

Recruitment of Trustees: Briefing Note

The Organisation

Down's Syndrome Scotland was established in 1982 and is the only organisation based in Scotland dedicated solely to supporting people with Down's syndrome, their relatives and carers, throughout their lives. In 2009, its legal status was changed to that of a company limited by guarantee, it is also registered as a Scottish Charity with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

Our mission is *"To support families and people with Down's syndrome to reach their fullest potential by providing a range of services, influencing public policy and by changing attitudes."*

Over the last 40 years the charity has helped support thousands of families and has seen big improvements in the quality of life for people with Down's syndrome. Our ability to influence policy makers has grown considerably and we are now a trusted strategic partner of the Scottish Government.

While progress has undoubtedly been made over the past 40 years, it remains the case that people with Down's syndrome living in Scotland continue to experience discrimination and prejudice and, for too many, the opportunity to live their best life and achieve their fullest potential is denied to them. Our work is not done and people with Down's syndrome and their families need our help and support today, more than ever.

The mission of the charity is brought to life through a combination of a dedicated staff team (currently 30 strong, most of whom work part-time) and groups of committed parent volunteers who run our ten local branches across Scotland which offer an invaluable peer support network at a local level. In recent years, we have established an Experts Group of eight adults with Down's syndrome to advise and inform our priorities and strategic focus.

The Board has approved a three-year Strategic Framework (2022-25) for the organisation and a copy is available on our new website.

A copy of the charity's latest set of Accounts and Annual Report (2023/24) is also available from the website which is a rich source of detailed information about the charity and the work we do throughout Scotland (www.dsscotland.org.uk).

Background to the Appointments

Down's Syndrome Scotland is at an exciting juncture in its development.

Having emerged from the long shadow of the pandemic stronger and more resilient, the charity has significantly extended its reach across Scotland by the innovative use of technology. While there is a renewed appetite to return to face to face, in person, sessions, our new online services are here to stay as they ensure no one is disadvantaged because of their location throughout Scotland. Our model of delivery and support embraces hybridity.

Demand for support from families and individuals with Down's syndrome reached a historic high in the pandemic years and still continues to increase year on year. Our engagement with a wide range of professionals active in the lives of people with Down's syndrome (including education and health professionals) has taken off and we provide regular accredited training and development opportunities for increasing numbers of practitioners in all of these settings.

We no longer have a 'Head Office' and all of our staff work from home with regular planned staff get togethers occurring 4-6 times a year.

Our key challenge, as we observe demand for services and support increasing and we witness unprecedented pressure on financial support, is how we sustain our work in the challenging years that lie ahead.

It is in this context that we are seeking to recruit a number of new Trustees to join the Board of the charity. With all the transformational work now firmly embedded, a radical overhaul of our financial priorities undertaken and with a strong reserves position to allow ambitious longer term planning, the time is now right to add to the expertise on the Board.

We have ambitious plans to reach more people with Down's syndrome, more quickly and more often and we have a number of very exciting developments planned over the next 12-18 months. We welcome trustee applications that can help us amplify these plans and look further into our future.

Meetings of the Board

Full Board meetings are held quarterly throughout the year and Trustees are also expected to attend the Annual General Meeting, a separate meeting usually held later in the year. We also allocate some time each year to step back and look at our strategic direction.

The Board has three sub committees:

- Finance and Risk – meets three weeks ahead of each Board meeting.
- Remuneration – meets at least once a year.
- Nominations – meets as required for any senior team or Board vacancies.

Members of the Board are expected to participate in the work of the sub-committees where possible.

Trustees serve for an initial three-year term which may be renewed on two occasions up to a maximum term in office of nine years.

The Board must have between three and twelve members. There are currently eight Trustees on the Board and you can view the current membership on the website.

A detailed Trustee role description is available as a separate document and includes a person specification for the role.

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To apply, please send an up to date CV and covering letter explaining why you are interested in joining our Board of Trustees to Michael Cunningham, Company Secretary, Down's Syndrome Scotland at: michael.cunningham@dsscotland.org.uk

For informal enquiries, treated in the strictest confidence, please contact our Board Chair, Andrea Tonner at a.tonner@strath.ac.uk

Closing date for applications: Friday 21 February 2025 at 5pm