



Down  
Syndrome  
Ireland

National Leadership Local Support



# ANNUAL REVIEW 2013

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# INTRODUCTION:

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Welcome to the 2013 Annual Review of Down Syndrome Ireland, the largest organisation in Ireland to represent people with an intellectual disability.



I have had the honour of representing Down Syndrome Ireland as their President since June 2013 and I wish to thank Clare Leonard for her stewardship over the previous three years. Clare brought the organisation through a time of change and leaves it strong and resourceful as it faces the future.

Since becoming president the organisation has faced many challenges in the areas of education and health with a lot of engagement with politicians and government officials, lobbying for better resources and supports for our members. These campaigns continue into 2014 and the efforts will continue unabated. Corporate Governance issues became a spectre towards the end of the year and I am pleased to write that Down Syndrome Ireland has been recognised being one of the best governed organisations in the sector. This recognition came from within the sector as well as from our supporters who have continued to support through this trying time. I think it appropriate at this point to acknowledge all our supporters, as without them we would not be able to deliver the services to our members and to continue to lobby on their behalf.

I wish to acknowledge the sterling work of all the staff in the national office and in the branches who go the extra mile on behalf of our members. I also wish to thank my fellow board members who have supported me in my role as president with sound counsel and advice.

Looking forward to 2014 I realise that there are still significant challenges ahead for the organisation but challenges bring opportunities. As an organisation we are taking advantage of the property market and hope to acquire a building in the near future that will save significantly on our current rent bill and I look forward to having the branches support the organisation in this venture.

Lastly I would encourage all our members to become active members in their branches, as the more active our members are the more relevant our voice is at the campaign table.

Mary Doherty

President, DSI

# DOWN SYNDROME IRELAND:

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Down Syndrome Ireland is a national voluntary organisation supporting people with Down syndrome and their families in twenty-five branches nationwide.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Down Syndrome Ireland is dedicated to being the primary source of information and support to people with Down syndrome, their families and the professional community, working towards an improved quality of life for our members along with a respect and acceptance of people with Down syndrome as valued members of Irish society.

Down Syndrome Ireland provides a nationally recognised voice for people with Down syndrome and their families. Down Syndrome Ireland provides information and advice, influences policy, raises public awareness and works towards the improvement of education and services for children and adults with Down syndrome.

## Our Organisation

Down Syndrome Ireland represents and supports 3,500 members through a national team and twenty-five local branches nationwide.

## The NATIONAL TEAM – A Brief Overview

The National Office comprises of a Fundraising Team, a Central Support Team and a National Resource Team. The National Resource Team provides specialist consultancy services around the country in health, education, early development, speech and language therapy, counselling and independence.

In addition, the organisation is governed by a Board of Directors who consults with a National Council comprised of parent representatives from each branch and a National Advisory Council. DSI's National Advisory Council represents the opinions of adults with Down syndrome within our organisation. The council is made up of eleven adults with Down syndrome from across Ireland.



# National Leadership, Local Support

## LOCAL BRANCHES – A Brief Overview

Down Syndrome Ireland has twenty-five branches nationwide. These branches are run almost exclusively by volunteer parents working in committees and providing their members with a wide range of services and social opportunities.

**The services and opportunities offered to members vary with each branch, but among them are:**

- Parent Link
- Early Development Programmes
- Mother & Child Groups
- Pre-school Home Teaching Service
- Speech & Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- The Latch-On (Adult Literacy) Programme
- Employment Opportunities
- Arts & Crafts Classes
- Speech & Drama Classes
- Dance Classes
- Social Occasions including:
  - Christmas Parties
  - Summer Outings
  - Theatre & Concert visits

All the services provided at branch level are funded through donations and fundraising by the members of those branches and their families and friends.

## OUR OBJECTIVES

Down Syndrome Ireland aims to facilitate and optimise service delivery and supports in the country by:

- » Raising awareness of people with Down syndrome as valued members of the community;
- » Working towards the development of essential supports and services to best support people with Down syndrome through the various life stages;
- » Working closely with our branches, service providers and community groups to ensure integrated analysis, planning and provision of services;
- » Being an efficient provider of high quality evidence based supports and services;
- » Lobbying for better supports and resources for people with Down syndrome through the various life stages.





# OUR WORK: Key



## The key activities and areas of specific focus in 2013 included the following:

### › NATIONAL RESOURCE TEAM:

In 2013 Down Syndrome Ireland's National Resource Team (NRT) comprised of a full-time Specialist Counsellor, Director of Policy, Ethics & Independence and Clinical Research Nurse. Part-time posts on the team include an Education Officer, Speech & Language Therapist (1 day a week) and Early Development Advisor (3 hours weekly).

#### The Mission of the NRT is:

- To foster a spirit of independence in people with Down syndrome and their families.
- To promote the objectives and guiding principles for best-practice in the areas of early development, education, personal development, health-care, emotional well-being and independence for individuals with Down syndrome.

- To empower families and people with Down syndrome and equip them with the knowledge and skills to advocate for their rights.
- To promote a positive image of people with Down syndrome as valued members of Irish society.
- To affect change through a solution-focused approach.

The professionals who comprise Down Syndrome Ireland's NRT continued throughout 2013 to provide services to the community connected with Down syndrome. Employing a "train the trainer" approach the team works closely to develop innovative ways of addressing areas of personal development and healthy lifestyles which lead to emotional, physical and mental wellbeing of individuals who have Down syndrome. The members of the NRT are dedicated to preparing and providing the most up-to-date information and advice services to our membership of over 3,000 families. The NRT adopts a three-tier approach to service delivery and employs a number of mediums in order to reach as large a

target audience as possible.

#### Tier One:

The provision of direct services such as:

- Counselling services
- Information seminars and conferences
- Individual parent queries
- Case conferences
- Advocacy supports
- Visits to branches/schools/ services/hospitals
- Personal development courses;
- Facilitation of National Advisory Council work.

#### Tier Two:

Educating Professionals (train the trainer)

- Management of Latch-On Adult Literacy programme across all four provinces;
- Teacher/SNA training;
- Lectures to:
  - Medical students, Midwives, Public health nurses, Employers and Union officials.

# Services and Projects

## Tier three:

Information Provision and Representation through:

- The production of publications; articles for websites and print media;
- Supervision of branding and ensuring adherence to DSI mission and ethos;
- Representation in the media;
- The provision of content for grant proposals.

## › SUPPORTING RESEARCH:

The NRT is also dedicated to supporting research on crucial areas specific to Down syndrome at undergraduate and post-graduate level. This may involve meeting and supporting a student in devising information gathering tools and communicating on their behalf with the membership.

## › SERVICES FOR NEW AND EXPECTANT PARENTS:

In 2013 DSI continued to offer a host of services to new and expectant families. For many new and expectant parents, DSI is the first point of contact. Professionally trained staff and specialists within the NRT are available to address parent queries and provide on-going support and counselling as required.

### » New Parent Guide

An information booklet for new parents is written and published by Down Syndrome Ireland. The new parent information booklet contains well-researched and accurate information for new parents in Ireland. Throughout 2013 DSI continued to disseminate this booklet to maternity hospitals nationwide.

### » Parent Link

Parent Link is a voluntary support and information service for parents of new babies with Down syndrome.

It is a service run entirely on a voluntary basis by parents who are familiar with the feelings and reactions associated with having a child with Down syndrome in the family. Parent Link parents provide time, confidentiality and a listening ear for new parents. Parent Link parents receive training in communication skills from Down Syndrome Ireland's National Resource Team. DSI continued to provide this service throughout 2013 and to provide support to the parent volunteers.

### » New Parents' Conferences

New Parent Conferences are run annually by DSI. Being a parent of a new baby who has Down syndrome can be a traumatic experience for many parents. Many will feel disappointed and possibly scared at the prospect of bringing up a child with an intellectual disability. They may also wonder if they have the strength and ability to do their best for their son/daughter. Some may worry about health issues, family life and about the effect of this condition on their child, family and each other. We at Down Syndrome Ireland have found that one of the best ways to address these issues is by holding an annual residential weekend conference somewhere around the country. Parents of children under two years of age arrive on Friday evening and leave on Sunday at lunchtime. All meals and accommodation are provided at a minimal cost in order to make the opportunity accessible to all our members regardless of income. The weekend offers parents the opportunity to meet other parents in a relaxed and child-free environment and give them time to reflect on their

new situation. During the weekend they are helped by speakers who are experts in the world of Down syndrome. They receive information and have time for discussion on such topics as their feelings, health concerns, speech and language therapy, family life and interaction and communication skills. The weekend is confined to fifty people, this small number ensures that each family is given the time and expertise they require to make their experience beneficial for their situation.

The 2013 conference was hosted in Laois during November with over 50 new parents in attendance. Analysis of parent evaluations of the conference revealed high levels of parent satisfaction.





#### › **EARLY DEVELOPMENT:**

Early Development is extremely important in supporting children's growth and development during their early years. A number of local branches run Early Development projects. In addition to this DSI ran regional Early Development Conferences during 2013 in Cork and Galway for parents as well as the first in-depth Early Development and Communications conference for professionals. Our Early Development consultant continues to be available to answer any queries that arise in this area and DSI remain actively involved in Special Interest Groups such as the LAMH Research and Development Group.

#### › **EDUCATION SERVICES:**

Down Syndrome Ireland employed a part-time Education Consultant during 2013. They provide parents with information on general educational issues such as:

- strategies for working in partnership with the child's school
- supports available to children with special educational needs (SNAs, Resource Teachers, etc.)

- how parents can support the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

The Education Consultant also provided services to schools, teachers and SNAs directly through the provision of training and assistance with individual queries and cases.

In 2013, the Education consultant visited 12 branches by request (Galway, Louth / Meath, Westmeath, Leitrim / West Cavan, Donegal, Waterford, Kildare, Tipperary, Mayo, Monaghan, Limerick and Kerry). Numerous individual visits were also paid to schools and parents in all branches.

In addition to the Education Consultant's services, DSI held two successful Education Conferences in 2013 in Galway and Kilkenny offering sessions to both parents and professionals. Provision of Numicon Maths Equipment and training was also on-going throughout 2013.

Research and development, lobbying and forming alliances and partnerships with relevant bodies continued to form a key part of DSI's work in the area of education in 2013.

#### › **DOWN SYNDROME IRELAND SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG)**

The Down Syndrome Ireland Speech & Language Therapy Special Interest Group (DSI SIG) was founded by Down Syndrome Ireland in 2009. The primary purpose of the DSI SIG is to promote evidence-based practice through the provision of specialist training /education for speech and language therapists (SLTs) and the provision of a structured forum for SLTs to develop and share expertise and research findings. DSI has worked with noted experts in the field of Speech and Language Therapy to devise suitable programmes and training events to this end.

The DSI SIG meets twice a year, once for a study day and once for a skills training seminar.

The SIG National Training Event 2013 was held during June. Geraldine Moran, Aoife Ni Riordan and Ger Manley delivered training on using iPads as therapy tools with children with Down syndrome.



The SIG National Study Day was planned to tie in with the Behaviour Conference in November 2013, offering SIG members the opportunity to join the morning session of the Behaviour Conference for professionals, followed by an afternoon session focusing on the impact of behavioural challenges on outcomes in speech and language therapy. However the afternoon session did not take place due to the very small number of SIG members who applied to attend. Informal feedback suggests that therapists in many services are no longer being given time for continuing professional development.

### › COUNSELLING AND DRAMATHERAPY:

Down Syndrome Ireland continued through 2013 to offer a counselling and dramatherapy service to people with Down syndrome and their families. The counsellor offers a safe, confidential and non-judgmental environment in which clients can: receive the support they need to resolve issues and make decisions; deal with negative feelings and emotions; gain clarity and perspective on the issue; identify and explore personal resources and develop new skills. DSI's counsellor also plays a key role in many other services, such as services to new and expectant parents, personal development programmes and services to professionals.

### › PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES:

Down Syndrome Ireland runs ten-week personal development courses around the country for children and adults with Down syndrome. The course is divided into four modules, comprising; friendships, feelings, sexuality and self-esteem. In 2013 two personal development courses were delivered in Kerry for teens and adults. A personal development course was also delivered for children in Waterford.

### › NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL:

Our National Advisory Council (NAC) continues to represent the opinions of adults with Down syndrome within the organisation. The committee meet once a month in the DSI national office and meetings are facilitated by a member of the NRT. In 2013 the council launched their positive awareness campaign, acknowledging the positive contributions that people with Down syndrome make to their families and communities. The Council also launched an anti-bullying campaign entitled 'I'm OK, You're Mean' which comprises of a video and booklet. Members of the NAC represented DSI by delivering lectures and talks to professionals and undergraduates about their experiences of living with Down syndrome. One member addressed a select committee at the Council of Europe on accessible tourism and culture. The NAC supported one undergraduate multimedia studies student with his thesis about living with Down syndrome in Irish society. The NAC also supported four masters students with their multimedia project about friendships. In addition to this, members of the Council also travelled to Rome as part of the "Think Different, Think Europe" pan-European project.

### › LATCH-ON ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMME:

Literacy & Technology Hands On (Latch-On) is two-year literacy programme for adults with intellectual disability. Latch-On was initiated and developed at the School of Education at the University of Queensland and has a strong foundation in educational research and practice. The programme provides opportunities for adults with Down syndrome to commence and continue their literacy development. Through 2013 Down Syndrome Ireland continued running of the

Latch-On programmes across all four provinces. We currently have thirteen teaching sites nationwide in Dublin, Louth, Meath, Roscommon, Cavan, Monaghan, Waterford, Limerick, Clare, with two sites in Kildare and two sites in Kerry.

Ireland is the first European country to acquire a license to run Latch-On and the programme has been extremely successful. Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered at the outset of the pilot phase of the programme; ongoing data gathering and analysis are integral parts of the programme. The Irish data will form part of an international research project as conducted by the University of Queensland.

Professional development for teachers was provided by the University of Queensland during May 2013 with the creators of the programme also visiting each site to conduct audit reviews and ensure compliance with the programmes methodologies.



## › SMART TOURISM EUROPEAN PROJECT:

In 2013, DSI concluded work on the pan-European Smart Tourism Project. The project focuses on the development of new methods and tools through the mobility, active participation and exchange of experiences of people with Down syndrome. The project involved the participation of three Down syndrome associations comprising the national associations of Italy and Portugal as well as Down Syndrome Ireland. The project foresaw the production of three easy-to-read European city guidebooks comprising Rome, Dublin and Lisbon. The primary target group is individuals with Down syndrome, however it was envisaged that the easy-to-read guidebooks would also be of use to other target groups including people with a low level of English and those with acquired brain injury. The project concluded in Ireland with the production and launch by the deputy Lord Mayor of an easy-to-read 'Smart Tourism' Guidebook of our capital city. This guidebook was designed by people with Down syndrome for people with Down syndrome. The project participants

developed a range of writing and analytical skills during the production and testing phases of this project. Participants were introduced to a new genre of writing. Participants experienced travelling experiences in two European countries as recommended by their peers. Participants demonstrated improved self-confidence as the project progressed and the participants worked together as a team by listening to and respecting one another's opinions. The Smart Tourism project has empowered our members to avail of life's opportunities similar to those opportunities afforded to their peers in the general population.

## › HEALTH:

DSI in collaboration with the Department of Health employs a Clinical Nurse Specialist to carry out research specific to health related issues experienced by individuals with Down syndrome. The role includes assisting individuals with Down syndrome, their parents/guardians and other medical providers with any health issues that may arise. In 2013, the Clinical Nurse Specialist continued to provide

advice and up to date information and education nationwide within the area of Down syndrome and health for children and adolescents from birth to 18 years. The focus of the research programme is to promote individual and family participation in care and identifying and meeting the needs of children with Down syndrome and their families throughout childhood and adolescents. The Clinical Nurse Specialist provides clear understanding of healthcare issues including available treatment and care options as their child grows and develops. She continues to act as a communication link for parents with allied health professionals within hospital and community services locally and nationally.

2013 saw an increased amount of new referrals from maternity hospitals and community services requesting support for new babies with Down syndrome and their families. Support and aftercare is provided to individuals and their parents when they attend the hospital for procedures and feedback is given to community services. Health education talks were delivered to branches, community



services, medical professionals and students throughout the year. Research is also being conducted into health and wellbeing, education and future planning. Further research is also being undertaken in conjunction with Our Lady's Hospital, Crumlin on Arthropathy of Down syndrome. It is hoped that this piece of research will be one of the largest in the world on this topic.

### › LOBBYING:

Down Syndrome Ireland has a long and proud history of lobbying and campaigning for, and on behalf of people with Down syndrome and their families in Ireland. Throughout 2013, DSI continued our efforts to effect change in the Education, Health and Disability Rights area. DSI co-organised protest marches on these issues and was a founding member of the Disability Rights Coalition, Ireland to lobby on all the issues that relate to people with an intellectual disability. In May, over 60 TDs and Senators attended a briefing at the AV rooms in Leinster House given by DSI parents and the NRT focusing on the educational needs of children with Down syndrome. This led to the formation of a cross party group supporting the efforts of DSI to increase the level of resources allocated to children who have Down syndrome to support their education. In June 2013 a small delegation met with the Minister for Education & Skills to further raise the awareness of this issue. Our Education Consultant has been appointed to the NCSE's consultative forum. A number of meetings took place with the chair of the Health and Social protection committee on the medical card issue. Activity on both these issues continue at a high level into 2014.

### › PUBLICATIONS:

DSI publishes a magazine thrice annually. The publication includes information on a wide variety of topics of interest to families and professionals. Down Syndrome Ireland also provides a wide range of booklets, factsheets and resources covering many aspects of living with Down syndrome.

During 2013 a number of new publications were added to the existing list of DSI publications including a new Student Information Pack, an awareness booklet about bullying including a series of personal stories about experiences of bullying and the Smart Tourism Guide to Dublin.

During 2013 DSI also worked with the Referendum Commission for the first time to produce an easily accessible guide to the two referendums for those with intellectual disability. The aim of the guide was to provide information on the referendums held on Friday 4th October, in an accessible format for people with intellectual disability so that they can make an informed choice. DSI has been consistently calling on state bodies to provide accessible information in relation to public information campaigns to those with intellectual disabilities and this is the first time that it has been done.

### › AWARENESS CAMPAIGN:

In 2012 The National Advisory Council (NAC) and National Resource Team (NRT) in Down Syndrome Ireland worked together to devise materials for an awareness campaign aimed at challenging societal views and perceptions of the condition of Down syndrome. 2013 saw a number of new themes and materials developed. The

involvement of the NAC proved invaluable to the development of campaign materials. DSI also developed an Advocacy calendar from this campaign and the calendar was distributed to employers and supporters throughout the country.

To improve understanding and challenge perceptions of Down syndrome, DSI also train volunteers and professionals on policy and best practice. Information sessions are also delivered to employers and unions.

### › CONFERENCES:

DSI offer conferences and information sessions on a wide variety of topics to our members and to professionals that work with people with Down syndrome. Each year DSI also hold an annual conference for our members to coincide with our AGM. Notable conferences during 2013 included 'Addressing Behavioural Issues in children, Teens and Adults with Down syndrome'. The two day conference was delivered by internationally recognised speakers Dr D McGuire & Dr G. Capone and was well attended by both parents and professionals.

### OTHER SUPPORTS:


In addition to the many projects undertaken and the support services of the National Resource Team, we have a dedicated team of support staff in our National Office offering a variety of services and supports to members as well as support and administrative services to our branch network.


# SERVICES REVIEWED:

## Service Delivery 2013

Down Syndrome Ireland delivers a wide range of services. Below are service delivery metrics in some of our key service areas:

### Referrals and Queries:

 <b>EDUCATION</b>		
Contacts from Parents	(initial /repeat)	698
Contacts from Teachers	(initial/repeat)	225
Meetings with Parents	(individual)	74
Meetings with Parents	(group)	18
School Visits	(group)	47
Meetings with Teachers/SNAs (Exclusive of school visits and conference work)	(group)	3

 <b>ADULT AREA/INDEPENDENCE</b>	
Parent Queries	410
Professional Queries	360
Branch & Latch-On Visits	15
National Advisory Council Meetings / Events	28





## CONFERENCES DELIVERED

- 2 Education Conferences
- 12 Branch Educational Seminars
- One 3-day New Parent Residential Conference
- 3 Volunteer Training Days
- 2 10-week Personal Development Courses
- Speech & Language Therapist's Special Interest Group (SIG) Training Seminar, Study Day & AGM
- Annual Conference & AGM
- 4 Lectures on Down Syndrome to Health and other professionals
- Training Seminar for DSI Home Teachers
- 5 Counselling / Dramatherapy Branch Seminars
- Latch-On Key Teacher Training and Professional Development seminars in partnership with University of Queensland



## MEETINGS WITH / SUBMISSIONS TO:

- National Council of Special Education (Allocation of Resources / SNAs)
- Department of Education and Skills (Resources /SNAs)
- Disability Authority of Ireland
- Equality and Diversity
- Government Departments/ Minister Frances Fitzgerald
- Institute of Child Education and Psychology (online course for teachers)
- United Nations
- International Federation of Electoral Systems IFES
- Referendum Commission
- University of Queensland
- Lámh Research & Development Committee
- Downsed European Research Conference
- Appointment to IASLT working group on SLT provision for children with ID



## PUBLICATIONS

- Revised New Parent Booklet
- Awareness Campaign Materials
- 'I'm Ok, You're Mean' Bullying Booklet
- Student Booklet
- Easy-to-Read Children Referendum Guide
- Two Editions of the DSI Magazine

# FINANCIAL TABLES:

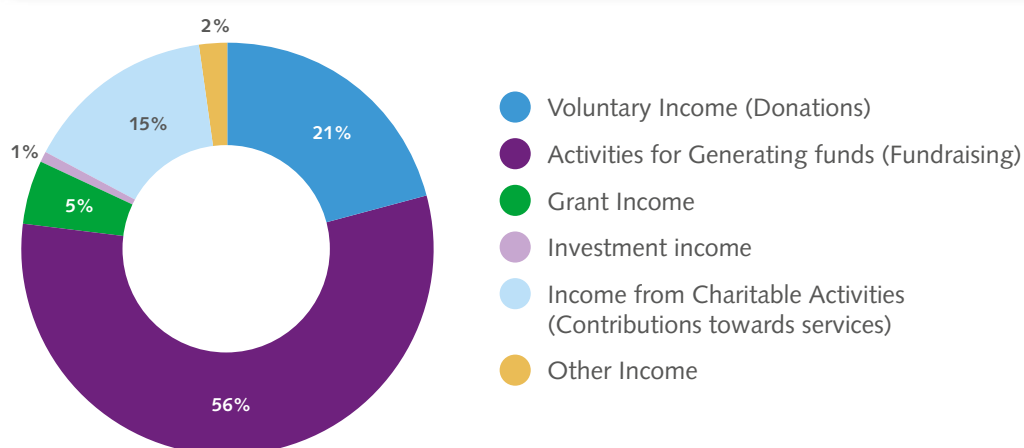
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In 2013 Down Syndrome Ireland spent over €2.6million on the provision of services and the achievement of the organisation's objectives. The main sources of revenue for Down Syndrome Ireland continue to be donations and fundraising which accounted for over 77% of the organisation's revenue in 2013. The work of the organisation would not be possible without the tremendous efforts of the members, supporters and the public in the generation of funds.



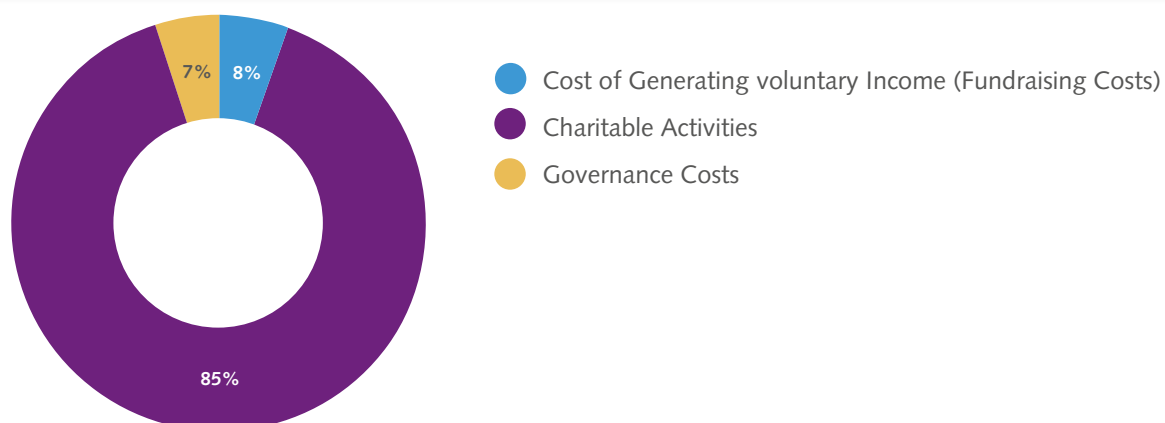
## INCOME SOURCES 2013

Voluntary Income (Donations)	€696,749
Activities for Generating funds (Fundraising)	€1,875,148
Grant Income	€170,757
Investment income	€41,882
Income from Charitable Activities (Contributions towards services)	€505,635
Other Income	€63,285



## RESOURCES EXPENDED 2013

Cost of Generating voluntary Income (Fundraising Costs)	€230,513
Charitable Activities	€2,668,865
Governance Costs	€228,420



# OUR BRANCHES:

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Down Syndrome Ireland has twenty-five branches nationwide. These branches are run almost exclusively by volunteer parents working in committees and providing their members with a wide range of services and social opportunities.

## CARLOW

We would like to thank everyone for all their support throughout 2013. Attendance at meetings was up and support to the committee much improved and it was good to see the committee's strategies yielding results. We are very fortunate to have a great team that work very well together. We have become proactive and offer much assistance to many families in all areas and that's what it's all about. There is always someone at the other end of the phone so no one is left to feel alone.

Despite the current climate the branch have been very fortunate this year with fundraising and a lot of unexpected events came up, all of it very welcome however big or small.

We introduced a very simple calendar of activities which was well received and appreciated by the families. It gave some idea of the initial plans at the start of the year and also gave a very useful list of contacts.

The Speech & Language Clinic continued and financial assistance was provided to a number of families, so there is no reason that any child isn't getting the service due to financial hardship.

The Massage service resumed and was well received by two of our local Adult Services. It is now being offered to everyone in these centres. The Baby Massage service has been very positive with some great goals being set and achieved. It is a stress free appointment for parent and baby and so very beneficial. Again some financial assistance was available in order to make it affordable for parents.

Numicon was presented to families from within our branch which enabled parents to have some insight before investing in the equipment.

It's also important to remember that not everything should be serious and like all things, a balance is needed and some fun should be had. Therefore, we brought a number of preschool children to Kidsville for a morning to introduce the facility to everyone. Teens and Adults too, enjoyed a trip to see The Lion King at the Bord Gais Energy Theatre. The Annual Summer Trip to Amber Springs had the biggest turnout this year, so all in all the social calendar was good and families got a chance to meet each other and spend time together. Information shared by other parents is sometimes far more valuable than any book and it can be done while socialising so we always encourage families to attend such outings as a lot can be gained from them. Siblings also get a chance to interact.





Our Parent Link Co-Ordinator has provided an invaluable service to new parents and indeed some older parents. She has a wealth of experience and we'd be lost without her.

Our National Council Representative attended meetings in Dublin and around the country and always has news for us. All aspects at National Level come under their radar and a full report is always available. She promotes all the conferences, supports parents attending and also has a wealth of experience and again we'd be lost without her.

Our Special Interest Group, which was set up at the AGM, put together a comprehensive survey of services being provided to our members. The group compiled all the results and wrote to the Local HSE and Ministers of State with their findings. A meeting has been secured with the HSE to discuss their findings and progress the issue further. We have adopted a statement from a National Council Meeting – Parents will change policies not organisations.

Fit Kidz for children aged 2 to 12 years continues on Saturday mornings in Tinryland Parish Centre, the aim of the programme is to develop basic skills.

Arthritis Screening - We had a full list of under age 18 to be screened and Dr. Foley from Crumlin attended Carlow to conduct the screening process for her research.

## CAVAN/MONAGHAN

2013 was a very eventful year for the branch, and proved to be the start of a new era of change.

### Services Offered:

**Preschool Home Teacher Service:** This service is offered from the age of one year, until the child goes to school and our home teacher visits every member at home each fortnight. Great effort is made by the branch to retain this service, and vigorous fundraising is required each year, as the branch is responsible for raising the salary of the home teacher.

**LATCH-ON:** Our latch on service is doing well in both areas, and all the students are enjoying the various activities. There are plans to include the students within the campus of the Cavan Institute of Technology. This will prove to be an invaluable start to promoting integration and acceptance at third level education.

**Monthly Coffee Mornings:** 2013 saw the start to our monthly coffee mornings. They are run at a local play centre, the kids have a ball, and the moms and dads have a chance to chat....in-between rescues from slides and ball pools! This has been an invaluable resource, as parents share experiences, and the kids get to meet and play with each other, and hopefully make friendships to last a lifetime.

The year ended with a BIG BANG, when SANTA came to visit all the kids! It was a wonderful experience.

2014 will be even more exciting!!!



Cavan/Monaghan members enjoying the annual Christmas Party

## CORK

Down Syndrome Cork has over 360 members, with membership renewed on an annual basis. Geographical Area covered is Cork City and County. Centre 21, our primary base has gone from strength to strength in the past year with an average of two events held there per week in 2013.

**Services:** In the year 2013 the branch provided the following:

**Speech and Language Therapy:** The branch operated a full time SLT service throughout the year. It is a subsidised service and parents who are involved in bag packing also receive a €20 credit against the cost of SLT.

**Education Service:** The branch expanded its education service for members during 2013 by engaging a part-time, voluntary Education Officer who has an extensive background in education. Their role included visits to schools and advice to schools on matters relevant to our members. The branch also organised seminars on entry to the primary school system and also on entry to second level schools, both mainstream and special.

**Workshops:** We provided a variety of workshops for our members on topics including financial wellbeing and planning, challenging behaviour and sibling support. We also provided a Lamh workshop for teachers and SNAs working in schools where our children attend. We also provided arthritis screening and an alternative medicine and health screening for our West Cork members.

**Monthly Coffee mornings:** We run a monthly coffee morning in Centre 21 where anyone is welcome to drop in. We also organised a Nollaig na mBan and an Easter na mBan for our moms, aunts, sisters, grandmothers and friends.

### **Physiotherapy Service & Occupational Therapy:**

We provided a subsidised Physiotherapy Service which also included information seminars for parents. The first seminar was aimed at children in the 0-3 age category. A subsidised Occupational Therapy Service was also supported by the branch at Stepping Ahead which is adjacent to our office. This involved both individual and group sessions.

**Adult members (21+):** Following on from 2012, we placed an increased emphasis on the provision of activities and events for our adult members. We started SNAG (Starting New At Golf) in August and we also had a number of social evenings including a bowling night.

**Young Adult Members (15-20):** Our teenager/young adult members have also been very busy in 2013 with two dance classes, a baking night and a disco.

**Young Members:** Our younger members were busier than even in 2013 with dance classes, art classes and trips to a care farm in Castlemartyr. Our Christmas Party continues to be a very popular event on the calendar.

**Jo Jingles:** This continues to be exceptionally popular with our very young members and their parents and is a great introduction to the branch for our new parents. This happens in our own Centre 21 on the 3rd Saturday of every month.

**Psychomotricity:** Psychomotricity sessions continued for our young members in West Cork.

For the first time we also organised weekends away to Galway for our members. We brought members aged 21+ on our first trip and some of our teenagers on the second. We stayed in Kilcuan, a house owned by the Irish Pilgrimage Trust. A great time was had by all which included a trip to the aquarium and bowling.

We opened a pop-up bookshop in Merchants Quay Shopping Centre which has proved very successful both as a fundraising opportunity but more importantly as a chance for a number of our adult members to get involved as staff members.



## » PLANNING AHEAD (2014)

We are planning to run a number of new workshops throughout 2014. We will be organising our own New Parents Workshop for the first time as well as an RLI workshop and more Lamh courses, particularly for parents.

**Fundraising:** Despite the economic difficulties, the people of Cork continue to support the Branch time and time again. The Tour de Munster continues to be one of our main fundraisers. We would like to thank Paul Sheridan and his team for their huge efforts and to the many parents who participate in the cycle. Thank you also to Marks & Spencer for their continued support of our bag packing. We also received a grant from the Cork Education & Training Board. We continue to hold our Annual Ball; this was a great success thanks to a very active Ball Committee and the support of the members. DS Cork also held our Bizarre Bazaar which again proved to be very popular with the people of Cork. A number of

schools in Cork got involved with us for Purple Day where they engaged in a wide variety of fundraising activities on World Down Syndrome Day in March. We also launched a line of DS Cork chocolate bars which have proved very popular (and yummy) with our members, friends and in a number of schools throughout Cork.

We hope to continue and expand our existing activities such as our dance classes, art classes and SNAG Golf.

**Website:** Our website, and particularly our Facebook page have gone from strength to strength. All activities and events are posted on Facebook along with plenty of photos. Both are looked after by one of our committee members.

Down Syndrome Cork has big plans for the year ahead-watch this space!

## DONEGAL

Donegal Down Syndrome has over 140 members currently spread throughout Donegal. We are located at Convent Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

### Services and Activities 2013:

**Speech and Language Therapy:** We have a speech and language therapist at the Letterkenny office three days of the week. She is then based in Donegal Town the other two days. We pay a substantial contribution quarterly to The Bluestack Foundation (another charitable organisation for Special Needs), who employ her. She works with our members on an individual basis through set appointments. The members are offered three blocks of eight sessions annually. Our members are not asked to pay for this service.

**Education:** We have been very pro-active in trying to augment the knowledge of our families and professionals regarding communication, literacy and numeracy. In May 2013 we hosted a very successful Conference for both parents and professionals over two days. Professor Sue Buckley was the key speaker. The conference was free of charge to parents with a small charge to professionals. This conference heightened awareness of Down syndrome and promoted inclusion within Donegal.

In addition to this, we ran three Lamh one day workshops in our branch last year with a qualified Lamh tutor. These were attended by Special Needs Assistants, Parents and Teachers. Attendance at these workshops certified the attendees at level 1. There was a charge to cover the cost of materials and tutor for the day.

We also hosted our first Numicon workshop, which was a huge success and is a growing method of mathematics for children with Down Syndrome. The facilitator was Cecilie MacKinnon. There were both professionals and parents present. There was a small cover charge for the day for room hire and refreshments.

### Members 14+ years / Adult :

Our members in this age group have been involved in a wide range of activities including

- Regular Yoga classes held in two locations
- Two short theatre productions during the Summer and Christmas
- Regular Swimming sessions
- A day trip to Dublin Zoo
- Outdoor Activities at Gartan Lake Activity Centre
- Monthly Youth Group
- Drama in Buncrana
- Art Workshops Summer/Winter
- Christmas Candle Service
- Cinema trip
- World Down Syndrome Day party

### Members under 6 years:

Our members in this age group have been involved in activities including:

- Regular Tiny Tunes- dance /action and songs sessions
- Parent & toddler group
- A day trip to Dublin Zoo
- Regular Swimming sessions

- Two short Theatre Productions
- Art workshops Summer /Winter
- Christmas Candle Service
- Cinema trip - €5 for show and refreshments
- Baby Massage and Yoga - provided at a small cost of €20
- World Down Syndrome Day party

All of the above were free of charge to our members unless highlighted against the activity. We endeavour not to constantly split into different age groups so that our members and families can all mix together to gain support and share information. It was rewarding at the theatre productions to see children aged three dancing alongside some of our adult members.

## » PLANNING FOR 2014

We had funding and a location in place for cycling for all ages at the end of 2013, but unfortunately due to bad weather this was postponed until May 2014. Living Classes are to commence in March 2014 for our Adult members. Due to the success of a weekly Parent/Toddler Group we have decided to continue this on into 2014. There is much excitement around World Down Syndrome Day 2014 with a huge party booked, inviting some of our friends from Mayo and Sligo. We also have workshops regarding toileting, early years and behaviour planned.

We are preparing to set up a new parent-link system with training taking place in the Spring. There will be more Numicon and Lamh Workshops. We are excited that in May we have two seminars organised. The two speakers are Dr Sara Jayne Flynn and Rebecca Baxter. They are both highly qualified and we hope again to raise awareness, enhance knowledge and empower both professionals and parents with new strategies.



Donegal Branch's visit to the Zoo

## » FUNDRAISING

We are very active fundraisers and the communities within Donegal are very supportive. We were a benefactor at the North West 10 k in 2013. Our families take part in an annual Church gate collection once a year. Over 100 people took part in the Glenveagh Hill Walking Challenge in September. A few of our parents took part in a cycle Mizen to Malin Head in August. Individual members had tea parties, carol singing, Easter Egg hunt, barbeque, photograph exhibition and music evenings to name just a few. Tesco allowed us to bag pack and we also made our own Christmas Hampers which were hugely successful.

We have a dynamic facebook page and hope to start a Twitter account in the New Year. Also we hope to be able to create a donate online facility.

## DUBLIN

Down Syndrome Dublin has over 400 members and membership is renewed annually. The branch covers Dublin city and county and is completely run by parent volunteers.

### Services, Events and Activities 2013

2013 was an incredibly busy year for the branch.

Subsidised Speech and Language Therapy was rolled out to all members. There are currently over 80 members availing of this fantastic service through CATTS Ireland. Down Syndrome Dublin contributes towards the initial S&L assessment and also covers 50% of the cost of one-on-one private Speech therapy with CATTS. It is planned to roll out subsidised Occupational Therapy through CATTS to all our members in the coming months, and we are sure it will be just as successful.

The first group of Latch-On Students are due to complete the two year Latch-On Course in 2014. The current students gave a presentation of the course and its benefits at the DS Dublin 2013 AGM.

In September 2013, Down Syndrome Dublin invited Prof Sue Buckley to Dublin for a three day Education Conference. This was a wonderful event with an attendance of 550 people over the course of three days. We know that many schools, parents and children benefited from Sue's advice.

In October, [www.handsthattalk.ie](http://www.handsthattalk.ie) went live. This is a website created and funded by Down Syndrome Dublin that teaches everyone to sign free of charge. It has also proved very successful.





Delegates attending Dublin Branch's Education Conference with Prof Sue Buckley

The branch has also been organising many classes for all ages including Gymboree, Dance, Stage Classes, Cycling, Hip Hop, Playball and the ever popular Saturday Art Club. A Playball summer camp was held in 2013 over the course of two weeks and everyone had a great time.

Several group events also took place including an adults Valentines Disco, a summer day trip to the Zoo and the Children's Christmas Party.

## » LOOKING AHEAD TO 2014

2014 promises to be an exciting year with a new group of students ready to start a new two year Latch-On course. We also hope to expand the services we can provide for new and young families. We are planning even more classes, adult activities and outings. We are also planning on revamping our website.

## » FUNDRAISING

We would like to thank all those who have helped us fundraise. Thank you to all our members who came out and shook buckets, packed bags and baked cakes. Thank you to all those who have been to 'Hell and Back', and still have the bruises. Thank you to the marathon runners and walkers. Thank you to those who took part in the Paris to Nice Cycle and raised a phenomenal amount of money for the branch. We hope that our members will continue to support us with our fundraising efforts.



Participants in the Hell and Back challenge

## GALWAY

We have approximately 250 members in the Galway Branch. We had a very busy year in 2013 with a tremendous effort to improve our fundraising capabilities and services provided, both of which have improved significantly. At our AGM held in November we were delighted to report on a positive outlook, and we elected our new Chairman Pat Coyne

### Services Provided

The 'Little Owls' initiative is an early communication group of infants and young children with Down Syndrome between 1-3yrs. It has been developed in Galway city and has been running successfully since 2000 where 170 children have received service to date. Little Owls is a partnership between Voices for Down Syndrome Galway and the Brothers of Charity. It is a collaborative initiative between Community Nurses in Early Intervention Services, and a Speech and Language therapist, and this partnership has been the key to its success. The Speech and Language therapy element of the group sessions is funded by our Voices for Down Syndrome Galway project and therapy is provided by Mari Caulfield, Speech & Language Therapy Centre. It has been somewhat intensive during 2013 with four sessions per day every two weeks. There have been many bilingual and trilingual sessions lately with many languages being spoken within the sessions and they have shared and learnt nursery rhymes and jingles in different languages! Little Owls has also included Refresher LAMH evenings in support of parents, carers and families and a coffee morning where the parents can meet other parents.

Children from 3 years of age can then avail of the therapy we offer with 'Voices for Down Syndrome Galway'. This project was established in 2005, employs two senior therapists and provides Speech and Language therapy to 70 children and adults at any given time. Our clinic is based in NUIG, working in collaboration with their Speech Therapy Dept., giving their students valuable clinical experience with us, in exchange for use of their state of the art therapy clinics and access to some of the leading academics in Speech and Language therapy in the country. Therapy has been enhanced recently to include the use of iPad applications and providing training courses to professionals in the use of LAMH.

**Colour Strings (5 to 10 year olds):** This is a method of teaching music. It teaches singing first and children learn pitch and rhythm through their own voice. All the teaching is done through games and dance. Along the way they are turn taking, listening and responding, exercising and relaxing. Colour strings is run weekly in two locations, Knocknacarra and Oranmore.

**Soccer Training (8 to 16 year olds):** Weekly every Saturday at Salthill Devon's Facilities at Drom, Galway.

We are delighted to have recently purchased a full set of gear for the team, thanks to a grant from the HSE National Lottery.

**Friendship Group:** This group runs throughout the year. It is run by Maree O'Connor with the support of the transition year students from Mounthawk Secondary school. Suitable for teenagers/young adults and facilitates many social outings, i.e. Cinema, shopping, bowling etc.

**Blue Teapot Theatre Workshop Pilot Project (12 to 15 year olds):** An eight week workshop was run on a pilot basis, which was a great success, we hope that another workshop will take place in 2014.

**Art Classes (for 5 to 10 year olds approx):** Art Classes take place in Barna, with an emphasis on fun and developing fine motor skills. These classes are geared towards both the child with Down syndrome and their sibling which is proving to be a real success.

**Education:** We were fully involved in the national campaign against discriminatory policies within the Educational System. Locally we held a protest march in June and a large postal and email campaign to all TD's in County Galway.

We established a Galway Down Syndrome Education Committee whose aims are:

- Establish a support network made up of parents with a background/interest in education.
- Liaise with the National Resource Team for provision of training to parents and teachers.
- Support parents/children in transition from one level to the next.
- Provide advice re communicating and working with teachers and schools re our children's education.

We commenced our Numicon Project, where we plan to both train and provide Numicon kits to primary, secondary and pre-schools in County Galway where our members are attending. The first training sessions took place in November, with the roll out to be completed during 2014/2015. We were delighted to receive a grant of €8,000 from multinational SAP Ireland who made this project possible.



Down Syndrome Galway Football Team, proudly displaying their new kit.





Fun at our Speech & Language Summer Camp run by Voices for Down Syndrome Galway



Learning to play the Harp at Colour Strings, Knocknacarra.

## » SOCIAL

We had a very successful and enjoyable Christmas get together at Loughwell Pet Farm, with lots of activities for the kids and they got a chance to visit Santa.

- Information /Education Sessions for Members and Professionals included:
- iPad Training
- Lamh Training
- Financial Planning
- Health Issues and Advice from the National Resource Team
- Numicon Training
- AGM

## » FUNDRAISING

We meet the costs to run our services and activities through charitable donations, fundraising and parent contributions. We were delighted this year to receive a

grant from the HSE National Lottery of €1,000 towards our Speech & Language Therapy Project and €8,000 from SAP Ireland towards our Numicon Project.

Our major fundraising activities were: Annual Raffle, Churchgate Collections, Christmas Carol Singing, Christmas Swim, Coin Boxes, Women's Mini Marathon and Honey Days Campaign.

We had great success with a new initiative, Bike-2-Boffin, 90km fun cycle Galway to Cleggan with ferry to Boffin for social evening and overnight. This was a huge success, with 100 participants all giving very positive feedback and the event raised €23,000. We plan to make this an annual event.

The Garda Blue Challenge, in aid of both Voices for Down Syndrome Galway and Ability West, was a two day cycle event from Galway to Croagh Patrick, climb Croagh Parick, then overnight at Westport and return to Galway. This event raised €17,000 for our project. We are very grateful to the Gardai for including us as one of their charities to benefit from this initiative.

# KERRY

During 2013, Kerry branch continued to offer a host of services to our members. Services included:

**Deenagh Lodge:** Deenagh Lodge Coffee shop/restaurant in Killarney offers part-time training and employment to teenagers and young adults throughout the Spring and Summer months (April –Sept).

**Personal Development Course:** A personal development course aimed at our young Adults and teenagers in Kerry was facilitated by May Gannon and Gráinne Murphy from the national office. It consisted of ten evening sessions of two groups: (1) For the 12 – 17yr age group (2) For the 18's and over age group and ran from the end of June to the end of August. We had a very positive response from this Course.

**Sean Taaffe Course:** This was a pilot course organised by Sean Taaffe Hairdressing Academy, Killarney. The course covered personal hair care, working on models and some general salon work with one session on Make- Up. There were ten young adults involved in this course, which ran from mid-April to the end of May.

**Sam Rotman Concert:** Renowned World Concert Pianist Sam Rotman performed in aid of Down Syndrome Kerry at the Carlton Hotel, Tralee on Saturday 20th April. This was sponsored by Tralee Baptism Church.

**Fishing:** Michael Hennessy with Inland Fisheries Ireland ran a fishing event on May 19th at Barfinnihy Lake in Kenmare for all members and families. Michael Hennessy also organised an Ice Cream Funday party in conjunction with the event and raised funds for DS Kerry.

**Swimming:** Three of our teenagers Mary Clare McCarthy, Cathal Griffin and Conor Griffin, are on the panel who are training in Dublin for the trials of the Down Syndrome National swim team.

**Activities:** Basketball, Swimming, Sports Taster Programme and Cycling Classes are all run throughout the year at different times and venues.

**Friendship Group:** This group runs throughout the year with the support of the transition year students from Mounthawk Secondary school. Suitable for teenagers and young adults the programme facilitates many social outings including the Cinema, shopping and bowling.

**Early Intervention:** The early intervention group (0-6yrs) met for the first time on Friday the 18th October. The venue is the building at the back of the Church of the Resurrection, Park Rd, Killarney and the group meet there every two weeks from 10am until 12pm. The first meeting was really to set out an agenda from October to Christmas and to get a sense of what were the top priorities for parents. It will be a varied programme: exchanging general information; music; group parent led OT; pooling of resources and equipment which your child may have grown out of but some other child might benefit from; iPad discussions and much more.

**Latch-On (Literacy Programme):** The Latch-On programme is running in two centres, Listowel and Killorglin. It is a two year programme designed for teenagers and young adults to improve their Literacy and Numeracy skills. We hope to be in a position to offer another two year programme once current programme finishes in 2014.

**Family Fun Day:** We held our family fun day on the 1st September at the Old School House in the grounds of Muckross Traditional Farm. With plenty of activities, music, good food, and live coverage of the Kerry V Dublin semi-final football match. A wonderful day with the added bonus of brilliant sunshine was enjoyed by all.

**Speech & Language Therapy:** We employ two full-time therapists Marian Dunleavy and Niamh Staunton. Both therapists work from our office in Moyderwell and other venues throughout the county, including school visits.

**Occupational Therapy:** We employ two Occupational Therapist on a part-time basis, Kate Moss and Mary Rose Benner.

**Arthritis Screening:** DS Kerry branch took part in this screening in November so that any parent who had any concerns about Arthritis could have it checked out (6months-18yrs) This was organised by Dr Charlene Foley, Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin and funded by the National Children's Research Centre.

**Christmas Parties & Panto Christmas Parties & Panto:** This year we held two Christmas parties. The first party was focused on the younger members and their families, and



Some of the Team at Deenagh Lodge in action



was a great success, complete with visit from Santa Claus. The second was aimed at the teenagers and young adults, who enjoyed a sit down meal and disco, with some party games to add to the festive atmosphere. It was enjoyed by all who attended, and will hopefully become an annual event. A trip to Cork in December to see Aladdin got the whole group into the festive spirit where we all had a day trip to remember.

**Social Farming:** Social Farming is a Project which involves work placement of individuals with Special Needs in farms. This is being organised by South Kerry Development Partnership, North and East Kerry Development, Kerry Parents and Friends, St. John of God and Down Syndrome Kerry on a collaborative basis. Host farms will be based in South Kerry, Mid Kerry, East Kerry, Kenmare and North Kerry areas. The Project will commence in the Spring of 2014. The Project is open to all members of Down Syndrome Kerry who are over 18 years.

**Seminars:** Seminars including Numicon Training for Parents/Teachers/SNAs run throughout the year, throughout the county.

## » FUNDRAISING

**Night at the Dogs:** The annual Night at the Dogs fundraiser was held on February the 16th and as usual was a very enjoyable night of entertainment for all young and old.

**Ring of Kerry Cycle (6th July 2013):** This was the highlight of our fundraising calendar in 2013. Together with a very active branch led by Denis Cronin and a host of other DS Kerry members, families, friends and the general public, the cycle was an outstanding success.

**Tour De Munster (8th – 11th August):** Again all our members, coordinators, family and friends with the public did not let us down and we had another very rewarding fundraising event for DS Kerry.

**Honey Days & Church Gate Collections:** Both Honey Days and Church Gate Collections continue to be well organised and supported throughout the county.

As you can see we have a very active branch.

## KILDARE

Kildare has over 190 families who are registered with the branch, with membership renewed annually. The geographical area covered is North and South Kildare and some parts of Wicklow i.e Blessington, Baltinglass and Dunlavin. Our centre is at 35 College Park, Newbridge and this is where most of the activities of the branch take place. We also hire the Parish Centre in Leixlip to facilitate members in the North of the county.

In 2013 the branch provided the following activities and services for our members:

**Speech and Language Therapy:** The branch employs three part time therapists with 70 members availing of the service for their son or daughter. The Speech Therapy service is subsidised by the Kildare branch. Lamh Workshops are run for parents and the extended family. The branch also arrange ipad training workshops for members.

**Early Development Groups:** The Kildare branch organises two Early Development Groups, one in Newbridge at 35 College Park and one in Leixlip Parish Centre, which cater for children 0 to 5 years every week throughout the year.

**Latch- On Adult Literacy Programme:** The Kildare branch has two classes with 20 students involved in this programme which is run from leased premises in Naas. This programme has provided opportunities for adults with Down syndrome from the branch to commence and continue their literacy development.

**Parent Link:** Parent Link is a voluntary support and information service for parents of new babies with Down syndrome. It is a service run entirely on a voluntary basis by parents who are familiar with the feelings and reactions associated with having a child with Down syndrome in the family.

**Numicon Workshops:** Numicon workshops are organised for Teachers, Special Needs Assistants, Pre School Teachers and Parents every year by the branch.

**Drama Class:** The drama class meet in Newbridge every Saturday afternoon, the present group have been together for many years. The group are working on Hamlet at the moment.

**Echoes Dance Class:** Cathy O'Kennedy runs two dance classes (Junior and Senior) for the branch in Newbridge. The junior class started in 2013 to cater for ages 9 upwards.

**Swimming:** Our swimming group meet in the Curragh Pool every Tuesday with instructor Stephen O'Toole. All ages attend swimming.

**Pottery:** Beautiful pottery pieces are produced in our pottery group. The group meet every Wednesday in Newbridge. In 2013 pieces were sold at two local craft fairs in Caragh and Naas in Co. Kildare.

**Cycle Safety Course:** This was a new venture for the branch in 2013 with a very successful course in Celbridge. The branch plans to run this course every year for members of all ages.

**Other activities which the branch run throughout the year include:**

- Members Meetings
- Playball
- Annual Summer Camp

**Social Occasions include:**

- Christmas Parties
- Summer Outings
- Theatre & Concert visits for young adults aged 13 upwards

## » FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is an ongoing activity within the Kildare Branch as all activities are subsidised. The following are some fundraisers which were organised by the branch and members: Lugnaquilla Walk; Croagh Patrick Climb; Ladies Mini Marathon; Night at the Dogs; Table Quizzes; Duathlon and Triathlon Events.

All the services provided at branch level are funded through subscriptions, donations and fundraising by the members of the branches and their families and friends.



Echos Youth Dance Group

## KILKENNY

Down Syndrome Kilkenny has close to 50 members, with membership renewed on an annual basis.

In the year 2013 the branch ran a number of events and activities including the following:

**Speech & Language Therapy (SLT) and Occupational Therapy (OT):** The branch commenced a full time SLT service in 2013, with a speech therapist available on Saturdays to accommodate the School goers.

**Pantomime:** 40 people including 18 children travelled to the Helix in Dublin to see Sleeping Beauty on 1st December 2013. We had a great day including a little shopping in Liffey Valley Shopping Centre following by lunch close-by.

**Christmas Party:** There was a huge turn out at the Christmas party on the 16th December, with over 100 people attending, DJ'd by one of the Children's dads, Mark Fitzpatrick, with party games followed by a visit from Santa.

**Playdate:** A great morning was spent at the local indoor play area 'Playstation' in Kilkenny. Parents got a chance to have a coffee and catch up while the children worked out in the large number of soft play areas.

**Facebook Page:** The Branch launched a facebook page in 2013 to spread the word on the activities of the Branch and get connected to our members more readily.

## » Planning Ahead (2014)

**Personal Development Course:** Ten of our teenage children in the Branch will attend a ten week course on Personal Development including modules on Feelings, Self-Esteem, Friendship and Sexuality.

**Numicon Workshop:** A workshop is being planned for parents, teachers and SNA to give an overview of the Numicon teaching programme and the rationale.

**Fundraising:** The main fundraising event next year will be the Tour de Leinster. Honey Pots and Bag Packing will also contribute to the much needed funds for the branch.

## LAOIS BRANCH

Laois Down Syndrome had a very busy and productive 2013. We provided a range of activities and have over 60 families covering the Laois area.

The activities and services provided are as follows:

- » **Monthly Committee Meetings** A new committee is elected every year at the AGM in February.
- » **Information nights** Regular information nights are held with guest speakers who are invited to talk about a particular topic relating to our children. In 2013, we had a financial talk from Allan Cuthbert from Financial Wellbeing on the importance of financial planning for our members. Laois SENO John Moran also gave a talk for parents with children going into the education system.
- » **Speech and Occupational Therapy:** Members may avail of Speech and Occupational Therapies from CATTS which is subsidised by Laois Down Syndrome.
- » **Chiropodist Clinic** A chiropodist clinic for all our members is held once a month at our base headquarters with a local chiropodist.
- » **Parent Toddler Group** A regular parent and toddler group takes place in Roll n' Bowl the last Tuesday of every month from 11:00am – 1:00pm. The group entails, play for toddlers and coffee and chat for adults.
- » **Caterpillars Club** The Caterpillar Club is held once a month in our family centre in Gort Na nOir, Abbeyleix. This is a fun group for those under 5 year olds, facilitated by a retired Early Intervention Nurse. It is normally held on the second Wednesday of the month.
- » **Cinema Club** The branch organise a Saturday Cinema Club for all ages in the local cinema once a month
- » **Ballacolla Hawthorn Thrashers** The Ballacolla Hawthorn Thrashers is organised in the Community Centre, Ballacolla for the over 12 year olds, every Tuesday night from 7:00 – 8:00pm. Our fully equipped gym is put to great use on this night.
- » **Bowling** Bowling for over 12 year olds takes place on the 1st Friday of every month in Roll n' Bowl, Portlaoise followed by food afterwards. It is a great fun and social outing for our members!
- » **Summer Camp** A summer camp is usually held for members for one week during the summer period.
- » **Family Outings and Panto:** Every Summer we have a family day out with parents and children. In 2013, we had a day out to visit the Army camp in the Curragh Army Base and Museum. In January, members went to see 'Treasure Island' in a local theatre.
- » **Parentlink Service:** Parentlink is a support and information service provided by parents who act as a contact point for new parents. We have two trained parentlink liaisons in the Laois branch. We also created a New Parent Information Leaflet for new parents.



Laois branch members participating in the Cycling Safety and Skills Course



## LAOIS CONTINUED...

- » **Family Fun Day:** The Easter Sunday Family Fun Day in Ballacolla is a fantastic family day with lots of entertainment for children and adults from tractor pulls, face painting, dog shows, bouncing castles and lots lots more.

## Successes

2013 seen plenty of new activities and successes including:

- Cycling Safety and Skills Course: This course allowed our members to learn a valuable life skill of learning to balance and cycle their own bike unaided. It was such a huge success that we ran it three times during the year and will continue it in 2014.
- One to One Swimming Lessons were provided to our members in the local Leisure centre.
- Family BBQ and Disco was held in the Manor Hotel, Abbeyleix as well as our Christmas Party 2013, both were very successful.
- Happy Hearts a local music group taught music and dancing to our members.



## » Planning ahead for 2014

Some of the activities planned for 2014 include:

- Pottery Classes for all ages monthly in the Crafty Farmhouse, Ratheniska.
- Physiotherapy for all members of Laois Down Syndrome in our premises in Abbeyleix.
- A talk on toilet training for our members by our local Incontinence Nurse.
- First aid course for members and parents.
- Lamh course for parents and pre-school teachers in the area.
- A revamp of our Laois Down Syndrome website.
- A continued effort to keep our Facebook page active.
- Evening talk from Laois Childcare Services to inform parents of services available for their children.
- We are looking forward to the DSI's "Tour de Leinster" in September 2014 and are busy organising events for the September as it passes through Portlaoise.

## » FUNDRAISING EVENTS INCLUDED:

Fundraising Events included Sale of Shamrock; Church Gate Collections; Ballacolla Family Fun Day; Table Quiz and Dance night; Golf outing and Sale of Calendars.



Members of the Laois branch enjoying a visit to the Curragh Army Base and Museum



# LIMERICK

**Mission Statement:** In Down Syndrome Limerick we endeavour to support families and individuals with Down syndrome throughout their life, through a range of Social, Education and Development activities. Recognition of the importance of early intervention and of developing communication ability, with due regard to the individuality of the person, guides everything we do.

**Chairperson:** During 2013 Down Syndrome Limerick saw the changeover of Chairperson, Roger Kingston took this position from January to August and Noreen Keane who is our current Chairperson took up her position at the end of August 2013.

**Weekly Activities:** During the school calendar year of 2013 the following activities took place weekly

- » **Junior Club Creative Dance**  
Saturday Morning - 1 hour - Jan/June
- » **Junior Club Art Class**  
Saturday Morning - 1 hour - On going
- » **Snooker Club 14yrs plus**  
Saturday - 2 hours - Jan-June
- » **Saturday Club**  
Saturday - 2 hours - On going
- » **Swimming Lessons**  
Saturday - 1 hour - Jan-March
- » **Hip Hop [teens and up]**  
Saturday - 1 hour - On going
- » **Hip Hop [Juniors]**  
Saturday - 1 hour - On going
- » **Latch On**  
Tuesday & Thursday - Full day - On going

**Parent Link:** We continued to offer the parent link service to our new parents.

**Speech and Language Services:** Speech and Language Services continue to be core to our service provision in Down Syndrome Limerick. As always therapy and programmes remain tailored to the needs of our members and their family. Services range from one to one clinics, group work, Summer camps and coffee mornings for parents.

## Fundraising

As always a lot of energy went into fundraising in 2013 with many successful events including:

- Night at the Dogs
- Tour De Munster
- Askeaton Cycling Club Cycle
- Lapland to Limerick
- Carol Singing in the Market
- Paul O' Connor Cruises
- Honey Days

## Highlights

Highlights of the year included:

- Kamal Ibrahim joined in our World Down Syndrome Day 2013 celebrations.
- Our pool players had their first Pool Tournament in June 2013.
- A Table quiz night with the Munster Rugby Team.
- Kate Hup, Occupational Therapist delivered a wonderful information session on promoting independence in our children and teenagers.
- Halloween parties for both our junior and adult members proved a SPOOKY celebration.
- Christmas 2013 went out with yet another great annual Christmas Party in the Castletroy Hotel. A big thank you to all our adult members who organised the whole event.

## » DOWN SYNDROME LIMERICK ACTION PLAN 2013-2018

- » Following the completion of a needs assessment among members and family conducted in 2012 – 2013 the Down Syndrome Limerick Action Plan for 2013 – 2018 was completed. Key areas for action are as follows:
- » Down Syndrome Limerick will provide an inclusive and welcoming service for all its members and their families.
- » Down Syndrome Limerick will identify a fundraising policy to guide best practice.
- » Down Syndrome Limerick will develop its advocacy role.
- » Down Syndrome Limerick will be a place of information sharing on all topics related to Down syndrome.
- » Down Syndrome Limerick will be an organisation that supports and welcomes volunteers in the delivery of its services.

## LOUTH/MEATH

The Louth/Meath Branch represents over 250 member families throughout the counties of Meath and Louth. The Branch is run on a completely voluntary basis by a committee elected annually at our Annual General Meeting. Hence our motto is "Parents for Parents". The committee meets once a month, (usually the first Monday in the month) at 8.00pm in the in Conyngham Arms Hotel, Slane, Co Meath.

The Louth/Meath Branch's goal is to help people with Down syndrome make their own futures as bright and independent as possible by providing them with education, support and friendship every step of the way.

### Details of Activities and Services provided:-

**Home Teacher Programme:** The Louth/Meath Branch manages an "Early Intervention Home Teacher Programme" for preschool children (aged from 1 year to 6 years) with Down syndrome in the counties of Louth and Meath. There are no administrative costs associated with the Programme, as it is managed on a completely voluntarily basis by members of the Branch whom are parents of children with Down syndrome.

The Programme consists of Home Teachers visiting the home of the child with Down syndrome for one to two hours every fortnight throughout the school year (approximately 20 visits per year). There are six Home Teachers employed on a part-time basis by the Branch

**Activities for Teenagers and Young Adults** The branch's Teenagers and Young Adults coordinator organises social activities for Teenagers and Young Adults. The Teenagers and Young Adults have been very busy over the past twelve months with activities organised during the school holidays as well as ongoing activities such as Tag Rugby and Speech & Drama. There is also the annual Christmas party which was a great success at Christmas.

**Speech & Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy:** CATTS (Clinical Assessment and Therapy Team Services) are providing Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy to our members. CATTS provide Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) and Occupational Therapy (OT) services to babies, children, adolescents and adults.

The way that CATTS provide the service is by:

- Assessing your child's speech and language needs and provide a formal assessment report.
- Providing individual or group Speech and Language Therapy sessions.
- Providing parent information and training.
- In addition CATTS can provide Occupational Therapy.

The service is provided in four locations throughout Louth & Meath - Drogheda, Dundalk, Navan and Ashbourne.

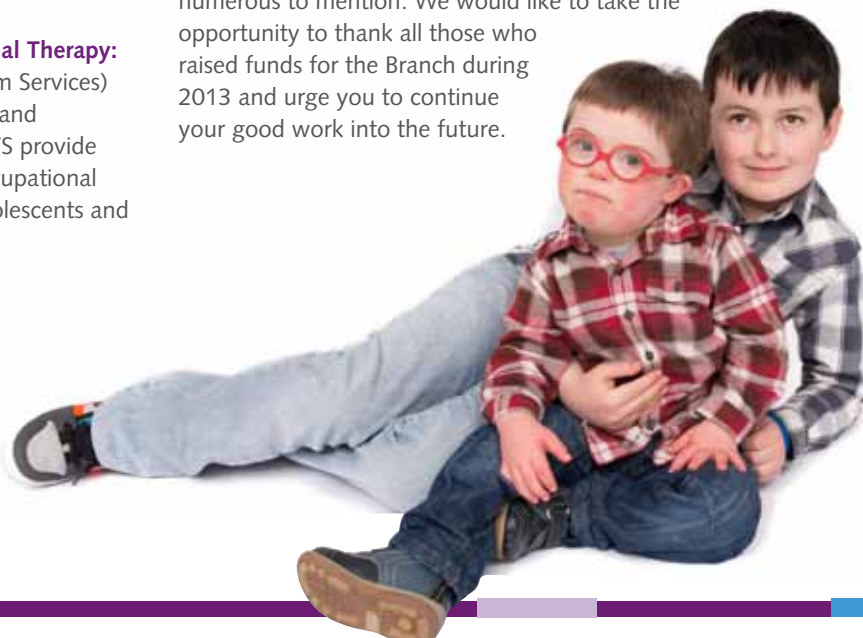
**Latch-on Adult Literacy programme:** The Adult Literacy Programme, is a programme which has been developed by the University of Queensland, Australia and brought to Ireland by Down Syndrome Ireland. The Adult Literacy Programme in the Louth/Meath Branch began twice-weekly over a period of about eighteen months from April 2012. There were two classes running, one in Navan and one in the Drogheda. Each class is run by a qualified teacher who has been accredited to teach the programme. Each class has one or two tutors depending on the number of students. The maximum number of students in any one class is twelve. This Programme is heavily subsidised by the Branch. Both Classes graduated during 2013 and we are in the process of setting up new classes for 2014.

**Parentlink Service:** The branch also provide a Parentlink service for new members.

**Speech & Drama Classes:** The Branch runs Speech and Drama classes in three locations throughout Louth & Meath. Classes are provided free of charge to members.

**Children's Christmas party:** Louth/Meath branch's Children's Christmas Party took place again this year in the spectacular Trim Castle Hotel. Santa again visited the party and presented a gift to each of our children with Down syndrome, sponsored by the Branch. As it was a lovely family event Santa also brought gifts for other children such as siblings and guests who attended the party.

**Branch Fundraising:** There were many Fundraisers held during the year in aid of the branch which are too numerous to mention. We would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who raised funds for the Branch during 2013 and urge you to continue your good work into the future.



## MAYO

During the summer a group of our adult members visited the Arigna Mines and Strokestown House, a great day was had by all.

The Broaden Your Horizons trip in February was to Prague and Vienna. A number of our members visited the sights of Prague and Vienna as well as attending a concert in Vienna.

Branch members are also offered Drama, Keep fit and Arts & Crafts on a weekly basis. Younger members enjoyed Playball.

During the Summer we ran an Art Camp in July and although the numbers participating were low it was a great success.

There were numerous parties throughout the year including Easter, Halloween and Christmas.

## OFFALY

The committee met six times during the year with varying attendance. Meetings were alternated between Birr and Tullamore. Services to members during the year included:

**Pathways to Possibilities:** Parenting Programme: Offaly ID invited parents to take part in this six session parent empowerment training in Autumn 2013. Two instructors from Inclusion Ireland, Frieda Finlay and Anne Lawlor, ran the course in Tullamore. Three members attended from Offaly Down Syndrome. Training was given on identifying strengths and creating personal profiles for our children/adults. Sessions were also attended by Muiriosa Foundation Day Service care workers.

**Adult Health Education:** In response to concern by parents of adults we began to look into the possibilities of a programme on health related issues. The branch met with Judy Ryan of the HSE in April 2013 and began to link in with an AIT professor who leads the Intellectual Disability Graduate Nursing programme. It was discussed that Graduate students could work with groups into the 2013-2014 academic year. The two nurses attended the January 2014 meeting and outlined their programmes: one on obesity & nutrition and the other on breast health. These clinics are planned to take place in February and March 2014.

**Home Teacher Programme:** In August 2013 we heard that our Home Teacher would not be returning and so two new teachers were appointed following a recruitment process. They began in November. Two members took on the Home Teacher coordinator positions - one for North Offaly and one for South Offaly. They are responsible for collecting time sheets from the home teachers, keeping in touch with the families regarding the programme, keeping records and contacting the Treasurer to provide payment.



Offaly branch members enjoying the Family Fun Day



Offaly branch members enjoying the Family Fun Day



**Speech & Language Therapy:** The Speech & Language therapy programme came as a response to members not being able to access SLT sessions. Our programme, in conjunction with the Offaly Association for People with Intellectual Disabilities, began in January 2013. Since that time to the end of January 2014 there have been 40 visits by six families. The cost of the service is split between the family and the Branch.

**Seminars and Information Sessions:** In September a session was delivered by Marcia Van Riper on "What Families Need to Thrive." Six families also participated in meeting separately with Marcia prior to the session. There was emphasis at the October meeting of returning and/or being mindful of our purpose as primarily parent support. We also heard from the Citizens Advice Service on what is available through their office. Local parents Mildred & Theo also shared their story at the November meeting, the session was well attended. In January there was a presentation by Petria on the building of Personal Profiles. Also, in conjunction with DSI and Crumlin Hospital an arthritis clinic is to be organised with Dr. Charlene Foley to be held in Tullamore in February

**Parentlink Service:** The branch continued to offer the parentlink service to new members.

**Education Campaign:** Members participated in the postcard campaign for the Down Syndrome Education Equality campaign in September. Our branch secretary attended the Leinster committee meeting at the Sue Buckley conference in Dublin in September. In January a Bill was put forward by Finian McGrath and members were encouraged to contact TDs.

**Coffee Mornings and Get-togethers:** There were five parent coffee morning sessions in Birr during the year and three Jumpin' Jacks mornings. The Christmas Party was well attended in December.

## » FUNDRAISING

In April there was a good showing for the Night at the Dogs and trojan work done by Marie to fundraise. There was also awareness for Offaly Down Syndrome and funding the same month through the sale of Kilcormac Kilouhy mini-hurles. In May, Aidan Spain worked with DSI to facilitate the Tesco Ice Cream party. Later in the month a fun day was held at the County Arms hotel with ten

families participated.

- In June, two members participated in the Mini-Marathon and also this month, the Bluebell Vintage Tractor run resulted in a fantastic €12,345 raised for the branch. There was a great turnout on the day of members to assist with the breakfast and many members met their home teacher fundraising target goals through this event.
- A few members participated in DSI Honey Days 2013 in Birr, Banagher, Ferbane, Edenderry, and Tullamore. During the year, members also supported the DSI charity shop by donating stock
- Facebook: A Facebook account was opened this year. It is managed by the branch secretary. It has 63 likes and on average the postings get 15 views. It has been a means for one new family to contact the Association.



Offaly branch members supporting the Bluebell Vintage Tractor Run



The 'Breakfast Team' from Offaly branch at the Bluebell Vintage Tractor Run



Offaly branch members supporting the Bluebell Vintage Tractor Run



Offaly branch members supporting the Bluebell Vintage Tractor Run



## ROSCOMMON BRANCH

2013 saw another year of fundraising to support the Latch-On Programme. We are still finding it difficult to support financially, but our 'Ladies only' Ball held in early January was a marvellous success and we had a generous donation from some local ladies who took part in the marathon.

We also saw some changes to our Latch-On team. Our teacher decided to move on and our search for his replacement took most of the summer, however all good things come to those who wait, and by September we were delighted to welcome Ms Juliana Jura to our team. We also had a new group of volunteer tutors join us. The change of team has been very successful and the class progressed regardless of the upheaval.



## TIPPERARY

Down Syndrome Tipperary branch is run on a voluntary basis by parents of children with Down syndrome. Geographical area covered is both north and south Tipperary, the branch meet six times a year in Horse and Jockey Hotel, Thurles.

All services provided by branch are funded through donations and various fundraising events by members and their families and friends.

### Services provided by branch in 2013 included:

**Speech and language therapy:** The branch employ a senior Speech and Language Therapist two days per week to work with our members. We offer individual sessions, group sessions, school visits, and Easter and Summer camps. This service is heavily subsidised by the branch.

**Parentlink:** Four of our members are trained to provide support and information to parents of new babies with Down syndrome in the Tipperary area.

**Kindermusik** was provided by the branch to new babies up to our six year olds. The sessions are followed by Tea/Coffee and a chat afterwards.

**Dance Classes:** Free form of dance movement with Cathy Kennedy was provided by the branch. Various performances were put on in Source Arts Centre in Thurles and Waterside Killaloe.

**Fitness Classes** for our over 6 year olds continued in conjunction with Stepping Ahead Clinic.

**Educational Seminars:** The branch provided various seminars and workshops for members, these included a Gaps seminar with Dr. Natasha Campbell McBride, and Susanna Stokes our senior Speech & Language therapist provided training for parents on 'use the ipad in an educational setting'. We invited Alan Curtburt to provide financial and special needs trust planning for our members. Numicon training was also given to educational providers and parents alike.

**Latch On Adult Literacy Project** continues.

Outings included sessions at various soft ball play areas in both north and south Tipperary. A Summer outing to Trabolgan took place and in November 2013 Down Syndrome Tipperary held 'A Gathering of Members and past Members' in Holy Cross Abbey followed by a meal and dance.

### » Planning ahead for 2014

- Down Syndrome Tipperary would like to maintain and improve services already provided by the branch.
- Down Syndrome Tipperary would like to promote the Latch-On Adult Literacy Project, a summary of the programme has been sent to all over 18 year olds.
- Down Syndrome Tipperary are promoting the National Advisory Council 2014 – 2017.
- Cookery workshops throughout Co. Tipperary for our over 13 year olds in the hope our members will learn a lifelong skill.
- Down Syndrome Tipperary is currently researching a home tutoring service for our school going members.
- Down Syndrome Tipperary will support the ongoing awareness and fundraising events nationwide and at branch level.



## WATERFORD

The Waterford Branch of Down Syndrome Ireland had a very busy and productive year, the highlight of which was the hosting of the National AGM at the Tower Hotel in June. Planning for this event began in 2012 and it involved a huge effort on behalf of the committee and individual Branchmembers, who liaised closely with DSI national office, the Mayor's Office, Failte Ireland, and others, to ensure the success of the event.

The weekend kicked off with a Mayoral Reception graciously hosted on the Friday evening by Mayor Jim D'Arcy to welcome the delegates to Waterford, including Pat Clarke (CEO) and Clare Leonard (outgoing President). In addition to some excellent workshops arranged by the national office, the Branch organised some great activities for both younger and older members not attending workshops. These included a theatre and craft session run by the Little Red Kettle Theatre Company, a drumming session run by Rhythm & Shakes, and a fitness session run by Niall Devereux (Niall runs regular fitness classes as one of our Branch activities). A dance workshop was also hosted by Libby Seward who runs our Traces contemporary dance troupe, and attendees at the AGM Dinner on the Saturday evening were also treated to a performance by Traces.

For the very young members we engaged our Music Therapist, Helen Arthur, to host a Music Therapy session, and we also organised crèche facilities. The Latch-On group and Traces group presented some nice displays of their work, and we also had some excellent displays of project work, carried out with the support of the Branch, by transition year students at the Ursuline Secondary School in Waterford.

Prior to the dinner on the Saturday night, the Branch hosted a Cheese & Wine Reception at the fabulous Waterford Medieval Museum, with music provided by local harpist Una McSweeney. This was followed by a Disco at the Tower Hotel. On the Sunday morning we organised a trip on the Suir Valley Railway and a Picnic, which topped off what was a great weekend for all involved. We could not begin to thank all of the individuals and organisations who contributed their time and resources to making the AGM in Waterford a great success.

Our **Latch-On programme** continued at the Edmund Rice Centre, with the first term of the second year beginning in September. Our nine eager participants attended lessons provided by key teacher Lisa Cahill on Mondays and Thursdays for the second year of the programme, supported by our volunteer tutors. We also secured staff through the TUS programme as Latch-On tutors, and also to staff our now well established Branch Office in the Edmund Rice centre. We were also very grateful to the Waterford VEC for providing us with a support teacher as well as other resources. The Irish Times published an article on our Latch-On programme in November.

**Branch activities** which are facilitated for our members continued in 2013. These include our Chillax programme, where groups of adult members with DS meet up with their friends. At the heart of Chillax is that the members themselves decide what they want to do and the volunteers facilitate this. In 2013, a formal code of conduct and volunteer policy were adopted and put into practice. A 4th group was added in the 20-22 year age bracket while some additional members joined existing groups. Other ongoing activities included Music Therapy, Cookery Classes for adult members and parents, Horse Riding, and one to one Swimming lessons which, again in 2013, was one of our most popular activities. It was also a successful year for our Traces contemporary dance group, who performed their "Truth or Dare" dance production at Garter Lane, and their "Synergy" piece at the Irish Youth Dance Festival in Dun Laoghaire in July. Fitness classes for our younger members run by Niall Devereux at the De La Salle GAA grounds were also extremely popular. We continued to provide supports for new parents of babies with Down syndrome through our Parentlink programme.



**Social activities and outings** included a Picnic at the John F Kennedy Arboretum in August, and a trip to the Dunmore East Adventure Centre in September. The highlight, as usual, was our annual Christmas Party at the Tower Hotel, and the Chillax group also had a great adults Christmas night out at the Woodlands Hotel. We launched our "Song for Lily Ann" at the Christmas Party. This was a song written by local songwriter Buddy Sutton, and well known recording artist Charlie McGettigan, for one of our newest members Lily Ann Sadlier. Lilly Ann's parents generously allowed the Branch to sell the single to promote and raise funds for the Branch, and it is available for download from iTunes.

**Branch meetings** were very well attended during the year with several very interesting speakers, including Alan Culthbert, Financial Planner, Patricia Griffin, NRT, and Mary Doherty, National President, DSI. The Branch members expressed wholehearted support for National Initiatives relating to education issues, and in particular pledged financial support for a legal challenge relating to provision of resource hours for children with Down syndrome in mainstream primary education. A large Waterford delegation attended the protest march in Dublin in June accompanied by a fabulous banner made by students of Waterford Educate Together. The Branch welcomed several new families as members during the year.

#### **Fundraising:**

The Tour de Munster was a resounding success once again and a heartfelt thanks to all those involved in its organising. This was underpinned by a lot of very hard work on the part of many of our members who took part in bucket shaking and church gate collections.

The Nights at the Dogs in February and in August were also a great success, as were our Honey Days and Ice Cream Funday Campaigns, and we held a Pub Quiz in May. The Branch enjoys great support from the local community and some of our notable donations include the proceeds of a Camino Walk by Geraldine Walsh, a Vintage Breakfast Morning hosted by Ballysaggart School House in Lismore, a Toughathlon organised by John & Patrick Morrissey & friends, and the Seantaí Field Day in Kilmacow. The Branch continued with our funding scheme for members to help make necessities such as Speech & Language Therapy more affordable for our members, as well as life enhancing activities such as swimming lessons and other qualifying activities.





## WEXFORD

The Committee of the Wexford Branch of Down Syndrome Ireland meet on a monthly basis in the Riverside Park Hotel, Enniscorthy.

» **The branch continues to offer subsidies on vital services including:**

- Speech and Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Behaviour Therapy.
- Counselling.
- Swimming Lessons and Horse riding.

Each December the branch organises a **Christmas Party** for the younger members who enjoy meeting Santa while our teenagers and adults enjoy an Abba Tribute Show in the Wexford Opera House. World Down Syndrome Day is also celebrated by the branch.

A **Lamh** course is run annually and this year a Personal Development Courses and a New Parent Workshop were also organised.

**Information evenings** were also held during the year on a variety of different topics.

**A Learn to Cycle Programme and Kayaking** are organised for the summer months.

**Church Gate Collections** continue to be our main source of fund raising.

Members are kept informed of events by regular text messages and also by email.

## WICKLOW

2013 was a relatively quiet year for the Wicklow Branch in terms of the range of activities organised by the Branch. Membership of the Branch Committee fell to such an extent that it did not prove possible to maintain much more than a basic service to members, details of which are set out below.

The Branch held its AGM on Thurs 21st Feb in Druids Glen Resort Hotel, Newtownmountkennedy. In the months prior to the meeting the Committee had consulted with members and stakeholders in the development of a Strategy for the Branch to give a focus to our efforts and to assist with making applications to the corporate sector for funding support. This was approved as a Mission Statement for the Branch at the AGM. The members also agreed with the Committee's proposal to ring-fence some Branch funds to provide a type of individualised funding scheme which would be available to each Branch member with Down syndrome. Under the scheme, a limited amount of funding would be given to those members, subject to certain conditions, to be used towards a specific need / activity that they would be of benefit to them.

The meeting was informed that the WOW Club, which provided activities – Playball, Drama and Arts & Crafts – for our children from age 3 to 12, had discontinued after the end of the summer 2012 term as the numbers of participating children had dropped to an unsustainable level. However, the Committee undertook to explore options for resuming the Club later in 2013 and subsequently undertook a survey among families who would have children in the appropriate age. Later in the year, the Committee successfully submitted an application for a grant from Wicklow County Council towards the running of the Club, which has since recommenced in 2014.

We celebrated World Down Syndrome Day on 21st March with a pub quiz in Delgany. While attendance was not as high as in previous years, as it was a very wet and stormy evening, this meant that everyone who attended went home with a least a spot prize and we still raised over €600 on the night.

In April, the Branch wrote to schools throughout the County seeking volunteer support from Transition Year students to assist us in delivering activities for our members. Unfortunately, as there was no take-up to the request, alternative steps will have to be taken to pursue this option.

During the year, families of children who attend the largest special needs school in the County, St Catherine's, were informed that it had run into some financial difficulties which resulted in actions that had the potential to impact on the delivery of services to our members. The Branch wrote to the relevant Government Ministers and to the five County TDs seeking their support in deferring the proposed actions until at least the end of the school year. The situation in the school is being continually monitored.

Each year, the Branch organises a summer Family Day, which is usually held in the grounds of a school in Newcastle. The 2013 event was held on Sunday 23 June and was as enjoyable as ever, with fun and games organised by an entertainer, Mr Podzo, who kept the children well amused for the afternoon with a range of activities from tug-o'-wars and three-legged races, to bashing a piñata. Two bouncy castles also helped the children to burn off the sugar they ingested from the goodies on offer.

Fundraising activities were limited primarily to promoting the Ice Cream Party and organising collections for the Honey Days in October.

We held a Branch meeting and social night in the Parkview Hotel, Newtownmountkennedy on Friday 20th November. The meeting itself lasted about an hour, with the main discussion centring on the need to get more volunteers onto the Committee and the proposal by DSI Head Office to run a Tour of Leinster cycling event in the province over 4 days in September. After the formal meeting, members enjoyed a chat over some finger food and a drink.







National Leadership Local Support

Citylink Business Park,  
Old Nass Road, Dublin 12.

T: 01 4266500 / 1890 374 374

E: [info@downsyndrome.ie](mailto:info@downsyndrome.ie)

**[www.downsyndrome.ie](http://www.downsyndrome.ie)**

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