

## Chair's report for the Annual General Meeting 25 January 2018 (for period 1 April 2016 - 31 March 2017)

### Charitable objectives

We remain committed to 'enabling children with Down syndrome to maximise their potential'; seeking ways to deliver through this regular therapy sessions and via family support.

### Performance and achievements

The main focus for DEx in 2016/17 was:

- Developing and implementing a plan to locate and secure a new venue for Downright Excellent (DEx). This was following Golden Lane campus' decision to seek new tenants who would be prepared to pay considerably higher rents for the spaces available.
- Continuing to provide our core offer of speech and language therapy with complementary support and activities in Stay and Play/DEX Stars to children with Down syndrome. From April 2016 to March 2017, DEx provided weekly services and support for 95 London-based families during school term time. While our very youngest children continued to enjoy sensory activities and early sound making, our primary school aged children focused on developing their speech and language skills and building relationships with peers. Our eldest children worked on life skills and communication through our 'Tweens' programme. More of our children successfully transitioned to secondary schools – a huge achievement for them all.
- Establishing the provision of routine Occupational Therapy to our primary school aged children. This centres on developing fine motor skills (handwriting, dressing, manipulation of small objects) and gross motor skills (upper body strength, hopping, jumping etc.) Very few boroughs provide Occupational Therapy to children with Down syndrome, yet it is a vital area of evidenced support to enable our children to develop their independence.
- Continuing to provide an open, welcoming environment to enable parents and carers to meet, talk and provide each other with support and share information. We continued to offer prospective parents (who may have received test results indicating a high probability of delivering a child with Down syndrome) the opportunity to meet our children and their families to offer an alternative, positive view of Down syndrome
- Strengthening the Board by recruiting one new parent Trustee to boost our representation from pre-school families and replacing our Deputy Treasurer with another Chartered Accountant.
- Strengthening our finance systems and focusing on ensuring our safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and fit for purpose.

We also:

- Increased capacity and our skills base by continuing to work with University College London to recruit student SLTs as volunteers on Saturdays.
- Delivered school staff training sessions to enable them to develop their understanding of the needs of the children they support as well as providing them with practical ideas and complementary strategies to implement in their practice.
- Began to consider the impact of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) on our data and record keeping (with a focus on 'consent') and to plan for the changes.

## Our people

We remain indebted to our wonderful team of freelancers and volunteers who continue to provide exceptional services and support to our families. Despite this being a period of considerable change and upheaval for Downright Excellent, our team remained focussed on meeting our objectives and finding practical solutions to logistical challenges as they arose. Particular thanks to the Trustees who spent considerable amounts of their own time researching new venues and visiting them to assess their suitability.

## Financial review

Our total income for the year ended 31 March 2017 was £154,987. This represented an increase on the previous financial year of £7,273.

The income was made up of £100,85 (grants), £26,779 (donations and individual fundraising activity) and £27,260 (parental contributions). Expenditure for the year increased by £29,321 (25%) to £148,004. The results for the year are shown in the Statement of Financial Activities and the main sources of funds are detailed in notes 2-4.

At the end of 31 March 2017, we generated a surplus of just over £10,300. As in 2015/16, Trustees maintained a tight control on costs, seeking justifications for all expenditure against our charitable objectives. Particular focus was maintained on planning for additional property costs as required by our enforced move from Golden Lane.

## Fundraising

DEX services remained heavily subsidised during the year and the organisation continued to fully subsidise wherever appropriate. We are committed to ensuring equality of access to services and regularly review our policies around ability to contribute.

We aimed to ensure that we had sufficient funds to meet the expenditure budget agreed by the trustees in April 2016 which given the change in venue, rose to £149,886 over the year.

During the year we received a major grant from the Big Lottery Fund (£84,826) and grants from Global's Make a Noise (£16,030). DEX received ongoing, in kind, support from Rabobank who enable our Trustees to conduct their meetings in generous surroundings and provide us with an annual weekend meeting space for our strategy day.

Smaller donations also came from a range of individuals and organisations, many of which were unexpected, yet very gratefully received.

We continued with our 'alternative fundraising strategy' to raise funds from a variety of sources and to spread our income generation 'risk'. The alternative fundraising strategy contributed £26,779 (17%) towards the income for the year. We continued to encourage the generation of unrestricted (i.e. not tied to the delivery of a specific project or aspect of the services we deliver) 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.

As usual, external funding was supplemented by parental contributions of £12.50 per session, per child unless a family received workless state benefits, in which case the contribution was waived. The

contributions from parents represent only a small proportion of Downright Excellent's annual operating costs but are a vital source of assumed income.

DEX is incredibly grateful to all of its funders, sponsors and supporters who enable us to address the challenges faced by children with Down syndrome in London and their families.

## Communication

We regularly updated our website as a medium for attracting new funders, and maintain an active 'DEX' Facebook page. Additionally, we attended and supported the network of organisations supporting children and adults with Down syndrome across the UK; sharing best practice and learning from each other. Our organisational maturity means we are often sought as 'experts' in the field of successful therapy delivery and running a successful organisation.

Internal communication is also incredibly important. To this end we produce regular newsletters and meet with parents/carers at the start of each term to communicate any changes and request feedback. Our Friday and Saturday coordinators also acted as an important communication channel between DEX and families.

## Looking ahead

In 2017/18 we are seeking to:

- Secure adequate income to enable us to continue to deliver impactful services to children with Down syndrome and their families across London.
- Seek innovative solutions to managing the 'bulge' of school aged children moving from Fridays to Saturdays.
- Establish ourselves in our new 'home' at the Sundial Centre.
- Review our governing document to ensure it is 'fit for purpose'.
- Begin working towards PQASSO accreditation which will provide assurance to prospective funders and partners that we are a competent organisation.
- Considering what a post-Tweens service 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.

My final thanks goes to all our fantastic children (and their families) who worked so hard this year towards maximising their own potential. Without exception, they continue to demonstrate that given the right support and encouragement, children with Down syndrome can achieve wonderful things, exceeding societal expectations and enriching all of our lives.

**Lucy Lloyd-Scott**  
**Chair of Trustees**  
**Downright Excellent**  
**21/01/2018**