

## Downright Excellent Annual Report 2015-16

### Charitable objectives

It has been another exceptional year for Downright Excellent (DEx). We have increased our reach and our income and continue to be a lifeline for many families of children with Down syndrome in London.

At our last Strategy Day, our mission was refined to focus on our ultimate aim: *'Enabling children with Down syndrome to maximise their potential'*. This mission has given us the motivation to think broadly and creatively about how we can best meet the needs of children with Down syndrome and their families.

### Performance and achievements

The main focus for DEx in 2015/16 was:

- Continuing to provide speech and language therapy with complementary support and activities in Stay and Play to children with Down syndrome - From April 2015, March 2016, DEx provided weekly services & support for 74 London based families during school term time.

While our very youngest children enjoyed sensory activities and early sound making, our eldest children worked on life skills and communication through our 'Tweens' programme. Two of our children successfully transitioned to mainstream secondary schools – a huge achievement for them both.

- Offering age appropriate stay and play activities to complement the Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) groups. 15 families on the waiting list were invited to attend Friday Stay and Play only while they waited for an SLT place. Stay and Play on a Saturday was significantly bolstered by the addition of a larger number of willing volunteers from University College London (UCL).
- Continuing to enable parents and carers to meet, talk and provide each other with support and share information whilst their children were playing or in sessions.
- Developing our alternative fundraising strategy with success
- Strengthening the Board by recruiting one new parent Trustee
- Strengthening and developing policies and procedures, finance systems and governance.

We also:

- Increased capacity and our skills base by working with University College London to recruit student SLTs as volunteers on Saturdays



- Extended our ability to offer complementary activities. We recruited a volunteer yoga teacher and offered support on coping with clothing fastenings and dressing through a volunteer with experience in this area
- Delivered a whole staff training session in a nursery school as an inset day. This was aimed at enabling all the nursery's staff to develop their understanding of the needs of the child they support as well as providing them with practical ideas and complementary strategies to implement in their practice.

## Our people

We are lucky to have a wonderful mix of dedicated and skilled freelancers and sessional workers who made these 2015/16 achievements possible. They are supported by a group of keen volunteers, some of whom are at the start of their own SLT careers, who enable us to provide a more personal service. Over this structure sits our thoughtful, practical, creative and committed Trustee Board who met regularly throughout the course of 2015/16 to make decisions on governance, finance, policies, strategy, operations and new projects.

## Financial review

Our total income for the year ended 31 March 2016 increased from £73,533 to £147,714.

This income was made up of £94,110 – grants, £31,763 – donations and fundraising activities £21,741 - parental contributions and £100 – bank interest. Expenditure for the year increased from £93,727 to £118,683. The results for the year are shown in the Statement of Financial Activities and the main sources of funds are as detailed in notes 2 and 3.

At the end of the year ended 31 March 2015 there was a small deficit of £1,911 due to increased costs in the year ended 31 March 2015. We have maintained tight controls on costs during the year but have increased income by over 100%, resulting in net income of £29,031 for the year. Of the funds remaining, £1,971 relates to an under-spend and the remainder relates to additional fundraising generated in the year to be used against future costs.

## Fundraising

DEx services were again heavily subsidised during the year and the organisation continued to fully subsidise wherever appropriate. We also kept a watching brief on our families' circumstances during 2015/16 as they adjusted to new government regulations that affect income.

We aimed to ensure that we had sufficient funds to meet the expenditure budget agreed by the trustees in April 2015, of £116,715.

During the year we received a major grant from the Big Lottery Fund (£86,310) and grants from London Catalyst (£5,000) and the Leathersellers Charitable Fund (£2,800). DEx received ongoing, in kind, support from Rabobank. Smaller donations also came from a



range of individuals and organisations, many of which were unexpected, yet very gratefully received.

We implemented an 'alternative fundraising strategy' to raise funds from a variety of sources and to spread our income generation 'risk'. The alternative fundraising strategy proved to be extremely successful, contributing £31,763 towards the income for the year.

As usual, external funding was supplemented by parental contributions per child unless a family received workless state benefits, in which case the contribution was waived.

In addition to our grant funding and parental/carer contributions, we encouraged the generation of unrestricted funding via donations, fundraising initiatives, bequests, gift cards and sponsored events. These continued to bring DEx additional financial security - as well as expanding our network of benefactors and supporters. We substantially developed our website as a medium for attracting new funders, and maintain an active 'DEX' Facebook page.

DEx is indebted to all of its funders and sponsors for their invaluable support, through which it will continue to address the challenges faced by children with Down syndrome in London and their families.

## Looking ahead

2016/17 looks to be no less busy or demanding of our time and energy. Attention has already been focussed on:

- Regalvanising Saturday Stay and Play through a brand and content refresh – 'DEX Stars Club' has been born
- Establishing Occupational Therapy (OT) as a fixture for Saturdays, offering this on alternate weeks to our successful SLT service
- Looking into the requirements for PQASSO – an externally validated organisational quality standard which we anticipate will be attractive to prospective funders
- Considering what a post-Tweens DEx offer might look like and how this could be funded
- Actively seeking new Trustees to replace some departing members and refresh the Board – bringing new ideas and skills to the organisation

Finally, a big thank you to all our amazing children (and their families) who worked so hard over the year towards maximising their own potential. The sky is the limit!

**Lucy Lloyd-Scott**  
**Chair**  
**30 November 2016**

