



TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

for the year 19 February
2021 - 19 February 2022



Wakefield and District
Down's Syndrome Support Group



A welcome from our Chair of Trustees

Our AGM is a wonderful opportunity to reflect and give thanks for the past year in our WDDSSG life. The world continued to be a strange and scary place for many especially as the world began to open back up after a long period of restrictions and shielding. As trustees, we were very mindful of the vulnerability of many within our group and every decision made about what activities we could and could not offer

was made with the utmost consideration. That said, we did begin to open up, slowly and tentatively. My favourite moment saw us at This Green Moon where the children (and some adults!) ran, built, laughed and relaxed together. The place is truly magical and it was an honour to be able to see the happiness emanating from so many. Love and compassion really did shine out throughout the day. It was the first time some of our newer families were able to join us and finally put faces to names and get a taste of the WDDSSG experience in all of its glory.

Christmas was a difficult decision, as we know how much the Christmas party is enjoyed by so many. To reduce risks to everyone involved, we introduced Doorstep Santa who visited families with his entourage of festive friends. As trustees, we felt we needed to make a personal gesture to you all, to let you know we were still there for you all, that we care deeply and that we will always do what we can to be a part of your lives. That and the fact that one of our trustees had a burning urge to wear tights and dress up as an elf (I'll let you work out who)!

Our panto trip was a virtual one this year thanks to Wakefield Theatre going over and above for our families recording the performance and giving us access.

As a group, we continue to do what we do very well despite the difficult times faced.

Our group is growing in numbers, we continue to raise awareness and most importantly, we continue to support one another in many ways. I would never attempt to list people to thank as there are far too many (and inevitably I will miss someone out) however I would like to thank you, all of you. We all contribute in what way we can. We must continue to recognise this as we go forward. Those who want something to happen enough will always be given the opportunity to propose this to trustees. Wherever possible, whenever it is in the best interests of the charity, and people are prepared to put plans into action, it will happen. So thank you, thank you to the doers, the checkers, the helpers and the participants (not the goers!) We all have very busy home lives and I really do appreciate your commitment.

Next year will bring more opportunities, more fun and more awareness of that I am sure.

To close (just as I did last year) I would just like to reiterate how proud I am of this charity and the families that make up our group. Our tag line remains very poignant ...

A brighter future through a better understanding.

Ann-Marie Sheard
Chair of Trustees

OUR CHARITABLE OBJECTS

We are a small, voluntary-run charity, with big ideas!

We work to raise awareness in the hope of reducing social stigma and discrimination, and maximising opportunities and potential of children and young people with Down's syndrome.

We held our AGM on 9 July.

Our charity, guided by our trustees, continues to be shaped by the families that are in it – by what they want, by what they are able to set up, and by what they create between them.

We are always limited by time, as all of our volunteers are busy parents and cannot always achieve what they would like to, but we continue to do our best to keep on supporting, creating opportunities for fun and friendship, raising awareness and making a difference.

THE OBJECTS OF OUR CIO ARE:

The promotion of social inclusion among people with Down's syndrome and those with other learning/additional needs including their families and carers within Wakefield and District and its immediately bordering areas who are socially excluded as a result of their condition by preventing them from becoming socially excluded, relieving their needs and assisting them to integrate into society by:-

1. providing information, forums, advocacy and general support; and
2. by providing recreational facilities and opportunities.

We achieve our objects with a mixture of regular and one-off activities and events which enable families to have fun and develop friendships and, ultimately, to support each other.

We aim to make a difference by improving understanding of Down's syndrome in our community in as many ways as we can, and we are steadily increasing the opportunities for children and young people with Down's syndrome in our area.

We also work to raise awareness of Down's syndrome and our charity in our area, and to the wider world on the internet and on social media.

This year...

Supporting each other

The Covid pandemic continued for most of this period, meaning that we were still unable to resume our regular activities. We did what we could, holding our first outdoor meetings.

We are proud of the decisions we made to be cautious around resuming activities, as we made the health of our vulnerable families the highest priority.

As we were unable to hold our much-loved annual Christmas party, we made a decision to spread the joy in a way that we could manage - socially distanced Doorstep Santas!!!

We had some wonderful feedback, here's just some of it:

"Thank you so much, Santa and helpers. This was such a lovely thing that you have done. Miss you all deeply."

"You guys are just amazing thank you for what you do for our lovely group."

"Thank you team for arranging Santa to come and make a young man very happy. We do appreciate all the Trustees and volunteers do for our group not just at Christmas but all year round - thanks again"

"When Santa calls and makes your day! Thank you Wakefield & District Down's Syndrome Support Group I have a happy boy tonight!"



Support

Our Facebook group, which facilitates communication between our parents and offers a forum for advice and support whenever it is needed, has been the key to keeping our charity going while we were unable to meet. The group provides a network, reinforced every day by the families within it, where questions are always answered or people are signposted to a service that will help them, people who have concerns are listened to, and people who have things in common come forward and make contact with each other, if they choose to. The Facebook group is a precious resource that didn't disappear regardless of the state of the world around us.

We weren't able to meet up for our annual pantomime trip, but we were lucky enough to negotiate a filmed version of the pantomime at Wakefield Theatre for our families, with a special link for WDDSSG that we could all watch at the same time!

During the pandemic, the volunteers that keep our charity going faced as many difficulties as every other family we support, and we are proud of what they did to keep the support group there to support others when it was needed.

Our What I Wish I'd Known book remains available to new parents in our area and for sale across the country, and our new parent support systems remain in place.



Raising awareness

We always create special awareness posts in March to celebrate World Down's Syndrome Day, and in October for DS Awareness Month. We focus on what has become one of the key values of our charity - valuing and accepting all people with DS as they are.

For World Down Syndrome Day our posts follow the themes of the international WDSD - this year the theme was "Inclusion Means". Inclusion is improving, but there is much more to do. We asked our families what they would like to tell others - here's some examples:

"just having the same opportunities as everyone else"

"being welcome and being valued"

"we should all be equally valued for our own gifts and talents"

"understanding that we all have a part to play in society"

"with the right support, anything can be possible".



Fun and friendship

Our first face to face meetings

We made our first tentative steps back into meeting up in August, holding an open meeting at Heath Common. The rain didn't stop us having fun!!

We had a fantastic time at one of our favourite places, This Green Moon, which enabled us to meet up outdoors. We were able to meet new babies that we'd not had chance to meet yet, and families were able to talk to each other for the first time in ages!!



And our older group started outdoor walks together!

Making a difference

Speech and language therapy

We had money that was ringfenced for speech and language and so, although we were unable to organise face to face sessions, we were able to recruit an experienced speech and language therapist to offer online parent advice sessions to support families.

We offered a block of sessions for early years and Key stage 1, plus catch up sessions on a Saturday for those who couldn't attend, and a block for Key Stage 2. The sessions covered a different topic each time, for example Attention and Listening, Creating Opportunities to Communicate, Developing Vocabulary or Word Levels.

This is a great opportunity for families to learn more about how to support their own children's speech and language development. It was well-received by the families that attended, but we had hoped more families would attend.

We collected comments after the sessions, for example, was it useful to share your session with other families:

"Yes because our experiences are often similar and you realise we all have similar struggles".

"Please keep this session in the program as very, very good thank you"

Fundraising

With many thanks...!!!

The Covid pandemic continued to have a considerable impact on the opportunities for fundraising this year. We are in a favourable position as a very small charity that our outgoings are similarly limited, but the fundraising activities are often a great opportunity for raising awareness, which is so vital for our charity, and so we hope this can increase again next year.

Every donation is gratefully received and very much appreciated, and are all documented in our Treasurer's report. We wish to send particular thanks to Keeley Handlovics and her team for her spectacular fundraising event and also to Team Reggie - you are all Superstars!



The year ahead

We are looking forward to the coming year, and hoping that we are able to resume some of our much-loved activities.

We are hoping that Saturday Club will return in 2022, with more opportunities for our families to meet each other and have fun.

As well as resuming current activities, we are hoping to start new projects - recruiting new parent supporters and increasing our contacts with local hospitals and maternity services, for example.

We have substantial reserves available to support new projects - our current volunteers are stretched and we are hopeful that new volunteers will step forward to support the charity and allow its good work to continue.



OUR ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Charity name: Wakefield and District Down's Syndrome Support Group

Charity registration number: 1155866

Address: c/o 4 Fennel Court, Methley LS26 9LG

OUR TRUSTEES 19 FEB 2021 - 18 FEB 2022

Ann-Marie Sheard - Chair of Trustees

Neil Courtman - Vice Chair of Trustees / Secretary

Ruth Noble - Treasurer

Andrea Arnold - Parent Trustee / Communications

Ann Aylward - Parent Trustee

Alison Brown - Parent Trustee

John Crawshaw - Independent Trustee

Paula Rose - Grandparent Trustee (resigned September 2021)

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Our group has run as a voluntary group since 2000, with a small committee of volunteers, and we became an affiliated local group of the Down's Syndrome Association in 2003. Our charity has been formed as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which is governed by a constitution which was adopted on 20 February 2014.

We hold regular trustee meetings as well as any additional sub-group meetings where necessary. Our trustees have remained mostly the same from the previous year, we have one independent trustee and have actively sought to appoint another one to strengthen our board. We provide a named trustee to support events organised by volunteers outside of the trustee board.

The Trustees have taken the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance into account when making all decisions and will continue to do so.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The net receipts for this year were £5,369.57, and net expenditure was £4,784.91. The Treasurer's full report was presented at our AGM. It was noted that the Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on both our income and our opportunities to use our donations.

RESERVES

The charity's balance at the end of this year were £29,229.28. Of that balance, £16,420.14 is funds restricted for specific purposes by the donors, leaving free cash reserves of £12,809.14.

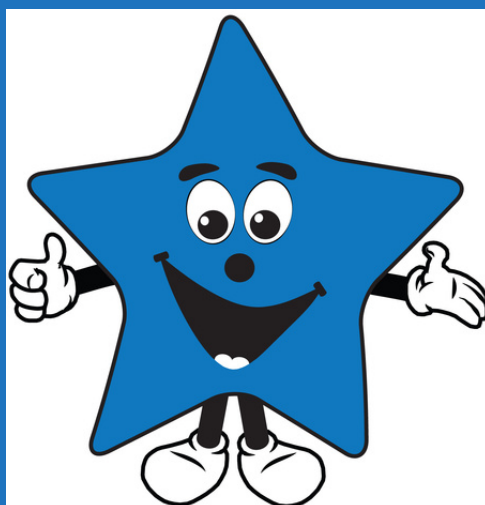
There is no formal reserves policy, as the charity's ongoing core costs are minimal due to being fully volunteer-led. The majority of our income and reserves is available to be allocated to maintaining current projects for the future, and to creating new projects.

DECLARATION

Signed by the Chair on behalf of all trustees:



Ann-Marie Sheard, Chair of Trustees for WDDSSG



Wakefield & District Downs Syndrome Group**Income & Expenditure Accounts for the year 18th February 2021 to 17th February 2022****Income**

Donations	<u>£5,369.57</u>	
Total Income		£5,369.57

Expenses

Rent	£1,040.00	
Insurance	£30.00	
Donations Sent	£300.00	
Entertainment	£634.75	
Training	£126.00	
Gifts	£990.32	
Software	£178.83	
Postage	£42.11	
Professional Fees	£1,420.00	
Stationary	<u>£22.90</u>	
Total Expenses		<u>£4,784.91</u>

Surplus for the year		<u><u>£584.66</u></u>
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