

ThorngateLiving

Annual Report 2023

Elsie Twist

"The care and love she felt there, not only gave her a new purpose and a lease of life, but it also gave her family peace of mind that she was safe, happy and thriving in a wonderful community."

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Introduction

Thorngate Living Russell Churcher Court

Our Mission

Providing comfort and security to those in need since 1868 and committed to developing the highest standards of housing and professional care in a supportive, respectful and friendly community.

Our Values



We seek to improve lives through passionately promoting excellence in support, care and housing.



We strive to be transparent, approachable, listening to each other and acting with empathy and consistency.



We will each commit to take responsibility for our role in our teams encouraging, respecting and supporting each other.



We will respect and support everyone as individuals, treating residents and colleagues with dignity and compassion, behaving professionally whatever our role.

Chairman's view Mark Hook



Having completed my first year as Chairman of Thorngate Churcher Trust I am pleased to say that the organisation is in

good health and as ever, is continuing to improve.

Your board members (pictured on page 28) have once more supported our executive team, housing and care staff to deliver on our mission of providing the very best housing, care and support. The board has held a number of educational board days regarding our innovation and environmental strategy and board meetings ensuring that we are up to date with our responsibilities as housing regulations increase, and other pressures are ever present in the care sector.

However, our housing waiting list still continues to grow, and we remain committed to delivering new homes on our site at Grove Road Gosport, to ease the pressure on that waiting list and on all those desperate to find a secure, warm and safe home in our borough. It has also been important that we continue to improve our existing homes, and we have made a number of improvements to heating systems and doors as well as refurbishing bedrooms and bathrooms in our care home, Russell Churcher Court.

I want to thank the other members of the board for their support of me and the organisation, and on behalf of the board I thank you and our staff for the part everyone plays in creating this unique and supportive community.

May I wish you a peaceful and healthy 2023-24.



Chief Executive's view Anne Taylor



The front cover of this annual report has a generous quote from a family member following the death of a resident in the last

year, which they have kindly agreed that we can use.

It reminds me and all our great colleagues why we are really here, which I hope is exemplified by our values.

Our charitable objects are to provide social housing and other such relief as the trustees see fit, which encompasses all our support and care activities.

While our buildings provide a basis for what we do and are a hub for our activities I truly believe it is our support for people who live with us, in our housing schemes and in our care home that drive our activities.

If you live in our supported housing schemes, I hope that you are able to make the most of our facilities and the wonderful wardens and maintenance teams that interact with you and create safe, warm and comfortable housing. Our Housing and Support Manager, Jill Francis continues to work hard to support all our residents and she has been working with Adam Davies (Finance Manager) and me to try as best we can to mitigate the cost-of-living increases that are bearing down upon us.

I am delighted that we have managed to feature several of our residents who kindly agreed to share their stories with us in this report. In our care home, our year has been full of challenges and change. We continued to rise to the challenge of Covid-19 which remained with us throughout the year and impacted significantly on our costs, in addition to the cost-of-living pressures.

However, while staffing was an issue for most of the year, later in the period we managed to reduce recruitment issues significantly by welcoming sponsored employees. Our Registered Manager of the last four years, Lukasz Irzabek moved onto pastures new, and we were delighted to welcome Fiona Taylor as our new Registered Manager from November 2022.

You can read more about Fiona on page 15.

We were also lucky to recruit Greg Watson as Catering Manager in September 2022 to strengthen the leadership team in Russell Churcher Court and maintain our commitment to lunch clubs within housing. I know that Greg's contribution to the food for all our residents and to the development of his team has been phenomenal.

In addition to reflecting on the last year, this report always gives me the opportunity to look to the future. It continues to be an exciting one, albeit that we all have to cut our cloth to our resources given the cost-of-living increases. For current residents one of the most important initiatives will be the new industrial boiler being installed at Thorngate Court in summer 2023 to serve all the flats in block one. In the past year Clare House also received a new communal boiler to several flats. We are also moving ahead quickly with electronically opening doors at Thorngate Court and the rear door at Elizabeth Court.

Our pathway to our new site at Grove Road has not been easy during the past year but we hope to further improve on our planning applications with green technology and eventually break ground on the first phase of 30 flats, not least as our waiting list has now grown to over 90 for our housing units as I write.

As always, I want to finish with thanks for the support I receive from my close colleagues, especially Adam Davies, Finance Manager, and our board. For an organisation to move forward as Thorngate does consistently year on year, a committed and hard working board that takes the time to understand the environment in which we operate and gives up the time to contribute to the business plan is not a given, and we are all lucky that we have the calibre of board members with varied experience across all the sectors in which we operate.

Since May 2022 the board has been led by Mark Hook who continues to push me and my team to strive for the very best for our residents, and that is what we all commit to do going forward into 2023 and beyond.

Pictured left to right – back row, Heather Bridgman, Adam Davies, Anne Taylor, Fiona Taylor, Jill Francis, Murat Canbek. Seated – Hollie Mace and Sean Fegan

About Thorngate Churcher Trust



Our focus

- To continue to be a destination of choice for housing residents, care residents and employees.
- To develop new supported housing schemes for our existing resident profile.



We are members of



A message from the late Elsie Twist's family

"I would like to add how very grateful my sister, and I are for the kindness and consideration shown to us, at this very sad time, by everyone associated with the Trust. In particular, the wonderful staff at Elizabeth Court who from the very start of my mum's residency there made her feel welcome, safe, and very much at home. The care and love she felt at Elizabeth Court in her time there, following her illness in 2015, not only gave her a new purpose and lease of life it also gave her family peace of mind that she was safe, happy, and thriving in a wonderful community. In a world where we hear of poor housing conditions and horror stories of some landlords ignoring tenants' concerns it is important to celebrate the very best examples of excellent standards provided by those who truly care, and I wholeheartedly put the Trust in this category.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, my mum is echoing this sentiment somewhere, I'm sure!"



The best possible care

We do like to talk about our mission and our values here at Thorngate Churcher Trust, but sometimes resident stories paint a much better picture of life here in our housing schemes. We received this wonderful comment (on the previous page) after the death of Elsie Twist who made a significant contribution to life at Elizabeth Court. It really is a wonderful combination of our amazing residents, our safe and warm buildings and our tremendous staff all working together to deliver the best possible lives.

Resident Stories Shirley Charlton

Shirley's connection with Thorngate goes back to 1980 when her mother-in-law Dorothy Charlton moved into what was then Thorngate Cottages. Dorothy then became one of the first residents at Elizabeth Court when that opened in 1981 and Shirley still has some of Dorothy's original paperwork from the move.

When Shirley (pictured below) and her husband Graham were themselves looking for sheltered accommodation, they became residents at Elizabeth Court in 2007, the perfect choice as they already knew many of the residents and wardens.

Graham passed away in 2016 and Shirley is now our second longest standing resident at Elizabeth Court, a home she loves.

Shirley says that the wardens have made a particularly positive impact on her life at Elizabeth Court.

Maggie Jeffery

Event organisation and fundraising at Thorngate Court have been masterminded by Maggie Jeffery (pictured below, left) who says she loves living at the development. Her mother was also a Thorngate resident and her husband is cared for in our care home with daily visits from Maggie.

"I love it here and Thorngate looks after both of us so well," said Maggie.

Most recently Maggie has been raising money for the Thorngate entertainment fund to ensure that events are free to everyone with fetes and BBQs among the most popular.

Dawn & Alf Grubb

At Melrose Gardens Dawn and Alf Grubb (pictured below, right) have been residents for more than 17 years and are involved in ensuring an active social life for those who live there.

As former performers their black book of acts has proved invaluable in attracting some talented acts to entertain Thorngate residents – something Dawn said they have loved organising.

As big fans of living at Thorngate Dawn said there was nowhere better to live. *"You just can't get anywhere better than here,"* she said.



Our people



Supporting our residents

Key to the experience of our housing residents is the support provided by our wardens and we are delighted to have an enthusiastic, experienced and proactive team working to support our residents in sheltered accommodation.

These include Lance Campling who joined Thorngate in 2021. He works at Melrose Gardens where he's responsible for ensuring the residents are all happy and that the buildings are in tip-top condition.

Lance's experience heading up a number of charities and as a nurse in the Royal Air Force provides a great background for this role.

Jayne Hunt enjoys her role so much that she returned after initially retiring.

She says that she loves the social aspect of the job and making sure the residents are well cared for across Thorngate's homes. Away from Thorngate, Jayne's passion is golf and she is lady captain at Stokes Bay Golf Club, regularly winning prizes.

The newest member of the warden team is Sharon Maslen who has swapped life on the road in her motorhome for being a key part of the team at Thorngate Court and Melrose Gardens. *"I just love it here and all the residents,"* said Sharon who has worked as a carer in the past for adults with learning difficulties. *"I have family in the area so it's great to be back in Gosport and working to help so many lovely people."*



A strong team

We have been delighted to welcome two new members of senior staff to Russell Churcher Court during the year. In January 2023 Lukasz Irzabek left for pastures new but by then we had welcomed Fiona Taylor RN (pictured below, left), is our new Registered Manager. Fiona has a nursing background and has had a successful career at several care and nursing homes in South Hampshire.

Fiona joined Thorngate from her role as home manager at Dolphin Homes where she was instrumental in the introduction of technology to streamline and improve its nursing home operations.

She worked as a staff nurse for seven years and her previous roles also include care manager in a residential care home in Gosport.

"I am personally thrilled we found someone of the calibre, enthusiasm, and experience of Fiona to lead the team in Russell Churcher Court," said chief executive Anne Taylor. "Her experience both in the care home sector and nursing are invaluable to us and our residents."

Fiona quickly settled into her new role and said, "It's great to be part of such a progressive organisation with a charitable ethos and values. The great team here means we can deliver the care and activities our residents deserve with a supportive management team and board of trustees."

We also welcomed Greg Watson (pictured below, right) from the Guernsey prison service to the post of Catering Manager in September 2022. Greg has changed and improved the kitchen structure and has built a strong and efficient team delivering for the residents in Russell Churcher Court and for the lunch clubs and residents' functions.



During the year we were fortunate to become a sponsoring employer under the health and social care scheme. This has significantly improved our hiring issues and has resulted in the recruitment of some phenomenal carers, some of whom we hope to promote in 2023.

One of these is Bukola Showunmi (pictured below, right) who is a popular carer with residents and staff.

Originally from Nigeria, Bukola moved to the UK with her husband who is a banking student.

She says she has fitted in so well with the team and the role at Russell Churcher Court. *"I love the team and the residents are superb,"* she said.

We were also joined in the finance team by Sean Fegan (pictured below, left) who graduated from Portsmouth University. Sean studied accounting and finance at university and the 24-year-old who lives in Southsea has a variety of computing skills having developed his own mobile computing game during lockdown.

"Companies were not offering placements during Covid, so I created a software development studio and developed a video game for mobile use," said Sean. "I'm now using my computing knowledge in my new role to improve business processes such as the automation of data entry."

Finance manager Adam Davies said Sean is already making a positive impact at Thorngate and said his expertise and enthusiasm to learn fit perfectly with the Trust.

"We're always keen to develop talent within Thorngate and it's great to have Sean on board to help the team at such an important time for us," he said.



Training for the future

We are always looking to develop the talent we have at Thorngate to create a forwardthinking, well-qualified and committed workforce for the future.

At Russell Churcher Court a number of our heroes have been promoted and training success has included Lisa de la Mare who has successfully completed here NVQ Level 3 in Health and Social Care. She has also now been promoted to senior carer.

Thorngate Living Russell Churcher Court

023 9252 760

Building strategy

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Energy and environmental strategy

Innovation continues to be at the heart of our organisation and drives us forward in many aspects of our operation.

All of our homes meet the Energy Performance Building Rating C, seven years ahead of the government's target, but we are still looking at ways of improving things further and we continually work on our sustainability strategy.

We have also continued to implement and plan for more efficient heating systems, such as a new industrial boiler in Thorngate Court to reduce the cost-of-living crisis. This was installed in July 2023.

We also installed a new boiler serving several of the flats in Clare House in 2022-23.

While, in an ideal world we would be using more renewables, in many of our older buildings this is just not possible yet.

Digital strategy

Innovation this year has mostly been focused on internal systems improvements and data, such as monitoring energy usage, streamlining our accounts processes and gathering feedback.

Our technical focus as part of our innovative approach is likely to be around the management and control of energy consumption and our efforts to try to limit, reduce and neutralise our consumption of earth's resources.

In the last few years, the many checklists that are involved in the delivery of our service are increasingly digital and may be completed more easily and viewed anywhere and provide the evidence required by the management team and formal reporting to regulators.

In the last year, we awarded the contract for the management of our IT to a new provider, and we are pleased to say that the transition has been smooth and that we have seen improvements in this increasingly vital service.

We have implemented a digital rota system replacing many noticeboards and paper-based systems and sub-processes to ensure that we can manage the schedule of staff on duty, covering absences and holidays and notifying and fairly allocating shift patterns.

Upgrading our facilities

Our programme of renewing doors at Thorngate Court with automatic doors continues. This is understandably very important to residents because it enables them to gain entry in and out of blocks more easily.

In our care home we have been upgrading rooms with new bathrooms, air conditioning and kitchen areas, making these even more attractive to new residents. We were ahead of schedule on these refurbishments by the end of March 2023.

Creating new homes for the future

We are continuing to steadily move forward with our development plans at Grove Road.

In the last year we have issued tenders to potential contractors and once returned the proposals have been evaluated ahead of work starting on the development.

It is still our intention to start this development as soon as we can, but this depends on a number of external factors such as utilities, finance, and our Homes England grant funding. What we have planned is 39 new homes which have been designed by Boon Brown Architects in conjunction with the team here at Thorngate to ensure that the homes feature all the special features we know are important to our residents.

We already have a long waiting list for our new homes but if you know someone who would like to be considered for one of these new homes then please contact our housing team and keep an eye on the website for updates to these plans and the build progress.

Thorngate in the community



Thorngate activities

Activities have continued apace and just a few of the highlights have been the creation of an art gallery, fundraising events, regular visits from outside organisations, and plenty of celebration events to mark the King's Coronation.

School pupils create care home art gallery

Pupils from Brockhurst Primary School in Gosport have created works of art which have been officially opened as an art gallery in Russell Churcher Court.

Gosport Mayor at the time Jamie Hutchison, officially opened the art gallery which features topics ranging from trees during the four seasons through to WWI.

Activities team senior co-ordinator Jojo Green was behind the idea of asking the school if the pupils could provide some art to brighten up the corridors in Russell Churcher Court.

"The children were amazing throughout Covid sending pictures and cards to keep everyone's spirits up so I asked teacher Nicky Bloxsom if they could help with this project," said Jojo.

"We were presented with some amazing creations and the children had worked so hard that we wanted to show the pictures off, so we framed them and once on the wall they looked fabulous."

The opening provided the perfect opportunity to invite some of the artists along to the opening, where the children also enjoyed chatting to residents and enjoyed freshly baked cookies created by Stacey White from the care home's kitchen staff.



Value for money financial report

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Our social housing financial performance

The Regulator of Social Housing requires us to report to them how we are performing financially overall on social housing (i.e. excluding our care home operations).

This metric indicates our financial stability – it shows the margin we make operating the organisation on a day-to-day basis.

We compare this to a peer group of similar organisations.

The metrics we have chosen and have consistently reported on for the last

few years are a mixture of both hard financial data and targets related to social impact and based on our charitable objects.

This translates into a number of monthly key performance indicators that the executive reports on monthly, procurement measures that we review periodically, and forward looking targets which reflect our forward focused business plan to 2023, as well as systematically examining our governance.

Void Reporting

Both housing and care home voids are reported monthly to the board and Thorngate sets its own targets on voids. Thorngate also benchmarks itself against the Smaller Providers Benchmarking Group, and this figure has been reported on where relevant below.

We report voids on a percentage basis monthly and on a lost revenue basis annually. Our target is 2.5% or less voids. This can be affected by, for example, increased development or major repairs, if this means more transfers of residents or decanting.

-	Thorngate 2022-23	Thorngate 2021-22			Peer Group 2022-23
Housing %	0.23%	0.22%	0.27%	0.25%	1.15%
Care %	4.67%	1.70%	3.90%	1.17%	9.5%

We have once again turned in an excellent performance on housing voids and are ranked in the first quartile yet again in the peer group of smaller similar housing associations. This reflects just how desirable our combined package of high-quality housing and high-quality housing support delivered by on-site staff are to residents. This is also reflected in our very long waiting list for units (currently around 90 applications for 124 flats) with a wait time of 18 months. Our care voids for 2022-2023 have risen due to the refurbishments in Russell Churcher Court.

Procurement

Since the VFM standard was first introduced, Thorngate has reported its performance against prior years in a number of areas. This has shown useful trends, and this has been continued this year. The focus areas continue to be gas and electric purchases, and care home food costs. These have been chosen because almost all our properties have gas included in the weekly maintenance charges, communal electricity is a large cost and for our care home, food is one of the largest costs. These figures can only be considered year on year within the same organisation because of different characteristics between different providers.

Gas		2020-21 £61,045 -3.8%	2021-22 £46,305 -24.1	2022-23 £43,739 -5.54
Electric		2020-21 £49,983 +6.5%	2021-22 £50,515 +1.1%	2022-23 £48,418 -4.15%
Food (care home per resident)	6	2020-21 £1,404 -31%	2021-22 £2,164 +54%	2022-23 £2,040 -5.73%

While we seek to reduce our utility costs, we seek to at least maintain our food cost budget per person level, as there is a correlation between quality and cost and the case of food for care home residents, and nutrition is a key part of caring for frail residents.

On gas and electric procurement, we go to the market, and we are currently in three year deals on both gas and electric, concluding in December 2023 and June 2024 respectively. We were extremely lucky to get a good deal in Spring/Summer 2020. We typically tender a host of suppliers, both brokers and direct and usually are looking at around 15 projections. Gas is used for heating and hot water in both housing and care homes and only the new developments of Lucas Court, Garden View and Bradbury House buy their own gas. It should be noted that if housing residents had to buy their own gas or electric they would not be able to buy this as competitively as we do, however of course they would have more control over usage.

Gas: Our spend on gas has fallen again this year. After the year end we have fitted new industrial boilers at Thorngate Court to operate our district heating systems as efficiently as possible. Overall unit usage dropped by 7.05%

Electric: Spend on electricity has decreased for the first time in six years. Given that our price has not changed this is the result of using fewer units. Our sensor project which monitors for unusual use of electricity has highlighted occasions when action needed to be taken and therefore reduced our usage. Overall unit usage dropped by 8.2%.

Once the current value-for-money gas and electric contracts conclude in December 2023 and June 2024, we are expecting to see increases in unit costs in line with the market.

Food: The cost of food increased during the year due to inflation, however we employed a new catering manager midway through the year. This enabled us to have more control over budgets, resulting in more efficient purchasing. The longer-term food cost environment remains uncertain and the current budget for 2023-2024 period is £2,196 per person.

Complaints Policy Our policy is in place to deal with all complaints promptly, ensuring that they are all treated fairly and consistently. Our aim is to take action to put things right and continuously learn and improve our service.

As part of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code, we carry out an annual assessment and the following is our latest self-assessment.

No.	Area	Resp	Response	
1.	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No	
	Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?	Yes		
	An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.			
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	Yes		
	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? Evidence relied upon?	Yes		
2.	Accessibility	Yes	No	
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	Yes		
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	Yes		
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?		No	
	Although we do not have a formal adjustments policy, Thorngate Churcher Trust does make reasonable adjustments to support residents/applicants whenever this is required			
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	Yes		
	We include information on Thorngate Churcher Trust's complaints process in our resident's Handbook. We now remind residents on Thorngate Churcher Trust's complaints process within our resident's newsletter on each site.			
3.	Complaints team and process	Yes	No	
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?		No	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints? Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	N/A	N/A	
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	N/A	N/A	
	If there is a third stage to the complaint's procedure are residents involved in the decision making?	Yes		
	They can ask for their complaint to be considered by Trustees			
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	Yes		

COMPLAINTS POLICY

	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?	Yes		
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	Yes		
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?	Sta	Stage 1	
4.	Communication		No	
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?	Yes		
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	Yes		
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	Yes		
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	Yes		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?	100%		
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?	N/A		
	 What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? Stage one Stage one (with extension) Stage 2 Stage 2 (with extension) 	le timescales? 100%		
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	N/A	N//	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	N/A	N//	
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction			
	We ask for feedback through the resident survey, carried out every two years.			
5.	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service	Yes	No	
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?	N/A	N//	
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A	N//	
j.	Fairness in complaint handling	Yes	Nc	
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	Yes		
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	N/A	N//	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate?	0		
	We have not refused to escalate any cases. However, we do ask that complaints are looked at by the relevant manager in the first instance rather than straight to CEO.			
	What was the reason for the refusal?		N/A	
	Did we explain our decision to the resident? We do explain our complaints policy and procedure to residents who want to report a dissatisfaction/complaint.	N/A	N//	

COMPLAINTS POLICY

7.	Outcomes and remedies		No
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	Yes	
8.	Continuous learning and improvement	Yes	No
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?		
	How do we share these lessons with:		
	a. residents? Yes		
	b. the board / governing body? Shared with members of the board on a quarterly basis.		
	c. In the annual report? Complaints section features in Annual Reports to residents.		
	Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?	Yes	
	The code has highlighted gaps in our logging and monitoring processes		
	What changes have we made?		
	• We have updated our Complaints Policy and uploaded onto our website.		
	• A more consistent approach of logging and monitoring complaints.		
	 Include regular articles on how to make a complaint in our resident newsletter. 		
	• Published complaints section in our Annual Report to residents.		

Thorngate Trustees



Our Trustees



Mark Hook

In his role as chair Mark is committed to both the wellbeing of residents and the long-term future of the Trust.



Jim Gilhooley

As a former chair of trustees, Jim's expertise as an HR professional continues to be an important element of our board.



Christopher Matthews

Chris is a partner in law firm Churchers. There has always been a partner from Churchers on the board of trustees and Chris is mainly involved in strategic decisions and adding value to legal and business decisions.



Julie Palmer

Julie's background in social services is a key area of expertise on the board of trustees.



Reeta Ram

Reeta is founder of DPR Housing Limited and Dementia Partners Limited, offering 24-hour staffing for high level support.



John Clark

John is a housing professional who has worked for various large housing associations in roles ranging from repairs and complaints management to housing manager before becoming executive director at Orione Care.



Ollie Zaki

Ollie is a partner at local law firm Glanvilles and says he is pleased to be involved as a trustee using his professional expertise and the opportunity to give something back to the community.



David Popoola-Smith

David joined the board of trustees in 2022 and as a social worker is highly experienced in adult social care.



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