

Darjeeling Children's Trust Annual Report 2016

Charity Registration No. 1143109

Principal office address: 151 Abbey Road, Westbury-On-Trym, Bristol BS9 3QH

Trustees :

Pasang Wangdi, Sharan Patel, Hugh Heron, Katherine Carr, Clare Blakeway-Phillips, Marilyn Adams (Chairperson), Vik Patel, Andrew Carr, Felicity Christensen, Nima Wangdi, Sunita Halai and Sonam Dorjee.

Governance and Management

The Darjeeling Children's Trust (DCT) was originally constituted by Trust Deed in early 2008. This document was amended in June 2011 to comply with a suggested amendment from the Charity Commission to allow full registration to proceed. The current Trust Deed is dated June 2011 and registration by the Charity Commission was confirmed on 27 July 2011.

New trustees are invited to join the Trust when either a vacancy arises due to the resignation of a current trustee or when a gap is identified in the skills available to trustees and which needs to be filled. The procedure followed is in accordance with advice published by the Charity Commission.

During 2016 three additional trustees were appointed: Sunita Halai, Nima Wangdi and Sonam Dorjee; and two trustees, Penelope Adams and Katie Williams, resigned from the Board.

Objectives and Activities

The Trust seeks to advance the education and preserve and protect the good health of the children and young people of Darjeeling through the provision and improvement of education facilities, through improvements to their living conditions and through sponsorship.

In September 2012 trustees approved the Trust's second five year plan to cover the period 2013 – 2018 which provides detailed targets which are consistent with the Trust's aims and objectives. This plan sets the context against which suggested new projects are assessed. The plan states that Darjeeling Children's Trust will work with the local community to:

- Sponsor individual children to attend better schools;
- Help improve the physical fabric of schools where conditions have an adverse impact upon children's health and where this work would contribute to the quality of the educational experience, including by inviting supporters of the Trust to adopt individual school improvement projects;
- Fund a travelling library to visit at least 6 primary schools to encourage literacy, access to information and a love of reading and hold an annual story telling competition;
- Provide music teaching in primary schools and for all sponsored children and provide tuition for musically gifted children within these groups to enable them to enter music exams if desired;

- Fund and provide support for young people to undertake hospitality training and nursing training and provide vocational training in needlework at the Girls' Orphanage;
- Fund health improvement measures for girls and boys at a local orphanage;
- Support the rebuilding of a boys' and girls' orphanage to provide an improved living environment for the children and young people;
- Facilitate volunteering in Darjeeling as and when candidates with the appropriate skills and aptitudes present themselves.
- In addition Trustees will ensure a full range of management skills is available to ensure the long term sustainability of Darjeeling Children's Trust and that visits are made by UK Trustees twice a year to Darjeeling so far as is possible.

Achievements and Performance in 2016

Three trustees of Darjeeling Children's Trust: Major Pasang Wandi, Sonam Dorjee and Nima Wangdi, live permanently in Darjeeling and oversee the work of the Trust on the ground. Visits to Darjeeling were made by two UK based trustees during 2016: Hugh Heron and Marilyn Adams and by DCT treasurer Robert Adams. These visits took place in April and November 2016. In addition Major Wangdi and Nima Wangdi visited the UK in March/April and attended publicity events in Yorkshire, London and Bristol.

The work that the Trust was able to achieve in 2016 was adversely affected by the change to the exchange rate from Sterling to Rupees with the falling value of sterling after June 2016.

a) Improvements to schools

Fewer school improvements were implemented in 2016 than in some previous years. One initial request for help was made in autumn 2015 but was not pursued by the school concerned. Improvements made were funding of a new gate, fence and walling at Mahatma Ghandi School and two new tables at Red Cross School. The ability of the Trust to carry out further major improvements in future will be impacted by the exchange rate, unless it improves significantly, or by trustees attaching higher priority to this area of activity.

Stationery continues to be supplied on an as needed basis to 10 schools.

b) Travelling Library

The Trust's librarian/storyteller is an experienced teacher who has continued the work of the travelling library with visits being made to seven primary schools. The number of schools has reduced slightly from 2015 because the number of children at some schools has reduced significantly to single figures.

The project itself continues to work well. In addition to hearing stories the children engage in art, which will be extended to include other craft activities in 2017. Stories are also used to pass on messages concerning health issues.

c) Music teaching in schools

The teaching of music in primary schools was identified as a target in the Trust's revised five year plan, which was adopted in 2013, as access to and participation in musical activities has been shown by research to have a beneficial effect upon a child's emotional and intellectual development. The Trust's peripatetic music teacher has now been working with the children for over five years. He visits nine municipal primary schools and also provides singing lessons to the children sponsored through the Trust by visiting two additional schools where they are students.

The children continue to learn new songs but additional resources of song books are required for the 5-11 age group from spring 2017.

d) Vocational training

DCT has continued to provide financial support to young people undertaking vocational training courses, including paying for course fees, books, uniforms and where appropriate for travel and hostel accommodation.

Six young people (four young men and two young women) started the hospitality training course at the Food and Craft Institute, a government college in Darjeeling, in summer 2016. They will remain at college until mid 2017 after which they will do their practical training in hotel placements arranged by their tutor. Subject to their successful completion of the course in summer 2017 and the 6 months' work placement, they will each gain a nationally recognised Diploma. All come from poor families and without support would be unable to do the course

Experience has demonstrated that this training provides a successful way into employment by young people who previously were unable to gain work. A number of the graduates from the course now work in Middle East countries and their skills continue to be in high demand both in India and abroad. Experience is showing that they are using their incomes to support their families in Darjeeling in various ways.

Two young women are now sponsored through the Trust to undertake nurse training. One of the young women is now in her final year of study on a three and a half year nursing course in Silguri. Her course also provides her with experience and skills in community health. She will be required to work at a government specified location within West Bengal for 6 months after completion of her course after which she will be free to seek employment anywhere she wishes. The second nurse trainee is in her second year of study at the main Government hospital in Darjeeling.

Trustees decided in 2015 to try and broaden the vocational training opportunities available to girls with fewer educational qualifications. In the knowledge that there is great demand for beauticians and also that this is a job that can be done from home with very little initial capital outlay, an arrangement was made for training to be provided at a local salon for three young women. The scheme was initiated in 2015 when three young women completed the course and a further three young women were enrolled on the course at a local salon in mid 2016. They have now finished their training.

All three came from low income families and none had a job before starting their training.

The training in needlework skills has continued at the Girls' Orphanage with an experienced teacher. Eight senior girls attend regularly and they have developed a range of needlework skills which are being extended to include both manual and machine knitting. The girls have continued to

enjoy the course and the quality of their work has improved. The skills which they are learning will allow them to return to work at home and earn an income if they eventually return to their home villages.

e) Health improvements at the orphanages

Funding for health improvement measures initially concentrated on the Girls' Orphanage in view of their more apparent needs due to the cramped nature of their site and consequent crowded living conditions which have an adverse impact upon their health. Early measures concentrated upon provision of goods such as combs, medicated soap and towels. This expanded over time to include water deliveries to allow better personal hygiene but as water is now provided by another donor, the deliveries funded by DCT have stopped. In addition the girls also benefit from visits from a qualified nurse paid for by the Trust who advises them, provides health education and has an overview of their health. She also advises the Trust of specific needs, such as for medication, as they arise. From March 2016, her role has been supported by a young woman who had previously been supported by DCT to undertake paramedic training. Her appointment has allowed regular weekly health checks to take place and she also helps the younger girls to wash properly once a week. Continuing these checks are especially important for new arrivals and as girls return from their home villages when they may present with problems such as scabies. Any problems are now identified and addressed rapidly and with greater effect.

This activity by the Trust was expanded to include deliveries of medicated soap and towels to the 60 boys in the Boys' Orphanage. Even though the boys' living environment improved immeasurably when they moved into their new dormitory accommodation in November 2014, the Trust is continuing to provide soap and towels on an as needed basis. In addition visits are now being made to the boys' orphanage by the nurse and nurse assistant and health checks are being carried out regularly.

The resources provided by the Trust continue to make a significant difference to the children and young people's health and well-being, especially since problems are more quickly addressed as they arise. It is hoped that when all 100 children have new accommodation and adequate water supplies are more readily available, the improvement in living conditions will result in fewer health problems and the support which DCT provides can then be reviewed.

f) Supporting redevelopment of the orphanages

DCT has continued to work in partnership with the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission, acting as supporter, adviser and fund raiser to the Mission in order to achieve the redevelopment of the boys' orphanage site so that it can eventually accommodate 60 boys and 40 girls. Responsibility for managing the project, however, lies with the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission which is a completely separate body and which has also been raising monies. The project team includes DCT trustees, members of the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission, the site managers implementing the scheme and a Delhi based firm of architects which has provided a significant amount of pro bono work.

Fund raising efforts are now being directed towards raising monies for the second phase for which the ground breaking ceremony was held in November 2015. A programme of phased demolition was carried out throughout 2016 which was closely linked to the phased programme of construction of foundations and slabs so that one preceded the other.

Funds raised by DCT to support the project are transferred through the Kripasaran Mission's FCRA account.

g) Child Sponsorship

A total of 67 children were being sponsored through the Trust at the end of 2016.

The main challenge facing the Trust is ensuring the continuity of funding for each child, although reserves are sufficient to match any shortfall generated in this way.

There has been a significant increase in costs attached to the scheme resulting largely from rises in school fees. Consequently requests for sponsorship have resulted in a doubling up of some sponsors now being attached to some children. Increasing costs are likely to continue as the children increase in age and further costs eg computer fees and more expensive books are incurred.

The scheme is of significant benefit to the children who are now in better education. They appear to have a developing self-confidence and the majority are making good progress in their studies. It is however a difficult process for the children to adapt to a more rigorous education system and some take longer than others to do so. Consequently a small number are being required to repeat their last school year to ensure that they achieve the required standard. Experience has shown however that once these children settle down they generally do well at school.

Some of the sponsored young people are now completing their education and trustees have initiated development of a careers advice and mentoring programme which will be further developed in 2017.

Although Trustees seek to ensure that families are completely supportive of the process and are settled in Darjeeling, there can be no guarantee of each child continuing in the scheme. Such an event represents a lost opportunity to another child and a waste of resources to the Trust. Nevertheless such incidents are infrequent and do not invalidate the programme in any way. There were no such withdrawals in 2015.

h) Fund raising

Donations, fund raising events and sponsorship are the three largest sources of income for the Trust. Whilst the total amount derived from gift aid and interest is not large it is significant when expenditure is considered. The challenge for the Trust in the next few years will be to maintain the level of income under these three heads to ensure that funds are available for core activities whilst also increasing the amount available for Phase 2 of the orphanage redevelopment.

Trust running costs are the smallest area of expenditure. The major components of this are fees charged by electronic cash transfers and by Just Giving. None of this expenditure relates to the payment of personal expenses for Trustees and the Trust remains fortunate that all trustees are willing to cover all such costs themselves. It should also be noted that the total running costs remain significantly lower than the amount of income from Gift Aid.

In the current difficult economic climate, DCT is grateful to its supporters for all the monies donated and for the funds which individuals have raised through sponsored events. The annual Darjeeling Cup Golf Day was again significant in raising funds towards DCT's core activities as well as to the

orphanage rebuilding project. The main fund raising event took place in London in April 2016 with funds raised contributing to the redevelopment of the Kripasaran orphanage.

i) Policy on reserves and other financial issues

The Trust's policy on reserves is to maintain a minimum cash balance of £7500, a figure which will be periodically reviewed. None of the funds held by the Trust are in deficit.

The Trust does not act as the Custodian Trustee for any assets.

Recommendation: The report be adopted as a fair and true account of the Darjeeling Children's Trust's activities in 2016

Approved 11th March 2017

Marilyn Adams

Chairperson

Darjeeling Children's Trust