



Hull and East Yorkshire
Down Syndrome Support



ANNUAL
REPORT &
ACCOUNTS

1ST NOV 2023
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Downright Special
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Foreword from the Chair



Over the past 12 months, Downright Special has continued to grow, innovate, and provide exceptional support to children, young people, and their families. This year has been one of significant achievements, reflecting our commitment to education, health, and advocacy.

We were delighted to welcome seven new babies to the Downright Special family, ensuring that their parents received immediate support. Our Friday morning sessions and curriculum were redesigned to enhance engagement, effectiveness, and inclusivity. This year also saw the launch of Downright Dance, providing weekly sessions for young people aged 11-25, helping them build confidence and friendships through movement.

A major milestone was the completion of key updates to the Down Syndrome Care Pathway, which was successfully launched on the new Integrated Care Board (ICB) website. This was recognised as an example of best practice when presented at the Hull SEND Inspection. Additionally, our brand-new website was launched, making it easier than ever for families, professionals, and supporters to access vital information.

Recognising the importance of training, we introduced regular sessions for neonatal unit doctors, ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge to support families effectively. We also delivered training sessions for Hull's health visiting teams, broadening awareness and understanding of Down syndrome.

To further enhance educational support, we initiated a new project to create a bank of differentiated resources for the KS3 secondary school curriculum. Our biannual survey of parents and schools provided invaluable insights that will guide our future services.

Financial sustainability is key to our success, and we were thrilled to secure our largest grant to date—£78,000 over three years. This funding will allow us to continue delivering essential programmes and expanding our reach.

These accomplishments are a testament to the hard work of our dedicated team of staff, volunteers, and supporters. We remain committed to enhancing our services, advocating for best practices, and ensuring that every child and young person with Down syndrome receives the support they need to thrive.

As we look ahead, we are excited about the opportunities to build on this success, and we thank every individual and organisation that has contributed to making this year so remarkable.

Lizann Lawson
Chair of Trustees

Background

The Downright Special Network was established in June 2007 to:

- Provide and operate such support, materials and events so both parents/carers and professionals in health and education may be assisted in helping children with Down syndrome to achieve the best possible outcomes throughout their education, social, physical and emotional development.
- Produce antenatal support and information to prospective parents and emotional and practical support to new parents.
- Strive to build a brighter future for children with Down syndrome in our area.

The work undertaken by staff, because of the fundraising and donations received, allows us to focus on our enduring priorities of:

- Education
- Support
- Health
- Advocacy
- Training

Our Pledge

Downright Special recognises that each individual with Down syndrome is unique and that some may have more complex needs. We pledge to create an environment where all individuals and their families feel welcome and supported, regardless of diagnosis or ability.

Safeguarding Statement

Downright Special is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults with a care and support need, engaged in the breadth of its activities. Downright Special believes that everyone has the right to be safe from harm and should be able to live free from fear of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Downright Special takes its responsibilities for safeguarding children extremely seriously and we believe safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. We follow safer recruiting guidelines. All Downright Special posts are subject to enhanced DBS disclosure. All our staff and volunteers who have contact with families must attend Level 1 Safeguarding training as a minimum with several of our staff receiving further training including safer recruiting, vulnerable babies and Makaton safeguarding workshop. Our safeguarding policies can be found on our website <https://www.downrightspecial.co.uk/our-story/about-downright-special/#policies>

Meet the Team

Our Trustees









We had five trustees on the board this year.

	<p>Lizann Lawson Appointed October 2019 Chair since July 2020</p>		<p>Angela Broekhuizen Appointed June 2016 Treasurer since June 2021</p>
	<p>Gavin Beresford Appointed May 2017</p>		<p>Michelle Marie Appointed April 2022</p>
	<p>Neil Findlay Appointed October 2022</p>		

Our Staff

We have eight part-time members of staff who: ensure the smooth running of the charity; deliver our Friday education sessions; deliver outreach work in schools; deliver training courses for parents and professionals and who develop our work on health and wellbeing.

The team members are:

	Gillian Bowlas Charity Manager		Louise Smith Charity Organiser
	Sam Findlay Health Lead		Katie Bewell Specialist Teacher (KS1) & Designated Safeguarding Lead
	Laura Nichols Early Years Advisor		Dr Nicola O'Riordan Advisory Teacher (KS2 to KS4)
	Sarah Hyde Toddler Group Leader		Susanne Townhill Baby Group Leader & New Parent Contact



**Lauren, Becky and Jess
Friday Group Volunteers**

Our Volunteers

To keep our costs as low as possible, the Charity uses many volunteers, including several parents, and we owe a huge debt of gratitude to each one of them who helped us this year.

These volunteers assist with running Friday sessions, laminating resources, organising social and fundraising events, designing publications and resources, helping with social media, managing our website and IT systems, running our bookstall, charity tin collections and managing the accounts.

Many thanks to: Lisa Bell, Poppy Bell, Harry Bewell, Rose Bielby, Lisa Bloomer, Bob Bloomer, Rachel Bowlas, Angela Broekhuizen, Tone Broomfield, Louise Brown, Toni Bullock, Becky Constable, Neil Findlay, Jill Lambert, Jessica Ross, Karl Svenson, Lauren Ward and all the amazing volunteers who helped at our Christmas and Awareness Week events this year.

Review of our Activities of the Year

Education

OUR PRIORITY WAS TO EMBED A NEW FORMAT FOR OUR WEEKLY FRIDAY EARLY INTERVENTION SESSIONS AND TO INCREASE SUPPORT TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITH INCLUSION AND DIFFERENTIATION

Downright Special Early Development Groups



Our Downright Special early development groups run on a Friday during term time and continue to be a great success for children from birth to approximately five years old. In this year had around 16 children who attended Friday mornings and, this year, we delivered 37 sessions. These sessions are a chance for parents to get together, have a coffee, share experiences and provide mutual support. The children get the chance to play and make friends. Most importantly the sessions also incorporate 'lesson time' when the children are put in small groups to work on their speech, language and communication skills, numeracy and literacy in a way that is tailored to the specific learning profile of children with Down syndrome. We provide lots of bespoke visual resources to support the children's learning and parents are given these to continue the work at home. We use Makaton sign language throughout the morning, helping parents and children learn the signs they need to communicate with each other and help with learning new words. We have established a tried and tested curriculum of activities which is reviewed annually to ensure the latest teaching methods are used. The curriculum also helps us to track progress and record milestones for each child. In September this year we altered how we organise the mornings to increase opportunities for sensory activities, enhance the transition between our different teachers and ensure the sessions are even more child orientated whilst continuing to alter our approach for children with specific social communication needs.



Our baby group continues to be incorporated into Friday mornings, with our youngest children enjoying a range of sensory activities and learning some of the early skills, such as taking turns and making early speech sounds in a relaxed and fun environment. It is also a chance for parents to see a demonstration of some the activities they can do at home to support their child's development and for parents to learn some of the most useful sign language to help with their baby's communication skills.

Also, an aspect which is crucially important, Downright Special Fridays offer parents and carers the opportunity to chat over coffee, share their experiences and offer peer-to-peer support whilst the children play in a safe environment. However good a statutory agency may be, there are some things that only another parent will understand and be able to offer the mutual support which is so often needed. The Friday group is striking visual evidence that there is no "type" of parent who will have a child with Down syndrome, and we have a diversity of ages and cultures in the group. New dads can also be reassured it certainly isn't a "mother and baby" group, as we have several fathers attending regularly.

Downright Special Education Outreach Work with Schools



Downright Special Education aims to support effective inclusion in mainstream schools. Our three part-time members of staff provide support to 52 children in mainstream nurseries, pre-schools and schools. We have continued to increase our support to mainstream secondary schools as more of our children choose to continue their education this way. We supported ten children in mainstream secondary. The number of schools and nurseries receiving direct support from us is around 46. Our specialist teachers have visited schools to assess children and advise teaching staff, provided training for schools on the learning profile of children with Down syndrome, assisted with formulating effective Individual Education Plans (IEPs), written reports for the Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) process, and attended annual reviews and transition meetings. We also continue to provide Education Resource Packs for each child we support when they begin their formal education.

“[They have] gained confidence when interacting socially with other adults and peers at school. An increase in time engaged in activities and more understanding of the setting and routines which has ultimately improved self-regulation and behaviour throughout the day. Overall happiness and enthusiasm have improved for coming into school and the setting, as well as improvement with speech and communication in all aspects.”

Laura Nichols is our Early Years Advisor and, in addition to leading a Friday morning early intervention group, Laura's remit is to provide support and advice on inclusion of a child with Down syndrome in mainstream nursery or pre-school settings. She ensures our children get the best start to their education before they even reach statutory school age. Laura had 11 children on her caseload and provided support to 10 different settings this year.

Katie Bewell is our Specialist Teacher, delivering groups on Friday mornings and afternoons with her outreach work focused on children in Key Stage 1. She supports school staff with differentiated resources and advice, modelling the evidence-based interventions recommended for each individual child. Katie had 16 children on her caseload this year.

Dr Nicola O'Riordan is our Key Stage 2-4 Advisory Teacher. Nicola has been instrumental in providing outreach support to our KS2-KS4 children and supporting the children, staff and parents in the transition to secondary school. Nicola had 25 children on her case load. A highlight this year, as per our objective to increase support to secondary schools on inclusion and differentiation has been being able to increase Nicola's hours to four days a week from three, enabling her to start a new project to build a bank of resources to assist secondary schools with differentiating the KS3 curriculum. So far Nicola has completed work on the science curriculum, working alongside staff from Hesse High School. This will be shared with other schools in our area.



Very importantly, we continue to offer small-group sessions at our Downright Special Friday group for school-age children and their TAs to the end of Key Stage 1. This year, we had 7 children attending these afternoon sessions in two different teaching groups. These structured lessons cover the core elements of the curriculum, including reading, writing, literacy, numeracy, and speech and language development. Having the TAs attend means they can see a demonstration of how to practically apply the specific teaching

techniques which ensure our children's learning is maximised. They are given resources they can take away for use in the classroom and have plenty of opportunity to ask for advice on any issues they may be facing in the classroom, or to get guidance on next steps. It is also useful for them to meet other TAs to share experiences and learn from each other. We also continued monthly groups for children who have recently moved into KS2 and are ready to do some focused work on developing comprehension skills using a heavily scaffolded version of the 'Language for Thinking' speech and language programme. This group is led by our KS2/4 advisor Nicola O'Riordan.

Feedback from Teaching Assistants

"My overall confidence has improved to feel I am supporting the child in the best way I possibly can. Ensuring I am doing all to make sure that the child's school life is giving what's needed to help with progress in all aspects of the child's life not just educational. And working to that child's needs and specific goals rather than pushing a curriculum that doesn't meet their needs. Just my overall understanding has greatly improved so as a TA I feel like I have the tools needed to give that child the most suitable support."

"The whole team at Downright special have been amazing! The support and care they have given me, the child and the parents is first class. They have taught me so much and guided me in so many areas of how to ensure the child has all his needs met. I am truly grateful to each and every one of them for everything they have done for us all. Amazing, kind, hardworking and care so much for every child, parent and carer they come in contact with. Lovely, genuine people."

Support to Families

Our priorities during the year were to offer a variety of social events including social event opportunities for older children/ young adults and to continue to offer support in all aspects of care, health and education

Social Events

Parents told us how important it is to them to have social events and chances to meet up with other families. Social events allow our families to get together, share experiences, pass on tips, support each other, and celebrate their children's achievements. The events also give the children a chance to make friends with other children with Down syndrome and develop what we hope will be lifelong friendships and support networks. These events are just as important as our formal activities and this year we made it a priority to offer as many social events as possible with a mixture of events for all ages and the whole family and age-specific events. We knew how much our older children valued events just for them where they could socialise with their peers of the same age.



We organised 16 social events in total this year. For each event we have considered the suggestions from parents of children with complex needs to help make the events as inclusive as possible. We have:

- Used a 'complex needs checklist' when assessing venues for events
- Planned some repeated events in safe/familiar places with the same routine
- Written social stories in advance of each event
- Where possible chosen venues with quiet rooms or spaces to cater for different needs.



Social Events for All Ages

- Christmas Crafts – making baubles for our tree at Beverley Minster's Christmas Tree Festival
- Christmas Party at Lazaat's. 70 children plus their families came along.
- Bowling for 16 children
- Withernsea Bike Easter Egg run at East Park, Hull
- Summer coffee and cake
- Densholme Farm Fun-day – 26 enjoyed meeting the animals, climbing on the tractor and a picnic in the grounds

In addition to these whole-family events, we ran the following sessions for different age groups with over 70 of our children attending at least one event this year.



Pre-school/Primary age events:

- 2 dance sessions with Joanna from The Little Yorkshire Dance Academy
- 2 Soft Play pizza parties at Monkey Bizness
- Sensory Story Time for ages 0-4



Youth Club Events (12-25)

- Pizza-making at Ask Italian, Hull
- 2 Dance sessions with Joanna
- Pottery Painting
- Mocktail-making at Humber St Gallery

Events for Parents



From parents' feedback we had the request to give parent/carers a forum to meet up for a chat, so had started to run regular cuppa and chat sessions! The November session was well attended with parents helping to wrap the Christmas presents but the rest of the plans for the year were cancelled due to poor attendance. We are looking at trying to understand better what parents would prefer to do if anything.

Other Support

New and Expectant Parents



We continued to support families new to parenting a baby with Down syndrome to offer support and information and this year welcomed seven new babies to our special family. Through the hospital and health visiting teams, families are usually put in contact with us within a week of the birth or if a parent knows antenatally then we provide support through the pregnancy. We set straight to work not as lone “advisors” but instead using the extensive network we have built up to put the new parents in touch with others. As our database has grown to over 140 local families, we can now go so far as to match new parents to those of similar ages, situations and with babies who have similar medical conditions. For a new parent, there is nothing better

than speaking to somebody who knows exactly what they are going through and can give them a glimpse of easier times a couple of years down the road, and there is nothing that our families with older children like better than reaching out to give new parents support, reassurance, advice and hope for the future. Fantastically, our families are working together for mutual benefit, which was always our ambition.

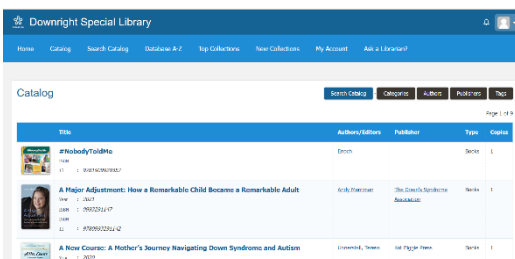
Advice

Our team are on hand throughout the week to give advice on all aspects of the care and education of children and young people with Down syndrome.

We have a closed Facebook group for parents, giving them a safe place to share useful information, ask questions and provide mutual support.

We have supported several families this year with advice on filling in benefit forms, in providing reports and advice for Education and Health Care Plans, with advice on SEND law and with support in choosing schools and nurseries. We have been able to help seven families with their applications for claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or appealing against decisions.

Online Library



We have an online library system, where we catalogue all of the books, information and resources we have and make it easy for parents and carers to view the list and arrange to borrow items. The system also makes it easier for us to log the whereabouts of all our resources. We continued to add to the library as new publications become available.

Downright Special Health

To continue to develop the health agenda with a focus on the care pathway, maternity services and understanding best practice around supporting children with dual diagnosis.



This year we were delighted to be able to continue to fund the role of our Downright Special Health Lead, Sam. Downright Special has always had a strong focus on education and the aim of the Health Lead role is to bring this same level of expertise and knowledge to the understanding of the health needs of children with Down syndrome.

Sam has been supporting our families with:

- Signposting and advice about which health services do what, how referral is made and referral criteria. This includes support with referral forms. This also includes where families have found it problematic accessing services or who wish to feedback dissatisfaction with services.
- Advice about specific health issues common to Down Syndrome with signposting to reputable sources of information.
- Advice/support around behaviours, management of behaviours at home, sensory processing difficulties and referral to Sensory Service if relevant.
- Advice to parents about puberty/growing up.
- Advice and support regarding sleep
- Creation of a bespoke Health Passport for a child or young person
- Creation of social stories e.g. to prepare for appointments or about specific issues such as growing up.
- Discussion with parents wondering about a possible additional diagnosis for example autism or ADHD.
- A listening ear for any parent that needs space to talk in confidence.

In addition, this year Sam has:

- **Led the annual update to the Down syndrome care pathway**, contacting relevant professionals, updating the pathway with the latest evidence-based information and working with local NHS commissioners to ensure the updates were included and rolled out to the new Integrated Care Board website. The Down Syndrome Care Pathway can be found here: <https://humberandnorthyorkshire.org.uk/our-work/downsyndromepathway/>. This year, additions and updates to the Pathway were focused on the 0-19 Service, Local Authority Early Years Provision and IPaSS/SaPTS.
- **Worked with the local Emergency Department Paediatric Consultant to set up an alert system** within hospital records so that when a child with Down syndrome arrives at hospital there is a flag on their records that alerts doctors and nurses to the possible differences in how a child with Down syndrome might display symptoms of serious illness. Sam leads on making sure this is updated on an annual basis.
- **Developed bespoke social stories** for children to support specific situations and reduce anxiety.
- **Hospital passports** – supported several families with completing a hospital passport as a ‘one-pager’ of information about their child that clinicians need to know including medical and communication needs

Supporting Young People – Building a Brighter Future Project

Our priorities were to continue the Building a Brighter Future project, looking at Downright Special's role in supporting young people with Down syndrome post-16.



This year we have continued to work on the outcomes from the working group of parents who shared their views on the issues faced when our young people become adults. The group identified five themes: lack of clarity about what happens at each stage of the transition to adulthood; worries about the legal implications of becoming an adult; safety of their young person; wellbeing of parents/carers; social opportunities for their young person; the need for ongoing speech and language therapy.

The feedback told us how much the young people and families valued regular social events. In addition to the social events we arranged this year (the favourite being the Mocktails event at the trendy Humber St Gallery café) we were delighted to start our weekly dance group “Downright Dance” in April. We sent a survey out to the young people themselves to ask what they wanted, and we now have 10 young people of all abilities who come along to the session led by dance teacher Joanna, supported by volunteer Rose. They all feedback every week how much they love it. It has been amazing to see the friendships develop, their confidence growing as well as seeing them learn new skills to build their fitness and strength.

“Monday dance class has really brought out the best in my daughter”, Feedback from a parent

As mentioned in the Education section we have also increased the hours of Nicola our KS2-4 Advisory Teacher so that she can work on developing resources for secondary schools to differentiate the curriculum and to also have more time to support young people to choose the next steps after school as they transition into college and other settings.

We are continuing to work through the rest of the action plan from the project.

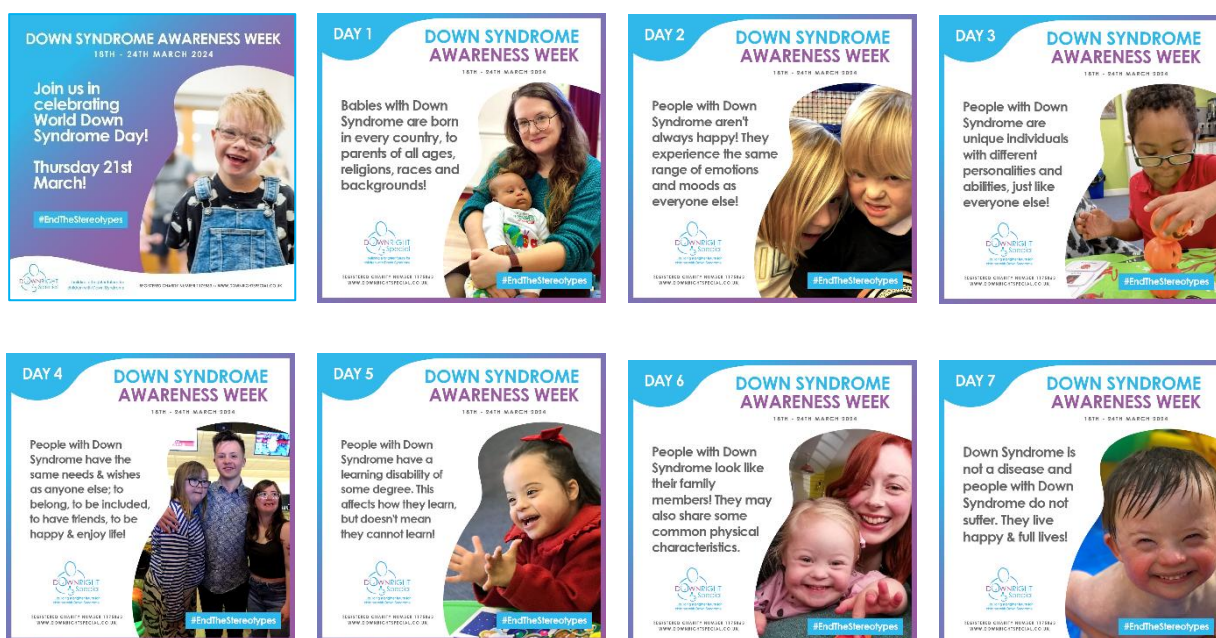
Advocacy

Our priorities during the year were to work collaboratively with our NHS partners to review and communicate the Down Syndrome Care Pathway, to actively participate in Down Syndrome Awareness Week and to raise the profile of the charity.

Awareness Week / World Down Syndrome Day

Part of our mission is to act as a voice for the children and parents we support. We aim to change perceptions and raise awareness of what it really means to have Down syndrome.

For Awareness Week this year we had a successful social media campaign, along the theme of #EndTheStereotypes to raise awareness and dispel some of the myths about Down syndrome.



We also had several schools and other supporters wearing their #LotsofSocks on World Down Syndrome Day to raise awareness or hosting coffee morning and bakes sales.

Our charity manager delivered a World Down Syndrome day assembly to a local primary school and also delivered a session to Sixth form Health and Social Care students at a local college.



We ended Awareness week again this year with a Charity Football Match, organised and led by First Touch UK / head coach Karl Southwick, dad to Mia.

A team of Downright Special friends and families played a full match against a team of parents from the football academy in a fun but competitive game that everyone enjoyed whilst raising funds for the charity and awareness. Thank you so much to Karl, the players and everyone else involved in organising a brilliant day!



New Parent Packs



Our new parent packs continue to be available on the maternity and neonatal wards. Midwives can give these packs out to parents knowing they are receiving up-to-date information on parenting a child with Down syndrome. A version of these packs is also available for those with an antenatal diagnosis. The packs available to download from our website:

<https://www.downrightspecial.co.uk/knowledge-resources/expectant-parent-pack/>

<https://www.downrightspecial.co.uk/knowledge-resources/new-parent-pack/>

Networking

We have continued to build networks with groups nationwide, through the DSUK-led Facebook group for those running parent support groups with the aim of making a difference by sharing support, services, knowledge and expertise, making sure we are delivering the best service possible to our families and running our groups as efficiently as possible. We attended the annual DSUK parent support group leaders conference.

We continue to be affiliated to the Down's Syndrome Association and attend the affiliated groups monthly meetings. We work with the local Parent Carer Forums to feedback views from parents of key issues affecting them and build connections with other local charities to share experiences locally.

In November we were invited with paediatrics to talk to an inspector from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as part of the CQC/OFSTED Joint Hull SEND inspection to showcase the local Down syndrome care pathway as an example of good practice that could be shared with other areas.

New Website

We were delighted to launch our lovely new website this year. <https://www.downrightspecial.co.uk/>. The website has been redesigned to make it easier than ever for families, professionals and supporters to connect with the charity, stay up to date with what we are doing and learn about the difference we make. This was a major piece of work, but we are so pleased that we now have an up-to-date fresh looking welcoming website that reflects the charity's values and ethos, reflecting Down syndrome in a positive way.

Communication with parents and carers

Making sure we hear the issues facing parents so that we can properly represent their voices is very important to us. We regularly review and update communications and engagement action plan, and we have two parents on our board of trustees, ensuring that we are continuing to deliver services that maximise the benefit to the families we support. We send regular emails to parents, send a half-termly update newsletter to parents and communicate frequently via our social media channels and closed Facebook group. This year we sent out our biannual survey for parents and for schools. Overall the feedback was excellent and we are acting on the ideas that we received, in particular social event suggestions and feedback on timing of training.

Training

Our priority during the year has been to continue to offer a range of training for parents, schools, and health professionals.



Teachers attending our workshop on curriculum planning and differentiation

One of our aims is to promote the awareness of Down syndrome and support successful inclusion. One of the ways we do this is providing training which is accessible to schools, parents and professionals working with our children. We minimise how much we charge for these courses to ensure no child is disadvantaged.

We have had a successful year delivering a comprehensive programme of training to professionals in education and health and to parents. This year we have noticed a decrease in the numbers of schools able to release staff for training but despite this over 300 parents and professionals attended training either online or in person.

We delivered 14 training courses for schools this year including: Introduction to Working with Children with Down Syndrome; Maths using Numicon; Teaching Reading; Curriculum Access, Working Memory, Promoting Positive Behaviour, Preparing for Successful Transition, Signing and a workshop on Curriculum Planning and Differentiation. We continued to offer some of these courses on an INSET training basis.

We organised three training sessions / workshops specifically for parents on Toilet Training, Sensory Processing and Introduction to Signing.

Training for professionals in health is also important to us. For the first time Susanne and Gillian delivered two training sessions on delivering the news that a baby has Down syndrome, to around 16 neonatal doctors and other staff on the Neonatal Intensive care unit at Hull Royal Infirmary. This training is planned to be delivered each time there is a new rotation of doctors on the unit. They also delivered training to the Hull 0-19 team of health visitors and school nurses, reaching around 40 members of staff over two sessions. Our teaching team delivered training to the Speech and Language Therapy Service on using the 'See and Learn' speech sounds and vocabulary programme with children with Down syndrome.

Fundraising

The work of Downright Special is only made possible by the generosity and efforts of many people who have supported us by awarding us a grant, raising funds, or donating goods and services. Our plan in this year was to continue to have a broadly based fundraising strategy, rather than relying on one type of income. Community fundraising continues to be a challenge and so we chose to increase the proportion of income to be received from grant. Our targets for this year were: grants/trusts (75%), community (20%), training (3%), other (2%). These targets are monitored at trustee meetings. Our continued focus on grants has reaped rewards in 2024, with successful grants received from:

Grants	Amount
Anonymous Trust 1	25,000.00
The National Lottery Community Fund	17,746.00
Matthew Good Foundation	10,000.00
STA15	10,000.00
Sir James Reckitt Charity	5,000.00
Masonic Charitable Foundation	5,000.00
Joseph+Annie Cattle Trust	5,000.00
Brian Murtagh Charitable Trust	5,000.00
Hull Aid in Sickness Trust	3,000.00
Lloyds Bank	2,669.00
Hull&East Riding Charitable Trust	2,500.00
ERVAS (Dynamix Friends Fund)	2,000.00
Barratt Charitable Foundation	1,500.00
Co-op Community Fundraising	1,020.16
Magdalen Trust	1,000.00
Yorkshire Building Society Charitable Fund	850.00
CMS Foundation	750.00
Tesco Bags (Groundworks)	375.00
KCOM	150.00
	£98,560.16

We were delighted that a charitable trust (who wish to remain anonymous) awarded us a grant of £78,000 to be paid over 3 years, with the first £25,000 paid to us in this year. This is to support the running costs associated with our work with children aged 0-8 years old and gives us real security and confidence that we can continue to deliver our services into the future.

Our income from grants was 100% of our target this year. In 2023 we had invested £1,200 in paying for 30 hours of a bid-writer's time to help us with our grant applications in this year and this has proven to be a very successful strategy again.

Our community fundraising & donations income saw a 5% increase compared to last year. We have continued to work very hard to raise funds through our bookstall, raffles, auctions and encouraging families to take part in our Down Syndrome Awareness Week activities. We raised around £4800 during Awareness Week through families and friends taking part in a number of challenges, including a sponsored football match, bake sales, dance schools wearing Lots of Socks, Facebook donate buttons, Lots of Socks in schools and nurseries, donations and matched funds and raffles.

We continue to be the charity of the year for Portia House, Hessle High.

We had several individuals and teams who undertook amazing challenges this year including walking from Hull to Edinburgh, abseiling from the top of Anfield Stadium and taking part in tough mudders!

Overall, our income this year increased by 5% compared to last year (from £126K to £132K on a cash basis), surpassing our expectations. This gives us confidence for 2024-2025 that we will be able fund the charity in line with our budget of £138k for covering increased cost due to inflation, minimum wage increases and cost of living increases whilst continuing to grow the charity's offer to families.

It is important to highlight we receive no statutory funding, and do not currently charge our parents or the schools and early years settings we support for the majority of the services we offer. The only charge was a heavily subsidised rate for school staff to attend training courses and small charge for the weekly dance sessions.

Every penny goes towards building a brighter future for children and young people with Down syndrome and making a huge difference to their lives today. **Our heartfelt thanks go to those who supported us by raising funds or providing goods and services between November 2023 and October 2024. These include:**

Andy Harness	Emma Carter	Jean Nejrup	Newland School for Girls
Andy Smith (in memory of Margaret Smith)	Frederick Holmes School	Joanna harker	P&J Whomsley
Angela Broekhuizen (Sietske Broekhuizen)	Genesis Nursery	John Hutton	Pizza Pie
Appleton Primary	Gillian Bowlas	Joseph Bentley	Premier Molescroft
Arthouse	H Kemp & Son	Judy Sugden	Roger Coates
Ashley Henshaw	Helen Foster	Karl and Kerli Southwick	Roger Vine
Bethune Pharmacy	Hilly Lambert	Kerry Farmery	Sandhills Bookstall
Bob Bloomer	Holderness Academy	Kingspan Access flooring	Scientific Laboratory Supplies
Braham & Dixon	Holly McGuirk	Kristian Parker & Andy Blakeston	St Andrews (Kirkella) Primary
Chiltern Primary	Hornsea Luncheon Club	Lauren Keighley	St Mary's College and Sixth Form
Delilah-Rose's Family	Ideal Boilers	Lesley Beadle	Susan Norrie
Dominik Bielawski	In memory of Aunt Margaret (Anon)	Lisa Bloomer	Toni's Deli
Don Bremner	Jan Coates	Little Einsteins Nursery	Virgin Money Holderness road
Eltherington group	Janis Robinson (in memory of Tony Saunders)	M L Tuffnell	Zenith Developments

Thanks also to everyone who:

- Supported us during Awareness Week
- Hosted a collection tin
- Set up a [Facebook Fundraiser](#) for us this year
- Donated via TicketSource when booking an event
- Set up regular giving via their Payroll or via our Just Giving Page <https://www.justgiving.com/downright-special>
- Gave us a one-off donation via Just Giving, Paypal, or direct to the charity
- Donated a raffle or auction prize
- Donated goods for our eBay shop
- Supported us by using <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk> for their online shopping
- Sent e-cards using [Don't Send Me A Card](#).
- Bought us resources from our Amazon Wish List <https://tinyurl.com/2p87d64b>
- Everyone else who donated or supported us in any way, big or small. We couldn't do it without you!

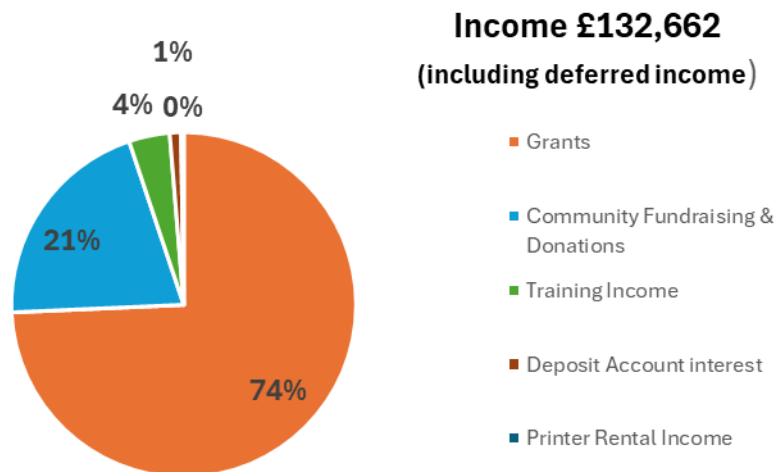
Financial Review

Income

Our levels of income (including deferred income of £24,331) saw a 5% increase compared to last year in line with our plans and our highest annual income to date. This year we saw increases in donations (up £5k, 25%) in part because of one donation of £7500 from a local business for which we were very grateful. Income from grants was down 3% compared to last year but met the target we had set ourselves for this year. (Please note in the accounts £24,330 of the grant income has been deferred, so grants income looks lower than it actually was.) We also had increases in deposit account interest and training income.

We continue to fundraise ourselves with our bookstall at Sandhill Garden Centre Café, and income from sharing the use of our printer. Our campaigns for World Down Syndrome Day generated around £4800 and we ran several raffles.

Fundraising from individuals taking part in sponsored events continues to play a vital role in securing sufficient income to run the charity, although income from this continues to be much reduced compared to before the pandemic and we continue to look for innovative ways to encourage individuals to fundraise for us.



Note: The figures in this chart include deferred income. A full summary of the accounts is appended to this trustees' report.

Expenditure

In line with our plans, our overall expenditure increased by just under 5% compared to last year. This was due to us increasing the hours of our Advisory Teacher by an extra 1 day a week in order to carry out our plans to build a bank of resources to support secondary schools with differentiated the curriculum and to provide increased support with planning the transition from secondary to post-16 education settings.

We continue to invest in specialist resources and making bespoke materials which can be used in our education sessions or given to families and schools to support the development of the children.

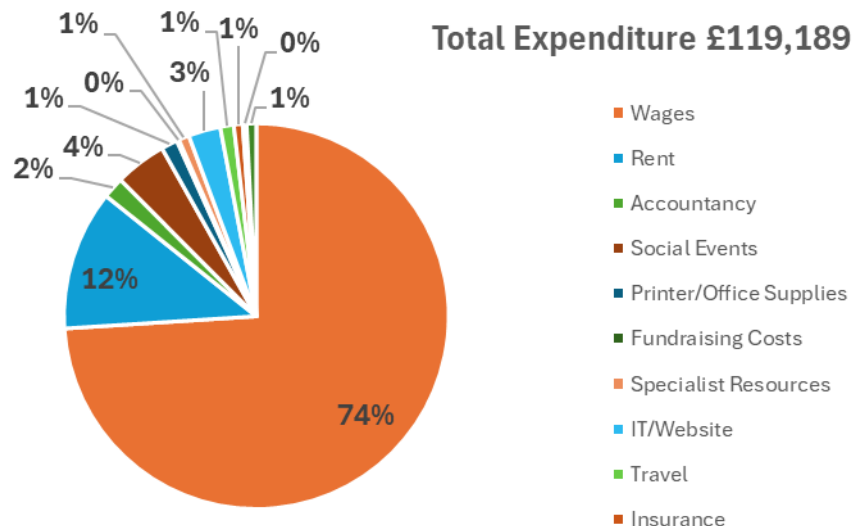
This year our spend on social events increased in part due to the increase in costs of events in line with the cost of living increases this year and because we started our new weekly Downright Dance project.

We are very grateful to the many individuals who purchased office supplies and specialist resources from our Amazon Wishlist, helping to keep these costs as low as possible.

We have invested in new IT equipment including three iPads and a laptop (with thanks to funding from grants) and also invested in a new website, moving the hosting to a new provider.

We keep our costs as low as possible through gifts in kind from local businesses, such as reduced accountancy costs from Harris Lacey and Swain, employment law advice from Gosschalks solicitors, telephony support from The One Point and many more. The One Point also very kindly continued to donate their time free of charge to support us with our IT systems following our migration to Office 365 last year, and then supporting us to ensure a seamless transition for our website hosting to our new provider.

We are hugely thankful for the incredible efforts from our team of volunteers, who have enabled us to continue to be so cost effective.



Looking to the future

This year we have been working on refreshing our five-year strategy. Our plans for the next 5 years continue to be centred on expanding our range of services in line with the increasing age range of the children and young people we support so we can continue to support their evolving needs and help them reach their potential. Our goal is to support children and young people through their secondary school years and beyond to further education and employment. We also want to ensure that we continue to be sustainable in the short term whilst we continue to deliver our core, current activities.

Some of our plans in each of our priority areas are:

Education

- Increase our support to secondary schools and support transition between educational stages in particular secondary to post-16 colleges.
- Enhance links with further education providers and day services

Health

- Develop a programme of training and information sessions for families to help them support the health and wellbeing of their children and young adults with Down syndrome.
- Network with local health services to advocate for the health needs of individuals with Down syndrome, work together to develop best practice and increase awareness of the Care Pathway in health services with a focus on GPs.

Support

- Provide opportunities to allow children and young people with Down Syndrome to develop friendships and independence through social activities and networking events
- Continue to deliver support services for children, young people & their families, based on need, making adjustments e.g. to our Friday sessions as necessary
- Support families to navigate SEND law and the EHCP process, leading to impactful support

Advocacy

- Ensure young people are included in the design of activities and develop ways to involve them in the running of the charity
- Continued networking, engagement and lobbying at a local and national level

Training

- Continue to develop our training offer with further education links
- Continue to offer a programme of training for schools, parents, carers and health professionals

Underpinning Activities

- Continue our strategy to focus on seeking multi-year funding for our projects and core costs to ensure long term sustainability
- Research, design and implement a new cloud-based data storage system to improve our systems for document storage and knowledge sharing.
- Undertake a board of trustees skills audit and recruit new trustees as required to ensure continued strong governance of the charity

We actively encourage as many people as possible to get involved in whatever way they can. If you would like to do something 'Downright Special', please contact office@downrightspecial.co.uk

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lizann Lawson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lizann Lawson (Trustee)

Appendix: Unaudited Financial Statements