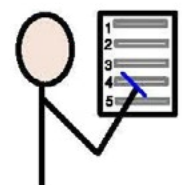
2022-23 was a year of significant challenge in the context of social care funding and staff supply that has hit the whole sector, just as it was coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst Thera's staff turnover and vacancy levels were more positive than the majority of the sector, staff supply did impact, in some cases, on our high standards of consistency of support, and people choosing who supports them.



costs



limited



recruit

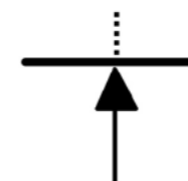
In some cases, this resulted in the use of agency workers to cover shortages (Thera does not routinely use agency workers), which, as well as impacting quality and limiting opportunities for people, has had an additional financial cost. We are pleased to update that things are gradually improving in 2023-24 thanks to the hard work of our staff teams, allowing us to remove agency usage in most cases.

This has also limited our capacity for some specialist projects and developmental work, such as the Path to Jobs project to increase employment opportunities for people with a learning disability. We had to slow down the further development of the Thrive project beyond daytime support, to enable people to be part of their local communities. We are nevertheless continuing with these, just at a slower pace where necessary, so that they do not impact on our core responsibility to deliver the best support to the people we currently work with.

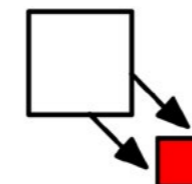
Whilst we have continued to actively support the development of our leaders with a learning disability, we did struggle to recruit to the post of Service Quality Director in Thera South West. This has meant that this post was vacant for the whole of 2022-23. It is not clear why this should be the case in this area when we have been successful in recruiting elsewhere. We do, however, recognise that the lack of employment and promotion opportunities and professional networks for people with a learning disability in general, mean that there is an immature employment market, as well as a lack of career pathways to help people get to those director level roles.



housing



limited



reduce



committed

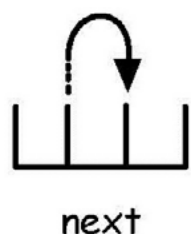
We are stimulating discussion ourselves as an organisation and leading by example to address this. In addition, we will take this forward with our Path to Jobs project in 2024.

Demand for housing is increasing, leading to even higher property prices. The housing market in 2022-23 saw significant turbulence with increased borrowing costs following the UK Government autumn 2022 mini budget affecting many, including Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlords, with a knock-on effect on affordability and choice for renters. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) welfare benefit support for housing costs has remained at the 30th percentile of 2020 rates – detrimentally impacting the ability for people reliant on welfare benefits to access rental housing. This limited Forward Housing's ability to find suitable high-quality properties that are financially viable.

Employment rates for people with a learning disability continue to reduce, making it a challenging time to support people to get a job. The employment rates of people with a learning disability remained at 4.8% in 2022-23¹⁶, the same rate as 2021-22. Many people lost jobs and voluntary opportunities during the Covid-19 pandemic and in many cases have struggled to find something new post-lockdown. Now more than ever, there is a need for specialist employment support such as Unity Works and Unity Works is committed to supporting people to re-enter the workforce and flourish in the careers of their choice.

For more information on Thera's financial performance and investment history, please see Appendix B: Summary of Financial Information.





¹⁶ NHS (2023), ASCOF <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/15/61FC2D/meas-from-the-asc-of-eng-2022-23-report.pdf>




Next steps

In 2023 and particularly going into 2024 we are beginning to see the settling of the worst of the social care crisis. We are looking forward to being able to re-focus on some specialist projects and development work. Companies are working with the people they support, staff and company members to shape their future strategy.

Goal	Next steps
 <p>leaders</p> <p>Show that people with a learning disability can be leaders in society</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to involve people we support in company activities and planning, including management committees, community and internal projects. Develop other opportunities for leadership and engagement within Thera Group Increase connections with other organisations, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote the leadership model and talent pool for other organisations - supporting the development of opportunities outside of Thera, for Thera's existing leaders with a lived experience of learning disability.
 <p>wellbeing</p> <p>Increase social and personal wellbeing of people with a learning disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create further opportunities to develop and share RESTORE2™ Mini and STOMP Expand the Thrive project beyond day-time support, to reimagine the support to people to access and be part of their local and other communities. Re-develop ways to measure our impact for people with different needs, who are particularly vulnerable to poor support and limited opportunities.

Goal	Next steps
 <p>housing</p> <p>Improve access to housing for people with a learning disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and implement a strategy to increase the involvement of people with lived experience of a learning disability in the decisions made by Forward Housing. Ensure financial capital continues to be available to develop bespoke housing solutions
 <p>financial</p> <p>Improve the financial wellbeing of people with a learning disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support more people with financial advocacy. Continue external advocacy and awareness raising. Launch a new research project on financial wellbeing for people with a learning disability. Begin developing new personalised impact measures
 <p>employment</p> <p>Improve readiness and access to employment and training and business opportunities for people with a learning disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue delivering supported employment and training programmes as well as supported internships to enable more people to achieve their employment goals. Continue to work with employers with the aim of opening up opportunities and increasing diversity in the workplace.
 <p>community</p> <p>Broaden the community and social networks of people with a learning disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build people's confidence to go out in the community again post-lockdown. Increase the reach of social and community projects and social support. Refocus Equal Futures' work on community connections and circles of support. Deliver learning disability awareness training to venues as part of Gig Buddies' wider impact on the community.

Goal	Next steps
 development Other organisational development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celebrate Thera’s 25th birthday in July 2023• Finalise the new Social Impact Framework and begin developing appropriate measures to better understand and evidence our impact.• Begin rolling out the information strategy to improve our capacity to collect accurate, timely data.• Enhancing the inclusivity of Thera’s boards to enable all directors to contribute, including those with lived experience of a learning disability, and promote diversity.• Welcome a new Group Executive team to work alongside continuing Group Executive Director Matthew Smith.• Develop our people strategy to attract new leaders, including leaders with a learning disability, and build our workforce.

Methodology



Having introduced the new Impact Management Project (IMP) approach in the 2021-22 report, we have continued with the IMP this year, giving us a first year of comparison data. This approach assesses the contribution we are making to each of our impact goals, comparing against past performance and external benchmarks, to give an effective evaluation of our impact in each area. Further detail on the Impact Management Project methodology can be found in the independent impact assessment appendix.

We are using the same source data to measure our impact as in previous years. This includes company and project feedback surveys, the Quality Company peer-led checks and operational assurance audits, alongside operational, HR and performance data.

Changes to methodology



Some specific measures have been removed this year after review, as they no longer provided accurate and/or meaningful evidence of our impact. This includes counting those people that have complex behavioural support needs and reporting on financial savings for people after the first year of support.

The way Thera’s care and support companies record people’s support needs around behaviour is changing as we continue to embed Positive Behaviour Support in our work for all people we support. In future we will be looking at how best to record this and the variety of people’s other support needs, particularly those that may increase someone’s vulnerability to poor support and limited opportunities. We plan to be able to disaggregate our data in future, to understand whether our impact is different for those with particular support needs, such as behaviours of concern or dementia. This will strengthen our impact measurement and ensure we are reaching those in the most challenging circumstances.

Dosh is no longer reporting on the savings generated in the first year of support as this is too simplistic to be reflective of each person’s goals.



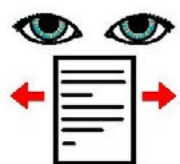
support

Whereas one person may come to Dosh with low income and savings that they wish to increase, another person may have very high savings as they have not had the support, access or budget management to use their income effectively. In both cases, the person may have had restricted opportunities and lack of choice in their lives as their money is not working well for them. Dosh Financial Advocates support people in both these situations (and many others); however, the actions and therefore measures of success will be very different.



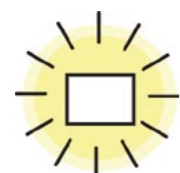
assessment

Investing for Good have been providing the impact and financial confidence assessment since we began our annual impact reports in 2016. They stopped offering this service in 2023. We have continued our social impact assessment through the same framework and are now working directly with the same consultant as in 2021-22.



evaluation

After evaluating the options for an alternative assessment of financial confidence, it was decided that there were no suitable alternatives and indeed this is not a common reporting measure. As such, we have instead provided the same core financial update, based on our annual report and accounts, with brief commentary. Please see the financial summary appendix for this information. For more on the Group's financial performance, please see the [Thera Trust Annual Report and Accounts](#).



new

Preview of new social impact framework and measures

As mentioned in the previous report, we have undertaken a review of the social impact framework. Following a consultation with people supported, staff members and families across Thera Group companies in autumn 2022, a working group of staff members came together in summer 2023 to co-produce a new social impact framework based on the goals everyone told us were important to them. The new framework was agreed by the Thera Trust board in December 2023.

Through autumn and winter 2023-24 we have been working on developing the information we need to measure and evaluate this impact.

We are committed to making impact data useful for people we support and the teams around them, so that impact measurement first and foremost helps people get the best support. We will then



useful



April

use this for impact management and to share our impact online at www.thera.co.uk/impact and in this annual Social Impact Report.

Measuring impact under our new framework will begin in April 2024 but will take time to develop and will be continuously improved and refined to make it as accurate, useful and insightful as possible. As well as getting the data right, we are keen to make our impact reporting more engaging and timely, so we will be working with our communications team to develop a new impact section on the website as well as the more traditional report.



feedback

We welcome feedback, comments and ideas on our social impact framework and measurement from people we support, families, staff members, investors and other stakeholders. You can get in touch with our Head of Impact Management, Meike Beckford, at meike.beckford@thera.co.uk.

For any query on the content of the report, please contact Meike Beckford:
meike.beckford@thera.co.uk

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