

ACORN VILLAGE IMPACT REPORT

24-25



Acorn Village
People First, Disability Second

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

“First and foremost, I strive to ensure that the organisation continues to meet its belief of life’s for living, its commitment to people first and disability second and that the voices of those living with us are heard and respected. Regular input from those people living and working with us is vital and shapes everything we do.

Acorn does not work as a singular, only as a team. Each person putting in their own skills, expertise, kindness and compassion to enhance the lives of those people living with us. A continued appreciation also goes to our volunteers and supporters.”

Michelle Cook, CEO



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR OF TRUSTEES



As the Chair of Trustees, I remain committed to upholding Acorn Village’s founding belief that life is for living, and to ensuring that a people-first, disability-second ethos is reflected in every aspect of the community. I am encouraged by the continued focus on listening to those who live, work, and engage with Acorn Village, and I seek assurance that these voices meaningfully shape both day-to-day practice and our long-term direction.

Over the past year, I have worked with fellow Trustees to maintain close oversight of the Acorn’s quality, impact, and community life. Together, we have ensured that all areas - from care and support to social, recreational, and working environments - promote dignity, respect, inclusion, and individual choice.

I recognise that Acorn Village’s achievements are the result of a collective effort. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the staff, volunteers, residents, and supporters whose dedication, skills, and compassion continue to sustain and enrich the community.

Alongside this, myself and the rest of the board remain focused on the long-term sustainability of Acorn Village, ensuring that resources are managed responsibly and that the organisation is well positioned to meet future challenges while continuing to provide a vibrant, inclusive, and person-centred environment for all.

John Whittaker, Chair of Trustees

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Adults with learning disabilities continue to face barriers including limited opportunities, accessibility challenges, and social stigma.

These obstacles can restrict independence, choice, and full participation in society.

At Acorn Village, we are committed to addressing these challenges by creating inclusive environments where people feel valued and supported.

Through personalised care, specialist housing, and a wide range of meaningful activities, we enable adults with learning disabilities to live fulfilling lives and play an active role in their communities.

Our approach focuses on empowerment, choice, and independence, ensuring the people we support are respected, included, and able to thrive. By working together with families, partners, and supporters, we continue to build a society where everyone belongs.



YEAR IN NUMBERS

RESIDENTS AND TENANTS

51 Adults Supported
35 Residents
16 Tenants
110 Registered Day Services Attendees

ACTIVITIES

2,257 Workshops Run
- Art, Breakfast Club, Computers, Cooking and Life Skills, Drama Club, Drumming, Film Club, Games, Gardening, Lads Hour, Lego Club, Media, Story Time, Textiles

1,700 Sensory Sessions

WELLBEING

300 Counselling Sessions
200 Wellbeing Activities
Highlight Events:
Soup Day and Summer Fun Day.

FACILITIES

1345+ Maintenance Jobs completed in 24-25

Highlights | Planting of Apple and Pear Avenue, Kitchen Garden project, Renewal of site signage, Residential houses kitchen upgrades, New boiler in Mistley Hall

INCOME

£266K raised via donations, legacies and grant achievements

Acorn has been able to: Enhance gardening and wellbeing activities, Upgrade our IT infrastructure, Maintain safe, warm spaces through boiler improvements

ENGAGEMENT

Facebook page had 40,000 visits
We reached over 178,000 people
Our posts received over 20,000 interactions (likes, comments and shares).

1,370 website link clicks
Monthly Supporter and Family Emails Sent

OUR PEOPLE



Acorn Village wouldn't be the same without our people. Both paid staff and volunteers are integral to our success. This year, we celebrated one 25-year long service award, one 20-year long service award and three 15-year long service awards. This exceptional retention reflects the strong culture of care, support, and community at Acorn Village.

Our staff turnover rate was just 18.5%, lower than the national average for social care (24.7% - skills for care 24/25). This demonstrates our commitment to valuing and investing in our people.

Take a look at our current vacancies
acornvillages.com/jobs



“Working at Acorn is more than just a job — it’s being part of a community that truly cares. Every person here makes a difference, and it’s a privilege to help support the people who make Acorn such a special place“

Michelle Sear, Head of Human Resources



OUR CARE SERVICES



Many of our dedicated staff have been part of the Acorn family for years, walking alongside residents and tenants through every stage of their journey. They know each person not just by name, but by personality — their hopes, habits, and the little things that make them smile. This deep understanding builds trust, safety and confidence.

There is nothing our team loves more than seeing someone achieve a goal, no matter how big or small. Whether it's learning to cook a meal, make a new friend, or simply express themselves more freely, those everyday moments of growth bring real joy to our staff — and are celebrated as the milestones they truly are. It's this consistency, care and heartfelt pride that make Acorn Village not just a place of support, but a place of belonging.



OUR CARE SERVICES

“2024-25 was a busy year, beside all the excellent work that goes on to ensure all our residents and tenants have healthy, active and enjoyable lives, the background work was completed with our newly adopted Digital Social Care Record (DSCR) and this went live in phases across care services. This presented a huge cultural shift away from having paper based care plans and records and involved many hours of work not just in the set up and creation of care plans, and actions but in training all staff to use the handheld devices and become familiar with all the record and reporting functions. As with any new system, we continue to refine the use of the DSCR so it collects information in a way that can be collated and assessed easily but it has already proven to be incredibly helpful to identify changes in need, produce reports for health professionals and promote a responsive service.

Sadly five long standing residents passed away during the 2024-25 financial year. Wherever possible we try to accommodate peoples wishes and four were able to see out their days in comfort at home, supported by their known carers and the local Single Point team. One passed away peacefully at hospital but we worked alongside the hospital staff to ensure they continued to receive companionate care from their familiar staffing team”.

Identifying suitable people to live in our established group homes takes time, but we welcomed three new people to come and live within our residential services. They have all settled in well and are enjoying being part of the Acorn community and all the opportunities available to them.”

Tom Cox, Senior Registered Manager



OUR CARE SERVICES

A lovely example of a personal achievement for one of our residents was they began volunteering in our onsite Café, completing a basic food hygiene qualification and working independently - a milestone in her journey toward self-confidence and life skills.

Families remain central to residents' wellbeing: care staff regularly help maintain these bonds through phone calls, photo sharing and in-person visits.

In 2024-25 our care teams supported all our residents and tenants to access a wide range of activities on site and in the wider community such as going swimming, horseriding, sailing, bowling, theatre and cinema trips and days out to places of interest.

We supported some people to access voluntary work experiences and get involved with the wider community for events.

"I LIKE LIVING HERE, AS I HAVE GOT REALLY NICE AND LOVING CARING PEOPLE WHO I LOVE AND THEY ARE THERE WITH ME WHENEVER I FEEL EMOTIONAL AND FAIRLY ILL. EVERYONE IS VERY SUPPORTIVE."

RESIDENT AT ACORN VILLAGE



DAY SERVICES

Our Day Services play a vital role in providing a range of engaging and enriching activities for adults with learning disabilities. These workshops are designed to support personal development, enhance social skills, and foster a sense of achievement and inclusion in the community.

One of the most popular aspects of Day Services in 24-25 is our Breakfast Club, which offers a warm, welcoming environment to start the day. It provides participants with the chance to socialise and engage with others. Art and Textiles workshops were also offered frequently in 24-25, with users embracing their creativity through various mediums. Over 700 sessions were run across these three activities, helping individuals express themselves while also developing fine motor skills.

In addition to these creative workshops, our Gardening sessions encourage individuals to connect with nature and cultivate their own plants, which enhances both practical skills and emotional well-being. Gardening is not only therapeutic but also provides a sense of pride as users see their efforts come to life.



**2,295 SESSIONS
RUN THROUGHOUT
24-25**



**PRODUCE GROWN IN OUR GARDENING
WORKSHOPS IS BROUGHT STRAIGHT
INTO OUR COOKING SESSIONS AND
USED IN OUR ONSITE CAFÉ!**

DAY SERVICES



In Day Services, there's also a strong emphasis on physical activities, with Drumming and Movement workshops, all promoting physical activity, coordination, and sensory development.

We partner throughout the year with **Wheels For All**, a national cycling charity which promotes inclusive and accessible cycling, they visit Acorn Village as part of their community engagement programmes.

For more relaxing and sensory-focused experiences, Day Services offered **1,700** sensory room sessions in 24-25, where users could engage with calming activities that promote relaxation and focus. Other activities such as Story Time, Games, and Music sessions are designed to be engaging and soothing, providing sensory-rich experiences that cater to different needs.

Beyond daily workshops, Day Services ran special outings and events, such as Horse Riding, Sailing, and trips to the Theatre and Farm, offering participants the chance to explore new experiences in the wider community.

Whether it's a Zoo visit, a Beach trip, or even a Life Skills outing, these trips provide important opportunities for growth and enjoyment outside the usual setting.

DAY SERVICES



We recognise the importance of accessibility, and with that in mind, we provide services on some weekends, being open 40% of the year over weekends throughout 24-25, ensuring our services are available to those who may need them outside regular weekdays.

All these activities, combined with the expert care and attention of our staff, offer a holistic approach to supporting adults with learning disabilities, empowering them to achieve their personal goals and lead fulfilling lives.

For further information on our Day Services workshops contact acornworkshops@acornvillages.com.

"Day Services are a vital part of our attendees lives. The workshops we offer are so important because they support independence, wellbeing, community, inclusion and help improve quality of life. Having regular social interaction and inclusion improves mental health. Throughout the year we offer a vast array of workshops to cater and suite all needs. In day services we make sure everyday is fun, creative and heartfelt"

Phil Wilden - Head of Day Services



WELLBEING



Wellbeing remains at the heart of everything we do, for our residents, staff, and volunteers.

In 24-25, our Wellbeing Services provided a range of vital support, including counselling, art therapy, and relaxation sessions, alongside a broad array of activities designed to enhance emotional, physical, and mental health.

We are proud to maintain the high standards required to uphold our Level 3 Accreditation, which is recognised through the Working Well programme for our ongoing commitment to supporting staff wellbeing.

We also took part in several national campaigns to raise awareness and offer support around critical wellbeing topics. These campaigns included Endometriosis Awareness Month, Time to Talk Day, Samaritans Awareness Day, Men's Health Week, International Women's Day, International Men's Day, and Neurodiversity Celebration Week.

Read our 24-25 Wellbeing Impact Report by scanning the QR code.



LITTLE LIBRARY

A key development this year was the launch of our Little Library - a valuable resource stocked with self-care and wellbeing-related books



THE WALLED GARDEN CAFÉ AND RETAIL

Our onsite café, The Walled Garden Café, is a heartwarming hub at Acorn Village - a welcoming and inclusive space for all.

It serves as a meeting spot for residents and tenants to connect with family and friends, while also inviting the wider community to enjoy delicious homemade food and drinks, offering a unique glimpse into daily life here at Acorn Village.

The café also provides a safe, supportive environment for individuals to develop communication skills and gain valuable work experience in hospitality, including real-world customer service interactions. This year we extended our opening hours to weekends, welcoming more visitors, continuing to create a lively community hub for the village.



Our shops, located both onsite and in Manningtree High Street, offer high-quality donated goods while promoting sustainability and fostering stronger community connections.

We have very recently implemented Gift Aid on our shop donations, helping to maximise donations on our gifted goods to better support our work.

Our shops provide valuable volunteering and work experience opportunities for adults with learning disabilities, helping to build confidence, develop practical skills, and encourage greater independence. Through these efforts, the shops play a key role in strengthening ties with local shoppers and donors, expanding Acorn's presence within the community.

Additionally, our online sales of donated items help us reach a broader audience, creating a network of buyers who appreciate both affordability and the positive impact they make through their purchases.



INCOME GENERATION



£266,053

in donations and
legacy gifts

In 2024–25, Acorn Village received an incredible **£266,053** in donations and legacy gifts. This remarkable generosity reflects the deep commitment our supporters have to improving the lives of adults with learning disabilities. Every gift has played a vital role in sustaining our services, enhancing our facilities, and creating meaningful opportunities for our residents.

These contributions ensure we can continue providing a safe, supportive and empowering community where people can truly thrive. We are profoundly grateful to everyone who chose to support Acorn Village in 24-25.



A heartfelt thank you to every individual supporter, corporate partner and community group who helped raise funds for Acorn Village throughout 2024–25.

Your generosity has made a real and lasting difference to the lives of adults with learning disabilities. Whether you organised an event, made a donation, sponsored an activity, or championed our work in your workplace or community, your support has helped us provide safe homes, meaningful activities and opportunities for people to thrive.

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to those who chose to remember Acorn Village through legacy giving. These thoughtful gifts ensure we can continue supporting our community well into the future, creating a lasting impact for generations to come.

We are incredibly grateful for your kindness, commitment and belief in Acorn Village. Together, you have helped create a happier, more inclusive community where our residents can live life to the full.

INCOME GENERATION

Grant Achievements

Through grant support this year, Acorn has been able to:

- **Enhance our gardening and outdoor wellbeing activities**
- **Improve residential environments, including furniture and essential equipment**
- **Upgrade our IT infrastructure**
- **Deliver creative and therapeutic programmes such as Art therapy, Musement and Harwich Sings**
- **Expand access to sports and physical activity equipment**
- **Maintain safe, warm spaces through boiler improvements**

We extend our sincere thanks to all the trusts, foundations and local partners whose generosity made these achievements possible, including:

Grassroots Fund, Percy Bilton Trust, National Lottery Awards for All, The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Lawford Parish Council, and the Fowler Jones Smith Charitable Trust.



Growing Online Engagement

Our growing online engagement helps raise awareness, attract supporters and celebrate the achievements of the people who live at Acorn. It's a powerful way for the community to stay connected with us.

It helps a small charity like Acorn Village, amplify its impact, strengthen sustainability, and remain relevant in an increasingly digital world - ensuring our mission reaches and supports as many people as possible.

CORPORATE SUPPORT



Businesses that have supported us in 24-25 often tell us they've experienced these and more:

- Team building and increased staff motivation
- Opportunities to meet new people and potential clients
- Enhanced public relations and media coverage
- Fulfilling CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) objectives
- Ongoing support and collaboration from the Acorn team
- A boost to brand visibility and community reputation
- The feel-good factor of giving back and making a lasting impact

If you're a business keen to support Acorn Village, there are many ways that you and your staff can help us. From having one of our collection pots on your reception desk, volunteering days, through to event sponsorship and participation. Scan the QR code to find out more.



OUR VILLAGE

Our Facilities and Maintenance team plays a crucial role in the day-to-day running of Acorn Village, carrying out essential updates, maintenance, and repairs across buildings and facilities throughout the site. Their work ensures that our environment remains safe, functional, and welcoming for everyone.

A key example of their expertise is the care of Mistley Hall, one of our Grade II listed heritage buildings. While maintaining a historic site brings unique challenges, the team works carefully and skillfully to preserve its character and history while keeping it fit for modern use. In the past year alone, the team completed 1,345 jobs, demonstrating their dedication and responsiveness.



1,345 JOBS COMPLETED

Highlights |

• PLANTING OF APPLE AND PEAR AVENUE



• KITCHEN GARDEN PROJECT

• RENEWAL OF SITE SIGNAGE

• RESIDENTIAL HOUSES KITCHEN UPGRADES



• NEW BOILER IN MISTLEY HALL

TRAINING

Acorn Training Services continued to make a meaningful impact in 2024–2025 by delivering accredited, high-quality training to individuals, organisations, and businesses.

More than a training provider, Acorn Training Services operates as an approved centre for ProTrainings.UK (since 2016), and TQUK (since 2023). This long-standing and diverse accreditation enables us to deliver professional, regulated qualifications to the highest standards, supporting both internal development and external partners.

Our training offer supports workforce development, compliance, and personal growth, equipping learners with the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to succeed. Importantly, every course booked also contributes directly to supporting adults with learning disabilities, extending our positive impact across the wider community.

Examples of qualifications completed in 2024–2025 include:

- **Level 5 Leadership and Management for Adult Care**
- **Level 2 Diploma in Business Administration**
- **Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of End of Life Care**
- **Level 2 Certificate in Falls Prevention**

Examples of training completed in 2024–2025 include:

Moving and Assisting, Emergency First Aid at Work, First Aid at Work, Community First Aid, Mental Health in the Workplace.

**"THE COURSE WAS BRILLIANTLY DELIVERED AND EASY TO FOLLOW. LOUISE CREATED AN ACTIVE, ENGAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND KEPT EVERYONE'S ATTENTION THROUGHOUT."
EMERGENCY FIRST AID AT WORK LEARNER**



CELEBRATING OUR FIVE DECADES AND LOOKING AHEAD



In 2025–2026, we will continue providing dedicated support to adults with learning disabilities. This year will also mark the 50th Anniversary of Acorn Village — a remarkable and meaningful milestone in our journey.



From everyone at Acorn Village - residents, staff, families, volunteers and trustees - thank you. Your generosity, kindness and commitment fuels and enhances everything we do and stand for.

| Contact Us |

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DONATE

