



## About Thrive Homes

A professional landlord creating quality homes where people enjoy living. Thrive is built around the importance of home as a foundation that enables individuals and families to build and sustain the lives they want.

Thrive is a business with a social heart, looking towards an exciting future. As a result of its transformation programme, Thrive jumped from an Investors In People Bronze rating to Gold, skipping Silver in the process. They are listed in the Sunday Times' Top 100 Not-for Profit Organisations to Work For and Top 25 Housing Associations.

[www.thrivehomes.org.uk](http://www.thrivehomes.org.uk)

## About changemaker

**changemaker** supports organisations and individuals in delivering sustainable and lasting change. They create high performing teams and organisations by focusing on the human being, helping leaders and teams understand how they see the world and each other. They encourage diversity in all forms and help organisations to understand and develop the power of thinking differently.

## Thrive Homes UK – a reinvention story

Elspeth Mackenzie became Chief Executive of Thrive Homes one year after it took over Three Rivers District Council's property portfolio and its housing department staff. The company's ambition was limited - to maintain the housing stock and more or less continue doing what the Council had done – and its culture was conservative, detail-oriented, process-focused.

Elspeth wanted to create an innovative, dynamic and entrepreneurial company: *"an agile organisation in which individuals self-respond to difficult situations; where people understand the boundaries of their roles but within those boundaries they feel fully empowered to take the initiative."*

She realised making this vision a reality would require some drastic changes, creating not only a new operating model but also a complementary and enabling company culture. Elspeth knew the two needed to go hand-in-hand and she couldn't achieve the former without the latter. She realised this wasn't something Thrive could do alone: *"Getting a core of people to behave in ways that reflect your brand is tough. After a few false starts we found Paul."*

Paul Major is a founding partner of **changemaker**, specialists in supporting leaders and their organisations to achieve sustainable change. Along with his **changemaker** colleagues, he became a mentor and coach for Thrive throughout a period of intense change

*“**changemaker** helped us understand how the various parts of our organisation fitted together and interacted, why friction happens and how to avoid it.”*

**Elsbeth Mackenzie**

**Chief Executive**

*“I’ve seen a real difference in how I work. I’ve moved from managing to leading, from telling to coaching. These are conscious changes and the external coaching really helps.”*

**Jo Barrett**

**Operations Director**



that touched every aspect of their business model, working with both the management team and the workforce to design and deliver a change programme that transformed their company culture.

Today, Thrive Homes describes itself as “a professional landlord creating quality homes where people enjoy living.” It offers properties to a range of customers, including shared ownership and market rate rents. It treats its tenants as customers, its ethos encapsulated in the Thrive Deal, a two-way relationship based on mutual respect with responsibilities on both sides.

## **Creating a Baseline. Creating Engagement**

**changemaker** knew that the first step for any successful change is to intimately understand your current situation. Paul Major commented “*The single most important step in realising any human change is to recognise that everyone sees the world, work and life through a different lens. We all have different preferences and personalities which influence the way we behave and the experiences we create. Real cultural shift isn’t possible until you recognise that fact. It’s critical to not only understand what this means for an individual but also what behaviours and experiences we want to create as an organisation and the role of leadership in influencing these.*”

The first step was to introduce Thrive to Lumina Spark, a psychometric tool that provides unique insights using real-world language. It helps increase self-awareness, reveals hidden potential and enables people to cope better under pressure by enabling a greater understanding of how we see the world and why we respond in the way we do to the situations and people around us.

**changemaker** created Lumina Spark profiles for everyone in the organisation. This gave each person an insight into their own personalities and the preferences of their colleagues, both under normal circumstances and when under pressure. It was revelatory, capturing everyone’s imagination and fully engaging them with the process.



## Actionable Insights

The next step was to help Thrive's leadership team use the insights provided by the Lumina profiles to understand their current behavioural norm and compare it to the one they wanted. Understanding this gap allowed them to plan how to close it and enabled them to actively lead a cultural shift in the organisation. Elspeth Mackenzie called this stage "a self-awareness journey for the organisation".

The ensuing change programme included rolling out initiatives to develop accountability, encourage action learning and peer coaching groups as well as introducing two other tools: Lumina Team and Lumina Select. Lumina Team enabled individual teams to understand their preferences, embrace differences in viewpoint and improve team performance. Lumina Select helped Thrive hire more diversely, consciously identifying the competencies and behaviours required in the organisation they wanted to become.

At the end of this stage, the Lumina tools and **change**maker's coaching transformed every aspect of how Thrive's people interacted with each other, their Board, their suppliers and their customers. Thrive adopted the language and concepts embedded in the tools and they became an integral part of the company's DNA.

## Widespread Benefits

The Lumina toolset became the catalyst for cultural change and the foundation stone of a process that is still expanding to touch all aspects of interpersonal interactions within Thrive. From recruitment to supplier selection to Board composition, they are thinking objectively about the behavioural competencies they need and actively using these insights in the selection process. An unconscious process has become a conscious one.

**change**maker's approach and Lumina Spark have also given Thrive an unexpected bonus – a non-judgemental shared language that allows them to have difficult conversations in a non-threatening way. This has proved

*"The Lumina model recognises the value each of us bring from the introvert to the extrovert, how to better understand ourselves and each other, and creates a common language we can use to help us work better together."*

**Karen Forbes-Jackson**

**Executive Director—  
Corporate Services**

*"The amazing thing is the extent to which every level of the organisation has embraced the Lumina tool and the insight it provides."*

**Elsbeth Mackenzie**

*"We're getting better at being honest with each other. We're getting better outcomes through greater self-awareness."*

**Jo Barrett**

*"We can have difficult conversations successfully because we've learned to take the emotion out of it."*

**Victoria Bolton**

**Customer Experience Lead**

*"It all sounds common sense but without the coaching it wouldn't happen because you're working to overcome ingrained habits."*

**Jo Barrett**

beneficial in all kinds of situations, enabling them to become better at giving and receiving tough feedback and easing introduction of peer-to-peer coaching.

## Critical Success Factors

Like all journeys, cultural shift is easier when you have a guide who knows the terrain. Everyone at Thrive stressed the importance of an external coach – someone with a dispassionate viewpoint who can connect at all levels of the organisation and break down potential barriers. For Elspeth, the fact that Paul had a business background was a bonus because she felt he instinctively understood her business challenges.

Mindset and leadership were equally important. Elspeth Mackenzie's belief in managed experimentation undoubtedly increased Thrive's chances of success, as did the total commitment she and her leadership team gave to changing the company - including making the necessary investment in both time and money.

Three years into the journey, the results speak for themselves – both in terms of external ratings and the internal shift in how people behave and act. However, for Elspeth Mackenzie, it's an ongoing, iterative, evolutionary process. As far as they've already come, Thrive are still setting themselves the challenge to do even better.

For more information on Thrive Homes please visit [www.thrivehomes.org.uk](http://www.thrivehomes.org.uk)

To discuss how **changemaker** could help you transform your business or for further information on the revolutionary Lumina Learning psychometric tools please contact Paul via e-mail at [paul.major@changemaker.org.uk](mailto:paul.major@changemaker.org.uk)

