

A Year of Change

Annual report 2023 - 2024



Looking back over this last year, I can only describe it as a Year of Change, which I hope all our community has found a positive experience.

I reflect on conversations I have had with people this year about how the changes have affected them and asked would they want to go back in time? The answer was no, they did not want to go back to the old ways, that the changes are good, and life is better.

I know that any change is always challenging as we look at what we have done, what we can do and more importantly to then have the discipline and resilience to make the changes, one step at a time, which we know are necessary.

I particularly want to thank all our staff as every one of you is a leader in your own service area, working with the Senior Managers and the support of the Board members, all have shown commitment and hard work to improving the experience of being part of our community. It has been a whole team effort; and you will see in the report how much we have achieved, which means we can look forward to the coming year with confidence.



Deborah Robinson,
Chair of the
Board of Trustees WVHA

Welcome

A year of change.



In July 2022, we began the process to develop a clear plan of how to move forward.

By September 2022, we had published a one-year plan to guide us through this complicated time. In the plan we said we would:

- Undertake a full consultation with the people we support, staff, family, commissioners, and other professionals
- Complete a full stock condition survey of all our properties.
- Improve our services.
- Improve our staff's terms and conditions.
- Significantly reduce the use of agency staff by increasing the number of permanent staff.
- Review our housing management practice and health and safety processes.

We have now done all of the above and as a result have restructured the central team.

During this process we refreshed our Mission, Vision and Values and by the end of 2024, we will be in a position to publish our five-year strategy. This will support the development of a unique vision for Whitmore Vale Housing Association and make clear how we intend to achieve that vision.

While we have run at a deficit this year, this was intentional as we have invested in the significant areas and had to manage the increased costs that the whole economy is facing.

However, the three key reasons for this deficit were:

1. The need to fully employ permanent staff.
2. Historic fee levels
3. Vacancies in our care homes

We have made substantial improvements in all three areas, and this will show in next year's accounts and annual report. By the end of 2024, we will be in a position to publish our five-year strategy. The people that live and work here are committed to seeing the organisation bearing fruit in the coming year and we look forward to reporting on our progress.

Next year's key work areas are:

- Co-production
- Digitising care records
- Improving staff training and support
- Policy and procedure revision

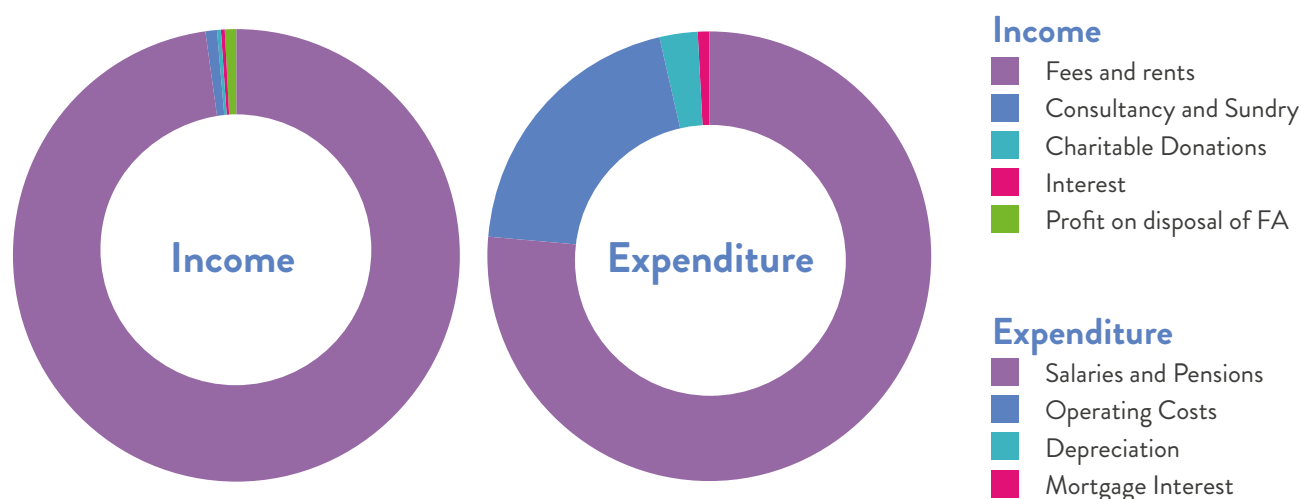
Sonja Jones, CEO

Our Finances

Making every penny count.

During 2023 we appointed a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to ensure the development and sustainability of the charity and to ensure good governance of finance. We are now able to provide scrutiny and comment on monthly management accounts, support Whitmore Vale Housing Association staff and have developed higher level reporting for Board, senior staff, and cost centre managers. This year we have reviewed fees; modelled feasibility of business planning and the CFO has reported to Board independently. We reviewed our rents and repaid our mortgages that became due in July 2023. We have gone through a deeper evaluation of our finance systems and now have created greater transparency and reporting procedures.

Julie Doyle, Chief Finance Officer



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We are very grateful for the donations received from friends and parents of residents of Whitmore Vale this year. These additional funds enable us to enhance the facilities and activities provided to the People we Support. Next year we are aiming to increase our fundraising through a variety of initiatives.”

Julie Doyle, Chief Finance Officer



Care and Support

Rapid development and change

This last year has been one of rapid development and change, where we have built on last year's improvements. Our Quality Assurance system has really allowed us to see where we need to improve and where to celebrate excellence and you can see these themes reported on elsewhere in the report and in the upcoming publication of our strategic plan.

In July we received a GOOD rating from CQC at Whitmore Vale House, meaning our services are now rated GOOD at each location.

We are in the process of moving to a digital record keeping system and

co-producing strength-based, person-centred plans with the People we Support.

A service for People with Learning Disabilities and Dementia

We noticed that people with learning disabilities and a diagnosis of dementia did not have access to specialist services. So, we worked with the People we Support, Families, Specialist Services and Commissioners to develop this. Staff needed specialist training to ensure they understood the impact of dementia and how it affected the person's emotional, communication and health needs.

“

Since moving to The Old Manse, I have been given many more opportunities than I used to have. I really enjoy living here”

“

We, J's family, are extremely grateful for all the care that J receives and appreciate all the hard work that your team provides.”

Lifelong services

We had high demand for our lifelong services. This service has been extended and offers support to people with learning disabilities who have significant health care needs. We have had the pleasure of welcoming two new people to the service whose quality of life has significantly improved and have made great developments in their skills and now enjoy broader, more fulfilling activities.

Enablement

All our services are now enablement focused. However, this is most evident in our independent living and outreach services. We work with people to understand their desires and aspirations for the future and work with them to create a plan to achieve this.

Independent Living and Outreach

The Old Manse, Turner Court, The Ferns and Victoria Road were categorised as supported living and this meant that the tenancy and support contracts were linked. We spoke to commissioners and moved the supported living contracts to outreach contracts. It didn't mean anyone living with us had to move or reduce their support hours, it just reflected the work we did more accurately. It also allowed us to separate the Care and Support team and the Housing team, so that both teams could fully focus on their area of work.

This enables people who live in Whitmore Vale Housing Association accommodation the choice to change their care and support providers, if they wish, without changing where they live. We believe having this choice is a fundamental right for People with Learning Disabilities and or Autism and is now in line with Surrey County Council Policy.

All of these changes are driven by the Mission, Vision and Values of the Association.



Above: Stuart with his Swimming Medal.



Our Community

Representing our community.

In the last year we have moved beyond ensuring compliance to considering our position against quality standards, supporting our services to move further towards delivering excellent and innovative care and support.

Our training provision has moved in-house, meaning we can provide bespoke and timely training onsite for services, and more effectively meet our staff development objectives.

We are working more and more alongside those we support to co-design our policies and procedures and the direction of all our activities, both formal and fun.



Phil L, The Old Manse

Loves all things transport and is the man to go to about the county's bus and train timetables. This passion has led him to be the WVHA's Transport Champion and produce his regular transport poster and to be a regular contributor to the Surrey Bus Partnership Stakeholder Meeting. Word is now out, and Phil has been interviewed by Surrey County Council for Learning Disability week, appearing on their website as well as ours.

Demi H, Haven House

Demi is part of the 'Get it Right' group. She comes together with other people with learning disabilities to review SCC's easy read literature. Demi was one of the first people to be paid by SCC, for her work, through the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People.



Furthermore, Demi is our 'Wheelchair Champion' and is involved in our Wheelchair Passport training, co-delivering this training with Emma, our Training Officer.

Sue S, Turner Court

Sue is proudly the co-chair of the South West Surrey Valuing People Group. She attends and introduces information and speakers to the meeting. Not only that, but she is also a great ambassador for the co-productive journey we are all taking together.

Rebecca Slinn, Development Manager

Human Resources

Significant improvements

This year we have had a real impact on staff vacancies, reaching 93% employment, which is better than the national average.

We have enhanced the services provided by our Human Resource department, with a Level 3 apprentice joining the team.

We obtained our Skilled Worker 'A' rated sponsor licence and have implemented our online HR system.

We have improved our pay and conditions by increasing all salaries significantly above minimum wage, improving annual leaving entitlements, introducing occupational sick pay along with the staff qualification and development programme.



“*You gave me the opportunity to learn, grow, adapt in so many ways than I could ever imagine! I look forward to learning even more under your guidance.*”

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Estates

Always improving our homes

This incredibly fast paced year has seen us putting the foundations and systems in place to ensure that our buildings continue to be safe. We are planning longer term works identified by stock condition surveys and have moved onto the exciting job of improving the buildings for our residents, tenants and our staff.

Significantly, we have spent time reviewing our policies and procedures so that our residents and tenants know what level of service they can expect from us, and have set targeted timescales for maintenance works.

We have worked hand in hand with our residents where we are carrying out improvement works.

2024 will see no let-up in the pace as we integrate Housing within the Estates Department and we focus on tenant involvement and the creation of a Tenants Association. We are aiming to have redecorated 50% of our residential care bedrooms in a colour of the residents choosing and will be making strides in providing updated communal areas.

John Hodges, Estates Manager



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