

## **Christopher and Henry Oldfield Trust**

### **Review of Activities**

The trustees continue to support a number of prison-related charities where the objective is to reduce reoffending. During the year Choirs Beating Time, the Longford Trust, Fine Cell Work, the Prisoners Advice Service, Food Behind Bars, and Unlocked Graduates have been among those charities supported. We were disappointed that Unlocked Graduates (the Teach First of the prison service) did not have its contract renewed by the Ministry of Justice despite its recognised success. The Trust has also supported a number of charities with mental health objectives, including James's Place and Kenward Trust. The prison sector cries out for improvement and many medium-sized and small charities are best positioned to help. In previous years the Trust has supported Justice Defenders, which provides legal training to prisoners and prison officers in Kenya and Uganda and which we visited in 2022; and the Lambeth Trust (the Difference course).

During the financial year the Trust supported over 60 charities and while we naturally feel all have been worthwhile causes we would make particular mention of a few, and in this review highlight one which we feel is truly exceptional and unusual. Alsama is an English charity which runs two schools in the Shatila refugee camp – camp is a misnomer: it is an extremely overcrowded and precariously overbuilt section of Beirut, now housing largely Syrian refugees. One of the qualifications for entry, at age 11, to one of these schools is illiteracy. Thanks to the immense dedication and skill of the teaching staff and to the hard work of the pupils, Alsama aims to get its students literate and numerate within six months. The level of achievement is very high, and some pupils are now being offered places in universities in the UK and elsewhere. Having visited Alsama during 2025, we are convinced that this charity not only does something remarkable for every individual pupil but something important for society in reducing the risk of alienation of refugees in dire circumstances.

We continue to monitor the effectiveness of past grants. The government, after a hiatus of more than a year following its election, has confirmed its support for two new sixth form selective schools in Oldham and Dudley, which result from a partnership between Star Academies and Eton College. The Trust supported the prospective Oldham school with a grant of £960,000 in 2022-23. Star Academies runs over 30 schools in the North of England and has an outstanding record of transformation. Oldham is among the most deprived areas in the country. We are delighted that this project will now go ahead. Our largest grant during the year was to Star Academies to support the funding of performing arts in schools in the north-west. We saw at first hand the beneficial effects on the confidence and collegiality of pupils at Morecambe Bay Academy where, as a result of this funding, the school staged an inspiring performance of *Beauty and the Beast*.

Amber Foundation in 2021-22 received a grant from the Trust of £1.6 million to buy a house in Kennington, Ashford, Kent. Amber provides accommodation in four houses in England (up to 25 in each house) to young people who are homeless or in crisis, many of them addicts in recovery and some who have been on the wrong side of the law. We are pleased to see that Amber, and the Kennington House, are thriving, with excellent outcomes.

We have noted before that the Trust has made grants to institutions for bursaries including to Kent and Medway Medical School (where the three relevant students graduated in the summer of 2025), Eton College, Gordonstoun School, Kings School Rochester, the Community of St

Anselm at Lambeth Palace, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and New College Oxford. No new bursaries were funded during the year.

### **Plans for future periods**

Since its formation in 2015 (originally as the Oldfield Charitable Trust), the Trust has made over 300 grants, many of them repeat grants, with a total value of more than £15 million. In general we are very pleased with the Trust's activity and with the causes which we have been able to support; but there are too many of them, and we plan in future years (after a year in which we made nearly 70 grants) to reduce the number and increase the average size of grants. We particularly look out for charities to which we may make a very substantial (i.e. £500,000-£1 million) grant where there is something which is exceptional in its purpose, management and impact.

The Trust has no employees and has had no administrative costs other than the fee to its auditors. From 1 October 2025, Gilberto Algar Faria has been assisting the trustees with assessment of applications and research on appropriate areas for significant support.

The trustees meet three or four times a year to consider applications. We receive an average of eight applications a week and are conscious that many of these go not only unsupported but unanswered. We ask, in order to reduce the amount of time wasted by charity applicants which we regret, that initial applications be limited to 500 words which should include (though not necessarily be limited to) details of the charity and, if specified, project to be funded, its relevance in terms of benefit to the community or to a particular cohort of people, total income and expenses of the charity in the most recent year, and the total of unrestricted funds.

From time to time we have received applications by registered post, which is an unnecessary expense to the charity, and applications on which there is insufficient postage. We have also received applications addressed to other grantmaking trusts; and we frequently receive expensive glossy brochures. In general such applications will not be considered.

Application should be by post, or by email to [info@chotrust.org](mailto:info@chotrust.org), and we regret that we will not always respond. A successful applicant, or one from whom the trustees might ask for more information by email, can expect to hear from us within three months.