Wakefield and District Down's Syndrome Support Group

Charity number 1155866

Annual Review February 2014 – February 2015

For more information about our group:
www.downsyndrome-wakefield.co.uk
www.facebook.com/wakeyDS

Message from our Chair of Trustees, Geoff Tulley

Hello, hope you like our new, funky, overview of 2014/2015.

This has been a fantastic year for WDDSSG. This review starts in February 2014 at the point we became a registered charity, a significant step in our development, one that redefined how we manage the group by the incorporation of trustees and, recently, independent trustees.

This structure provides a solid foundation for the next step in WDDSSG's life. A step that will be defined by those who wish to take the group forward. Ownership of this group remains with those willing to give their time and commitment (however small) to organise and plan activities and events on its behalf.

You will see around my words here that we continue to provide our long-standing events and activities as well as adding new ones each year. Each year we get bigger, each year we get stronger, thanks to those that volunteer, those that fundraise, those that donate.

On a personal note, the fully subscribed Informing, Empowering and Changing Lives Conference we hosted in October along with the accompanying Perspectives on Down's Syndrome booklet were real highlights. On the Conference feedback forms we received an average 9.44 out of 10 result to the question "how much have you enjoyed the day?". A fantastic response!

I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that the Perspectives on Down's Syndrome booklet is a beautiful piece of work, one we should be very proud of, and certainly one we should find a way to develop in this coming year.

I can't let this review pass without honouring the memory of our little superstar Logan Jameson-Briggs. As you will all know, Logan passed on at the beginning of November 2014. It was the darkest of times for all at WDDSSG and no words have been created that lighten that dark.

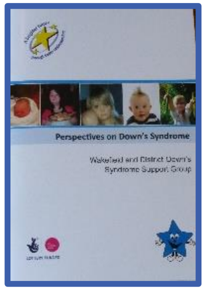
We can only find light in the love and support that abounds at times like these, it was this light that got us through, it was this light that I hope in some small way helped Sam and Mike through those times too.

One of our projects for the coming year is to use the Logan's Smile fundraising in an effective and lasting way, one that provides a legacy to the little man himself and his wonderful smile.

Thank you all for your efforts this year, here's to the next one.

Making a difference

Over 140 people attended our hugely successful Informing, Empowering and Changing Lives Conference in October. The day was for both professionals and parents, and provided positive information and advice to help support people with Down's syndrome to achieve their full potential. The conference was funded by a grant from the Big Lottery Fund which totalled over £6000 for a range of our projects.



Perspectives on Down's Syndrome

Wakefield and District Down's Syndrome Support Group

Spreading the word

Our public facebook page has been a fantastic success, spreading lots of positive information about people with Down's syndrome out into the world around us! The page has 700 people who 'like' it.

Our monthly newsletter has also gone electronic, making it more accessible and able to be shared via social media.

Our fabulous Family Fun Day was a massive success, attracting thousands of people to share our celebration of World Down's Syndrome Day with us, raising awareness, having fun together and raising £1870 for the group as well!

We've got out into our community more this year and have run stalls at Normanton Gala, Featherstone Rovers Community gala and the KIDS marketplace event. Our mascot Superstar has made several public appearances! And our members are stepping into the limelight and raising awareness in all sorts of different ways!!

Supporting families...

Our charitable aims include providing information, forums, advocacy and general support, and providing recreational facilities and opportunities.

We have a named new parent contact who is available to talk with new parents to offer support and information.

Saturday club continues to be popular and well-attended, and creates a valuable opportunity for parents to meet and to support each other in a relaxed and friendly environment. We have different activities each time, such as Jo Jingles music sessions.

Our busy and welcoming parent/carer Facebook group is a constant flow of questions and ideas and enables our parents to support each other whenever it is needed.

... and having fun!!

We create lots of opportunities for making friends and having fun together throughout the year. This year our main summer trip was to Flamingoland and we've had so many trips and opportunities, including the Disability Rocks music festival and a learning day at Eureka museum.

Our DixSy club for young adults has had a great year with discos, theatre trips, a DJ workshop, and a super coffee morning in Normanton.

And our family Christmas parties and mums/dads nights out were fab as always!

Achieving great things

Our TriStars21 gymnastics club, established in partnership between our group and Normanton Sports Acro, has been an amazing success. Most of the children have achieved at least their first British Amateur Gymnastics award badges and the sessions provide support with social interaction and confidence as well as gymnastics skills.

Lots of our group members are involved with Able2 Pontefract who are a small and brilliant voluntary-run group providing sporting opportunities for young people with learning disabilities, and are affiliated to Special Olympics GB. Such a positive and successful experience for all involved!

And an extra special well done this year to Beth Courtman for being a finalist in the national My Perspective photo competition and Thomas Raddings for his Yorkshire Children of Courage award – superstars!!!

Thank you!

To all of our trustees and our volunteers who make us what we are, and to those who support what we do, and those who advocate for people with Down's syndrome, in Wakefield and beyond.

To all of our supporters, fundraisers and donors this year, especially...

- The Big Lottery Fund for the amazing grant that funded our conference
- Claire Fisher, Michelle Hopps and everyone who participated in and donated to the Super September fundraising challenge, which raised over £2000!
- Next at Wath-on-Dearne / Lee Smith who raised £1000
- Logan's Smile – his fundraising total reached £965
- Alexis Sharp who organised our brilliantly entertaining Race Night (and all who placed bets!!), raising nearly £900
- White Dragon Services £450
- Utility Hub annual golf day £450
- Jenny Jones memorial netball tournament £400
- Sunbeams Children's Centre in Lupset for hosting Saturday Club
- ASDA CDC Wakefield for hosting our trustee meetings

and many others who have donated and contributed in so many ways – you are all superstars!!

Want to get involved?

- ★ Volunteer for us – our whole group is completely run by volunteers and there are loads of ways that you can join us. From getting on board with organising an event or activity, to offering new ideas, to simply listening to ideas and offering suggestions, you are always very welcome!!!
- ★ Fundraising – there are loads of ways to help us – from individual donations, doing an event or a crazy challenge for us, to corporate support such as sponsoring our Family Fun Day or providing a raffle prize. There are easy ways to raise extra for us, such as using www.easyfundraising.org.uk to click through to your favourite shopping sites, naming us as your chosen charity, and then we get a donation every time you shop online!!
- ★ Donations can be made using BTMyDonate or by texting WDSG21 + £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 or £10 to 70070