

Darjeeling Children's Trust

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



"WE CHANGE LIVES"



Registered charity in England and Wales
Charity number 1143109

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Trustees' report	- 3 -
Brief history	- 3 -
Registered charity	- 3 -
Registered address	- 3 -
Charitable Objectives and Activities	- 3 -
How the Trust works	- 3 -
Trustees	- 4 -
Achievements and Performance in 2024	- 5 -
Fundraising	- 8 -
Financial Review	- 9 -
Policy on reserves	- 9 -
Financial Statements	- 10 -
Notes to the financial statements	- 12 -
Independent Examiner's Report	- 14 -

TRUSTEES' REPORT

The Trustees present their annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Brief history

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.

Registered charity

The registered number is 1143109.

Registered address

21 Crummock Gardens, Kingsbury, London NW9 0DE

Charitable Objectives and Activities

The objectives of the charity are to advance 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.

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, Switzerland and India meet quarterly to take decisions about the operation of the Trust and its projects. In 2024 these meetings alternated between video conference and hybrid formats, with some Trustees attending meetings in London in person in April and July while others joined remotely.

Funding our first project manager in India (Aashwin Pradhan) in late 2021 had allowed us to expand the scope and management of our projects. As the work grew, Aashwin's employment grew from part-time to full-time, and in 2023 the Trust agreed to fund a part-time assistant for Aashwin to take on some of his duties. Alok Rai took up the post in July 2023. The continued expansion of our work and the removal of an administrative post in the UK allowed us to make Alok Rai a full-time member of staff in May 2024. A sub-group of the Board, chaired by Jennifer Owen, continued to meet regularly with Aashwin throughout 2024 in order to support him in the development and delivery of projects in India.

The Trust maintains effective relationships with several 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 Buddhist Mission Children's Home, and the building and design team responsible for delivery of the Children's Home project.

Funds are transferred to Darjeeling through use of the Trinity Foundation, an organisation based in Siliguri, India which is able to receive funds from the UK through an FCRA account; and by direct transfers to the FCRA account held by the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission (KBM), where funds are to be spent on that project. Although we fund their posts, both Aashwin Pradhan and Alok Rai continued in 2024 to be employed on behalf of DCT by the Trinity Foundation.

Europe-based Trustees visited Darjeeling a number of times during 2024. Graham Cory, Marilyn Adams, Hugh Heron, Matthew Houghton, Tshering Huber and Sharan Patel all visited for the opening of KBM in May 2024. Sharan Patel visited in November 2024 as well.

Trustees

The following were trustees throughout 2024:

- Hugh Heron, Matthew Houghton, Jennifer Owen, Matthew Morpurgo and Sharan Patel, all of whom are resident in the UK.
- Tshering Huber, who is resident in Switzerland.
- Pasang Wangdi, who is resident in India.

The following individuals stepped down from the Board during 2024:

- Katherine Carr (Chairperson)
- Marilyn Adams (Trustee)
- Akasa Pradhan (Trustee)

The following individuals, all of whom are resident in the UK, joined the Board as Trustees during 2024:

- Graham Cory (Chairperson)

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, while ensuring that the overall number of Trustees on the Board is appropriate in order to facilitate management of the charity.

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

Achievements and Performance in 2024

2024 was a year of finished projects leading to grand openings. The build of KBM finally came to fruition and we are now moving to the stage of maintenance. Several new projects were initiated and others upgraded. Trustee turnover was also relatively high during this year, and the new Trustees from 2023 continued to bring fresh energy and ideas to the Board. The Treasurer helped the Board to apply financial rigour to future forecasting and fundraising plans to ensure new commitments can be sustained going forward.

Activity was undertaken in 2024 under the following projects:

a) Re-construction of the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission (KBM) Children's Home

Construction work was completed in 2024. By the end of the year this significant project, the funding of which has been a focus of effort for DCT for over a decade, was complete. 2024 saw the completion of important communal areas, including the kitchen and boundary wall and offices for the two supervisors. Rainwater harvesting tanks were placed and connected to the water supply. This will make a huge difference to the water self-sufficiency of the home in the dry season.

May 5th was a momentous day – the official opening of the DCT funded construction of KBM. Many trustees attended the exciting and joyous event in Darjeeling, along with local supporters, the professionals who had advised and worked on the build and of course the children who live there. We are now moving onto an ongoing program of maintenance and upkeep of the home.

b) Ongoing support for the Kripasaran Children's Home

The expanded programme of activities for the children has continued throughout 2024, and additional projects have allowed them to thrive physically and mentally and thereby make the most of the educational opportunities available to them. The male supervisor (Sangam Dewan) and female supervisor (Jigten Bhutia), both funded by DCT, are now an integral part of the running of the home. Their robust record keeping and reporting mechanisms have been instrumental in 2024 in spotting improvements which can be made at KBM and finding opportunities to expand the experiences and opportunities for the children.

The most impactful programme to start in 2024 was the new nutrition project. It had been noted that the diet of the children lacked various nutrients and was bland and repetitive. This was addressed in 2024 when we implemented and funded an expanded diet for the children, with more variety and a careful balance of foods to meet their nutritional needs. This has made a significant contribution to the ability of the children to grow and thrive and also to look forward to their mealtimes.

During the year, activities at KBM included:

- Computer training for the older students by Darjeeling Institute of Computer Education (DICE). These computer classes have been highly effective, enabling young adults to proficiently use Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and design software while adhering to ethical computer use.
- Tuition in Maths and English, including additional tuition over the winter for children in classes 10 and 12 preparing for school exams.

- Knitting and sewing classes which continued throughout the year for the girls and boys.
- Trips for the boys to play football at St. Paul's School.
- An outing for the junior children to the Darjeeling Zoo and Himalayan Mountaineering Institute.
- Participating in and attending readings by three authors – Yoshay Lama Lindblom, Thomas K. Shor and Maren Heiberg. These events enhanced the children's love of reading and the spoken word.

New equipment was also provided for the Home, including:

- The provision of rain gear (umbrellas, boots and raincoats) to the children at KBM (as well as sponsored children, vocational training students and staff) in July.
- New curtains.
- Books for the library.

Visits by several DCT supporters throughout the year also enriched the lives of the children, through activities they arranged and donations they made. These varied contributions included additional English practice, and provision of celebration meals to mark special events or occasions. As always, we are hugely grateful to all our supporters who donate their time, effort and funds to enrich the children's lives.

c) Health and Welfare

Our partnership with Dr Shreya Chettri, a Resident Medical Officer at the Planters Hospital in Darjeeling, continued throughout 2024. With the support of her nursing team, she oversaw the physical and mental wellbeing of the children at KBM, of our sponsored children who live with their parents/guardians, of the young people we support through vocational training, and of the staff whose salaries we fund. Activity in 2024 included:

- The emphasis and training around safeguarding children and young people was continued. The four full-time staff all completed a rigorous and enlightening professional development course run by the Open University. This information was then cascaded down to all the staff working with DCT.
- We welcomed West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR) to the children's home on State Child Protection Day to deliver an event with the theme "Stay Safe Online." We look forward to collaborating with WBCPCR to further enhance our safeguarding strategies.
- An awareness programme on human trafficking was conducted at the children's home by MARG (Mankind in Action for Rural Growth), a leading NGO in Darjeeling. They delivered a powerful session on human trafficking and child exploitation, accompanied by a screening of a Nepali-language film on the topic.
- Children and young people attended DLR Prerna's combined World Mental Health Day and Nutrition Week event, themed "*Connecting Minds and Meals*." The programme included discussions, presentations, and interactive activities.

- Delivery of the third annual 'dental camp' in March by a team of dental surgeons from West Sikkim, which provided dental checks and treatments to the children who live at KBM and to all children whose education is being sponsored through DCT.
- Delivery of the third annual 'eye camp' in December, which resulted in 32 of the 123 children and adults who had their eyes tested being provided with glasses.
- Yoga classes, which continued at weekends and remained very popular as a means to keep physically fit and mentally relaxed.
- The delivery of a health and hygiene class educating the girls at KBM about menstruation, by DLR Prerna an NGO we continue to work closely with.
- The third annual visit from the local fire station in October, to run a fire and earthquake drill for children and staff and provide training on the use of fire extinguishers.
- Regular haircuts during the year, sometimes provided by the young people whose training as beauticians was being funded through DCT.
- Continued provision of basic health supplies, including toothpaste, soap and sanitary items.

Many of these interventions were provided for free by local healthcare professionals, NGOs and organisations, and we are hugely grateful for their support. Dental camps, eye camps and education sessions are a hugely beneficial addition to the welfare of the children supported by DCT, and we are indebted to those who provide these services for the care and kindness they demonstrate.

d) Child Sponsorship

Ten new children who had been selected for sponsorship at the end of 2023 were inducted into the scheme in January and February, receiving their new uniform, books and stationery. On top of the children already being supported to attend good-quality schools, this will bring the total number of children sponsored to 53.

Our sponsorship programme has now been running for seventeen years, and many children are now graduating from school and going on to further education. In 2024 we supported six of these children to take up courses at Southfield College and North Point (St Josephs), some of them to pursue undergraduate degrees. These are options which could never have been dreamt of when the children were first sponsored, and we are hugely grateful to our supporters for their generosity over the years and very proud of the children.

Some of our current and past sponsored children achieved fantastic individual successes throughout the year, winning prizes in extracurricular competitions in badminton, taekwondo and debate. It is wonderful to see them succeed in this way and rise to the opportunities they have been given.

e) Vocational Training and Careers Support

We continued to fund places on vocational courses for young people (a total of 21 at the end of 2024), with great success in terms of their ability to obtain secure and fulfilling jobs after graduation. Specifically:

- We funded nursing training for eight young people during this year.

- In June, the ten young people studying hotel management at the Food Craft Institute (FCI) in Darjeeling left to take up their industrial placements. Every year ten new young people are enrolled on the FCI course.
- One young person studied hotel management at Don Bosco college. She has since secured a full-time post.
- One young person completed an auto mechanic course at Don Bosco college and has secured full-time employment.
- Three students completed beautician training and celebrated by giving the girls at the KBM Home a haircut. Three new candidates were selected and joined the next course.

In 2024 the Careers programme continued to expand to meet the needs of the young people in Darjeeling. An introductory seminar was held to introduce the idea of careers and future choice to children at KBM and sponsored children above the age of 14. Following on from this later in the year a career symposium was held. At this event DCT alumni and guest speakers showcased diverse career paths and encouraged the young people to discuss freely their hopes and desires for the future. The students in their penultimate year of school were then given one to one career guidance by a local teacher and KBM alumnus. This has proved invaluable and has offered the students and their parents time to consider their future paths.

In December, DCT once again arranged for five young people to attend a 15-day adventure course at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, using funds kindly provided by the Rotary Club of Pontefract. This is the third year we have funded this course, and the young people who took part gained truly unique experiences. They successfully climbed to the summit of Sandakphu, the highest point in West Bengal, as well as experiencing rock-climbing, kayaking and wild swimming, sleeping in hammocks in the wild, and learning valuable leadership and resilience skills. We intend to give another cohort of our older children access to this experience next year.

Fundraising

The annual Darjeeling Golf Cup took place again in Yorkshire in June, and with a day of good weather the ever-popular event raised over £7,000.

We received some generous donations during 2024. In August, one trustee held a culinary event, raising over £2,500 and another event in Yorkshire in November raised over £1,500.

The most significant fundraising event of the year was the Unlocking Doors, Opening Futures Ball, held at the May Fair Hotel in London on 23rd November. This was a fantastic opportunity to re-engage with our supporters in-person, celebrate the achievements of past years and look ahead to new projects in the future. Through ticket sales and auctions, we were delighted to raise over £50,000 from the event.

We were also delighted to partner with some adventurers this year. The London to Singapore Expedition recreated the original 1955 overland route in two Land Rover Defender 110s, travelling 14,500 miles through 21 countries. The team set off from London in August 2023, managed to fit in a visit to Darjeeling on the way, and reached Singapore as planned just before Christmas 2023. Thanks to extremely generous sponsors and supporters they raised £55,000 for DCT.

Financial Review

Total receipts for 2024 were £200,341 with payments of £133,066. The balance held in the UK at the end of the year was £137,052 which reflects the significant fundraising efforts during the year and will enable the Trust to continue to deliver its projects into the foreseeable future.

Although not included in the following financial statements, supporters of DCT donated local funds in Indian rupees directly to KBM. These significant funds amounted to almost £15,000. We are enormously grateful for these local Indian donations and hope to build even stronger links with the local communities in Darjeeling.

Statements of the Receipts and Payments, and Assets and Liabilities, come with this Report and are part of the formal statement for 2024.

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 2024. This figure will be reviewed in 2025, in recognition of the expanded programme of activity the Trust now delivers.

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 on 26 September 2025.

Signed

Name

Jennifer Owen

Position

Chair of Trustees

Date

26 September 2025

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Darjeeling Children's Trust

1143109

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

01/01/2024

To

31/12/2024

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Regular donations	7,530	1,608	-	9,138	8,448
Ad hoc donations	27,514	14,519	-	42,033	38,057
Fund raising events (incl Nov 2024 Ball)	60,110	-	-	60,110	5,392
London2Singapore Land Rover Challenge	54,905	-	-	54,905	-
Child sponsorship and vocational training	21,131	-	-	21,131	21,170
Gift aid	7,497	-	-	7,497	18,019
Grants	-	-	-	-	4,679
Trustee expenses (donated back to Trust)	5,526	-	-	5,526	3,129
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	184,214	16,127	-	200,341	98,895
A2 Asset and investment sales					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	184,214	16,127	-	200,341	98,895
A3 Payments					
Kripasaran Children's Home	48,651	7,603	-	56,254	92,952
Child sponsorship	17,281	1,950	-	19,231	31,020
Vocational training	12,428	1,200	-	13,628	11,678
Costs of major fundraising	18,305	-	-	18,305	1,352
Commissions, fees, and bank charges	3,317	-	-	3,317	5,579
Trust running costs	16,805	-	-	16,805	21,775
Trustee expenses (donated back to Trust)	5,526	-	-	5,526	3,129
Sub total	122,313	10,753	-	133,066	167,486
A4 Asset and investment purchases					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	122,313	10,753	-	133,066	167,486
Net of receipts/(payments)	61,901	5,374	-	67,275	(68,591)
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	86,110	-	-	86,110	154,701
Cash funds this year end	148,011	5,374	-	153,385	86,110

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Cash at Co-operative bank	131,678	5,374	-
	Cash in Darjeeling	16,333	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	148,011	5,374	-
(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))		OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Details			
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Matthew Houghton (Treasurer)	26 September 2025	

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Basis of preparation

The accounting year covers the period from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024.

The Charities Act 2011 allows charities that are not companies to use the receipts and payments format provided they have not recorded more than £250,000 in the year.

The trust has three restricted funds:

- (a) for the redevelopment of the Kripasaran Children's Home - this is a project that has been part-funded by the trust since 2013;
- (b) some vocational courses at accredited institutes;
- (c) Eye camp and Child sponsorship (funds received from registered charity 1120007 Rajaram & Laxmibai Shinde Charitable Trust on 20 February 2024)

Gift Aid

The HMRC gift aid claim for the tax year 2023/2024 was settled during the year.

Fundraising events

During 2024 there were some notable fundraising events which are mentioned in the Annual Report.

The significant funds that were received in the year were:

	2024
	£
London2Singapore Land Rover Challenge	54,905
November 2025 Ball at The May Fair Hotel (a further £19,556 was received in 2025)	47,162
The Darjeeling Cup Golf Tournament in Pontefract	9,201
Momo event in Switzerland	2,572
The Gathering and other Yorkshire Gourmet events	2,106

Trust running costs

The following costs have been classified as Trust running costs:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Administrative support costs	15,275	18,573
Independent examination fees	-	1,428
Recruitment costs	-	951
Trustee travel expenses	770	-
IT and software costs	471	528
Insurance	289	278
Other	-	18
	<u>16,805</u>	<u>21,775</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(CONTINUED)

Staff costs

In Darjeeling, the Project Lead became full time from the beginning of 2023 and an assistant was taken on in July 2023. In the UK, the part-time Administrative Officer role was made redundant in April 2024.

In 2024 the total salary cost of these roles was £12,568 (2023: £16,989).

Commissions, fees, and bank charges

The following costs have been classified as commissions, fees and bank charges:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Trinity Foundation administrative fees	2,701	3,826
Just Giving fees	226	665
Bank fees	390	729
Other	-	359
	<u>3,317</u>	<u>5,579</u>

Trustees and other related party transactions

No Trustees received any remuneration in respect of their responsibilities as Trustees.

One Trustee travelled to Darjeeling in May 2024 and claimed a total of £770 travel expenses. Several other Trustees travelled to Darjeeling throughout the year claiming £5,526 travel expenses which they donated back to the Trust.

Fees for examination of the accounts

These financial statements include fees for independent examination of £nil relating to the 2023 annual report (2023: £1,428 relating to the 2022 annual report).

Commitments and Guarantees

The Trust did not have any material commitments, nor has it provided any guarantees to third parties at 31 December 2024.

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 2024.

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.

Kausor Amin-Ali FCCT FRSA
15 St Marys Paddock
Wellingborough
Northamptonshire
NN8 1HJ

Date: 26 September 2025