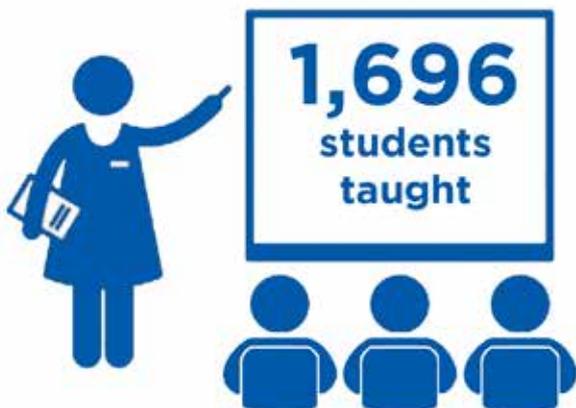




Annual Report 2018



From the Director



**Julia Acott,
Director**

Growing – developing - changing

Personally 2018 has been a year of exhilaration and sometimes exhaustion too, as Alternatives has been able to expand and consolidate its work. Our motto of “Listen – care – support” has continued to underpin all we do and we have continued to achieve our mission of providing “holistic help in a hurting world”. A record number of our clients have moved forwards in life as a result of the range of programmes and activities we are able to offer.

We have developed our offices this year to give us more scope within them to match the needs of our growing organisation, adding a third garden room. And the WAF Charity Shop has taken off, with new staff to manage it.

We Are Family (WAF) continues to be the main area of Alternatives’ efforts and makes the most dramatic impact on people’s lives, significantly helping 66 women and their children during 2018. For many years our primary focus was around a mother’s bonding and attachment with her baby and young child, which grew out of our support for pregnancy choices and loss. We are still passionate about this and about equipping mothers for positive parenting. However as we have come to understand more deeply the vulnerabilities of their children and the challenges for them of growing up in Newham, which has high levels of gang activity and youth violence, we now focus more consciously on improving outcomes for children of all ages.

This year we started running workshops specifically for teens who may be vulnerable to gangs. We are considering a holiday club next year for the children from We Are Family aged 11 and over, and even a regular afterschool club. This has been a natural move forwards for us, as many women who come to We Are Family have older children who we would consider vulnerable. I am thankful that the team is embracing this growth and change and traveling together, learning new skills to get this important work right.

Comings and Goings

In January we said farewell to Sarah Moriah, who was one of the original mums in the We Are Family group. She is now running a successful business locally and is a trustee of Alternatives.

We bade Jade Ford a temporary farewell as she went on maternity leave and welcomed Sandra Fabowale who has stepped into her role as Family Support Worker. Sandra is also one of our placement counsellors.

We said thank you and farewell to Masuma Sultana and Simone Thomas, both placement counsellors. In the autumn term we welcomed two new placement students: Nicole Wardell, a drama therapy student, who brings a different dimension of creativity, and Lauren Martin, a placement counsellor with a background in supporting vulnerable and displaced women.

We welcomed Yetunde Fatejo, one of our WAF mums, into the role of WAF CAF Manager and then into a job-share with Sheron Ankrah as WAF Development Managers. The two of them have a primary focus on social enterprise development and practical support.

We thank Carol Baynes who stepped down from being a trustee after many years, and we are delighted to welcome Francesca Ojefua as a new trustee.

Counselling Team

Nicole and Lauren have fitted in straight away with our clients and are doing valuable work, alongside our other counsellors Sally, Coleen and Sandra. We thank Barbara Church for her ongoing voluntary contribution of staff supervision.

Alt-Ed Talks

Our education work, rebranded Alt-Ed Talks has branched into Teen Workshops and we are covering such topics as gangs, consent, culture, identity, healthy relationships and online safety, as well as our core work in healthy relationships, self-esteem, pregnancy, contraception and STIs. We are grateful for the help from our volunteers Bianca, Stacey, Simeon and Francesca who join with the Alternatives team. Thanks to Matt for his work on the fryp.org.uk website, and to Kate for developing and growing into her role as Education Manager.

We Are Family

The We Are Family (WAF) project work is always challenging, with the complex lives that our clients bring to us. Sometimes we can feel very angry towards perpetrators and abusers. But this year has seen a steady stream of clients moving forwards confidently into training and employment, as well as into secure housing and stability. We have many celebrations in the We Are Family group when people get their leave to remain in the UK – 17 this year. Sadly there are always more and more clients coming to us from terrible situations, and we offer them all our support of parenting



Fun at the beach in August



A day out in the countryside

and life skills, advocacy and practical help. This year we have increased our programme so that there is something happening daily from Monday – Friday during term time which means no one need be isolated.

Social Enterprise

With new grants from City Bridge Trust and the SEGRO Community Fund we have been able to establish our WAF Charity Shop, Creations, with regular staff of Yetunde (Shop Manager and WAF Development Manager) and Mavis, with Sheron (WAF Development Manager) and Sandra supporting. The shop is run as a social enterprise, and is also a base where our mums and children can get clothes, toys and equipment for themselves for free. It gives an opportunity for WAF volunteers to join the team and learn retail skills as well as help in the new WAF HUB – a back room at the shop where our mums can drop in for craft learning projects, refreshments and support.

Our pop-up café, the WAF CAF, is another social enterprise led by Yetunde, which re-launched with a new team of six this September. Three of them have already moved on into paid employment! So we are continually adding in new volunteers from the WAF group. WAF CAF catering jobs this year included the opening of Chapman Cottage, a new room in our garden donated to Alternatives to celebrate the Golden Wedding Anniversary of our Chair of Trustees Howard and his wife Carole. They also provided food for 60 at the AGM of Helping Hands, a charity run by our neighbours at the Friary where Yetunde, the WAF CAF Manager, once lived when she was homeless.

WAF Angels are employed as cleaners for local residents, and the income they get makes a huge difference to them. It has funded loans for vocational training as well as helping them feed their families.

Altogether 20 women moved into volunteering, training or work this year.

Food

Our donated food is a lifeline for many of our families and the number of people who need it increases steadily. Thanks to all who donated at Harvest time, as well as to regular providers Eric Samuel from Community Food Enterprise Ltd, City Harvest and Nando's. These gifts are essentials and very much appreciated. Our children also enjoyed the luxury of Easter Eggs this year, thanks to Kevin Jenkins at The AAA Zone.

Toys and Clothes and Stationery

Most of our clients just do not have the resources to buy toys for their children so we are indebted to those who donate Christmas and birthday presents for them. These toys become highly prized possessions and without these donations the children would have

no toys at all to play with. Similarly with clothes; as children grow we are so pleased we can help with larger sizes for them. This September we had some wonderful stationery sets donated which meant all our children could start back at school with good colouring pens and pencils. These gifts are a real boost to children's self-esteem and quality of childhood.

Finance

A huge thanks to Philippa for her amazing grant fundraising success and to Jeremy for his design and graphics input as well as running our online fundraising and appeals. Last year we took part in The Big Give for the first time and won an award for our initiative! Their successes have meant we have been able to develop the work we are doing and employ new staff. We are still working on diversifying our income, knowing we will need new sources of unrestricted funds to survive and grow in challenging times.

Thanks too to Peter Bailey, our voluntary Finance Director and Buildings Manager, for all the practical help and time he donates.

We are very appreciative of all the funders who have believed in us and funded the various projects across the organisation. We are grateful to have been part of the Evaluation Exchange pilot project with Aston-Mansfield and UCL this year, helping us strengthen our evaluation framework. In the New Year the team is taking a big step towards greater professionalism by starting to use the "Upshot" monitoring and evaluation software to measure and evidence the impact of our work.

Trustees

Thanks to our trustees Howard (Chair), Andy, Chris, Mark, Sarah, Carol (retired this year), Eva, Christina and John for their help throughout the year and support at our events. Howard was Father Christmas this year! Welcome to Francesca Ojefua who became a trustee in December.

The Future

As we move into next year when Alternatives will be 25 years old, I have decided that 2019 will be my last year as Director.

Along with the trustees and with the support of funders, we have planned a managed transition during the year to allow a new Director the opportunity to take Alternatives to the next level from 2020 onwards. We will begin recruiting early in 2019.

Once I have handed over, I plan to have a part-time role developing and delivering training for Alternatives, as a way to increasing earned income. This present year has been a time for staff to get used to the reality of transition ahead, and we have had regular strategy meetings preparing for the change. I am delighted that organisationally we are in a strong place, and for many reasons this feels the right time to hand over, giving the future the best chance possible.

Julia Acott

Alt-Ed Talks

Kate Neal

Kate in action at one of our local schools



This year in the education team we have rebranded our name and our lessons content. We are now called Alt-Ed Talks (which stands for Alternatives Education) and the new colour scheme is consistent across all core lessons. This also gave us an opportunity to reinforce the Alternatives ethos in all that we deliver to young people.

We have worked in Lister, Plashet and Cumberland Schools over this past academic year providing PSHE support on Relationships, Pregnancy Choices and Contraception. Alongside this we have had the amazing opportunity to expand our work with young people through the avenue of workshops. The Renewal Programme based in East Ham approached us about facilitating workshops with young people exploring relationships, contraception and pregnancy choices. This has allowed us to expand our thinking in the way we deliver our content and from this we have dreamed up a series of ten workshops aimed at at-risk young women who are vulnerable to gangs, sexual exploitation and criminal behaviour. This dream has become a reality with a small grant provided by the Aspers Community Fund and the opportunity to pilot the workshops with a group of young girls at the Garden Café in Custom House. We are also planning a summer holiday project with teenagers from We Are Family next year.

We have been seeking to expand our work into other Secondary Schools in Newham, and have lots of positive plans for next year. Since the start of the academic year in September, we have re-established contact with three schools we've worked with in the past, and are planning how we can support their PSHE programmes both with lessons and with possible drop-ins for follow up questions and even free pregnancy testing and contraception advice. We are excited as a team to see what unfolds in the coming academic year. In November Kate ran a training day for the six volunteers, five of them new, equipping them to support Kate in schools and now youth settings. One new recruit said, "Really informative; great resources. Made us feel comfortable and created a safe environment for learning".

The WAF Shop

Sheron Ankrah

I joined Alternatives team in July of this year as Development Manager, in a job share role with Yetunde (Yetty). Our role is to develop social enterprise and organise the distribution of donated clothes and food.

In the four months I have been here, the level of constant work that Alternatives takes on has been a real revelation. And I have been so impressed with how the support given to the women and their families has made such a difference in real terms, giving them hope for their tomorrow.

I have seen the faces of mums light up when given the opportunity to be helped with items such as cot for their new born baby. I have found myself saying words that I have heard many times from the staff over the very short time I have been here... "You are welcome, it's our pleasure, that's what we are here for, and if we can help we will help."

One of the most amazing things is being a part of the team at "Creations", the WAF Charity shop on Prince Regents Lane. It is not only a functioning shop, where items purchased generate income for the charity, but since September we have opened the "WAF HUB", a place for our mums to come and chat and put their hidden talents of art, craft, and creative design to good use making items to sell.



Learning together at the new WAF HUB

The Centre

Jenny Jones

It's been a busy year and the number of people coming to our Centre for help has risen steadily. As Centre Manager I co-ordinate a team of staff who help clients deal with issues like housing, immigration, benefits, medical issues, advocacy regarding children, signposting and referrals to specialist agencies.

Over the past year, 17 women have been given Leave to Remain or had their Leave to Remain extended. While this is extremely good news, it brings a different set of challenges for them. I've accompanied women to housing appointments and job centre appointments, and filled in benefit and passport applications. This year (until 30 November) staff at the Centre have written 1,082 letters and made 400 phone calls on behalf of clients. It's been a privilege to walk their journeys with them. The joy of each landmark is shared with the group, which leads to much smiling, cheering and clapping.

This year some of us had two days' training to become qualified Mental Health First Aiders, which gave us greater understanding and empathy for clients who endure poor mental health. During the year we took part in a six-month Evaluation Exchange initiative, arranged by Aston-Mansfield. A volunteer team of researchers from UCL worked with Alternatives staff to help improve how we monitor our activities and measure the difference we make. It was a sometimes challenging, but entirely worthwhile project and we are really pleased to have been a part of it.

Some months after coming to the WAF group, A told me that she and her 5 year-old were living in a rat-infested basement room and paying an unfair amount of rent. She was also very wary of going to



Social Services for help, given the fact that her immigration application wasn't yet finalised. After much encouragement, she agreed to go if I went with her. She was very soon re-housed and although it was just outside the borough, there were no rodents.

We Are Family

Julia Dexter



The We Are Family programme supports women and their families who are experiencing a range of needs including homelessness and severe hunger – one came on a Monday not having eaten since Saturday - domestic violence, modern day slavery and trafficking, relationship breakdown, mental health issues and trauma. They may have no immigration status so no recourse to public funds, no money, no family or support network, no baby clothes or equipment, and sometimes little English. As well as surviving and coping with major trauma in their lives, they are single parents who have to parent 24/7. Their children in the midst of this may also experience trauma and developmental delay.

Families may continue to struggle even when they find work or become eligible for benefits, which is why the WAF Enterprises were launched to increase employability. Over the last three years we have helped 48 women into work.

The We Are Family group meets every Monday with 25-30 parents and 10-15 preschool children in term time. The morning consists of good food, a crèche with planned children's activities and a group session for parents on teaching life skills and parenting skills, encouraging personal growth and developing self-awareness. Women are made aware of the practical help available at our Centre and vulnerable families have a named support worker. Counselling for women that need it adds to the holistic support we provide that helps women recover the emotional resilience turn their lives around over 2-3 years. More confident parenting and the "second family" provided by WAF helps children to be healthy, secure and developmentally ready to start school. Feedback from mums shows the difference it makes.

"The people at WAF are never shocked or disappointed by issues we all face."

"I am able to manage [my children's] emotions. I have learnt how to discipline with love. Now I am showing them a lot of love."

"I've got somewhere permanent to stay and food to eat. I had breakfast this morning!!"

"Your children need you to be calm, they teach you techniques to calm down when you are stressed. I learn to behave, how to treat the children. Because I didn't get it back home. You can only give what you know."

"My son sees WAF as part of his family."

There are also weekly Practical Parenting classes in term time, and this Autumn we ran a new seven-week course for parents of teenagers. It was a small group which made for an openness and honesty. At the start of one session A opened her folder and pointed to the word "once". She said, "What we learnt here the other week about saying things once has really stuck in my head. I was telling the children off recently and I stopped myself from repeating. And surprisingly the children listened!"

We have great celebrations and positive life experiences too.

During the school holidays, school age children join the group. In the summer holidays, 22 parents and 54 children went to West Ham Park every Monday, sharing food and learning to play together. In the Easter holiday and October half term we ran craft sessions for 40 people each time. Both children and parents really enjoyed making masks, collage, colouring and card making. What stands out for me is the atmosphere in the room which is very calm, peaceful and relaxing with people full of creativity, concentration and pride in their work.

Talking about the October session, one parent said, "It's wonderful to focus, breathe and smile" and one of the children declared "It made me feel all tingly on the inside, like I'm flying in another world".

Highlight of the year for many families are outings: We took 60 people to the Science Museum, 80 to the Kent countryside and 87 on the train to the seaside. All of these were "firsts" for most of the families.

"I have never been anywhere like this before"

"This is the best day ever".



A new team of cooks at the WAF CAF in April



We celebrate the birthdays of children and mums at We Are Family each Monday, and we really celebrate Christmas! Thanks to wonderfully generous donations of toys, we sort and wrap over 200 presents each year, and pass them on to mums (with gift tags to write) so they can give them to their children. Each child receives a book, a cuddly toy, something educational, and a craft activity or fun toy – usually the only toys they get for Christmas. Food and gifts are prepared and wrapped for every parent too. Mums and children play games at our Christmas Party, and then feast, forgetting their problems briefly, and visiting Santa as they leave.

We couldn't do any of this without our fantastic team of staff and WAF volunteers. With appreciation and respect to Chris Andrew Julia Acott, Jenny Jones, Pat Wiggins, Kate Neal, Sheron, Sandra, Yetunde, Earna Gibson Wendy, Chantel, Agnes, Francesca, Camille, Joke - you are all essential in making WAF run smoothly week by week. THANK YOU.



Howard Chapman, Chair of Trustees

I would like to thank Julia Acott and all the staff, volunteers and trustees at Alternatives whose skill and dedication is helping transform so many lives in East London.

It has been an amazing year, with Alternatives providing vital services entirely funded through the support of grants from trusts and foundations and donations from supporters from the local community and beyond.

We have challenging times ahead as the charity seeks to develop ever more effective ways to meet the growing needs of vulnerable individuals and families facing difficult times.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to our clients whose courage and fortitude in very challenging circumstances continues to inspire us all.

Coleen

I have been counselling at Forrest House Alternatives for three years. It is a place that epitomises acceptance, love, care, provision, teaching, laughter and sometimes tears. It is a place that accepts people as they are without judgement, and then goes on to help them out of the often dire circumstances they find themselves in. Counselling is offered as part of that journey. The women I have been privileged to have trust me enough to share their story come from all parts of the world. Their experiences are varied and mostly harrowing. Some will come for a few weeks, most for a few months, and sometimes therapy stretches across years. But a most important ingredient that makes my job easier in the first instance, is that the women who come to Alternatives trust the staff and volunteers – it is a place they feel safe. If a client feels safe in therapy, that is one less hurdle to jump.

Yetunde

I started working officially with Alternatives in June 2018 and I can say it is one of the best things that has happened to me in the UK so far. It has boosted my confidence and now I have the courage to interact with people, including women who are members of We Are Family and others.

Also, it's a great joy for me that I have the opportunity to manage both the WAF charity shop and the WAF CAF because of the wonderful experience and knowledge I have gained and am still getting from there.

Nicole

I am a second year student undertaking an MA in Drama and Movement Therapy and I have just started my placement at Alternatives. In Drama Therapy we use different creative and artistic methods to work through our emotions such as art, movement, play and storytelling.

Already in the short time that I have been here my experience has been insightful, educational and inspirational. The staff are dedicated, supportive, warm and very welcoming. There is a sense of feeling 'home' away from home, making it a place that feels approachable, safe and always ready with a cup of tea.



Francesca Ojefua, WAF mum and Alternatives' newest trustee

Volunteering in the WAF creche





Some of the older WAF children

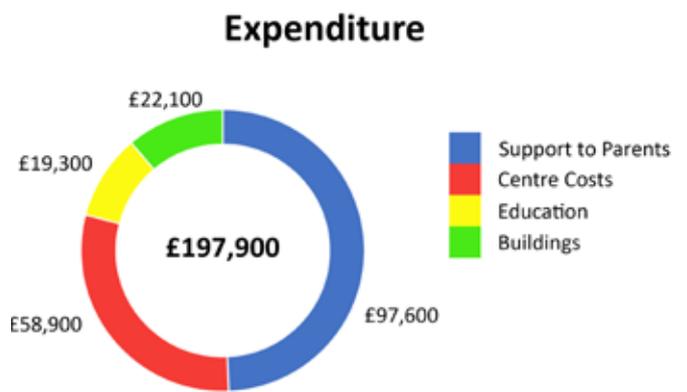
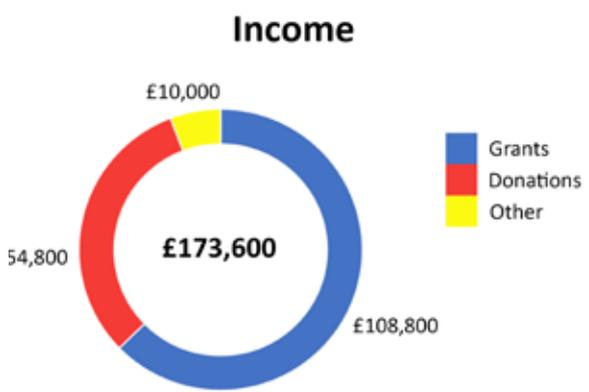


We Are Family made this artwork together for a local exhibition

Finances

The expanding work has required more income from grants in particular and also increased investment in staff and premises. Philippa King, our fundraiser, has secured a number of significant grants which have been received in 2018 and some of these will extend also for a further two years. The grants have enabled more

support workers to be appointed. The building fund accumulated from previous years was used this year to enhance the offices and its lovely garden and to create much needed additional space for counselling, leaving the monies from a legacy received in 2017 for building a new meeting room in 2019.



Estimated and unaudited

Special thanks to our funders during 2018 including:

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| Aspers Good Causes Fund | SEGRO Community Fund | St George and St Ethelbert's, East Ham, Calverton School, Scott Wilkie School. |
| Augustine Courtauld Trust | The Childhood Trust | Christmas present donations from Community Links, Icen Chapter, Widows Sons Masonic Bikers Association & Coburn Lodge, Petts Wood Christ Church, Kingswood House School, Ashtead, and Parish of St Giles and St George, Ashtead who also gave generous financial donations. |
| BBC Children in Need | Valerie Barber | Many other churches and individuals – thank you! |
| Big Lottery Awards for All | Warburtons Families Matter | <i>We are truly grateful for each one of you and would like you to know that your contribution makes a difference to individual lives – THANKYOU.</i> |
| Charles Hayward Foundation | Nando's, City Harvest and Community Food Enterprise for regular food donations | |
| City Bridge Trust | InKind Direct for great value items | |
| Henry Smith Charity | Mrs Smith & Mount Trust | |
| Lloyds Bank Foundation | Churches and schools that gave gifts of food and other donations including CEM Church, Custom House Baptist Church, Memorial Community Church, Ascension Church, St Oswald's Croxley Green, Plaistow Christian Fellowship, | |
| London Borough of Newham | | |
| London Catalyst | | |
| London Over the Border Fund | | |
| Plaistow South Big Local | | |

How you can help

Stay in touch

Please do sign up to our exciting bi-monthly newsletters. They will keep you in touch with what we are doing, and with events and opportunities to help. Just email alternatives@altel.org.uk Or sign up via our website, www.altel.org.uk/mailling-list

Give

- We now have two ways to give online. You can make a donation to Alternatives Trust East London via www.thebiggive.org.uk, where at certain times of year they will double your donation! You can also make one-off or regular donations to Alternatives Trust East London via www.mydonate.bt.com Both of these websites handle Gift Aid for us.
- 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."
- For more information please contact alternatives@altel.org.uk or 020 7476 8215 or see www.altel.org.uk

In Kind donations

We rely on donations of new children's toys, Christmas gifts, food, baby equipment, toiletries and clothes to pass on to people who really appreciate them. Would your school, church or club like to help out by collecting for Alternatives at Harvest or another occasion? The new charity shop is interested in any good-quality items.

Volunteer

New volunteers are always welcome in a variety of roles, regular or occasional, from driving to gardening to wrapping presents! We would love your support; please do get in touch if you'd like to join the team.

Trustees of Alternatives Trust East London:

- Chris Andrew – retired psychiatrist
- Christina Baby – finance director of partner charity Just Homes
- Carol Baynes – local parent with a special interest in education (retired 2018)
- Howard Chapman (chair) - businessman
- John Coombs – local bank manager and charity mentor
- Mark Janes – minister of Memorial Community Church
- Sarah Moriah – one of the first members of We Are Family
- Francesca Ojefua – (new in 2018) also a member of We Are Family
- Andy Pople – local GP
- Eva Price – volunteer with Alternatives since it began in 1994



Above: The Alternatives team at Sarah's goodbye in January;



Left: The opening of Chapman Cottage

Rainbow over Forrest House



Alternatives Trust East London

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Registered charity number 1103724