

A close-up photograph of a young boy with short brown hair, wearing a blue and white plaid shirt. He is seated in a wheelchair with a black headrest that has large, rounded protrusions resembling Mickey Mouse ears. The boy has a serious expression and is looking off to the right. His hands are clasped together in his lap. The background is slightly blurred, showing a blue wall and some greenery.

A Profile

Children in Distress

Children in Distress was set up in the early 1990's in response to the crisis in paediatric care services exposed following the Popular Revolution that swept Romania's communist regime from power. The Charity pioneered the treatment and care provision for those infants and children who had been infected with the HIV virus and associated opportunistic life threatening infections. The Charity set up the first paediatric hospice offering respite, palliative and end of life care for children living with full blown AIDS.

Children in Distress and its sister Foundation, Copii in Dificultate, now provides hospice care for children with life threatening conditions as a result of accident, infection, genetic disorders and birth defects. They pioneer life changing multiple therapies for those with disabilities and pioneer education and welfare for those living with Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

Educational opportunities are offered to children from disadvantaged backgrounds and training is made available to educational, medical, nursing and therapy professionals to develop and improve the quality of opportunity and care available throughout Romania. In addition, a range of medical and social welfare programmes provide advocacy, disability care, food, clothing, educational material and opportunities to those suffering discrimination and disadvantage.



Education and Training

Children in Distress has been able to empower students and change the attitudes of care staff to deliver the best possible care and current best practice. Our work has been significant in improving medical teaching and the delivery of care services for children throughout Romania, and in changing the attitude and approach of those caring for them.



Our education and training programmes have been carried out in conjunction with our partner organisation Fund-a-Physio, based in Ely, Cambridgeshire, as well as a host of volunteer doctors, therapists, nurses, psychologists, teachers and lecturers both here in the UK and in Romania.

Medical Equipment, Mobility Aids, Medicines and Dressings

Due to the generosity of donors, over many years Children in Distress has been able to build clinics, kit out wards and supply beds and bedding. We have also been able to provide vital equipment such as wheel-chairs, mobility aids and computer systems to assist with diagnosis and therapy while medication, drugs, sterile dressings and medical equipment have changed the lives of infants, children, adults and senior citizens.





St Laurence - Cernavoda



Children in Distress pioneered the opening of paediatric hospices in the Balkans with the opening of St Laurence, Cernavoda, for infants and children touched by HIV and AIDS. Initially the care was provided by volunteer nurses and carers from the UK, since local professional staff were too frightened to offer the children the love and care they needed. The volunteer staff faced the continuing care and loss of children who came to the hospice with almost no hope

for life. However, in the early 1990s, Children in Distress working with the Baylor Clinic pioneered the introduction of antiretroviral medication for children and the life expectancy increased almost immediately.

Today, of the over four hundred or so infants and children who came to Cernavoda some forty-five survivors live either in independent living in the former volunteer nurses' homes or in the local community having found, with the help of CID staff, the parents or relatives who once abandoned them. We are fortunate that we now have young people who have found a future with adult relationships and there are children of our children who thrive and prosper as a result of the dedication, nursing and care their parents were given by the volunteers who ensured they had all the love and care they needed.

St Margaret's - Bucharest

St Margaret's Hospice and Children's Centre, Bucharest. The success of St Laurence led to the opening of St Margaret's Bucharest initially as a street children's project that developed into a residential unit for infants and children with short life expectancy as result of accident, infection, birth defects, developmental or genetic malformations. The hospice has an enviable reputation for its respite, palliative and end of life care dealing with the most severe cases, and its nurses are perhaps the best trained and experienced paediatric nurses in Romania. The Hospice has twenty respite, long term palliative end of life care beds all with multiple waiting lists. The Hospice has been home to well over two hundred children since opening its doors. Some have recovered



sufficiently to return to family or foster care and a few to local authority care. Sadly, however, many have been called home, after a period of loving sheltered care, passing away while surrounded by those who cared for them.

St Andrew's - Pitești



Housed in a completely redeveloped former School for the Deaf, St Andrew's is unique in being jointly funded and fully integrated within the

social care service of the local county Child Protection Department. It is a beacon project that demonstrates the quality of care and offers a complete range of welfare services in addition to its role as a hospice. The residential unit has some sixteen beds and has, over the last ten years, demonstrated both the best in palliative care and the rehabilitation and development opportunities for children with severe physical, educational and developmental handicap. The building was designed to offer separate access to children excluded from state schools by reason of HIV or physical disability access to education and training.

The centre also offers a range of integrated community based outreach services and provides a peripatetic therapy, child development and psychological counselling service from a base within the compound and across the rural areas of Argeș County.

St Christopher's Curtea De Argeș

The success of St Margaret's and demand for care led to the opening of St Christopher's Hospice in a rural setting in Argeș County. This came to specialise in the care of infants with untreated hydrocephalus and developed a system of care that managed the condition for those who had not received shunt operations or were regarded as inoperable. Years of CID funded operations and comparative success in rehabilitation of infants and children with hydrocephalus and Spina bifida meant that the service needed new and better planned facilities and the hospice relocated to St Andrew's Hospice in Pitești, the third largest city in Romania. St Christopher's was converted into a sheltered holiday centre and now serves the children of its local community with education and welfare programmes.





St Michael's School for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

St Michael's School for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Arising from an original pilot programme operating with St Margaret's Hospice Bucharest, which was jointly funded by Children in Distress and the European Union, St Michael's School and Autism Centre now operates with the School of the Deaf in Bucharest's Sector 1. St Michael's School has some ninety children and young people in a range of classes and services.

It operates the only truly independent assessment and review service in Romania. The staff advocated the application of Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) therapy and the use of Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) to promote communication of the profoundly autistic children of Romania. This led to a series of annual international conferences which educated the general public, parents and professionals involved with the care and development of children with the full spectrum of Autistic Spectrum Disorders and empowered parents seeking help with their child's condition.

In 2011 the School team helped set up the working party which drafted and piloted into law, legislation on the

national education curriculum for children with autism and rights to education and welfare service for those living with the condition. St Michael's remains the only facility dedicated solely to the education, training and development of infants and children with ASD and has a superb reputation for its work. The school now has classes ranging from preschool infants to senior school for youngsters of up to 15 years of age.

The team of psychologists, therapists and educators offer support to seven other parental led self-help and support groups in Romania and work closely with three key universities in the professional training and development of students and professional staff. St Michael's is the only centre in the Balkans with professional status for training in the use of ABA techniques.



Child Development Centres

Attached to both St Margaret's and St Andrew's Hospice, Child Development Centres provide the best in onsite therapy services and deliver peripatetic services to their immediate local and regional communities.

Multiple Therapies

The programmes and outcomes for children were so significantly good that a second clinic and therapy unit was opened within the grounds of St Andrew's Hospice in Pitești which now operates independently but offers a wider range of services to those whose condition is impaired by accident, infection or physical or developmental challenges.

Physiotherapy

Arising from the need for therapy services for children resident within the hospices, the demand for individually tailored programmes of child development services was identified. The first of two St Nicolas Child Development Centres opened some seven years ago to offer a range of services designed to allow a child with developmental needs the opportunity to maximise their potential and be the best that they can be. Children are referred by general practitioners, paediatric specialists or hospital units who are unable to offer parents or their children the hope of improvement in their condition. Children are treated holistically and receive speech therapy, physiotherapy, counselling and treatment as required. Since opening its doors, over one thousand children have seen significant improvement in their development, being able to walk, talk, communicate, eat, dress and self toilet where previously their development was impaired.



Social Welfare & Support Programmes

Christmas Shoe Box Appeal



Since it first launched, well over half a million children and senior citizens have benefitted from the generosity of donors in the United Kingdom and have had the joy of a gift at Christmas.

The gift boxes have gone mostly to the poorest of the poor, the forgotten and destitute or those in hospitals or institutions across the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Moldovan Republic.

Professional Students Practical Work Experience And Access Training

Last year in association with three key universities and a number of local authorities, Children in Distress brokered and agreed an educational training protocol offering, over the next three years, two thousand psychology, physiotherapy and social work students access to practical work experience as part of their education and training. The aim is to introduce insight and expertise to the education curriculum and improve the attitude and expectation of students entering professional treatment and care.

Welfare Donations

Over the last ten years, each year some ten thousand infants, children, young people and senior citizens have been given warm winter clothing, hand knitted sweaters, hats, gloves, scarves and knitted cot, pram or bed blankets to keep them warm in winter. Innumerable other gifts of clothing have been distributed to destitute families and in emergency relief.

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