



Charity registration number 1089224

## A recreational facility for disabled children, their families, friends and schools



### Purpose of Thomley Activity Centre

Thomley Activity Centre was launched in July 2002 by parents of children with autism. These parents found that their children were excluded from other play-schemes due to unavailability of appropriate activities and facilities, as well as their child's considered inappropriate behaviour. These parents also observed the need to cater for the siblings of disabled children as they are often disadvantaged by the fact that attention is focused on the disabled child. In response to their own experiences, they were eager to lessen the feeling of isolation in the challenges of bringing up disabled children.

#### Programme objectives

Fuelled by their own personal experiences, the founding Trustees established Thomley Activity Centre as a recreational facility for disabled children, their families, friends and schools. Its aim is to achieve the following outcomes.

- To increase self esteem, health, confidence, social and physical skills of disabled **children**, their siblings and friends through accessible play, recreation and education.
- To provide **parents and carers** with opportunities to meet others who have disabled children, to lessen their isolation and to increase their ability to support their children through play, recreation and access to information.
- To raise awareness amongst the **community**, to encourage understanding and acceptance of disability issues, and to increase ability to include disabled children within their own community activities.

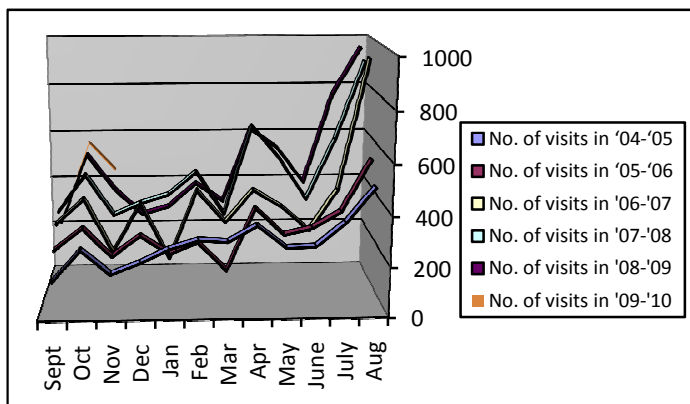
Thomley's business plan also clearly defines plans for development and growth i.e.

- Increasing capacities of the Activity Centre to support growing numbers of visitors.
- Extending the Activity Centre's upper age bracket from 16 years up to 19 years, thus helping prepare disabled young people for the transition into adulthood.
- Developing a future Social Programme for disabled adults to: develop skills for independent living; participate in appropriate social and recreational activities; and develop vocational prospects within their own local community.

#### Description of Thomley Activity Centre

Based in Worminghall, Thomley Activity Centre is the only fully accessible facility of its kind within a 35 mile radius. Set in 7 secure acres of countryside, Thomley offers a safe and supportive environment for disabled and non-disabled children to play together, have fun and grow in confidence. Facilities include a sensory room, soft play, IT, music activities, chill-out area, arts and crafts, play rooms, swings, roundabout, aerial zip wire and 1km cycle track.

As demonstrated the following chart, Thomley's usage has grown 72% over the past 5 years. Thomley has become a lifeline to 1,960 children from 756 families who travel from 19 different counties merely to access a facility which understands and meets the needs of disabled children. Thomley received a total of 5,863 visits by children last year, with the majority coming from Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Last year, 60% of children attended with families, 20% with schools and 20% with respite carers. In 2010, Thomley will be open for approximately 240 days of the year.



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