



Pictured: Alana House women took part in a photography and picnic event, where they took photographs of the environment, ate lunch, played games and made bracelets!

Alana House

Women's Community Project

Annual Report

2024-2025

 *Alana*
HOUSE
Women's Community Project

Part of



Parents And Children Together



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

Custody Diversion Service: Our work has developed with funding from the Ministry of Justice. We are now an established presence in Loddon Valley and Maidenhead police custody suites. Our goal is to continue to have a presence in both custody suites each day to create opportunities to engage women in support, 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.

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 1-2-1 support, or, by offering referred women access to our range of groupwork activities depending on each women's individual needs and circumstances.

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.

Project with Royal Berkshire Hospital and 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

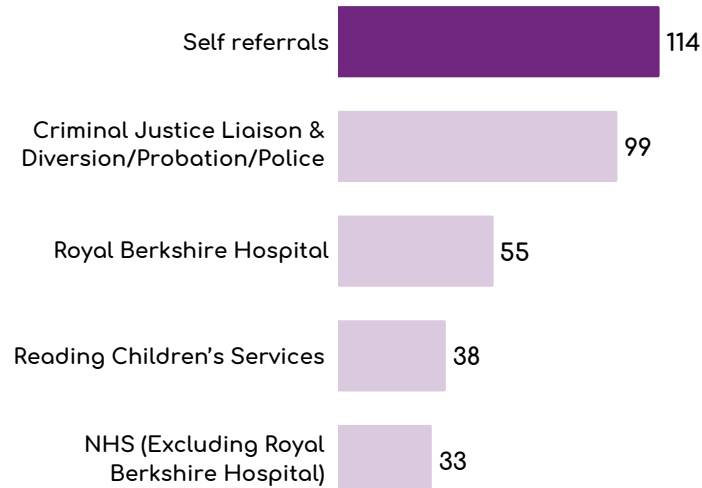
In 2024-2025
we received

415

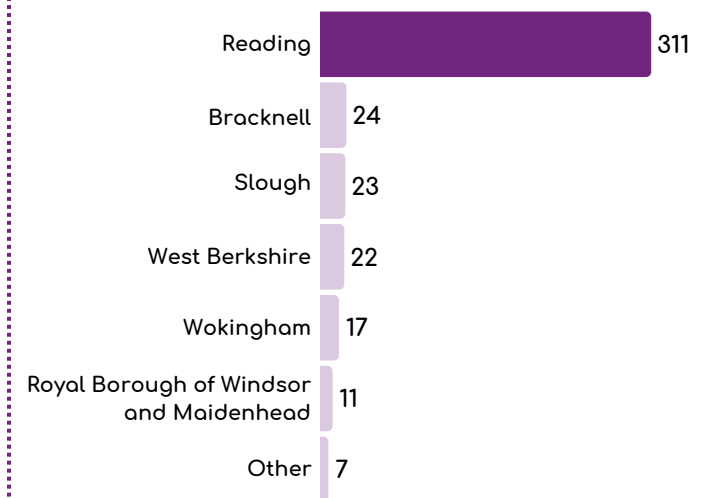
referrals

10% increase
of referrals
from last year

Top 5 referral sources



Location of referrals



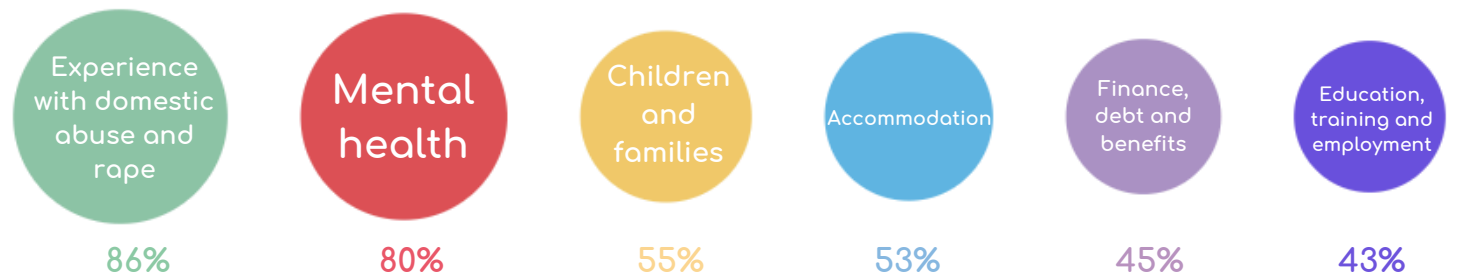
At referral,
service users present
on average with

5

needs

out of 9

Top six needs reported at referral stage



Experience with domestic abuse and rape is, for the first time, the most reported need at referral, followed by mental health. Children and families is the need that has experienced the biggest increase compared to last year, followed by accommodation. finance, debts and benefits as well as education, training and employment have all seen a decrease compared to previous year.



Key achievements

Women supported

In 2024-2025, a total of

242

women received support
from Alana House

Length of engagement

In 2024-2025,

266

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

Keyword sessions

In 2024-2025, a total of

1648

keyword sessions were
attended by women

Signposting

In 2024-2025, a total of

308

women were supported
through signposting

Counselling

In 2024-2025, a total of

143

counselling sessions were
attended by 17 women

Donations

In 2024-2025, a total of

88

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



Awards



Alana House named as winner of the 2024 Robin Corbett Award



Pictured: Kathryn Warner, Director of Community Services and Development and Lynda Souter, Alana House Team Leader, receiving the Robin Corbett award in London.

Alana House has been named as the 2024 winner of the Robin Corbett Award. The Robin Corbett Awards shine a spotlight on the best work in prisoner reintegration. They were set up by the family of Robin Corbett who was passionate about prison reform and prison education.

Judges were impressed by the practical way Alana House uses a trauma-informed, empathetic approach which diverts women away from the criminal justice system.

Lady Val Corbett, Founder of the Robin Corbett Award, said: "Our judges include the Director of Prison Reform Trust, Former Head of London Prisons, President of Prison Governors Association, Former Secretary of State for Justice, a serving magistrate, a retired judge and a former prisoner. They agreed the applicants were of the highest standard since the RCA began in 2013 and we were happy with the three worthy winners we chose.

"The 2024 winner, Alana House/PACT, established in 2010, supports women who had committed offences but needed support to make positive life changes. The two highly commended winners, Prisoners Abroad helps British citizens detained overseas and, just as important, supports their families while the RIFT Wise Women project aims to empower women with convictions by providing impactful self-employment support."

PACT CEO Natausha van Vliet said: "We are deeply honoured to receive the Robin Corbett Award in recognition of the important work of our women's community project Alana House which aims to give women a brighter future for themselves and their children. Part of our transformative work includes embedding support workers in custody suites and courts to provide women with holistic and therapeutic support. This approach ultimately prevents women from entering the criminal justice system."

As this year's winner, Alana House will receive £5,000, a glass plaque donated by James Timpson and the book 'A Life Well Lived', written by Lady Corbett about her husband.



Groupwork

Group sessions

In 2024-2025, a total of

389

group sessions were delivered

77% increase from last year

Group attendances

In 2024-2025, a total of

120

women attended groups

60% increase from last year

Alana House community café

In 2024-2025, a total of

53

café drop-in sessions were held

15% increase from last year

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
- Coping with strong emotions
- Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit
- Foundations maternal separation support
- Healing Trauma
- Hope2Recovery
- IT Skills
- New Directions
- Outing
- Parenting
- Sexual Violence Recovery Toolkit
- The Museum of English Rural Life Gardening Group
- Sewing
- Reading Rep Theatre Group
- Trauma Informed Yoga
- Well-being

One off groups included:

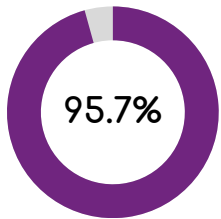
- Poetry and Creativity Workshop
- Christmas sessions
- Reading Library
- Probation supervision events/sessions at Alana House
- Service User Forum
- Ufton Court Day out



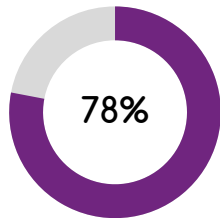
Outcomes

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

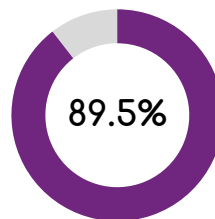
Using the Empowerment Radar, we can assess an individual's progress and measure distance travelled to inform and refine support planning



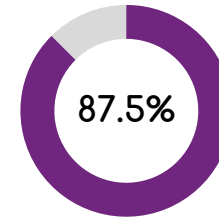
Employment, training and education



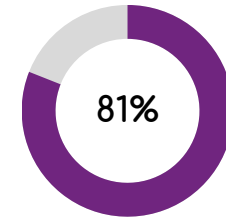
Physical health



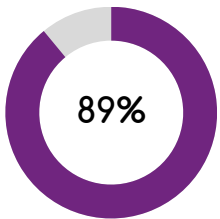
Finance, debt and benefits



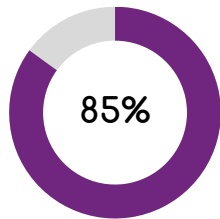
Children, families and relationships



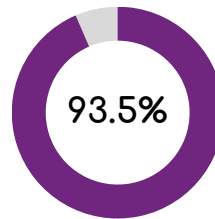
Attitude, thinking and behaviour



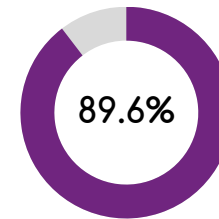
Domestic abuse and rape



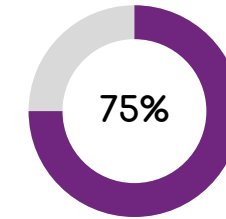
Accommodation



Mental health



Drugs and alcohol



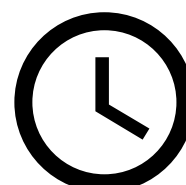
Sex work*

*Only 4 women presented with this need

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



805 hours
given to group work



984 hours
given to one-to-one work



Alana House volunteers

Alana House Volunteers

570 hours of
volunteering work
was completed by
Alana House
volunteers

“Volunteering with Alana House has been inspiring, moving, and incredibly insightful in learning about how resilient and strong women can be, even when facing adversity everywhere they turn. I am very grateful for the opportunity to spend meaningful time with the women at Alana House and look forward to supporting them for years to come.”

Emily, Volunteer Counsellor

“Volunteering as a counsellor at Alana House isn't just about offering support - it's about standing beside women as they reclaim their voice, their strength, and their future. For so many, this is their safe place - a lifeline - and they often say they wouldn't know what to do without it or the incredible people within it. Working alongside the dedicated team of key workers, I've always felt included, valued, and part of something truly meaningful. The thoughtful touches - like thank you and birthday cards - reflects the heart and humanity that make Alana so special. I wouldn't be the counsellor I am today without the experience, learning, and inspiration I've gained through my time here.”

Lisa, Volunteer Counsellor and Group Facilitator

“Alana House is an excellent organisation to volunteer for. The role is important, impactful and very rewarding, and the Alana House team are welcoming and supportive.”

Custody & Courts Volunteer

25 volunteers have
supported Alana
House activities

“I love helping out in my own small way. I always leave feeling uplifted and happy simply because I enjoy spending time with the ladies.”

Alana House volunteer

“I enjoy coming to Alana House and seeing everyone there. It's a lovely place to work with friendly people. All the women in the baking group are great and I can see them learning and improving with each week they come!”

Javairia, Baking Volunteer



Case study

Assia*

Assia wanted support with contacting the police, her neurodiversity meant that she found communicating with them difficult.

She also shared wanting to go back to college and to access recovery and wellbeing groups at Alana House as she felt very socially isolated.

Assia was referred to Alana House by her Brighter Futures Family Worker.

The Alana House Key Worker met with Assia who explained she had reported incidents of domestic abuse to the police. Her husband was subject to bail conditions including not to contact or attend her home until February 2024.

Assia attended Alana House groups including the Baking and Cooking Group and the Alana House Café, where she could socialise with other women. Assia also completed the Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit Programme and the Healing Trauma Programme.

Assia was supported to make the application for the English course at Reading College.

With support from her Key Worker, Assia contacted the police officer in charge to understand more about her case.

This led to regular contact with the police officer keeping Assia and her Key Worker up to date on the situation.

Assia received a letter from her husband's solicitor requesting contact with their son.

Her Key Worker arranged a free consultation with a solicitor who provided Assia with legal advice on the situation. The solicitor and her Key Worker supported Assia in drafting a response letter

A further session with the solicitor was arranged when another communication from her husband stated his intention to request joint custody of their child. The solicitor agreed to take Assia's case on and together with her Key Worker, Assia was supported in writing her statement.

Assia was supported at court by her Key Worker and was represented by a barrister who was organised by the solicitor. Assia remains in ongoing court proceedings.

Whilst the legal process continues, Assia has attended social events at Alana House, which has reduced her sense of isolation and has begun processing the trauma related to the domestic abuse from her husband.

“I have not had any help with anything before Alana House. Nobody gave the time I needed. Sometimes I don't understand things but you have helped me a lot.”



Royal Berkshire Hospital project case study

Gemma*

Gemma was referred into Alana House by the midwifery Poppy Team from Royal Berkshire Hospital. Gemma was 8 months pregnant and has a 6-year-old son.

Gemma was presenting with symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and had disclosed to the midwife that she had reported to Thames Valley Police that she was experiencing domestic abuse.

The investigation was originally 'no further actioned' due to lack of evidence as stated by the Crown Prosecution Service.

With the help of Alana House this is now being reviewed. Gemma and her Key Worker have met with the police and they are now reinvestigating the allegations.

They were currently investigating her ex-partner for control and coercion. Gemma had and still was being abused by her ex-partner. This included emotional and physical abuse.

Alana House supported Gemma to work with children's services as they had been contacted due to safeguarding concerns from Gemma's son's school.

The ex-partner would attempt to remove their son on his non-contact days. Alana House liaised with the school explaining that under the current child arrangement order, that was not allowed.

Alongside this, there were current family court proceedings for their son. Gemma advised that she was in debt because of the child arrangements order and was currently on maternity leave and unable to meet the demands of the debts.

Gemma was self-harming and was unable to leave her home without experiencing anxiety.

Gemma has been able to access 1-2-1 keywork sessions on a regular basis with her keyworker. She has also completed several groups at Alana House, including Hope To Recovery and Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit. She will attend the Adverse Childhood Experiences group.

Alana House provided access to free legal advice for Gemma so that she was able to understand what her options were.

This helped Gemma to understand the legal aspects which ultimately gave her more confidence in challenging any breaches to the court order made by the ex-partner.

Gemma's confidence has increased as she has been given access to a trauma informed space and her voice has been heard.

Gemma's self-harming has significantly reduced and she feels she has more control over her own life once again. She can make decisions without fear.

"The support from Alana has kept my head above water, it's a holistic support network in which I've received both individual support that is relevant to my own personal situation but also been able to connect with other women who have experienced similar issues through the family court, which accentuates post-separation abuse.

The abuse I've suffered has taken me to the depths of no return and just when I thought I couldn't go on, Alana stepped in and pulled me back out.

I'm not there yet and I'm not through my personal situation, but it's comforting to know that Alana will stick with me until this hell is over.

I am forever grateful for their continued support - they have such a vast breadth of experience and skills to help people like me get through.

Thank you."

*Name changed for confidentiality



Ministry of Justice project case study

Kate*

Kate was referred in 2023 by Liaison and Diversion after being seen in Maidenhead custody on charge of Intent to Supply Class B Drugs.

Her abusive husband was involved in selling drugs and Kate was erroneously implicated when she went home and unknowingly stepped into the crime scene being investigated.

Kate was supported by her Key Worker to appeal previous PIP decision which saw Kate receiving the standard rate.

The appeal resulted in Kate being awarded the highest rate for daily living and mobility. This meant she could afford to buy a car so she could attend her appointments and social opportunities more easily.

At the time of referral, Kate was experiencing complications with an autoimmune condition which left her very malnourished. She was also struggling with symptoms of PTSD from medical procedures, anxiety and depression and as a result of domestic abuse, she suffered from psychotic episodes for which she was sectioned.

Kate was living in overcrowded conditions at home and was also being evicted by family after fleeing her husband's abuse. With support from her Key Worker, Kate was offered by the council an appropriate accommodation that met her needs. Kate worked with her Key Worker to ensure housing benefit, council tax support and reductions and bills were in place.

With Kate's permission, a referral was made to the local commissioned domestic abuse service which successfully worked with Kate. Kate was also supported to attend counselling sessions at Alana House which changed her life in terms of being able to manage her physical and emotional symptoms, and cope with stressors including those associated with her previous experience of domestic abuse related trauma.

Kate is healthy and she is in control of her depression and anxiety, having found coping strategies that work for her.

Kate recently participated a Ministerial visit at Alana House, where she shared her experience of the criminal justice system, the relationship between this and domestic abuse and her impactful reflections on how women's centres should be funded.

Gradually, the frequency of support stepped down from weekly to fortnightly to monthly meetings. These took place in the hospital, in the community and eventually in her home as Kate regained control over her life and symptom management.

Kate wanted to go back to university but she found it difficult due to previous issues around her student finances. With the help of her Key Worker, which included supporting letters and phone calls, the situation was successfully resolved and Kate was able to return to university and just recently obtained a First in her first year.

"Thank you so much - I'm so pleased the meeting went well. I was really glad we had the chance to share our experiences, thoughts and feelings. Everyone was so polite and welcoming, and I truly appreciate being part of it.

I'm also really pleased to hear that the Minister described it as inspirational. Honestly, hats off to you all at Alana House - whatever you do, you do it with such care and excellence. It's incredible how you change lives. As victims and service users, we truly wouldn't be where we are today without the support you provide.

You've built such a strong and compassionate network from every angle, and that makes all the difference.

Thank you again for having me."



New initiatives

Staff training

- In 2024-25 we were able to invest in IDVA and ISVA training for three Key Workers at Alana House. These qualifications ensure women affected by domestic and sexual abuse receive expert, trauma-informed support tailored to their individual needs. Ongoing staff development, including accredited training and reflective practice, enhances the team's ability to respond to complex trauma, build trust with service users and deliver consistent, high-quality support. This investment in staff not only improves outcomes for the women supported, but also fosters a resilient, knowledgeable and compassionate workforce.

Maternal separation pilot programme

- The Foundations Programme was developed as a structured peer support group for mothers separated from their children. The purpose of the programme was to create a safe and supportive environment where participants could explore their experiences, develop coping strategies and build resilience. Recognising the profound impact of separation on mothers' mental and emotional well-being, the programme provides psychoeducational learning alongside peer support. A key aim was to build peer-to-peer support networks among participants and reduce feelings of isolation through shared experiences and connection. Maternal separation is closely linked to increased risks of self-harm and suicidal ideation, particularly when compounded by trauma, stigma and lack of support. The Foundations Programme directly addresses these risks by fostering a sense of belonging, validating lived experiences and equipping women with tools to manage emotional distress. Through this trauma-informed approach, the programme not only supports individual recovery but also contributes to long-term wellbeing and safety.

Oxford expansion

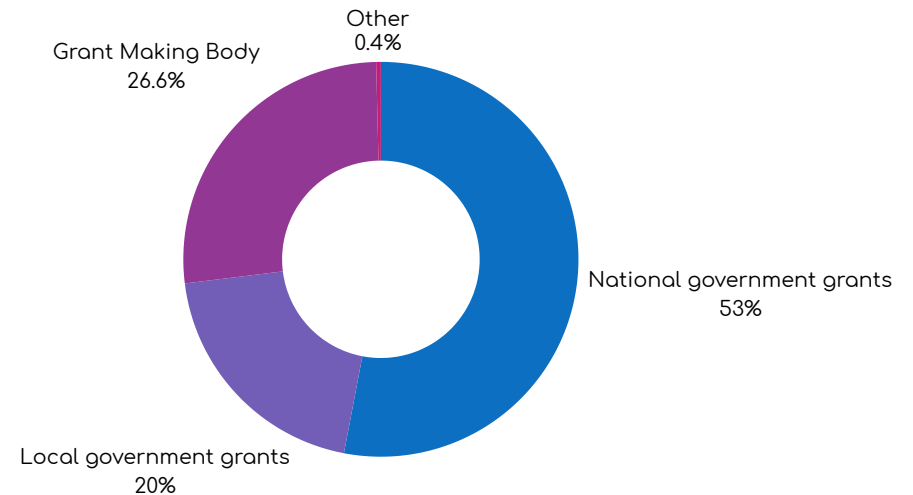
- Alana House Women's Community Project is expanding its services into Oxford city centre and South Oxfordshire, following its successful outreach and custody suite work across Berkshire, funded by the Ministry of Justice. The new locations will offer tailored support for women being sentenced at Oxfordshire courts, those in police custody and women at risk of entering the justice system. The service will also focus on diversion initiatives and work closely with probation staff to support women subject to probation requirements, ensuring continuity of care and long-term support as they transition out of the criminal justice system.



Funding sources

Funding sources in 2024-2025

- We continued to receive support from committed funders, such as Berkshire Community Foundation, Nationwide, the Ministry of Justice, Reading Borough Council and the National Lottery Community Fund.
- In 2024-2025, we secured crucial funding from the Ministry of Justice and the National Lottery Community Fund for Alana House's core costs which will enable us to operate strategically and sustainably in 2025-2026.



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



 alana.house@pactcharity.org

 www.alanahouse.org

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 Alana House

 @AlanaHousePACT

The Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work Inc.,
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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: Shortbreads made by women attending Alana House's baking group