

our partnership with other local charities including First Fruit, Aspire, Transform Newham and Newham FoodBank, and the generous Harvest food donations from at least eight churches in Newham and beyond. These partnerships help us meet the needs of families in very difficult circumstances, particularly those who have no recourse to public funds.

At the beginning of November 2011, ten participants started an 18-week Called to Care training course facilitated by the director and centre manager. We hope that a number of them will be able to become volunteer advisors at the centre in 2012 when they complete the course.

We are very grateful for the security provided by a new three year grant for the post of Centre Manager from the Henry Smith Charity, following on from previous funding from the Tudor Trust – especially at a time when there is increased competition for funds. Barbara writes,

'Having been a volunteer for many years prior to appointment to a paid position in 2008, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work for Alternatives as Centre Manager and serve clients in this way. I'm both pleased and humbled to have the opportunity to continue in this role.'



The Education Team has consisted of Katie and Jo for most of the year and much has been achieved.

We have delivered around 1,400 pupil sessions to around 600 different students as well as attending freshers' fairs at the University of East London (UEL) and Newham Sixth Form College (NewVIC) at the start of this academic year.

The freshers' fairs were a very positive experience which enabled us to engage with 500 students, 200 of whom either filled out questionnaires were given information about FRYP (the new Faith, Relationships and Young People website) and Alternatives. We were able to forge links with the Chaplaincy Department at UEL and also very positive dialogue with several other faith groups and organisations.

The general consensus from both fairs was that FRYP is an innovative and necessary project which allows young people of faith (and indeed no faith) to access good, accurate relevant information surrounding the tricky area of relationships in a way that they are comfortable with.

Teaching and Training

During the year, we have produced more of our own lesson materials, and they are now available for others to use as copyright issues are being ironed out. The beginning of the year saw a very well received training course for other pregnancy choices centres, which are now able to use our Parenting and Unplanned Pregnancy materials in their local schools. The HIV lesson has been used by form tutors in one of our Newham schools after training from the team. We have also been involved in advising this school on their new Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy.

Katie and Jo have delivered three two-day courses of Speakeasy, a Family Planning Association course for parents that equips them to talk to their children and teens about relationships and sex. Two courses were for parents here in Newham and the third was to foster carers in Bradford. One of the social workers on the course said:

'It was a fun and engaging course. I found it thought provoking and it left me with ideas to use in practice.'

Newish and FRYP

NewISH (Newham Interfaith Sexual Health Forum), co-chaired by Jo along with Luke Bazeley from Christ Church, Plaistow, is working hard to get new members to join the steering group. We would like to thank Afsia Khanom from SHINE who, until recently, co-chaired with Jo. She has achieved much and has been an inspiration in the work. NewISH would also like to thank Michael Bath, former SRE advisor and Claire Clinton, former RE

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'It was a fun and engaging course. I found it thought provoking and it left me with ideas to use in practice.'

advisor, for all the work they put into NewISH until their redundancy from Newham in March. They are greatly missed.

The biggest achievement of the year has been the launch of the Faith Relationships and Young People (FRYP) website: www.FRYP.org.uk. This has been a real challenge and is still in its development stages, but has seen people writing for it from all over the country, with input from national Jewish and Muslim organisations as well as people involved with NewISH. The website had its local launch in March this year at Stratford circus, thanks to funding from NHS, with around 130 people attending either for the afternoon or in the evening. Sarah Acott, our website project leader, heads up the team working on this and we plan to have our national launch in the spring, by which time we expect to have an interactive forum and an online counsellor facility up and running.

We would like to thank Emmanuel Kwarteng and his team who made a video of the March event. We hope to produce a shorter version for release onto YouTube. A big thank you too to Deji and the rest of Four Kornerz for writing the song 'You can lean on my shoulder' especially for the website. We are grateful to everyone who helped to make the launch such a success, prompting comments like:

'It was a great event, really useful and encouraging to see so many people positively taking part'; 'Very well organised'; 'Young people's panel was excellent'.

The coming year looks as though it will have its challenges and opportunities. We would like to say a special thank you to Katie Evans, who has been a fantastic and inspirational member of the team, and is moving on to other things. Katie will be missed greatly.



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London Evening Standard
Dispossessed Fund
NHS Newham Flexible Fund
The Souter Charitable Trust
Transform Newham
Trust for London
Tudor Trust
Wates Foundation
The Woodward Charitable Trust
Many churches and individuals – thank you!
The Parish of St Giles and St George, Ashtead

Thanks to our one-day-a-week fundraiser Philippa King

We could not provide support to families without the generous gifts of food, toys and baby equipment we receive from many individuals; organisations including Key Catering, Community Links, and The Woodgate Community; and numerous churches in Newham and beyond.



Annual Report 2011

From the Director

The year began with the move to our new offices at Forrest House. We are very grateful to everyone who helped make this go smoothly, especially the team from the Woodgate Community. Within a year we have filled up all the space as the work of Alternatives has continued to grow. I was delighted to hand over our old building to partner charity Just Homes, who re-opened it in August as 'Creations' baby and gift shop with accommodation for some of our vulnerable families.

We welcomed new members of the team during the year. Pat Wiggins joined us in January as assistant to the director, and Simon Gibson and Chigozie Eneremadu, formerly volunteers, are now employed with the 4Dads group. We also have two students on placement: Ruth Carden from the Central School of Speech and Drama and Sue Dixon from Goldsmiths, University of London, who is doing a counselling placement with us. Both are adding to the support we can offer clients. Two of our large three-year grants came to an end during the year and we are very grateful, in difficult times, to all those who support our work, particularly the new three-year funding for our centre manager and continued support for We Are Family.

We're delighted that the new partnership with WHCM Counselling & Support, the charity that owns the new building, is going so well. During the year we welcomed Dr. Andrew Barnardo to our Board of Trustees, and Peter Watherston, one of our trustees, joined the board of WHCM as a sign of our partnership.

A highlight of the year was the graduation ceremony in November at the O2 for Sarah Moriah, who obtained a degree in Law from the University of East London. Sarah was one of the first four young parents who came to the We Are Family pilot project in 2005 when she was homeless and pregnant. Having turned her life around, she became a support worker for WAF while starting to study part-time, as well as getting married again, bringing up another baby and stepson, and supporting a friend's four children through tragedy. We congratulate Sarah on all she has achieved.

Congratulations also to Centre Manager Barbara Church, who completed her BSc (Hons) in Integrative Counselling in October 2011, and is now registered with UKCP (United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy) as a Psychotherapeutic Counsellor and a member of BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy).

This year Alternatives, and the CareConfidential network we are part of, have been drawn



Within a year we have filled up all the space as the work of Alternatives has continued to grow.

into the media debate about public funding of faith-based services to women facing unexpected pregnancy. We choose not to campaign or take sides in this debate, as to do so could have a negative effect on the women we are here to help, who remain our focus. However we were visited by a 'mystery shopper' subsequently quoted in an article in The Guardian that was mostly critical of Christian-based centres, saying, 'the counsellor was warm, friendly and well informed about abortion as well as local pathways and services'. The Guardian also mentioned the new Faith, Education and Young People website, www. FRYP.org.uk, which increased traffic considerably. FRYP was launched in May with a great event at Stratford Circus.

Throughout 2011 we hosted many visitors from other centres within the CareConfidential network and I travelled widely to deliver training, most enjoyably to Brussels. In June I was invited to speak about the families we support at the National Prayer Breakfast in the House of Commons on the theme of A Hope and a Future: Transforming Lives.

We had encouraging evidence of transformed lives in an independent evaluation of the We Are Family project, carried out this year, which said, 'With very few exceptions, parents reported that their contact with WAF had a positive impact on them as parents. Often this impact had been considerable, occasionally even life changing'.

This work would not happen without the backing of donors along with the passion, commitment and dedication of Alternatives' staff. I have been personally very supported by them all this year, the first since the death of my husband Steve in September 2010, and I am delighted that the work is strong and healthy in a difficult economic climate. Thank you so much, everyone.



Julia Acott and Sarah Moriah at Sarah's graduation

alternatives

SUPPORT TO PARENTS

We Are Family has had another busy and fruitful year with forty Monday morning sessions at Memorial Community Church's Children's Centre, five park gatherings in the summer and three sessions in the garden at Forrest House. We have had 40 women and 58 children coming through We Are Family this year, with an average of 13 parents attending each week. Twelve families, over half of all those who come regularly, have no recourse to public funds. We are glad that several long-term members of We Are Family have moved on to employment or study. This year one mum we support was able to move out of a residential baby unit and into family care, and we continue to work with a small group of parents whose children are on a Child Protection Plan or Children in Need Plan.

Highlights this year are many. We took record numbers of people on the annual outings: 60 to Beech Grove in the Kent countryside and 67 to the seaside. Both were very much enjoyed and appreciated, and we were glad to see more dads coming along than in previous years. When asked 'what was your best memory of the beach day?' one parent said 'Seeing sea, nice weather my daughter going in the water and a smile on her face.

The social events at Forrest House were also memorable, encouraging quality play time for children with their parents. The Thursday parenting group ran in term time throughout the year finishing with an accredited Parenting course 'PPP' (Positive Parenting Programme). This smaller and more focussed group has been great for some of our quieter parents who have grown in confidence and parenting skills over the year. This term we began to offer drama and creative therapy sessions on Tuesday mornings led by Ruth Carden. We have continued to partner with other organisations, with Conflict and Change leading a series of Monday sessions.

Another huge event in the life of We Are Family was an external evaluation of the project we had carried out by Aston Mansfield's Community Involvement Unit. Over several months,

When asked 'what was your best memory of the beach day?' one parent said 'Seeing sea, nice weather, my daughter going in the water and a smile on her face.

parents, children, staff and professionals were either interviewed or filled in questionnaires about the group. We were amazed, pleased and challenged by the outcomes of the report which concluded:

'There is evidence of significant, widespread positive impact on the confidence and capacity of parents accessing the WAF project, and on their self confidence, self esteem, self awareness, emotional wellbeing, resilience and hope.'

Our grateful thanks go everyone who took part and to Anne Crisp for all her hard work in compiling the report. Here are some quotes from the evaluation:

- *'The stuff I do at WAF when I go home I do it with my children as well and I find it really helpful.'*
- *(From professionals) 'WAF is a credible agency that manages to sustain the difficult art of being professional, accountable and robust in its policies and procedures while being personal, approachable and not bureaucratic. We can and do refer women to its services.'*
- *'The WAF club has been the family I never had, they have supported me in so many ways, I am so grateful to have them in my life and my child's.'*

June saw the end of a three year grant from the Big Lottery Fund, and we are very grateful for an 18-month grant from Trust For London, and support from the London Standard Dispossessed Fund to keep We Are Family going.

The evaluation highlighted that the strength of WAF is not so much what we do but the way we do it, and challenged us to put into writing our ethos and methodology so it can be passed on to future staff. This would also help meet the other challenge the report highlighted, that there are many more parents who would benefit from WAF, but our group can't grow any larger and maintain its quality. Our plan over the next three years is to develop materials that will allow other people to start new WAF groups both here and in other parts of the country. We hope that funders, including the Big Lottery, will invest in this plan to make We Are Family sustainable in the long term.

A big thank you to all those who fund us and support us in many different ways. We very much value you and we couldn't do it without you. Thanks to the staff this year: Julia Acott, Julia Dexter, Dr. Chris Andrew, Earna Gibson, Sarah Moriah, Margaret Bankole, Pat Wiggins, Linda Shirky, Elizabeth Booker and Rosa Nakalema and to the many volunteers who have helped in the creche and with driving on the seaside outing.



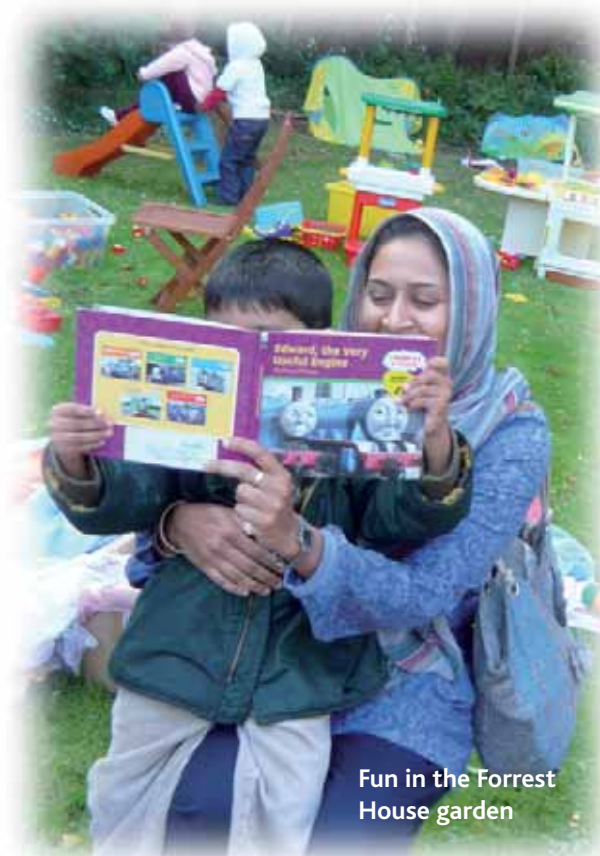
The 4Dads group was started in summer 2010 with the aim of supporting fathers who are involved with the women and children who make up We Are Family, to enable them to foster better relationships with their partners, wives and children. It aimed to also provide support for other fathers who have similar needs. Run by four dads, 4Dads works with dads and for dads.

The group meets fortnightly and has informal teaching and discussion sessions led by Dr. Chris Andrew, psychiatrist, on topics such as stress and anger management, relationships, and good parenting skills. They also take part in sporting activities and social events like bowling and barbecues. There are trips for dads and children, eg. to Discover in Stratford, and the 4Dads went on the We Are Family summer outings again this year.

The biggest challenge at first was getting fathers to join the group, but the four leaders worked hard on this, and as men came to the group they found it useful and bonded well.



'The stuff I do at WAF when I go home I do it with my children as well and I find it really helpful.'



Fun in the Forrest House garden

There are now eight dads who attend regularly. Our biggest achievement is that we have fathers who cut across race, nationality, religion and age to get together on a regular basis to share with each other issues in their lives which they would not ordinarily have shared.

The group is led by paid staff Chigozie Eneremadu and Simon Gibson with volunteers Tom Sefton and Emeka Ejinkonje, and the valuable support of Chris Andrew. In the coming year we want to build better and more trusting relationships with our members, and develop stronger networks with other agencies that can support our dads.



At our new premises, Forrest House, the pregnancy choices centre is open every weekday, four mornings for clients to drop in and at other times for appointments. Six hours each week are covered by a small team of committed and reliable volunteers, and the rest mostly by the centre manager Barbara Church, who has now completed her third year in this post. Volunteers also provide regular cover for the CareConfidential national helpline. After over 10 years of volunteering with us, Maria Gentile has moved on to new things. We thank her for her wonderful support and faithful work which has been much appreciated. Book-keeping is now carried out by Sarah Acott, who works efficiently in keeping the finances well presented and up-to-date.

The move to the new premises brought with it much work in packing and unpacking, which was achieved while still remaining open for clients. The new building in its quiet residential location is very different to the busy high road at the old premises, and the privacy and quiet location has been greatly appreciated.

We sent details about our new address and free service to all GPs and pharmacies in Newham, but have noticed a marked change in the number of clients: there have been fewer seeking help to have a free pregnancy test, but more seeking help with pregnancy choices or following abortion or miscarriage. The centre manager alone has had 290 one-to-one booked client appointments during the year, with a similar number of unscheduled calls and visits to the centre. Many have said how they have valued the support they received.

'I wanted to let you know how relieved I was to be able to come and meet with you last week. Thank you for not judging me and for giving me time. It's not going to be easy, but I've talked with my partner now and things feel a bit clearer.'

The centre has been able to continue to offer time and space to those who have often felt like they have had nowhere else to go as they consider their options and feelings in difficult and sometimes challenging personal circumstances.

'I didn't know who I could ask, things are so different here and I don't have any family in the UK. I searched on the internet 'pregnancy', 'help' and 'east London' and your details came up. Thanks so much for helping me, I don't know what I would have done without you.'

Barbara takes responsibility for practical issues that arise at the centre, dealing with client enquiries, and answering most daily telephone calls, as well as seeing clients for regular counselling and helping to organise our equipment store. She is also involved in helping with collection and delivery of items of equipment, and with assisting the Education team with delivery of unplanned pregnancy lessons in secondary schools.

We remain thankful for a regular flow of donations by local people of quality second hand baby items, and there has been a quick turnaround as these are passed on to families who cannot buy what they need for their baby: more than 150 clients this year. We also value



Front l-r are dads Chigozie, Emeka and Simon; standing at the back Chris and Tom

'I wanted to let you know how relieved I was to be able to come and meet with you last week. Thank you for not judging me and for giving me time ...'