

# Annual Report 2024

## Overview



### Our Services

The Fircroft Trust is a local charity working in Kingston upon Thames with adults living in the community with mental health and wellbeing challenges and/or learning disabilities.

Since registration in 1970, our charity has developed and now is able to provide:

- A **Wellbeing Hub** for adults who live in the local community facing wellbeing issues. This is both a centre-based service and community-based service in Kingston upon Thames which provides a range of activities designed with the people we support to support people to manage their mental health, learn new skills and improve their wellbeing.
- **Man Shed** - A workshop style environment for men facing wellbeing issues
- The Fircroft Trust provides **Residential Services** in the form of:
  - **Residential Care** for adults with multiple needs, and
  - **Supported Living** in smaller houses for people requiring less support.

## Our Aims

### OUR VALUES:

Respect, Transparency,  
Support, Trust and Empathy.

### OUR VISION:

Improving the **quality of life**  
for people we support.

### OUR MISSION:

We want to support people with mental health or learning disabilities to live **full** and **inclusive lives**, not just by living within their communities, but taking an active and inclusive part in shaping what is **meaningful** to them.

### OUR CULTURE:

Every person should be seen as a **person first** as we work to improve the quality of life for everyone we support.

### INVESTING IN STAFF:

We see staff as our **main asset**, and we are committed to enabling staff to **thrive**, providing bespoke training and a supportive place to work.

## THE FIRCROFT TRUST

# Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

## Achievements and performance

We can't believe it's been a whole year since we settled back at our **Ditton Road** premises. It has been wonderful to welcome back people as well as new friends. Time has just zipped by!



At **Firs Court**, the people we support have led a very busy time accessing the community and planning events. More later.

Our biggest change has been incorporating our charity shop into the charity. It was previously our 'Trading'

**Charity Shop**, which meant two sets of accounts and a lot more bureaucracy.

I hope you enjoy reading our updates.

Best wishes

**Olga Bowey-Cockburn**  
Chair of Trustees

## Fircroft Wellbeing Hub



The **activities** we provide at the Wellbeing Hub are varied, but always chosen by the people we support. These have included cooking, going for walks together, and **learning new skills**. Some people prefer a **quiet time** in the art room or enjoying our lovely garden.

Others love the **companionship** of friends and combating isolation and loneliness. But it doesn't matter how people like to spend time; the Wellbeing Hub is here to provide **support** for people experiencing wellbeing issues, whether short term or for longer periods.



**Outings** continue to be very popular and are always well attended. We are extremely grateful for the reduced price tickets that some attractions afford us. This year we went to Kew, Hampton Court, the seaside and so much more.



## Story:

One person has recurring crisis with their mental health – when she is experiencing them, she comes to the Wellbeing Hub to recover. Not only does it help this person, but the family are very grateful knowing that she is in a **safe place**, and they too can have some **respite**.

“ People call me mad which makes me feel rubbish. All that goes away as soon as I come to the Hub. ”

# Man Shed

The Man Shed is a small group of men who are working together to **create, repair and upcycle** items to sell in our new shop on Ditton Road.

The ‘shedders’ have shared their skills and have worked on various projects including refurbishing furniture and building bird boxes and other items.

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Over the last year we have been able to re-purpose a portacabin into our new shop, and we are so grateful to Tolworth Girls School, who wonderfully decorated the outside. The items that are made by the people we support, and others have stocked the shop. Opening hours are limited now.

The Shelter we fundraised for last year has been built. It has been a real pleasure to see it being used.



# Residential Care and Supported Living Services



**Firs Court** provides:

- **residential care** for adults with learning disabilities and/or complex needs.
- **supported living** houses for adults who are more independent.

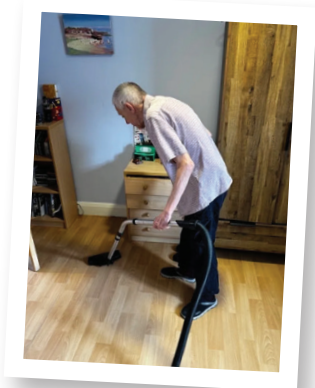


One parent said of their family member living at Firs Court “They have a better **social** life than we do!” I think that just about sums up how much the people we support love living there.

We’ve had quite a few people whose needs have changed this year and there has been a few moves within Firs Court. These **changes** are made comfortably because everyone knows and understands the set up at Firs Court, and are already good friends with all the people we support. One person who moved from a single occupancy residence into Maple said: *“I am having so much fun – I wish I had done this sooner!”*

We continue to develop our **digital technology** to ensure that the people we support and staff can keep all events and needs updated, cutting down on bureaucracy and freeing everyone to get on with living life to it’s full.

Of course, it’s not all fun and games – there are chores that need to be done with the support of staff.



But that leaves plenty of time to:



“ It is so wonderful to see what amazing care people get at Firs Court – you can see how happy they are. ”  
a family member



## Firs Fest:

This year everyone at Firs Court organised the Firs Fest – a fundraising event to raise money for their **amenity fund**. Sometimes we need to subsidise outings for the people we support dependent only of benefits. The event was an amazing success and raised £615.

“ Thank you - it was lovely to see everyone enjoying themselves and participating in the festivities! ”

an attendee



# The Fircroft Trust Shop

The great news is that our charity shop has now been **incorporated into the charity**. Historically, the law dictated that the charity and the trading company should be separate. But this has changed. This has been important because of various reasons, among which:

- It streamlines the paperwork – which will save the organisation precious funds
- we now no longer have different governing bodies.

Our shop at Tolworth sells a wide range of donated items, including furniture and electrical goods. The profits are now part of charity and provide much needed funds. It is also the face of the charity, and people can come in and find out what we do as a charity.



One of the objectives of the shop has always been to provide **opportunities** for people we support to volunteer in a safe and encouraging environment. A place to **learn** new skills and move on to follow further volunteering opportunities and paid employment. We have been delighted to be part of people's **personal growth** as they gain confidence and **experience** in retail.

## Story:

One person that used to volunteer at the shop, looks back and says that the shop gave her the skills and courage to go on to paid employment.

## What people say

“ The busy-ness of the shops helps my mental health and staff are so **supportive** ”

Volunteer

“ I started as a volunteer and now I get **paid** as a part-time member of the team. And I get to support others! ”

Staff member

“ I love my job at the shop. When we were closed, I felt very lonely ”

Volunteer

## Other news

- We now have a **new Shop Manager** – Alistair Temple. Please do pop in and say hello. Jo hasn't gone away; you will still see her there as she had decided to become an assistant.
- **Facebook** – our Facebook page has changed, so if you're wondering why the old one has become stale, please go to **#Fircroft Trust – Charity Shops**



### Betty Harding

Many of you will remember our wonderful volunteer, Betty who sadly passed away this year. She was a staunch supporter of our work and volunteered at the shop for over 30 years. Much loved by everyone, she continued to work until just a few years ago but continued to visit the shop and encourage everyone. She is sorely missed.

# Summary

This year has been a very busy year, consolidating and embedding our work to provide the best possible opportunities to the people we support. We have been particularly heartened to see everyone up-beat and enthusiastic about the changes that have evolved over the last year.

Staff and volunteers have begun work on a sensory area funded by the Worshipful Company of Gardeners, which will enhance our garden, which already boasts a lovely pond area with fish.

In residential accommodation we continue to see a shift in the kind of support people are seeking – from people wanting mainly group homes to seeking independent or small group accommodation. There seems also to be a shortage of supported housing for people with more **complex needs**. We feel we have the skills to provide that support and indeed are already providing.

This year we are trying to raise money for our **HARDSHIP FUND**. Many of the people we support are on benefits, and because of this they don't have spare funds to pay for emergency needs. We became acutely aware of this during the last year, when one of the people we support was unable to access the professional assessment needed for six months which would have given her a better end of life experience. We had to go privately, but felt it was essential to have a fund that could support us in the case of any future urgent need. **If you can support this fund, please do let us know.**



A special **'thank you'** to all our staff, volunteers, and people we support, who have made it possible for us for us to adapt and thrive throughout all the changes. We are always amazed at the creativity and hard work the teams have done to ensure we are providing the best care and support.

## We need your support

to donate  
please follow  
the QR code:

