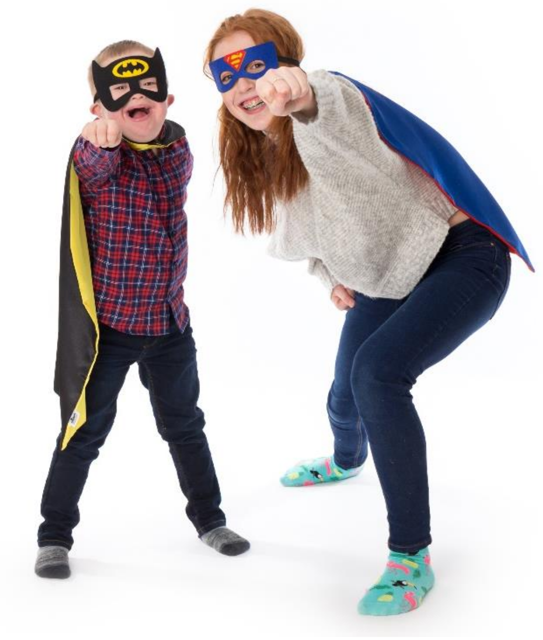
Wakefield and District Down's Syndrome Support Group

Charity number 1155866

Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts

For the year ended 17 February 2019



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:-

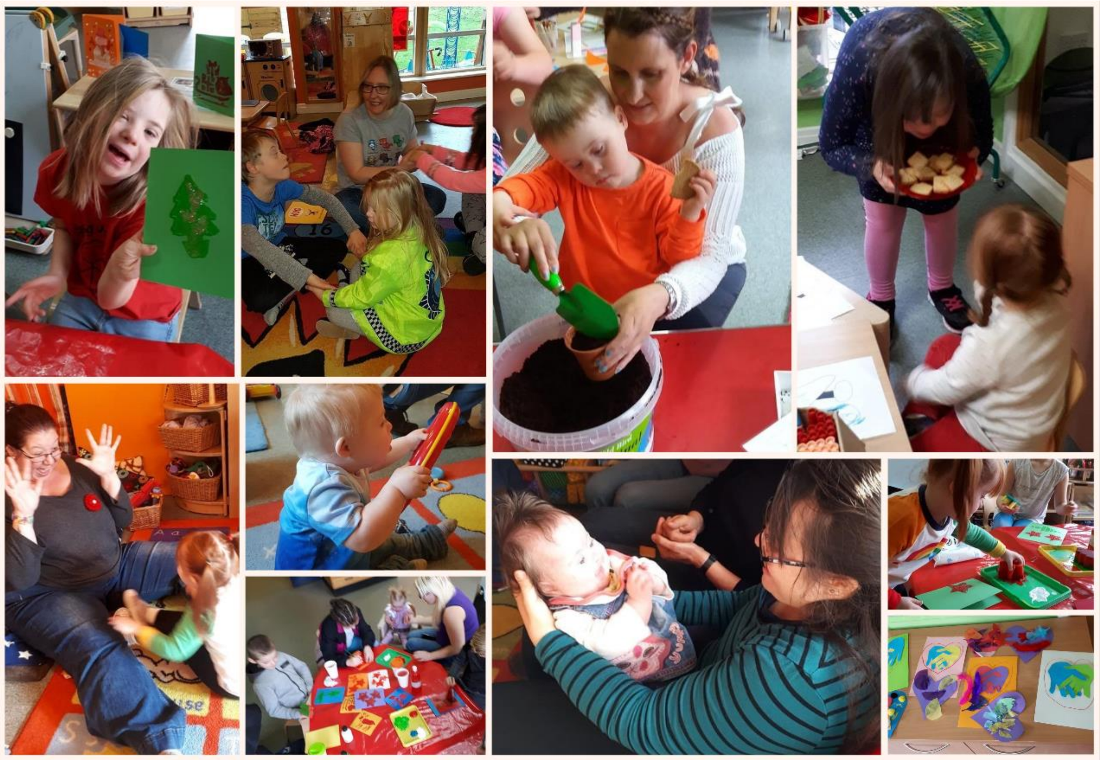
1. **providing information, forums, advocacy and general support; and**
2. **by providing recreational facilities and opportunities.**

Our charitable objects are, broadly, promoting social inclusion among people with Downs's syndrome in our area.

The way we achieve our objects are 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.
We are a small, voluntary-run charity, with big ideas! Here's just a few examples of what we have achieved this year…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 continue to communicate well with our families and our beneficiaries through email and social media.
We held our **AGM** in July which was open to all, although was not as well attended by our beneficiaries as we would have liked.
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.

Support

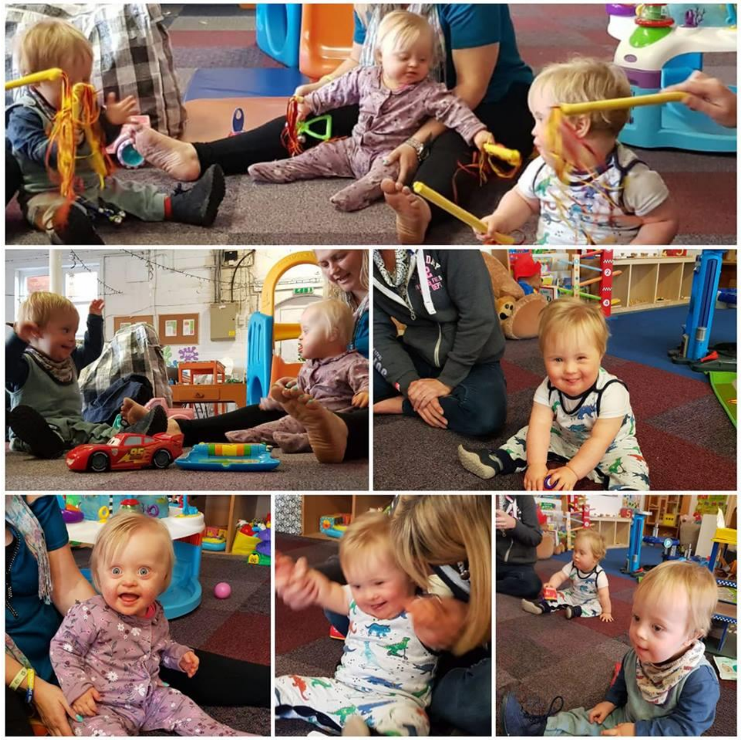
Saturday Club



Our **Saturday club** runs once a month on the first Saturday of every month, and is open to families of all ages. It provides a valuable opportunity for parents to meet and support each other, in a welcoming, informal and relaxed environment, and the children with Down's syndrome and their siblings are all able to access activities together.

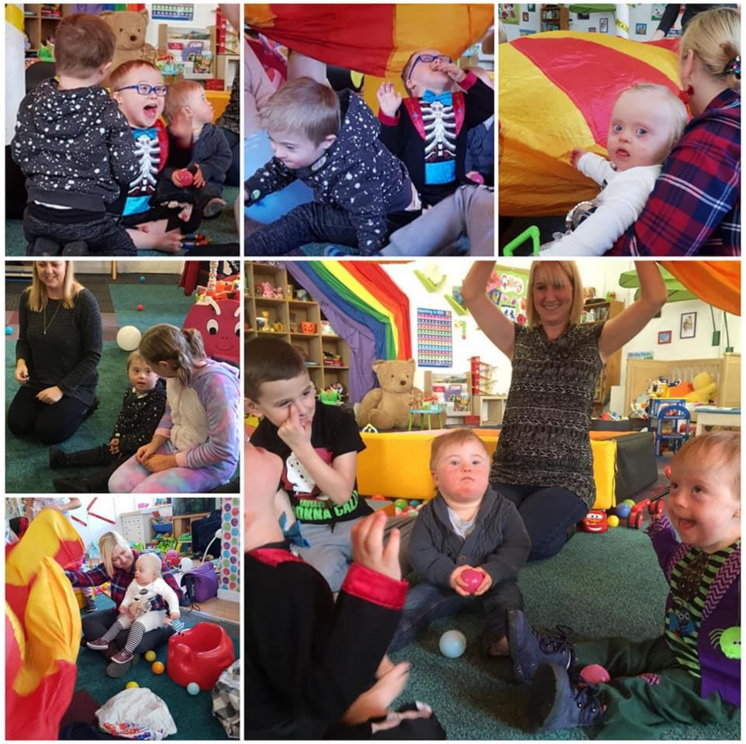
We have added some more structured craft activities this year, with a focus on a couple of key Makaton signs for each, and our regular song bag, where we sing and sign together, is still met with lots of enthusiasm!

TriStars Tots



TriStars Tots is our group for 0-3s. It is a lovely relaxed and welcoming environment for new families to meet each other. It's for little ones who are pre-school, and runs every fortnight. The group has had lots of positive feedback but attendance has also been affected by the varying health issues of our young tots.

As babies grow, we always need new parents to volunteer to take over groups like Tots, and we are hoping someone (or a group of someones!) step forward to keep this going for the new families of the future.



Many ways of finding support…

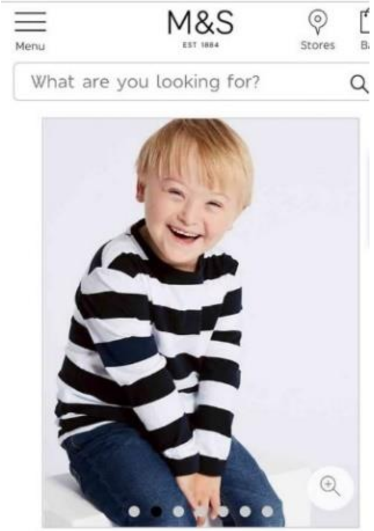
We have a specific named **new parent contact**, Jo Elvidge, if people are in need of someone to talk to after they have received a diagnosis, who is able to signpost to others as well. Her phone number and email address are published on our web site.

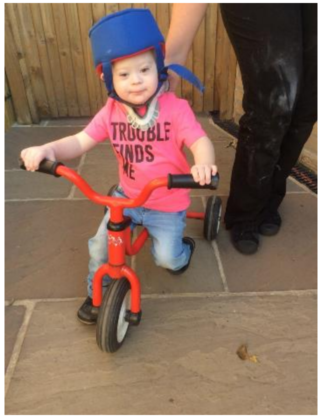
We also run a busy **Facebook group**, which facilitates communication between our parents and offers a forum for advice and support whenever it is needed. As we are volunteer-led, we have no facility to offer formal support, but we have created a network, reinforced every day by our trustees, where 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.

There are lots of ways that WDDSSG **supports** families in line with our objectives: as well as the groups we run, there are many small but useful practical ways that we offer support – such as giving out **RADAR keys** to help families access disabled toilet facilities, and creating a **Makaton** signs folder for people to access and discuss at Saturday club.

We work hard to celebrate the successes of young people connected to our group, as we have had feedback that parents want to see kids like theirs, from their own area, alongside the many wonderful national campaigns that are happening more and more now.

Among the other features on our own **web site**, we have a **Superstars gallery**, contributed to by our parents, which publicises the many amazing things that our young people with DS have achieved, such as the lovely Frankie modelling for M and S, and also shows off magical moments like Henry mastering a balance bike!





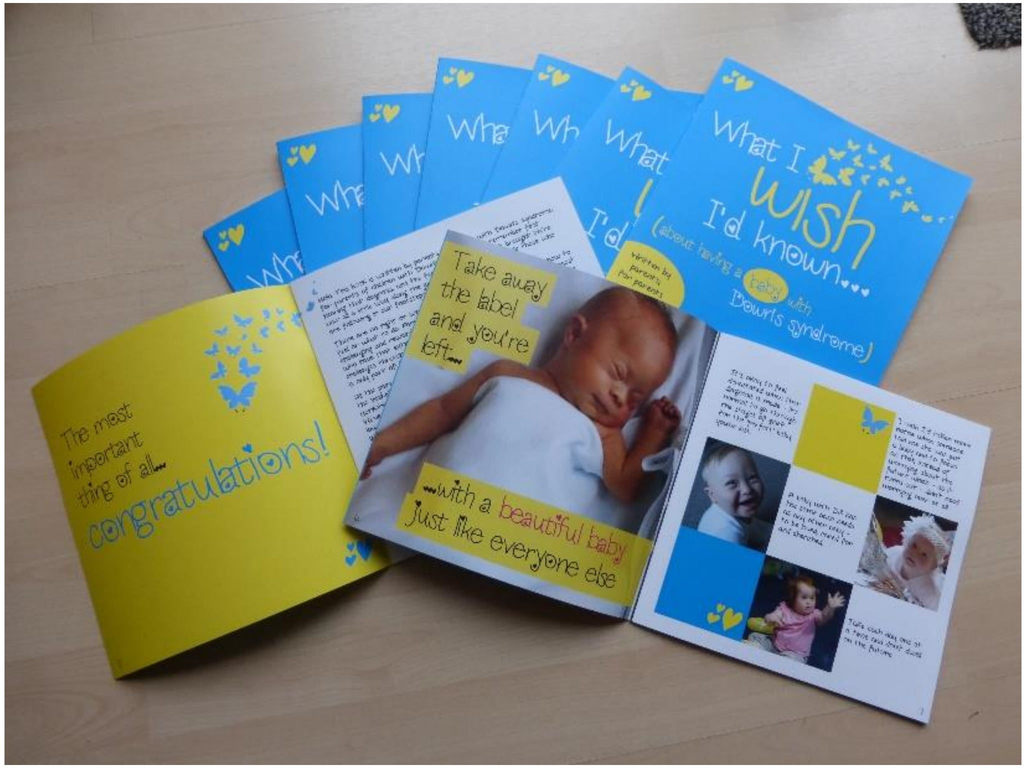
New parent support

We are particularly focussing some of our attention on our support for new parents, after the success of our Tell It Right training last year. We continue to build relationships with local midwives and are working towards further training.

A project designing a congratulations card for new parents started this year, and will be unveiled in the next year!

Our **What I Wish I'd Known** book continues to be popular. Our decision to spread the positivity of our book far and wide, by selling it at cost price to anyone who wants it, has made it very accessible. We sell it via eBay and direct to other support groups around the country, including Shropshire, Coventry, London and Kent, some of whom are using it in their new parent welcome packs. Our families can be very proud of what they have achieved by contributing to this book!

Our web site also has a special section for new parents, as a place to start.

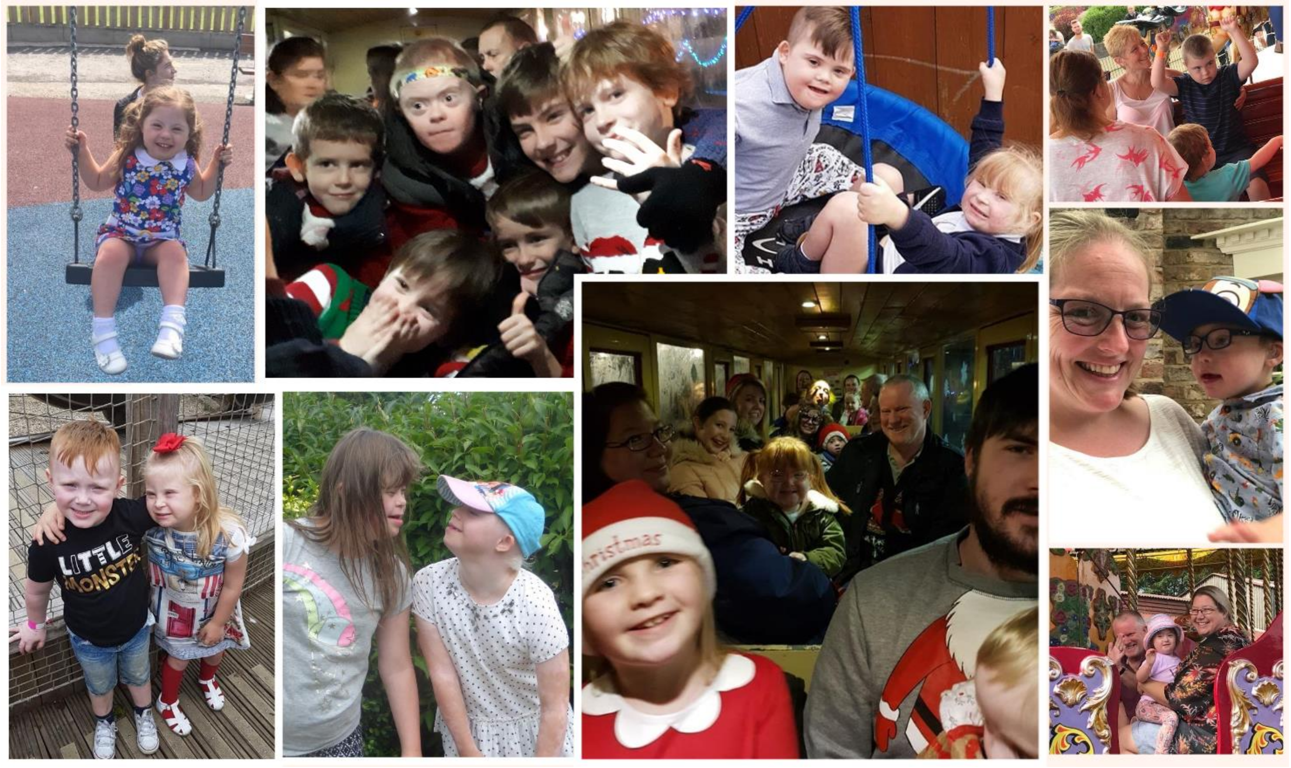


> "My book came in the post today, wow, how powerful in making all my thoughts and feelings acceptable and 'normal'."

Fun and friendship

Our group works by creating opportunities for making friends and having fun together throughout the year. Families making friendships can mean that they have a support network for life. We try to balance a mixture of one-off events alongside our regular activities.

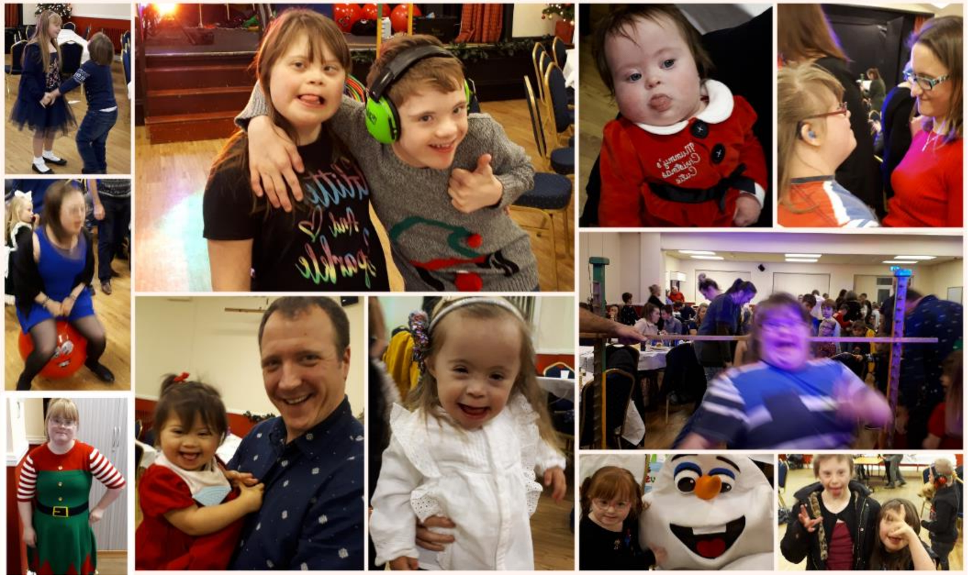
In August, WDDSSG visited Lightwater Valley for our annual **summer trip**. 33 families travelled by coach and car to enjoy the delights of the theme park. One of the highlights of the day is meeting up at lunchtime to picnic together. Friendships are cemented between adults and children across our group, such a fantastic way to spend some of the hard earned monies raised by our amazing supporters.



We took a massive 93 people to the Christmas pantomime at Wakefield theatre, and 15 families loved experiencing the Santa Express together!!

Parties!

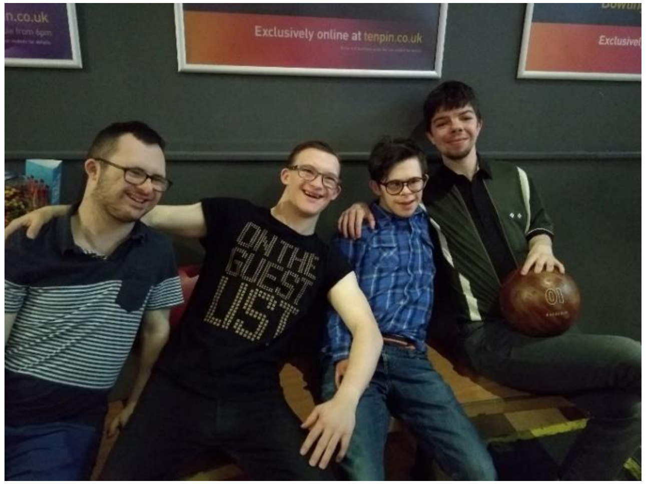
WDDSSG do good parties! We hold a regular family Christmas party which is always very well attended. We provide food and fun, and Santa makes an appearance!



In March this year we held a special party for World Down's Syndrome Day at a local soft play centre, which was a hugely successful event, focussing on our charity's key values of bringing people together to build friendships and have fun together.

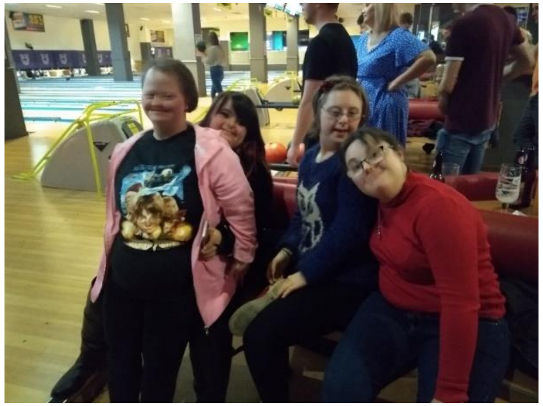
All of our events and activities are as inclusive as possible, the family events are usually free to our group's families and funded by the group where possible and are guided by what families request. Our members are encouraged to offer suggestions and ideas, and are supported to organise activities by the group's trustees, and we are always looking for ways to encourage more people to do this.

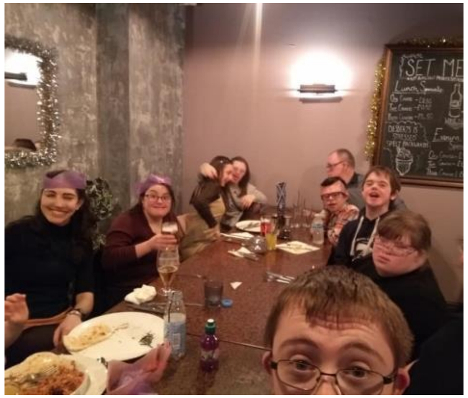
Our older group



Our older group have their own Facebook page, and participate in many of our whole group activities, as well as having their own events, such as a trip to the pantomime with a meal out together.

Our older group organised the wonderful Valentine's Disco in February and there are big plans for this group's development in the year ahead, with meetings over movies and pizza – watch this space!!



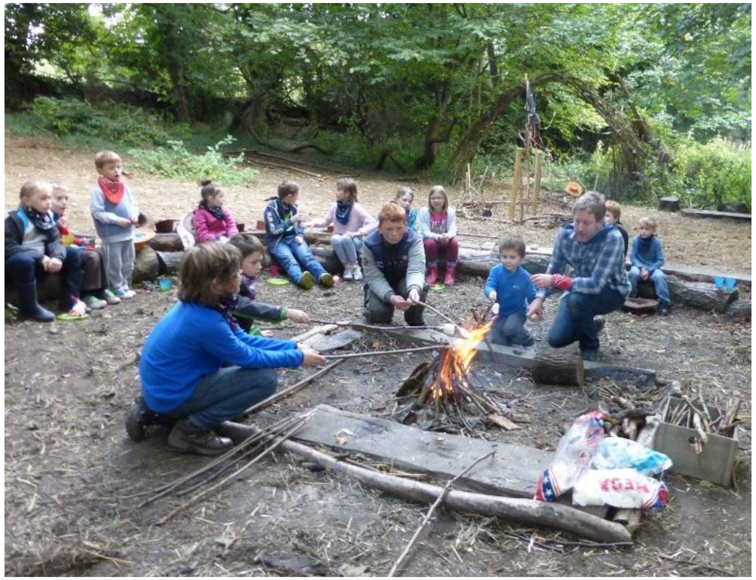


Supersibs

Our Supersibs group has been set up to offer our siblings a chance to get to know each other. We know how important it is for young people with a sibling with DS to know that there are others like them, and we think it is very valuable to form friendships now, for the future.

We arranged a trip to Pizza Hut in November, which was a lot of fun!

We had a very special woodland experience together at This Green Moon in September, such a lot of teamwork and having fun together with some brilliant feedback from both the kids and their parents.



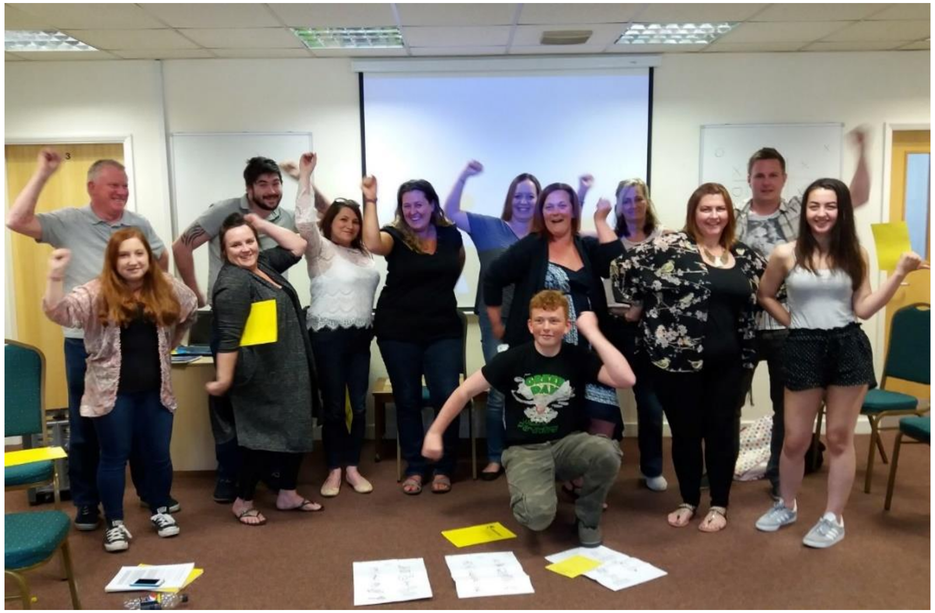
Making a difference

Some of the highlights this year included:

Ten parents attended a **training session** in February on **Education, Health and Care Plans**, presented by Dan Pott of Barnardos.

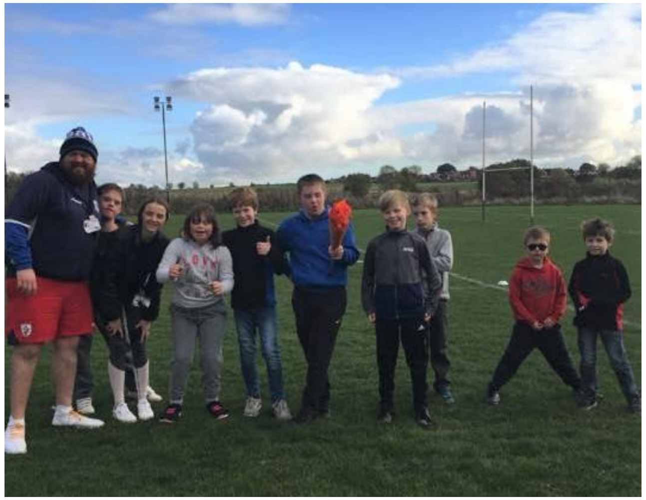
Dan gave an overview of the process and then invited everyone to raise any questions. There was some interesting discussions around everyone's experience of the process and Dan offered some helpful advice around dealing with the issues raised. The general view was that the session was useful, as much because the parents were encouraged that they weren't the only ones having issues and that help was available.

In March we ran **Parent Makaton training** with the help of Makaton tutor Kerry Crabtree, giving lots of families access to the Beginner’s training. Makaton signing is invaluable for supporting communication in young people with DS.



TriStars Active

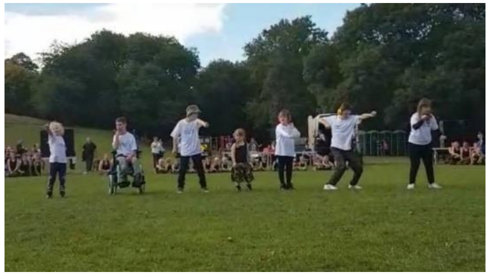
Our fantastic monthly sessions, for children aged five and above, promote physical fitness and engagement with sports while having fun. They allow everyone to try activities such as indoor kurling, boccia and bean bag throwing, and to have fun whilst helping develop hand-eye coordination skills. The activities are a mix of individual, pairs and groups which also helps support social interaction, and are open to our children's siblings, which is a fantastic social opportunity for everybody. The sessions have been attended regularly with good feedback, and these sessions are planned to continue into the future.



We also offered a fantastic **multi-sports session** in the October half-term holidays, which included both young people with DS and their siblings.

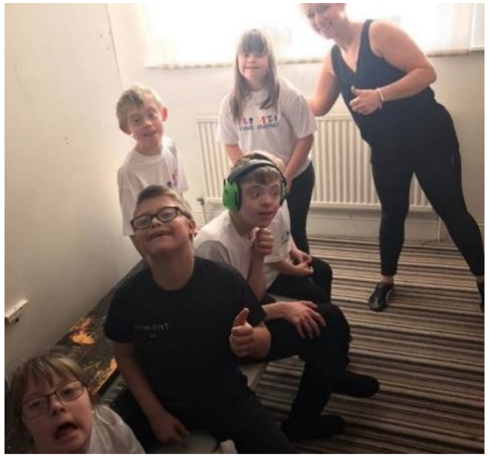
TriStars21 Dance

We continue to work together with Jo Riddell's Dance House for our **TriStars 21 Dance class**, which continues to be a success for our families. It provides an enjoyable opportunity to get fit and have fun for dancers from school-age and above (younger dancers with additional needs are welcomed and well-supported within our dance teacher's mainstream classes).



Our dancers were able to perform as part of Dance House's team at the Normanton gala in September. They were all so proud of their achievement!

And, not long afterwards, our dancers got the opportunity to enter their first dance exam, which they all passed!!



Raising Awareness

For World Down's Syndrome Day, we created a very special project. With the help of Tres Belle Photography's very generous support, we were able to offer a family photo shoot to many of our families, enabling them to have some very precious photos of their families. The photos were used to create a very special awareness video, using quotes from the siblings themselves.

The final total reached over 44,000 views, with 641 shares on Facebook, and it is still being viewed!!

Our **web site** continues to be developed, and provides a valuable source of information about the group and about Down's syndrome.

On social media, we have an active **Twitter** account and our **public Facebook page**, which is used to promote positive awareness about people with Down's syndrome, has gone from strength to strength and now has over 2000 followers. We share relevant information, and publish our own positive posts, letting the community we have created know about the good work we do, and increasing awareness and acceptance.

Raising funds

Fundraising for our group has continued throughout the year, both at these events and through a wide range of different sources, often in a way that often strengthens bonds and friendships between our families. We are always so grateful for the contributions people make and the effort they put in to support us.

We attend some events every year, such as Normanton Junior Academy's summer fair, running stalls and engaging with families while we raise valuable funds.

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

Trustees during the year:

Ann-Marie Sheard	**Chair of Trustees**	**Alison Brown**	**Parent Trustee**
Neil Courtman	**Vice Chair of Trustees**	**John Crawshaw**	**Independent Trustee**
Sara Beaumont	**Secretary**	**Emma Juckes**	**Parent Trustee (resigned June 2018)**
Ruth Noble	**Treasurer**	**Paula Rose**	**Grandparent Trustee**
Andrea Arnold	**Parent Trustee, communications officer**	**Alexis Sharp**	**Parent Trustee**
Ann Aylward	**Parent Trustee (elected January 2019)**		

Our 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 mostly remained the same from the previous year, we have one independent trustee and are actively seeking 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 review

The net receipts for this year were £7128.08. Treasurer's report was completed and presented at our AGM.

Reserves

The charity's free cash reserves at the end of the year were £21,039.79. Of that balance, £9,209.04 was restricted funds.
There is no formal reserves policy as the ongoing core costs are minimal due to being volunteer-led. The majority of our income and reserves are available to be allocated to maintaining current projects for the future and creating new projects.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the annual report as above.

Signed by the Chair on behalf of all trustees:

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Ann-Marie Sheard, Chair of Trustees for WDDSSG