

Annual Report 2021



#ShareTheJourney



Down
Syndrome
Ireland

Contents of Annual Report 2021

Overview	4
Our vision	4
Our mission	4
Our Purpose	4
Our Values	5
Down Syndrome Ireland national team	6
Our 25 Branches	6
Our Objectives	6
Message from Liam McLoughlan, President of DSI Ireland	7
Message from Barry Sheridan, CEO of DSI Ireland	8
Compliance	9
The voice of our members	9
Our work in 2021	10
Annual Report – Member Support Team Lead 2021	11
A look back	11
See and Learn	11
Research	13
Training	14
Webinars & Seminars	14
Development of Resources	14
Conferences	15
Representation at Meetings	16
Surveys	16
Consultations & Submissions	16
Adult Education	17
Down Syndrome Ireland and involvement in the ETB network	18
DSI Adult Education Courses – 2021 Overview	18
Latch-On	18
MOTE	19
Work Skills	19
Personal Development	19
Ability Online	20
Resource-sharing and training	20
What do our members say?	20
Personal Development Student Quotes	20
Ability Online Student Quotes	21
Case Study	22



2021 EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME	25
Case Study 1	25
Case Study 2	26
Personal Development Course completion & pilot	27
Work Readiness Programme – Grafton Barber	27
Down syndrome awareness training	28
Pre-employment and pre-interview training	28
Return to work and new jobs	28
Funding	29
National Office Fundraising	31
World Down Syndrome Day	30
50 th Anniversary - Community and Events	31
Go for Gold	31
Corporate	32
Charity Shops	33
Human Resources	33
Finance	34
Branches	35

“ We work to ensure that people with Down syndrome can lead the lives they want, how they want, where they want at whatever stage of life. ”

Overview

Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI) offers support and services to people with Down syndrome and their families throughout Ireland. Our membership comprises of approximately 3,500 members with 25 branches nationwide.

We provide 'all-through life' supports and services with specialists in the areas of health, speech and language, early development, education and adult training and education, employment and independence that enhance the lives of thousands of children and adults with Down syndrome across the country. We work to ensure that people with Down syndrome can lead the lives they want, how they want and where they want at whatever stage of life.

Down Syndrome Ireland works collaboratively with a number of key stakeholder partners to ensure that the needs of our members are met.

We also provide information, training and advice, influence policy, raise public awareness and work towards the improvement of services and supports for children and adults with Down syndrome.

Our vision

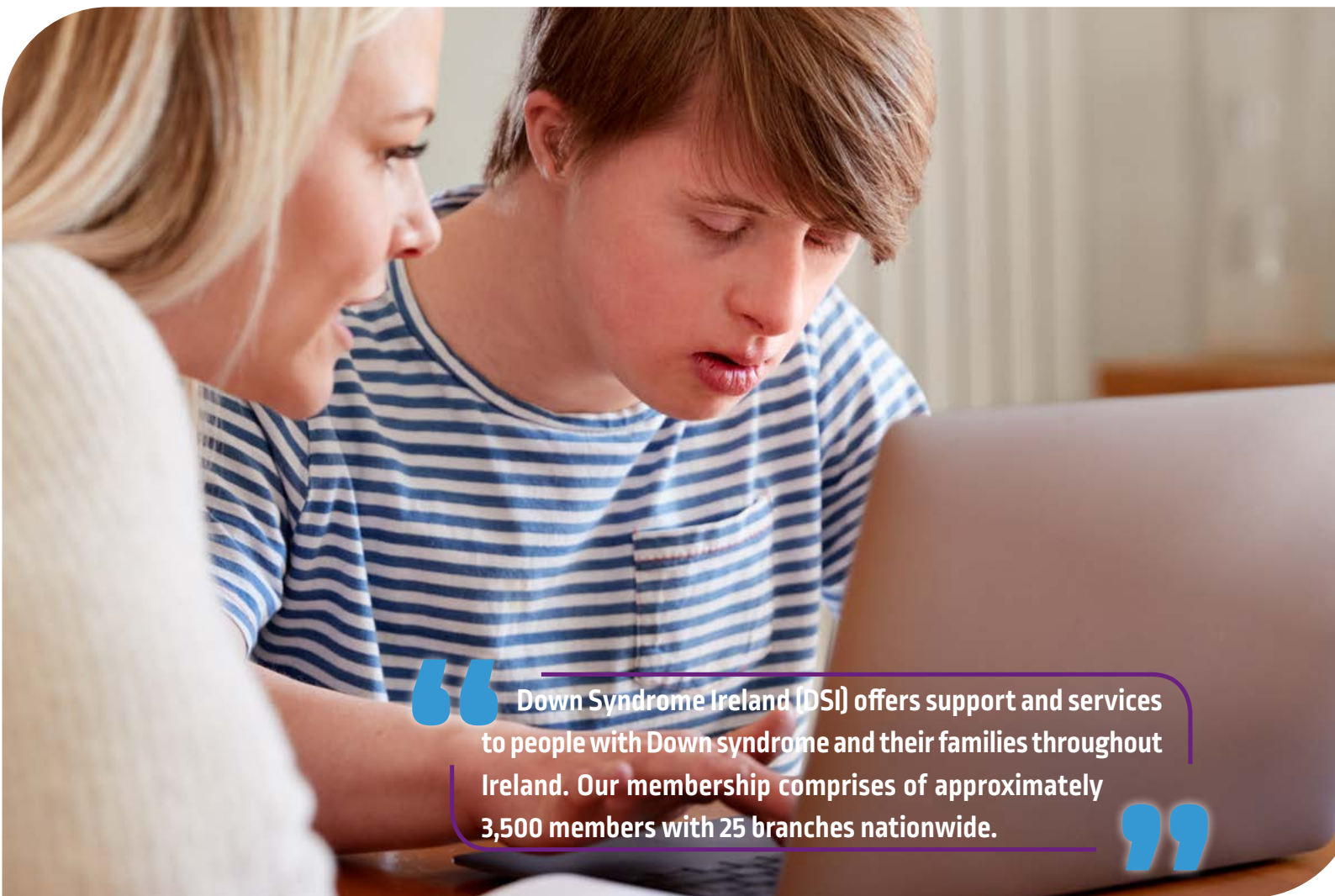
We work towards a society that enables all people with Down syndrome to participate to their fullest potential, as equal members with full entitlement as Irish citizens.

Our mission

Down Syndrome Ireland supports people with Down syndrome and their families in their communities. We strive to provide consistent, high-quality advice, support and information to every person with Down syndrome to ensure that whatever their stage of life they have a network to support them.

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to create the environment for people with Down syndrome to achieve their potential, with a particular focus on health, education, employment, and life in the community. Down Syndrome Ireland is a confederation of local branches, who work together to ensure consistency, quality and a common approach which celebrates, supports, and advocates for people with Down syndrome.



Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI) offers support and services to people with Down syndrome and their families throughout Ireland. Our membership comprises of approximately 3,500 members with 25 branches nationwide.



Our Values

Inclusivity: We strive to create a society where people with Down syndrome are supported, valued and integral members of their communities and we demonstrate that inclusivity in our own work.

Passion: We will fight tirelessly to enrich the lives of people with Down syndrome and their families through our work and support Nationwide.

Integrity: We will act with honesty, accountability, and professionalism at all levels of the organisation.

Respect: Everyone should be supported to live a meaningful, rewarding, healthy, and happy life.

Collaborative: Together we are stronger. Sharing information, knowledge and expertise improves outcomes for everyone both locally and nation.

Down Syndrome Ireland national team

Our national office is run by a small team dedicated to supporting people with Down syndrome and their families across Ireland.

We provide specialist consultancy services and supports around the country in health, speech and language, early development, education, adult training and education, employment and advocacy and independence.

Our 25 Branches

We have twenty-five branches across the country with each branch fully dedicated to enriching the lives of those with Down syndrome.

Our branches are run almost exclusively by volunteers working in committees, providing children and adults with Down syndrome with a wide range of services and social opportunities.

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

We aim 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 throughout their various life stages

“ Our 25 branches are run almost exclusively by volunteers working in committees, providing children and adults with Down syndrome with a wide range of services and social opportunities. ”

Message from Liam McLoughlan

President of Down Syndrome Ireland



Two Thousand and twenty one was our 50th year and we celebrated despite the ongoing challenges of COVID -19. Our 21 Demands were the focal point of what we see as the key

issues for our organisation and many events were organised to highlight their importance and to celebrate what we had achieved over the last 50 years.

Barry Sheridan joined DSI as CEO at the beginning of 2021 and as an organisation we are fortunate to benefit from his experience and knowledge in the charity sector. As restrictions were lifted there was still caution about meeting in person and employees returning to the office and so 2021 was still a period of zoom and team meetings and adapting to the new circumstances we all found ourselves in. With many new members joining the Board at the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021 there was a focus on assessing the organisation and what needed to be achieved in the next few years. Crowe were appointed in the last quarter to assist in creating a new strategic plan and a governance review was undertaken to make sure that the organisation understood the areas for development. A new Chief Finance Officer joined in July 2021 and a Senior Compliance Officer was appointed in November 2021.

A core part of the work of the Board is to serve as guardians of the trust placed in DSI by our members and we are firmly committed to ensuring the highest standards of transparency and accountability in all that the organisation does. The Board is working hard to create a strong foundation for the next 50 years.

At branch level our committees and volunteers continued to support our members with zoom

and team meetings and events and many courses were still run on line because of health concerns for our members. The volunteers' strength and resilience has been at the heart of the organisation at what has been a very challenging time for all of us.

Concerns about restrictions continued with COVID-19 restrictions and the AGM in Killarney had a zoom facility because some members and families were still concerned about health risks for meeting in person. Marian Flanagan replaced Kevin Griffin as the new President of DSI and I am grateful to both of them for the hard work and commitment they showed during their terms of office.

We continued to link with the HSE to help communicate risks and responsibilities in Ireland, and to ensure equality of access to healthcare. We kept branches informed about their responsibilities to employees, volunteers and members, and how to make sure people were as safe as possible when they returned to in-person activities.

All the while, we focused on providing information, resources and reassurance for our members while, like the rest of society, exploring different ways to engage online with people with Down syndrome and their families across Ireland.

Looking to the future I would very much like to thank my fellow Board members, our staff team, branch officers, volunteers, funders and charity partners, who together worked so hard to support people with Down syndrome and their families. The generosity of the general public who supported Down Syndrome Ireland during an unprecedented year will never be forgotten. We work towards the next 50 years with a stronger framework as together we are stronger.

Liam McLoughlan

President - Down Syndrome Ireland

Message from Barry Sheridan CEO of Down Syndrome Ireland



Joining Down Syndrome Ireland in 2021 was an opportunity to lead the organisation at a time of celebration and change. Our 21 Demands were a focus of the changes that we were looking for and were the focus for our campaigning in our celebratory year.

The Board and I worked together to review the framework and governance of the organisation. I was pleased to be joined by Justin Keys, our new Chief Finance Officer, and to commence working towards a strategic plan with Crowe at the AGM.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions I was able to meet many of our members in different parts of the organisation and it was really heartening to see what our volunteers had achieved through very difficult times.

Setting goals for each department and encouraging engagement between the branches and employees is one of my key objectives and I hope to build on that as I recognise the commitment of the volunteers in the Board and also the branches.

I am truly appreciative of all those who are directly involved and actively engage with Down Syndrome Ireland. As an organisation, we look forward to the future, and our Strategy for 2022 will result in important and necessary change.

By 2025, we will create a working environment that involves strong engagement between the National Office and the branch network. Most importantly, we will provide a stronger level of support to people with Down syndrome.

Barry Sheridan

CEO - Down Syndrome Ireland



Compliance

There were a number of changes in DSI at the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021. New directors joined the Board and a new President was elected at the 2021 AGM. Marian Flanagan, a barrister, with considerable board experience and legal expertise was keen to use her skills to build on the foundations of her predecessors and to lead the organisation into its next 50 years. A new CEO, Barry Sheridan, joined DSI in January 2021 who was the former CEO of Men's Shed. He appointed a new CFO, Justin Keys who is a qualified accountant with 20 years not-for-profit experience. Justin previously worked with Merchants Quay Ireland, Youth Advocate Programmes Ireland and Fighting Blindness.

Our 21 Demands was a strong indication of everything the organisation wanted to bring to the attention of the general public and government bodies and the impact that this would have on their members.

The Board was also conscious of its increasing statutory and regulatory requirements and appointed a Senior Compliance Officer to concentrate on that within the organisation.

The Board also employed Crowe Management Consulting to assist with the preparation of a three years plan and work commenced with member engagement at the 2021 AGM.

Moving into the next 50 years with a strong and enabling organisation for everyone in it.

The voice of our members

Our National Advisory Council (NAC) and Regional Advisory Council (RAC) represent the opinions of adults with Down syndrome within our organisation. The Council comprises of adults with Down syndrome. As an organisation, we need to hear and respond to the voices of people with Down syndrome. Our interim National Advisory Committee and our first Regional Advisory Committee hosted by the Louth-Meath Branch for the Northeast region were facilitated to hold their meetings online throughout 2021, ensuring the continuity of this valuable programme.



Here, one of our NAC members Sinéad Friel tells us about her experience on the National Advisory Council:

“Hi, my name is Sinéad Friel and I am part of the NAC for Down Syndrome Ireland. I am also the chairperson. It gives me a great opportunity to be part of a team and to help out the facilitators, Sinéad and Mary-Frances. When you are on the NAC, you learn how councils work. It's helpful for getting involved in other councils and groups. The NAC is the voice of adults with Down syndrome. I am proud to be part of it and really enjoy it.”

Our work in 2021

Moving into the next 50 years the organisation is looking to achieve its 21 Demands and to have a clear framework within which this will be achieved.

Annual Report – Member Support Team Lead 2021

A look back

The focus of the member support team through 2021 was to ensure that up to date advice, information and support was provided to people with Down syndrome and their families across the lifespan, and to advocate for changes to support the rights of people with Down syndrome.

As 2021 was the 50th anniversary of the founding of Down Syndrome Ireland, we engaged in a review of the history of the organisation and the current situation, working with members, staff and external consultants to produce ‘The Upside’ report. This was a significant piece of work, providing a focus for reviewing and highlighting targets for advocacy over the coming years in the areas of health, education, employment and life in the community.

2021 was still overshadowed with the Covid 19 pandemic, though vaccines were slowly becoming available. Advocacy for people with Down syndrome, who were found to be particularly vulnerable to Covid 19, was essential. This advocacy led to adults with Down syndrome being recognised as a specifically vulnerable group and prioritised for vaccination.

To facilitate communication and ensure that nobody was overlooked, the HSE created a Covid 19 vaccine community network. This group (which is ongoing) was formed by the HSE in March 2021 to:

- Create a network of people working together to help communicate and engage people about the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme
- Ensure that key organisations were informed about the vaccine programme, giving a forum to ask questions and get accurate responses from health professionals engaged at a high level on delivering the programme. Allow organisations to access information on safety and testing, how the vaccine works, and the delivery schedule
- Ensure that organisations representing vulnerable groups were aware of public health advice in order to reassure and inform members
- Promote two-way communication, enabling organisations to highlight the specific concerns raised by the people they represent. 8 meetings were attended in 2021, with follow-up Down syndrome specific information produced and circulated via Digest, social media, and where necessary by direct email.

See and Learn

The See and Learn project was conceived in 2019 as a start in the process of bringing evidence-led programmes to the early years. Unfortunately, the onset of the pandemic in March 2020 and its impact on early years education meant that the outcome measures we had planned were no possible.



“ DSI with UCC, developed and delivered an online music programme for families with very young children with Down syndrome. This was delivered as part of an online parent and toddler group programme... ”

Some results were available, indicating that families had found the programme helpful and would recommend it to others, so during 2020 and 2021 we provided information to the Library service and to Education centres in each county to encourage them to stock the resources. This led to delivery of further information and training to libraries around the country.

Research

Findings from the See and Learn project were presented at the international Down Syndrome Research Forum, along with presentations about parents' experiences in education (Fidelma Brady), the development and roll out of the Work Skills course (Lisa Martin) and the development and roll out of Ability Online (Aoife Gaffney)

We worked with final year SLT students in UCC to survey families of children with Down syndrome and adults with Down syndrome about Speech and Language Therapy provision in Ireland. The preliminary study was expanded with further support from UCC. This research highlighted the growing gap between research and practice and was written up and published in the [Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities](#).

Also with UCC, an online music programme was developed and delivered for families with very young children with Down syndrome. This was delivered as part of an online parent and toddler group programme, which also included talks from health professionals and therapists to support parents at a time when in-person appointments with HSE professionals were very difficult to access for many people.

The 2021 music programme, along with two parent focus groups, will be used to inform a more structured research project to be delivered in 2022, to find out whether a short structured programme incorporating singing and Lamh signing could be developed and used to promote vocabulary development in very young children with Down syndrome.

As adult education partnerships with the ETBs became more widespread, we were conscious of the limitations of using developmental literacy assessments to measure progress. Developmental assessments have limited validity as outcome measures given the sociocultural, functional basis of our courses. We looked for functional assessments that took account of how adults with Down syndrome use their literacy in everyday life. As there was no research literature available on this topic, we began a piece of co-research together with students in some of our online and in-person adult education classes, again with the support of the Speech and Language Therapy department in UCC. This work is ongoing.

DSI has a seat on the Lamh research and development committee, which meets 3 times per year.

Training

Providing training, assistance and advice for members and families along with developing resources was a priority for the team. Best practice is continually researched to ensure the information we provide is the most up-to-date available. DSI has been represented at meetings with various organisations and a number of surveys have been conducted with our members to ascertain their opinions on various issues. A number of submissions have also been made to government bodies and organisations highlighting our concerns over the course of the year.

Webinars & Seminars

The following webinars & seminars were facilitated over the course of the year

- **Multi-disciplinary Conference on early feeding and feeding issues**
- **Online parent and baby/toddler groups- fortnightly January-July**
- **Primary Transition**
- **Post Primary Transition**
- **Communication**
- **Social & Speech Development**
- **Primary School – General**
- **Post Primary School – General**
- **Communication & Essential Planning – Primary**
- **Communication & Essential Planning – Post Primary**
- **Choosing a School – Pre-School to Primary School**
- **Choosing a School – Primary to Post-Primary School**
- **ETB teacher training (blended learning using a combination of pre-recorded seminars and live events)**

We had a great attendance at all events, with approximately 1000 participants over the 10 evenings. While we are very aware of the benefits of online sessions in making information more accessible to families and schools, we do feel that the opportunities for very valuable interaction at onsite, in-person events is missed by participants. Hopefully, in 2022, the online training webinars and seminars will continue, and we will also be able to return to some onsite events nationally.

Development of Resources

Eight (8) additional online education seminars were developed and are available for download on our website:

- **Communication**
- **Essential Planning**
- **Choosing a Primary School**
- **Choosing a Post Primary School**



- **Dual Diagnosis of Down Syndrome & Autism**
- **Educational Programmes for Children with Down Syndrome & Autism**

Online teacher training information seminars were developed and uploaded to the learning platform 'Moodle' as part of a blended learning module to provide an efficient way of preparing teachers to deliver adult education in the ETB setting:

- **Speech, language and communication**
- **Down syndrome, general information including hearing, vision, health issues that may impact learning**
- **Independence**
- **Disability awareness**

The Personal development course was reviewed and uploaded to Moodle to facilitate wider use.

It was piloted in one branch group, with extremely positive feedback, and with two post-primary schools, which are ongoing.

Conferences

DSI member support team had a strong presence at the International Down syndrome research forum in March, making 4 presentations covering issues connected with pre-school education, primary school, adult education and employment. The NCSE Research conference was attended virtually in November. The theme of the 2021 conference was Continuity in Education; Dealing with Regression Post Pandemic; and Education for Adults with Disabilities.

Representation at Meetings

A number of meetings were attended over the course of the year with groups and organisations, including meetings with Minister Madigan & Department of Education officials, Ministers Rabbitte and O’Gorman DCEDIY, NCSE officials, the NCSE Consultative Forum, Children’s Rights Alliance, SOLAS, Disability Federation of Ireland, Ombudsman, UNESCO, Tusla, DS (International), the Special Education Forum and various other advocacy groups.

Surveys

The following surveys were conducted to ascertain member’s opinions:

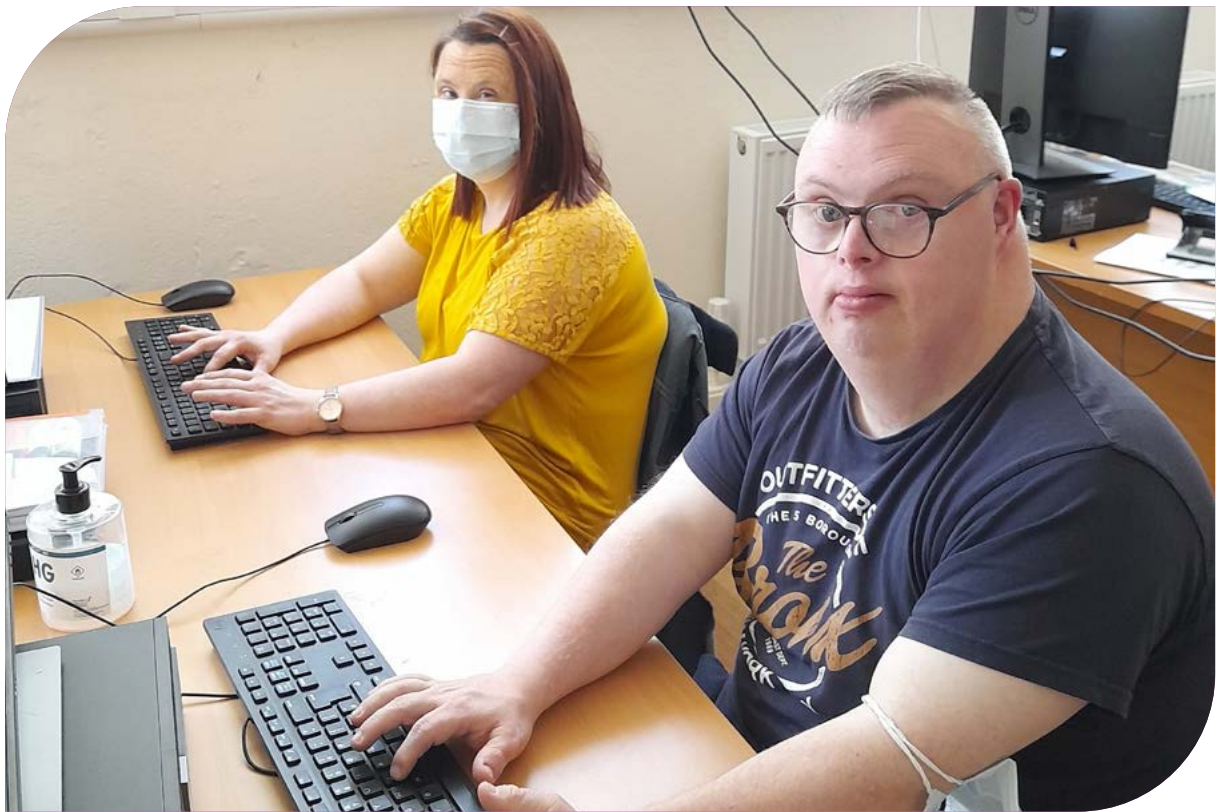
- Reduced School Days
- Closures in Special Schools & Classes
- Primary Communication
- Post Primary Communication
- Summer Provision
- Experiences of Bullying in education settings
- Teenagers views on education and life after school
- Adults with Down syndrome: views on continuing education

Consultations & Submissions

A number of submissions have also been made to government bodies and organisations highlighting our concerns over the course of the year.

- Educational Disadvantage (CRA)
- UNCRPD Article 24 Submission – State Report
- ISSU Submission
- NCSE Strategy Statement
- UNCRC submission –State Report
- Oireachtas Committee Submissions:
 - ✓ Bullying
 - ✓ Impact of the Decision to Delay the Return to School of Children with Special Educational Needs

DSI was also represented at the Oireachtas Committee Consultation on the **Provision for Special Educational Needs with Reference to the Implementation of the EPSEN Act.**



Triona and Declan completing Latch On in Roscommon in GRETB

Adult Education

Life changed utterly during the pandemic in 2021 and it was hard for many to understand the enormity of the challenges we faced as a nation. Boredom and isolation was difficult for us all, and adults with Down syndrome saw their employment, education and day services badly affected by the pandemic.

[The further development of online courses](#)

DSI created a resource page on our website for adult members so that they could keep active and engaged while at home. As 2021 began adult education continuing to be delivered online. Down Syndrome Ireland's 10-week Ability Online programme helped counteract the negative effects of pandemic. The range of topics covered such as mental health, conversation skills, politics, relationships and reading in everyday life, helped adult members maintain and develop their literacy, numeracy, life and social skills. For some adult members, Ability Online was a taster of longer Down Syndrome courses. For others, it facilitated bridging the return to meeting in-person towards the end of the year. 80 adult members studied on the programme in 2021.

The majority of members who participated in the 5 focus groups we facilitated in the latter half of the year, expressed a preference for in-person education. However, many recommended a blended approach, expanding our range of online courses to include

topics such as music and movies. This flexible approach would allow adult members throughout the country to access further learning. As a result, we began developing 3 new online courses to be rolled out in 2022 – Music, Movies, and Healthy Living and Wellbeing.

Down Syndrome Ireland and involvement in the ETB network

2021 was a pivotal year in the field of Adult Education for Down Syndrome Ireland. We embarked on the transition from branches delivering all our Adult Education courses, to ETBs delivering some of our courses. In September, with 3 ETBs began delivering our Latch-On (Literacy and Technology Hands On) and 1 ETB began delivering our Work Skills Programme. We began working actively with 2 other ETBs. This means members will no longer have to pay and fundraise to access courses these courses. In a 2021 survey, we found 71% of our members would like to take part in further education but barriers include not being able to find a course at the right level. Our partnership with ETBs broadens the scope for our adult members to find courses at the right level, and to follow other pathways such progressing to other ETB courses or taking up meaningful employment. We will be continuing to work with more ETBs throughout the country in 2022.

DSI Adult Education Courses – 2021 Overview

We strived to update and improve our 4 in-person adult education programmes. Our Latch-On - Literacy and Technology, and MOTE – My Opinion My Vote programmes are well-established but we continued to tweak them. We continued to pilot our Work Skills programme which had been paused in 2020 due to the pandemic. We completed our Personal Development Programme. This programme was developed after listening to members, families and employers. In the latter part of 2021, we began piloting the programme in 1 branch with adult students and in 2 post-primary schools. A second branch is to pilot the programme at the beginning of 2022. Once feedback is collated, we will improve the programme to better meet the needs of our adult members. We hope to offer it to all DSI branches in the future.

1. Latch-On Literacy and Technology

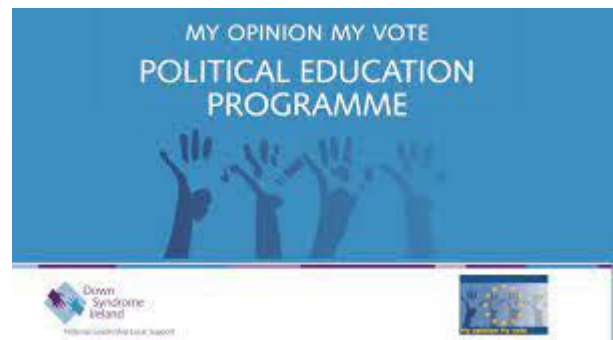
Practical Literacy & Technology (Latch-On) is two-year literacy programme developed specifically for adults with an intellectual disability. The programme provides opportunities for adults with Down syndrome to commence and continue their literacy development.



Latch-On was developed at the University of Queensland, Australia. The Latch-On course is taught two days or three half days a week over two years. The course content is designed to allow the students opportunities to access literacy in all its forms from viewing through to reading and writing. There are no academic prerequisites for studying Latch-On, as the course content is differentiated to suit the needs of individuals. This course provides a good foundation for adult learners, whether they are aiming for further education, employment or simply maintaining and improving their literacy skills.

2. Decision Making: Rights and Responsibilities (MOTE)

MOTE is a political education programme which was produced following an extensive pan European research project including Down Syndrome Ireland. As well as political awareness, MOTE encourages independent decision making and responsibility. MOTE aims to empower students through active citizenship and participation in the political process. This course teaches students about forming opinions and making choices. It encourages self-advocacy and a broad awareness of the social and political landscape, locally, nationally and at a European level.



3. Work Skills

Our Work Skills course was developed by Down Syndrome Ireland and is based on a project by Accenture called the Skills to Succeed Academy. This two-year part-time course is designed to prepare adults with Down syndrome to take up meaningful employment and to equip them with the skills to navigate the world of work. Students explore their own strengths and interests, and discuss how these could be useful in the workplace, as well as learning about how to find and keep a job. The students' study four modules over two years including a module based on interpersonal skills.



4. Personal Development

Our Personal Development programme was developed to fill the gap on personal development education. It aims to develop social and life skills, to increase self-awareness, self-esteem and independence, to enhance employability and to promote inclusion. In a nutshell, it to empower people with Down syndrome to achieve their full potential.



Ability Online

Ability online was a short topic-based modules used as an introduction or continuation of the programmes above. This ten-week course, which was initially developed to help combat isolation experienced by adult members during the pandemic and to bridge the gap to the return to meeting in-person but course was a huge success, leading to the development of new online courses for 2022.

Some Ability Online Before and after statistics

- An increase from 22% to 70% in adults with Down syndrome who read content online.
- An increase from 23% to 47% in adults who wrote letters.
- The percentage of students who never set an alarm in the morning decreased from 27% to 5%.

Resource-sharing and training

We depended on the tireless work of branches and education staff to deliver our courses to our adult members. One of our main ways to do this was through training – both specific teaching training and disability awareness training. All training was delivered online in 2021 but we plan to deliver both online and in-person training in 2022. In 2021, we trained 84 staff working in branches and ETBs. This included teachers, Classroom Assistants and other staff. We were able to support teachers to a higher level through our new Moodle Academy – an online learning platform. As we train and support more education staff, more adults with Down syndrome will have the opportunity to continue their studies and become more active members of their local community.

In an effort to reach as many adult members as possible, we continued to develop our Adult Resources webpage. We will be delighted to have more input from our adult members in 2022.

What do our members say?

Personal Development Student Quotes

1. Emily Logan

“The course was very, very good. I learned lots. I learned more about feelings and to be more independent. It was good to meet up with friends and do lots of work. We did typing as well. I really enjoyed the course.”

2. Cathal Byrne

“ I like the course because it's good to learn new things. It's good to do different courses and learn new skills. ”



3. Monica O'Gorman

“ I like this course. It was an amazing course. I met my friends here. We learned about health and safety, and to be more independent. ”

Ability Online Student Quotes

1. Michelle Whelehan –

“ I really enjoyed the course. It is lovely to meet people from other parts of Ireland on Zoom. I would encourage people to take part in this course because they would be working to improve their ability and their Independence. ”



2. Stephen Doherty

“ I took part in the online ability course as my parents thought it would be interesting for me as I took a year out of my 3rd level hospitality course due to covid-19. My parents were right I am really enjoying the course. I would advise anyone thinking about taking part to do so as it's very interesting good fun and very educational. ”

Case Study

Rebecca Buckley

“My name is Rebecca, 26 years young! I have done many courses with DS Ireland - Latch-on, MOTE and Work Skills. I started them in 2016 and I finished in 2021, I really enjoyed them all as I got to meet my friends each week. I am hoping to do the literacy for living, Mum thinks it is very important to feed the brain ♥. The pandemic came, it was hard. I am now finished my hairdressing course with Alfaparf up in Kilmainham with Ger his team and Mary-Frances who were very helpful! I got to meet new friends. I am now currently doing my work experience for 3 hours in Pelo, I love it. I really like going to the book club too.”



Rebecca Buckley's mother, Katie Buckley

As a young adult, it is so important to keep up the life skills, learning and trying new thing – that has been my Motto over the years. We were so delighted that Rebecca has enjoyed and learned from so many DSI courses like the Latch-On, Work Skills and MOTE - My Opinion My Vote, doing things that she enjoys like the Alfaparf hairdressing course and book club in Naas Library. The reality is my little wonderful woman will always need support and opportunities to keep climbing those sometimes very big hills! But always thankful & blessed that people around us no matter who they may be will keep climbing with us.



EUROPEAN UNION
Investing in your Future
European Social Fund



An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Employment Affairs
and Social Protection



government supporting communities

pobal



Ag tacú le daoine aige
a bfuil míchumas leann
a gcuimhne a bfuil smach
Supporting young people
with disabilities
reach their potential



THE IRELAND FUNDS



Mary Clare O'Shaughnessy - Ego Boost Hair

Quote from Katie's Gaynor's mother, Mary Gaynor

Katie has done Latch-On, Work Skills and Personal Development. During Covid, she did online classes. It was great to keep her going and be part of the group. I knew she was being supported and being prepared for jobs. During Covid it was hard to be home so much so doing the online classes with their teacher Declan and class assistant Mary meant that Katie was able to keep in touch with her classmates online and keep a routine that kept her motivated. The Personal Development Programme was perfect to start back after the online classes. It was just right. It has really benefitted Katie, being able to express her feelings and build her confidence and independence. The modules should be part of every course.



**“My job within Revive
Active has helped me to be
independent and also to be
brave in trying new things”**

Rachel Connell



2021 EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

2021 was a difficult year as the Covid 19 Pandemic forced society to enter lockdowns on a number of occasions and restricted movement resulting in low levels of economic activity. It is important that to acknowledge the particular challenges which our members faced during this period. However, despite the numerous adversaries our members persevered will many entered employment for the first time.

Case Study 1

Rachel Connell @ Revive Active, Mullingar

Rachel began working as part of a 6 week work placement in Revive Active, Mullingar in October 2021. She was offered a paid job and permanent contract after the 6 weeks, and now works 3 days a week as part of the production team, packing, assembling, sealing products, checking batch codes & sending products for shipping.

Here's what her Manager Colm Horton had to say about having Rachel as an employee in Revive Active:

"Rachel has slotted brilliantly into our Revive Active Mullingar manufacturing facility. She is a very popular and valuable member of our team and we have never looked back since she joined us. Well done Rachel, you are a credit to yourself and your family."

Here's what Rachel's Mum Deirdre said about her having a job:

"It suits Rachel so well. I think 9 hours broken into 3 shifts is perfect for her and now part of her routine. She takes great pride in it. It has given her a new found focus and sense of being valued because she is in paid employment, something she always wanted but also because they are such a good company, she feels included and a valuable member of the team."

Here's what Rachel said about her job at Revive Active:

"My job within Revive Active has helped me to be independent and also to be brave in trying new things"

Case Study 2

Katie McHugh @ Artizan Foods, Dublin

Katie McHugh began work with Artizan Foods in September 2021, 2 days per week.

Here's what her Manager Sheena Murray had to say about having Katie as an employee in Artizan Foods:

"Katie started with us back in September and has been a fantastic addition to the team. As we continue to develop her skillset, we have been proud to introduce Katie to the different parts of the business. We are so happy she is part of the Artizan family and we look forward to many more years of working with her!"

Here's what Katie said about her job at Artizan

"I really love working in Artizan and that the people are really nice."



Katie McHugh
at Artizan Foods, Dublin

Personal Development Course completion & pilot

We completed writing our Personal Development Course, which aims to develop social & life skills, to increase self-awareness, self-esteem & independence, to enhance employability & promote inclusion & to empower people with Down syndrome to achieve their full potential. We have rolled it out to 4 locations to pilot this year. Our Louth/Meath and Kerry branches are piloting the course with classes of adults with Down syndrome, and 2 post primary schools are also piloting the course in a secondary school setting with students with Down syndrome in a larger class with other students also. Once feedback has been received and the course has been edited, we hope to offer this course to all DSI branches.

Work Readiness Programme – Grafton Barber

- We have begun working on developing a new strand to our Employment Programme, a “Work Readiness Programme”, which will combine online training with direct community engagement to advance employment opportunities for our members. Our aim over the next 3 year is to design and deliver a series of courses to equip participants with skills needed to enter the workplace, by facilitating opportunities for practical work placements while providing the necessary theory and literacy skills related to each sector. The first new course within our Work Readiness Programme is in partnership with the Grafton Barbers, who own 50 barbershops nationwide. Our first round began in October 2022, with 6 students completing 10 weeks training in the Grafton Barber Academy on Grafton Street, followed by 6 weeks of work placements in salons across Dublin. All 6 graduates secured paid jobs in their salons and are now working as part of the team, welcoming customers, serving drinks, gowning up, cleaning work stations. It is a fantastic addition to our programme & the Grafton Barber team are committed to many more rounds of training and employment as part of our partnership. Covid-19 resulted in our Alfaparf Milano Beauty in all its Forms training pausing, but we hope in early 2022 to recommence our 5th round of hairdressing assistant training, once families feel safe to travel again.

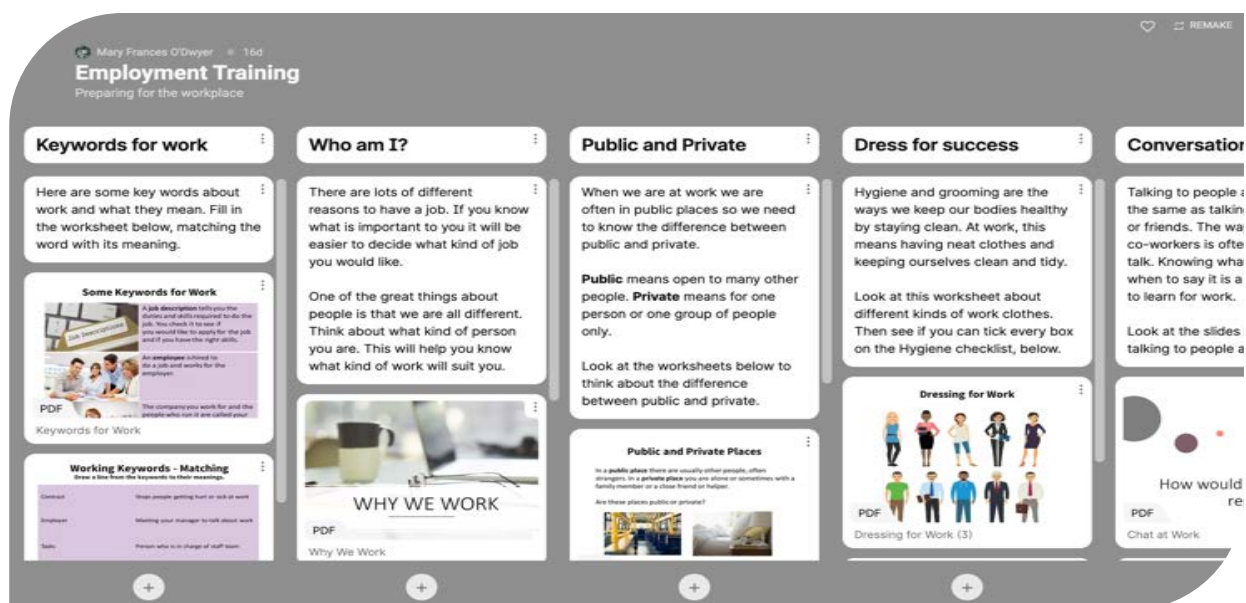


Down syndrome awareness training

We worked alongside Accenture to create an online version of our Down syndrome awareness training. This new resource has allowed us not only have a wider reach in staff teams by sending a link of our training to employers, but feedback has also showed that employers like to refer to the training on multiple occasions if they need a refresher or clarity while their employee with Down syndrome is at work.

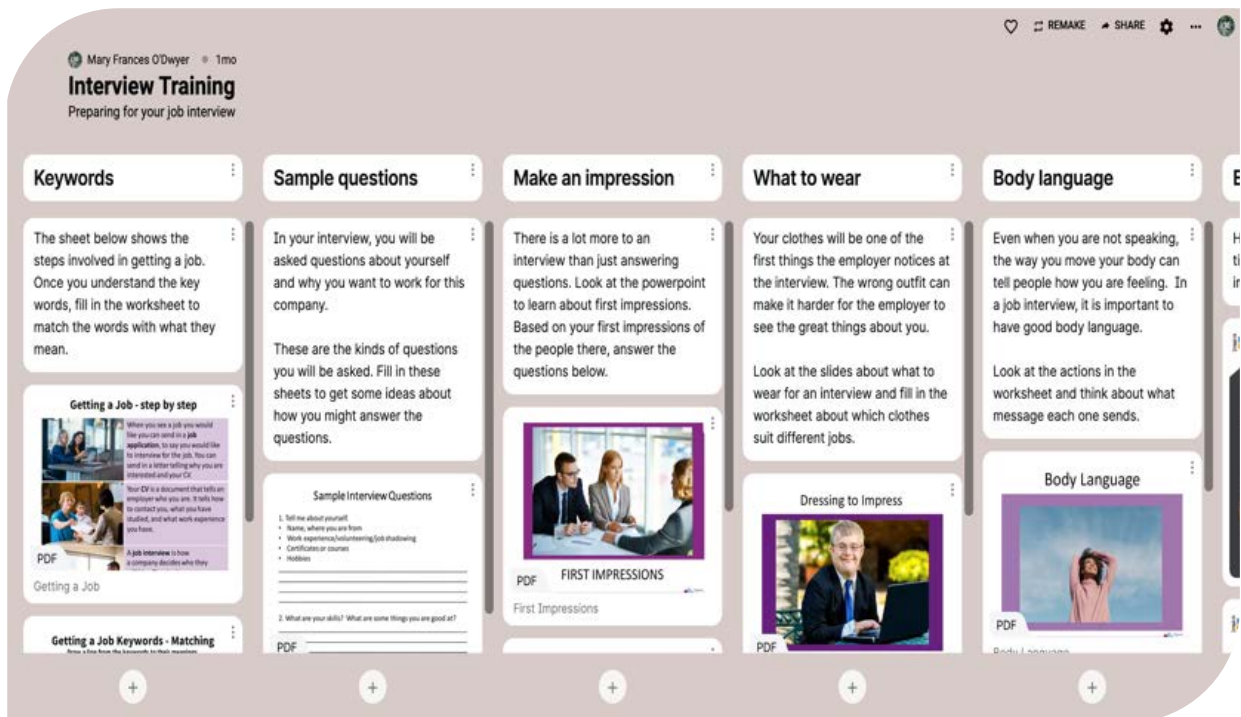
Pre-employment and pre-interview training

We purchased a new online licence called “Padlet”, which has allowed us create and upload our pre-employment and pre-interview training to an online forum. This has been an invaluable resource, as groups of adults with Down syndrome have been able to access the training with us, regardless of their location, in preparing for work and interviews. Running courses on zoom is very different to in a classroom and in person, but family contribution has been outstanding in ensuring the resources we have emailed home following the online training have been completed and their son/daughter with Down syndrome is well prepped for interview and work.



Return to work and new jobs

Before the pandemic, 64 of our Ability Programme participants had moved into paid employment. Due to the pandemic, approximately 95% of these employees lost their jobs. We are continuing to work with employers, employees and their families to ensure a safe return to work. We have worked closely with Walkers Law Firm, to create an easy return to work checklist, and to adapt the “Return to Work Safely Protocol COVID-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers” produced by the Government, into an easy read format also. This has been an invaluable tool in ensuring a safe return for our adult members with Down syndrome, but also to ensure employers are confident that their employee with Down syndrome understands the new protocols in place due to the pandemic. We also created a “Back to Work” Padlet, where we worked on things that



might have changed post-covid and worked on refreshing work skills with employees, in preparation for the return to work. Additionally we are supporting adults with Down syndrome to settle into their new jobs, thanks to companies like Applegreen, Grafton Barber, Artizan Foods, Harvey's Point Hotel, Radisson Hotel Sligo, Mayson Hotel & Revive Active. It is extremely positive and encouraging to see new job offers arise post pandemic, and to see employers old and new still committed to employing people with Down syndrome to be part of their team. We also reached out to all Work Skills course graduates nationwide, and sent them a work survey to find out where they would like to work, their location, types of work, interests etc. This is a great tool for us to collect information when partnering with employers, but also in interview situations to give employers in the case where a person with Down syndrome may not have a CV.

Funding

Our European Social Fund, which we had received from 2018-2021 to fund our Ability Programme expired in August 2021. We submitted financial and non financial reports applied for and were successful recipients of new funding from Dormant Accounts for 15 months until the end of 2022. This will fund our Employment Programme.





Virtual Purple

#PurpleRun4DS

World Down Syndrome Day

Due to another lockdown imposed in early 2021, the annual Purple Run celebration in Dublin's Phoenix Park for World Down Syndrome Day on March 21st was once again cancelled. The event was transferred online to become the '*Virtual Purple Run*', with participant recruitment and fundraising driven through Facebook. It was an overwhelming success with over 1,900 participants taking part individually or with family and friends in their own Purple Run, and raising over €220K in the process.

'*Lots of Socks*' has been an important international awareness building campaign for World Down Syndrome Day over the years. It has grown organically in Ireland largely through increased social media engagement. In 2021, it was decided to harness this support and actively encourage individuals, families, schools, communities and companies to get involved by wearing their most colourful socks and sharing their photos and videos online with a donation ask. The campaign was a great success from both an awareness and fundraising perspective.

National Office Fundraising

With less than 20% Annual State Funding, Down Syndrome Ireland remains heavily dependent on fundraising activities and the generosity of the general public for its income.

2021 was again dominated by the COVID-19 Pandemic and its dramatic impact continued to be felt throughout the charity sector in Ireland. During the year Down Syndrome Ireland adapted its traditional fundraising campaigns and activities to embrace the move online with the adoption of developing digital and social fundraising methods.

After a fundraising income loss of a third in 2020, income recovered steadily throughout 2021 and thankfully returned to pre-COVID levels. This was achieved through the implementation of a wide variety of fundraising campaigns and activities which included the following highlights:

50th Anniversary - Community and Events

As part of Down Syndrome Ireland's 50th Anniversary a National Raffle was held, with 18 out of our 25 branches participating through ticket sales. The raffle was a great engagement piece for new supporters to learn more about the organisation on a national level. There was great excitement around the draw with the well-deserved winner of the 1st Prize, a brand new Hyundai i10, being an ICU nurse from Sligo. The National Raffle was a great success and raised almost €80K between our branches and National Office.



Go for Gold

Our '**Go for Gold**' campaign was launched by Padraig O'Callaghan from the Paudcast in May as a new Summer campaign to help celebrate our 50th Anniversary and all the amazing achievements our members strive towards every day. Many schools, clubs and companies held Go for Gold parties, sports day, treasure hunts and coffee mornings etc. over the Summer months, helping raise funds for Down Syndrome Ireland in our fiftieth year.



After two previous postponements due to the pandemic, our planned **'Abseil 4 DSI'** finally took place in Croke Park on a sunny July day in 2022. We had 80 brave participants who abseiled the 100 feet down to the hallowed ground from the Hogan Stand. It was a great opportunity to meet so many of our members again from around the country, and the families and friends who looked on from the stands. The participants themselves fundraised an amazing €50K in total.

Following the success of our **'Virtual Purple Run'** in March, we launched the **'50 for 50 Challenge'** in October to mark our 50th Anniversary. We asked people to raise a minimum of 50 euros by taking on a 50 based challenge – walk, run, cycle or swim 50km during the month, or do 50 push-ups/sit-ups/squats etc. each day: Your Challenge Your Way! Registration was free and each participant received a 50th Share the Journey t-shirt. The challenge was a

success with individuals and groups taking part countrywide.

Corporate

Through our **'50 for 50'** campaign we invited 50 corporate partners to support us for our 50th Anniversary through three tiers of participation - Gold, Silver and Bronze. Each tier offered a different level of support in helping us raise awareness and funds during this milestone anniversary year.



Woodies Heroes Summer fundraising campaign. Despite the on-going pandemic, the campaign was the most successful in its seven year history and surpassed its target by raising over €536,000 through its stores and the overwhelming generosity of its customers. Down Syndrome Ireland's share of the funds raised went towards

supporting our Early Years Education Programme.



Also during the Summer months, Unilever Ireland launched a 20th Anniversary Partnership HB Ice Cream pack with 10 cent from each pack sold being donated to Down Syndrome Ireland.

Despite many people continuing to work from home in late 2021, our annual **'Christmas Jumper Day'** campaign went ahead. We asked companies, individuals and work colleagues support us over the Christmas period by wearing their most festive jumpers, share via social media and make a donation if they could.



Our corporate partnerships continued to play a key role and helped sustain us during the year through their various fundraising initiatives. We are most grateful to our partners and the fantastic teams at MACE, iNUA, Credit Suisse and Kaefer etc. for all their continued support, it is very much appreciated.

Charity Shops

Due to the ongoing pandemic and after an almost five months forced closure at the beginning of 2021, our four Dublin charity

shops finally reopened mid-May. Our shops are an integral part of our annual fundraising activities and thankfully sales across all the shops rebounded immediately and continued strong throughout the year. The success of our shops is due to the support of our fantastic team of volunteer staff and our wonderful loyal customers.

Even though COVID-19 continued to bring uncertainty and difficulties throughout 2021, we are so very grateful for the support that Down Syndrome Ireland continued to receive from countless individuals, schools, communities and companies all over the country, through their generous donations and various fundraising activities. This support is vital for the funding of our work with children and adults with Down syndrome, and their families throughout Ireland. Thank you!

Human Resources

Our Head of Education, Fidelma Brady, was awarded a Doctorate in Education from Queens University Belfast in 2021. Her dissertation examined the 'Experience of Parents with the Inclusion of their Children with Down Syndrome in Mainstream Primary School in the Republic of Ireland'. The research findings were presented at the Down Syndrome Education International Research Conference under the Issues and Perspectives in Education section.

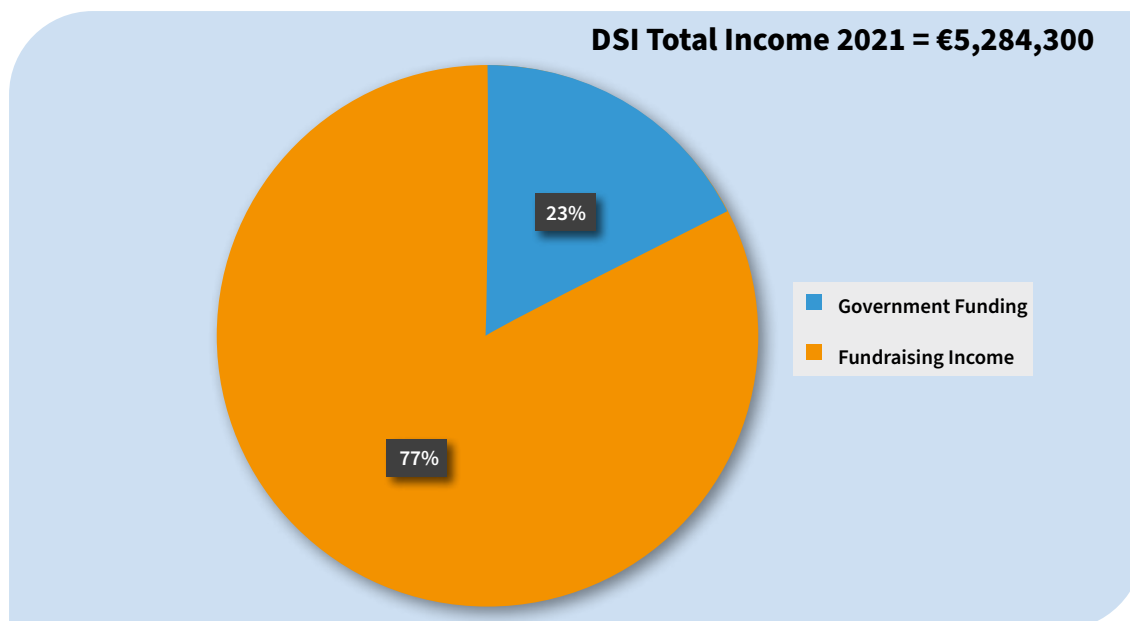
Finance

Income:

Government Funding €1,225,886

Fundraising Income €4,058,414

Total €5,284,300

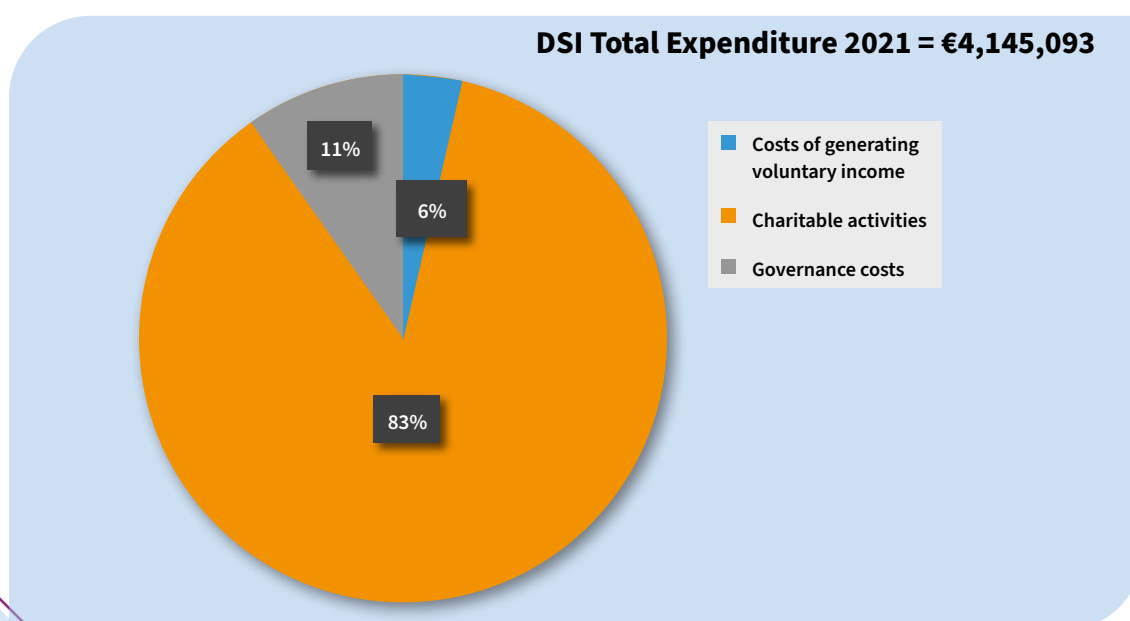


Expenditure:

Costs of generating voluntary income €241,992

Charitable activities €3,443,590

Governance costs €459,511



Branch Case Studies

DOWN SYNDROME CORK



Down Syndrome Cork had an extremely busy 2021 operating out of 3 centres; our office in Ballincollig, our education centre at the Field of Dreams and our Shop in Cork city. Our members also reached 400 led by a hard working committee who were still able to meet on zoom.

Speech and Language Therapy

- Our SLT department provided 30 individual sessions per month, “Stay at home Social” weekly groups for 0-5 years and fortnightly Teenage Zoom groups for those aged 13-17. Webinars were held for early educators and primary school staff (97 attended)
- Webinars for Parents with input on OT, Audiology and SLT also took place
- SLT sessions resumed in person and Little Explorers Early Intervention Programme and Little Learners groups returned for 1-3 and 3-5 year olds
- Monthly and fortnightly teenage/adult social groups returned as well as the much-loved Virtual Easter Egg event to which 70+ members signed in on Zoom

- Our SLT team delivered 2 Lámh Module 1 Courses
- 7 Summer Camps took place at the Field of Dreams for members from 0 to 18, with 56 members attending. DSCork also organised a Sibshop for siblings of children with Down Syndrome
- DS Cork delivered individual and group therapy, with some sessions being facilitated online. A Halloween Party at the Field of Dreams for the 0-6 age group facilitated by our SLTs
- A Christmas Zoom Party where 43 members signed in

Fantastic Member and Fundraising Events

- Our Twentyone/3 Online Concert to mark World Down Syndrome Day
- Baby & Toddler Coffee Mornings @ Field of Dreams
- Team Up 4 Tennis – accessible tennis lessons
- Tour de Munster – a 4-day 600km cycle around Munster
- The return of our DS Cork Golf Classic

- Members and Friends Barbecue @ Field of Dreams
- Mural launch in Cork City to mark 50 years of DSI

Field of Dreams

- Student numbers increased, new programmes came on stream and members returned to the Field
- Our graduates returning to the world of work
- 5 Work Skills and 8 Literacy students received 56 2-hour Zoom sessions with a staggering 99% attendance rate
- Our Work Skills and Literacy students were back on site at the end of March
- 12 new students joined our Activation programme
- 19 students joined our new, CONNECT programme taking our enrolment to 44
- Graduations took place in the summer after an extended programme year
- We launched our The Field of Dreams Café, designed to give our Work Skills students real-world work experience took place on 4 occasions: twice in May and again in October and November
- Representatives from local businesses and community organisations were invited to the site, and our students took on the roles of host, set-up, wait staff, cleaners, and tour guides
- The Café is now a core element of our Ready2Work programme and takes place monthly during the academic year
- 51 students enrolled in our classes.
- We introduced 2 new programmes Field to Fork/ Ready2Work and Life Skills which now run alongside our existing Activation, Literacy and CONNECT programmes.
- 3 new Tutors and 3 new Classroom Assistants joined DS Cork using a new interactive whiteboard in our classroom
- A new Employment Support Specialist joined to support our graduates in finding work
- Pre-Covid, 8/8 of our original graduates were working. Unfortunately, this fell to 2/8 as a direct result of the pandemic
- by the end of 2021, that number was 6/8, with opportunities identified for the remaining students
- 3/5 of the 2021 Work Skills graduates were working by the end of the year



- We completed our remaining themed gardens
- We sold over 700 pumpkins throughout October!
- Our Farm Shop continued to develop with our range of plants and produce proving a big hit with customers
- Corporate volunteering was slow but reached 213 volunteers on-site over 26 days by the end of 2021
- 56 members in attendance at camps including 'Fun with Food', 'School Readiness' and a SibShop for siblings of those with Down Syndrome

Down Syndrome Cork Shop

Our Charity Shop, based in the centre of Cork City, exceeded all expectations in terms of sales figures with an ever-

expanding customer base and a growing following on social media.

In addition, our Pilot Employment Training Scheme was launched with a view to employing 10 of our adult members as Shop Assistants, supported by our Shop Manager, Employment Support Specialist, and our hugely committed team of Volunteers. The scheme is due to commence in Spring 2022.

The Shop also expanded its reach with a Pop-Up Dress Shop and a 'Little Socks' stall at the famous English Market, both of which took place in October. The Shop continues to grow with ambitious plans for 2022 and beyond.

DOWN SYNDROME LIMERICK



Pictured with his family is DSI Limerick branch member Séamus Mooney, who at 76, is believed to be the oldest person with Down syndrome in the State.

Down Syndrome Limerick provides services and supports to almost 200 members. 2021 saw us navigate another challenging year but we had many fundraising successes with Abseil Thomond, Three Counties Cycle and an epic year for the Tour de Munster. We upgraded our website, introducing an e-commerce function. Limerick People's Museum hosted our Lockdown Lookback Photography Exhibition which also had an online gallery. We were so proud of our member, Pdraig O'Callaghan who featured on the Late Late Toy Show in December and was also an ambassador for DSI's The Upside campaign marking 50 years of the national charity.

We ran a hybrid model of service delivery with face to face and online services provided. A total of 1016 hours of Speech and Language Therapy was provided. Occupational Therapy totalled 55 hours. Cycling, swimming, parent-link, drama and youth club all continued as much as possible. The class of 2020 finally graduated from their Latch On course in 2021. We commenced Work Skills in September – the first time this course has been offered in the Mid-West to adults with Down syndrome.

DSL also ran school transition and readiness courses for parents and children. We ran the Parenting Plus Special Needs Programme to 20 parents online. Other services and supports included pre-school SLT and OT support groups, literacy webinars, Numicon courses, music therapy, Tai Chi classes, social club (18-25 year olds), activity club (8 – 12 year olds) and Zumba classes. A busy year at DSL! For more information on our services click [here](#).

OFFALY DOWN SYNDROME



At the beginning of 2021, we realised that things were going to continue being different for a long time to come, so Offaly Down Syndrome continued to support our membership of more than 50 families the best we could.

We kept each other talking with chats on our WhatsApp groups, we zoom-ed our way through meetings and therapies, and we celebrated International Down Syndrome Awareness Month with passion on our Facebook Page.

17 of our younger members expressed themselves through music therapy, 26 of our members attended SLT therapy, and with thanks to funding from The Lions Club, Inclusion Ireland and Bord Na Mona, we purchased 15 brand new Apple iPads with the latest See and Learn Apps on them for members who took part in the See and Learn Programme.

We introduced a lottery syndicate with 300 members made up of friends and families of Offaly Down Syndrome members, trying our best to win the National Lottery jackpot each week, unfortunately it never happened, but we did manage to raise somewhere around €8000.00.



And finally, Henry Donnelly from Kilcormac was made an Honorary Garda and was presented with his Garda car by Tullamore Community Policing Unit on behalf of the Garda Charity [Little Blue Heroes](#).



DOWN SYNDROME DUBLIN

In 2021, Dublin branch membership continued to grow as we kept in touch mostly through social media and Zoom. We continued with our Hip Hop, Ballroom, Fun with Numbers and Musical Theatre classes, and added in Yoga and Pilates for good measure. We had some very successful adult discos, a teenage dance party and our traditional Christmas party. We were also delighted to offer our members a year's free access to Kater4Kids novelty baking, which helped pass the time during lockdown.

We celebrated World Down Syndrome Day 2021 at a distance by sending seed bombs to each of our members, and we really enjoyed seeing all the photos of members planting their seed bombs and watching them grow.

As summer came and restrictions loosened we were delighted to be able to get together in person. We had kayaking, a tennis camp, an art and drama camp, a Learn to Cycle course and an art and wellbeing camp. It was fantastic for everyone to meet up again: thanks to Dublin City Sport and Wellbeing, Connections Arts Centre, Yvonne Law and Deirdre Meyler for providing such wonderful activities.

In October some of our older teenagers and young adults had the opportunity to take part in a two-day film workshop with Connections Arts Centre, where they wrote, shot and starred in their own movie.

Our year ended on an optimistic note, when our Baby and Toddler group went back in person after so long on Zoom - many of them had never met in real life before so it was very exciting!

As usual we are very thankful to the members and supporters who fundraised for the branch in various ways in 2021 – their efforts helped us to keep our activities running.



Down Syndrome Ireland
Unit 3, Park Way House, Western Parkway Business Park,
Ballymount Drive, Dublin 12, D12HP70
CRA Number 20010164; CHY Number is 6062.

www.downsyndrome.ie

