



# The Orchard Project Appeal

Opening the door for young adults with  
autism to live the best life possible



**Specialist homes for young adults  
with complex needs and autism**

# Our story



**We were founded almost 60 years ago by a group of families who had a vision for creating a better life for their relatives with learning disabilities. Back then we pioneered the idea that adults with learning disabilities have the right to choices about how they live and how they are supported, to enable them to lead the best life possible.**

Today, we're a trusted national charity supporting over 2,500 people across England and Wales; from living independently in their own home to taking part in day activities, and from support for a few hours a week up to 24 hours a day.

We support people in all areas of their life: developing practical skills, connecting with their community, to help with getting a job and introducing technology that can help people with learning disabilities live as independently as possible.

People with learning disabilities and autism face obstacles that are hard to imagine, and we use our skills, experience and creative ideas to help overcome them.

We can't make their challenges go away, but we can offer the kind support and encouragement that gives them a chance to find more enjoyment and satisfaction

in life. We listen, work hard to understand their needs and then provide the kind of personalised services that make a real difference.

**“ I'm much happier here. Staff listen to me and Mo is wonderful. Life was hard before – I didn't feel respected as an individual and I wanted to be treated as my own person. I am now. ”**

David

Our services are funded through a combination of local authority social care budgets and fundraised income. Often local authority budgets will cover only the basics, or funding only for people with the most complex needs. We don't feel this is enough. So, we also raise money for things that are no longer funded to make sure people can live the lives they want.



**400+**  
**family carers**

were supported in the last year



We provide nearly  
**600 respite hours**  
every week



**We support 2,500+**  
people every year across England and Wales



**85%** of our services are rated by CQC as **'good'** or **'outstanding'**

All statistics correct at time of going to print

# Introduction from Chair of Trustees

**We believe in a world where anyone with a learning disability and autism can live within their community with all the choice and support they need to live the best life possible.**

Right now, too many vulnerable young adults are being forced to stay in places designed for people who have very different needs and require a restricted environment to be safe, simply because there's nowhere else for them to live. Instead of learning to live as independently as possible, their freedom and more, is taken from them.

The Orchard project will provide a critical step in supporting some of society's most vulnerable people find their way out of these unsuitable environments. In the safety and security of specialist homes, and with the help of a supported living service, young adults with complex needs and autism can begin to overcome the challenge they've faced and start their journey towards living their best life.

The Orchard will be the first service of its kind in Essex, and one of only a handful in the UK. It's desperately needed.

We're pleased to be working in partnership with Essex County Council, in support of their Transforming Care Plan, to make the service a reality. In fact, it will provide a blueprint for provision across the UK, which means we have the chance to change the lives of thousands of young adults with complex needs and autism.



**But we can't do it without your help.**

People with learning disabilities and autism face difficult and lifelong challenges. Yet I frequently hear stories of bravery and determination; it's truly inspiring. I hope you will be inspired by what you read over the next few pages to lend us your support, to help us give them the care and support they have the right to receive.

With thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith Jolly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Baroness Jolly**, Chair of Trustees



# “If you have autism, don't try to change yourself, change your environment.”

Lee Champion, Specialist Skills Practitioner, Hft.

## **Vulnerable young people with learning disabilities and autism do not have access to the appropriate accommodation and support they need, limiting their opportunities to live freely and independently. Provision is at crisis point.**

Hundreds of young adults are trapped in children's services which can't meet their needs. Some are living in their family home with relatives who can't cope with their challenging behaviour.

Eventually their living arrangements become impossible.

Sadly, a lack of provision of specialist services often means the only option is admission to an Assessment and Treatment Unit (ATU), which are only designed for short-term secure placements. More and more young people without a clinical need for such environments are forced to stay for months, or even years, simply because appropriate provision is not available to them.

Over 2,200 children and young adults are currently confined to an ATU unnecessarily.\*

They've lost their freedom and everything that was familiar to them. Boredom, frustration and anxiety usually worsen challenging behaviours, which can lead to physical restraint, seclusion and sedation becoming more commonplace. Contact with those caring for them and family and friends can be limited, adding to the isolation.

With limited human contact and no access to the communications tools they came to rely on before they were admitted, the world quickly becomes a confusing and frightening place.

**They often feel forgotten.**

\* Source: NHS Digital

**Many young adults and a number of children are left unnecessarily isolated, helpless and distressed in secure units. Some have been there for more than half a decade.**

**Vulnerable children, young adults and their families are left powerless.**

**Right this minute, throughout the UK, there are bright, capable and scared young adults living in these environments that simply shouldn't be there.**

**Something needs to change, urgently.**

**Will you help us?**

**Over 2,200**  
children and young adults  
are currently confined to an  
ATU unnecessarily.

A close-up photograph of a man with short dark hair and a mustache, smiling broadly with his eyes closed. He is lying down, with his hands clasped behind his head. He is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. A patterned pillow with pink and yellow circles is visible behind his head. The background is dark and out of focus.

# Specialist homes for young adults with complex needs and autism

**We're creating purpose-built, specialist homes and a supported living service so young adults can move safely out of inappropriate settings into an environment where compassion, practical support and gentle encouragement are at the heart.**

Every home will be designed with the individual's physical and emotional needs in mind too, so they can live as comfortably and independently as possible.

Our vision is a place where young people can feel safe. With nurturing support they'll feel cared for and know that they matter. In time, they'll feel confident to move on from The Orchard and achieve their ambition to live more independently.

With your support, we can help vulnerable young adults rediscover their joy, find a sense of purpose, and fulfil their true potential.

**The Orchard aims to give everyone freedom, choice and confidence.**

## A supportive environment

Autism affects a person's sensory experience, imagination, social communication and interaction with others, and their environment makes a significant difference to their quality of life. The Orchard homes will be built with design features that avoid unnecessary and intrusive sensory stimuli that might cause high anxiety and lead to challenging behaviours.

“Some colours, textures and sounds are hideous and terrifying. On the other hand I see beauty in many things...” Insight into living with autism shared by someone supported by Hft.



### A range of carefully designed special features will:

- Give young people the chance to socialise in a shared space, at their own pace
- Let individuals manage their level of privacy so they can connect with others only when they want
- Give a sense a freedom, avoid conflict and prevent feelings of being trapped, to minimise anxiety
- Provide the choice between stimulating and calming surroundings so individuals can keep a healthy balance and avoid overwhelm



## Specialist support

We'll place a highly trained team of specialists to support every resident.

We'll listen, understand their needs and provide person-centred support based on our Fusion Model, our unique and innovative way of supporting someone with a learning disability. It gives individuals more control over their lives and helps them enjoy greater levels of inclusion, independence and choice.

# The Orchard homes: Designed by people with autism for people with autism

We've consulted people with autism, those who support them and Dr John Biddulph, leading expert in autism and the built environment, to create specialist homes. Our homes will support the sensory, social and physical requirements of people with complex needs and autism.

**1** Private garden for each home giving residents their own outdoor space and the chance to learn new skills

**2** Solitary spaces (cosy nooks) that allow individuals to spend time alone and avoid overstimulation

**3** Single storey layout to minimise sound and avoid distress in people with noise sensitivity

**4** Individual rooms to make it less daunting and confusing when moving from one activity to another, by using the room for context, for example, the kitchen for cooking and living room for relaxation



**5** Living areas will have a homely feel with soft furnishings and comfortable furniture to help relaxation

**6** Zoned transition space to help individuals prepare for the change in scene as they move from space to space or to another activity, reducing risk of overwhelm

**7** Intelligent acoustic design to minimise auditory over-stimulation

**8** Specialist lighting to allow residents to control their environment

# THE ORCHARD PROJECT APPEAL

**1** Wide and accessible walkways with no dead ends to avoid residents feeling trapped and help avoid conflict

**2** Recessed front door, with bench, to provide semi-private space for phased transition into shared space

**3** Shared courtyard to give individuals who are at risk of isolation a sense of community and to help individuals develop their social skills



**4** Sensory room to provide relaxation, sensory stimulation and input with sensory lighting, interactive equipment to encourage communication and entertainment and tactile furnishings for comfort and stimulation

**5** Multi-purpose room which will act as a community space to bring people together socially and be home to a variety of day activities

**6** Wildlife area to increase wellbeing and create a connection with nature

We're creating a 'Gold Standard' build based on recommendations by the "Think Autism strategy governance refresh".  
(Department for Health and Social Change 2018)

# Help us open the door for young adults like Tom to live the life they choose



Imagine having your freedom, friends, choice and privacy taken away from you - all at the same time. We can't imagine it either, and need your help to provide new homes that will give young adults with complex needs and autism a different choice.

An investment of around £2.2 million will be needed to build the Orchard. Hft is providing an initial £800,000 and is looking for those who share the same vision to help us to raise the remainder.

Your donation will help give young adults like Tom a place they can call home and get the support they so desperately need to live a life without isolation, gain some independence and have the freedom to make choices about how they want to live.

We anticipate works will start in **2020/2021**

“ The Garfield Weston Foundation is delighted to be supporting Hft with a pledge of £100,000 towards this much-needed capital project. The Trustees hope that The Orchard will enable young adults in Essex to play an active role in the community and lead the best life possible. ”

To give a gift, please use the enclosed donation form or donate online at [www.hft.org.uk/theorchard](http://www.hft.org.uk/theorchard)

Looking for fundraising ideas? Visit [www.hft.org.uk/fundraising-ideas](http://www.hft.org.uk/fundraising-ideas)

If you would like to speak to someone about supporting The Orchard Project Appeal, please call **Vanessa Edwards, Director of Fundraising** on 07771 390 110

# From isolation to independence: Tom's story

**Tom is a typical 23-year-old, with goals, aspirations and ideas about how he wants to live. He also has an autism diagnosis.**

Three years ago, Tom spent most of his time alone yet had zero privacy. His only chance to communicate with those caring for him was when he asked for food or drink. The outside world was just the other side of a locked door, yet it was a world away for Tom.

This was his life for four months after he was confined to a secure Assessment and Treatment Unit (ATU) when his supported living placements were unsuccessful.

Overnight, Tom went from doing the things he loved like shopping trips, picnics and feeding the ducks, to living in complete isolation. His communication pictures were taken from him too, making it difficult for him to understand on the rare occasions he had human contact. Frustration, pacing, hitting out and increasingly challenging behaviour became the norm.

Today Tom lives in one of our residential services and since moving in he's gained friends in his local community. He now has the freedom to make choices about what he wants to do and a level of independence that gives him more control over his life – everything that was taken away from him three years ago when he was admitted to the ATU.

Tom was clinically obese when he came to live with us.

An unhealthy lifestyle and often drinking up to 20 cans of Coke every day took its toll on his health. Now, with more options and expert support, his life no longer revolves around food and drink. He's healthier and lost much of the excess weight making it easier to do the things he used to enjoy.

Tom's autism means that while he can communicate verbally, he has limited vocabulary and so can get overloaded by verbal communication. Without clear boundaries, constant reassurance and knowing what's happening next, he can become anxious.

When Tom's support team began preparing for his move, they quickly understood that creating communication techniques, establishing routines and helping him become more confident were going to be vital to his progress.

**“...a complete turnaround – a total 180...”**

Charlotte, one of Tom's support team describing his change

Now his world is less unpredictable, overwhelming and stressful.

His newfound confidence has given him the ability to go out into the community, and the support in his home means he can do everyday things like keeping his home clean, doing his laundry, cooking his meals and spending time outside the house - things he didn't have the option to try before.

In fact, Tom was able to visit the dentist recently, something that would have been unthinkable when he first moved in. He's even planning a holiday, which would have been impossible just a few years ago. In only three years, Tom has developed beyond recognition. He's much calmer, more settled and engaged in life. He's verbalising more too. But perhaps most importantly, Tom is smiling again! It's wonderful to see him living the best life possible.





## Appeal Office

Hft, Whitefriars  
Lewins Mead  
Bristol BS1 2NT

 Find out more at  
[hft.org.uk/theorchard](https://hft.org.uk/theorchard)

 Call us...  
0117 906 1699

 @Hftonline

 Hftlearningdisabilities

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5/6 Brook Office Park, Folly Brook Road, Emersons Green, Bristol BS16 7FL  
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