

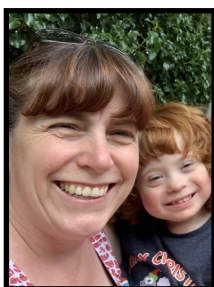


down's syndrome oxford

Newsletter | August 2020

From the Chair

It's extremely difficult to find the words to do justice to the way in which all of our lives have been disrupted over the last few months. Every single family has had their own unique set of circumstances to manage and we are all getting through this in our own ways. One thing has come shining through - the strength of our community and the willingness of our members to help each other wherever possible. This extraordinary newsletter gives an insight into just how creative and adaptable our community is.



In less than two weeks from lock-down, DSO reengineered it's entire operation: EDGs and PDGs moved to online; choir moved to Zoom; Wednesday Stay and Play was replaced with a Friday Sing and Sign session and many of our families started connecting directly; the website was relaunched with new COVID and useful information sections added, which continue to be updated with key information. We held our first virtual AGM. The list goes on.

DSO has also launched it's first summer activity programmes. The **Summer of Fun** events have been fabulous so far and if you haven't already, do sign up for those still to come. Our new **Shine on Challenge Club** for our older children has just launched. You can read more on page 8.

Grant applications are being made to try and generate much needed funds to support our activities and also our goal of providing some additional education support in key areas from the Autumn 2020. We all know how hard our

young people work to achieve their goals and we want to try and help with addressing some of the shortfall from these months of isolation. If there are any areas you would like to see included in that programme, please do let us know. Email chair@DSOxford.org.uk, or simply comment on Facebook or one of our WhatsApp groups.

My thanks go out to everybody on the committee - people have continually gone above and beyond to help DSO adapt to these incredibly challenging times.

"We are still united even when we are apart" - beautifully put Andrew Dubock.

With best wishes from my family to yours, stay safe.

Jos Smith, Chair

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Our first virtual AGM

On the 29th June DSO held its first ever virtual AGM and it was an overwhelming success with 21 people attending. We took time to reflect on the highlights of the last year, including:

- ⇒ a number of **successful new initiatives** such as the DS Dual Diagnosis Group and the TA Twilight Training Sessions.
- ⇒ some **incredibly well-attended social events** such as the Abbaphonics trip to the Royal Albert Hall with over 90 people attending, and the panto visits that were enjoyed by many of our families.
- ⇒ the purchase of **the new DSO gazebo** which has without doubt enabled us to have a greater presence at fundraising event.
- ⇒ some **wonderful fundraising efforts** from the Oxford North Rotary Club and Magdalen Collage School, to name a few.



We also talked about **the impact COVID-19 has had on the charity** and how we've had to cancel fundraising events and choir performances, think about new ways to keep connected with our community, and re-design our events into online versions!

Our 3 main officers were re-elected into their posts.

- **Jos Smith — Chair**
- **Sarah Fonge — Treasurer**
- **Roberta Celeste — Secretary**

New Social Club Co-ordinators

Pre-school Club

Emily Higgins, mum of Bill aged 2, has taken over as Pre-School Club Co-ordinator from Natalie Rowe. Emily is looking forward to planning some trips as soon as we are able.

A very big thank-you to Natalie who has done a great job organising some fantastic days out and events for the pre-school children over the last couple of years.

Primary Club

Nik Field, mum of Charlie aged 5 and **Sam Morrissey**, mum of Seb aged 8, are jointly taking on the role of Primary Club Co-ordinator. They take over from Kelly Stacey who has carried out the role for the last 7 years.

Thanks to Nik and Sam for taking on the role and a huge thank-you to Kelly for doing such a wonderful job for such a long period of time. We look forward to welcoming you to the 10 + Club!

Pre-School Sing & Sign Sessions

Since Friday 27th March, almost the start of lockdown, DSO have run online sing & sign sessions for our pre-school children on Friday mornings. Our lovely presenters are Sally & Hannah Dubock, the dynamic duo, and Michelle Blackstock.

Over the weeks 17 children with Down's syndrome have taken part, some with their "gang" of brothers or sisters. To make the sessions interactive our presenters give the parents a list of props beforehand. So, magically when Sally or Michelle bring out their toys for the song, the children also have something to play with and share. A big favourite is when the monkeys bouncing on the bed do not only fall off the bed but end up on the other side of the kitchen!



Sally & Hannah Dubock



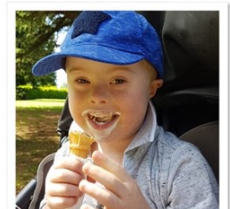
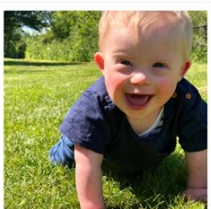
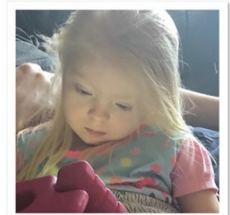
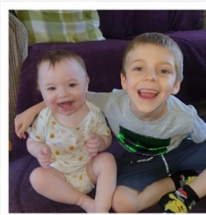
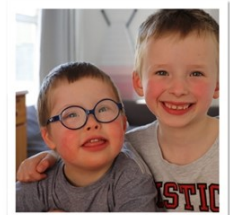
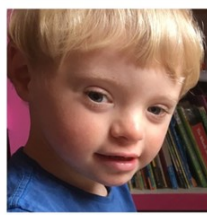
Michelle Blackstock

Michelle and Sally & Hannah have kindly offered to **continue our sessions through the summer holidays**. We look forward to lots of singing and giggles from our amazing pre-school children and their families.

Amanda Foulds, EDG Administrator

Our Pre-School Group – what a gorgeous bunch!

Alyssa Assil Bill Andrew Leo Leo & Noah Ethan Elliot
Andrew Ezra Daniel & Cameron Jack & Andrew Poppy
Samuel Lily Jojo



DSO's Summer of Fun Begins

Katharine Horrocks writes:

The first two events of DSO's Summer of Fun have recently taken place – virtual parties organised by Sharky & George. They were for two different age groups, and in total 23 families took part. It's fair to say these were a success!

The party hosts managed to engage the children by playing music, organising games such as finding colourful items and bringing them to the screen, dancing around as animals, creating a stack of cushions and jumping in and dressing up. Although of course we all miss seeing each other in person and our annual summer party, it was fun to do some different activities.

Alexander Horrocks, aged 15, who joined one of the parties says "I have enjoyed the Sharky & George Party. I really enjoyed it. My favourite bit is the stacking of the cushions. I liked that bit. I'm looking forward to the other parties coming up like Dave Benson-Phillips, Colonel Custard and Singing Hands. Thank you for joining the party for 2 days."

There are still places available to attend future summer events. See the next page for the full programme including times and dates. Look out for the emails and reminders on Facebook to book your place.

Here's what some of our members said about the recent Sharky & George events:

Very enjoyable.
Fantastic idea.
Brightened up a difficult day.

My daughter loved it ... she found it very engaging and laughed a lot ... thank you.

My child loved it and so did his sister. It was a great activity for him to be part of and kept his attention really well. By the end we were all exhausted, so great exercise too.





We are still united
even when we are apart

SUMMER OF FUN

We have moved our usual summer party online with a series of events that you can enjoy in your own safe spaces. *Keep an eye on your emails and Facebook for details of how to sign-up.*

- **Sharky and George Parties** Tuesday 14 July, 4pm (younger group) | Wednesday 15 July, 4pm (older group)
- **Dave Benson-Phillips** Tuesday 28 July, 2pm | Saturday 22 August, 2pm
- **Colonel Custard** Friday 7 August, 11am (younger group) & 2pm (older group)
- **Singing Hands** Friday 14 August, 2pm (younger group) and 4pm (older group)



We need your help

**Have you borrowed a toy,
piece of equipment, or any
item from Elliot's Shed?**

Over the years we've lost track of some of the items that are out on loan from Elliot's Shed and we're keen to update our database. If you've borrowed something from the shed, no matter how long ago, please can you get in touch to let us know what you've got. It doesn't mean we're going to take it away from you, we just need to know where things are!

Email Matt at the address below to tell us what you've got:

elliottsshed@dsoxford.org.uk

Early and Primary Development Groups

Colette Lloyd, our EDG and PDG Leader, has done a fantastic job making sure the groups have continued to run during lockdown. With some slight adaptations to the group formats, and the need to rapidly learn some whizzy new technology skills, Colette has been successfully running weekly 1-2-1 classes for the children, and they sound great fun! Here, she tells us all about it.

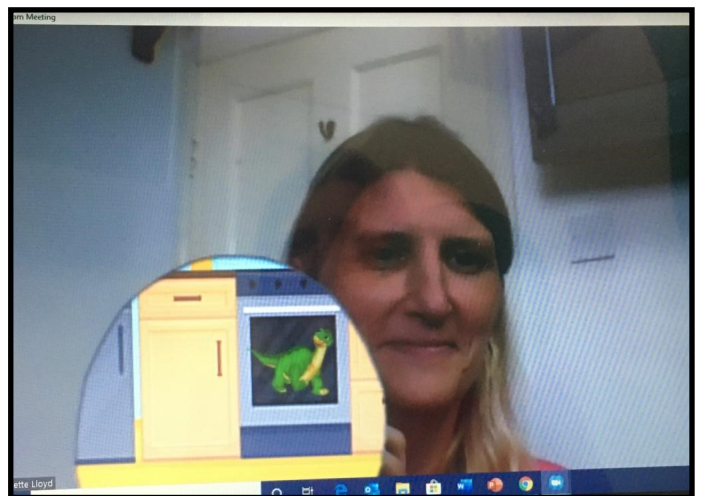
Colette writes:

Well, that was a learning curve! Back in March I had barely heard of Zoom, green screens and had certainly never tried teletherapy. Four months on and we have come a long way. **The children from our Early and Primary Development Groups have adapted brilliantly.** I have had one or two run away or one look at me on screen has caused them to burst into tears, but by and large it has been great fun.

Every couple of weeks I have discovered a new skill, like the use of a magnifying glass (a circle of green card), hiding toys in a wardrobe (two background pictures - one with the doors shut and one with the doors open and a picture of a toy in the middle) and a naughty elephant who keeps disappearing every time I turn around!

And it also seems that, through offering sessions online, we have **been able to reach more parents than before**, for whom travelling to Abingdon would have been a barrier. In addition we have extended the sessions til the end of July to **offer a little more support** to our families whose routines of school and nursery have been rather disrupted over the past few months!

And may I say a big thank you to all the parents who have also mastered the technology from their end, and managed to find ways to help their child focus on a crazy lady waving things round on the other side of a screen!



New venue for EDGs and Stay and Play Sessions

For a number of years we have held our **Wednesday Early Development Groups (EDGs) and Stay & Play sessions at the Carousel Centre in Abingdon**. DSO have an amazing relationship with the Carousel Centre and we will hopefully continue our affiliation with them in the future. The Monday EDGs (with no stay and play) were being held at St Aldates Church in Oxford. However, many of our Wednesday attendees will be starting school in September 2020 and **we need to make some changes to meet the needs of our pre-schoolers**.

We also want to give the families who have been attending the Monday group the opportunity to benefit from our Stay & Play sessions. **After consulting our families, a central Oxford location (with parking) seemed most appropriate**. We have found another great location and a **move to West Oxford Community Association (WOCA)** has been agreed.

When we're able to begin again, **all the EDGs will be held on Wednesdays with Stay and Play available**.

WOCA is a 5-minute walk from Oxford City Station, with lots of bus routes and parking. There are **outdoor play areas** and the lovely **Tumbling Bay Kitchen & Café**. In future, we may even use WOCA as a meeting place for a "Unity Holiday Club" – watch this space.

Amanda Foulds, EDG Co-ordinator



Training Update

One of the positives to come out of these difficult times is the amount of virtual training now available, often free and often with the convenience of being able to complete at a time which suits you.

During lockdown, **DSO bought in a training session from Inclusively Down on promoting positive behaviour**. The session was free and open to all DSO parents, who could access the training at any time over a six week period, which made it very convenient.

We are also very excited to have **developed a new partnership with Regional Makaton Trainer Libby Lumley of Hands Aloud**. So far, we have been able to offer two free virtual Makaton taster sessions aimed at grandparents and parents, which were both fully booked. We hope to continue offering sessions including training for school staff and also sessions based around specific topics, for example food.

Elsa Gill, Training Co-ordinator

Launch of Shine on Challenge Club



DSO is pleased to announce the launch of our new holiday skills club for older children (secondary school age and up), the **Shine On Skills Club**. We are conscious that with such a long break from

school some families and their children may be finding it difficult to keep motivated to learn, so we wanted to find a **fun and engaging way** of encouraging young people to learn new skills, or keep up existing ones, during the holidays. The Club will have a **series of challenges** and young people **have the opportunity to gain bronze, silver and gold certificates** in cooking, entertaining, thinking about the world of work, and keeping fit and healthy.

The Club will **launch on Monday 3rd August** – keep an eye open for emails and notifications on Facebook of how to sign up.

Katharine Horrocks

Choir keeps singing and signing

Sadly, the start of lockdown meant that the choir had to **cancel a planned performance in Witney to celebrate World Down's Syndrome Day**. However, undeterred by the restrictions, we found an alternative way to perform and instead created a WSDS video of one of our favourite songs, *Try Everything* by Shakira, expertly put together by DSO Dad, Ian Davies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHbGW3TDZvA>

The choir has seamlessly switched from meeting in person to weekly Zoom sessions. Led by our wonderful Choir Leader Annie Hawkins or 'DJ Amanda' we have managed to keep our close community connected during these difficult times and have even attracted a few new members along the way.

Elsa Gill, Choir Co-ordinator



DSO Online Events Protocols

During this time please don't forget to stay safe online. DSO have written some guidelines to help keep everyone safe whilst taking part in our online video calls.

DSO Online Events Protocols

The purpose of these protocols is to outline the key principles under which DSO intends to operate online events. These protocols should minimise risks to ensure the safety of all the participants.

Participants

We ask participants, parents or carers of participants attending an event to observe the follow recommendations:

- The participants should be made aware of acceptable online behaviour; this is what is also accepted in public.
- All invitations to join our events will be sent to parents/carers or participants; the log-in details should not be shared.
- Participants should be dressed appropriately.
- Ideally, sessions should take place in a room where there are no distractions or too many other people.
- Please be aware of anything you have in the background that you would not want shared with others.
- Parents/carers or participants may only take photos or video recordings if consent is given by a participant or responsible adult.
- For detailed information you can also visit the UK Council for Internet Safety UKCCIS Education For A Connected World

Organisers

If DSO is hosting an online event, a member of DSO must be present for the duration of the video call. If DSO is not hosting the event and the event involves children, the professionals managing the event must be DBS checked.

The person responsible for hosting the session must create a password which should only be sent to the parents/carers or participants who are registered. There are some open events, for DSO adult members, where the call details can be put on the DSO Facebook page

A reoccurring meeting can use the same meeting ID and password. However, if you feel the password has been compromised you must create a new password.

Ideally the host should maintain a 'waiting room' functionality and approve requests for participants to join the sessions.

A participant should be immediately removed from a meeting if inappropriate behaviour takes place - this is to safeguard the individual as well as the other participants.

Concerns

If anything happens that you feel uncomfortable about, the person should follow DSO's safeguarding policy and report it to our designated Safeguard Lead, Amanda Foulds on 07769 707855.

****If an individual is in immediate danger, please call the emergency services on 999.**

DSActive Tennis Tournament

On Saturday 7th March some members of the DSActive tennis team that meet at the White Horse Leisure Centre in Abingdon played in the regional tournament at the LTA National Tennis Centre in London.

Thomas Foulds, Arthur Fonge, Owen Lane and Natasha Pearson took part and were all amazing! Ages of participants range from 9 years to 30 years, our members being the youngest.



Natasha and Thomas both made it to the **semi-finals** but were beaten by their opponents. The matches were played outside which none of them were used to but the weather was on their side and during the final presentations a **special guest**

appeared who happened to be at the centre for a training day—**Sir Andy Murray!**

We were all so **immensely proud of the team** and so **very grateful to Sue Auger** and all the staff at the White Horse Leisure Centre for their patience, understanding and dedication to our members.



In normal circumstances, the sessions run term-time Saturday mornings 11am - midday, and I can highly recommend it! The sessions are part of the Down's Syndrome Association's active sports programme.

Sarah Fonge, *mum to Arthur Fonge*





10+ Club



In March, nearly sixty 10+ Club went to see **The Greatest Showman Sing-along** at the **New Theatre in Oxford**. On arrival we were all given a goodie bag which was filled with props to use throughout the screening. Our group was in very good voice and we certainly enjoyed singing along to all the songs, and with many of the children and adults being members of the choir as well, we were not only singing but signing too.

Lucy Sanderson, 10+ Club Co-ordinator



Fundraising and Donations

DSO is extremely grateful to have been given the following money from 1st February 2020 to 17th July 2020, either through some amazing fundraising efforts or through donations.

WDSO Badge Sales Caroline Ford	£50.00
The First Clue / Thame Music Festival	£500.00
Freya Crawford—21-mile cycle ride.....	£270.00
Coventry Building Society Christmas Raffle.....	£112.00
Berinsfield Charity Darts Night.....	£580.00
Oxfordshire Freemasons, Alfred Lodge	£300.00
Oxford North Rotary Club	£6000.00

In addition:

The **DSO Lottery** generates an average monthly income of **£155.00**

Monthly **standing order donations** generate **£82.00**

If you are making a donation via our justgiving page please email treasurer@dsoxford.org.uk so I can look out for it and make sure we can show our appreciation.

Sarah Fonge, Treasurer

A huge thank you to the Oxford North Rotary Club



Oxford North Rotary Club has been supporting DSO for their year to June 2020, thanks to Paul Murray.

Outgoing President Paul nominated DSO as one of his two President's charities, alongside Parkinson's Oxford. Despite the impact of lock-down on their planned fundraising events, a couple of months ago we received the amazing news that they had raised an incredible £5,000 for DSO. Two

subsequent calls from Paul saw that **sum increased to £6,000**. A phenomenal amount in extremely challenging circumstances.



They held a number of physical events in the first half of the year, such as the sell out Big Band event at Exeter Hall. Lockdown proved no barrier, as they began holding virtual events, including



a virtual bike ride, which saw their members cycle a great distance, collectively.

Our Choir did a special video performance as a thank you to Paul and his fellow Rotarians. We are extremely grateful for all of their support.

And thank you to Oxfordshire Freemasons, Alfred Lodge for their wonderful donation to the choir

In March, Leigh Thompson from Oxfordshire Freemasons, Alfred Lodge, visited one of our choir practices to **handover a cheque for £300**. Leigh was so impressed with the choir, and after chatting to some of the families, it was decided that the donation would go towards choir resources.



Lottery Results



Recent Winners:

February 2020

1st prize - £50.00	Ruth & Nick Smith
2nd prize - £30.00	Jenny Dilnot
3rd prize - £20.00	Carolyn Walker

March 2020

1st prize - £50.00	Ruth & Nick Smith
2nd prize - £30.00	Sarah Stevenson
3rd prize - £20.00	Jo & Stu Crawford

April 2020

1st prize - £54.00	Jenny Dilnot
2nd prize - £32.40	Emily & Matt Robinson
3rd prize - £21.60	Shaun Goddard

May 2020

1st prize - £50.00	Amber Wing
2nd prize - £30.00	Jo Sumner
3rd prize - £20.00	Emily & Matt Robinson

June 2020

1st prize - £50.00	Ruth & Nick Smith
2nd prize - £30.00	Amber Wing
3rd prize - £20.00	Caroline Ford

July 2020

1st prize - £52.00	Caroline Ford
2nd prize - £31.20	Andrew Fearnside
3rd prize - £20.80	Amber Wing

A big thank-you to all those who take part for your continued support.

We now raise £155 per month for DSO!

Want to join the DSO lottery?

Each ticket is £5 per month

All you need to do is:

- 1 Set up a regular monthly payment to our lottery account
→ **Account number 29786768 / Sort code 30-80-45**
- 2 Send an email to Amanda Foulds at
→ **lottery@dsoxford.org.uk**
- 3 We'll allocate you a number, email you back to tell you your number, and let you know when you win!



Gift Aid Declaration

Please tick appropriate response:

- ☐ I would like DSO to reclaim the tax on all donations I've made since April 2000 and all my future donations until further notice. I understand that I must pay an amount of income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax DSO reclaims on my donation(s).
- ☐ I am not a UK tax payer

I enclose my gift of £ _____ (Cheque/PO payable to Down's Syndrome Oxford)

Or

A regular gift of £ _____ per month/quarter/year (please delete as appropriate)

Commencing on the _____ (day) _____ (month) _____ (year)

Name of bank: _____

Address of bank: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Account No.: _____ Sort Code: __ - __ - __

Signature: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Bank Ref: _____

(Completed by DSO)

Bank Instructions: please pay the above amount on the same day every month/quarter/year (as indicated) thereafter to Lloyds Bank (30-94-04) for the account of Down's Syndrome Oxford (a/c 01154094).

Please return this form to **Down's Syndrome Oxford**, not your bank, c/o Treasurer, Manor Farm, Waterperry, Oxfordshire, OX33 1LB

We will not share your information with any other organisations:

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

Postcode: _____

Registered Charity No. 1103850

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<http://www.dsoxford.org.uk>



Facebook (closed group):

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/dsoxford>



Facebook (public group):

<https://www.facebook.com/downssyndromeoxford>



Twitter:

[@DownsOxford](http://twitter.com/DownsOxford)



down's syndrome oxford

Registered charity number: 1103850



With thanks to First Move Direct Marketing in High Wycombe who generously print and distribute our newsletter free of charge.

The deadline for the next edition of the newsletter is Friday 23rd October 2020.

We welcome text or photos about your child enjoying themselves—not necessarily a DSO event.

Please send materials to the editor Lucy Sanderson at newsletter@dsoxford.org.uk