



Annual Report 2014

This was a landmark year as Alternatives Trust East London turned 20. Here is my personal A-Z of the year.

A Anniversary. This year we celebrated 20 years of Alternatives. I never thought, when I started the work in my front room, that it would grow like this and touch so many people's lives along the way. I estimate we have had around 20,000 client contacts during that time, as well as taken more than one hundred lessons in local schools.



Fun at the Anniversary Party



Funny receiving her certificate at the Anniversary Party

B Barbara Church. After many years of being Centre Manager, Barbara moved on in February to become PA to the head teacher of the newly-opened Oasis Academy in Newham. We miss her, and are really pleased that she carries on volunteering with us, supervising some of the counselling work and seeing clients at Forrest House. Thank you Barbara!

C Clients. With Barbara's leaving I have seen more clients at the centre this year. For some it can take a long time before transformation happens. There have been some intensely sad and some incredibly happy moments. A recent client wrote 'Thank you for helping me through what I thought would be everlasting pain. You have shown me that life can move on and still be wonderful even through loss. You have given me a second chance at life'. She carried her pain for nine years before seeking help, and is now free to move forwards.

D Dads. The 4Dads group is a difficult group to grow, but I am delighted that we have it, as we want to value the role of fathers as well as mothers in families.

E Education work, which has grown this year. With successful funding it has been good to see it gather momentum again.

F Food, which has been literally a life saver for some of our more vulnerable families. To receive harvest donations from local churches and fresh food from a local farmer has been fantastic! We have people asking for food who literally have nothing to give to their children. *F is also for Family.* More and more I appreciate the value of having family. We aim to grow extended family for those who don't have it, through our supportive relationships and shared experiences, particularly through We Are Family.



Lorraine's cake

G Garden. The families we work with don't have a garden – most don't have a house. A very few have a flat. Most share a house with many others. Some share a room with others. In worst case scenarios they have to share a bed with someone they don't particularly know. So to have the beautiful garden to share with them is a real gift and we sincerely thank our friends from the Woodgate Community who keep it so beautifully for us. G is also for Groups – WAF, PPG, 4Dads, WAF CO-OP, post adoption birth mothers' group. To be alongside others who have had similar struggles to your own is very therapeutic.

H Hope, which we give to our clients who often feel hopeless. We delight in the success of many of our clients. Some of the mums who we have been supporting for a few years had great outcomes this year, with two coming off benefits, and one in full time employment. Another has set up a business, and others are gaining confidence and new skills.

I Ice cream, kindly donated for this year's seaside outing to Dymchurch for around 70 people. A special thank you to this thoughtful person.



On the beach at Dymchurch

J **Jenny Jones our new Centre Manager.** Jenny joined us on 1 December, at the time when Christmas preparations take over the building, with hundreds of presents being wrapped for the mums and children in the We are Family group. We welcome her into the team.

K **Knitting.** Lovely hand-knitted baby clothes, filled with kindness, are welcomed by clients, who normally would not have access to such personal items.

L **Love: lots of it!** Tough love, love shown when situations seem hopeless, love expressed in practical small acts of kindness and care, gentle words, a smile, a hug.

M **Mickey Mouse toys: 48 of them!** These were a donation from In-Kind Direct, as Christmas presents for our families. They have been added to the bags of groceries and other gifts for each family.

N **Nandos.** For many weeks this year we received surplus chicken donated by Nandos, which was given to our clients. This has made a significant improvement to the diet of some families.



Awe at the Science Museum

O **Outings.** Most people we work with have never had a holiday, and the only day out they have will be one that we organise. It was great this year to go to the beach at Dymchurch and to the Science Museum with the We are Family group. This was a first for all of them, with some saying: 'I never thought it would welcome people like us, you know,

ordinary people who have never been before'; 'I learned so much and it was so interesting'; 'We stayed until 7pm when we had to leave. It was amazing'.

P **Placement Counsellors.** We are grateful for the time offered by recently-qualified counsellors to Alternatives. This year we thank Linette Baker, Janet Hill and Sally Craig. Sally has remained and is currently seeing ten people here. None of our clients would normally be able to afford counselling, and this is a great asset. P is also for Parties. Thanks to Ithaca House who invited the We Are Family group to a great Easter party. Our Summer

anniversary party and Christmas party both had around 70 people at them.

... **And for Partnership.** We have worked with local charities Aston Mansfield, Community Links and Bonny Downs Community Association, producing a directory of services in Newham available to help address family poverty.

Q **Quality.** We aim to deliver a high quality professional service which is also caring and supportive. To this end, all staff go on training courses to add to our skills, and we network with other professionals to ensure that our standards remain high and we are continually learning from good practice.

R **Radio.** I was pleased to talk about the work of Alternatives on a local radio show with Pete Day from NuSound Radio 92FM and be the guest for a live phone-in relating to unintended pregnancy and post abortion support on Premier Radio this year.

S **Social Enterprise.** An exciting new venture is the Social Enterprise group, which has now formed and chosen a name: the 'We are Family Co-operative'. This group of women has had several stalls at local markets already, and is slowly gathering momentum and developing plans for the coming years. I would also like S to stand for Safety. Alternatives provides a safe place for many people for whom the world has been an unsafe place with no security. This is a much needed resource, and something we guard and treasure carefully.

T **Thank you to everyone who contributes in a large or small way to make Alternatives Trust East London effective.** There are so many who together help us all to make a difference and see transformation in children's and parents lives. This September was a landmark when eight of the children who have grown up through We Are Family all started school. As these families have moved on, we have lots of new mums and more babies than ever. It is great to see the children meeting the developmental milestones at the right ages, despite the real tragedy and misfortune their mothers have had to deal with.

U **Unintended pregnancy support.** Several of the team have completed a training course to update their skills as Pregnancy Choices Practitioners this year, in line with the core work of the charity, which is supporting people experiencing unintended pregnancy or following pregnancy loss.

V **Vision.** The trustees welcomed Carol Baynes as a new trustee this year, and reaffirmed their shared vision for the work. An excerpt from it is:

Alternatives aims to show care and support to our clients:

- ▶ Not by excluding but by including
- ▶ Not by judging but by accepting



Donated Christmas presents

It is great to see the children meeting the developmental milestones at the right ages, despite the real tragedy and misfortune their mothers have had to deal with.

- ▶ Not by exposing but by providing safety
- ▶ Not by abandoning but by nurturing
- ▶ Not by ignoring but by recognising potential
- ▶ Not by discouraging but by valuing.

W What Works at We are Family:

- ▶ The We are Family group models real family life
- ▶ Counselling and support for people with many diverse needs
- ▶ Parenting and life skills
- ▶ Baby clothes, equipment and nappies
- ▶ Food for families with no recourse to public funds
- ▶ Supporting with legal paperwork issues
- ▶ Occasional financial gifts
- ▶ Home visits
- ▶ Supporting in advocacy work
- ▶ Linking parents together for trips out together
- ▶ Showing love as Jesus showed his loved to us

X is for **Excellent Team** – without whom none of this would be possible. Many thanks to all the staff and volunteers who all work so hard. Thanks to all the contributors to this report. Thanks to our trustees, Eva Price (chair), Chris Andrew, Christina Baby, Carol Baynes, Howard Chapman and Andy Pople. Thanks to the volunteers in every area of the work, to Philippa King our fundraiser, and to Sarah Acott our book keeper.

Y is for **Years to come** – we hope many of them! We are hugely thankful to our funders and donors, big and small. They are all essential and have enabled us to keep going through this difficult economic climate. We are sure that the work we do provides an excellent return on investment. Through the support provided by We Are Family, an average of 10 babies or children each year are able to stay with their families who would otherwise have entered the Care system. So at a cost of around £1,000 per family for a year, this project saves the state around £3.8 million each year until the children are grown.

Z zzzzzz. This work is often very tiring, but definitely worth it!

Julia Acott
Director

Many thanks to all the staff and volunteers who all work so hard. Thanks to all the contributors to this report.



From February this year, Pat Wiggins shared the post of Centre Manager's position with Julia, until new three-year funding was secured for the post. She writes:

Alternatives relies on donations of baby equipment and food to pass on to families in need, and it never fails to amaze me at how generous people are. Gifts come in from community groups, churches and individuals and it is quite common to see someone struggling towards the front door of Forrest House with a huge black bag full of baby clothes or toys.

We have been given fresh farm produce this year including apples, strawberries, pears, plums, potatoes, cabbages and cauliflowers which have been greatly appreciated by everyone. New toys are also sent in and these are given out to our children from the We are Family group for birthday and Christmas presents – almost always the only ones they receive.

I feel privileged to be able to sort out the tins and packets of food ready to give them out when they are needed. It is also great to choose the birthday presents, trying to give each child something suited to their interests. At the time of writing we are expecting deliveries of beautiful toys for Christmas. The rolls of wrapping paper are in the office waiting to be opened and we are ready for action, so that every child will have gifts from Santa Claus at the We Are Family Christmas party.

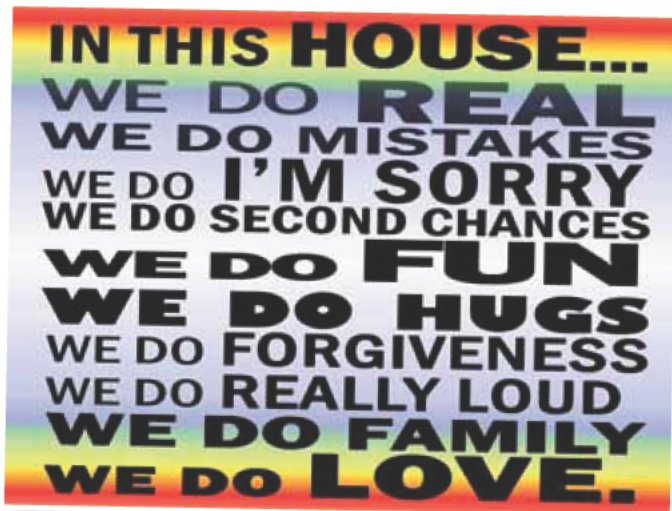
Pat Wiggins

The We Are Family Club has been running at capacity for years, and somehow continued to grow again in 2014, with 20 – 25 mums coming each week on a Monday morning. While 10 families moved on during the year, 50 families have come to the group overall and there are another 20 referrals from midwives and social workers, who we've been in contact with but have not yet made it through the doors.

The weekly teaching sessions have covered topics like managing relationships, dealing with conflict, and parenting, with lots of family activity sessions. Combined with weekly visits from support staff to help with parenting and practical issues, these have helped mums rebuild confidence in themselves and their ability to parent their children. On August Mondays we met in the park for games and a picnic, and on some days we hosted activities in the garden at Forrest House. We have had fun times with dressing up, construction and imaginary play activities, and a water play session with paddling pools and our water tray provided by the Woodgate community. One parent, who has no recourse to public funds, commented that these sessions were especially important to her as she has to pay to go to a Children's Centre.

A new outing this year was a fantastic trip to the Science Museum in February half term; we travelled on the tube to South Kensington with many youngsters and buggies. It was a first for the parents, who enjoyed it as much as the children. Our annual beach trip found us in Dymchurch. The beach was beautifully sandy, the tide was out and the sun shone brightly for the best part of the day. Many

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The 4Dads experience remains both intriguing and challenging. We entered the year with much eagerness and a great sense of anticipation. On a small budget we were able to continue our mission of providing much needed support for fathers in the area of good parenting skills. We also worked hard to provide strong positive role models for fathers to become more active in their roles as fathers and encouraged an atmosphere of friendship which enabled fathers to focus on their relationships with their wives, partners and children.

mums and their children walked down to the sea and had lots of fun swimming, paddling and laughing in the sea; another new experience for most of them and their children. One parent said it was "perfect" and one six-year old said "It was an awesome day."

We Are Family continues to be well networked, receiving a stream of referrals from other agencies and working with various other charities to meet families' needs. The Acorn midwife holds a clinic in our building after WAF, and we have a new link with the Family Nurse Practitioners, a new initiative for young people supporting them through pregnancy and for first two years of their child's life.

The We Are Family team this year has included: Julia A, Julia D, Chris, Elizabeth, Jo, Earna, Pat, Kirsty, Marie, Sam, Harriet, Althea, Mary, Stefanie, Carys, Victoria, Cassandra, plus drivers and volunteers for the trip to the beach Eva, Mark J, Clive, Pauline, Yvonne, Mark P, Brian, Daniel and Naomi. A huge thank you to you all; you are all wonderful and essential to who we are and what we do.

Practical Parenting Group

This is a smaller group of 5-8 mums that are interested in looking in more depth at parenting skills. They want to ask questions and devise strategies for improving their parenting. The group has looked at a number of topics including, budgeting, routines, behaviour management, nutrition, safety, songs, play and more. The parents have a large say in what we cover, and we discuss at the beginning of each term what we want to do in the following weeks.

Many of the parents that attend this group want to learn how to give their children the attention, affirmation and play that they missed out on as children. Two quite moving times this year have been when parents have gone out of their comfort zone and really made an effort to consider their children's needs. One was a session on learning family games, and the other was creating their own books that feature their children. Both of these activities had a genuine positive impact on emotional closeness of the family. Along with the many sessions on routines and discipline, they have created quite a breadth of opportunities to examine what makes and builds good and lasting memories for our children.

Julia Dexter, Elizabeth Booker and Earna Gibson

Parenting Skills Courses were facilitated by Dr Chris Andrew. Dads who took part in them said they learnt something new and were happy to take them on board in their parenting styles at home.

We met once a month, with an average of seven men coming to the group. Food at the meetings was often cooked by the dads, and eating together at the end of the parenting courses fortified the bond that already exists between the men.



One of the men who joined the group in 2014 got married in the summer to his long-term partner, and the members of the 4Dads group were invited to share their wedding day with them.

Another highlight of 2014 was a barbeque in the summer, where seven dads had a great time together over good food and drinks and also talking openly about their relationship with their wives, partners and children, their jobs and even their health and faith created a sense of achievement and satisfaction in us and also further affirmed our belief that there is a great need for what we do in 4Dads in our community.

Chigozie Eneremadu



Sarah and Johura

Social Enterprise Group: The We Are Family Co-operative

The year 2014 has been an amazing year with a lot of learning curves and blessings along the way. I started running a pioneer Social Enterprise project with Alternatives in February, to help mums from the We Are Family group to move on when their children were grown. I was full of optimism and fear of the new territory but took it on with excitement knowing that if we pulled it off, many people's lives will be transformed for better.

We started with inviting mums round and discussing what their dreams were. While some mothers knew exactly what they wanted to do, others did not and with ideas flowing, there were several options of what our pioneer Social Enterprise projects would be. We agreed to start with card making but have since done other several things including jewellery making, and we have attended several events to help our learning process including the Hobby Craft event at Excel London. This is in addition to things that other mums were already doing, or could do but had not had an opportunity to do them, like baking and cooking. Some of our mums, like Lorraine and Agnes, have excelled at selling their food at different events. We have pooled our resources, and shared childcare between us so we can all have a chance to learn, make and sell.

We are a group of eight mums so far, who are attending every Tuesday and discussing their ideas and dreams that they would like to see happen. I benefited from a Social Enterprise training seminar, which was challenging and inspiring, and as a group we have arranged for specialist training in running a business for early next year, and setting up food hygiene training courses. The group has chosen a name for itself, the We Are Family Cooperative.

We have been out and about selling our goods, with up to five mums each time looking after the stalls. We have had stalls at four events so far, most recently the Stratford Retro Market, which we really enjoyed and gave us a feel of what it could be like. It was wet and cold but it was

great to be present and doing our bit to better ourselves. If by being there makes another mother think, 'I can do that', we are in business. We have three more dates coming up before Christmas in Stratford Broadway and we are very excited.

Sarah Moriah



This has been a good year for the Education team, as renewed funding will enable us to expand into new settings and develop the range of lessons we can provide to schools and community groups. There have been staff changes, with Jo now having an oversight role for a few hours a week while also using the office for her university work. We are currently looking to appoint a permanent member of staff as 'Education Team Leader' from January, but would like to thank Jess Craig and Jennifer Essu for the great work they have done over the last couple of terms.

A number of volunteers have worked with us during 2014 and we would like to thank Bianca Ferreira da Silva, Jennifer Essu, Esther Jannetta, Julia Acott, Jess Craig and Eva Price for the time they have spent with us in schools.

The Education team delivered 1,080 pupil sessions in the last academic year, and this term has delivered our 'unintended pregnancy' session to around 270 year 11 pupils at one girls' school. We are currently developing new lessons on the subjects of pornography and FGM, as well as a set of lessons on relationship and sex education to offer to years five and six in Newham primary schools.

This expansion in our provision is going to need a larger workforce, so a three day training session for staff and volunteers has been arranged for the beginning of 2015 to equip them to go into schools and do this much-needed work. The Education team is also positioning itself to be an integral part of CPD for schools in Newham, by offering courses for school staff that will equip them to deliver the lessons we have developed in their own settings. This will be explored further in 2015.

Jo Sell

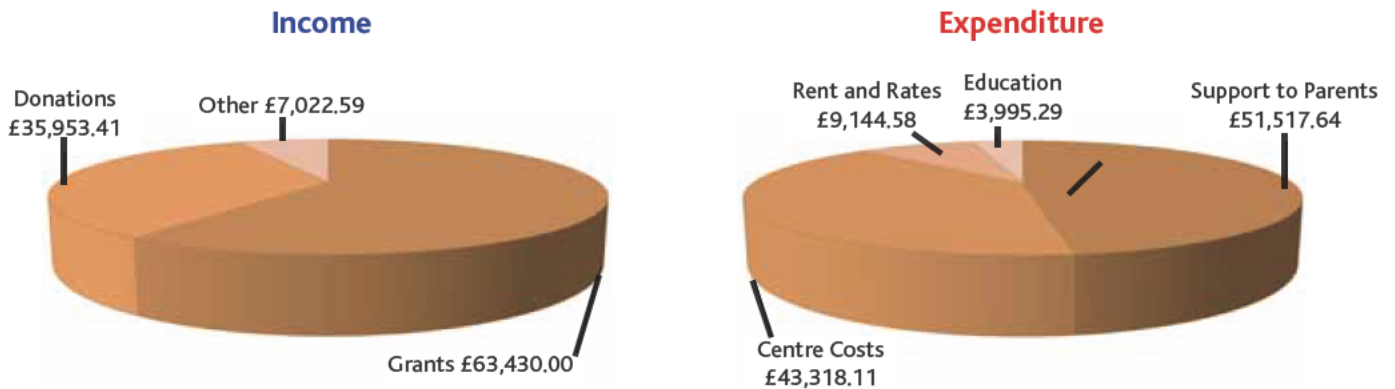


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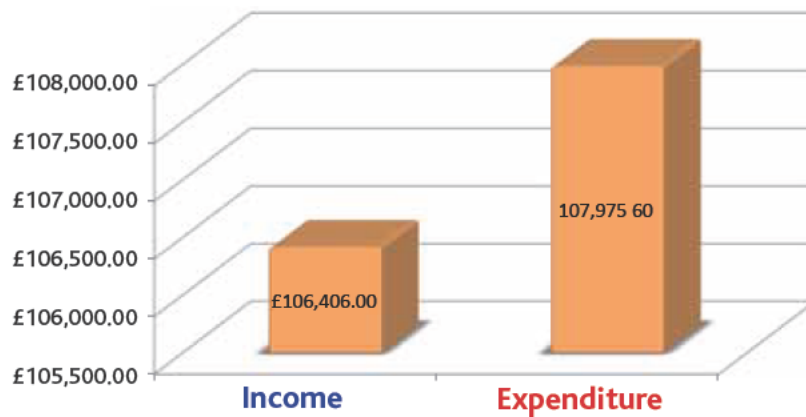
Financial Statement

Thanks again to Philippa our fundraiser and Sarah Acott our book keeper for their excellent work this year. We are relieved and thankful to have the income from grants

and donations in these trying times when funding is much harder to secure. We thank everyone who has supported us and enabled our work to continue.



Income vs Expenditure



Thank you to all our funders during 2014 including:

- | | |
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| Big Lottery Fund Awards for All | Parish of St Giles and St George, Ashted |
| Community First Canning Town North | Petts Wood Christ Church |
| Community Links | Santander Community Plus |
| Diocese of Chelmsford (London Over the Border Council) | Sir Halley Stewart Trust |
| Drapers' Charitable Company | Tesco Charity Trust |
| Help a Capital Child | Transform Newham |
| Henry Smith Charity | Trusthouse Charitable Fund |
| London Borough of Newham Let's Get the Party Started | Warburtons Charity Fund |
| London Catalyst | Many churches and individuals – thank you! |
| Mrs Smith and Mount Trust | |



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