

2024

OUR IMPACT



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Ben Thomas & Kathryn Rossiter

Welcome from Ben & Kathryn

Hello and welcome to our 2024 Impact Report, in which we are delighted to showcase some of our achievements over the past year.

This last year feels particularly positive with many highlights. We launched new programmes in Birmingham with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and celebrated the first cohort of students graduating with their Level 5 Thrive Diploma in Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH). Additionally, our collaboration with the Methodist Housing Association enabled us to introduce STH into their care settings, further expanding our reach and impact. We also continued to lead the Therapeutic Horticulture Stakeholder Group and made progress in establishing the Association for STH, which will ensure the profession gains the recognition it deserves. In March 2024, I was honoured to hand over the CEO role to Ben Thomas, who has been our Head of Operations since 2021. After over 11 rewarding years at Thrive it was a bittersweet moment, but I am confident that I am leaving behind a great team of staff and volunteers, along with fantastic supporters, who will continue to drive Thrive's vision forward.



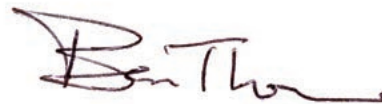
Kathryn Rossiter, former Chief Executive of Thrive

I am delighted to have been invited to lead Thrive and build on Kathryn's exceptional work. There is huge potential for Thrive and the STH sector as we strive towards greater recognition, training and support for all STH Practitioners and help many more people to improve their health and wellbeing through gardening.

I am pleased that we have secured a significant grant towards the development of the Cultivating Wellbeing app. This app will support users to create a personalised gardening and nature-based plan and will provide evidence-based information on the benefits of gardening. We are also looking forward to hosting the 16th International People Plant Symposium, marking another key step forwards in the STH sector's journey to full recognition. Additionally, we will be constructing a new Sanctuary Garden in Battersea Park, from which we will launch a new programme for people with dementia.

We have seen financial improvement in the past year but continue to operate in a very challenging national and economic environment. We remain reliant on the generosity of our many amazing supporters. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to Thrive's work.

I hope that you enjoy reading about our work and I look forward to meeting many more of you in my new role.



Ben Thomas, Chief Executive of Thrive

Impact

Thrive uses gardening to improve health and wellbeing. We do this in four ways...



1. Our Social and Therapeutic Horticulture Programmes

Our trained practitioners use plants and gardens to enable people to improve their mental and physical health, to develop social skills, combat isolation and promote learning – we call this Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH).

Hundreds of people with mental ill-health, disabilities and long-term health conditions benefit from our STH programmes at our centres in Birmingham, London and Reading, as well as in the community.

2. Our Information Service

We enable people living with ill-health or disability to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of gardening in their own space and time by providing information to make gardening easier.

We offer a wide range of how-to guides and practical information which are suitable for people living with many different health conditions or disabilities, whether new to gardening or life-long gardeners.

Each year we help thousands of people via our website or who get in touch via phone calls, emails, social media and mail from across the UK and beyond.

3. Our Training, Education and Consultancy

We educate, advise and train people in how to use STH to benefit others.

We have helped many practitioners create therapeutic gardening programmes around the country, as well as contributing to projects internationally.

We use our expertise and experience in STH to provide courses and training, which are delivered online and face-to-face.

4. Our Advocacy

We advocate on behalf of the profession to get STH recognised as a therapeutic intervention and to ensure that provision is matched to an individual's need.



Number of therapeutic
gardening sessions delivered:



13,227

95%

Of client gardeners said
they were very satisfied
with Thrive's service

Number of clients who
attended sessions:



414

96%

Of client gardeners said
being at Thrive has
improved their physical
health

Number of volunteers who
support our three centres:



217

99%

Of client gardeners said
they were happier or have
improved well-being

Number of people who
received Thrive training:



1,818

95%

Of client gardeners said
they gained new skills

Hours of work by volunteers
(including our corporate days):



29,356

96%

Of client gardeners said
they socialised more
with others

Our Purpose

To bring health and gardening closer together so that many more people achieve positive outcomes through Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH).

Why STH is good for health and wellbeing

The main benefits of an active engagement in gardening include:

- Better physical health – strengthened muscles, improved co-ordination, dexterity, motor skills and balance.
- Improved mental health – gardening provides a sense of purpose and achievement and can reduce stress and anxiety.
- Provides opportunities to connect with others, reducing feelings of isolation and exclusion.
- New skills can be learnt in a garden that can boost confidence, self-esteem and lead to volunteering and employment opportunities.
- Increased connection to nature which itself is documented to improve mental health



Our Vision

Gardening is actively encouraged as part of personal health and wellbeing management and Social and Therapeutic Horticulture services are available wherever you live.

In defining our vision, we have identified three priority areas in which we will be focussing within our strategic plan:

Grow our Sector

STH sector is recognised as part of the health and social care landscape

We want to lead and shape the debate about how a larger and more professional STH sector can provide improved outcomes for people with a defined health, social care or education need at local, regional, and national levels, while delivering measurable savings for the NHS and social care sectors. We also want to build a movement towards professionalising the sector.

Grow our Impact

STH is recognised as providing genuine positive impact

Thrive can make a national-scale impact on health and wellbeing through delivery of STH programmes and a digital information service and using our knowledge and expertise to enable others to deliver STH beyond our centres.



Grow our Organisation Sustainability

Thrive has a sustainable operating model

Achieved through an engaged and effective workforce, effective use of our infrastructure and ensuring that our spending is aligned with income to maintain our reserves and invest in our continued development.

JoJo's Story

After discovering the benefits of gardening while in hospital, JoJo has seen significant improvements in his mental health since joining Thrive.

"If you're not feeling too good you can always turn to gardening because it will always lift you up and change your mood; it'll change the way you're thinking and give you peace of mind."

It was during a long-term stay at a psychiatric hospital that JoJo discovered the benefits of gardening. He became a keen gardener as part of his occupational therapy and was referred to Thrive as part of his transition back into the community after his discharge.

He says he immediately noticed a difference after attending sessions to how he felt.

"When I finish a session, I feel really good. When I first joined Thrive, I felt aches and pains but now I've strengthened my body and I've strengthened my mind and my motivation. I feel a part of something great and so important. I feel as though I'm giving back to society and making the park nice for the local people to enjoy. I get great satisfaction and I'm keen to learn new things about gardening."

JoJo particularly enjoys tasks like sowing seeds and pricking out, which require a high level of concentration.

STH Practitioner, Alex, has observed the positive impact that Thrive has had on JoJo even after a short time. She said: "I can really sense that he's gaining a lot from this experience and it's great for his mental

health. He's become very open and talks about everything going on in his life. He's found a safe space to talk to people he trusts, without judgement. Coming out of an environment like a psychiatric hospital can be difficult, but here, you're surrounded by supportive, friendly people."

" I feel a part of something great and so important. I feel as though I'm giving back to society and making the park nice for the local people to enjoy. I get great satisfaction and I'm keen to learn new things about gardening "

JoJo
Client Gardener

JoJo is already planning for his future and hoping to work towards a horticultural qualification with Thrive, and Alex is encouraging him to pursue his goal: "Hopefully, he'll be able to draw on the skills he's learning here and find work, stability and a sense of pride in himself."



Bradley's Story

Visiting Thrive offers Bradley a place where he can learn, socialise and, most importantly, feel accepted.

Bradley has felt his confidence grow alongside the plants he's tended to during the time he's been coming to Thrive.

Living with autism and ADHD can cause anxiety and difficulty in processing information, but Bradley has flourished within Thrive's relaxed and friendly environment. Leading with a person-centred approach, Nina, the STH Practitioner working with Bradley, understands his unique needs and aspirations and takes time to explain new skills, supporting him to work collaboratively alongside others to facilitate those all-important social connections.

"I love gardening and making a difference by helping. You learn a lot from Thrive. You learn how to plant different plants and how to plant seeds and rake the plots so they're flat, a lot of different things," he said. "I enjoy helping to lay out pathways and creating more spaces, taking weeds out and making a great space for growing more plants at Thrive to make everything look good. Working in the greenhouse is also really good."

Nina, notes how much enjoyment Bradley gets from gardening. She said: "He enjoys the satisfaction of seeing something completed. When we talked about a project involving clearing an area around the pond, you can see he gets real satisfaction at looking at the end and thinking 'that's what we've done today, that's what we've achieved.'"

Bradley has loved having his own personal plot to tend to. He shared: "Right now I've got some onions and

garlic growing there and I've got a whole plan of what to plant next. I'm going to grow tomatoes and a sunflower for my gran who sadly passed away last year and that means a lot to me. I also get to bring back vegetables and fruit from my plot to my mum."

Nina has also noticed how much he benefits from the social interaction: "He's very friendly and always says hello to people and thanks everyone by name at the end of the day.

"He is very good working alongside other people in the group and he'll help other people who may not be as able. He'll go and fetch tools and support people with what they're doing.

"Since Bradley has started attending sessions, he's been so enthusiastic about everything. Whatever the task, Bradley will give it a go and just gets stuck in!"

"I like to meet new people and get to know everyone. I've learned everyone's names, and we have some great conversations. Everyone's really accepting of disabilities."

For Bradley, the most significant aspect of Thrive is the support he feels during his sessions. He said: "The most special thing about Thrive is how they help you adapt to everything you need to do and how helpful everyone is; teaching you and make it a nice area to be in. I really look forward to coming here."



A Big Year for Thrive Birmingham

This past year has been a busy one for the team in Birmingham, with a few exciting new projects launched.



Thanks to National Lottery players, Thrive Birmingham was awarded funding in June 2023 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to improve the gardens at Kings Heath Park.

The inspirational two-year project involves maintaining the integrity of the original garden design while making improvements to access and creating new signage and literature to reveal the garden's rich heritage.

A launch event, held in October 2023 kicked off with a series of speeches including from Thrive's longest standing ambassador and celebrity TV gardener and Chartered Horticulturalist, David Domoney. Over 100 people turned up in the pouring rain, showing the strength of the local community's desire to get involved with our work in Birmingham.

Part of the funding has also led to the appointment of a Community Engagement Officer who oversees public access and encourages local events and activities. This includes opening the gardens beyond client gardener delivery sessions for special tours and to facilitate Community Gardeners, a supported volunteer programme for people who want to support Thrive by helping to maintain the gardens.

We have also been able to use the funding for specific programmes, such as 'Growing Out'.

The 'Growing Out' programme provides free weekly sessions for women who are experiencing anxiety,



depression, or other forms of mental ill-health. Through this, we have been able to support individuals like Lisa, who struggles with a range of severe mental health issues, and finds leaving her home and socialising very challenging:

I love the variety of activities we do, and it has expanded my interest in nature more widely. I love art and I add pictures to my journal so that I have a running log of each week which I can look back on. This has given me a great boost and made me feel more comfortable in outdoor environments. I can now manage my mental health better through being outside with nature, so when things get bad, I go to my garden.

We also secured funding from Forward Carers for a new programme specifically for carers.

The 'Carers Connect' sessions are designed for carers to be able to take time out in nature and have space and support for their own health and wellbeing. This has benefited individuals like Laura who is a full-time carer for multiple family members.

She said: "Thrive has been a true sanctuary for me. I leave each session feeling refreshed and re-energised. As caregivers, we spend most of our time giving to others and it's rare and very special to feel that we are being taken care of. I feel I am more able to give the best possible care to my family because I have taken that time for myself."

“ From my first visit I felt at ease. The gardens are so peaceful, and it felt like a safe space I could attend. Rachel, the STH Practitioner who runs my session, is extremely patient and kind, and I feel accepted when I turn up to Thrive even when I am facing a bad episode, which I haven't experienced before. ”

Lisa
Client Gardener



Our Training

Thrive are experts at helping individuals and organisations to use Social and Therapeutic Horticulture to help others.



Graduation of the first Diploma cohort

We were proud to see our first Diploma cohort graduate this year. Thrive's new diploma has accreditation provided by the Open College Network and the course runs over two years as a Higher Education level Diploma with a blend of self-guided learning, lectures, workshops, tutorials and assessed course work.

The award is the most wide-ranging curriculum in the STH sector available in the UK and provides students with the skills and knowledge to deliver excellence in nature-based interventions in the UK.

“I loved studying for the diploma, I wanted a complete career change, but didn't have any experience in STH. This course has taught me so much and I now have a job at a therapeutic garden, it's been such an exciting year and I love what I do.” –

Katie Andrews, Diploma Graduate

A special graduation and awards ceremony was held in Reading. Horticultural researcher and retired professor at Loughborough University, Dr Joe Sempik was an honorary guest and explained that the graduating students were now among the highest qualified people in the UK to practice STH.

96% of trainees said they were satisfied with Thrive courses

91% of trainees said they had broadened their skills in STH

86% of trainees said the courses positively impacted their role



Collaborative work

We were once again pleased to work with the Historic Royal Palaces and support schools through their Superbloom programme; here we provide learning and supervision for all the schools involved and year on year have supported the development of a now comprehensive resources pack that all schools involved have access to.

We are also excited to have begun a partnership with Methodist Housing Association, the largest charitable provider of care for older people in the UK, to pilot the development of a green care strategy in five of their care settings with the intention of seeing the strategy rolled out to all settings.

“Thrive has always produced first class training and is recognised as having a gold standard that everyone looks up to and recognises. Today is a huge achievement, not just for the students graduating but for the horticultural sector.”

Dr Joe Sempik

Celebrating Successes with Brilliant People

Thank you so much to all our supporters, partners and friends.



We are incredibly proud of all your support, achievements and making these successes possible; here are just a few of the highlights.

Record-breaking fundraising

BBC Lifeline

Client gardeners, Evan, Randall, and Rebecca showed the nation how STH makes a difference in their lives. With Thrive Ambassador, garden designer and TV presenter Mark Lane, heading the appeal, together we successfully raised over £10,700 to further our impact.

Match-Funding through the Big Give Campaign

Following last year's success, Thrive took part for a second time in the Big Give, the match funding campaign which doubles donations. The focus was on the story of client gardener Rowena and her mum Jan, who have been visiting one of the programmes at the centre in Birmingham. Rowena lives with a rare genetic condition, which has caused delayed development and communication difficulties, yet through her STH sessions, she's grown in confidence, leading to more independence in making positive choices.

“The difference coming to Thrive had made for her is it's a much richer life. Richer in terms of her experience and developing new relationships. It's given her a degree of independence which I think is super important.” - Jan, Rowena's Mum

The campaign succeeded in reaching the bold new target of £20,000. We particularly want to thank The Hospital Saturday Fund for their support and our wonderful corporate partner, The Leisure and Outdoor Furniture Association (LOFA).

We hit the headlines

ITV paid us a few visits. First, to our Reading centre to find out what the client gardeners were growing over the summer and how STH benefits them. Then in the winter to produce a feature on our work, during which the crew captured an afternoon session in full swing, including bulb planting and bird feeder making. One amazing outcome from the film was a donation of £1k from a group of bridge players who contacted us after viewing the programme.

BBC London produced a feature on how Thrive supports client gardeners. They interviewed Max, who, when he first arrived at Thrive, wasn't keen to talk or socialise with others, but since working with the Practitioner, has been able to open up, and was able to talk freely to ITV about his enjoyment of maintaining the fountain in the Old English Garden, Battersea Park and about how his sessions have improved his mental health. They also spoke to Imogen, who has cerebral palsy and epilepsy, about how gardening has improved her dexterity and strength.

We also welcomed BBC Gardeners' World presenter and garden designer, Sue Kent, to our gardens in London. Sue met with client gardeners and practitioners and learnt about all the wonderful benefits of STH.



Increasing recognition in the STH sector

Thrive participated in a conference attended by over 170 people to underline the growing importance of nature-based therapies. This provided positive promotion for our training courses, the work on professionalising the sector and Thrive's lead role in driving system change.

Alongside over a dozen global partners, and co-ordinated by Trellis, Scotland's network for STH, we played a lead role in the development of a new social media initiative, World Therapeutic Horticulture Day. The campaign had a wide reach with 332 people and organisations worldwide posting on social media.



“ I’m in a bit of a dark season and gardening has now become my calm and happy space. Thank you. ”

Subscriber
Gardening Club Newsletter



“ During the shorter daylight hours of winter, it’s important that we take care of our mental & physical wellbeing. Activities such as those outlined in Thrive’s winter wellbeing calendar are the tonic that lifts our mind and body by engaging with nature. ”

David Domoney
Thrive Ambassador & TV gardener

Encouraging wellbeing over the winter

We know many people find winter months harder and so we created a four-week calendar of winter wellbeing activities featuring a range of outdoor and indoor tasks. From taking a wintry tree photo to checking garden protection, we encouraged people to take part in a mix of practical and creative activities to give their wellbeing a boost and invited them to share photos of their involvement which featured in a gallery on our website.

The calendar was a great success with over 11,000 page views on the website, making it the most visited after the home page. It was also featured across a range of press including BBC Radio and Country Living magazine.

Get Gardening goes from strength to strength

Our free online information service, Get Gardening, celebrated its first anniversary in July 2023. The service, made possible with a grant from the Peter Sowerby Foundation, is designed to help even more people use gardening to improve their health.

Visitors to Get Gardening can discover seasonal gardening ideas, ways to make gardening more accessible, inspiring stories and more. By using tags and filters, this advice can be tailored to suit a wide range of garden types, interests, and health conditions. Since its launch, more than 267,000 people have accessed the service, of which around 40% have a disability or long-term health condition.

Accessible gardening and getting back to gardening following illness or injury is important to people's health and wellbeing, and to this end, we have invested in creating over 230 resource guides, collaborating with a number of partner organisations when developing more condition-specific resources. This ensures the advice is

sound, allows us to conduct extra research if necessary and leads to co-promotion of the articles. In the last year, we have been proud to collaborate on new guides with Diabetes UK, Asthma + Lung UK and Newson Health, who are menopause specialists.

We were also thrilled to be selected as a finalist in the AbilityNet Tech4Good Awards, in the category of 'Inclusive Health' for our work with Get Gardening.

Results from our rolling Get Gardening survey:

- 95%** could find information looking for
- 94%** have a better understanding of how gardening can improve health
- 98%** have / intend to put into practice what they've learnt
- 80%** with a disability say it's helped removed long-term barriers to gardening

Developing an innovative new wellbeing app

We are very excited to announce that Thrive is developing a brand-new app, Cultivating Wellbeing. A pilot version is being tested this summer, followed by a full launch in early spring 2025.

Through it, individuals will be given support and structure to help create their own gardening and nature-based plan, to support their health and wellbeing. The app will be an interactive personal calendar, along with tailored suggestions for activities to try. Users will have the ability to record their efforts and reflect through note-making. Cultivating Wellbeing will be an important extra tool within our services. We know for some who have

accessed an STH programme there is the question of what to do next? The app can help individuals to make the transition, allowing them to keep embedding healthier behaviours that can improve their health and wellbeing.

It will also allow us to reach those who could self-manage their health conditions, but need some additional motivation, structure, or support.

We are working with digital specialists, Big Lemon, to develop the app. The outcomes of the pilot will be validated by the University of Essex. We are also working with The Organisation for the Review of Care and Health Apps (ORCHA) to ensure it reaches the quality benchmark needed to be listed in digital health libraries.

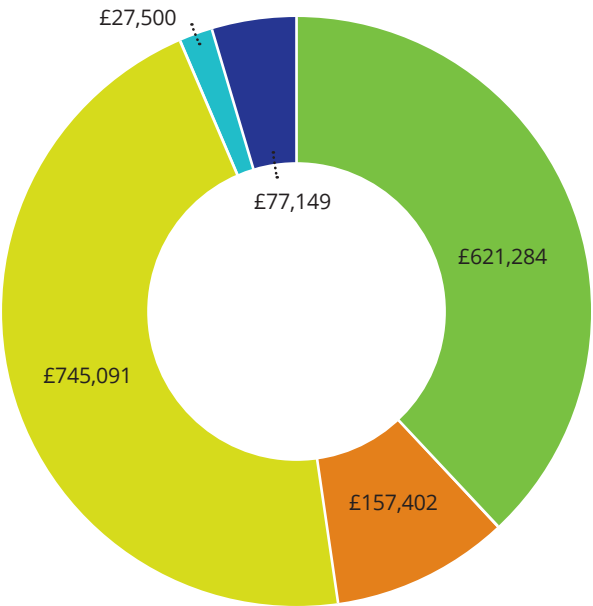
Finance

Income and expenditure 2023-2024

Income

Fundraising & Retail	38%	£621,284
Services for Professionals	10%	£157,402
Client Services	45%	£745,091
Information Service	2%	£27,500
Investments	5%	£77,149

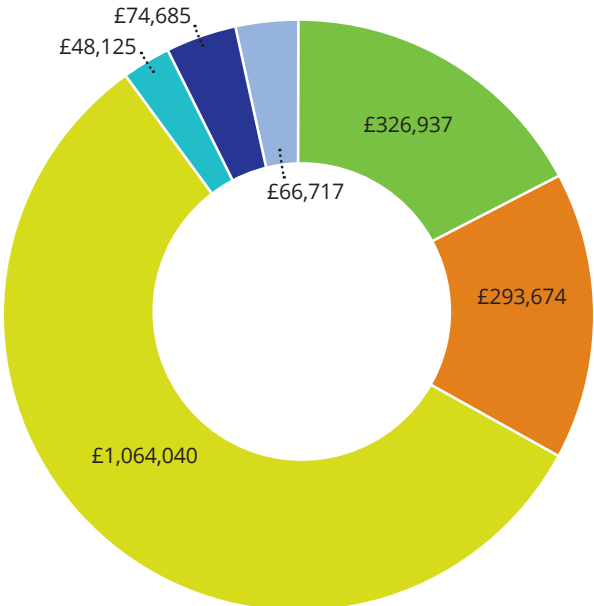
TOTAL **£1,628,426**



Expenditure

Raising Funds	17%	£326,937
Services for Professionals	16%	£293,674
Client Services	57%	£1,064,040
Information Service	3%	£48,125
Governance	4%	£74,685
Strategic Development	3%	£66,717

TOTAL **£1,874,178**



A big thank you!

Thank you to everyone who has donated towards our work over the last financial year and in particular to the following for their generous and valued significant contributions.

- Aitchison-Tait Trust
- Alitex Limited
- Berkshire Community Foundation
- Birmingham Common Good Trust
- British Association Of Landscape Industries
- Cavendish Nuclear
- City Bridge Trust
- E Holloway
- Englefield Charitable Trust
- Europlants UK Ltd
- Forest Garden
- Forward Carers
- Freemasons - Worcestershire Provincial Grand Lodge
- Freemavens
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- Social Investment Business
- Southcote Gardeners Association
- Squarepoint Foundation
- Swallowfield Horticultural Society
- The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
- The British Streptocarpus Society
- The Calleva Foundation
- The Childwick Trust
- The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust
- The Eddleston Settlement
- The Edmund Godson Charity
- The Golden Bottle Trust
- The Haramead Trust
- The Hospital Saturday Fund
- The National Garden Scheme
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund
- The Oldhurst Trust
- The Orchid Trust
- The Roger and Jean Jefcoate Trust
- The Worshipful Company of Gardeners
- V Roberts
- Wandsworth Borough Council
- Whitaker Charitable Trust
- Wimbledon Foundation



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