

DOWN SYNDROME KERRY

1ST EDITION

NEWSLETTER



2025



Annmarie Ladden, Catriona Ni Mhuiris and John O Connor

CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS

Hi Everyone,

You're all very welcome to our first edition of Down Syndrome Kerry's Newsletter, and we very much hope you enjoy reading it, hopefully, there is something there for all of you.

Christmas does seem an age away now, but we were delighted to see so many of our younger members and their families enjoying our Christmas party at the Brehon Hotel. Our 321 shop in Tralee has once again been very much to the fore with the launch of an inspiring three-storey mural on World Down Syndrome Day. We have also enjoyed great success on the silver screen with our short film 'Believe', which was launched at MTU Tralee in mid-March, a great night was had by all, and our film went on to be a finalist in the Fresh Film Awards. As always, Easter heralds the opening of Deenagh lodge at the National Park in Killarney, where 24 of our members recently enjoyed training from Down Syndrome Ireland, preparatory to them starting work in Deenagh for the summer season and also hugely helped from taking part in our Culinary Skills and Job Ready programmes at MTU. Thirty-one of our members are currently in paid employment at Deenagh. Our programme at Tech Amergin in Waterville is going great guns, much to the joy of our members and their families, and we are delighted with the extension of Kerry SLT services to Cahersiveen and Dingle.

A huge and sincere thank you to you all for your kindness, instruction and care in helping our members to thrive.

We are delighted to be able to offer a series of webinars covering a whole range of topics for younger to older members in collaboration with Down Syndrome Cork, as well as talks on other areas of concern for our members and their families. We continue to subsidise horse-riding and swimming for our members and are happy to help with any event anywhere in the county that will benefit our members. We are constantly working on improving services for our members from the youngest to the oldest.

As you know, we do not receive any support from the state for the services and supports we provide and are entirely reliant on fundraising, donations and our wonderful sponsors to keep Down Syndrome Kerry going and with running costs of approximately 500K per annum, much of which goes to subsidise the services to our members and to provide them with paid employment and so we really need your help. Please see the list of upcoming fundraisers and sign up to help. As a family, you will need to sign up to between 6-8 hours per year, and only families who do so will qualify for a full subsidy of services. We currently pay 50 Euro for each Speech and Language session, and members pay the remaining 30 Euro; we can only continue to do this for members who help us fundraise and so we look forward to your support.

A very warm welcome to Ruth Colleran, who has so willingly volunteered to be our Treasurer for the next couple of years and who brings with her considerable corporate experience, we very much look forward to working with you Ruth. Many many thanks to Taryn Hurst, who did such a great job as our Treasurer, advised us well and was such a positive team player and happily remains on our committee. We would like to wish Ann Ladden well on her retirement from the committee and to thank her for all of her hard work over the years and particularly for her work at Deenagh Lodge.

Our AGM will take place in July, where we will be looking for new committee members.

As you will see from the articles there is considerable breadth to the activities of Down Syndrome Kerry and we are delighted to have a wonderful and caring Operations Manager, Siobhán Walsh to co-ordinate it for us. Siobhán invariably goes well beyond the call of duty to ensure the very best for our members. We are most thankful to Siobhán and her team, Joe Burkett Employment Support Specialist, Claire Adams Instructional Trainer, Shirley Morris Administration, Liubov Solodun Administration for all of their hard work on behalf of our members.

Hope you have a great summer,

John O Connor - Chairperson - Down Syndrome Kerry



Gerard O Carroll, Paul Sheridan and Siobhan Walsh

FROM THE OPERATIONS MANAGER'S DESK

As Operations Manager, my role is to make sure the engine of Down Syndrome Kerry runs smoothly — from the big decisions to the everyday details that make a difference. But at DSK, you, our members, are the true decision-makers. I'm here to support your ideas and turn them into action. Over the past month, we've made great strides: our office now has upgraded fire and health and safety systems, our outreach Speech and Language Therapy sessions are reaching more families in Killarney, Cahersiveen and Dingle, and we've strengthened links with schools to expand supports.

It was also a joy to give back by volunteering for a day in Deenagh Lodge on the Monday Bank Holiday last—sharing work tasks with our members and all the Deenagh team, working together in the heart of Killarney National park.

A Successful meeting took place with the Disabilities Section HSE on securing funding for DSK. We now have a blueprint to work with in terms of respite models and enhanced service delivery.

Lastly, the backyard at DSK has been revamped, creating a more welcoming space for everyone, and we invite you to call in once our coffee mornings are up and running.

Our corporate Sponsorship for TDM now reaches € 18,120.00. We are hoping to reach our goal of €20000 shortly. If you know of a corporate sponsor, please let us know.

Updating and enhancing our website continues to be a key priority for us. We welcome your feedback and ideas — if you have any news, updates, or stories you'd like to share, please feel free to contact me by phone or email: 0861975419 or siobhanwalsh@downsyndrome.ie.

I'm proud to be part of DSK, and if you have an idea or initiative you'd like to explore, my door is always open.

My thanks, as always, to the Committee and Executive of DSK, the administration team in DSK, Employment Support, 321, MTU, Deenagh, Kerry SLT.

Looking forward to a great 2025!

Siobhan Walsh - Operations Manager - Down Syndrome Kerry

From the Treasurer’s Desk



By way of introduction, my name is Ruth Colleran. I am a proud Tralee woman and have worked for nearly 15 years in the Tax Department of Kerry Group, now working in the role as Group Head of Tax. Prior to joining Kerry, I spent 5 years in PwC Dublin, where I qualified as a Chartered Tax Advisor and Chartered Accountant.

Outside of work, I am kept busy with my 2 children (Rachel, 13 and Ben, 9) and in my spare time, I enjoy walking, reading and shopping.

Down Syndrome Ireland – Kerry Branch is a well-run, community-based organisation, and I am genuinely excited to be working with so many amazing new people! It’s always inspiring to connect with fresh perspectives and diverse talents, and I am looking forward to meeting many of you over the coming weeks and months.

Ruth Colleran - Treasurer - Down Syndrome Kerry

HOW TO BECOME A DSK MEMBER

To join us as a member or to renew your current membership, please simply follow the links

[NON-VOTING MEMBER](#)

[ONE VOTING MEMBER](#)

[TWO VOTING MEMBER](#)

Please remember to renew your membership.

Contact the DSK Office to confirm that your name is on the current membership list.

SERVICES WE OFFER





ParentLink for new Parents



Lamh training for parents and teachers







Parent and Toddler mornings



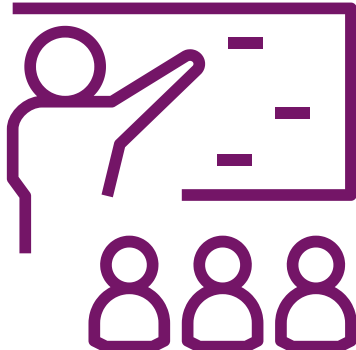
Employment support







Individual & Group Speech & Language Therapy



Education - MTU and Tech Amergin Programmes

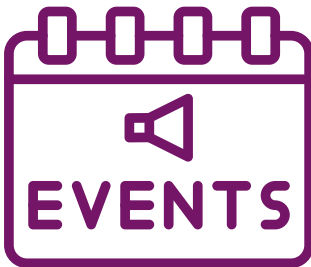






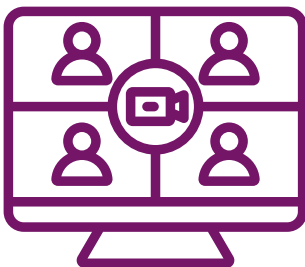
Education Support





Social activities





Online webinars

DSK IMPORTANT CONTACTS



Down Syndrome Kerry, Balloonagh Estate, Tralee,
Co. Kerry, V92 YK79



info@kerry.downsyndrome.ie



066 7103804

DSK Office

Operations Manager

Siobhan Walsh
Operations Manager



siobhanwalsh@downsyndrome.ie



0861975419



info@kerry.downsyndrome.ie/
siobhanwalsh@downsyndrome.ie



0876824313

Employment
Support

Instructional Job Trainer

Claire Adams
Instructional Job Trainer



claireadams@downsyndrome.ie



0877765936



11 Strand St, Tralee, Co.Kerry, V92 XVX0

Rachel Fitzgerald
Manager of 321



rachelfitzgerald@downsyndrome.ie

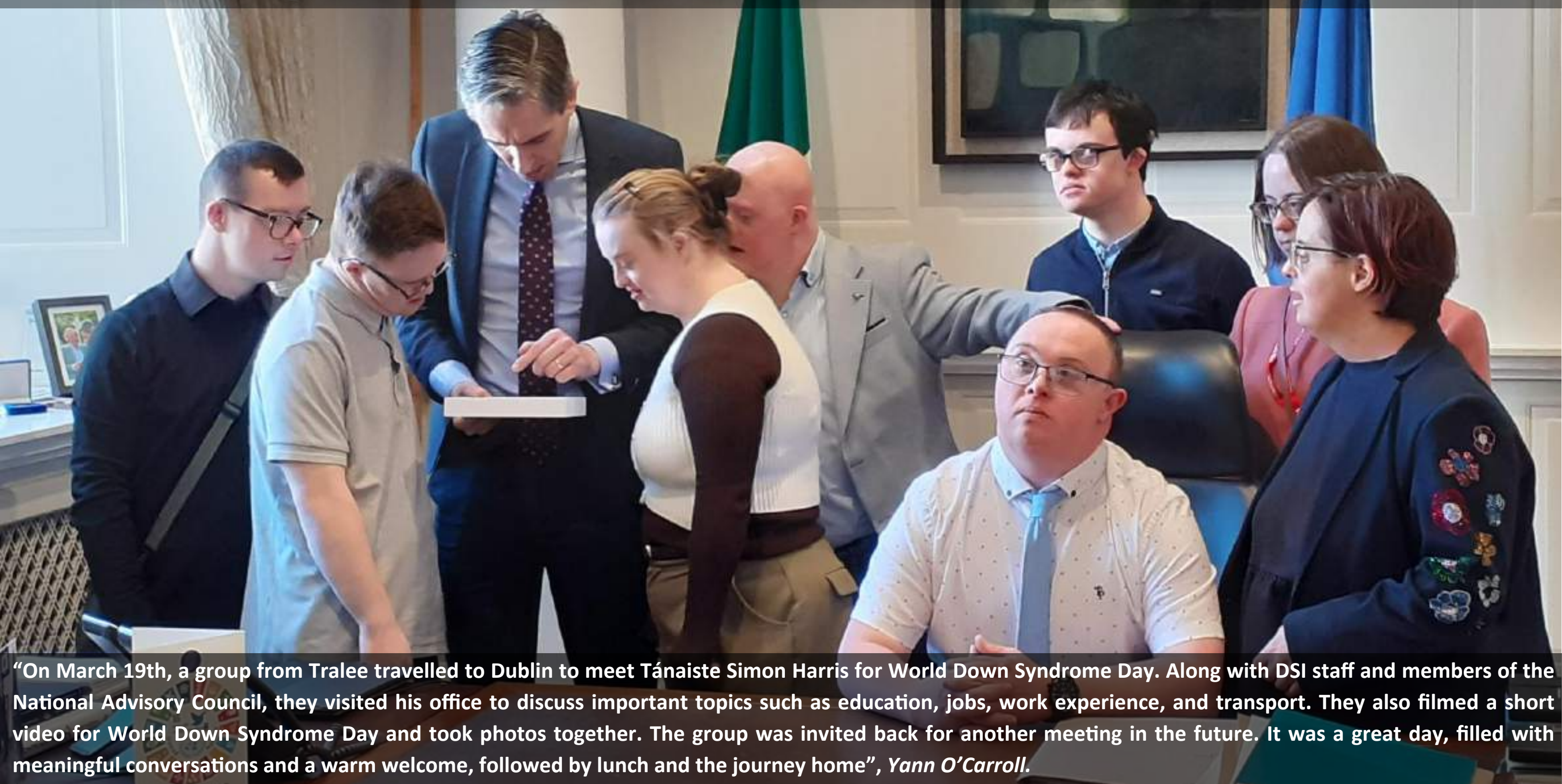


086 819 0224

321 Shop



Meeting the Tánaiste for World Down Syndrome Day



“On March 19th, a group from Tralee travelled to Dublin to meet Tánaiste Simon Harris for World Down Syndrome Day. Along with DSI staff and members of the National Advisory Council, they visited his office to discuss important topics such as education, jobs, work experience, and transport. They also filmed a short video for World Down Syndrome Day and took photos together. The group was invited back for another meeting in the future. It was a great day, filled with meaningful conversations and a warm welcome, followed by lunch and the journey home”, Yann O’Carroll.

WHAT’S THE NEWS?



Celebrating World Down Syndrome Day

What a fantastic celebration we had at the Down Syndrome Kerry 321 Shop for World Down Syndrome Day! The event was filled with joy, dancing, laughter, and lots of colour as we proudly showcased our vibrant socks, shared personal stories, and enjoyed great company.

We were joined by members of An Garda Síochána Kerry, who stood in solidarity with us and helped mark the occasion in a truly special way. Highlights of the day included live music, the reveal of a beautiful mural, fun guessing games, and plenty of tea and coffee to keep the energy going!

As a thank-you to our amazing community, we extended a special €2 SALE in the shop. A huge thank you to Rachel, Grace and all the wonderful team at 321 Shop - and to everyone who came and made the day unforgettable!



‘Believe’ Nominated for Two Film Awards!

We are thrilled to share that Believe, a film created by the Down Syndrome Kerry Film Group, has been nominated for not one but two awards in the Fresh Film Awards!

The awards ceremony took place on April 10th in Dublin, marking a proud moment for our community during World Down Syndrome Week celebrations here in the Kingdom of Kerry.

A special congratulations to Ellen, Patrick, and Oisín who represented the group in Dublin.

Well done to everyone involved, and congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

“The launch for the 'Believe' was a great night. I am so proud of everyone who took part in it, especially my close friends Amy and Paul Stephen. It actually made it through to the final for the short film, I would like to say thanks to Joe and Michelle for their incredible work in bringing it to life”,
Jessica Power

A big thank you to Joe, Deirdre, Clint and Kerry ETB for this great production!



[Click to watch](#)

A Culinary Celebration at the Launch of Believe



The official launch of Believe was made even more special thanks to the incredible talents of the MTU Kerry Campus Culinary Arts team and their amazing members. Guests were treated to a stunning selection of canapés — a true highlight of the evening.

A special shout-out to TJ, Mark, Michelle, and the full MTU crew for creating such a culinary delight. Their creativity and skill truly impressed.

Sweet thanks also go to Stella, whose treats were just as irresistible — every bite was a hit!

The teams at the Dúchas Centre and Kerry Sports Academy provided generous hospitality and support, helping make the event a warm and memorable celebration. Believe continues to bring people together in the most delicious ways.

WHAT’S THE NEWS?



DSK CHRISTMAS PARTY



EASTER HUNT DSK



Big thank you to Taryn and Joe for making the Christmas party such a success!

A great afternoon was had at the DSK Easter Egg Hunt on Good Friday. The event commenced with an egg hunt around Nuns Wood at Collis Sands House, and the Easter bunny even made a special appearance.

The children had great fun at the puppet show and disco, which was provided by Treasa from Kids Party Club, and the children all got a balloon animal of their choice. Samatha Houlihan was also on hand with her ever-popular face painting.

It was another fantastic afternoon spent with friends.

A big thank you to Debbie—can’t wait for more events like this!

Companion Tandems Family Event



Dale O'Carroll



Ian and Sophie
Twiss



Anthony
O'Connor and
James Doyle



Emilie

We had an amazing time at our recent Companion Tandems event! It was all about getting outdoors, riding together, and enjoying great company. Our families teamed up on tandem bikes for a day full of fun, laughter, and connection.

WHAT'S THE NEWS?



Denis Cronin and Alex O'Connor



Amber Donovan



Ellie Ladden



Fionn van Bladel



Peppy and Rachel

"Last year, our family got an amazing tandem bike that has truly transformed how we get around together. Peppy can sit up front and pedal, but when she gets tired, she can rest her feet while I continue cycling. I have full control of the brakes and steering, which makes it safe and manageable. Best of all—it's electric, so it takes the pressure off me too!

This bike has been a total game changer. For the first time, we can all head out for a cycle together as a family, and it's brought us so much joy.

We got it from a company in Cork called Companion Tandems. They import these second-hand bikes from the Netherlands. While they are quite expensive, we were incredibly fortunate to receive support: Variety Ireland generously funded 50% of the cost, and Down Syndrome Kerry kindly contributed as well.

We just wanted to share our experience—it's been such a success in our home. Keep an eye out for us on the road!

Warm wishes,"

Marcus and Rachel Fitzgerald

A huge thank you to everyone who came along and made it such a special day – we're already looking forward to the next one!



Almost 10 years of community, connection, and care

321 SHOP



John O Connor, Rachel Fitzgerald and Cathal Doyle

We have recovered from our celebrations of World Down Syndrome Day and the launch of our mural. A huge thank you to everyone who supported us on the day – your presence and encouragement meant the world.

As always, we're on the lookout for volunteers who can spare just three hours a week. If you've been thinking about getting involved, now is the perfect time to join our amazing team at 321. To express your interest, just get in touch using the email or phone number below.

Donations continue to play a vital role in what we do, and we're always grateful for your generosity. We especially welcome:

- Books (even those in poor condition — we can recycle them for funds!)
- Fashion items for women, men, and children
- Bric-a-brac, handbags, shoes, and accessories

Donations can be dropped off at our shop from Tuesday to Saturday, 10 am – 5 pm.

And now for some exciting news: 321 will be celebrating 10 years in operation on June 24th, 2025! It's hard to believe how far we've come, and you can be sure we'll mark this milestone in a big way. Stay tuned to our celebrations by following us on Facebook and Instagram — just search for 321 Down Syndrome Kerry.

Contact us:

Email: rachelfitzgerald@downsyndrome.ie

Phone: 086 819 0224

A huge thank you to Rachel, Grace, and the fantastic 321 Shop team for their dedication and hard work!



Greetings from Norma & the Team in the Deenagh
The season is in full swing in Killarney. We here at Deenagh Lodge are once again providing a warm welcome to both locals and visitors. We are more than delighted that our young adults are back working again with us this season. Our young adults are a credit to their families, support workers and communities as they work hard each day in Deenagh but always provide service with a smile. As usual, the café continues to provide a selection of fresh homebaking and sweet treats and a variety of ice cream. Hope to see you all during the Summer!

DEENAGH LODGE



Norma Doherty, Deenagh Lodge Manager, and New Volunteer - Alison Coffey

New volunteer

Deenagh Lodge coffee shop is a wonderful amenity within the Killarney National Park, which raises funds for the association and provides meaningful employment for young adults with Down Syndrome. As a recently retired primary teacher, I wanted to give something back. I feel that I have the energy, enthusiasm and skill set to work alongside and support young adults with Down Syndrome, as they practise their social and functional skills. This facility would not be viable without the fantastic team of Norma, Alice & Aoife and all of the volunteers supporting over thirty young adults with Down Syndrome.

Alison Coffey

If you would like to volunteer in Deenagh please contact
Norma on 087 998 3044

New initiative

Huge Congrats to Aoife Cronin, Pdraig Doherty & Mary Ashe & Alice O Shea for championing the coffee grounds initiative. All used coffee grounds in Deenagh can be purchased to help your garden! Donations to Deenagh, please!
Your reusable cups, if double, are served in our reuse organic milk cartons. No waste! All reused and reloved!!
We are so grateful to be part of Killarney National Park and are reminded of how precious our environment is.



Aoife Cronin and Mary Ashe



A huge thank you to Norma, Alice, Catherine, and their wonderful team
for their care and commitment to our members over the years!

A Parent's Perspective

My daughter, Máire, looks forward to Easter every year. She loves chocolate eggs, but the main reason for her anticipation is the seasonal reopening of the Deenagh Lodge Café. She has worked in the café every Sunday since it first opened and really loves her job there. The rest of the year she enjoys her Sunday morning lie-ins, but there is no keeping her in bed when the Deenagh is open for business. Each Sunday she proudly dons her work clothes and apron and heads off to serve the café's patrons, locals and tourists alike. I have borne witness to how her work there has developed Máire's social confidence and enhanced her self-esteem, facilitated by the wonderful staff and volunteers. As a parent I am profoundly grateful for the partnership between the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Down Syndrome Ireland that enables our adults with Down Syndrome in Kerry to be active members of the workforce and fulfil their great potential.

Kathleen Murphy



PARENT & TODDLER GROUP



The Parent and Toddler Group meets



every second Saturday
of the month



from 12:00 to 14:00



at the Down Syndrome Kerry
Building, Balloonagh Estate, Tralee,
V92 YK79

It's a warm and welcoming space where parents of young children (from newborns up to age 6) can come together to chat, share experiences, and build lasting friendships. Children also get the chance to play and connect with peers.

The group relaunched in February 2024 and currently welcomes 14 families. It continues to grow and support each other through friendship, shared advice, and community spirit.

New and returning members are always welcome!

For more information, please contact
Joanne Cunningham
at 0874330090.



DSK Toddler Group received a grant towards new toys & equipment from Kerry County Childcare and also availed of a Tusla Language and Play Programme facilitated in DSK.
We have applied for a grant this year for Paediatric First Aid and a Specialised Feeding Workshop with Kerry SLT.

A big thank you to Joanne for keeping the show on the road!



EDUCATION



Course Update: Craft and Wellbeing Classes at Tech Amergin

This term, Tech Amergin’s course has offered two distinct classes: Craft and Wellbeing. In the afternoon Wellbeing class, learners focused on culinary skills, healthy eating, and personal development. Each week, they prepared a healthy dish to enjoy at the centre and contributed to a Christmas hamper. Additionally, learners raised €250 by selling handmade Christmas cards in aid of Down Syndrome Kerry, with a few packs still available for next year.

In the Craft class, learners explored new techniques, including creating concrete tiles for a community garden project. They were responsible for designing, mixing, and laying the tiles themselves, with one learner commenting, “I can’t wait for my family to sit here in the sunshine and see this.”

The Wellbeing class also emphasised personal development, including interpersonal skills and relaxation techniques to manage stress. As the academic year comes to a close, learners are reflecting on their experiences and suggesting improvements for the upcoming term. The team at Tech Amergin hopes to introduce QQI qualifications and further support learners in accessing Community Education classes.

Tech Amergin has a long tradition of Universal Design for Learning, adapting teaching methods to meet the needs of all learners. The centre is proud to support the Kerry ETB’s goal of fostering a strong, inclusive, and respectful organisational culture, ensuring all learners feel welcome, comfortable, and respected. The team at Tech Amergin looks forward to continuing this journey with learners in the autumn.

Marian O’Neill - Centre Manager - Tech Amergin.

A huge thank you to Marian and her team for discovering more and more of the abilities of our members and helping them to grow!



Webinar Schedule 2025			
Month	Webinar Subject	Presenter	Target Age group
15th Jan	Wills & Trusts	Financial Wellbeing	All
19th Feb	What is Down Syndrome	DownsAbility	New parents
19th Mar	Early Intervention	DownsAbility	Pre-School
16th Apr	Early Independence	DownsAbility	Primary / Secondary
21st May	More Alike than Different	DownsAbility	Secondary / Adults
18th June	Growing Up	DownsAbility	Pre-school & Primary
16th July	Age Appropriate Behaviours	DownsAbility	Secondary / Adults
20th Aug	Gross and Fine Motor Skills	DownsAbility	Pre-School
17th Sept	Fine Motor Skills and Writing	DownsAbility	Primary
15th Oct	Finances	Financial Wellbeing	All + adult members
19th Nov	Sexuality & Relationships Education	Michelle	Primary / Secondary / Adults
17th Dec	Independent Toilet Skills	DownsAbility	Pre-school & Primary



Above is a photo from our last day of the current term at M.T.U. students got the opportunity to invite their parents for lunch. They were so proud as they served a meal they had cooked from scratch. This group have accomplished so much. Starting from working as a group, then in pairs, to now working on their own. It is wonderful to see the students using their skills in employment and at home with their families. *A huge thank you to TJ, Mark, Michelle and Gerard at MTU for the wonderful kitchen skills, sense of self-confidence and personal growth that you have given to our young adults over the years!*



Friday Group
Job Ready / Personal Development. Kerry Regional Advisory Council

Sinead Flynn Head of Adult Education D.S.I. facilitated the formation of The Kerry branch of the Regional Advisory council. The Regional Advisory Council is an independent self-advocacy group for adults with Down syndrome. The committee elected their officers by holding a private vote. They meet up about once a month usually on a Friday. Once established it is hoped they will have their meetings in the evening or a time of that’s suits their schedule. The RAC gives our members a platform to link in with the National Advisory Council and have their voices heard at a national level. The K.R.A.C have hosted online meetings with the N.A.C. and R.A.C. from other branches. Just recently Stephen Faley, who shares the chairpersons’ role with Ellen O Donoghue joined The Midlands R.A.C meeting. Sinead Flynn said Stephen represented his group well and gave an informative update. An in-person meeting is planned for September 2025.



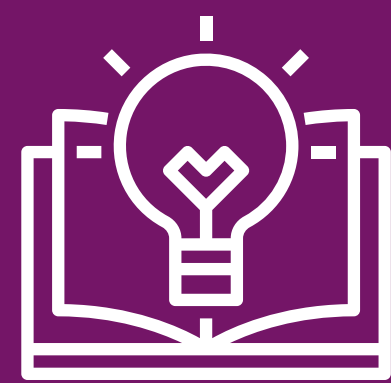
Green campus events
 The green committee at M.T.U. promote sustainable habits at Christmas by encouraging students and staff to reuse, recycle and upcycle instead of buying new items. Our group volunteered to help man the Pre-Christmas Swap shop stand. The money that was collected was given to Down Syndrome Kerry. It was a nice initiative for the group to be involved with, as it was food for thought with their social enterprise idea.

Michelle Burke - Tutor MTU

Engaging with events at M.T.U.



As part of the Enterprise 2025 event at M.T.U., attendees enjoyed engaging discussions and networking. The event fostered valuable connections and showcased impressive student innovation. *L-R Maurice Flavin, Ellen O'Donoghue, Paul Scanlon, Stephen Faley and Patrick Ladden*



DSK Programmes based in MTU

DSK offers two courses based in MTU Kerry, North Campus, Tralee. These typically run on Mondays and Fridays, 9 am to 3 pm. Tutor is Michelle Burke. The plan is to offer a new course on Personal Development starting in September 2025. This is primarily for new participants aged 18 and over. For students who are on the current Monday or Friday programme, the plan is to continue in September with a one-day per week programme focusing on community involvement and social engagement with a continuing emphasis on functional literacy and independence.

Online and in-person information sessions will be offered to people who express an interest and/or register by the end of June.

To find out more or to book a place on the Personal Development course, please contact Gerard O'Carroll



086 3916600



gerard.ocarroll@hotmail.com

In 2018, I had the great privilege of volunteering at the World Meeting of Families, which was held in Dublin. This international event was particularly special as it was attended by Pope Francis. During his visit, the Pope visited Phoenix Park, Croke Park and Knock Shrine.

During his time in Ireland, Pope Francis also met with President Michael D. Higgins and the Taoiseach. One of the key issues raised was the importance of acknowledging and protecting the rights of children, a message that resonated with many.

My connection with Pope Francis goes back to 2014, when I was fortunate enough to meet him during a visit to Rome. It was a moment I will never forget. In the future, I hope to return to Rome to visit his final resting place.

Being part of such a significant event in 2018 was an unforgettable experience, and I am grateful to have played a small role in welcoming Pope Francis to Ireland.

Stephen Faley - DSK Member

My name is Amy Lynch, and I live in Tralee, Co. Kerry. I currently work at Urban Sanctuary on Wednesdays from 10 to 11 a.m. I am deeply passionate about the beauty industry and have a strong interest in pursuing a career in fashion and modelling.

In 2017, I was honored to be a contestant in the Rose of Tralee. I also hosted my own TV show called Frock Finders and appeared on Radio Kerry. Performing on stage is something I truly enjoy, especially with my friends. Together, we created and starred in a film titled Believe at MTU, which was nominated for an award in Dublin.

In addition to performing, I also have a love for songwriting and enjoy expressing myself creatively through music.

Amy Lynch - DSK Member



'Believe' behind-the-scenes photo

Parents support Groups online activities

Dual Diagnosis Support Group: Down Syndrome & Autism



Zoom session
June 4th.

This is a dedicated monthly space for parents and caregivers of individuals with both Down syndrome and autism. This online support group offers a safe, understanding environment where you can connect with others who truly understand the unique experiences, joys, and challenges of a dual diagnosis.

Who is this for? Parents and caregivers of individuals with a dual diagnosis of Down syndrome and autism.

[Click here for 11 am link](#)

[Click here for 8 pm link](#)

Sharing the Journey (All Ages)



Zoom session
June 5th.

Join us for our monthly Zoom meeting — a relaxed, agenda-free space where parents of individuals with Down syndrome can come together to chat, share experiences, and support one another. Whether you want to celebrate a recent milestone, talk through a challenge, or simply connect with others who truly understand, this is a welcoming space for all. Let's share our highs and lows, offer encouragement, and build a stronger community together.

[Click here for 11 am link](#)

[Click here for 8 pm link](#)

Monthly Connection Group for Branch Admins, Coordinators & Active Committee Members



Zoom session
June 26th.
at 10:30 am

Do you have an Admin/Coordinator in your branch? Or someone who'd like to get involved in local initiatives/connecting with other branches?

Join our Monthly Branch Connection Group, held on the last Thursday of every month at 10.30am. This is a relaxed, open space where anyone from your branch can come together to:

- Share ideas for local activities
- Discuss topics common to all branches e.g. funding opportunities, social media use, tools to help branch efficiency etc.
- Run a meeting agenda that's relevant to your branch

You set the agenda — this group is for you.

Let's come together to build knowledge, confidence, and stronger communities across the country through open and informed conversations.

The next meeting will be on the 26th of June.

[CLICK HERE](#)



SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPY TEAM

The Lifelong Importance of Speech and Language Therapy for People with Down Syndrome

Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) is essential for individuals with Down syndrome at every stage of life. It plays a vital role in enhancing communication, independence, and emotional wellbeing—from infancy through adulthood and into the later years.

Infancy: In the early years, SLT focuses on developing feeding skills and building foundational communication. Babies with Down syndrome often have low muscle tone, which can affect feeding and speech clarity. Early intervention supports parents with feeding techniques and encourages early communication through engagement, play, and babbling.

SLT in Down Syndrome Kerry

Kerry SLT Clinic (www.kerryslt.ie) has been providing services to the member of DSK (from babies to adults) for a number of years. We are committed to deliver individualised approach through clinic or school based sessions. We also organise seasonal activities such as social skills training, school preparation groups, summer camps. There are seven SLTs currently working in the clinic.

If you are availing of SLT already and wish to discuss any clinical matter, first of all please contact your SLT directly.

If you wish to contact Dominika (Clinical Director) or David (clinic Manager), please email info@kerryslt.ie.

For more information about SLT provision within Down Syndrome Kerry (including if you wish to start SLT) please contact Operations Manager Siobhán at siobhanwalsh@downsyndrome.ie.

Childhood: As children grow, SLT helps them develop both receptive and expressive language skills. Tools like picture-based communication systems or apps may be introduced, alongside Lámh, a manual sign language system commonly used in Ireland. Lámh helps children communicate effectively while verbal speech is still developing.

Young Adulthood: In young adulthood, SLT continues to support speech clarity, vocabulary expansion, and social communication skills. Therapy assists individuals in expressing their needs, building relationships, and participating in education or employment. AAC and Lámh may still be used, and SLT also helps with problem-solving and managing social situations.

Later Years: As people with Down syndrome age, they may experience changes in communication or memory. SLT can provide strategies to support comprehension, expression, and engagement in daily life. Feeding and swallowing support may become important again if age-related health issues arise.

SLT is an ongoing, dynamic support that adapts to a person's needs at every life stage. Whether through spoken language, Lámh, or AAC tools, SLT empowers individuals with Down syndrome to connect, express themselves, and fully participate in life.

A huge thank you to Dominika, David and your team for your collaboration, advice and very positive engagement with our members!

Joe Burkett - Employment Support Specialist

Joe Burkett joined Down Syndrome Kerry in April 2023.

During his two years in the role, Joe has successfully launched and managed the Kerry Employment Programme. Joe works alongside Head of Employment Aoife Gaffney, and the ESS team in working with our members to identify their desired job and sourcing meaningful employment for them.

Over the two years that Joe has been with DSK, many of our members have achieved their employment dreams. Currently, eleven DSK members are in meaningful employment (seasonal and some longer roles). Members in employment are working in the following sectors; catering, retail, beauty and admin.

Our employers include Moriarty's Centra (Ballyheigue), Horgan's Centra (Ardfert), Meadowlands Hotel, Urban Sanctuary, Garvey's Supervalu, The Brehon Hotel, The Rose Hotel, Fexco, Lizzie's Little Kitchen, Centra The Reeks, Tesco Deer Park, Cois Tra Café, the Bookshelf Café, and Mister Price.

Joe would like to extend his sincere thanks to all employers who have welcomed our DSK members into their businesses. All members are thriving in their employment having developed new skills and friendships in working alongside their colleagues. Joe has decided recently to move to different ventures.

We in DSK would like to wish Joe every success in his future and are very thankful for his creativity and kindness during his time in DSK.



If any member would like to explore potential employment avenues, please contact the DSK office or Siobhan in Operations. We welcome all discussions with members and their families.

info@kerry.downsyndrome.ie / siobhanwalsh@downsyndrome.ie

0876824313 - Employment Support Number

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT TEAM



Claire Adams - Instructional Trainer

As an instructional trainer, I help members build job-specific skills, independence, and confidence through tailored approaches like visual aids, task breakdown, repetition, and positive reinforcement.

At Deenagh Lodge, I assess members' skills, create task plans, and support them in a café environment using visual schedules and task breakdowns. Caregivers have noted increased confidence and a stronger sense of professional identity in members.

In the 321 Charity Shop, I support members in retail tasks, develop easy-read SOPs and visual guides, and coordinate scheduling with staff and day services. I also helped develop a Retail Programme due to launch this autumn.

At MTU, I support students in the Culinary Arts and Job Ready Course—helping bridge learning gaps, promote independence, support emotional regulation, and encourage social inclusion.

Instructional trainers play a vital role in helping adults with DS maintain meaningful employment. I regularly collaborate with DSK's Employment Support Specialist to address workplace challenges with targeted training and support. Employers have reported improved understanding and outcomes thanks to these interventions.

If any employer or caregiver would like to contact **Claire Adams** to provide specific training or support to any member in the working world, please feel free to contact her:

claireadams@downsyndrome.ie

0877765936

I joined the DSK Employment Team in April 2024. My role involves providing training and support to adults with Down syndrome, both in and out of the workforce. This includes job readiness training, on-the-job support, soft skills development, and collaboration with employers, social care settings, and caregivers.



“It is hard to believe that Annmarie is celebrating the end of her 1st year with us in The Bookshelf, Tralee. Since the first day Annmarie came to work with us she became an integral part of the team and was warmly welcomed by staff and customers alike. Annmarie approaches each work day with enthusiasm, warmth and a genuine smile for everyone she meets, not to mention the extra sparkly smile she has for familiar faces she recognises from outside of work. Over the past year, Annmarie has grown in confidence and now takes initiative in her daily duties. Her duties include serving coffee to customers, delivering plates of food, juicing oranges, clearing tables, and chatting with our customers. She brings a smile to everyone around her. Her warmth and positivity are truly infectious. It is our true privilege to have Annmarie as part of the Bookshelf team. Congratulations on your first anniversary in The Bookshelf, Annmarie. You have made a lasting impression on us all. Here’s to the next chapter!”,

Anne O Carroll - Proprietor - The Bookshelf Cafe Tralee



Annmarie Ladden and Anne O Carroll

**My name is Annmarie Ladden and I work at the Bookshelf Café in Tralee. I’ve been part of the team for a year now, and I absolutely love it!
I have so much fun working with my co-workers and our manager Gary. I feel very lucky to have Anne as my boss – she’s truly one of a kind. One day, I’d love to be a boss just like her!**



Anthony O’Connor and Centra The Reeks Team

“Tony has been a valued member of our team at Centra The Reeks, Killarney for the past 18 months. His positive attitude and strong work ethic make him a joy to work with, and he consistently brings a smile to the faces of both colleagues and customers. Tony plays a key role in the day-to-day running of the store, with responsibilities ranging from stocking shelves to merchandising, and always approaches his duties with enthusiasm and care. We're all looking forward to many more years of working with Tony and watching him continue to grow as part of the Centra family”,

Elizabeth Nagle - Assistant Manager - Centra The Reeks Killarney

EMPLOYMENT



Our National Employment Programme, developed in 2018, found that only 6% of adults with Down syndrome were in employment at the time. Everyone wants a purpose in life and it is no different for adults with Down syndrome. To date our employment team have supported over 320 adults with Down syndrome nationwide into paid meaningful employment. Meaningful employment is our goal - employment that is paid, in people's community & in an area that matches the skill & interest level of the person. Our members nationwide have been breaking down barriers and changing perspectives through their work, showing the workforce their capabilities and that they can enrich the workplace by adding value to staff teams. We have been fortunate to partner with large organisations, which have had a direct impact on our members in Kerry.

Recently, I worked with a group of adults with Down syndrome in Kerry, through a pre-employment workshop, preparing them for their Summer work in Deenagh Lodge. The passion to learn and excitement to return to work were so evident with the group (& the wider Deenagh staff) on the day. We spoke about the importance of personal care and hygiene, appropriate boundaries, communication and behaviour for work, tasks, contracts, and vocabulary around work. I would like to extend my well wishes to the group, and I look forward to visiting them at Deenagh Lodge in the summer.



Initiatives like Deenagh Lodge are vital to ensure that inclusive training and employment opportunities are available in the Killarney community. It provides value to our members with Down syndrome, the wider community and also helps spread awareness.

Aoife Gaffney - Head of Employment - Down Syndrome Ireland

UPCOMING EVENTS



MICHELLE MURPHY
WWW.RELATEABLE.ORG

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ON SEXUALITY FOR PRETEENS, TEENS and ADULTS

This is a generic talk about sexuality e.g. how tweens/teens adults learn about sexuality (e.g. the family, all the different types of media, via peers, in school/educational settings etc.), the importance of using anatomically correct language when talking your child, tips for imparting information/knowledge to your child, teaching your child or teen/tween/ adult the difference between public vs private behaviour.

If you are interested in attending this free DSK workshop please register your interest to info@kerry.downsyndrome.ie

Date TBC – Numbers dependant



SAFECARE TECHNOLOGIES & KERRY SLT
www.safecaretechnologies.com &
www.kerryslt.ie

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATION

This workshop focuses on Communication and Assistive Technology and ways to communicate, support your voice and how to use the latest communication devices and APPS

“Technology has changed the face of education and for many students with disabilities, it has levelled up the playing field and enabled them to realise their true potential. Assistive technology comes in many forms, a software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities, low-tech communication boards, alternative access methods and even switch adapted toys”.

Kerry SLT will advise on clinical aspects of using Communication Devices, offering advice and incorporating assistive technology into every day life

If you are interested in attending this free DSK workshop please register your interest to info@kerry.downsyndrome.ie

Date TBC – Numbers dependant

ALL AGES APPLICABLE



GARDA MARY GARDINER –
COMMUNITY GARDA

THE INTERNET – CYBERSECURITY – HOW TO KEEP SAFE, SCAMS, USING SOCIAL MEDIA, YOUR PRIVACY AND MORE

Garda Mary Gardiner is a well known Community Garda Tralee and will deliver this interactive information talk to parents and members.

Suitable for preteens, teens, adults and parents.

To be confirmed.

LÁMH SIGNS

Lámh is a communication tool for everyone. It's a manual sign system and helps with communication needs in Ireland.

Lámh can be used by young children, older children, teenagers and adults.

Wouldn't it be great if everyone could say Hello to everyone?

Lámh

Rachel is a Lámh tutor, and she introduces us to using some signs for everyday use



Hello

Thank you

Money



Coffee **MORNING**

ONE THURSDAY PER MONTH

**An invite to call in for tea, coffee, and
sweet treats!**

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN HELPING HOST THIS COFFEE
MORNING ON A ROTA BASIS IN DOWN SYNDROME KERRY,
PLEASE LET US KNOW AT

info@kerry.downsyndrome.ie



BBQ IN THE PARK

SATURDAY
12 JULY

DEENAGH LODGE,
KILLARNEY



Down
Syndrome
Kerry

JOIN US AT THE
DOWN SYNDROME KERRY BARBECUE!





The Kerry Playground Passport: Can Your Family Complete the Challenge?

Summer is here, and there’s a brand-new adventure waiting for families all across County Kerry! Introducing the Kerry Playground Passport – a fun, interactive way for children and families to explore the many fantastic public playgrounds scattered across the Kingdom. Created by EZxploring in partnership with the Healthy Kerry Committee and Kerry County Council, and funded by Healthy Ireland and the Kerry Community Integration Forum, this unique new resource is the perfect companion for your summer outings. With 44 public playgrounds featured across the county, the Playground Passport is more than just a guide – it’s a challenge! Can your family visit them all before the summer ends?

What is the Kerry Playground Passport?

The Kerry Playground Passport is a pocket-sized activity booklet designed especially for primary school-aged children. It’s packed with colourful maps, GPS coordinates, QR codes, and fun activities that promote outdoor play, movement, creativity, and connection with nature and community. Inside, young explorers will find a number of creative and engaging tasks:

- 🎨 Design Your Own Passport Stamp after each playground visit
- ★ Rate Each Playground and compare your favourites with friends and family
- 🎨 Draw a Picture of your favourite playground day

From Ballybunion to Ballinskelligs, or Castlegregory to Kilgarvan, you’ll find public playgrounds waiting to be explored—each one offering something special. Whether it’s coastal views, woodland trails, or town-centre convenience, Kerry’s playgrounds are dotted across every corner of the county. Many of Kerry’s playgrounds also include sensory play equipment, encouraging inclusive fun for children of all abilities. Sensory play supports development in balance, coordination, and social engagement, and provides a calm and stimulating environment for neurodiverse children, including those with autism. To further support autism awareness and inclusive communication, 41 playgrounds in Kerry are now equipped with communication boards from charity organisation 'Finding Charlie's Voice'. These boards feature visual symbols to help non-verbal or speech-delayed children express themselves more easily—making playground time more accessible, inclusive, and enjoyable for everyone.

📍 Where Can I Get a Playground Passport?

A sample passport has already been sent to every primary school in Kerry, but if you haven’t received one, don’t worry—additional copies are available at all Kerry Library branches. Prefer digital? You can also download the passport in English, Ukrainian, and Irish here:

- [Download in English](#)
- [Download in Irish](#)
- [Download in Ukrainian](#)

☀️ Take the Summer Playground Challenge!

So, here’s your family’s mission: can you visit all 44 playgrounds in Kerry before the summer ends? Each visit is a chance to play, explore, connect, and make memories—while supporting active lifestyles and inclusive play for all. Whether your child loves climbing frames or calm sensory zones, every playground brings something new. Plan your weekends, pack a picnic, and hit the road—there’s a whole world of slides, swings, and sunny days waiting to be discovered. Don’t forget to share your adventures on social media using #KerryPlaygroundPassport and tag [@ezxploring](#) & [@DiscoverKerry](#) to show off your progress! Let’s make this a summer of joy, fresh air, and fantastic family fun—one playground at a time!



DSK 2025 SUMMER PLANS

FUNDRAISING CYCLES



Sunday,
June 22nd

DSK is organising our very own charity cycle, based in Killarney!

We'll have 3 routes to suit all levels:

25km, 75km, and 95km (The 2 longer routes will incorporate Kenmare & Molls Gap).

There's something for everyone – whether you're a beginner or an experienced cyclist.

Not cycling? You can still be part of the day by volunteering!

More details coming soon – stay tuned!



Saturday,
July 5th

We're a Tier 2 Charity for the 2025 Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle!

If you or someone you know is taking part, please consider cycling for Down Syndrome Kerry.

Your support means the world to us and helps make a real difference!



Thursday, August 7th
-
Sunday, August 10th

The 25th Annual Tour De Munster is coming through Kerry!

This amazing event is a major fundraiser for our branch, and we're thrilled to be part of it once again.

We need your help as a volunteer!

#ROKCC



Proudly Powered by

idonate
making giving easier





THE TOM CREAN DINGLE PENINSULA CHALLENGE 2025



The much-loved Tom Crean Dingle Peninsula Challenge returns on August 29 and 30, 2025, with high hopes and even higher goals. This year, organisers aim to raise an ambitious €100,000 for local charities, including Down Syndrome Kerry, building on the outstanding €85,000 raised in 2024.

Last year's event saw €15,000 go directly to Down Syndrome Kerry—support that has made a real impact on our services and the families we serve. We were proud to be represented at the recent thank-you evening hosted by organisers Kieran O'Callaghan, Daniel Bohan, and Patrick O'Sullivan at The Rose Hotel, Tralee. Enda O'Brien and Maurice Horan joined other charity partners to celebrate the success and share how these funds are helping our community.

The Tom Crean Challenge has become a true highlight on the Kerry calendar. This demanding 90-mile multi-sport adventure through the stunning Dingle Peninsula combines walking, kayaking, cycling, running, and climbing. Starting in Blennerville, it takes participants along the Dingle Way to Inch, and on through Ventry, Críoch, Mount Brandon, Fenit, and back to Tralee via the Greenway.

Ten teams are expected to take on this year's challenge, with proceeds going to a fantastic group of local charities, including Kerry Cancer Support Group, Recovery Haven, Dillon Quirke Foundation, CyberSafeKids, The Kerry Hospice, Jack and Jill Foundation, and of course, Down Syndrome Kerry.

From everyone at Down Syndrome Kerry, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the organisers, participants, and generous donors who make this event possible. Your support helps us provide essential services, therapies, and opportunities for our members and their families. We are truly grateful.

We look forward to cheering on this year's teams and hope 2025 will be the biggest and best challenge yet. Every step, every mile, and every donation brings lasting impact.



STAY CONNECTED



VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR
THE LATEST UPDATES

FOLLOW US ON
FACEBOOK



CONTACT US



Call

066 71 03804



Email

info@kerry.downsyndrome.ie



Visit

DSK, Balloonagh Estate, Tralee



Thank you for donation to DSK

SERVICE PROVIDERS

KERRY PARENTS & FRIENDS ASSOCIATION

-  info@kpfa.ie
-  +353646632742
-  <https://kpfa.ie/>
-  Central Administration, The Old Monastery, Port Road, Killarney, Co. Kerry, Ireland, V93WK68

NATIONAL LEARNING NETWORK

-  info@nln.ie / tralee@nln.ie
-  +353667122533
-  <https://rehab.ie/national-learning-network/>
-  Clash Industrial Estate, Tralee, Co. Kerry, V92 H427

RESILIENCE HEALTHCARE

-  jmcauliffe@resilience.ie
-  +353656722875
-  <https://resilience.ie/>
-  Block 3, Ballymaley Business Park, Ballymaley, Ennis, Co Clare, V95 XD79

REHABCARE

-  info@rehab.ie
-  +353667190559
-  <https://rehab.ie/rehabcare/>
-  Blennerville Resource Centre, Blennerville, Tralee, Co. Kerry

INSPIRED

-  info@inspired.ie
-  +353667117315
-  <https://inspired.ie/>
-  Brandon Court, Basin Road, Tralee, Co. Kerry, V92PDE2

STUDIO 3

-  info@kerry.studio3.org
-  +353667128872
-  <https://www.studio3.org/>
-  3F DavCon Business Centre, Monavalley, Tralee, Co. Kerry, V92PP8

SAINT JOHN OF GOD KERRY SERVICES. DAY SERVICES

-  <https://www.flipsnack.com/875C6ABBDC9/sjog-day-services-information-booklet.html>
-  +353667199721
-  <https://sjogkerryservices.ie/our-services/day-services/>
-  Cork Kerry Community Healthcare, Health Service Executive, Community Services Building, Rathass, Tralee, Co. Kerry, V92 YA25

IRISH PILGRIMAGE TRUST

-  info@irishpilgrimagetrust.com
-  +353 (0) 91 796622
-  <https://www.irishpilgrimagetrust.com/>
-  The Irish Pilgrimage Trust, Kilcuan, Clarinbridge, Galway, H91 W596