



IMPACT REPORT 2025



Championing choice, inclusion and opportunity for people with Down syndrome and their families across Cheshire

Down Syndrome Cheshire

Introduction

Our mission

Championing a future where individuals with Down syndrome and their families are empowered, equipped with life skills, educational support, and advocacy, enabling them to live independent, impactful, and rewarding lives.

Our vision

To empower people with Down syndrome in Cheshire to live the life they choose.



Our values

Ambitious

Supportive

Trusted

Dedicated

Caring

The last 12 months have been a year of growth, progress and renewed ambition for Down Syndrome Cheshire. As the needs of families across Cheshire continue to evolve, so too has our work, expanding our reach, strengthening our services and creating more opportunities for people with Down syndrome to thrive.

This year, we have supported more families, welcomed new members into the DSC community and continued to walk alongside people at every stage of life. From early years support and education, to Thrive, social opportunities, Health and Social Care advocacy and family guidance, our work has continued to grow in both scale and impact.

We have listened, adapted and responded to what our community tells us matters most. Every session delivered, every family supported and every partnership strengthened has helped build confidence, independence and connection.

At the heart of this growth is our community: our members, families, staff, volunteers, trustees, supporters and partners. Together, they make DSC a place where people feel seen, valued and understood.

2024/25 has been a year of growth, momentum and possibility, and we are excited to keep building on this progress together.

A message from our CEO



“Every figure in this report represents a real story: increased independence, growing confidence and stronger connections.”

“I also want to give heartfelt thanks to our staff, volunteers and trustees. Their care, expertise and commitment play a huge part in making DSC such a special community.”

As CEO of Down Syndrome Cheshire, I am proud to reflect on another year shaped by growth, determination and the strength of our community. Our work continues to be guided by a simple belief: that every individual with Down syndrome should have the opportunity to live a life of choice, fulfilment and inclusion.

This year, our community has continued to grow. We are supporting more families than ever, and our early years provision is the largest it has ever been, meaning families are joining the DSC community sooner in their journey, which is fantastic.

We have continued to strengthen our services, including Thrive, our day provision, and expanded Health and Social Care support. Across everything we offer, our aim remains the same: to create spaces where people can build confidence, develop independence and form meaningful connections.

Collaboration has been central to this progress. Our partnerships, supporters, advisory groups, including the Parent Advisory Group and Income Generation Group, have all helped shape our direction and strengthen our work.

As we continue working within our 2025–2028 strategy, we are making fantastic headway towards what we set out to achieve. Soon, we will begin shaping our next strategy, one that will be even more ambitious, and I cannot wait for the DSC community to play its part in co-designing what comes next.

Thank you for your continued support. Together, we are building a future where every individual with Down syndrome can thrive.

Warm regards,
Vicky Irwin
Chief Executive Officer

290

families supported

Early
Years

biggest cohort

Thrive

Day Provision
launched

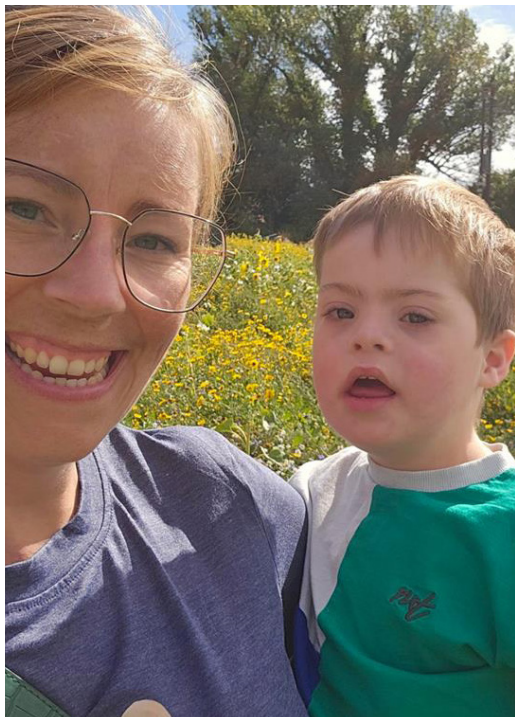
Health
and Social
Care

support introduced

Reliance

on grant funding
reduced

Family story: The Olsen Family



“DSC is so much more than a charity, it is a **lifeline.**”

DSC has been part of our journey from the very beginning, even before Ash was born. When we first received his diagnosis, the team reached out with warmth, reassurance and the answers we needed at a time when everything felt uncertain. Knowing someone was only ever a phone call or message away gave us comfort we cannot put into words.

As Ash has grown, DSC has supported us through every major milestone, from nursery advice and school transitions to EHCPs, DLA applications and navigating systems that can feel overwhelming. Having people who understand, advocate and explain things clearly has made an enormous difference, helping Ash receive the right support at the right time and helping us feel empowered rather than lost.

Being part of the DSC community has been life-changing. There is something so powerful about being surrounded by people who simply “get it”; people who understand the highs, worries, celebrations and challenges without explanation. That sense of belonging is priceless.

Some of our most special memories come from DSC sessions, especially Cheeky Monkeys, where we have watched Ash sing, sign, laugh and grow in confidence, communication and engagement. DSC gives Ash opportunities to develop, socialise and shine, while giving us, as parents, space to ask questions, share worries and feel understood.

DSC is so much more than a charity; it is a lifeline. A place of expertise, warmth, community and hope. We are truly grateful for everything DSC has done, and continues to do, for Ash and for us as a family.

The Olsen Family

Education

Schools, professionals and families were better equipped to support individuals with Down syndrome.



253

school visits supporting 157 children and young people



198

professionals joined training related to Down syndrome

156

people trained in Makaton

100%

of participants strongly agreed that the DSC workshops exceeded their expectations

100%

attendees said they felt more confident supporting a child with Down syndrome following Learning Profile training from DSC

95%

felt more confident using Makaton after support from DSC



“Really enjoyed the training and developed my understanding. DSC staff were very knowledgeable and passionate. Down syndrome Cheshire is an invaluable and important resource. Our children with Down Syndrome are very lucky.”

Teacher



“The wealth of information and resources I am now aware of is going to be invaluable for the children in my care. I feel much more confident in meeting their needs, particularly in my ability to teach and record learning in a way that is appropriate for a child with Down Syndrome.”

Early Years Practitioner

Family story: The Ollier Family

“I would truly be **lost** without DSC. It is a community, a support network and a source of joy, all rolled into one.”



We've been members of DSC for over ten years, and the support we've received has shaped every stage of Jasper's life. In his early years, DSC's Makaton training was transformational, helping us, his nursery and school staff communicate with him when he was non-verbal and reducing his frustration.

The Education Advocate service has also been invaluable. Navigating EHCPs, reviews and multi-team meetings can feel overwhelming, but having someone who understands the system and is firmly on your side has made an enormous difference.

As Jasper has grown, DSC's sports, social activities, Learning Lab, holiday clubs and residential have helped him develop confidence, friendship skills and independence, while also giving our family precious respite. I have also benefited hugely from parent sessions, including SEN law workshops, Wills and Trusts planning, and peer-support coffee mornings.

We have made so many special memories with DSC, from Breakfast with Santa and the annual panto to Fizz and Fashion night. I would truly be lost without DSC. It is a community, a support network and a source of joy all rolled into one.

The Ollier Family

Employability and Life Skills

Members built practical independence skills in meaningful ways.

11

213 CommuniTea Cafe delivered with too many cups of tea and coffee served to count!



22

members supported in Thrive Club



10

partnerships supporting employment and volunteer opportunities



25

individuals attended a Thrive Open Day event

17

weekend Learning Lab sessions delivered to 26 members

12 weeks

of Learn and Thrive workshops delivered

45

members accessing Thrive Holiday Club provision

“After visiting other local day facilities, I can honestly say that Thrive is the right place for my son. He is active, curious and wants to be busy, engaged and learning new skills. At Thrive, he is encouraged to get involved, try new things and build independence in a positive and supportive environment.

Every day feels purposeful, and that is so important. The staff and volunteers who run Thrive are outstanding. They genuinely care and take time to understand each member as an individual, supporting their interests, abilities and personality.

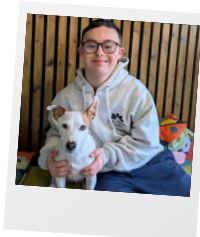
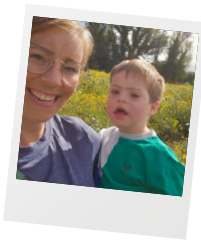
My son is treated with respect, encouragement and kindness, and that means everything to me. I feel incredibly lucky to have Thrive and would recommend it to anyone looking for a meaningful, engaging and supportive environment for their young person.”

Mum to a Thrive member



Fundraising

Every fundraiser helps turn community goodwill into practical support for families, children, young people and adults across Cheshire.

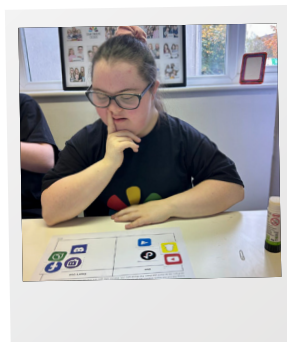


SUPER FUNDRAISER'S



23

members fundraising across World Down Syndrome Awareness Day and Down Syndrome Awareness Month



CHAMPION FUNDRAISER'S



Community

Members had more opportunities to socialise, try new things, build confidence and feel part of a wider community - from yoga and dance to holiday clubs, drama, cookery and days out.



63

new members joined DSC



43

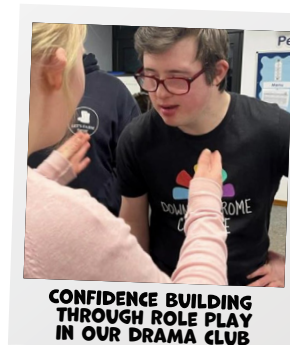
community events

30

members went to the Christmas Panto show

35

Holiday Club sessions



3697

staff and volunteer delivery hours across events and activities

45

members attending dance sessions

33

members playing football

132

families attended social events





Health and Social Care

Families received support with systems that can feel complex or overwhelming.

“Before speaking to DSC, everything felt confusing and overwhelming. Having someone listen, explain our rights and help us understand the next steps made us feel supported, reassured and much more in control.”

Parent

62

families supported

13

supported to access Direct Payments, 7 who then joined Thrive

5

families supported with advice with applications for Disability Living Allowance, PIP or Universal Credit

6

families supported to discuss Lasting Power of Attorney or Deputyships

12

families supported with advocacy support to discuss concerns, ideas or plans



SUPPORTING FAMILIES WITH LOCAL AUTHORITY HOME ASSESSMENT VISITS



SUPPORTING FAMILIES TO GET DIRECT PAYMENTS TO SUPPORT PLACES AT THRIVE CLUB

“We did not know where to start with Direct Payments, but the support we received from DSC made the process feel much less overwhelming. DSC helped us understand what Direct Payments could mean for our child, supported us with the application, and attended the social care assessment with us.

When the local authority initially suggested a package that did not fully meet our child’s needs, DSC helped us with correspondence and gave us the confidence to challenge this appropriately. As a result, we now have a robust social care plan and Direct Payment package in place.”

Parent

Thank you

Celebrating the people who make DSC special.

Staff team

Care, expertise and dedication bring our services to life every day



Trustees

Guidance, governance and commitment help keep DSC strong and sustainable



Advisory Groups

The Parent Advisory Groups help shape the direction and strengthen our approach

Supporters

Together, we are building a future where every individual with Down syndrome can thrive.



WOODCOCK

PICKEN

EDDLESTON

OLLIER

THOMAS

HOWARD

DAVIE

MERCER

LACEY

POTTER

PACKER

TRANTER

WICKSTEAD

GRAHAM

PICKERING

SMITH

AVRAAM

JERSTICE

KNIGHT

KINGSLEY

PAXTON

DRISCOLL

UPTON

Funders

Celebrating those who make our work possible.

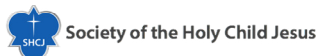
Principal Funder



Major Funders



Project Funders



THANK YOU

