

Annual Report 2024 - The Thomas Project

About us

The Thomas Project is a Christian charity in Walsall that serves our local community, helping those in hardship, need and distress. From our community hub in Aldridge, we work alongside other local charities and community partners, to offer a range of activities and support services to everyone in our community, regardless of faith, and bring people together. The Thomas Project is well known and trusted because of our long-standing relationship with the community, and we have a long standing good reputation for providing help and support to people in need. Our premises are in the heart of a community of shops and local businesses which is easy to access with bus stops just outside. The building is a neutral location which creates no barriers, has disability access and is open to everyone from all parts of the community.

A high percentage of the people we provide services to are in a state of food poverty and need urgent help with essential food supplies and other basic household items. Many of these people are in families so need help for the whole family not just themselves. Many are in long term unemployment and need help and support to find pathways back into work. Most of these people lack the ability to change their circumstances without support and assistance. There is also a high population of people over age 65 in Aldridge who have a need for local services so they don't have to travel far. Often they have experienced bereavement, experience loneliness and need a place where they can meet with others and find friendship, support and activities to stimulate them. Some lack the skills or have equipment to connect via the internet so need access to computers and internet and practical help with IT for form filling and connecting with family.

2024 Aims

We started 2024 in a good strong position having steadied our income and expenditure and starting to build up our reserves and finance for growth and development. Our strategy for 2024 was to increase our support and services, grow our charity, enable us to meet diverse needs, help more people, and reduce the impact of poverty on people's lives. Our core aims were:

- **For our community:** We aimed to provide a safe and welcoming community hub, deliver a range of community activities, and bring people together to prevent isolation and loneliness .
- **For those in need:** We aimed to deliver pastoral support, work with partners to provide information, advice, and guidance services, and continue to provide our weekly foodbank .
- **For people who want spiritual support:** We aimed to provide opportunities for people to learn more about the Christian Faith, support our local churches

and fellow Christian organisations, and live our values through our activities and services .

- **For our future:** We aimed to support trustees, staff, and volunteers to deliver our charitable aims, increase our income, grow our financial independence and security, diversify our impact, and raise our profile in our community and beyond .

2024 Achievements

2024 was a very busy year for The Thomas Project as we added more activities, events and sessions to our schedule. Our registered footfall into our community hub alone during 2024 was **492 individuals** with a total number of **1,031 visits**. This does not include the numbers who attended our events which were held outside of our premises which would significantly increase the statistics. During 2024 we;

- Explored and piloted new activities and services
- Enhanced and expanded our existing services
- Delivered a range of support and activities within our community hub and at other venues
- Increased our opening hours and food provision
- Organised more community events
- Attended local events to share information about our services
- Developed our relationships with our supporters
- Connected those who need help, with those who want to and are able to help
- Worked alongside more partners to increase support and signposting
- Increased our partnership working.

Foodbank: This continued to be busy, providing essential food and other basic supplies such as toiletries and cleaning products to **1,248** people in crisis. Alongside food parcels and other items people take home, each person who attends has the opportunity to sit down and have free refreshments and snacks while volunteers spent time making them feel welcome. Our volunteers offered a listening ear, finding out if people had any other needs we could help with and provided signposting to agencies providing long-term solutions.

"I actually feel happy and very welcome. Thank you to all the people who work here."

Place of Welcome: This was open weekly throughout the year and received **235 visitors**, providing a warm welcome and a warm space, serving refreshments and light snacks. People can come to save on fuel and food costs, socialise, and to form friendships. This helps tackle loneliness, isolation, and fuel poverty. Staff and

volunteers are on-hand to provide information and support for those in need and we provide a range of games and activities that people can get involved in. We extended this during 2024, making onwards referrals for those in fuel poverty to H.E.A.T, an advisory service which enables people to access advice and support, to access eligible hardship funding, to apply for warm home discounts etc, to control household energy usage and access support for any energy related issue. We also provided relevant useful literature and arranged information sessions during our place of welcome.

"I was extremely happy and humbled to have received such a warm welcome where I was listened to, wasn't judged, and treated with respect."

Monthly Munch: As a result of feedback from service users we extended our support for people experiencing food poverty by developing a new service called 'Monthly Munch' which started in September 2023. This is a monthly hot cooked meal where the community can come along and meet other people, have a chat and eat a nourishing meal. It is held at St Thomas Church where there is more space, and volunteers from The Thomas Project help with cooking, serving and chatting to those who attend. This is delivered in partnership with St Thomas Church and has been well attended, with feedback showing this is helping people experiencing food poverty and supports their food and fuel bills. It also helps bring people together.

Information and Support: We provided general information, emotional and practical support to people in need, and continue to refer to advice and guidance services where detailed or specialist help is required. The information and support needed has including help with money management, form filling, accessing services, housing support, debt management, looking for work and applying for jobs. We also ran information sessions which were designed to help people in a variety of innovative ways. For example, we ran a Taste Test session in September which gave people the opportunity to 'blind taste' various expensive brands against cheaper supermarket brands of food. Many people were unable to tell the difference and in a lot of cases chose the supermarket brand as their favourite. This surprised people and changed their mindsets from always wanting to buy the brand names. This has helped with their weekly/monthly shopping budget. We work in partnership with many local organisations to ensure that between us we can provide a range of information, advice and guidance to meet people's needs in a holistic way.

Health Awareness Sessions: After speaking to people in our community we found that there was a need for some Health Awareness sessions, which increase awareness and encourage people to seek medical advice, improving their health and wellbeing. In response to this, we ran two Cancer Awareness sessions in July. The first one was aimed specifically at women's cancers and the second one was aimed

at men's cancers. The professional who delivered the sessions said that attendance at our sessions bucked the trend as we had low attendance at our women's session and high attendance at our men's session. She stated that it is unusual for men to attend in high numbers. We spoke to people after the sessions and discovered that the reason for not many women attending was because a lot of people had other commitments. Therefore, we plan to run further sessions next year to give them the opportunity to attend. As a result of running the men's session two men went to their GP for tests. One had to have further investigations but was given the all clear and another man had further investigations which resulted in a diagnosis, not of cancer but on a condition that needs to be monitored. This showed that the sessions were very worthwhile and worth running again. We also ran a Blind awareness session with Walsall Society for the Blind.

IT Café: We provided free internet access and help and guidance with basic IT skills to **186 visitors** at our internet café which runs weekly. This service helps people access vital services such as NHS and benefits, and supports unemployed people in finding employment. We spoke to people who came to The Thomas Project for help with accessing online services and other services, and with Walsall Works to find out how we might extend this service to provide more support. Their feedback led to us developing a specific IT course for complete beginners which we launched on 24th September with a 6-week lesson plan. We worked with Walsall Works who provided a space with a suite of computers in Walsall Central Library on Tuesday afternoons for 6-weeks. This was run by our IT qualified volunteer and was a great success.

"The staff always go out of their way to help with any problem."

Arts and Crafts Projects: Through the year we ran regular creative and artistic sessions to help with mental wellbeing which was identified as an issue for many service users. We consulted with our service users in developing these activities. As a result we have commenced regular creative and artistic sessions at The Thomas Project which are known to help with mental wellbeing. For example, in October we ran a weekly series of Creative Writing workshops led by Poet Laureate Ian Henery, in partnership with Manor Farm Community Association and their Wider Determinants of Health programme. We ran three craft sessions on 17th October (Designing your own tote bag), 28th November (Designing and painting plant pots) and 5th December (designing and painting your own T shirt) and the people attended said they felt they had benefited from them. We also ran a session for people to learn how to make a Christmas door wreath which they could take home. Every session provided opportunities for people to come together and make friends which can positively impact on people's wellbeing. We funded the staff, volunteers, facilities and equipment for these sessions.

Walking Group: We coordinated monthly health walks, providing opportunities for people to socialize and improve their physical and mental health. Led by our walk leaders, people can walk at their own pace, chat and improve their health and wellbeing. In 2024, we extended this activity, working together with Manor Farm and

the Wider Determinants of Health programme, organising two walks which were outside of Aldridge, one in Brownhills along the canal towpaths and one in Walsall Arboretum. This was to give people the opportunity to walk different routes and to give people from other areas the opportunity to join in. This increased the number of people who benefited and some who were unaware of our monthly walks will now be joining these.

Plant to Plate Project: This 20-week gardening project, commencing in May, taught people how to grow fresh fruit and vegetables in a local green space. This project improved physical and mental health whilst teaching people new skills. As an added benefit it also provided fresh produce for the foodbank. We successfully piloted the Plant to Plate Project in 2023, and in 2024 we extended the duration from 12 weeks to 20 weeks in response to the feedback from participants. They told us that as well as producing fresh fruit and vegetables, they were learning new skills and the fresh air and exercise had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing. Participants learned everything from preparing the ground, planting seeds, tending seedlings and plants and eventually harvesting them. Each week the participants had the opportunity to do what they were capable of and also to sit down for refreshments and a chat before we finished. Excess vegetables were donated to our foodbank. At the end of the project attendees were invited to take part in the harvest celebration at the church where the garden was provided from and also at The Hawthorns residential home from where a few of the residents had attended. This project was a great success with people asking for it to be run again so we plan to run a third Plant to Plate project in 2025. Participants enjoyed regularly meeting up in the fresh air and felt that this and the exercise

"I really enjoyed learning about the different soils and how to make my own compost."

Various Community Events: We have organised several community events which have been well attended by people from the community, where people have been able to connect and make friends including;

- An Irish Night with hot food
- A Sixties and Northern Soul Night
- A Summer Strawberry Tea and open air concert
- Christmas Concert

These also help to raise funds for our Charity, with people being keen to support us so that we can continue to deliver services.

Christmas Gifts Appeal: We organised donations and distributed 490 gifts for children in need at Christmas (working alongside local businesses, community organisations, churches and members of the public). This service brings joy to

children and supports families in need and is a great way for people to make a difference.

Winter Warmth Appeal: We organised donations of warm coats, hats, scarves, gloves and socks for people in need and those who are street sleepers in Walsall, working with our community hub, Walsall Street Ministry and the Salvation Army to distribute these. This service helps people stay warm during the winter months.

A telephone befriending service: We provided emotional support to people in need, but who were unable to come into our community hub, via telephone support. We also signpost people to Linking Lives, a local telephone befriending service.

Uniform Bank: We worked together with other charities in Aldridge to take donations of local school uniforms which are then cleaned and provided to people in need in the community.

Alpha courses: One of our core charity aims is to promote the Christian faith. We believe that unmet spiritual needs have a negative impact on people's health and wellbeing, on social connectivity and on wider societal issues. We ran our third Alpha course in 2024 which was an opportunity for people to explore Christianity. As a result 3 people are now attending local Church of England Churches regularly, and one is attending other group activities in the church. Another one is attending a local Pentecostal church regularly and has joined a life group there.

Sustainability and organisational development

Our service users: We have built up a reputation for being a place of hope and help and have service users who recommend us to others. We have some regular attenders to some of our activities who come along most weeks and enjoy the friendships they have made.

Our supporters: We have a great variety of supporters, many of whom donate goods and finance regularly which helps us to continue the work we do. Our supporters also refer people to us for help and advertise our work and activities to help us reach more people. We have had other groups and agencies partner with us to expand the services we can offer.

Our volunteers: We are extremely blessed to have amazing, committed, regular volunteers without whom we could not deliver our services. In 2024 we provided Food Hygiene training, Manual Handling training and Health and Safety awareness training to increase the skills of our volunteer workforce. We are increasing the ways in which they can volunteer and the skills they can both offer and learn. We subsidised a Christmas meal in January 2024 for our staff and volunteers, and in July 2024 we coordinated a Thank You event for our volunteers to recognise and thank them for the work they do. This also gave our volunteers the opportunity to get together as a group, as many of them volunteer on different shifts so don't always get to see all of the other volunteers. We had 20 regular volunteers, excluding

trustees, during 2024. We obtain the appropriate level DBS check on all trustees, employees and volunteers who are in roles that are eligible for these checks as defined by the guidelines for these checks.

Our staff: We have two paid members of staff, our Charity Manager, Liz McMeekin, and our Activities Coordinator, Marlene Bradburn. We invested in an increase of staff hours for both posts during 2024 to enable us to develop and expand our services, increase our impact, and increase the opening hours of our community hub.

Our trustees: Together our Trustees contribute a wide range of skills, experience and connections that help us to deliver our plans. Among our Trustees we have people who have worked in social work, senior level charity work, finance and in business and many of our board and our team have lived experience of the issues we are addressing as a charity. These skills and experience mean there is good understanding of the needs and issues as well as of how to help and to manage the Charity. We took on a new Trustee Treasurer in 2024, Mike Cain, who is a great addition to the board. He has worked for many years in the finance industry and brings with him a wealth of experience. In 2025 we aim to increase the size and skills of our Trustee Board. A summary of our Trustee Board during 2024 is below.

Name	Position	Status changes	Joined
Nikki-Dee Haddleton	Chair	None	
Pete Brentall	Secretary	None	
Sanja Kalik	Treasurer	Resigned 11.6.24	
Mike Cain	Treasurer	New Recruit – Joined	10.10.24
Paul Bradburn	Trustee	None	
Kehinde Olajuwon	Trustee	None	
Crystina Woolley	Trustee	Resigned 13.11.24	

Our profile: To enable us to serve our community and reach people in need, it is vital that people are aware of us and what we offer. We raised our profile in our community and beyond through a range of events, speaking engagements, and marketing. This included updating our website and social media pages and launching our quarterly newsletter for supporters. We have invested in marketing materials to support our events and have more actively promoted who we are and what we offer, and defined our key messages and communication routes which support our Strategic Plan.

Our partnerships: We built strong relationships with key stakeholders and partners. Our Charity Manager has been crucial in identifying stakeholders and other interested parties, and connecting with them, as has our Activities Coordinator as she interacts with the community.

Our facilities and resources: We currently have a small community hub in Aldridge and have worked hard to make the best use of it with movable furniture so we can change it according to the session we are doing. We have been looking for new

premises so we can expand what we can offer, and we will continue to search for the right place for us and our service users.

Our Finance: Our financial period runs from 1st January to 31st December each year. The Charity ended the year with a net surplus of £44,389 after accounting for reserves which is an increase of £24,650 on the previous year. We have exercised good financial management to ensure that we operate comfortably within our means and still meet our objectives. We received funding from Grants of £47268 of which £25,311 was restricted. Donations from the public (Individual and Corporate) amounted to £21,596 and we received £2,526 from fund-raising events. We spent £33,473 on salaries and £9,500 on rent. The money spent by the Charity has been applied towards providing a Community Hub in Aldridge which is managed by 2 members of paid staff supported by Volunteers. Various activities and services are provided at the Hub during each week in line with the fulfilment of our objectives. We are half way through a 3 year Grant from the National Lottery which will enable us to comfortably continue our good works until mid-way through 2026. We will continue to actively seek other funding streams to take us beyond this date. The Thomas Project has a Policy of holding the equivalent of 3 months' worth of core expenditure in reserve to cover wind up costs in the event of the dissolution of the Charity. Our reserves figure for 2024 was therefore £12,500. We did not receive any income from other countries and our charity does not operate outside England and Wales. No trustees received any remuneration, payments or benefits from the charity other than refunds of legitimate trustee expenses. None of our charity's staff receive total employee benefits of £60,000 or more. We do not operate an employee benefits scheme. We are a 'living wage employer' and our salaries exceed the minimum living wage requirements. We contribute towards the employee pension scheme through payroll.

Conclusion

2024 overall was a great year for our charity, and we have been blessed to have such wonderful support throughout the year from our community and the communities we support. Financially, we were able to increase our income which has allowed us to invest in developing and growing our services. We have steady staff and volunteer resources to enable us to deliver our charitable aims, and have a strong board of Trustees. We have detailed plans in place to ensure 2025 is a successful and impactful year.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees for the Thomas Project I confirm that this report is accurate to the best of our knowledge and the financial statements accompanying this report is accurate and has been independently examined.

Authorised by: Paul Bradburn, Acting Chair of the Board of Trustees

Date: 6 October 2025



Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	01-Jan-24		31-Dec-24

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
101 - Standing Order Donations	3755	-	-	3,755	5,862
102 - Individual Donations	3269	-	-	3,269	10,573
104 - Fund Raising Events	2525	-	-	2,525	4,514
105 - One Off Donations		-	-	-	-
107 - Corporate Donations	6846	-	-	6,846	3,794
108 - Community Donations	7726	-	-	7,726	4,028
111 - Endowments/Legacy	9203	-	-	9,203	-
109 - Grants and Trust - Unrestricted	21957	-	-	21,957	5,000
103 - Room Hire		-	-	-	188
106 - Gift Aid Claims	411	-	-	411	143
110 - Sundry Income	3141	-	-	3,141	1,205
113 - Grants and Trusts - Restricted		25,311	-	25,311	13,836
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	58,833	25,311	-	84,144	49,143
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	58,833	25,311	-	84,144	49,143
A3 Payments					
201 - Salaries	8162	25,311	-	33,473	21,885
202 - Rent	9500	-	-	9,500	9,500
203 - Utilities	1437	-	-	1,437	1,525
204 - Phone and Broadband	949	-	-	949	517
205 - Council Tax	490	-	-	490	400
206 - Cleaning	1150	-	-	1,150	706
207 - Repairs and Maintenance	942	-	-	942	263
209 - Subscriptions	310	-	-	310	1,510
210 - Sundries	1707	-	-	1,707	2,693
211 - Printing & Stationery	508	-	-	508	345
212 - Foodbank	2772	-	-	2,772	21
213 - Pastoral		-	-	-	-
214 - Volunteer Costs	411	-	-	411	-
215 - Insurance	506	-	-	506	1,011
216 - Christian Outreach	420	-	-	420	-
217 - Training	190	-	-	190	168
218 - Branding/Publicity	768	-	-	768	-
219 - Activity Cost	355			355	
	30,577	25,311	-	55,888	40,544

A4 Asset and investment purchases. (see table)					
208 - Equipmnt	606	-	-	606	193
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	606	-	-	606	193
Total payments	31,183	25,311	-	56,494	40,737
Net of receipts/(payments)	27,650	-	-	27,650	8,406
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	32,239	-	-	32,239	23,833
Cash funds this year end	59,889	-	-	59,889	32,239

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Cash at Bank	58,889	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	58,889	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))			


	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Equipment	N/A	606	606
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	M J CAW.	6/10/25



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name

The Thomas Project

On accounts for the year
ended

31st December 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1082423

Set out on pages

1 to 12

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/12/2024.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (~~other than that disclosed below *~~) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Date:

09/10/2025

Name:

Mrs Joanne Hunt.

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

Address:

184 Rugeley Road, Chase Terrace
Burnwood, Staffordshire
WS7 1NT

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.