

Darjeeling Children's Trust: Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 December 2020

Charity Registration No. 1143109 Principal office address: 151 Abbey Road, Westbury-On-Trym, Bristol BS9 3QH

Trustees :

The following were trustees throughout 2020.

- Marilyn Adams (Chairperson until 12th January 2020), Clare Blakeway-Phillips, Katherine Carr (Chairperson from 12th January 2020), Hugh Heron, Sharan Patel and Vik Patel, all of whom are resident in the UK.
- Pasang Wangdi, Nima Wangdi, and Sonam Dorjee, all of whom are resident in India.

Tshering Huber, resident in Switzerland, became a Trustee on 12th January 2020. Lisa Glydon, resident in the UK, became an Associate Trustee on 12th January 2020 and a full Trustee on 20th June 2020.

Sunita Halai and Elizabeth Nottingham, both resident in the UK, stood down as Trustees on 12th January 2020.

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.

In September 2020 Trustees agreed Guidelines on the Payment of Expenses, and Guidance on Social Media and Photo Consent.

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. In December 2020 the Trust advertised on a

number of charity recruitment sites for a new Treasurer.

The procedure followed is in accordance with advice published by the Charity Commission. Prospective Trustees usually join initially as Associate Trustees for six months before agreeing by mutual agreement to become full Trustees.

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 January 2020 trustees approved a three-year strategic plan for 2020-2022, including detailed objectives and accompanying success measures which are consistent with the Trust's aims and objectives; and a description of the current operating context for the Trust.

The plan states that Darjeeling Children's Trust will work with the local community to:

- Help improve the physical fabric of schools where this work would contribute to the quality of the educational experience;
- Continue to provide the travelling library, and support other opportunities to enhance and improve children's literacy;
- Provide music teaching in primary schools;
- Promote and provide healthcare to girls and boys at the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission children's home;
- Provide sponsorship and support for young people annually to undertake vocational training, including hospitality, nursing and beauticians training;
- Provide training in needlework for girls at the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission children's home;
- Facilitate volunteering in Darjeeling as and when candidates with the appropriate skills and aptitudes present themselves;
- Maintain the sponsorship of children already supported through the Trust, during their school years and through vocational training where appropriate.

The plan also commits the Trust to ensure a full range of management skills is available amongst Trustees to ensure the long-term sustainability of Darjeeling Children's Trust, including a new Chair and Treasurer.

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

How the Trust works

The Trust has built close relationships with partners in Darjeeling over the years of its operation. Trustees based in the UK and Switzerland meet quarterly to take decisions about the operation of the Trust and its projects. With the exception of the first meeting in January 2020, these meetings took place remotely by video conference due to Covid restrictions. Decisions taken by these Trustees are influenced by the input of the three trustees based in Darjeeling, to ensure projects are achievable and target areas of most need. The Darjeeling-based Trustees oversee operational delivery of Trust activity on the ground, supported by a part-time paid assistant.

The Trust has also built up effective relationships with a number of educational and welfare organisations in Darjeeling, including in particular the head-teachers of the schools attended by sponsored children, the Food and Craft Institute, the Head Monk at the Kripasaran Children's Home, and the building and design team responsible for delivery of the Children's Home project.

Tshering Huber visited Darjeeling in February 2020; other than that no visits to India were possible during the year as a result of Covid restrictions. It is hoped that travel will be able to resume in 2021.

At the end of 2020 the Trust had raised £786,327 since its foundation in 2008.

Achievements and Performance in 2020

The coronavirus pandemic severely restricted activity on the ground during 2020, particularly in the areas of activity related to educational provision. Schools closed in the Spring and did not re-open for face-to-face teaching for the rest of the year. No new vocational training courses were undertaken. However, despite restrictions progress was made on construction of the Kripasaran Children's Home.

We were honoured in March to be selected as a finalist for the British Indian Awards 2020. a)

Support for schools

There were no requests for DCT to fund school improvements in 2020.

Stationery provision to schools

No stationery or other supplies were provided to schools, given the closures.

b) Travelling Library and Music teaching in schools

The Travelling Library and music teaching were put on hold during 2020 as schools were closed. The Trust has continued to pay partial wages of the librarian and music teacher, having sought assurances that this level of payment would be sufficient to avoid hardship. Sessions will resume once restrictions have lifted.

d) Vocational training

DCT usually provides financial support to young people undertaking vocational training courses, including paying for course fees, books, uniforms and where appropriate for travel and hostel accommodation. Experience has demonstrated that this training provides a very successful way into employment by young people who previously were unable to gain work. Experience shows that graduates are using their incomes to support their families in Darjeeling in various ways.

Five young people (three young men and two young women) were accepted in 2019 for DCT sponsorship on the two-year hospitality training course at the Food and Craft Institute (FCI), a government college in Darjeeling. DCT has also sponsored a young man who had lived the last eight years at an orphanage in Darjeeling, to study at the Imperial School of Hotel Management in Lebung, which is located on the edge of Darjeeling. All six students come from poor families and without support would be unable to do these courses.

These students were due to undertake work placements during 2020 for practical training; in the past students have travelled all over India and even overseas to take up these placements. It has not been possible for the 2019 cohort to take up their placements, and courses are currently on hold. Further information is awaited at the time of the writing of this report about how their course will be completed and when their 6 months' work placement will take place. We are hopeful that the courses will resume, including the delayed placements, in 2021.

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. Since 2015, ten young women have been funded to complete beautician training at a local salon. Funding was provided in late 2019 for three young women to undertake this course; all three came from low income families and one had lived at the Kripasaran Children's Home. None had a job before starting their training. The training has again been interrupted by Covid restrictions, and will resume once these are lifted.

Training in needlework skills which had been provided by an experienced teacher to girls at the Kripasaran Children's Home was also paused during Covid restrictions, and will resume once these are lifted.

Given course closures, no new students were accepted for training in 2020. Trustees will consider whether additional students can and should be funded in 2021 to make up for the missed opportunity to help students in 2020.

e) Supporting redevelopment of the Kripasaran Children's Home

DCT has supported the redevelopment of the Kripasaran Children's Home since 2011 from both conception and development of the idea through to construction. 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 who also heads the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission which is the commissioning body for the works, together with the Architect, Structural Engineer and Project Manager.

Following successful completion of girls' dormitories at the end of 2019, work began in mid-January to build a second bathroom. A call for help in February to provide 14 large tables for the new dining room resulted in generous donations from supporters to allow this furniture to be made.

Construction work paused during Spring 2020 as Darjeeling was placed in lockdown and supply and labour routes closed down. However easing of restrictions in the summer allowed work to recommence with a local workforce. In May, strong winds from Cyclone Amphan damaged part of the roof of the Home. Following completion of the bathroom, two staff bedrooms with attached bathrooms were constructed during the summer and autumn, freeing up capacity in the other dormitories and giving staff some space to themselves. Work began at the end of the year on the third and final girls' dormitory and associated bathroom, and on the children's activity room which will provide a space for study and play.

The focus for 2021 will be to complete these rooms, and to make progress through the final phase of the work, to construct a new kitchen and food storage area, provide living and office accommodation for the Head Monk, and landscape the site to create outdoor play space. The completion of the third girls' dormitory will allow more children living in poor conditions elsewhere to join the Home and benefit from the new accommodation in future.

f) Health improvements at the Kripasaran Children's Home

The children living at the Kripasaran Girls' and Boys' Homes usually 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, who undertakes weekly health checks and helps the younger girls to wash properly once a week.

Many of the children who usually live at the Children's Home returned to their families in Darjeeling and the surrounding area during lockdown. At the end of 2020 there were only 10 children living at the home. Once restrictions are eased and children return, regular visits by a qualified nurse and her assistant, along with provision of supplies, will resume. In the meantime the Trust has continued to pay partial wages of these individuals, having sought assurances that this level of payment would be sufficient to avoid hardship.

g) Child Sponsorship

A total of 54 children were being sponsored through the Trust at the end of 2020. The schools attended by these children provided a range of remote learning during the year. Most schools pegged their costs at 2019 levels, and did not charge fees for months during which no remote provision was available.

We are hopeful that schools will resume full face to face teaching early in 2021; at the time of writing classes have resumed for children in the four most senior year-groups, and will shortly resume for other age groups. Despite the frustration of school closures in 2020, it remains clear that being able to access a good education is hugely beneficial to the children, who have at least been able to continue their education remotely, unlike many in other schools. Once our sponsored children return to school, and in some cases to Darjeeling, we will take stock of their progress and identify any additional academic or emotional support they require.

Fund raising

Donations, fund raising events and sponsorship are usually the three largest sources of income for the Trust. No sponsors left the scheme during 2020. We were unable to hold in-person fundraising events due to Covid restrictions, but successfully ran a series of online tea-parties which attracted numerous donations. During the summer one of our Trustees raised £3,600 by making and selling facemasks. In February we received a grant of £3,349 from the United Nations Women's Guild. We were also fortunate to receive a number of sizeable one-off donations from supporters during the year. We benefited from Gift Aid income of £9,282.

We are incredibly grateful to our supporters for their continued generosity during 2020, both in making donations and in finding innovative ways to raise money during restrictions. Their generosity leaves us in a good position for 2021, with funds in place to take on additional vocational training students to make up for this year's cancellation, and continue to run our existing projects while nearing completion of the Kripasaran Children's Home project.

Financial Review

Total receipts in the year were £83,659, with payments of £60,022. UK balances increased by £29,992 to £72,183, with cash balances of £3,802 held in Darjeeling. Some of the UK balances were restricted: £11,248 to the redevelopment of the Kripasaran Children's Home and £6,032 to hospitality training. The remaining sum, £54,903, was for the Trust's unrestricted activities. During the year the trustees resolved to create a designated fund of £5,000, in aid of the Children's Home, using balances in the unrestricted sector. At the end of 2020 this fund had not been utilised.

Income in 2020 proved to be reliable despite the covid-19 pandemic. It was not possible to hold the usual range of fundraising events but new sources of online funding were developed, mainly to the benefit of the Children's Home appeal fund. Activities in Darjeeling were however significantly restricted by the pandemic, with most tuition switching to online teaching and some activities,

particularly hospitality training, being postponed to 2021. This fall in activity is a significant reason for the increase in balances during the year.

Statements of the Receipts and Payments, and Assets and Liabilities, come with this Report and are part of the formal statement for 2020.

Policy on reserves

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 2020. 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 7th March, 2021.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

Signed	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Name	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Position	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Date

DARJEELING CHILDREN'S TRUST

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES at 31.12.2020

		Unrestricted funds £s	Restricted funds £s	Total funds £s
1 Cash funds				
	at The co-operative bank	54,903	17,280	72,183
	in Darjeeling	<u>3,802</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3,802</u>
		58,705	17,280	75,985
2 Other monetary assets		None	None	
3 Investment assets		None	None	
4 Assets retained for the charity's own use		None	None	
5 Liabilities		None	None	

Authorisation by two trustees, on behalf of all trustees

Signature

Name

Date

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Darjeeling Children's Trust

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2020 which are set out on pages 1 and 2.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

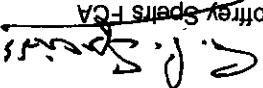
I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.


Geoffrey Sports FCA
ICAEW

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Chartered Accountants
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Date 27 September 2021