

# Jo's Promise to help orphans

## Physiotherapist's mercy mission to Russia to work with children

BY JOE JACKSON

**A BIG-HEARTED physiotherapist has quit her job at West Middlesex Hospital to go and work with needy Russian orphans.**

Jo Wooster, 25, from central Hounslow, left west London for the remote village of Yelatma, 200km south east of Moscow, last Thursday.

She will spend six months helping children with special needs in a state-run orphanage, thanks to an Isleworth-based charity. The Promise, who organised the project.

From the departure lounge at Heathrow, Jo told the *Chronicle* she was 'very excited' but had 'some apprehension' over what to expect in Russia.

"It's the first project of its kind and I'm the first physiotherapist to be based there long-term to work with the children each day. The aim is to train the carers so they can carry on the work

when I leave," she explained.

The Cornwall-born volunteer became involved in the venture after meeting the founder of The Promise, Sarah Settelen, while working in the Paediatrics department at the West Mid.

Mrs Settelen, who had a disabled daughter, created the charity to help special needs kids in Russia after volunteering in the country in 2002.

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She introduced Portage - the widely acclaimed pre-school education system - at the orphanage, and has now extended its work with families and other institutions in the region.

"Jo's contribution will be a huge benefit for the children. The conditions are

very difficult - they struggle to fund even basic medicine. We have got quite a lot of equipment out to them but there are not enough staff, so the kids spend too much time in their beds. She will truly make a big difference," said Wendy Tabuteau, the charity's director.

Industrious Jo spent months fundraising for the trip, including holding a cake sale at the West Mid that raised £1,000, but still needs to secure more money.

The prospect of six months in an under-funded Russian orphanage holds little fear.

"I like to have challenges in life. I'm not very good sticking in one place for a long time. But the main reason for going is obviously the children and to help change their lives. If I meet just a handful of my goals with them, I'll be happy," she added.

To sponsor her, or for more information, visit [www.justgiving.com/jowooster](http://www.justgiving.com/jowooster)



BAKING MONEY! Jo's cake sale helped to raise funds



Cakes and sale: Jo Wooster raising funds for her trip

## Jo's Russian promise

Hospital worker Jo Wooster has left her job at West Middlesex Hospital and packed her bags to work with special needs children in Russia

The 25 year old physiotherapist flew out this week to work for ThePromise, a local charity that supports Russian children with Special needs, and will be based in a village called Yelat-ma, 2000km south east of Moscow, working with children in a state-run orphanage

ThePromise was founded three years ago by Isleworth resident Sarah Settelen to introduce Portage, a widely acclaimed pre-school education system into an orphanage caring for very young disabled children in Ryazan, Russia. Last year, the programme was expanded into an orphanage in Yelatma which until then had been closed to the outside world.

Jo's skills as a physiotherapist will be invaluable to the on-going work of the Portage workers and funded by TheP-

romise. It will help to improve the quality of life of these children who are likely to spend the rest of their lives in institutions.

Jo said: "I'll be spending five months in Russia working with the children and others who are in desperate need of physiotherapy. I hope to share my skills with the staff from ThePromise so that when I leave, the work continues and some of the basics become part of the daily routine for the staff working with the children."

As a volunteer, Jo is raising the funds to support her trip. To date she has raised nearly £1,000 from a cake sale at West Middlesex Hospital and a 10 mile sponsored run.

To give a donation and for an update on Jo's work, visit [www.justgiving.org.uk/jowooster](http://www.justgiving.org.uk/jowooster) To find out more about the work of ThePromise visit [www.thepromise.org.uk](http://www.thepromise.org.uk)

[thechiswick.co.uk](http://thechiswick.co.uk)

# To Russia with love

by **RICHARD BOULLEMIER**

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To date she has raised nearly £1,000 from a cake sale at West Middlesex Hospital and a 10-mile sponsored run.

She aims to raise £3,500 to cover the costs of the trip and provide equipment for the orphanage.

To make a donation and for an update on Jo's work, visit [justgiving.com/jowooster](http://justgiving.com/jowooster).

To find out more about the work of ThePromise visit [the promise.org.uk](http://thepromise.org.uk).

• To have your say, visit [yourlocalguardian.co.uk](http://yourlocalguardian.co.uk).

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