



# Alana House

## Women's Community Project

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## Annual Report

### 2023-2024



Part of



Parents And Children Together

*Pictured: Artwork created in an Alana House drop-in session*



# About Alana House

Alana House is a community project run by PACT that uses a holistic and trauma-informed approach to support and empower women facing multiple disadvantages. We offer a confidential, women-only, non-judgemental space and welcome all self-identifying women who feel they need help, support, and advice. Alana House has a centre in Reading, but we also provide outreach services across Berkshire.

Alana House Reading opened in April 2010, adopting the recommendations from the Corston Report, which identified nine pathways of support and the trauma-informed approach needed to support women. Initially established to support women in the criminal justice system but who had often experienced trauma themselves, Alana House has developed over the years to support all women with multiple disadvantages who are looking for support to help make positive life changes.

## The nine pathways

Women are offered information and support in line with the nine pathways to help empower them to make positive life changes, develop new skills and create new opportunities. The nine pathways are:



Accommodation



Domestic abuse, violence and rape



Finance, benefits and debt



Attitudes, thinking and behaviour



Drugs and alcohol



Health and wellbeing



Children, families and relationships



Education, training and employment



Sex working

## Our aims

We explore these pathways to bring about positive change by:

- Empowering women to reflect on their lives and make a plan to address their needs, increasing their independence and facilitating their access to mainstream services.
- Addressing the individual barriers to achieve positive and sustainable change.
- Diverting women from custody by addressing the causes of crime and therefore reducing the impact on the community.
- Providing opportunities to access benefit and welfare advice, NHS sexual health treatment, housing and specialist drug and alcohol advice, in one safe place.



# Alana House projects

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- **Custody Diversion Service:** Our work has developed with funding from the Ministry of Justice. Our established service at the custody suite at Loddon has been replicated at the custody suite in Maidenhead. Our goal is to continue to have a presence in both custody suites each day to maximise the 'reachable/teachable' moments, promote early intervention, avoid continued involvement with the criminal justice system and support desistance approaches. On average 150 females are entering custody in Berkshire each month. Many women need assistance to deal with the root causes of offending behaviours to break the cycle of offending. We have been able to develop an additional route for engagement for women who have been in police custody through a data sharing agreement where Alana House can contact a woman who has been detained in police custody once she has been released to offer a further opportunity for support.
- **Court Service:** Alana House staff and volunteers have been offering support to women who are due to be sentenced in Courts in Berkshire. We have been able to have an input into pre-sentence reports (with permission from clients) to share our assessment of the client's needs and outline how holistic and trauma-informed interventions from Alana House can support desistance from further offending, and compliance with sentences passed by the Court. This service has ensured that factors such as abuse, and trauma are considered when females are sentenced. We aim to support 180 women per year (100 accessing one-to-one support and groupwork and 80 accessing triage and signposting support) through both the court and custody pathway.
- **Core Funded Work:** Alana House continues to offer support to women who reside in Reading who are experiencing multiple disadvantages. Women can self-refer or be referred by other professionals. Alana House can support a woman either by allocating a Keyworker for 121 support, or, by offering referred women access to our range of groupwork activities depending on each woman's individual needs and circumstances.
- **Project with Royal Berkshire Hospital & Alana House:** This work has continued and created an ongoing referral pathway for people in hospital who disclose that they are victims of domestic abuse. The project enables staff at the hospital to refer by phone or online. Where domestic abuse is suspected or disclosed, Alana House can respond and offer specialist support and signposting. Our shared aim is to support victims to a place of safety, reducing the physical and psychological harm that victims of abuse experience, and therefore reduce hospital admissions which are linked directly or indirectly to someone suffering abuse within an intimate relationship.



# Referrals

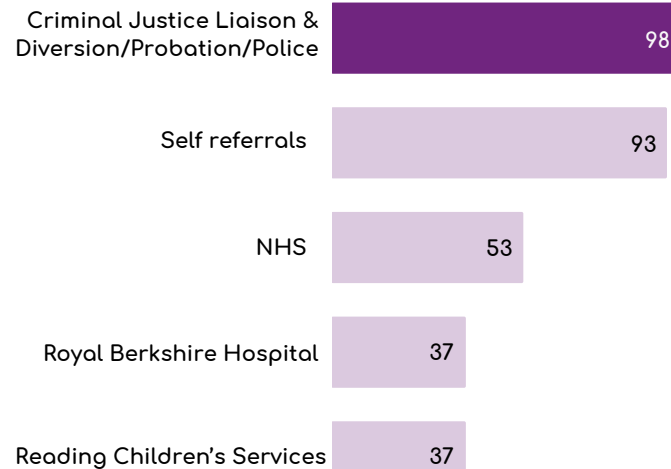
In 2023-2024  
we received

# 377

referrals

34.6 % increase  
of direct referrals  
from last year

## Top 5 Referral sources



## Locations of referrals



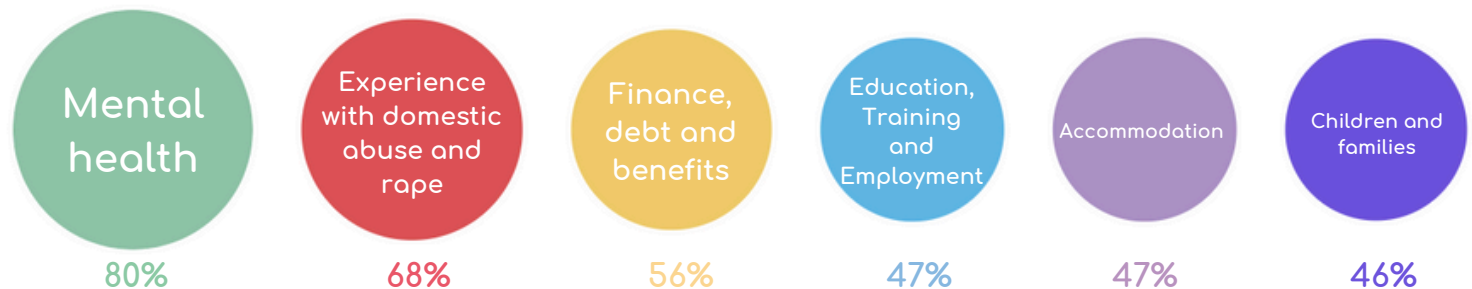
At referral,  
service users present,  
on average

# 4.5

needs

out of 9

## Top six needs reported at referral stage by service users



*Mental Health* remains the most reported need at referral followed by *experience with domestic abuse and rape*. *Finance debt and benefits*, *education, training and employment* and *accommodation* are the needs that have seen the highest increase compared to last year.



# Key achievements

## Women supported

In 2023-2024, a total of

**181**

women received support  
from Alana House

including 121 women who accessed  
support via the Community Rehabilitation  
Service (CRS)

## Length of engagement

In 2023-2024,

**245**

days was the average length  
of time a woman engaged with  
Alana House\*

\*figure does not include CRS service users

## Keyword sessions

In 2023-2024, a total of

**1312**

keyword sessions were  
attended by women\*

\*figure does not include CRS service users

## Signposting

In 2023-2024, a total of

**412**

women were supported  
through signposting

## Counselling

In 2023-2024, a total of

**232**

counselling sessions were  
attended by 19 women

## Donations

In 2023-2024, a total of

**61**

women received support  
through donations, food parcels  
and referrals to foodbanks





# Groups

## Group sessions

In 2023-2024, a total of

220

group sessions were delivered

## Group attendances

In 2023-2024, a total of

75

women attended groups

## Alana House community café

In 2023-2024, a total of

46

café drop-in sessions were held

## Group details

A series of different groups were held at Alana House which included:

- Baking
- Barista training
- Chai and Chat - Project Salama
- Change Grow Live substance misuse support
- Cooking
- Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit
- Healing Trauma
- Job Skills
- Parenting
- Power to Change
- Sexual Violence Recovery Toolkit
- The Museum of English Rural Life Gardening Group
- Sewing
- Reading Rep Theatre Group

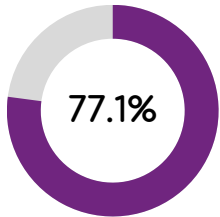
One off groups included:

- Health Hub
- Christmas sessions
- Odds Farm
- Poetry taster session
- Great Western Railway 'Try a Train'

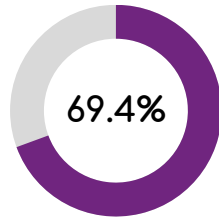


# Outcomes

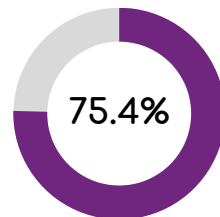
Percentage of women that recorded a positive or sustained improvement in each outcome area



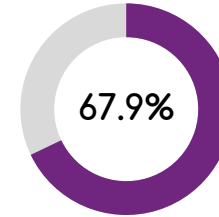
Employment, training and education



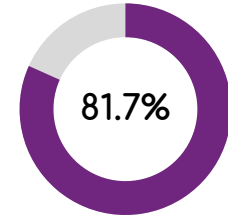
Physical health



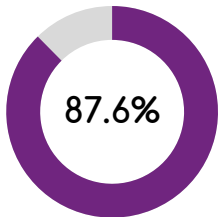
Finance, debt and benefits



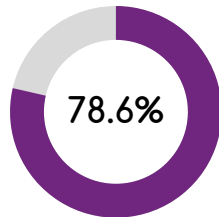
Children, families and relationships



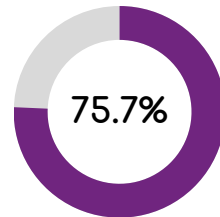
Attitude, thinking and behaviour



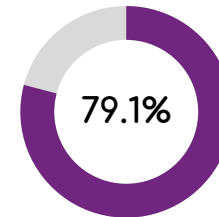
Domestic abuse and rape



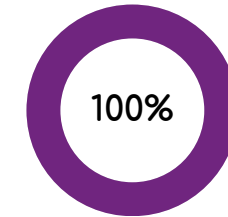
Accommodation



Mental health



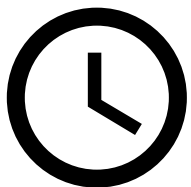
Drugs and alcohol



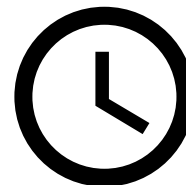
Sex work\*

\*only 5 women presented with this need

Number of hours given to one-to-one and group support in 2023-2024



**495 hours**  
given to group work



**1097 hours**  
given to one-to-one work



# Alana House volunteers

## Alana House Volunteers

71

**Alana House group sessions have been supported by volunteers**

— “ —

As a Counsellor at Alana House I have the privilege of working with women who have experienced trauma, abuse and mistreatment. By providing a supportive, safe and consistent space week after week, the process of healing can begin.

Clients can experience a trusting and safe relationship which fundamentally strengthens their ability to form these relationships outside of the counselling room.

Alana House volunteer

— “ —

I find everyone at Alana House very nice and friendly but also professional and keen to do the right thing for the service users. I've always felt included as part of the team and think staff are very flexible and open to new ideas.

In terms of what a volunteer can do; I think one of the main things we can give is time. Not only in hands on work but also time to think outside the box and action new ideas if appropriate. This saves staff time and so they can give full attention to their clients. It's nice for the volunteers to give extra, "icing on the cake" things rather than just having to stick to the basics of the service.

Alana House volunteer

— “ —

Volunteering for Alana house is very rewarding. They have so many ways of supporting the women who use the service and as a volunteer it means a lot to be part of the community.

I always feel appreciated by the staff and the service users.

Alana House volunteer

22

**volunteers have supported Alana House activities**

— “ —

Within every session lies a story of courage, vulnerability, and resilience. As a volunteer counsellor, I am honoured to be a part of these narratives, guiding with empathy and nurturing with compassion.

Alana House volunteer

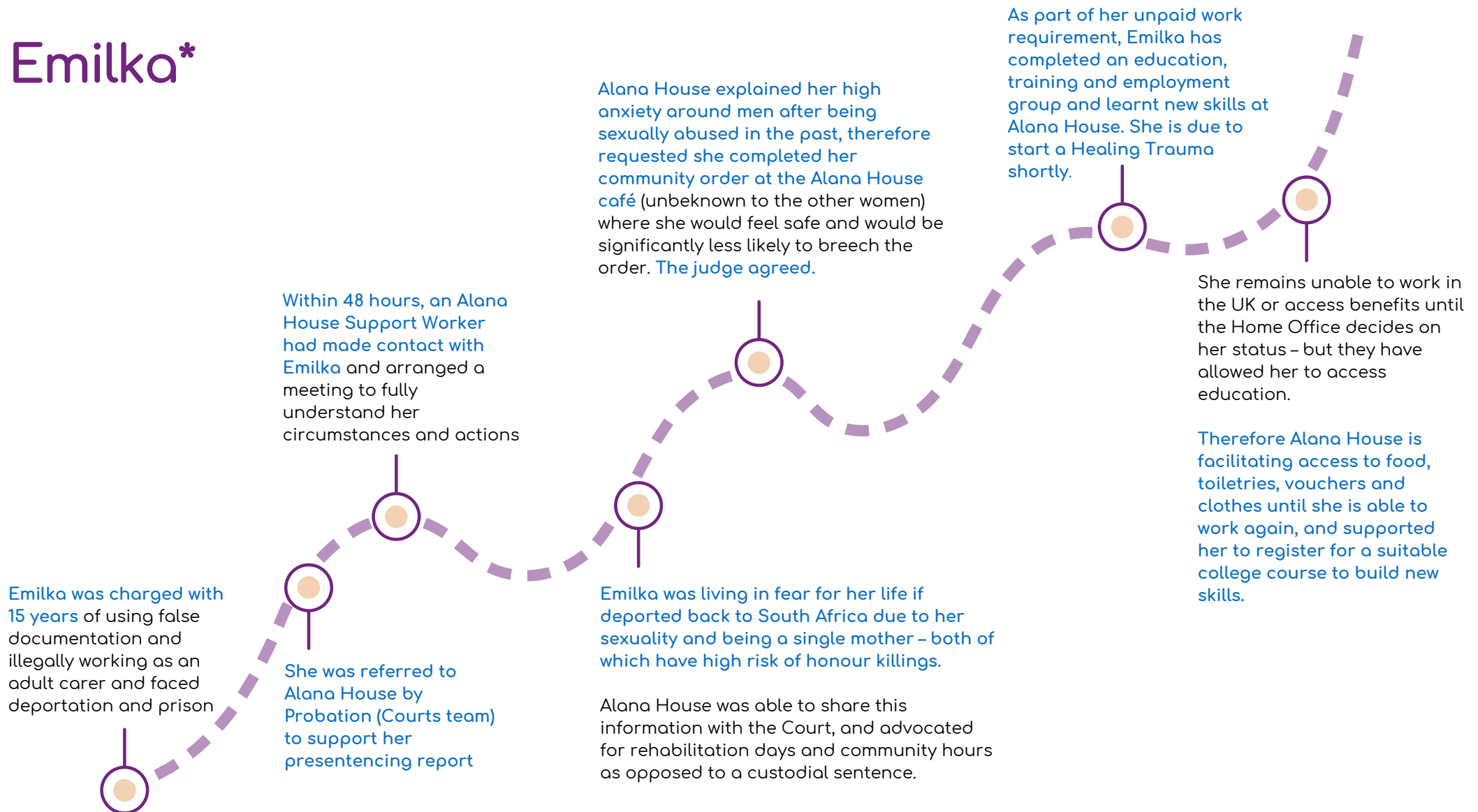
650 hours worked by volunteers





# Case study

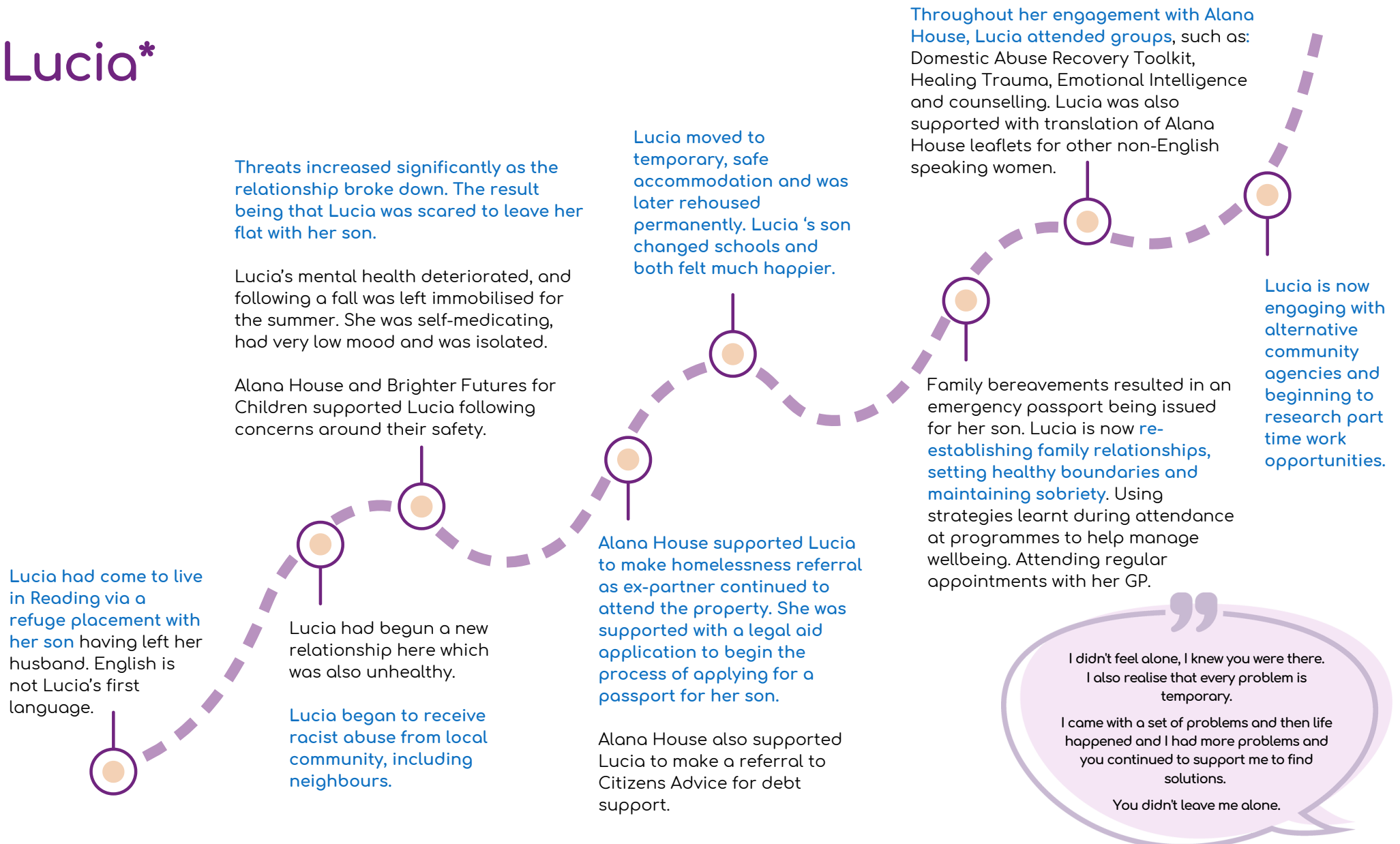
## Emilka\*





# Case study

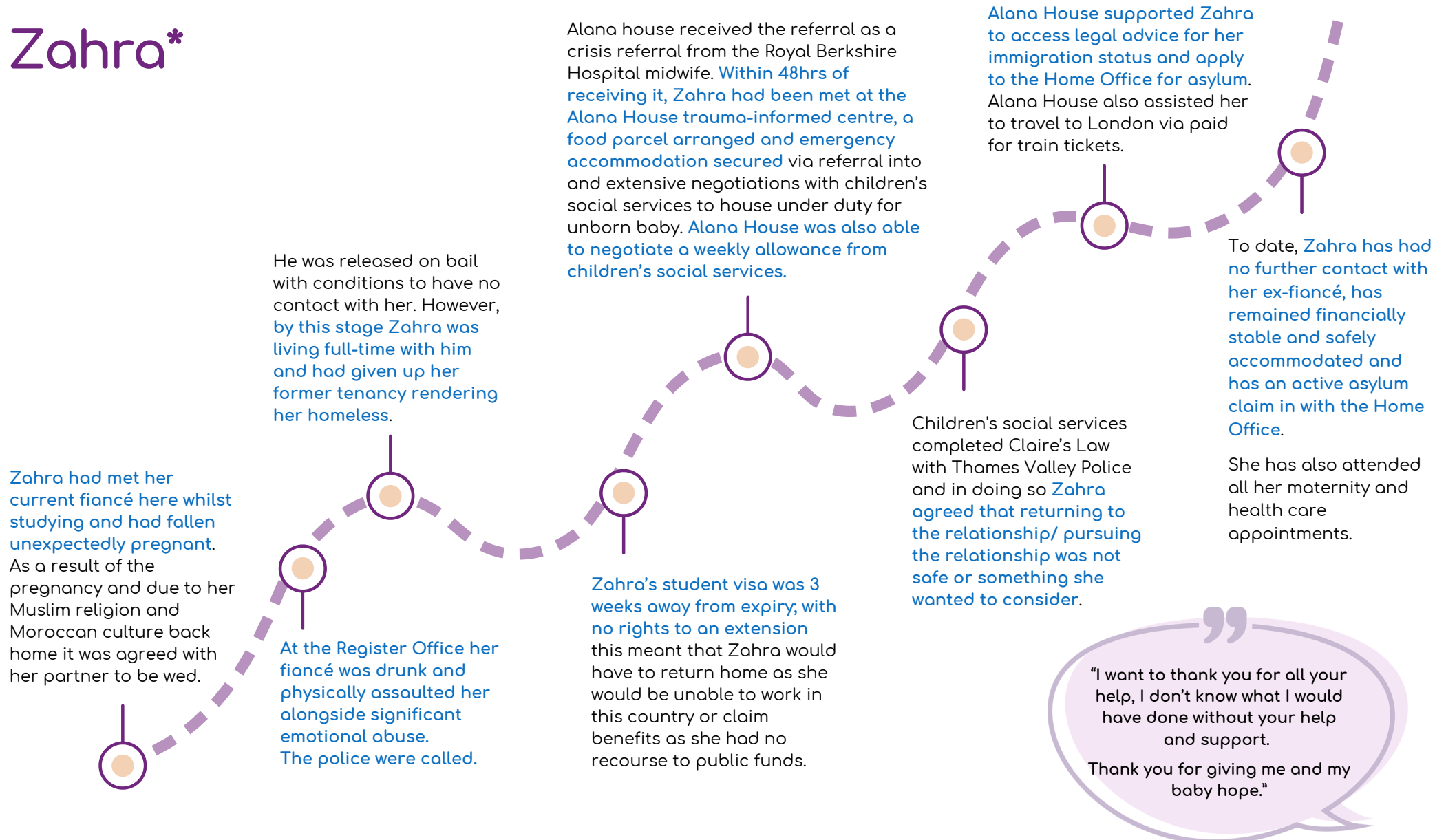
## Lucia\*





# Royal Berkshire Hospital project case study

## Zahra\*

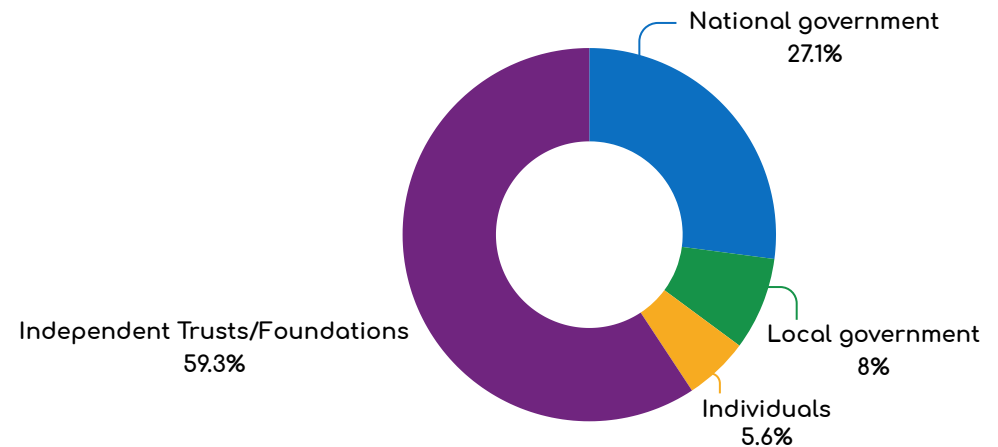




# Funding and future plans

- We thank the following organisations who continue to support Alana House - Berkshire Community Foundation, Nationwide, the Ministry of Justice, Reading Borough Council, and the Kidani Memorial Trust.
- With Ministry of Justice funding, we were able to expand Alana House diversion scheme to courts. This model should guide other organisations to make lasting, positive impacts on vulnerable women and their families.

Funding sources in 2023-2024



## Key priorities for 2024-2025

- Maintain and enhance our Criminal Justice System work through partnerships whilst actively seeking to expand our presence in Courts in Berkshire.
- Grow our volunteer base sufficiently, particularly seeking volunteers who have lived experience, to enable a timely and impactful response to meet and engage women detained in police custody in support or signposting to reduce further arrests and increase stability in the community.
- Upskill our frontline staff – pursue training for support workers to complete IDVA and ISVA training to enable specialist support for our service users whilst identifying other training relevant to the increasing needs of service users.
- To further expand and develop our counselling service through recruiting two further counselling students and secure funding for a support group for women experiencing maternal separation.



# Funding and future plans

- Further develop the Community Café running regular Barista Training and continue to seek referrals from Unpaid Work department of the Probation Service.
- Continue to prioritise the Health and Wellbeing of staff and service users, sustaining an environment of resilience and developing further tools to strengthen support for the increasing number of women presenting with poor mental health (including clinical supervision for staff).
- Develop our knowledge and understanding of acquired brain injury and how we can assess, and support women impacted by this; exploring partnership with academics to develop toolkit (funding dependent)
- Explore and seek to understand the needs of teenage girls and pilot (funding dependent) a service to support girls at risk of being swept into the criminal justice system.



## Volunteer with us!

### Flexible roles to suit your skills or interests

Do you have time or skills you could share with PACT?  
We would love for you to join our team of volunteers!

You could help run groups at Alana House, chat to people who attend our drop-in sessions, support our work in diverting women from custody and much more.

Find out more about our volunteering opportunities today:

[www.pactcharity.org/volunteer](http://www.pactcharity.org/volunteer)





Email: [alana.house@pactcharity.org](mailto:alana.house@pactcharity.org)

Website: [www.alanahouse.org](http://www.alanahouse.org)

Address: 2 Southern Court,  
South Street, Reading, RG1 4QS.

  @AlanaHousePACT

The Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work Inc.,  
whose working name is Parents And Children Together, is a company  
limited by guarantee, registered in England (no.1636098) and a  
Registered Charity (no.285214), whose registered office is:  
7 Southern Court, South Street, Reading, RG1 4QS



*Pictured: Coffee and baked goods made by women at the Alana House Community Café*