



Annual Report 2023-2024

Brighter Path was registered as a charity in England and Wales in May 2019 and this is our fifth annual report, covering the period 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2024. In the past 12 months we have continued making grants to individual care leavers, we have provided emergency food aid, we have supported organisations on the ground in Sri Lanka which work with care leavers and have continued to fund a boys' and girls' transition home for care leavers in Colombo.

Trustees

The trustees remain Caroline de Bono, John de Bono, Patrick Marshall, Henrietta Woolf and Alice Pilcher.

Banking

In accordance with our banking policy Brighter Path banking remains with CAF Bank who specialise in supporting the charitable sector. Our bank and platform fees (Stripe/ Paypal) were £559.83.

Funds received

In the period of 12 months to 30 April 2024 we received cash donations of £17,825 and £22.36 from Amazon Smile. We claimed Gift Aid of £4,861.32.

Website

Our website and its running costs remain entirely funded by private donation from the trustees.

Funds distribution

We made charitable grants of £27,160.28 which was a significant increase on the previous year (£20,101.45). At all times we have followed our own banking policy and have been aware of the importance of complying with best practice to avoid money laundering.

Conflict of interest

Two trustees (Caroline and John de Bono) are directors of Brighter Path (Sri Lanka) a not for profit company registered in Sri Lanka which provides support to children in care and to care leavers. Where any grants were made to Brighter Path (Sri Lanka) a potential conflict of interest was declared, these grants were approved by the other trustees and John and Caroline did not vote.

Working with other organisations

Brighter Path is keen to work with any reputable organisation in Sri Lanka which offers support to care leavers or, following the amendment to our change of purpose, with children in care. With the exception of SOS Villages, which provides support to care leavers who have been cared for as children in orphanages run by SOS, Generation Never Give Up, Emerge (which supports girls who have been sexually abused) and Brighter Path (Sri Lanka) we are aware of no other organisations focussing on supporting care leavers.

We are also aware of the importance of ensuring that our donations are spent on their intended purpose and of the risk that comes from working with organisations that we don't know either of the funds being spent ineffectually or of those funds being diverted away from our intended purpose. These factors combine to make it more common for us to work with Brighter Path Sri Lanka, but we remain open and committed to assisting other organisations working with children in care or care leavers where appropriate.

Sri Lanka is a national jurisdiction which operates to high child protection standards and has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. See the website of the Department of Probation and Child Services, http://www.probation.gov.lk/index_e.php

Ethical image policy

Images play an important role in helping us to raise awareness of the challenges faced by young people in care and care leavers. However the gathering and use of images can also cause harm or offence if they are intrusive, manipulative or used inappropriately. Our images must show a true and accurate account of the ways in which people live. We have introduced an ethical image policy to manage and guide our use of photos in fundraising which is in line with leading NGOs including Unicef and Save the Children.

Safeguarding

We have a safeguarding policy and a code of conduct for Brighter Path staff and volunteers working in Sri Lanka. Brighter Path is committed to working in accordance with the laws of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and to working with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services. Brighter Path is committed to a practice which protects children and young people from harm. The best interests of the child or young person and are paramount and are the primary consideration in our decision-making. Brighter Path accepts and recognises our responsibility to develop awareness of issues relating to child protection.

Activity

Financial support for care leavers

In 2023-24 we supported a total of 15 care leavers, with grants each month to about 8-10 care leavers at any one time. The financial support includes money for food, transport, course fees and materials, and personal hygiene needs. Without this financial support care leavers would typically go into low paid work and not have access to training.

Transition homes

We have continued to pay for the running of two transition homes in Colombo. In March 2024 the boys' transition home moved to new, bigger premises and can now accommodate nine care leavers. The girls' home which opened in 2023 has capacity for six girls. Care leavers come to these homes from orphanages and have the opportunity to attend vocational training or university. Care leavers benefit from a mentoring programme in which they learn essential life skills and are supported to stay in training or work whilst also learning to manage money and to save for when they leave the programme. Brighter Path staff work closely with future employers to help care leavers into well-paid, secure employment. Recent graduates from the transition homes include a graphic designer, a nursery school teacher, nurses and bakers.

We also funded annual outings for the boys and girls. These young people rarely have an opportunity to celebrate. We funded a day out at Galle Face, Colombo for the girls with kite flying and pizza. For the boys they travelled for the day to Galle, went swimming in the sea and had a celebratory meal before visiting Galle Fort. Both occasions which might be routine for some young people were memorable events for our care leavers.



1. The Boys' new transition home



2. and 3. Boys trip to Galle and Unnawatuna



4. Girls' trip to Galle Face

English classes

We have started providing English lessons to the care leavers in the transition homes. Weekly classes from a good teacher make a huge difference to these young people's language ability and good spoken English is a valuable skill in the employment market.

Vikasha Training Centre

We have begun to support the Vikasha Training Centre in Bandaarewella. The Training Centre is a home for young girls in the care system who have been unable to remain in mainstream education. They are taught how to sew and make clothes, giving them essential skills which they are able to use to obtain employment. Brighter Path's help with the Training Centre follows a direct approach from Commissioner Nadeesha Chathurangani of the Uva Province Department of Probation who has overall responsibility for the Training Centre and its residents. We supply course materials and pay the salary of a teacher for up to 40 girls.



The Vishaka Training Centre sewing school which Brighter Path is supporting. Girls in the care system who can't attend mainstream school study vocational skills here.

Presidential Commission

Commissioner Chathurangani travelled to Colombo to visit the Brighter Path transition homes. After her visit she commented, "I like the concept and good practices of Brighter Path. I am really impressed by the facilities and the great opportunities that you provide for institutionalised children at 18. I love the focus on the wellbeing of care leavers and the help given so that they may become productive members of society."



Mrs Chaturangi, Commisioner for the Uva Province, visiting the Boys' and Girls' Transition Homes in Colombo

Following her visit Mrs Chaturangani reported back to the President of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremasinghe. The President had recently established a "Committee to make recommendations for the protection, care and well-being of children subject to various forms of violence in Sri Lanka".

Brighter Path was asked to submit a report to the Committee explaining the Brighter Path vision and our model for care leavers and children in care. At a subsequent meeting and evidence session there was apparently quite a buzz and real interest in the Brighter Path programme which was presented as an example of best practice.

The 5th Biennial Conference on Alternative Care in Asia

In September 2023 we funded three young care leavers from Sri Lanka to fly to Kathmandu. They were sponsored by Brighter Path to attend the 5th Biennial Conference on Alternative Care for Children in Asia. This is an important event which I had attended previously in India and which rotates between countries.

The focus is very much on hearing the voice of young care leavers, learning from their experiences and seeking to improve best practice internationally. For our delegates it was not only an opportunity to travel abroad for the first time but to meet other care leavers

from different countries and share their experiences. We were very proud that two of our delegates made presentations to the Conference.

These care leavers all reported back that their own horizons had been broadened by the experience and the confidence and skills they will have learned from attending this international conference will benefit each of them individually as well as the communities from which they come.

Topics covered included the policy gaps so frequently encountered by care leavers: in financial security, housing, education, access to healthcare and in employment.



1. The three care leavers at the Biennial Conference.



2. and 3. Dulanjani at her graduation see (below)

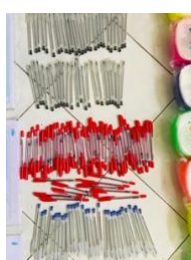


Graduation success

Brighter Path was delighted to celebrate the graduation of a second university student to whom we have been providing financial support. Dulanjani is a wheelchair user who uses her feet to type and write. Brighter Path supported her with funding for the daily journey between her accommodation and the university campus. She studied in the prestigious 'English Medium' cohort and graduated in October 2023 with a degree in International Relations.

Family strengthening/ school supplies

We undertook a project to fund a distribution of school supplies in conjunction with the Uva Province Department of Probation. This is an important part of our work to support 'family strengthening'. There are many families who are struggling economically and do not have enough money to pay for the most basic of school supplies. By providing essential resources to these families we can help keep the children with their families and also to access education.



The stationery that was donated

Underwear donation

We donated 585 pairs of underpants to boys and girls in government children's homes in the Bandarawell area. Although these homes receive some state funding they rely heavily on private donations. There is a real shortage of underwear for children but most people are too embarrassed to talk about the issue. Some boys manage with a single pair of underpants but others do not have any at all. Our donation ensures that every child in these homes will have at least two pairs of pants.



1. The underwear for boys and girls aged 2 to 18.



3. Caroline handing over the underwear donation to the Uva Province Commissioner

Support for Children's Homes

We made a donation to the Meth Sewa home for disabled children in Wellawaya. Our funding was a significant contribution to the home's water and electricity bills and we provided milk formula and nappies.

In February 2024 we donated baby essentials including formula and nappies to the Sujatha Sewana babies home in Bandarawella. This facility is run by the State and looks after newborn babies and very young children who have either been given up at birth, abandoned or who cannot be looked after by their parents. The babies are well cared for but there is a chronic shortage of supplies.



1. The newborn baby room at Sujatha Sewa Baby Home



2. Young children at the Meth Sewa home.



3. Some of the donations

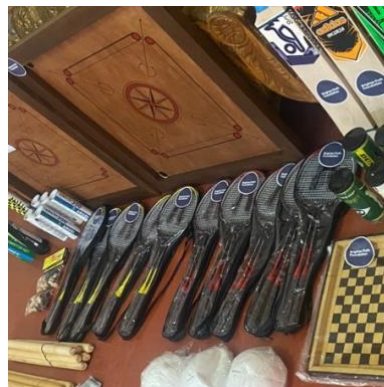
1st October 2023 was the United Nations National Children's Day. This is always a big day in Sri Lanka, particularly for children in care. The motto of the 2023 event was "For every child, every right". We sponsored T-shirts for all children in the care of Uva Province's probation department. A total of 564 children took part, aged from four to 18 and all wore the same colourful t-shirt. On this special day many children who are in different children's homes see siblings from other homes for the only time in the year.



Boys and girls enjoying Children's Day wearing the T-shirts Brighter Path sponsored

Boys' detention centre

We made a donation of much needed sports equipment and games to a boys 'certified home' in the Kappetipola area. This home is a borstal or youth detention centre for 'young offenders'. The 40 or so boys who live here, aged 11-18 are living in a strict environment where there is little time or opportunity for recreation. They learn vocational skills and work tending an area of land for fruit and vegetables but did not have any sports equipment at all. We donated cricket, volleyball, football and badminton which was excitedly received by both the boys and the provincial probation department who oversee the home.



The boys' new sports equipment

Conclusion

In our fifth year we have continued to flourish. Our 'core business' remains the transition homes and the financial support to care leavers. Those who we are able to help can see their life opportunities transformed by our investment in their futures and we are proud of what they achieve. At the same time we have managed to provide a wide range of support to children's homes, other organisations and individuals throughout the country in line with our charitable purpose. Once again I express my gratitude to my fellow trustees for their time and support, financial and otherwise, and to all our donors. We could not do what we do without you.

Caroline de Bono
Oxford
February 2025



Brighter Path
Financial Report for Year Ending 30th April 2024

	Total 2024	Total 2023
Incoming resources		
Donations	17,825	22,748.02
Other income	22.36	30.23
Gift Aid	4,861.32	-
Bank Interest	24.13	11.98
Resources Expended		
Bank/ fundraising charges	559.83	429.33
Grants	27,160.28	20,101.45
Net resources		
Total incoming/ outgoing	-4,987.30	2,374.45
Total funds carried forward	12,844.07	17,831.37

The notes on pages 2 to 3 form part of this financial report

Balance sheet as at 30th April 2024

	2024	2023
Cash in CAF Bank	12,728.45	16,631.73
Paypal balance	115.62	1,199.64
Total assets	12,844.07	17,831.37

Notes to Financial Report

Brighter Path is a CIO with annual income of less than £25,000 and therefore the accounts require approval from trustees but are not subject to independent examination. The accounts must show receipts and payments with a statement of assets and liabilities.

Brighter Path remains in good financial health with a steady flow of donations, large and small, from very generous donors who believe in what we are doing. We are grateful for their support.

Our income from donations for the year to 30.4.24 was £22,728.76. This was remarkably similar to that in the period of 12 months to April 2023 (£22,778.25) and much more than in 2022 (£12,521.43).

Our expenditure for 12 months to 30.4.24 was £27,720.11 of which grants totalled £27,160.28 i.e. 98%. The balance of £559.83 (2%) was bank charges and Paypal/ Stripe fees (on donations).

We have increased our expenditure from £20,101.45 in 2023 and £6,924.77 in 2022.

We were able to spend more without having increased our income because we had money in the bank from our first year of operations. We received a one off donation of £4,724.44 a fortnight after the end of the accounting period, if that had arrived two weeks earlier our income for the year would have been £27,453 against expenditure of £27,593. This shows that we are living within our means.

The picture of who is donating and how is changing slightly. At the beginning, presumably when people first heard about us, we had more donors but they tended to give less. We now have a smaller pool of donors but they are giving more.

We continue to support the boys' and girls' transition homes in Colombo. The cost of the girls' home is about £4,000 p.a. and the (larger) boys' home about £6,000 p.a. In addition we are supporting at any one time about 16 care leavers with monthly grants.

Gift aid: we reclaimed Gift Aid of £4,861.32

Other sources: we received £22.36 from Amazon Smile

Website: two trustees continue to donate the value of hosting the website and plug-ins to allow the website to operate¹.

Trustee remuneration: No remuneration was paid or was payable for the year directly or indirectly out of the funds of the charity to any trustee. Attention is drawn to the heading 'conflicts of interest' below.

¹ Hosting cost £50.99 per month

Conflicts of interest: Caroline and John de Bono who are trustees of Brighter Path are also directors of Brighter Path (Sri Lanka) a not for profit company in Sri Lanka which provides support for care leavers and those in care in Sri Lanka. In accordance with the Charity Commission's guidance on conflicts of interest neither trustee voted on any grants to Brighter Path in Sri Lanka.