



down's syndrome oxford

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2025



Our swimming
champions!

DSO Choir celebratory
performances

Film awards successes

From the chair



Welcoming the summer

It is so heartwarming to see the many social events that our members have been enjoying recently. And also to see the many and varied fundraising activities that have been undertaken.

We are extremely proud of the extraordinary achievements of some of our young people. Late last year Hannah Dubock, Amber Davies and Katie Lloyd had great success in the British Down's Syndrome Swimming Championships. Between them they scooped up eight medals, including four golds! It would be great to see more of our young people involved in swimming and maybe even in these competitions, so please contact Sally Dubock if you are interested.

In this issue you will also find individual profiles of some of our young members. They're full of fun facts, so enjoy reading them on pages 8 - 9. It's great to see our young people involved in such a diverse range of interests, hobbies and sports. If you'd like your young person to be featured in the next issue, please send their likes and favourite activities to newsletter@dsoxford.org.au

Our DSO Choir have been enjoying many gatherings and performances. At Christmas time they once again enthralled shoppers outside Westgate with joyous renditions of their favourite songs, raising an amazing £1500 in donations and sponsorship. Thank you to the dedication of the organising team and choir leads.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome Rachel Cunliffe, our new EDG speech therapist. She replaces the wonderful Collete Lloyd who has been an incredible resource for our young people for the last 10 years.

It is so amazing to see what our members are able to achieve when they are following their dreams. Our dear friend Otto Baxter who, through his passion and determination, has written and directed a short film titled 'The Puppet Asylum'. The success of the film has won him the Auteur of the Year award at the British Short Film Awards. And the accompanying documentary about the making of the film has won a BAFTA award and also an Emmy Award. Congratulations Otto!

All of us at DSO are always grateful for any fundraising efforts and donations. This year we are particularly delighted at the super human achievements of young Theo, who is doing 47 runs to raise funds for DSO. Please support him in his remaining runs by scanning the QR code on page 26 which directs you to his fundraising page.

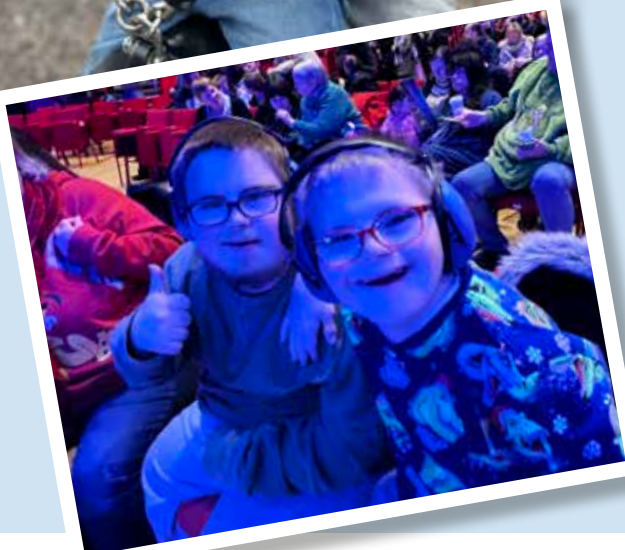
You may also find it interesting that Spain has elected it's first parliamentarian with Down's syndrome to Valencia's Regional Assembly. It's heartening to see our people taking the opportunity to represent themselves in government through their own voices. Details on page 30.

I hope you enjoy this issue of our newsletter!



IN THIS EDITION

From the chair	2
Down's Syndrome Swimming Championships	4
Halloween party	6
All about me	8
Celebrating a successful year - DSO Choir	10
Sim's Enterprise	12
It's Magic - pre-school visit to Yarnton Magic Garden	14
Introducing Rachel Cunliffe	16
Kit loves learning	17
Otto Baxter - BAFTA and Emmy success	18
Bowled over by Christmas - 16+ group	20
Amy's walk for DSO	22
Fairytale Farm visit - pre-school & primary groups	23
DSO Choir at Christmas	24
Fun with Santa - DSO Christmas Party	25
Theo's 47 runs for DSO	26
Elliot's Shed	27
Blenheim Adventures - pre-school group	28
Spain's first parliamentarian with Down's syndrome	30
First hair cuts	31
Quiz whizzes - Pub night quiz fundraiser	32
Lottery Results	34
WhatsApp Groups	34
Make a Donation	35
Contacts	36



Swimming champions!

By Sally Dubock

In November, the GB Down's Syndrome Swimming Championship were again held in Crawley - the third of this event. From DSO we had three competitors: Amber Davies, Hannah Dubock and Katie Lloyd. The races were held with competition rules, and to a high standard, with such an amazing atmosphere from swimmers and spectators.

Our swimmers did amazingly well. Their results were as follows:

Amber (Juniors: 10-16 years old): **Gold** for her age group in the 25m freestyle and **bronze** in the 25m backstroke.

Hannah (Seniors 17-24 years old): **Gold** for her age group and **overall gold** (national and international) in the 25m freestyle. 5th in the 25m breaststroke, 10th in the 25m backstroke, 18th in the 100m freestyle and 21st in the 50m freestyle. Hannah was in the next age category of 17-24 for the first time having just turned 17 years old so faced some tough competition but got PBs in all her races!

Katie (Masters 1: 25-34 years old): **Gold** for her age group in both the 25m backstroke and 25m breaststroke, **silver** in both the 25m freestyle and 100m breaststroke, and 6th in the 50m freestyle.

I recommend anyone who can swim a length competently to give it a go in November - it would be great to have more members from DSO there. And don't forget DSO now has swimming lessons in Bicester and Milton!





halloween hilarity

During half-term the 10+, 16+ and 21+ groups came together to enjoy a spook-tacular Halloween disco! Attendees donned their most boo-tiful costumes and enjoyed a fang-tastic night of dancing.

By Elsa Gill



BOO





EEK

All about me



Lucy

Age: 26

Food: Spicy, roast dinner, chips

Colour: Black

Team: Northhampton Saints rugby

Things to do:

Loves swimming, tennis, badminton, singing, karaoke, watching Coronation Street



Thomas

Age: 19

Food: Chicken kebabs

Team: Oxford United
Notts Forest

Things to do:

Loves to go to the theatre, musicals and comedy films. Likes sport, performing and playing drums.



Arthur

Age: 14

Food: Chips

Colour: Blue

Team: Oxford United
Tri-stars

Things to do:

Loves to go to tennis club, dance, go to the theatre and all things musical!



Lucy

Age: 18

Food: Pizza

Colour: Turquoise

Team: England Red Roses

Things to do:

Loves playing rugby and swimming. She also likes singing, dancing and ballet.

Ezra

Age: 9

Food: Sausages, nuggets, spaghetti bolognaise

Team: Not into football

Things to do:

Loves Mr Tumble, Topsy and Tim, Music especially Christmas and Birthday music.



Joseph

Age: 4

Food: Cheese sandwiches, yoghurt, ice cream

Team: Spurs

Things to do:

Loves football, feeding the ducks, soft play, play park, animals - especially cats.



Ollie

Age: 16

Food: Pizza, roast dinner, burger & chips, coleslaw

Things to do:

Loves swimming, music, singing, dancing & signing choir. Likes watching Harry Potter, Home Alone and Paddington.



Ellie

Age: 20

Food: Curry, pizza, ice cream, rice

Colour: Orange

Team: Oxford Tristars

Things to do:

Loves studying art at college, and visiting art galleries. She also loves playing football with the Oxford Tristars and dancing with Anjali. She loves music and TV shows, going to concerts and movies, and is very knowledgeable about her favourite bands.

Celebrating a Successful Year!

By Elsa Gill

The DSO Choir rounded off another fantastic year with a memorable performance at Bonn Square in November, followed by a festive Christmas Party in December.

In early November, we busked for an hour at Bonn Square in Oxford, captivating a generous audience on a busy Saturday afternoon. Thanks to their support, we raised an incredible £1,000! The atmosphere was electric, and we are grateful for everyone who stopped to listen and contribute.

We were also thrilled to receive a cheque for £500 from the staff at Beaverbrooks The Jewellers, who once again chose our choir as their charity of the year. We cannot thank them enough for their continued support!





Music nurtures
our souls!



A huge thank you
to Beaverbrooks





SIM'S ENTERPRISE

Sim began his mini business, Buttercorn Press, two years ago making cards using block printing. He sells the cards in our village shop and regularly takes orders from friends, too.

We work together at the weekends to create new designs and a particular favourite is splatter paint backgrounds and our current colour trend is gold!

Before Christmas, Sim printed stars with embossing glitter to decorate canvas bottle bags and gift bags which were a great success.

He sold over 60 in December. Ahead of Easter, Sim has decorated mini tote bags that are ideal for Easter egg hunts and these are already selling fast.

Sim proudly uses his earnings to pay for cinema tickets and treats at the café, but is disappointed that he can't (yet) afford a factory and employees.

You can follow us on Instagram.

By Nettie Lings





YARNTON

It's magic

By Andria Hutchings

72 of us from 21 families escaped the fog into the warmth of Yarnton Magic Garden sensory soft play on the icy morning of Saturday 11th January.

It was a great opportunity for a lot of our pre-school club families to catch up over a coffee while siblings played together on the sensory soft play and in the role play and football areas.

Saturday socials have become key for keeping in touch with those families who can't make Wednesday Stay and Play

sessions regularly because of work, nursery or other commitments. We always have fun as whole families are brought together to catch up, including those who have moved onto primary school recently.

The staff at Yarnton Magic Garden also had the good sense to direct a new family which had just moved to the area to our session so we were able to welcome them in person to DSO. All in all, it felt like a very happy time of lots of DSO parents and carers socialising while children enjoyed playing together at a particularly nice venue.

MAGIC GARDEN





Introducing Rachel Cunliffe

By Amanda Foulds

Introducing our new EDG speech therapist Rachel Cunliffe who is getting on fabulously with our pre school members and continuing Colette's specialist and aspirational teaching sessions.





KIT LOVES LEARNING

Kit has been benefiting hugely from the Early Development Group classes provided by DSO. Now, he constantly gets his older sister to write words for him to identify - he's absolutely in love with reading and very keen to learn to write.





A multitude of awards including

We are all extremely proud of our Otto Baxter, who has achieved spectacular success with his short film 'The Puppet Asylum'.

Described as an exhilarating debut in *The Guardian* 'The Puppet Asylum' is a 30-minute short film inspired by Jack the Ripper, A Nightmare on Elm Street and, crucially, Otto's own experience of living with Down syndrome.

We're proud to say that 'The Puppet Asylum' won Otto 'Auteur of the Year' at The British Short Film Awards last year.

Otto has always been extremely interested in film and storytelling and has actively nurtured relationships with filmmakers Peter Beard and Bruce Fletcher who, in collaboration with Sky Documentaries, followed the making of 'The Puppet Asylum' over a period of six years.

The resulting documentary 'Otto Baxter: Not a F***ing Horror Story' has been critically acclaimed and initially won Best Factual Director at the 2024 BAFTA Craft Awards and Best Single Documentary at the Radio Television Society Awards.

It has since gone on to win the Best Arts & Culture Documentary at the prestigious Banff Rockies Awards 2024.

And, to top it all off, the documentary went on to win the International Emmy for Documentary, 2024.

It was wonderful to see Otto on stage to receive the awards with his collaborators.

After the Emmy ceremony Peter Beard commented, "It was the most fun film possible to make, wasn't it?" Otto agreed.



a BAFTA and an Emmy for Otto!



Congratulations Otto!

Bowled over by Christmas

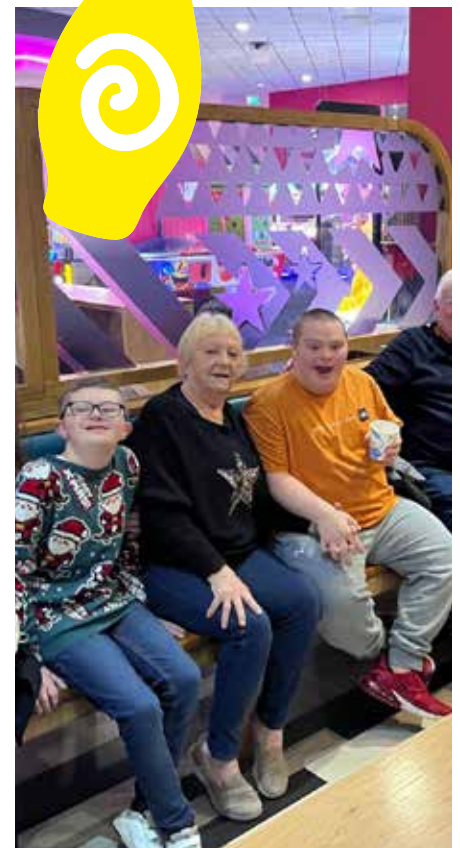


Lots of our families from the 16+ Club enjoyed their Christmas celebration at the Hollywood Bowl. The pins tumbled as the cheers energised the players. Everyone had an amazing time and encouraged each other to go for a strike!

Afterwards we all enjoyed dinner and Christmas crackers at Frankie and Benny's Italian Restaurant next door. Lots of great food and laughs for all.

A wonderful way to bring in the Christmas season.

By Joy Weideman







Amy's walk for DSO

Amy Hanson wanted to do something to celebrate 'World Down's Syndrome Day' so she came up with the idea of a Country Walk on 21st March to raise funds for Downs Syndrome Oxford, wearing odd socks of course! She totally smashed her target of £150 and has raised over £900 for DSO. She had an amazing day with her family and friends.





By Andria Hutchings

48 of us from a dozen pre-school and primary school club families made the most of the particularly glorious September sunshine to explore Fairytale Farm, near Chipping Norton.

The venue, specially designed with sensory and special needs in mind, was a hit not only with members with DS but also with their siblings. Holding the guinea pigs and rabbits was one of the highlights of the day, as well as endless fun on the farmyard themed playground. Parents and carers had a chance to catch up over packed lunches in the marquee reserved for DSO's use. It was a convenient time for members transitioning to primary to compare notes with families with more experience of the school journey. Thank you to the staff at Fairytale Farm who were a great help to Natalie and me in setting up the visit.



The choir at Christmas

The Choir rounded off the year with a Christmas party filled with festive songs, lively dancing and enjoying delicious festive goodies.

By Elsa Gill



Fun with Santa

Santa was heartily welcomed at the Christmas Party at Exeter Hall. He brought special gifts for all the children, who had also enjoyed dancing and musical games as well as lots of yummy food from the buffet.





Theo's 47 runs for DSO

From Helen Hopkins

Theo is 7 years old with a passion for running and a big challenge ahead of him. Inspired by the incredible support his cousin Silas has received from Down's Syndrome Oxford (DSO) and his own love for sport.

Theo is embarking on a year-long mission to raise funds for DSO and two other charities. To acknowledge the 47 chromosomes that characterise Down's syndrome, Theo will take on a mammoth challenge. Over the next year, he will run 47 different races or runs, each in a unique location. This journey will include Junior Parkruns and other running events across the country, showcasing Theo's dedication and determination.

Having completed over 140 Junior Parkruns already, Theo is ready to push himself to make a real difference for people like Silas. Regular updates on his progress will be shared on his fundraising page, so you can follow his journey and cheer him on.

Here is the URL for Theo's fundraising page:
www.givewheel.com/fundraising/5915/theos-47-runs-for-downs-syndrome/

SCAN ME



Scan to see Theo's progress and cheer him on.

Here's the list of Theo's planned runs for his fundraising challenge (subject to change):

- Run 1: 05/01/2025: Peacehaven Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 2: 12/01/2025: Hove Park Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 3: 19/01/2025: Haywards Heath Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 4: 26/01/2025: Chichester Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 5: 02/02/2025: Eastbourne Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 6: 09/02/2025: Bromley Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 7: 16/02/2025: Queen's Park Junior Parkrun, Brighton ✓
- Run 8: 23/02/2025: Cranleigh Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 9: 01/03/2025: Brighton Half Marathon Junior Race ✓
- Run 10: 02/03/2025: Tilgate Park Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 11: 09/03/2025: Battle Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 12: 23/03/2025: Tonbridge Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 13: 30/03/2025: Guildford Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 14: 05/04/2025: Brighton Miles (Brighton Marathon Junior Event) ✓
- Run 15: 06/04/2025: Worthing Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 16: 13/04/2025: Horsham Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 17: 20/04/2025: Reigate Priory Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 18: 27/04/2025: Leatherhead Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 19: 04/05/2025: Queen's Parade, Aldershot Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 20: 11/05/2025: Wilson's School Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 21: 18/05/2025: Nonsuch Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 22: 25/05/2025: Laleham Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 23: 01/06/2025: Savill Garden Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 24: 08/06/2025: Mewsbrook Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 25: 15/06/2025: Dartford Junior Parkrun ✓
- Run 26: 22/06/2025: Lloyd Junior Parkrun
- Run 27: 29/06/2025: Surbiton Junior Parkrun
- Run 28: 03/08/2025: Crystal Palace Junior Parkrun
- Run 29: 10/08/2025: Tooting Common Junior Parkrun
- Run 30: 17/08/2025: Battersea Junior Parkrun
- Run 31: 24/08/2025: Blickling Junior Parkrun
- Run 32: 31/08/2025: Wimbledon Common Junior Parkrun
- Run 33: 07/09/2025: Dowds Farm Junior Parkrun
- Run 34: 14/09/2025: Brockwell Junior Parkrun
- Run 35: 21/09/2025: Bushy Junior Parkrun
- Run 36: 28/09/2025: Bracknell Junior Parkrun
- Run 37: 05/10/2025: Hoblingwell Junior Parkrun
- Run 38: 12/10/2025: Waterlooville Junior Parkrun
- Run 39: 19/10/2025: Woking Junior Parkrun
- Run 40: 26/10/2025: Par Track Junior Parkrun
- Run 41: 02/11/2025: Bognor Regis Junior Parkrun
- Run 42: 09/11/2025: Mote Park Junior Parkrun
- Run 43: 16/11/2025: Beckenham Place Junior Parkrun
- Run 44: 23/11/2025: Figges Marsh Junior Parkrun
- Run 45: 30/11/2025: Winchester Junior Parkrun
- Run 46: 07/12/2025: T&C
- Run 47: 14/12/2025: Preston Park Junior Parkrun
- Run 47: 21/12/2025: Reserve date



Don't forget we have a wide range of equipment, toys and resources available for you to borrow **FREE of charge** from Elliot's shed.

Items available include:

- **Trip trap/breezi highchairs**
- **Wooden toys**
- **Sensory equipment**
- **Bikes, trikes and scooters**
- **Educational resources such as Numicon**

If you're interested to find out more about the items available please get in touch with Kat Cornfield at elliottshed@dsoxford.org.uk





Blenheim adventures

By Andria Hutchings

52 of us (from 13 families) from the pre-school club were welcomed back again this year free of charge to Blenheim Palace's Adventure Playground to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day together on the Saturday afternoon.

This year, there was unexpected warm sunshine behind the clouds so we didn't need our coats for once and were very comfortable for the whole three hour session. Many of our picnics were followed by far more ice creams than hot drinks.

We all had an absolutely fantastic time, once again making the most of the specially designed toddler and sensory areas.

Adventurous siblings had a good run around together to explore in the safe environment while the grown ups got a chance to catch up with each other. It really felt like some incredible quality family time together in an amazing setting. Thank you DSO and Blenheim Palace for making such get-togethers possible! Once again, newer families who aren't Wednesday Stay and Play regulars felt able to join in the fun.

Lots of parents were happy to share beautiful photos of the day for DSO and Blenheim Palace's social media. It was so encouraging going through them and a great way to show off just how inclusive Blenheim Palace Adventure Playground really is. The message from Blenheim Palace's Community Team is that they look forward to working with DSO more throughout the coming year.





Spain's first parliamentarian with Down's syndrome

Collated by Joy Weideman

Last year, Mar Galceran, became the first woman with Down's syndrome to be elected to Valencia's regional assembly.

Her achievement is the culmination of a long journey. When she was 18 years old, she joined the conservative People's party because she liked its embrace of tradition.

She worked her way up slowly through the party and was eventually added to the list of candidates for Valencia's regional elections.

In Spain, Galcerán's path into politics was blazed by Ángela Bachiller, who in 2013 became Spain's first city councillor with Down's syndrome in the northern city of Valladolid.

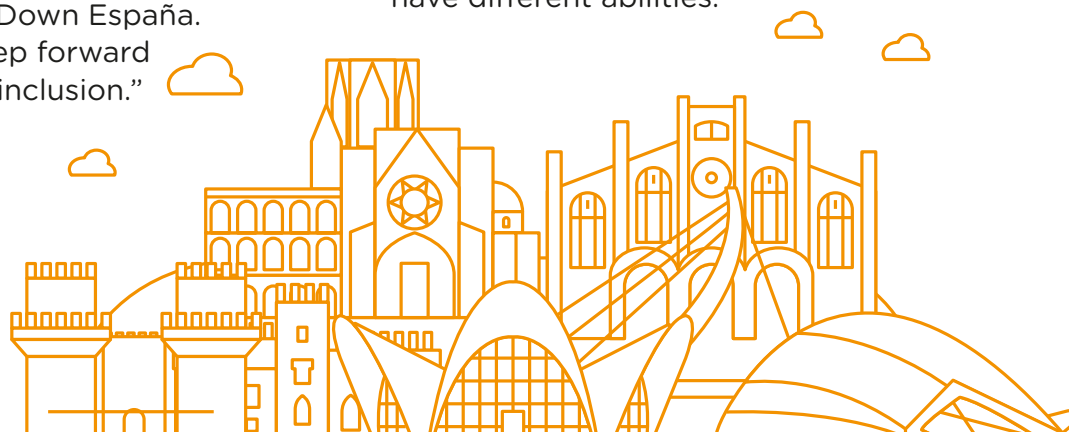
Agustín Matía Amor of Down España. reflected, "It's a huge step forward and an example of real inclusion."

Mar is a strong advocate for inclusivity, making history as Spain's first legislator with Down's syndrome. At 45-year-old, she reflects on her path, emphasising the importance of being recognised for herself rather than her disability.

Ultimately she hopes her presence in the regional parliament will help to dismantle the many prejudices that continue to linger in society.

Her journey acts as a beacon, demonstrating the potential for people with Down's syndrome to make important contributions to the political environment.

In her own words, she says: "I want to learn how to do it well, for Valencianos, and more importantly, for those of us who have different abilities."



First hair cuts



Lucy the hairdresser came in to give some of our little ones their first haircut during Stay and Play today.





Once a month my local pub, The Nightingale in Bicester, host a charity quiz night and in March they were kind enough to let me nominate DSO as the chosen charity.

It was a brilliant night. We had 15 quiz teams taking part, each with a maximum of 6 people in the team. Kieran, the landlord, put together a great quiz with rounds on geography, sport, music and film & television, plus a picture round, and we also held a raffle. Thank you to all those who donated prizes, and a special thank you must go to Tesco's in Bicester who were incredibly generous and donated some wonderful items.

One of the highlights of the night was a mini choir performance by Chloe, Lucy, Jack, Emily and Amanda, which was very well-received by the pub regulars!

At the end of the night we had **raised around £875 for DSO**. A huge thank you to Kieran and the team at The Nightingale for hosting a great night and enabling us to raise so much money. Kieran said "I have done many a quiz at The Nightingale but this one really touched my heart. Thank you so much."





DSO WhatsApp groups



Have you joined our DSO All Members Group yet?

Make sure you join, as it's the best place to keep up date with all things DSO. Open to everyone, it's the place where you can take part in discussions, ask questions, and put forward ideas and suggestions.

And don't forget, we have our Social WhatsApp groups, too. If you'd like to be added to a group, please contact the person listed here:



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LOTTERY RESULTS

Message from Andy Fearnside,
DSO Lottery organiser.

March saw the end of the financial year for the lottery, and I am happy to say that we raised **£2715** this year for DSO all thanks to you!

We would still love some new members so if you don't yet have a ticket or know anyone who would like to join, simply email **lottery@dsoxford.org.uk** for more details.

YOUR CHANCE TO WIN! JOIN THE LOTTERY.

**Join our lottery! Each ticket is just
£5 per month.**

To join simply:

- 1** Set up a regular monthly payment to our lottery account
Sort code: **30-80-45**
Account No: **29786768**
- 2** Send an email to Andy Fearnside 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!

Congratulations to our winners!

February 2025

1st Prize - Will Foulds
2nd Prize- Sue Crisp
3rd Prize- Jo Colehan

April 2025

1st Prize- Mary Robinson
2nd Prize- Sally Dubock
3rd Prize- Kay Haggie

March 2025

1st Prize- Emily Robinson
2nd Prize- Kat Cornfield
3rd Prize- Derek Smith

May 2025

1st Prize- Ella Terblanche
2nd Prize- Jane Westby
3rd Prize- Lucy Sanderson

MAKE A DONATION

Down's Syndrome Oxford relies entirely on its fundraising and generous donations from our friends and supporters to fund the activities we provide for our children. Any contribution you can make will be put to good use and is greatly appreciated.



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

OR _____

A regular gift of £ per month / quarter / year (please circle appropriate)

commencing on

Name of bank

Bank address

Postcode

Account No. Sort Code

Signature Date

Bank Ref:

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).

GIFT AID DECLARATION

Please tick the 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 at least equal to the tax DSO reclaims on my donation(s).

☐ I am not a UK taxpayer.

YOUR DETAILS

We will not share your information with any other organisation.

Your name

Your address

Postcode

Please return this form to:

Down's Syndrome Oxford (NOT your bank)
c/o Treasurer, 33 Saffron Crescent,
Carterton, OX18 1LD

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Website:
dsoxford.org.uk



Facebook (closed group):
**facebook.com/groups/
dsoxford**



Facebook (public group):
**facebook.com/
downssyndromeoxford**



Twitter:
**twitter.com/DownsOxford
@DownsOxford**

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

We welcome text or photos
about your child enjoying
themselves - not necessarily
a DSO event. Please send
materials to:

**Joy Weideman or
Lucy Sanderson
newsletter@dsoxford.org.uk**

The deadline for the next
edition of the newsletter is:

Friday 3 October 2025.



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



down's syndrome oxford

Registered charity number: 1103850