

ANNUAL REPORT

February 2024-February 2025

Wakefield and District Down's Syndrome Support Group



Just some of the fabulous photos shared with us
by our families to help us raise awareness in 2024

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

WELCOME



It is my privilege to present this year's Trustees' Annual Report and to extend a sincere welcome to all families who have joined us since our last Annual General Meeting. We are delighted to have you as part of the WDDSSG community. Our commitment remains to provide support wherever possible and, where direct assistance cannot be offered, to guide families towards appropriate resources and services. The Annual General Meeting provides an important opportunity to pause and reflect on the past year. Throughout this period, the trustees have remained mindful of the vulnerabilities within our membership, and every decision regarding activities has been taken with careful consideration. While previous years presented significant challenges, this year has seen a continuation of stability and a welcome return to a sense of normality. We have been able to deliver a range of activities that strengthen the connections which make our community so special.

This report outlines the activities and support provided during the year, but I wish to highlight the remarkable commitment behind these achievements. From family events and awareness campaigns to practical support and signposting, everything we do is powered by volunteers. These dedicated individuals give generously of their time and energy, and without them, our work would not be possible. On behalf of the trustees, I extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you.

Our group thrives on ideas from members, and we actively encourage participation in shaping our future activities. Where proposals align with the charity's objectives and individuals are willing to assist in their implementation, we will always endeavour to make them happen. This collaborative spirit is what makes WDDSSG unique.

We recognise that the needs of our families continue to evolve. Balancing resources, safeguarding, and accessibility remains a priority. The trustees are committed to listening, learning, and adapting to ensure that our support remains relevant and impactful.

The year ahead promises further opportunities to connect, share, and grow together. We aim to expand our activities, strengthen partnerships, and continue raising awareness of Down syndrome within our communities. Most importantly, we look forward to creating more moments of joy—the milestones, the laughter, and the experiences that remind us why we do what we do.

Finally, I am immensely proud of this charity and of the families who form its foundation. Our guiding principle remains as relevant today as ever: "A brighter future through better understanding."

Thank you for your continued support and commitment. Together, we are making a difference.

Ann-marie Sheard, Chair of Trustees

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.

WHAT WE DO

This year saw a change in some of our activities, due to funding concerns and the need to secure our charity's existence for both our current and future families.

We are proud that we run our regular social activities with minimal costs, so we have been able to maintain **Saturday Club**, which is always there to provide families with a way to make contact with others when they are ready, and many lifelong friendships have been formed this way! Our **Facebook group** remains an important way for our families to keep in touch, ask questions, get support and give support to others.

We created different ways to get together and, although we couldn't manage the annual summer trip this year, we arranged a **family meet-up** at Heath Common, which was loads of fun and still allowed families to come together.

Christmas is always a wonderful time for WDDSSG, and we were able to maintain our much-loved annual **Christmas party**, and continue with **Doorstep Santa**, a newer tradition that has become important to many families.

We were saddened by the closure of the Playstation, a venue that we have loved for our group's parties and for **Sunday Funday**. We celebrated World Down Syndrome Day there in March 2024, which turned out to be our last session.

Changes can lead to new beginnings, and this year we were able to find an alternative to our annual pantomime, with our very own performance of **Dewsbury Arts Group's pantomime**! It was a special day, with our ice cream treats too!



MAKING A DIFFERENCE



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We have also found ways of **creating opportunities** for our members to learn skills and feel valued taking a part in organising our events - here's Zoe taking tea and coffee orders at Saturday Club!

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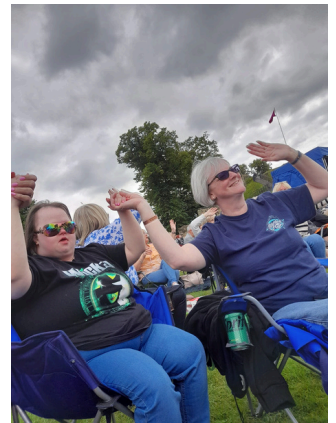
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This year we hosted a talk supporting families to learn about **wills**, which had 17 attendees, and a further 12 attendees joined a similar talk about **benefits**.

This year also saw a focus on developing our **Brighter Futures** group! As well as our wonderful annual Valentine's disco, the group organised a cinema trip in May, and enjoyed Musicals at the Park in June as well as an ABBA tribute band. They also attended a Michael Jackson tribute event with a restaurant meal in October, and a special performance at The Junction in Goole in December with a meal out at Pizza Express - lots of fun while building supportive friendships!



FUNDRAISING



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In June 2024 we were chosen by Morgan Sindall Construction to be their Charity for a year. Dan, Zita, Sallie and the Team raised a phenomenal £3,354.71 (in this reporting year) by undertaking many challenges including Oxenhope Straw Race, charity football match, cycle race, holding raffles, coffee mornings and many more!



We also extend our thanks to many others including Team Reggie, Michelle Hemingway and Watersheds among others for their kind donations and fundraising.

Thank you everyone that raised funds for us this year it is always very much appreciated!

THE YEAR AHEAD

We are very much looking forward to the year ahead, with hopes for increased financial opportunities and more help from volunteers to enable to group to do more. We'd love to bring back our much loved activities, like our Supersibs!

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. Our Trustees have remained mostly the same from the previous year, with one new parent Trustee, and we continue to be supported by two independent Trustees. Most of our volunteers providing our activities are also our Trustees, and as always, we 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.

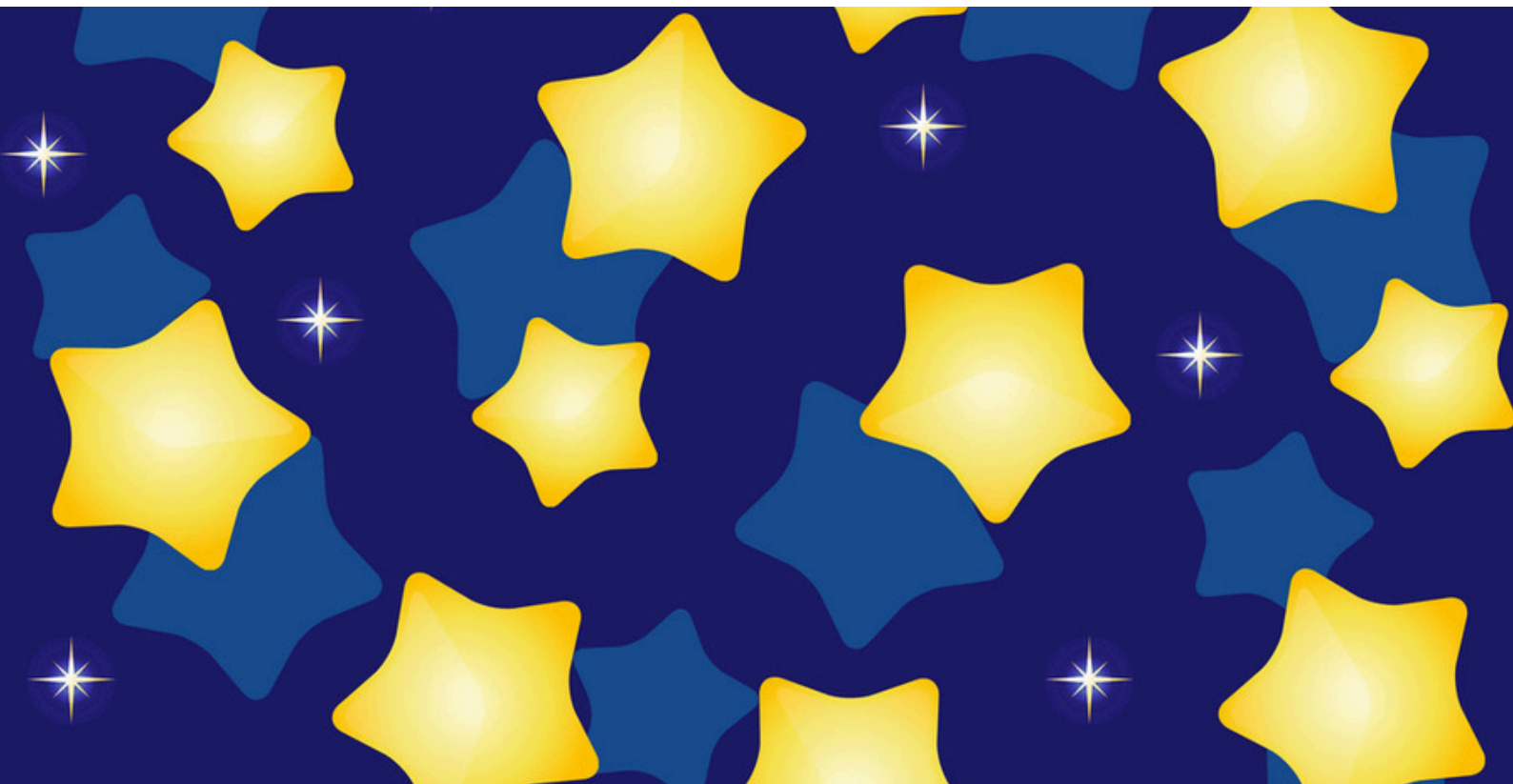
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Neil Courtman - Vice Chair of Trustees / Secretary
Ruth Noble - Treasurer
Andrea Arnold - Parent Trustee / Communications
Ann Aylward - Parent Trustee / Brighter Futures
Alison Brown - Parent Trustee / Fundraising
Chris Sharp - Parent Trustee (elected June 2024)
John Crawshaw - Independent Trustee
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Wakefield and District Down's Syndrome Support Group

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Address: c/o 4 Fennel Court,
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FINANCIAL INFORMATION



Expenditure over the year totalled £5,855.59 which was significantly lower than previous years and reflects our careful approach to managing our reduced income for the year and the decisions we made last year. Incoming monies were £7,881.35.

The charity's balance at the end of this year was £13,113.02. Of that balance, £2,898.48 is funds restricted for specific purposes by the donors, leaving free cash reserves of £10,214.54.

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.

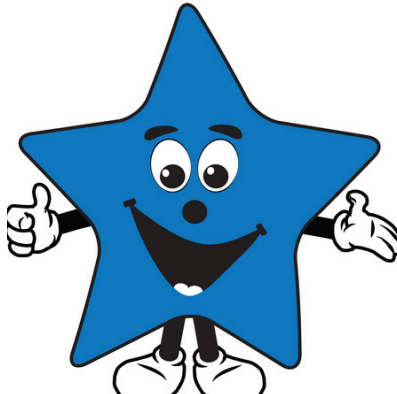
Signed by the Chair on behalf of all trustees:

Ann-Marie Sheard, Chair of Trustees for WDDSSG

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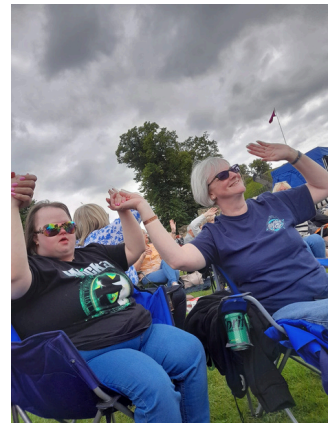
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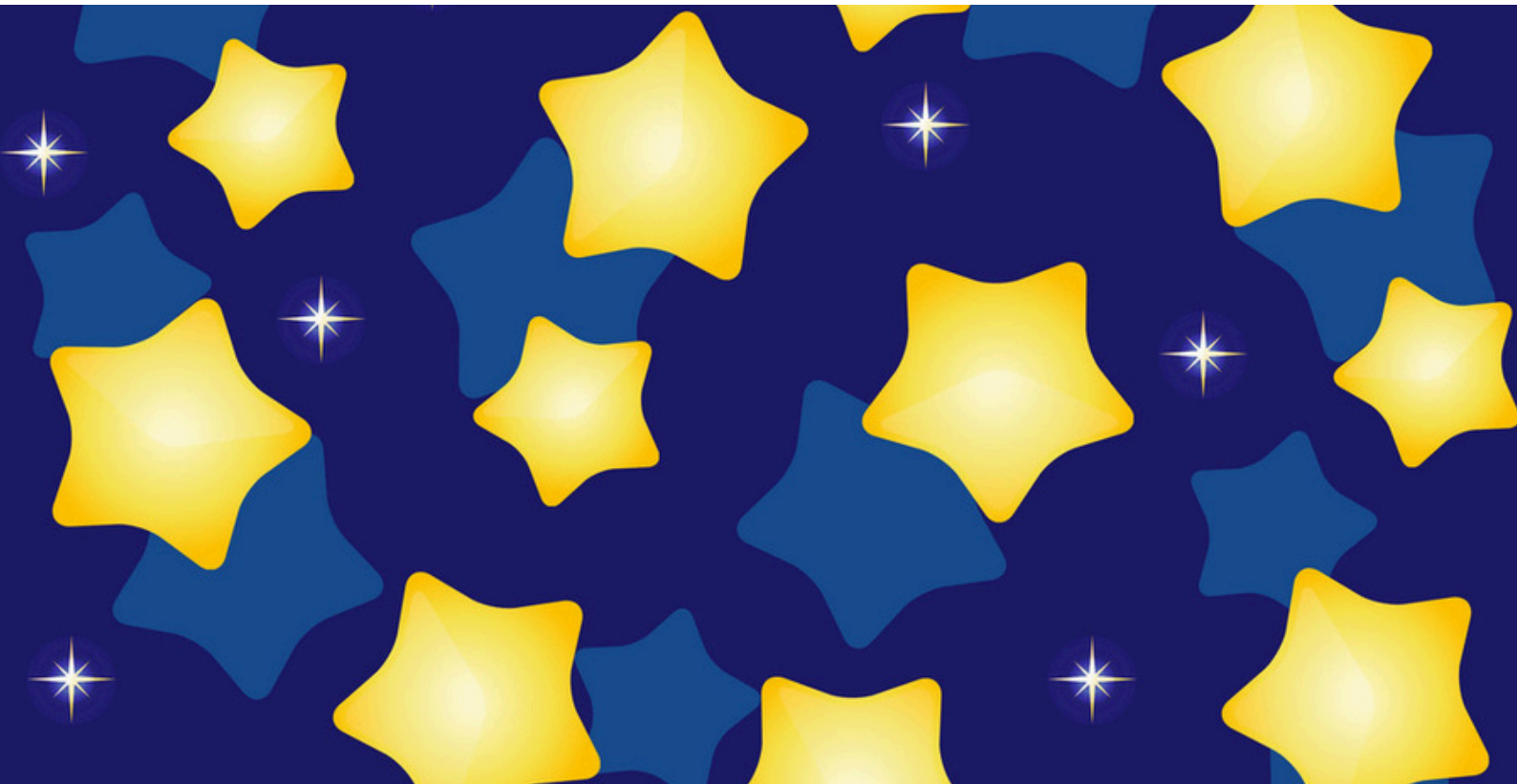
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Signed by the Chair on behalf of all trustees:

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