



2016 Annual Report

From the Director

Julia Acott says:

After a lot of hard work a benefactor was able to finally complete the purchase of Forrest House in October, enabling us to stay long term at a low rent and giving us stability and security in an otherwise fragile world, along with the opportunity to create more rooms for counselling and support in the fullness of time.

Goodbyes:

We had a few goodbyes this year – to Anisa Wright, now teaching in Bethlehem. Philippa King moved to another charity, working full time with them after 10 years of fundraising with us, for which we have been truly thankful. The Woodgate Community, who supported us with Melissa King in the crèche plus David and Louisa Mow who led our volunteer gardening team, all moved to Peckham to develop their work there. Jo Sell has stepped down from leading our Education Team, but is continuing with us as a much valued volunteer. We are very grateful for all that these people have contributed to build Alternatives to where it is today, and we miss them and thank them for their contributions of work. At the time of writing we are still looking to replace some of them!

Welcomes:

We were delighted to welcome Matthew and Kate Neal to our Education Team – they married in August and started work with us in September, for one day a week, led by Elizabeth Booker who is heading up the Education Team. We have also welcomed many new volunteers this year - my husband Peter Bailey as a consultant, and three new counsellors to the counselling team – Masuma Sultana, Karen Jackson, and Cheryl Titmus, plus support workers Shahanaz Rahman and Theresa Tui to the We Are Family team.

Highlights:

Beach trips are always brilliant – we had great weather and 130 benefited!

We are grateful for the support of Rashid Teladia, thanks to Lloyds Bank Foundation, who helped us to form our new Funding and Income-Generation Strategy. John Coombs has become our mentor, again thanks to Lloyds Bank Foundation, and we were delighted he provided us with 13 volunteers to wrap presents at Christmas!

Personally I benefited enormously from 9 days of training with the School for Social Entrepreneurs which radically challenged and changed my thinking and understanding in charity work in today's age. We have a lot of work to do this coming year to implement this new knowledge.

Our Social Enterprises consolidated and are slowly developing. We were able to increase Sarah Moriah's work to 3 days a week as Social Enterprise Manager, thanks to grants from SEGRO and Evening Standard Dispossessed Fund. Sarah also heads up the Community Buddies, and as client numbers grow, makes this a challenging role.

Julia Dexter has developed the scope of the parenting groups by offering a Parenting Teens programme, supported by Sarah in facilitating it. Several of our mums have children approaching teenage and this course has been well attended.

We could not have achieved all we did without the excellent staff team and our volunteers, and I thank them all for their support and inputs.

Thanks to our Trustees

Thank you to our trustees Chris Andrew, Christina Baby, Carol Baynes, Howard Chapman, Andy Pople and Eva Price for their support and oversight. Chris is a retired psychiatrist, working locally and part of the We Are Family team. Christina is a director of local partner charity Just Homes, and First Fruit and Aspire. Carol is a local teacher, parent, school governor and church leader. Howard is a businessman and a pioneer in pregnancy counselling work in the UK. Andy has been a local GP for 25 years. Eva (chair) has been a volunteer with Alternatives since its beginning in 1994,

and works locally with vulnerable undocumented women. It was decided at the last meeting in December to invite 3 new trustees to the Board, and as from January 2017 we will be joined by John Coombs a bank manager, Mark Janes a local church minister, and Sarah Moriah our Social Enterprise Manager, representing service users.

Centre Manager

Jenny Jones says:

I have been increasingly busy as the year progressed, averaging weekly appointments with around 12-15 clients, and meeting numerous other needs as they arise. I have written many letters for clients, frequently phoned the Home Office or Social Services, completed post abortion counselling with several clients, and worked with baby loss with others. I have also seen clients with unintended pregnancies and been very busy alongside Pat and between us we have given out approximately 540 bags of food, 100 equipment donations, 300 clothing donations and made many phone calls to various agencies.

Some reflections:

After typing up a CV, one of our mums now has signed a zero hours' contract with a cleaning agency. I'm so pleased for her – since getting citizenship, her self-esteem has increased in leaps and bounds and she is more confident than ever before. This is clearly indicated by the fact that because her husband is still being financially un-co-operative, she has decided to get some work (& money) of her own.

I supported one of our mums with a reference and helped her process her DBS so she could start full time work with a care agency. She is a long standing member of WAF, a pleasure to be around, who finally managed to regularise her immigration status and almost immediately got a job. I spoke to the recruiter that hired her who was very impressed by the certificates, references and level of support that we have provided for her. This proves that what we do works!

I attended housing with a homeless client. This was a first for me – I have never felt so incompetent in all my life. Watching her options being taken away one by one, feeling her fear and confusion at the way that no-one seemed willing or able to help her and her 3 year old son was heart breaking. I'm baffled by the fact that this could and does happen in what is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Part of me never wants to put myself in that position again, but I know I will, because I wouldn't want anyone to have to face it alone.

I watched as another mum (who has experienced massive abuse) sought advice for naturalisation of her son. I saw her switch off when she heard how much it would cost to apply for his citizenship (currently £937). It may as well have been a million pounds. It took a lot of encouragement to get her to the place where she would even consider compiling paperwork to prove that he has always lived in the country, which is a requirement for the application. She was so overwhelmed that she didn't see the point, but I think that she now understands that she needs to take one step at a time, otherwise nothing will change for her or her son.

To be better equipped for this work, I began a counselling diploma in September 2016 which I am enjoying a lot.

I manage the volunteer counsellors and childcare rota which enables mums to have free counselling at the Centre.

The Centre is busy, and it is a juggling act to organise the different room bookings including some external groups, plus donations arriving, plus a mix of meetings and support groups. Often clients are coming in to talk about the loss of a baby, which needs to be managed around small groups of mums and young children and donated baby equipment.

Pat Wiggins our administrator:

One of Pat's responsibilities is for our food collection and distribution and she says:

People come to Alternatives for many different reasons, one of which is asking for food that we can give them as they may not be able to access it in any other way. Below are the different ways that we are able to help people who come to our centre:-

City Harvest:

This year Alternatives has been fortunate enough to receive weekly deliveries of food from City Harvest who are an organisation formed in recognition of the fact that although London is a wealthy city, there is also hunger and poverty and the need to provide food for those who cannot do this themselves. This food is donated by supermarkets such as Sainsbury's, Tesco's, Morrison's, Waitrose and also some restaurants and hotels.

The food is delivered on a Tuesday afternoon and it is all hands on deck to bring it in and set it out in our back room. Jenny texts the ladies from our We Are Family Group asking them to come on Wednesday morning to collect some food.

There is quite a variation in the food we are given. It can be anything from fruit and vegetables to cakes, pastries and bread and on the odd occasion joints of meat and packs of smoked salmon. Sometimes we get washing powder and toiletries, at other times baby food and milk and there is always plenty to go round. We normally cater for around 16 people each week.

Nando's and other organisations:

We also gratefully receive donations of frozen chicken from Nando's on a weekly basis and have food in our own cupboards which is donated from different churches at Harvest time and throughout the year.

Food Vouchers:

We have a supply of Food Vouchers to be used at the different local foodbanks in the area and people are sometimes referred to us from the local schools or children's centres and other organisations in Newham. They are allowed three vouchers and can collect food from centres around the borough.

This is a very important part of the practical side of our work at Alternatives and it is a privilege to be involved in this very rewarding and worthwhile role."

Education and Young People's Work

Jo Sell says:

2016 has been a year of change for the Education Team. Anisa developed existing lessons with materials about the dangers of labelling and homophobia for use in lessons. The team were involved in a couple of special relationship and sex education days at Plashet School, which we shall continue in 2017.

Anisa's hard work has been very much appreciated and her skills enriched the work of the REALationships team at Alternatives. In July we wished her and her husband John our very best as they went to Bethlehem to work with schools out there. We have run additional training and Marj, Matt and Kate have come to join the team. Further teacher training has seen teachers in Newham better equipped to teach relationships and sex education in Newham Schools. Jo is continuing with her research and has stepped down as the Education Team manager, to complete her studies. The role was taken over by Elizabeth Booker in September.

Elizabeth Booker says:

In 2016 1050 pupils received RSE lessons. We have already booked in sessions for around a further 2000 students in three local schools for 2017. We are currently in the process of contacting 18 schools and sixth form colleges about our services including our new initiative to deliver more tailored information and one to one sessions within Drop-Ins.

We plan a new and innovative approach to Sex and Relationship Education (SRE). Despite OFSTED describing SRE nationally as 'not yet good enough' schools are scaling down their SRE provision. They are moving from having SRE as a regular part of the curriculum to having 'drop-down' sessions, usually over one or two weeks of the year in the summer term.

Moreover Newham is London's most populous and youngest borough, and one of the most diverse places in Europe in terms of culture and religion. According to the last census (ONS13) religious affiliation is around 85%. Newham is also one of the most deprived places in London. Although the teenage pregnancy rate has fallen it is still high, and in 2014 it was reported that 57.4% of under 18 pregnancies ended in abortion suggesting that they were unintended. This is an increase of 15.2% since 1998.

Most young people have to navigate daily between the different value systems of their family or cultural group, their school and peers and the media that affects everyone. They are vulnerable to misconceptions and bad ideas about themselves, especially those families that exclude them from SRE. We therefore believe that faith sensitive SRE is particularly important in this context.

It is because of this that we have decided to reinvent how we deliver SRE to help ensure as many people receive good quality SRE as possible. The plan for this new delivery of SRE moves away from just classroom based teaching and towards more young person centred teaching. This can include lunch time follow up sessions after teaching has been delivered in a school, links with schools to direct children at high risk of unhealthy sexual behaviour or abuse to our services, drop in sessions in a local café and youth group focused sessions.

We recognise that although good education is important for young people to make good decisions around sexual health, some teenagers do become pregnant. We have decided to set up a support group for these teenagers particularly looking at issues such as attachment and development.

We are delighted to have Matt and Kate Neal (married in August 2016) join our team in September 2017 to help with all this work.



Matt, what drew you to working here?

Alternatives has always been something which I had known about while growing up in Newham. I was a little involved in FRYP whilst I was at college and I knew many of the people who worked here (including my mum who was a trustee). When Kate and I were looking for a job alongside our community worker internship with Eden we wanted to find something which allowed us to really make a difference in Newham, so Alternatives seemed like the best place to do that. Growing up I felt there was little relationship and sex education at school (other than use a condom because STIs are bad) so getting the opportunity to help young people think about relationships in a real way was a big draw.

What's your favourite leisure pursuit or hobby?

I did a degree in English literature and creative writing so I love to read books and write short stories. I also love playing board games and computer games.

What's the craziest thing you've ever done?

I don't know about crazy but I was particularly accident prone as a child (and as an adult) so have had many sets of stitches and glue in my head resulting in various scars which will one day be on show when I go bald.

Kate, what drew you to working here?

I had seen the work Alternatives do when I was at NewVic and had been involved a little bit with FRYP. Jo had mentioned the job when Matt and I were organising our internship and it sounded like a great thing to get involved with. I really wanted to make a difference in Newham and help young people in difficult situations.

What's your favourite leisure pursuit or hobby?

I really enjoy playing board games when I get the time and swimming too (especially at the beach). Sitting down and watching something funny on the TV is also one of my favorite things to do.

What's the craziest thing you've ever done?

Swimming in the sea in Scotland was pretty crazy and pretty cold too seeing as it was February!



Julia Dexter, Support to Parents Manager, says:

I would like to start with a big thank you to the We Are Family team; Julia A, Chris, Earna, Elizabeth, Sarah, Jenny, Pat and Jo B. WAF would not work so well without you all, and neither would I; thank you.

We are saying hello and welcome to Shahanaz Rahman, Cheryl Titmus, Theresa Tsui.

A big thank you also to our many volunteers throughout the year: Elana, Megan, Melissa, Brenda, Natasha, Josephine, Elizabeth O, Kirsty and Chantel. We couldn't manage without any of you.

We have had another year of busyness and growth with 73 parents plus children passing through the doors of We Are



Family in total; and our average weekly numbers growing to the extent that we outgrew our crèche room. We moved the crèche into our meeting room and our meeting to an even bigger space; a change we are still all adjusting to. The teaching on parenting and life skills continues to be fresh and making an impression. One parent said *"I learn so much from the teaching, it changed the way I do things with my child"* and others around her echoed the same thought. Another mum said *"It has really helped me, I know now how to talk to my children. They gave me a letter of support to take to the Home Office. They've given me food which I really appreciate. I feel very comfortable, I feel like I've got friends. The teaching has helped me to change the way I talk to my children."*

Outstanding moments from this year include a trip to the science museum during February half term and two trips to the seaside; for some families this is a first and for all a highlight of their summer. Some had never seen the tide coming in and were awestruck at its rapidity, naming it as one of the best memories of the day. Another parent wrote *"It's much fun when there is water to play in. Thanks so much, my fun levels has been topped up"*

The on-going support for families throughout the year continues to grow with over 200 visits made by staff this year to homes, hospitals, clinics, housing, child services, schools etc. The most memorable for me was being present at the birth of a child in March. Such a privilege to support families through this special time.

In July we gave out 31 certificates to parents who had regularly attended WAF for 3 or more sessions listing the topics they had covered and the number of attendances they had achieved. All were very pleased to receive them, wanting a photo of this special event.

In September Sarah and I organised a 7 week course for those with children over 10 years about parenting teens and pre-teens. This proved very popular in terms of numbers, and is something we shall continue with into the new year.

The WAF team and Alternatives Trustees attended an in-house Safeguarding training day at the beginning of the year, resulting in a review and update of our safeguarding policy.

Training days for the team have included Modern Day Slavery Conference; Domestic Violence Awareness; Early Help Partnership training; 'Wave' and Children in Need training.

Some of us have also attended networking sessions with NHS, schools, Partnership working events and Transform

Newham; all excellent opportunities to connect with other professional's working with parents in Newham.

I would like to end with two quotes given to us when we asked the parents 'What has Alternatives done for you?

"A lot, I think of Alternatives like big tree with branches, which I see as the friends I've made. The fruits are the achievements & opportunities I've had. Having my papers, came through the advice of someone at Alternatives. Joining the Amies choir was something I heard about from someone at Alternatives."

"They welcome me, they are friendly; they are the best people that I could wish for. They arranged counselling which keeps me going. I'm happy and my children are happy. They are very accommodating, they listen to me and are helpful and emotionally supportive. Whatever the situation there is always someone to talk to."



Francesca, one of our clients, says:

I started attending We Are Family in January 2014 after I fled Domestic Abuse and was accommodated by a charity called Just Homes. I was pregnant and alone, unsure about my future and the survival of my unborn child.

The staff at Alternatives were very welcoming and it was nice to see and speak with many women who had been through experiences similar to mine. They provided a warm and friendly atmosphere and with time, I learned to feel safe and prepared for impending motherhood. They provided baby clothes, toys, nappies and other necessities as well as a listening ear.

After the birth of my child, the support continued and I felt secure knowing that the necessary support was available and I wasn't alone. I also started attending counselling sessions provided by Alternatives to help deal with the trauma from the abusive relationship and other difficult life events.

I have now been attending WAF for nearly three years and I intend to continue doing so for as long as possible. I am currently rehoused far away from Alternatives but they have given me the opportunity to keep attending much needed meetings and counselling sessions by providing support with transport fare. My child is

growing up with a 'family' which otherwise wouldn't have been possible. The staff are always willing to assist and are available whenever I need someone to talk to.

The love, support and encouragement I have received from Alternatives have enabled me grow in confidence, especially as I have had to fight many legal battles, the biggest being the fight to obtain legal residence in the United Kingdom (which I won!). I am grateful for being involved with Alternatives, everything the staff go out of their way to do and all the friends and 'sisters' I have come to know and build strong relationships with. They are a Family I would not have otherwise had. God bless Alternatives, We really Are Family.

'My Favourite Possession' by Francesca

My favourite possession is a gold bracelet. It's two gold bands joined together by three circles, the one in the middle depicting the emblem of my native community. It is significant to me because it was the last piece of jewellery left behind in an armed robbery that left my father dead. My mother couldn't bring herself to wear it any more and almost threw it away, but I took it and still have it fifteen years later.

Practical Parenting Groups

Elizabeth Booker, Family Support Worker says:

The practical parenting group is for parents that want to look more closely at their parenting. The group aims to present accessible and practical advice based upon research into areas such as attachment, wellbeing and emotional development.

We have a small but consistent group of mums that attend who have gone on a journey of self-reflection, thinking about what kind of a parent they want to be. This can be painful, particularly when reflecting on one's own childhood and things that we want to change for our children's.

We have delivered over 50 hours of teaching. Topics have included behaviour management, positive parenting, the importance of play, emotional development, attachment, parenting styles, routines, weaning, potty training, games, songs and rhymes, cooking and many more. We have also had a few outings this year including to the local farm, parks and libraries. These enriching experiences as well as the parenting teaching are essential for child development, particularly in families that may have a higher than average level of stress or less physical and emotional resources due to their circumstances.

Many families have told us that the parenting help they get from Alternatives is invaluable and that they think about their parenting in ways they never used to. One parent recently said at the end of a session on discipline: 'I have learned that I don't need a quick fix, If my child needs to cry to learn something then let her cry, don't give in'.



After a short break due to various reasons we are delighted to be running our 4Dads programme again, taking the form of monthly meetings and aiming to build community with the Dads, giving support where needed.

Chigozie Eneremadu, 4Dads Leader says:

'The break has reinforced the need to have a group like 4Dads for me. During the break most of the Dads stayed in touch because the bonds we have built over the years became something we acknowledged as a very important aspect of our life as men, hence the need to continue the group. The opportunity to get together at least once a month, have dinner and touch on issues that affect us men is something that is crucially missing in today's world. As our communities get bigger and more diversified, it is also easy to notice that communal bonding, kindred affiliations and brotherly love shrinks more and more. In the endearing spirit of WAF (We are Family) who have over the years worked so hard to bring together in love and unison, women and families who cut across different ethnicities, race, religion and cultures, thereby giving them a platform to bond, share their trials, fears, success stories and journeys with each other, we at 4Dads are equally happy to be back doing what we enjoy doing - providing a brotherly shoulder for each other and supporting men the way only men know how best to. Our venue still remains the lovely and relaxed Alternatives building.

More than ever before I am very excited, refreshed and full of energy and anticipation for the new experience and satisfaction supporting our Dads/men brings and I am sure all the men feel the same way too.'

Social Enterprise



Sarah Moriah, Social Enterprise Manager says:

The WAF CAF has continued to grow and establish itself as a permanent pop-up café. The food is better, the menu has become bigger and there is an established routine in preparation and service. Outside catering through the

WAF CAF has also increased as our confidence continues to grow. But the most amazing thing is the friendships that have become real compared to the days where we struggled to work together. We have grown in our skills of working as a team and have helped each other grow in different roles. We now understand the café is 'ours' and we share in the triumphs and failings and this has increased our motivation to make it better. Successful highlights have been catering for 200 for a church thanksgiving service and for 100 for a conference, for lunch and tea!



We have seen three staff members move into employment and it was refreshing to see that we celebrated with them in their growth. We have also welcomed new volunteers with two permanently and two part-time. We are able to settle well with the transitions as we have now understood the purpose of the enterprise, which is to help us gain and develop skills for the workplace.

While the cards and crafts has not been as busy as it has been in the past year, we were hired and able to do an outside card making session. We have also continued to sell at the Spring and Harvest markets and at different occasions.

The Social Enterprise has just established a WAF Angels who will be able to do odd jobs in different people's houses or sheltered housing such as cooking, cleaning, ironing, shopping etc..

We have recently started to look at selling on eBay as a charity but this is still in the pipeline.

There have also been several discussions about childminding and childcare which would include training childminders and also child carers to help mums get into employment and also to support each other.

Community Buddies

Some of the women who have been helped by We Are Family train to help other women in crisis as volunteer 'Community Buddies'. Developed by a group of local charities as a way of keeping families out of poverty, this scheme also gives volunteers the confidence to move on into paid work. Two moved on earlier this year and we retrained some more.

"Now I just have hope. Before I don't even have the hope, nowhere to go, I don't know where to start from. But when you see people surround you and they can help you ... you have the hope that everything will be sorted."

"You never know when life puts some difficulties in front of you. You need someone to give you that strength, to hold your hand, to know you can go through this."

Counselling

Counselling is available to women from We Are Family, if they would like and would benefit. This can help people to deal with past trauma and move forward in life. All counselling abides by UKCP and BACP ethical frameworks and all counsellors are qualified. We thank Etienne for his counselling as he moved on, and have been delighted to welcome three new counsellors – Masuma, Karen and Cheryl who join Sally, Ann, Coleen, Melanie. We also thank Barbara for her supervision.

Sally Craig says:

I have had a fruitful year counselling clients weekly at Alternatives. Each one has made huge strides in her personal life and the growth has impacted all areas of life. It is hugely rewarding work and gratifying to journey with such courageous women as they build trusting relationships, address painful past issues and navigate ongoing challenges. Sally photo

Coleen Spurdens says:

Over the past year I have met weekly with 7 different clients at Alternatives. The length of weeks each woman has needed to receive counselling has differed – some come for a few weeks, some come for a few months and some for come for over a year. Each one has their own difficult story. I feel a real sense of honour when they choose to trust me and reveal what challenges they have had to face, and what challenges they are currently facing. To work alongside each one has been, and continues to be, tremendously rewarding."

Farewell to Philippa, Development Manager for 11 years

Philippa King says:

I have worked one day a week for Alternatives since 2005, raising funds mainly from grant-making trusts and foundations. Back then it had not long moved to Prince Regent Lane, and We Are Family was still an idea in Julia's head. It's been great to see the charity employ staff, start new projects and grow to give the holistic help to families it does today. And it was not a particularly hard task to persuade funders to support Alternatives, because there's no doubting the difference it makes for people who don't get a lot of other help.

I moved on to a new part-time job in October this year, to work as development manager for a small national charity called On Road that tries to improve the media representation of marginalised or vulnerable people. I'm enjoying the new challenge. In the other half of my week I'm developing my practice as an artist.

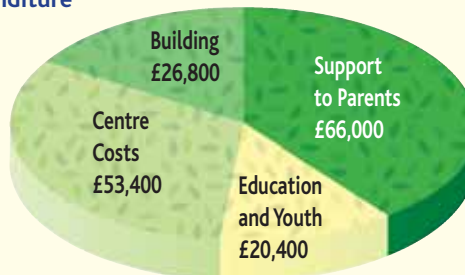


Financial Report (unaudited results)

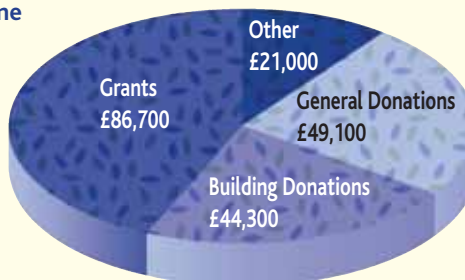
2016 has been a year of significant change for our finances. More expenditure on support for parents and education and youth reflects their increasing activities. However we were thankful to see general donations and grants keeping pace but we will have to work hard in 2017 to maintain our future income in a tough post Brexit world.

We also received significant special donations for the building where running costs increased substantially in the year in the run up to the purchase of Forrest House in October by a benefactor. These donations will help to fund an extra counselling room and other facilities.

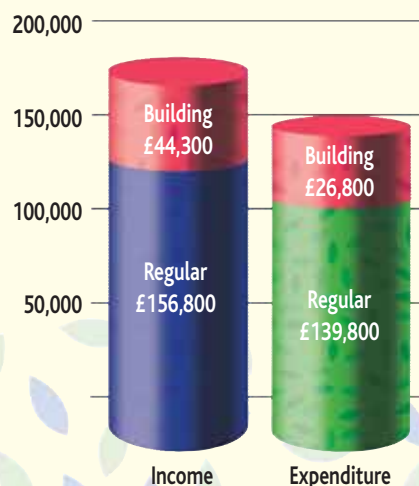
Expenditure



Income



Income and Expenditure



Thank you to all our funders during 2016 including:

Aston Mansfield Trust

BBC Children in Need

Big Lottery Fund Awards for All

Diocese of Chelmsford (London Over the Border Council)

Evening Standard Dispossessed Fund

Henry Smith Charity

Lloyds Bank Foundation

London Borough of Newham Let's Get the Party Started

London Catalyst

London Community Foundation

Plaistow South Big Local Social Action Fund

Sir Halley Stewart Trust

Souter Charitable Trust

SEGRO

Transform Newham

Trusthouse Charitable Fund

Warburtons

Woodgate Community

Nandos and City Harvest for regular food donations

Churches and schools that gave gifts of food including Ascension Church, Calverton Primary School, CEM Church, Custom House Baptist Church, Memorial Community Church, Plaistow Christian Fellowship, Plaistow Seventh Day Adventist Church, St George's East Ham, St Oswald's Croxley Green, Tollgate School.

Christmas present donations from Community Links, In-Kind Direct, Petts Wood Christ Church and Parish of St Giles and St George, Ashtead who also gave generous financial donations.

Many other churches and individuals – thank you!

How can I help?

We are funded entirely by grants and voluntary donations. Please give generously so that we can keep making life-changing differences to women who have nothing and no hope :

The easiest way to give is via our MyDonate page www.mydonate.bt.com/charities/alternativestrusteastlondon

- Give as you shop via EasyFundraising www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/atel/?t=Easyfundraising-li&v=a&u=3OKXNG&
- By cheque made payable to "Alternatives Trust East London" to: Alternatives Trust East London, Forrest House, 63 Rowntree Clifford Close, Plaistow, London E13 8AB.
- By bank transfer to Barclays, 737 Barking Road, London E13 9PL, sort code 20-67-88, account number 90268666, account name Alternatives Trust East London.

If you pay tax and would like us to claim Gift Aid, please write or email with your name and address stating, "I want Alternatives Trust East London to treat my donations as Gift Aid donations."



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