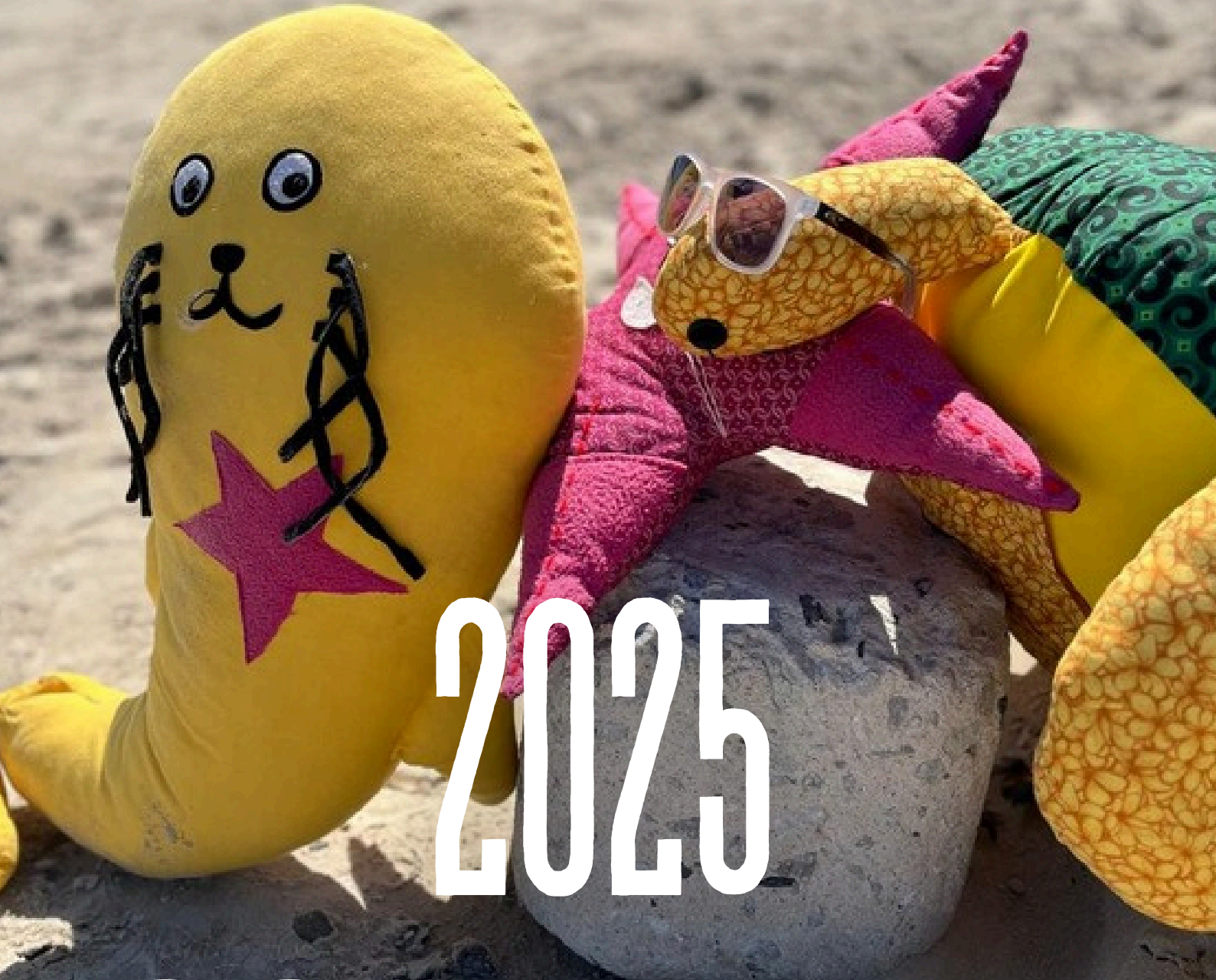


IMPACT REPORT



2025



DARCEY
SUNSHINE.ORG

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SPREADING SUNSHINE SINCE 2020

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2025

2025 AT A GLANCE

SOUTH AFRICA
ZIMBABWE
SCOTLAND

VOICES FROM OUR COMMUNITIES

FUNDING THE SUNSHINE

SCOTLAND
SOUTH AFRICA

WALL OF SUNSHINE

2025 COMMUNITY FUNDRAISERS

THE WAY AHEAD

A FINAL WORD



SPREADING SUNSHINE SINCE 2020

THE DARCEY SUNSHINE FOUNDATION - SPREADING SUNSHINE SAVING LIVES

The Darcey Sunshine Foundation was created in memory of 3 year old Darcey, following her tragic death in a backyard pool accident in February 2020.

Our mission is simple but vital, to **prevent childhood drowning through survival swimming and water safety education.**

THE GLOBAL BURDEN OF DROWNING

Around 300,000 people die from drowning every year worldwide.

Children are most at risk:

- Drowning is the **4th leading cause of death for children aged 1-4**
- And the **3rd leading cause for children aged 5-14.**

The burden is highly unequal:

- Over 90% of drowning deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, where access to swimming lessons and water safety education is limited.

Many of these deaths occur in communities where children interact with water daily, e.g. rivers, lakes, irrigation canals, and floodwaters, without the skills or knowledge to stay safe.

OUR IMPACT SINCE 2020



1,000+ children have learned life-saving survival swim skills

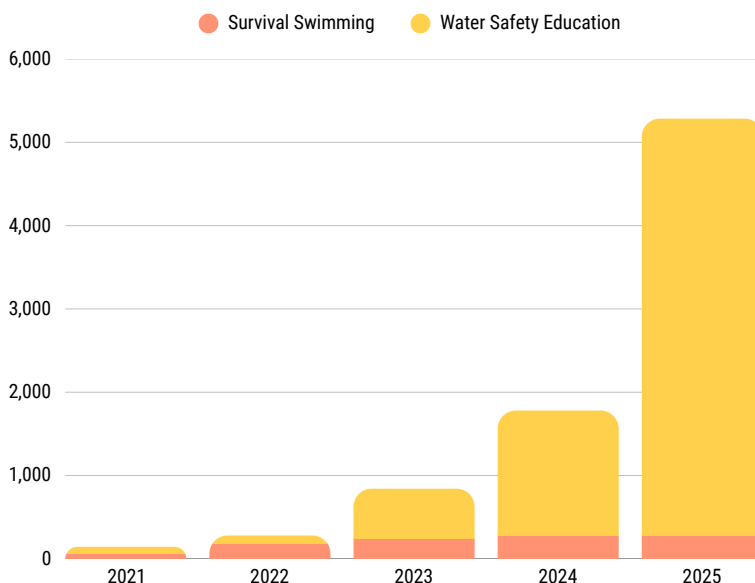


7,000+ children have received water safety education



4 countries delivering programmes that improve awareness, behaviours, and safety around water

OUR GROWTH SINCE 2020



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2025



284 children received 16 weeks of survival swimming lessons across 10 schools in the Western Cape

284 Parent Partnerships created through Water Safety Education workshops including CPR



208 vulnerable children learned basic swimming skills with Sharon Freeman Swimming Academy in Zimbabwe

Scottish Swimming petition to protect Scottish pools and make swimming a mandatory part of the school curriculum supported in Scottish parliament.





2025 AT A GLANCE

South Africa

In 2025, the Darcey Sunshine Foundation's South Africa programme continued to strengthen its delivery of beach safety education, survival swimming, and community-based water safety awareness. Through strong partnerships and refined safeguarding systems, the team has built a more structured, resilient, and impactful programme.

Leadership and Team Sunshine

The Sunshine team, led by Dr Bryony May, demonstrated strong collaboration, communication, and operational management throughout the year. They continue to strengthen relationships with our partner swim schools, Jo Jo Swimming Academy, Jade's Swim School, Making Waves Swim School, Swimmatix and Hout Bay Swimming Academy to provide high quality survival swimming to children across the Western Cape.

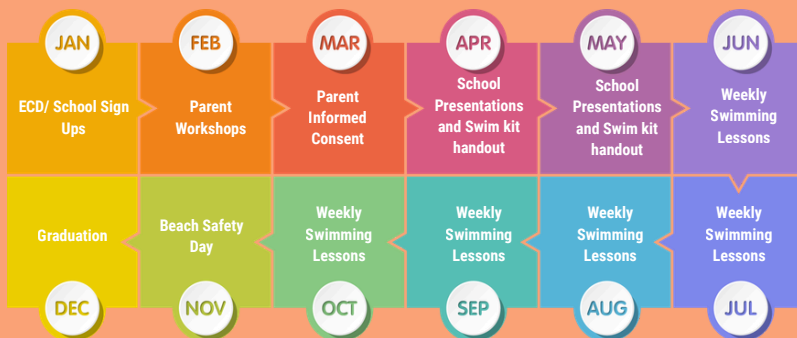


Survival Swim Programme

Our Survival Swim Programme runs year-round, and in 2025, **284 children from 10 Early Childhood Development Centres participated, supported by our 5 partner swim schools.** School and swim school partnerships remained strong. While larger schools such as Bottelary Primary and Hangberg Pre-Primary present logistical and communication challenges, significant improvements were achieved this year, helping even more children gain vital life-saving skills.



Key programme components:



Theory education and school reach

In 2025, over 5,000 learners (Grades 1–12) received water safety theory education through assemblies, classroom storytelling, and interactive role-play sessions. Many schools continue to request repeat visits.

Adult education remains an underdeveloped but critical area. Language, diversity, and cultural variation across communities highlight the need for a broader, community-based educator team. Plans are underway to mentor additional educators in 2026 to expand reach and build a stronger regional safety culture.



Beach safety education days

Beach Safety days were delivered at Strand, Muizenberg and Hout Bay, in partnership with Lifesaving South Africa, Strand Kitesurfing Club and local Spur restaurants.

The children received Beach Safety education and had fun in the waves with the local lifeguards teaching about the difference between still water in a pool or dam, to the movement and strong currents experienced at the beach.

With a delicious lunch from local Spur restaurants, the beach days are always memorable for both the children and the adults who support each year.

Adult survival swimming – a critical need

In South Africa, an estimated 85% of adults cannot swim. Internal programme research suggests over 95% of parents in the vulnerable communities we serve lack swimming ability or water safety education.

In 2024, four Early Childhood Development teachers completed adult survival swimming training, becoming confident water safety ambassadors within their schools and communities. Although 2025 delivery was delayed due to timing and logistical challenges, 10 teachers across multiple regions are ready to participate.

We would love to empower teachers with survival swimming skills in order to:

- Strengthen pupil support during lessons
- Increase engagement
- Help shift generational fear around water
- Build long-term community safety culture

However funding will need to be generated locally for this endeavour.

Final thoughts from Sunshine Co-ordinator, Dr Bryony May

“2025 was another year of collaborative progress in growing water safety awareness across our region. Our partnerships continue to expand as both the need and the impact of this work become increasingly clear.

Through our work with vulnerable communities, we see firsthand how financial barriers limit access to swimming and water safety skills. While adult supervision is critical for children’s safety around water, many adults in South Africa have never learned these life-saving skills themselves – a gap that must be addressed to reduce drowning risk.

With exciting developments in our educational model, 2026 promises to build an even stronger culture of water safety, protecting and empowering thousands of young lives.”



OUR BENEFICIARIES

In 2025, we were delighted to welcome 284 children from 10 early childhood development centres across the Western Cape of South Africa:

- **Great Beginnings**
- **Maryka Educare - Eerste River**
- **Little Smarties - Smartie Town**
- **Fundi Rainbow Educare - Strand**
- **Covenant Primary School - Strand**
- **Bottelary Primary School - Stellenbosch Farms**
- **Siyazama - Hout Bay**
- **Hout Bay Educare - Hout Bay**
- **Hangberg Pre-Primary - Hout Bay**
- **Joy Lighthouse - Vrygrond**



OUR PARTNERED SWIM SCHOOLS 2025

In the Western Cape of South Africa, we rely on our fabulous partner swim schools for the delivery of our survival swim programme. With their support, we evaluate each and every child's skill level at weeks 1, 8 and 16 to assess development. We are so thankful to each of our swim schools for their continued passion for change, for their dedication to ensuring EVERY child becomes safer in and around water, and for the love and patience they show each of our Sunshine Kids:

- **Making Waves Swim School - Gordon's Bay**
- **Jo Jo Swimming Academy - Somerset West**
- **Jade's Swim School - Stellenridge**
- **Swimmattix Swim School - Muizenberg**
- **Hout Bay Swimming Academy - Hout Bay**

Each of our partner swim schools deliver comprehensive private swimming lessons for both adults and children. Without them, 1000 children would not have been reached in the last 5 years with survival swim skills.





Zimbabwe

In 2025, the Darcey Sunshine Foundation strengthened its international impact through collaboration with Sharon Freeman Swim Academy in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Led by Sharon Freeman, the academy has long been committed to drowning prevention, learn-to-swim programmes, and inclusive aquatic education for babies, adults, and children with physical or cognitive challenges. For many years, the academy has quietly subsidised or waived fees for single parents, orphans, adopted children, and families facing financial hardship, ensuring that access to swimming and water awareness is not determined by income.

By formally aligning with the Darcey Sunshine Foundation, this work now sits within a broader water safety framework, strengthening both its identity and reach.



Strategic value of the partnership

The collaboration provides several key benefits for drowning prevention efforts in Zimbabwe:

Resource Optimisation

- Shared expertise, materials, and branding reduce administrative burden and enable more vulnerable children to access structured water safety education.

Expanded Reach Through a “Sister Foundation” Model

- Alignment with Darcey Sunshine’s established programmes in South Africa and Scotland enables curriculum sharing, safeguarding standards, and cross-border best practice transfer.

Unified Advocacy

- A stronger, collective voice increases the likelihood of influencing national education stakeholders to include water safety within school curricula.

Strengthened Community Trust

- Operating under an established international foundation helps overcome cultural hesitations around swimming and builds credibility in high-risk communities.

Darcey Sunshine’s provision of branded swim caps, T-shirts, and participation incentives has also supported engagement and motivation among young learners.

The urgent context

Drowning remains one of the leading causes of accidental death globally, particularly among children under five. It is silent, rapid, and can occur in as little as 20 seconds.

Key risk factors in Zimbabwe include:

Over 90% of global drowning deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.

The majority of adults in vulnerable communities cannot swim.

Active supervision practices (such as assigning a designated “Water Watcher”) are not widely recognised or implemented.

Access to formal swimming and water safety education remains limited.

Research shows that participation in formal swimming lessons can reduce the risk of drowning in young children by up to 88% – highlighting the lifesaving potential of accessible programmes.

Programme focus in Zimbabwe

Through this partnership, the Darcey Sunshine Foundation supports:

Survival swimming: Providing free or subsidised lessons to children unable to afford them.

Water safety advocacy: Delivering storytelling-based and school presentations that teach the “ABCs” of water safety.

Inclusive instruction: Ensuring children with disabilities and adults with no prior water confidence are not excluded from lifesaving skills.

Out of the thousands of children taught through the academy, there is confirmed evidence that at least one life has been saved as a direct result of swimming education – a powerful reminder that every lesson carries life-saving potential.

Looking ahead

This collaboration marks the beginning of a more structured, unified drowning prevention strategy in Zimbabwe. By combining grassroots commitment with international support, the partnership aims to:

Increase access to survival swimming

Build adult water confidence

Raise awareness of supervision practices

Advocate for systemic inclusion of water safety education

Drowning prevention requires collective effort. This partnership reflects a shared belief that sustainable impact is achieved not in isolation, but together.





Scotland

Advocacy and awareness

In 2025, we significantly amplified our voice in the national conversation around water safety and drowning prevention. We raised awareness through national and regional platforms including the Made by Mamas podcast, Scottish Swimming channels, and by speaking at egg Glasgow's inaugural Women on Top event. Alongside Sophie McGown (Ear SASS) and egg founder Kylie Reid, we shared an honest discussion about grief, resilience and purpose-driven change – ensuring that Darcey's legacy continues to spark vital conversations.

In partnership with Duncan Scott OBE and leading health and aquatics specialists, we supported Scottish Swimming's Petition to the Scottish Government. We provided evidence directly to the Petitions Committee, advocating for the protection of Scotland's swimming pools.

We reinforced these key messages:

- The urgent need to safeguard at-risk community pools through the implementation of a joint taskforce to evaluate and protect facilities.
- The importance of compulsory school swimming as the only truly equitable route to ensuring every child can learn this life-saving skill.
- With drowning remaining one of the leading causes of accidental death worldwide, protecting access to swimming lessons is a public health priority – not a luxury.

We continued to contribute to Water Safety Scotland's Education and Communication Subgroups and supported their Open Day at Lomond Shores on 25 July to mark World Drowning Prevention Day, aligning our work with national drowning prevention strategy.



Community engagement

Community remains central to our mission.

Our annual Elie Big Dook and Sandcastle Competition (26 July) brought together more than 100 participants for a powerful and uplifting day of remembrance, education and connection.

The cold-water dook honours lives lost to drowning while reinforcing the importance of informed, safe engagement with open water. The sandcastle competition, joyfully supported by Princess Ariel, continues to grow in popularity and is fast becoming a highlight of the Elie summer calendar.

These events are not only moments of togetherness but opportunities to embed water safety messaging directly into families and communities.

Access to lessons and partnerships

Access to swimming lessons remains the cornerstone of our impact.

Our partnership with Swim Easy strengthened further this year, enhanced by their collaboration with the Spartans Foundation. Together, we are ensuring that children who face financial barriers are able to access high-quality swimming lessons.

We formed new partnerships with Xcite Leisure (West Lothian) and Making Waves Swim School (East Kilbride), significantly extending our geographic reach. These relationships position us for substantial growth in Scottish impact in 2026, enabling us to support more families and reduce inequity in access to swimming.



Fundraising and sustainability

Our Winter Sunshine Ball, headline sponsored by Arnold Clark, was a landmark evening for the Foundation.

With additional support from W1M Financial Management and James Porter & Son, and the dedication of volunteers from Lloyds Banking Group and Scottish Widows, who not only ensured the evening ran seamlessly but also raised £2,500 in sponsorship, the event was an outstanding success.

Thanks to the generosity of our prize donors, long-standing supporters, and our exceptional Ball Committee, we raised £90,000 in one evening, making 2025 a record fundraising year for the Darcey Sunshine Foundation.

These funds directly support bursaries, international partnerships, education initiatives and advocacy work, transforming grief into tangible life-saving action.



Challenges and looking ahead

While 2025 has been a year of progress, challenges remain.

Recruitment into our Scottish bursary programme continues to be more limited than demand would suggest, highlighting ongoing barriers around awareness, referral pathways and community engagement. Sustainable, long-term funding also remains a priority to ensure stability and scalability.

In response, 2026 will see the introduction of our "Community Pots" model, a locally focused funding approach designed to ensure each community we serve has dedicated, ring-fenced resources to support children in that area. This model will strengthen accountability, local ownership and sustainability, enabling deeper and more consistent impact.



Voices from our COMMUNITIES

“Thank you for your continued partnership with us, you have brought light and hope to both our children and staff. Most of our children this year was so afraid of water and did not know the basics of being safe around water but your YES! to partnership made room for our kids to learn the importance of safety around water. Our children is not afraid of water anymore, they know the basics of being safe around water. To all the roleplayers both seen and unseen you have made a huge impact and brought hope to many.”

Joy Lighthouse

“Thank you so much Darcey Foundation for the year you have taught Junior about water safety and to enjoy water responsibilities, we appreciate what you have done may your good work always be blessed always.”

Parent, Maryka Educare

“I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for all the amazing work you do with the children. I can't swim myself so seeing the progress my daughter has made has given me a great sense of peace.”

Parent, Maryka Educare

“You've created an environment that's not only helped our child grow, but also build up a lot of confidence and becoming a determined young person. Your guidance and support mean the world to us, and we're so grateful for the time and energy you've invested in our kids.”

Cai's Mother

“Thank you so much to the people that trained and taught our kids the swimming and survival skills they have today...I am forever grateful.”

Parent, Hout Bay Educare

FUNDING THE SUNSHINE

SCOTLAND

Presented are the financial accounts for The Darcey Sunshine Project (SCIO) for the financial year September 2024 to September 2025. Please note that these accounts do not yet reflect the record-breaking £90,000 raised at our 2025 Winter Sunshine Ball in partnership with Arnold Clark.

We remain incredibly grateful to all our supporters, donors, sponsors and event attendees whose generosity enables us to continue making a meaningful difference across two continents.

Our 2024 Winter Sunshine Ball, proudly sponsored by McQuilkin Laboratory Supplies and Clyde Property, raised an outstanding £45,000. We are especially thankful to the volunteers from Santander, our generous prize donors, loyal supporters, and our dedicated Fundraising Committee for making the evening such a success.

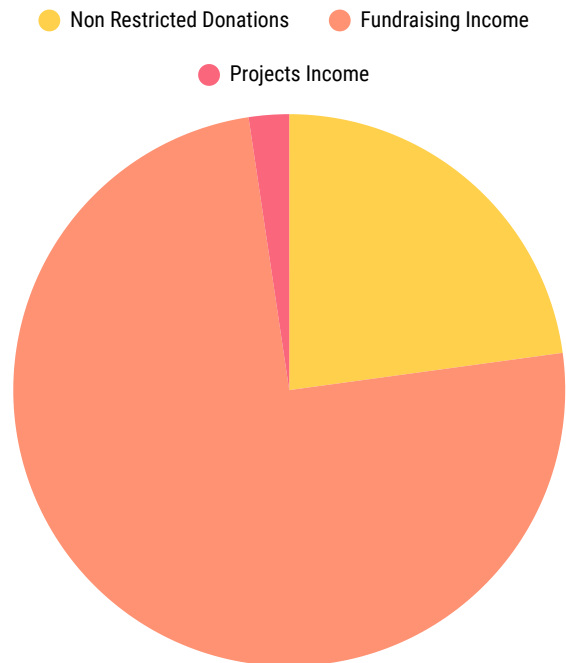
In July 2025, our Big Dook and Sandcastle Competition raised £4,200 while honouring lives lost to drowning and reinforcing the importance of safe, informed engagement with open water. We extend our thanks to Johnny Aitken of the Lodge on Loch Lomond for the delicious breakfast burritos that kept our enthusiastic sandcastle builders fuelled, and to the Elie community for their wonderful raffle prize donations.

Our incredible community fundraisers raised a remarkable £8,000 through the Edinburgh and Loch Ness Marathons, an extreme cycle around the Isle of Wight, and a team Channel and Robben Island crossing. We are deeply thankful to these committed supporters who continually challenge themselves to raise both awareness and vital funds to help prevent drowning.

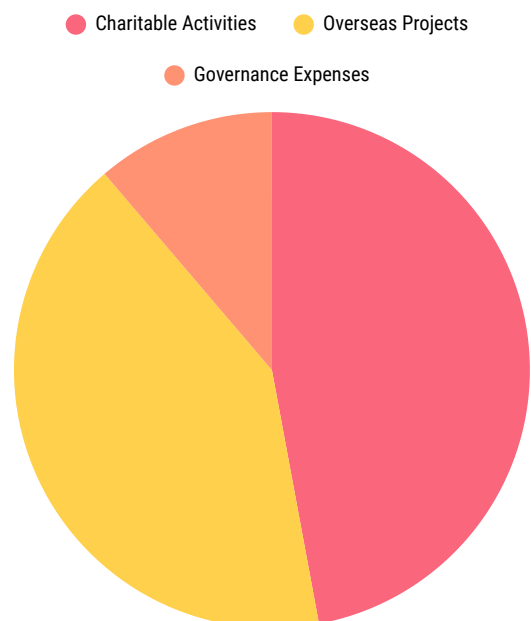
We are also sincerely grateful for the continued support of The Ronald Miller Foundation, Glasgow Eastern Merchants and the Garratt Family Trust. Their ongoing commitment reflects a shared belief in our mission and a dedication to ensuring every child has the opportunity to navigate the world around them safely.

Without this collective support, we would be unable to deliver vital water safety education and survival swimming skills to children facing financial hardship.

Total Income 2024/25:
£105,668



Total Expenditure
2024/25: £83,969



SOUTH AFRICA

The following financial accounts for The Darcey Sunshine Foundation (NPC) are for the financial year February 2025 to February 2026.

This year, more than 90% of funding for our South African projects was generated through UK fundraising efforts. While we are deeply grateful for this continued support, we remain focused on securing sustainable, locally sourced funding within South Africa to strengthen our community partnerships and empower more children with life-saving water safety knowledge.



We appreciate continued support from Somerset College with their annual Grade 1 Splash and Dash raising over R7,000, and the fabulous fundraising from the Cape Town Masters swimmers of R10,000 this year.

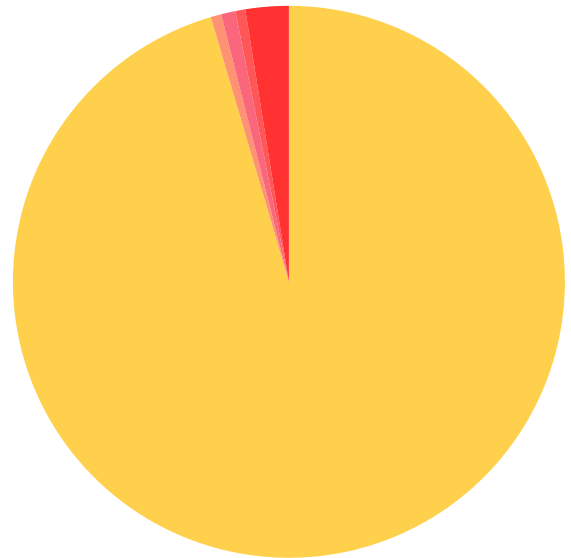


This year we introduced our new campaign, Sunshine Civvies Day, where schools and local businesses embraced the campaign by wearing yellow to spread some much-needed Winter Sunshine, while raising awareness of the critical role water safety education plays in preventing drowning, for World Drowning Prevention Day. Schools and businesses managed to raise over R30,000. We are proud to confirm that this initiative will now become an annual fundraiser, uniting communities each year in a shared commitment to prevention and education.

For several of our partner schools, we are now entering our fifth year of collaboration. We are committed to ensuring that every partnership we establish is meaningful, impactful and sustainable. Securing reliable, long-term funding is essential to achieving this, and we will continue to pursue local corporate sponsors, strategic partners and funding opportunities within South Africa.

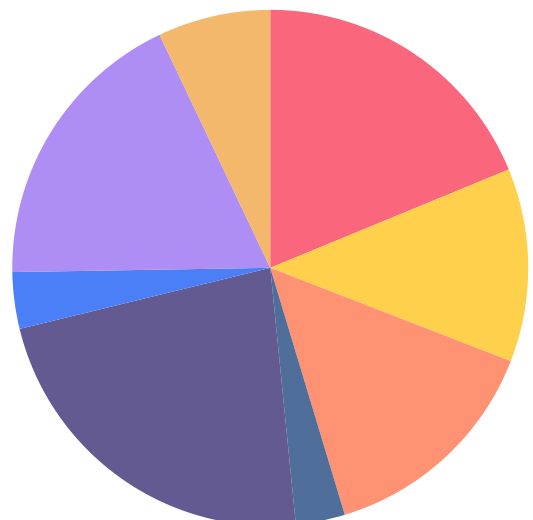
Total Income 2025/26: R1,220,944

- Darcey Sunshine Project UK
- Somerset College
- Cape Town Masters Swimmers
- Individual Donors
- Sunshine Civvies Day



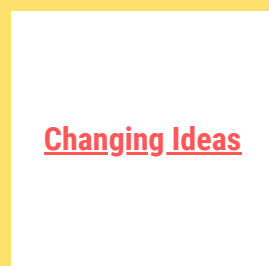
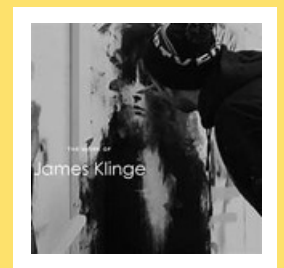
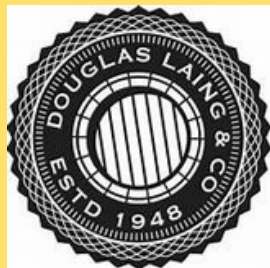
Total Expenditure 2024/25: R1,332,853

- Transport
- Swim Accessories
- Swimming Instruction
- Pool Rental
- Project Co-ordination
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Operating Costs
- Other



WALL OF SUNSHINE

Without our incredible supporters from across the globe, we would be entirely unable to provide this life changing, life preserving education. A huge thank you to our local and global sponsors, whether supporting our fundraising events, sponsoring kit, supporting our drowning prevention programmes or supporting our behind the scenes operations, THANK YOU! For our 2026 sponsorship opportunities, please reach out to hello@darceysunshine.org.



THE WAY AHEAD

As we look to the year ahead, The Darcey Sunshine Foundation is focused on deepening its impact and expanding access to lifesaving water safety education. Guided by our values of integrity, compassion, dignity, inclusion and hope, our priority is simple: ensuring every child has the opportunity to be safe and confident around water.

Strengthening leadership and governance

In 2026, we will continue to strengthen and diversify our Scottish and South African Boards, ensuring strong governance and a wide range of perspectives guide our work. We will also further embed our safeguarding culture in South Africa through additional training and professional development, keeping the wellbeing of children and communities at the heart of everything we do.

Expanding partnerships in Zimbabwe

In response to high drowning rates in Zimbabwe, we are proud to formalise our partnership with Sharon Freeman Swim Academy in Harare. Together, we are delivering survival swim skills to children from local orphanages and the families of domestic workers—many of whom live near unprotected water sources. In 2026, we look forward to strengthening this partnership and expanding access to lifesaving skills for those most at risk.



Improving access in Scotland

In Scotland, we remain committed to ensuring every child has the opportunity to learn basic survival swim skills. Through our work with Water Safety Scotland and partnerships with Swim Easy Ltd, Making Waves Swim School and Xcite Leisure, we will continue to:

- Improve access to lessons for children facing financial hardship
- Support children with additional support needs
- Prioritise children aged 9–13 who have not yet learned to swim

Ensuring these children can develop essential water safety skills is critical to preventing drowning.

Sustaining impact in South Africa

Our programmes in South Africa will continue to grow and evolve in response to community needs. In the year ahead, we aim to expand local fundraising, reach more schools with water safety education, and pilot peer education sessions that empower teenagers with survival skills and leadership training, helping to build a new generation of water safety ambassadors.

A shared future

With strong leadership, growing partnerships and the continued support of our global community, The Darcey Sunshine Foundation is well placed to create lasting change. Together, we are working towards a world where every child can live, learn and play safely around water. No other family need suffer such a preventable, tragic loss.



DARCEY
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A FINAL WORD FROM DARCEY SUNSHINE FOUNDER

Kirsty Doig

The end of the year offers a moment to pause and reflect on the incredible impact achieved across three countries over the past twelve months. The Darcey Sunshine Foundation was born from unimaginable loss following the death of my beautiful little girl, Darcey, in February 2020. Since then, more than 1,000 children have learned life-saving survival-swim skills and over 7,000 have received vital water-safety education, helping to change behaviours, attitudes and awareness around water.

2025 has been a hugely impactful year, made possible by the dedication of our global community. With support from Colin Graham Associates, we welcomed four new trustees to our UK Board, Greg Smith, James Klinge, Karen Haxton and Kimberley Hamilton, and said a heartfelt farewell to Polly Garratt, whose support has been invaluable since the charity's inception.

In South Africa, we also thanked founding Board member Lucy Gatinho for four years of dedicated service, while Lauren Scott-Rodger, Katrina Tyson and Sandi Theron continue to guide and support our flagship programmes.

I was honoured to support Scottish Swimming's Save Our Pools and School Swimming campaigns at the Scottish Parliament, advocating for swimming and water safety to become a mandatory part of the school curriculum so every child has the chance to be safe around water.

My heartfelt thanks go to our partners in Zimbabwe for their passion and leadership in protecting children in their local communities, and to our incredible team who continue to strengthen programmes in Scotland and South Africa. I am also deeply grateful to supporters around the world who swam, cycled and ran to raise awareness and funds for drowning prevention.

Above all, 2025 has shown the power of community, purpose and perseverance. Every child reached represents a life better protected. As I look to 2026, I do so with hope and gratitude to everyone helping us spread sunshine and save lives.

Kirsty Doig