**Minute of the 17th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 4th October 2025 (online)**

## 1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair of the Board of Trustees, Andrea Tonner, welcomed members to the charity's Annual General Meeting. The meeting was originally planned as an in-person event but was moved online due to weather conditions. Andrea acknowledged attendance from all over Scotland and introduced members of the Senior Management Team and other Trustees in attendance. The Chair extended a special welcome to the AGM to our new, incoming Chief Executive, Emma Soanes.

The Chair invited the Company Secretary, Michael Cunningham, to present apologies.

Apologies were received from the undernoted:

Rob Molan
Patricia Jackson
Aidan McEvoy
Margureta McGilchrist
Lachlanina McGilchrist
Neil McGilchrist

The full list of attendees is noted at the end of this minute.

## 2. Minutes of the 2024 AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM, held on 26 October 2024, having previously been approved by the Board of Trustees, were noted by all present. No questions or comments were raised regarding the previous AGM minutes.

## 3. Report on the Year by Chair of the Board of Trustees, Andrea Tonner

The Chair presented her report for the year ending 31st March 2025, as set out in the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31st March 2025.

Andrea remarked that it has been a year that stretched us, inspired us, and reminded us once again why this charity matters so deeply to families and individuals across Scotland.

Early in the year, three of our adult members – Grace, Fiona, and Cameron – travelled all the way to Brisbane, Australia, to take part in the World Down Syndrome Congress. Their presentations on topics ranging from self-advocacy to digital inclusion made a huge impression on the 1,000+ delegates gathered from across the world. They carried the voices of our community to an international stage and, in doing so, reminded us that people with Down's syndrome are not just participants in discussions about inclusion – they are leaders of those discussions.

At the other end of the year, we found ourselves in a very different setting: the world-famous Chelsea Flower Show. Our Down's Syndrome Scotland Garden was not only awarded a Silver Gilt Medal by the judges, but it also won the People's Choice Award**.** That meant the public connected – really connected – with the message our garden conveyed: a joyful celebration of people with Down's syndrome, and a call to action to dismantle the barriers that too often hold them back.

That garden is now replanted in its new home at Palacerigg Country Park in North Lanarkshire, where families, visitors and school groups will enjoy it for years to come. And every time someone visits, it will continue to raise awareness and spark conversations.

This year our Family Support Team responded to 963 enquiries. While that is lower than the record numbers we saw last year, it is still well above pre-pandemic levels. And importantly, one in five of those calls required intensive, ongoing support. Behind each of those statistics is a family in difficulty – sometimes in crisis – turning to us because statutory support is shrinking and they simply do not know where else to go.

We were also delighted to welcome 49 new babies born with Down's syndrome into our community this year. We also continued to expand our "Grab a Cuppa" sessions – informal gatherings where parents share experiences, learn from each other, and access expert advice. Attendance rose by 16%.

In our Professional Engagement Programme over 3,100 professionals took part in our training this year – a 30% increase on last year. We also launched the new Scottish Neonatal Care Pathway for babies born with Down's syndrome. This is now a national standard across Scotland, ensuring families receive consistent, high-quality care right from the start.

Our ABC – Achieving Better Communications – Programme continues to flourish, with 2,046 sessions delivered and 147 regular participants. The "First Steps" sessions for toddlers saw a 41% increase in participation. And our "Next Steps" sessions for 16–25 year-olds are proving so popular that we're planning to expand them further. Alongside this, our CHOIR 21 initiative has gone from strength to strength, with performances ranging from the Scottish Parliament to corporate events – and even at the opening day of Chelsea itself.

For teenagers, our TeenZ Space programme remains a lifeline and for adults, our FriendZ Meetups have become one of the most exciting developments of the past year.

Our Experts Group, made up of adults with Down's syndrome, met seven times this year and engaged with 10 external organisations.

At the national level, we welcomed the Scottish Government's recognition of people with Down's

syndrome as a distinct community within the proposed Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill. While disappointed that the Bill was not included in the current parliamentary programme, we remain deeply engaged and will continue pressing for progress after the 2026 elections.

Turning to Finance, this year we raised £948,577 in fundraised income, up on the year before, though short of our ambitious target. Trust income and Awareness Week were lower than hoped, but we saw encouraging growth in community fundraising, partnerships, and donations.

We ended the year with a deficit of £132,617. After five consecutive years of growth and surplus, this is a sobering reminder that we cannot take sustainability for granted. Thankfully, our reserves remain at around five months of operating expenditure, which gives us stability while we strengthen our income base.

Our success at Chelsea has already secured new corporate partnerships with organisations like Dell Technologies, Hilton Hotels, and Caulders Garden Centres. These relationships are more than financial – they help us build influence, inclusion, and real opportunities for our members, especially in employment.

This year we said farewell to our Vice-Chair, Patricia Jackson, whose nine years of service have left an extraordinary legacy. We also welcomed new trustees, ensuring fresh perspectives and renewed energy at Board level. And most significantly, we began the process of recruiting a new Chief Executive, as Eddie McConnell prepares to retire. Eddie's leadership has been nothing short of transformational. He has led with compassion, vision, and courage, guiding this charity to where it stands today. On behalf of the Board, staff, and families, we thank him profoundly.

As we look to the future, our extended Strategic Framework – what we call our "4-4-2 strategy" – continues to guide us.

- Four strategic objectives: supporting families, supporting individuals, shaping policy, and raising awareness.
- Four programmes for change: better health, employment opportunities, smoother life transitions, and active community living.
- And two foundation principles: protecting human rights, and securing equality and inclusion.

In the year ahead, our priorities include:

- Appointing our new Chief Executive by December.
- Launching our Inclusive Employment Programme with corporate partners.
- Supporting every adult with Down's syndrome to access an Annual Health Check.
- Strengthening our branch network with new Development Officers.
- Expanding our membership and launching an Individual Giving Programme to underpin sustainability.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I want to thank our staff, our volunteers, our funders, and all of you – our members and families. It is your stories, your courage, and your belief in a better

future that drive everything we do. Together, we will keep building a Scotland that truly values, includes, and celebrates every person with Down's syndrome.

**4. 2024-2 Trustees' Report and Financial Statements**

The Chair invited Michael Cunningham, Finance & Resources Manager, to present the Annual Accounts for the year to 31 March 2025.

Michael confirmed that the accounts to 31st March 2025 have been audited and no audit issues arose. The final position for 2024-25 was an overall decrease in funds of £132,617, which was less than budgeted for.

In total, £1,009k was received as income and expenditure was £1,148k.

Michael talked through details of income and expenditure and presented slides. The breakdown of income and expenditure can be viewed in the notes to the Financial Statements, in the 2024/25 Trustees' Report.

Acknowledgement was given to the charity's supporters, trusts and foundations, which are listed on page 17 of the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements.

Michael invited questions or comments on the Trustees Report and Financial Statements. Stuart McIntyre and Patrick Ford raised general questions on the accounts and reserves position and these were responded to by Michael.

**5. Re-election of Directors to the Board of Trustees**

Andrea asked Michael as Company Secretary to manage the election and re-election of Trustees.

Michael advised that Trustees are appointed for a three-year term and can be re-appointed on two further occasions giving a max term as a Trustee of nine years.

We are seeking the election of three new Trustees and the re-election of one Trustee. The three new Trustees are as follows:

**Nitin Gambhir** was proposed by Jim Batchelor and seconded by Amy Dalrymple.

**Nashwa Matta** was proposed by Andrea Tonner and Amy Dalrymple.

**Jo Wright** was proposed by Katrina Leese and seconded by Andrea Nolan.

**Aidan McEvoy** has reached the end of his second term and has indicated a willingness to continue for a third term. The proposer was Stuart McIntyre and the seconder was Katrina Leese.

As there were no objections, Nitin, Nashwa and Jo were duly elected to the Board of Trustees and Aidan was re-elected.

**6. AOCB**

a) Andrea invited members to raise any other competent business.

b) Eddie McConnell presented a short online film entitled 'meet the 4 faces of our 4 big dreams' to introduce Down's Syndrome Awareness Month. He expressed his thanks and appreciation for all of the support and kindness that had been afforded to him throughout his six years as Chief Executive of the charity.

c) As there was no further business, the Chair declared the 17th Annual General Meeting of Down's Syndrome Scotland closed, thanking everyone for their attendance.

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**Members present at the 2025 AGM:**
Andrea Tonner
Jim Batchelor
Katrina Leese
Nashwa Matta
Amy Dalrymple
Andrea Nolan
Cher Collins
Mark McDougall
Stuart McIntyre
Morna Lawson
Mandy Jephcote
Patrick Ford
Andrew Davis
Lynne Gauton
Craig Jordan

**Staff in attendance:**
Eddie McConnell
Emma Soanes
Michael Cunningham

Agreed as a true record of the meeting.

Signed:



Date: 15/11/2026

**Andrea Tonner, Chair of the Board of Trustees**