

# **Darjeeling Children's Trust: Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 December 2018**

**Charity Registration No. 1143109**

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

## **Trustees :**

The following were trustees during the period from the start of 2018 to the date of this report.

Sharan Patel, Hugh Heron, Katherine Carr, Clare Blakeway-Phillips, Marilyn Adams (Chairperson), Vik Patel, Sunita Halai, Elizabeth Nottingham all of whom are resident in the UK and Pasang Wangdi, Nima Wangdi, and Sonam Dorjee who are resident in India

## **Governance and Management**

The Darjeeling Children's Trust (DCT) is a UK charity governed by UK law. It 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 15 July 2011 and registration by the Charity Commission was confirmed on 27 July 2011.

## **Recruitment of Trustees**

The minimum number of trustees is three. Trustees are appointed for three years by a resolution of trustees passed at a Special Meeting. 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.

Andrew Carr resigned from the Board on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018.

Elizabeth Nottingham joined the Board on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2018.

## **Charitable Objectives and Activities**

The objectives of the charity are 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 set the context against which suggested new projects are assessed. Whilst the plan period has expired the Trust currently is working to achieve the same objectives, subject to a plan review. 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.

The trustees have given due regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

### **How the Trust works**

The Trust works in close partnership with its beneficiaries in Darjeeling, seeking to jointly establish achievable goals. The Trust has also built up effective relationships with a number of educational and welfare organisations in Darjeeling. It expects to continue these excellent partnership and working relationships and to continue its activities at current levels.

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 three UK based trustees during 2018: Marilyn Adams (trustee) and DCT treasurer Robert Adams visited in March and Hugh Heron, Clare Blakeway-Phillips (trustees) in November. Joint working between UK and India based trustees and the face to face discussions that these visits facilitate, allow regular monitoring of progress and an assessment of the viability of potential new projects in conjunction with local partners.

Trustees take no expenses. Running costs, excluding the set-up costs of fundraising events, are approximately 2% of total costs. Receipts from HMRC gift aid scheme since the Trust was formed outweigh cumulative running costs so all donation and event income goes to the children and young people of Darjeeling.

At the end of 2018 the Trust had raised £620,000 since its foundation in 2008.

## **Achievements and Performance in 2018**

### **a) Improvements to schools**

A request for significant funding was received from Mahatma Gandhi School for safety and security measures to stabilise the steep bank overlooking the school playground and to secure the area with erection of a steel mesh fence. This was discussed with the local community leaders and agreed in principle in April but work had to be held in abeyance due to the strike and was only completed in early December.

### **Stationery provision to schools**

The numbers of children on the school rolls of the majority of schools previously supported by provision of stationery has been falling, sometimes to single figures. Provision of stationery has therefore been reduced to those schools which can demonstrate a clear need for support.

### **b) Travelling Library and Music teaching in schools**

A review of both activities was carried out in spring 2018. Whilst the number of children in the schools visited by these two projects has been falling support continues amongst school staff and children for the projects.

Discussions took place in March between the Trust's librarian, Tschering Bhutia and a UK volunteer, Grant Robertson, who is a qualified teacher and together they developed a programme of activities which would renew and revitalise the teaching methods and approach used.

With the increased accessibility of films and tv to the children, in general they have become less receptive to a focussed story telling approach to improve their literacy. As a consequence of the discussions held, Tschering is now using a broader cross curriculum craft-based approach which has allowed the teaching of additional subjects including hygiene and this has proved a success. Mahatma Gandhi School has requested two rather than one visit weekly. Funding for the additional resources required to support this approach was approved.

In addition, following a request, Tshering provided additional tuition to the girls at the Kripasaran Children's Home who were anxious to improve their oral and written language skills.

The work of the Trust's music teacher continues to be supported by staff and children at the schools visited. Expenditure for additional resources was approved (a small Bluetooth speaker and additional music). A well-attended concert was organised to coincide with the visit by UK trustees in November in the Good Start Academy School Hall and children showed a range of singing and dancing talents. The concert was also attended by the children's parents and guardians.

### **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.

Five young people (four young men and one young woman) were accepted in summer 2018 for DCT sponsorship on the hospitality training course at the Food and Craft Institute, a government college in Darjeeling.

The young people will remain at college until mid 2019 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 2019 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.

Three past students who had successfully completed the college based element of their course in winter 2018 made visits to talk the older boys and girls at the Kripasaran Children's Home to pass on their experiences of this career path.

DCT has sponsored the nurse training of one young woman for the past three years. She graduated in early 2018 and subsequently obtained a paid post as a junior staff nurse in the same hospital where she did her training. She hopes eventually to gain her B.Sc. as she will qualify to take the relevant exams after working for 5 years.

DCT also stepped in to enable two former residents of the Kripasaran Girls' Home to finish their nurse training as support from another sponsor suddenly stopped. Both had 6 months remaining on their courses in Siliguri which they would otherwise have been unable to complete.

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 two local salons. Since 2015, nine young women have successfully completed the courses and have gone on to gain employment. A further three young women were enrolled on the course at two local salons in mid 2018.

All three came from low income families and one had lived for twelve years at the Kripasaran Children's Home. None had a job before starting their training.

The training in needlework skills with an experienced teacher continued through the year at the Kripasaran Girls' Home. Seven senior girls attend regularly and they have developed a range of needlework skills. 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 independent income if they eventually return to their home villages. One girl who formerly benefitted from these lessons and who now lives in a small town near Darjeeling has bought herself a sewing machine and is earning money by making garments.

#### **e) Health improvements at the Kripasaran Children's Home**

Support for the children and young people continued throughout the year although the numbers in residence reduced during the strike.

Funding for health improvement measures initially concentrated on the Girls' Home 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 and that has continued for boys and

for girls. In addition, deliveries of water were restarted during the year as the support of another donor for these supplies was withdrawn.

All the children at the Kripasaran Homes 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. Her role is supported by a young woman who had previously been sponsored 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. Whilst the girls of all ages are receptive to this help and advice, some problems have been encountered in engaging with the older boys. However visits continued over the year and checks were made regularly on the younger boys including their clothes, fingernails and cleanliness. Problems which have been identified include children who are especially dirty; some who have hardly any clothes; and incidents of scabies and other illnesses.

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 still arise. Even though the boys' living environment improved immeasurably when they moved into their new dormitory accommodation in November 2014, issues still arise and continuing these health checks is especially important for new arrivals and as children 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.

#### **f) Supporting redevelopment of the Kripasaran Children's Home**

The programme of construction is overseen and managed by a Project Team comprising the three DCT trustees based in India, UK trustees Marilyn Adams and Hugh Heron, Pema Bhante who manages the Children's Home and he also heads the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission which is the commissioning body for the works, together with the Architect, Structural Engineer and Project Manager.

Following a break in construction during the whole of 2017, work recommenced in early 2018. It was agreed at that time to concentrate on the horizontal expansion of the girls' accommodation requiring demolition of some of the remaining old buildings on the site with slab construction being completed before the onset of the monsoon. This was followed by construction of the large drain at the bottom of the site.

Following completion of the demolition, work then commenced on foundations and erection of the structural elements. Labour problem in Darjeeling led to some delays during the year.

#### **g) Child Sponsorship**

A total of 58 children were being sponsored through the Trust at the end of 2018 including three young people being sponsored into college or vocational training. These three will receive no further sponsorship once they have completed their courses.

Those facing major exams at years 10 and 12 require extra tuition and arrangements were put in place in December 2018 and for the remaining sponsored children who are in years 7-9 to receive extra tuition for three hours daily in January-February 2019.

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. 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.

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 was one such withdrawal in 2018.

#### **h) Eye Sight Project**

Two DCT supporters who had recently retired from owning a number of opticians' practices noticed when looking at publicity photos of the sponsored children that few were wearing glasses. This was contrary to expectations as usually the figure would be 30% in any large group. They then volunteered to take their skills to Darjeeling and carry out eye tests on the sponsored children. Originally planned for autumn 2017, plans were disrupted by the political troubles in Darjeeling and the visit eventually took place in autumn 2018. Arrangements on the ground were put in place by DCT trustees Major Wangdi and Nima Wangdi and so during a 14 day stay in Darjeeling eye tests were carried out for 170 children and a number of adults, including all the sponsored children and the children and young people at the Kripasaran Children's Home. This number far exceeded original expectations of what might be achieved and took place in sometimes challenging conditions in a number of locations and in a variety of lighting conditions.

Prescriptions for glasses for 40 children and young people and 10 adults were brought back to the UK where thanks to donations by a number of optician firms based in and around Bristol of all the frames and lens needed, the glasses were made up. They were delivered to the children and young people in early November by UK trustees Hugh Heron and Clare Blakeway-Phillips.

This project made a significant contribution to achieving the Trust's aims of advancing the education and preserving and protecting the health and well-being of the children and young people in Darjeeling since being able to see clearly is a pre-requisite to learning.

#### **Fund raising**

Donations, fund raising events and sponsorship are the three largest sources of income for the Trust. The target to raise £16,000 from ad hoc sources during the year was achieved. All donations came from reliable sources.

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 Kripasaran Children's Home redevelopment.

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. DCT's own main fund raising event in 2018 took place in London with monies raised contributing to the redevelopment of the Kripasaran Children's Home. The evening was also a celebration of the Trust's ten year anniversary since its inception and of all that had been achieved over that period.

## Financial Review

Total receipts in the year were £90,238 with payments of £107,636. Both figures are higher than in the previous year. This is because of a major fund-raising event in 2018, and because of an uninterrupted flow of funds to the Children's Home redevelopment project. At the end of 2018 balances were £78,448 of which £35,636 was restricted to the Children's Home project. The remaining £42,812 was held in the UK or in Darjeeling for the Trust's general activities. Both balances are at satisfactory levels based on the Trust's planned activities and the phasing of costs through the year.

Trust running costs are the smallest area of expenditure. The major component of this is the cost of the annual independent examination. Remaining costs relate largely to 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.

## Policy on reserves and other financial issues

The Trust's policy on reserves is to maintain a minimum balance of £7,500 for general activities. Reserves were well above this level throughout 2018. This figure 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.

**The report was approved by trustees as a fair and true account of the Trust's activities at their meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

*Signed on behalf of the Trustees:*

|                 |                      |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Signed</b>   | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| <b>Name</b>     | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| <b>Position</b> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| <b>Date</b>     | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

