

## Annual Report - Chair

I think this must just about be my 30<sup>th</sup> report. Someone needs to work it out sometime and remind me. I am reaching an age where you don't retain that information. But I think the longevity is part of the theme of this last year, and most of those that preceded it. Organisations that survive for long periods do so almost always because they are good at adapting. And I think that adaptation is the highlight of the last year for me. We see it in many guises.

Once again we were challenged by finances. When have we not been in recent years. We have had to constantly review and reconsider what we do, why we do it, and how we do it. That is always difficult and you are always choosing between options that in a perfect world you may not wish to. I believe the strength of our senior management team has been both tested and found very competent as we have once again had to work through this process. You might argue that we came to it a year late as we had a significant loss in the 15/16 year. But the careful management of 30 odd previous years gave us the time and room to move to do this in a considered manner. We have subsequently continued to press the Ministry for a recognition that they have provided other organizations with additional funding to provide what we have always provided and I remain hopeful that this will eventually be recognized. We face the current year with a realization that we will struggle to break even and we will need to continue being very vigilant indeed. We have also adapted to a new way of managing our finances with these contracted out (back to the future?). This provides us with the resilience we need to survive key personnel change. Also a necessary part of adaptation.

However, finance has not been the story of the year. I think the story has been the further evolution of the Trusts services with the (now prolonged) move from yet another large, institutional style facility at Pages Road, to the more normal new home developments. These decisions cost us money, big money, but they are necessary both for survival and because its just the right thing to do. Whilst we had hoped to be in place about now and that is not the reality we will see this come to fruition soon.

Adaptation has also been evident in the move to embrace different styles of service. Martin has commented in his report on the development of independent living options for several in our care. This is an excellent development, both for them and for us. For them because it gives them what they need and for us because it demonstrates that we are not stuck in a single way of doing things. We adapt and grow to meet what people need. In January of this year Martin and I met with Ministry officials around a new type of supported living programme (enabling good lives) and this was another potential variation in our models of care that would adapt service to actual need, rather than need to service. It has been a slow process but I was thrilled to see the confirmation in the last week that we will be proceeding with our first group of people.

I have said before that what keeps me in the Trust over all these years is the fact that we are not doing the same thing every year. It is the adaptation that provides the challenge and the challenge that provides the enjoyment.

I have also said before that what makes the challenge possible is the caliber of the team we have delivering it. We are blessed with significant talent in both people management and vision. It is the vision of Martin and his team that maintains the challenge and it is the people management that delivers the outcome. I want to, once again, afford my deepest appreciation to Martin and his team for another fantastic years service. I really do not think I would still be here after all these years were it not for the pleasure of working with great

people. Some of the personnel change but the ethos does not and that is down to fantastic leadership. So Martin, and all your team thank you sincerely.  
And to my fellow trustees, thank you also for continuing on the journey. It is also your persistence and commitment that makes this worthwhile. It's easy to be a Chairman when you are surrounded by good people and I am blessed in that.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays

Richard Thomson  
**Chair**

