

ANNUAL REPORT

February 2023-February 2024

Wakefield and District
**Down's Syndrome
Support Group**



Wakefield and District Down's Syndrome Support Group
Charity number: 1155866

OUR CHARITY

We are a very small, voluntary-run charity. 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.

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.



Our charitable objects

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 focus on four key areas: **support; fun and friendship; making a difference; raising awareness.**

We offer 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.

SUPPORT



Saturday Club is one of the cornerstones of our support group - it's held on the first Saturday of every month, and is a valuable opportunity to meet other families in person which can be so important. There are lots of opportunities for playing together and having fun, and parents get to chat and build friendships too.

"This group is a great support whenever you need it."

"Thank you for making us feel so welcome."

"Life is a journey for everyone. It's the people you meet along the way that make it special and this group is full of special people!"

We unfortunately had to cancel a session this year as currently only one family are volunteering to "lead" Saturday Club with welcoming people and they caught Covid. The session doesn't take much, as it is supported by our independent trustees and our SLT, it just needs the friendly face of a DS parent to say hello and check everyone is okay! We hope that other volunteers will step forward to back up our current family and make sure Saturday Club can always be there for others.



SUPPORT



Our **Facebook** group is a great support for families – the group enables families to offer support to each other and ask/answer questions. There's always people ready to offer answers and support, and we are very proud of the positive attitude that is always maintained across our social media with the help of all of our families. We also use

the group to keep everyone informed about our events. Last year we created our **WDDSSG Little Stars** group in response to families telling us that a gentle introduction to their DS journey may be easier than the main group for all families. This year, we created **Brighter Futures**, our group for high-school children to adults. We met up in October to make plans!!

We have our **Supersibs** group, that meet up to build friendships with others that have something in common and have fun together. We held a Supersibs event at Yorkshire Wildlings in August which was lots of fun!



FUN AND FRIENDSHIP



Our group has an essential role in creating opportunities for our families to socialise and have fun together. Meeting other people on the same journey as you is one way to make life easier, and to build connections that can be a support throughout the journey.

Events such as our **summer trip in August**, our full family trip to **Yorkshire Wildings** in October and our family **pantomime** event at Wakefield's Theatre Royal in January are very popular, and create amazing opportunities to have fun together and make memories.

Sunday Funday is our soft play session - open to every family and a brilliant opportunity for socialising and fun with others, as well as a chance for older children to feel comfortable accessing the benefits of soft play. We held four sessions this year - in March, May, July and November, but were also disappointed this year at the closure of our favourite venue, as it can be very difficult to find a soft play venue that is able to accommodate all of our families, and we hope to find a replacement soon.



FUN AND FRIENDSHIP



We always love a party at WDDSSG! Our **World Down Syndrome day party** was one of this year's best days, and we truly celebrated in style!

"We had a great time and my daughter made new friends. Thank you."

"Our first time coming, we loved every minute... thank you."

"We all had a lovely time so good to see everyone again, massive thank you to everyone who organised and for fabulous goodie bags."



Our **Valentine's disco** for our Brighter Futures group was a fantastic night for all, with some delicious food, loads of amazing raffle prizes to be won, and everyone dancing the night away!

"It was a really fab night. Lovely to see everyone enjoying themselves. The pie and peas were delicious and the homemade muffins were gorgeous. Thanks for arranging it."

FUN AND FRIENDSHIP



We held our annual **Christmas party** at Carleton Grange this year, and it was a brilliant afternoon for everyone. We're always grateful to our special guest in the red suit (seen on our Welcome page!) for taking the time out of his busy December schedule to visit WDDSSG!

***"Had the best time at the Xmas party! Thank you so much for organising"
Lovely party yesterday!! Great fun for all! Thank you so much"***

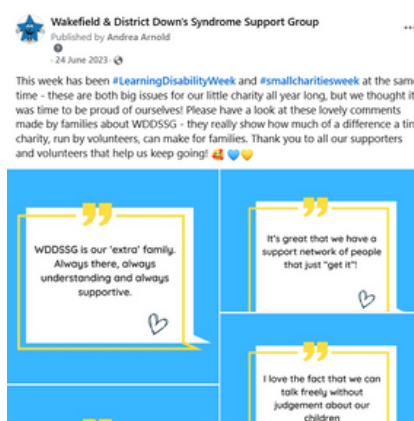
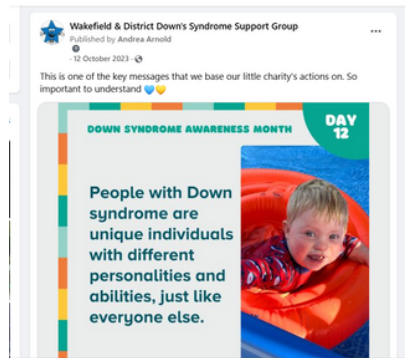
Doorstep Santas has become an important feature of the WDDSSG calendar, and brought smiles to everyone's faces! Our teams jingled their way around 23 families across the day, delivering presents and some wonderful memories! This year was a special year as we were able to include our first ever elf with DS - hopefully there will be more to come!!

"Thank you for a lovely Santa visit, my daughter's had the best weekend"



RAISING AWARENESS

We use our **public Facebook page** to raise awareness of our achievements and abilities and to participate in national awareness events such as World Down Syndrome Day. Here's a selection of our positive publications!



We love to show off our fabulous young people participating in all of the national events, such as Halloween and World Book Day, just like everyone else...



...and we really love to celebrate the truly special achievements of the young Superstars in our group, such as Oliver, who received TWO trophies for his street dance class, and Sophie, who achieved all the criteria for the Chief Scout Gold Award in her mainstream scout group, including a two day expedition. Absolutely awesome!



MAKING A DIFFERENCE



It has been another great year with our fab **speech and language therapist** Cath, who has offered bookable 1:1 sessions and informal support conversations with our families at Saturday Club on a regular basis. This has been so helpful to families.



We were able to offer some helpful support sessions for families, including **Level 3 Makaton training** in March and **First Aid sessions** in May this year.

Thank you so much for organising the Makaton course today, Andy was fantastic a great teacher
We were then saddened when Andy passed away this year, he was an excellent Ambassador for Makaton and will be missed by WDDSSG.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



"All children are capable of developing and progressing if people have the time to invest in them and understand them"

TriStars Active is our monthly informal sports session, usually held on the third Saturday of each month. Active is a great way of trying new and accessible activities, and we always have a mixture of familiar activities to build skills and new activities to try.

Active gives young people that find it hard to cope with mainstream sessions a place to be welcome and included. This can be so important for some of our families - inclusion in mainstream groups has increased so much since our charity was formed, and it works for some families and can be highly beneficial. Other families tell us that they can't find anywhere that their child can feel comfortable, or be successful. Everyone fits in at Active!



FUNDRAISING



Special thanks to Keeley Handlovics and her amazing team that raised an amazing amount for us again with their event!

We also extend our thanks to many others, including Team Reggie, Watersheds, those that have raised money with sales such as World Down Syndrome Day merchandise and birthday fundraisers, and those that have supported the charity in memory of their loved ones.

This year more than ever, we are very grateful for every penny raised for us - **thank you!**

THE YEAR AHEAD

As young people get older, our **Brighter Futures** group is going from strength to strength.

We hope over the next year that some families with younger children can get involved to create opportunities for our younger children, and continue the good work of this group.

CHARITY DETAILS



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 and our annual AGM was held on 8th September this year. Our trustees have remained mostly the same from the previous year, and we now have our two independent trustees. We try to provide a named trustee to support events organised by volunteers outside of the trustee board, and will only be able to expand our activities if further volunteers step forward.

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

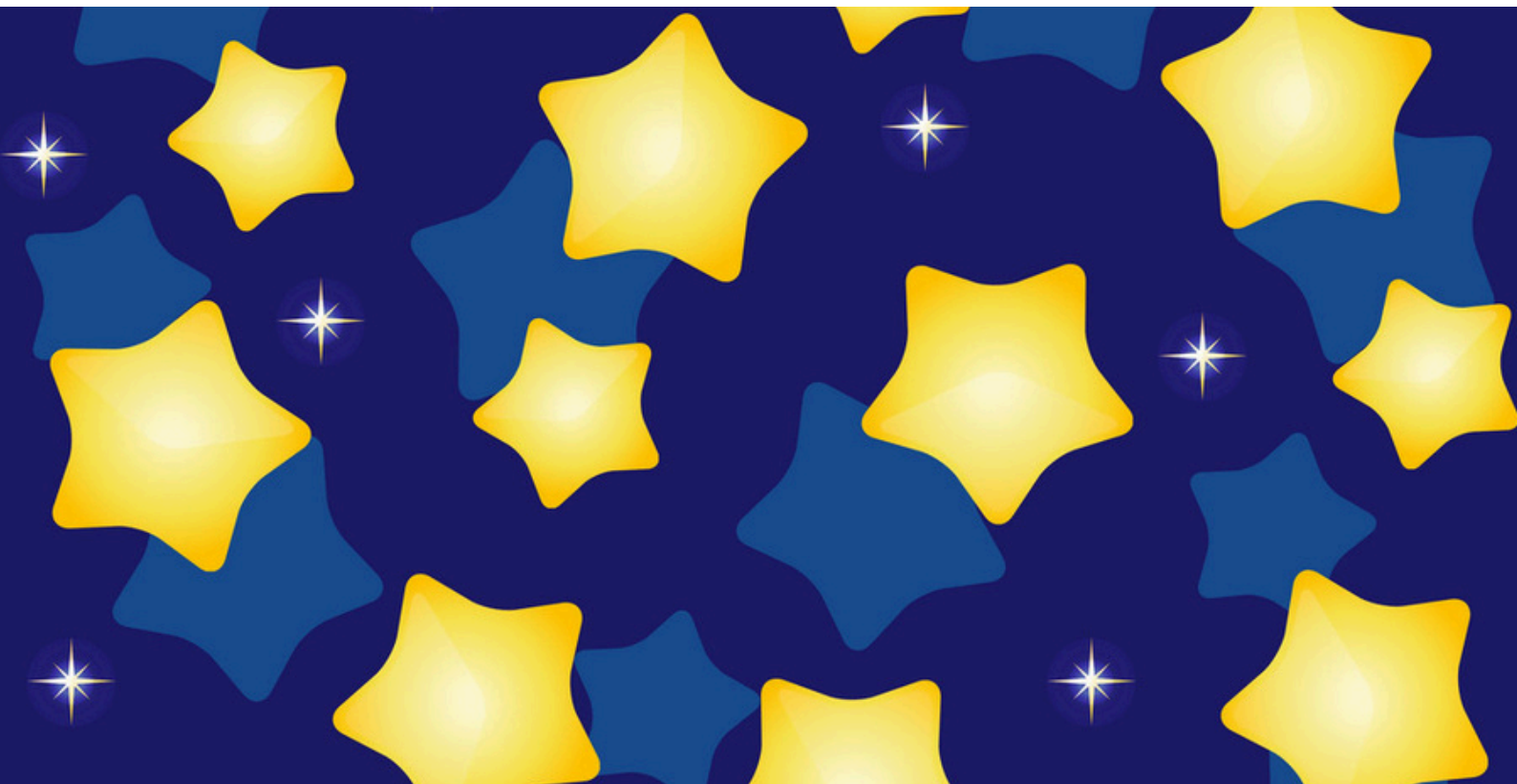
Trustees 19 Feb 2023 - 18 Feb 2024

Ann-Marie Sheard - Chair of Trustees
Neil Courtman - Vice Chair of Trustees / Secretary
Ruth Noble - Treasurer
Andrea Arnold - Parent Trustee / Communications
Alison Brown - Parent Trustee / Fundraising
Ann Aylward - Parent Trustee / Brighter Futures
John Crawshaw - Independent Trustee
Nigel LePage - Independent Trustee (10 March 2023)

Wakefield and District Down's Syndrome Support Group

Charity number: 1155866
Address: c/o 4 Fennel Court,
Methley, LS26 9LG

FINANCIAL INFORMATION



Expenditure totalled £15,078. Like everyone else, we have found that the cost of everything has increased. Incoming monies were £4,177. The charity's balance at the end of this year were £11,087.26. Of that balance, £2,868 is funds restricted for specific purposes by the donors, leaving free cash reserves of £8,219.

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

For next year, we have had to make some difficult decisions. As a result of our reduced income, we clearly cannot afford to fund all of the same events as last year and have to focus on those activities which provide specific benefits to our families. Our much-loved summer trip and pantomime trip cost thousands of pounds each, and we hope that by not funding these two events, it will allow all of the charity's other activities to continue. We also hope that support in the form of volunteers and fundraisers increases in the year to come.

Signed by the Chair on behalf of all trustees:


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Ann-Marie Sheard, Chair of Trustees for WDDSSG

Wakefield & District Down's Syndrome Support Group

Income & Expenditure Accounts for the year 18th February 2023 to 17th February 2024

Balance B/Fwd			22253.07			
<u>Income</u>						
Donations	£4,176.59					
Total Income		£4,176.59				
<u>Expenses</u>						
Parties	£1,812.00					
Speech and language	£756.00					
Panto	£3,762.20					
Trips and visits	£4,598.57					
Storage	£1,414.40					
Training	£1,985.00					
Gifts	£358.09					
Software	£99.00					
Misc	£18.00					
Professional Fees	£267.55					
Stationery	£271.59					
Total Expenses		£15,342.40				
Surplus(Deficit) for the year		-£11,165.81				
Balance C/Fwd			£11,087.26			

Independent Examiners Report for Wakefield & District Downs Syndrome Support Group

Accounting period; 18th February 2023 to 17th February 2024

Independent Examiner; Nicola Baldwin

Report

With a gross income of less than £25,000 there is no statutory requirement for the charity to have an external examination of the accounts, however, this has been carried out at the request the charity.

In my examination of the accounts, I have checked the bank statements and found all transactions to have been entered into the accounts. All transactions have a relevant document, not necessarily a point of sale receipt.

I have no concerns and have not come across any matters in connection with the examination to which attention needs to be drawn in this report.

Date 24th June 2024

Signed 

Name Nicola Baldwin

NVQ Level 3 Accounting

19 years accumulated experience of accounting employment.