

Annual Report for Chattertots for 2023

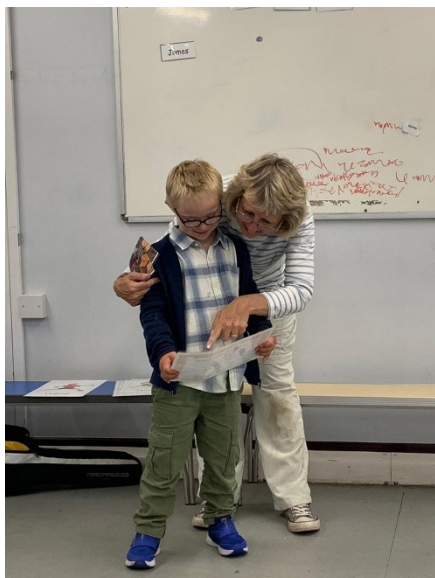


(Registered Charity 1198362)

Jan 1 to December 31, 2023

"Helping people with Down Syndrome find their voice."

Introduction



Chattertots is a registered charity that provides a range of early-intervention services to children and young people with Down Syndrome in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Our mission is to help them reach and achieve their full potential.

Whilst the Local Authority is expected to provide the essential support services (e.g. Speech and Language (SAL) therapy), the reality is that very little is delivered to the extent that some children receive no SAL therapy at all, and some of the schools have no (or very limited) experienced staff to meet the children's specific learning profile and needs.

The learning profile of children with Down Syndrome is now well understood and they require specific/targeted interventions starting from a very early age. With these interventions, many of these children will be able to attend mainstream schools, and later go on to live independently and obtain employment opportunities.

Chattertots aims to fill the gap in provision for children in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire to provide that early support so that each individual realises their full potential.

While we have no catchment area as such, most of our activities are hosted in or around Windsor, Reading and Wokingham, we accept any family that is willing to travel with preference for families who are unable to receive similar services from another charity. Our members come from as far east as Slough and as far west as Hungerford, as far north as Burnham and as far south as Bracknell.

We started as a charity in 2015 and in 2022 constituted with the Charity Commission as a CIO. In that time, we have grown from supporting three families to thirty families currently.

Governance



Chattertots is governed by a board of trustees. The trustees are responsible for the overall management of the charity and for ensuring that it complies with all relevant laws and regulations. All of our trustees are parents to children with Down Syndrome giving them unique experiences into the challenges for children with Down Syndrome to progress today. We ensure that Trustees' children with Down Syndrome span different ages to be representative of all our families.

In 2023, our Trustees are:

Clare McIntosh - Chair. Clare has led the charity since 2015. She has a general management background in FTSE 500 companies such as Centrica and O2, and well as experience in charity administration.

Mark Murphy - Treasurer. Mark has a mathematics degree and is an accomplished leader who's delivered outstanding Ecommerce, Digital Marketing and Loyalty strategies in the hospitality and travel industries.

Victoria Kirby - Trustee. Victoria works in the Training Division of Hewlett Packard and has extensive experience in running activities for young people. She previously served as Division Commander and a Trustee of the Guiding movement and bring considerable knowledge of safeguarding and best practices.

Leiah Norcott - Trustee. Leiah was also part of the founding team for the Charity and is a publishing and editorial director with fourteen years of editorial experience in print and digital publishing.

The board of trustees meets at least four times a year to review the charity's progress and to make any necessary decisions. The trustees are responsible for setting the charity's strategy and for overseeing all operational activity.

In 2023, Chattertots did not employ any staff. All of our administration is carried out by members on a volunteer basis.

We are pleased to present our report. This report provides an overview of our activities and financial performance during the year.

Activities



During the year, we provided a range of services to children and young people with disabilities. These services included:

- **Pre-School Speech and Language Therapy:** We offer weekly Speech and language therapy for pre-school children at a children's centre in Windsor. This is conducted by Symbol UK therapists who are recognised as having the strongest specialist expertise on the unique challenges for children with Down Syndrome
- **School Box:** As children start school, we provide a box of resources specially

adapted for children with Down Syndrome which should support them throughout primary school. This includes visual learning resources such as Numicon and See and Learn (from Down Syndrome Education), special pencils and scissors which are easier for people with poor motor skills to use, and training materials for school staff on behaviour and the learning profile.

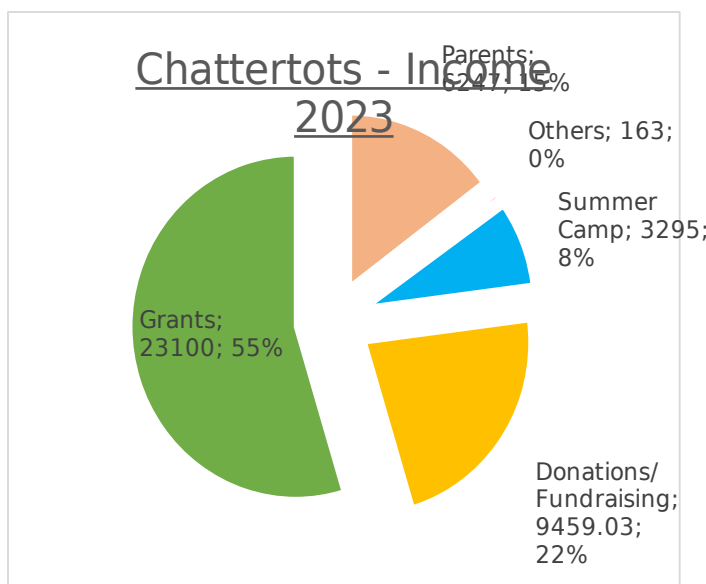
- **Primary School consultancy and SEN Support:** We fund a local independent consultant who has decades of experience in the learning profile of children with Down Syndrome to spend half a day at each school each half term, observing the child and working with staff to develop strategies to meet their needs and goals.
- **Summer Camp:** We organise a week-long summer camp which is run by Symbol UK (speech and language therapists specialised in

the profile of children with Down Syndrome). Many of the children who attend mainstream schools are the only child in the school with Down Syndrome. The camp provides a unique opportunity for the children to form friendships. The camp also provides intensive speech and language therapy meeting each individual child's goals.

- Reports and expertise: We part fund any report commissioned by parents as part of the Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process to enable them to secure the best provision from the Local Authority.
- Social activities at Camp Mohawk, TVAP and other locations.

Income

In 2022 our income had been hit by the Covid Crisis and Cost of Living Crisis and fallen significantly below our expenditure. It was therefore vital that we increase our fundraising significantly to ensure the future of Chattertots.



In 2023, we are delighted to share that our income increased by 430% from £9,690 to £42,264. Our main increases were in fundraising (£9,459 vs £1,864) and grants income (£23,100 vs £1,350).

In addition, for the first time, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead gave us £2000 contribution towards running our summer Camp.

We would like to express thanks to the Royal Windsor

Racecourse and Tesco Dedworth for allowing us to fundraise on their premises.





We are deeply grateful to the following who funded our programmes this year:

- The National Lottery
- The David Brownlow Charitable Trust
- Berkshire Community Foundation
- The Prince Philip Trust
- The Louis Baylis Trust

We would also like to express our gratitude to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for hosting our weekly pre-school SALT sessions at one of their children's centres.

Expenditure

Our expenditure was £32,497. This was made up of the following:

- Social activities: £275
- General expenses: £620
- Pre-School SALT: £14,682
- School Box: £246
- SEN Support: £6,555
- Summer Camp: £10,119

Overall Financial Performance

We are delighted to see much stronger financial performance in 2023 which gives us reassurance about the sustainability of the charity. We opened the year with £18,468 in reserves and ended with £28,235. Our policy is to build the reserves back to fund at least one year's worth of activities. This will mean holding reserves of approximately £35,000.

Priorities

Our priorities in the forthcoming year are to:

- Maintain and strengthen this level of fundraising



- Make our governance increasingly robust by agreeing key policies and ensure we are recovering all possible gift aid.
- Explore opportunity to expand our service offerings by trialling online speech and language therapy with primary school-aged children.
- Build in-depth relationships with our newer parents to understand and support their needs (this has been difficult to date due to Covid restrictions).

Conclusion

We are incredibly grateful to all our supporters for their help and support during the year. We are committed to continuing to provide the essential high-quality services to children and young people with Down Syndrome.