



Pictured in the background: Alana House women took part in Alana House picnic which involved activities such as pebble doodling which supports mindfulness and creativity.

# Alana House

## Women's Community Project

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## Annual Report

### 2025-2026



# 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 impacted by intersectional disadvantages. We offer a confidential, non-judgemental, women-only space and welcome women who feel they need help, support, and advice. Alana House has a centre in Reading, but we also provide outreach services across Berkshire, South Oxfordshire and Oxford City.

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 women impacted by intersectional 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, Maidenhead and Abingdon police custody suites. Our goal is to continue to have a presence in all 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.

**Support for women in Reading:** Alana House continued to offer support to women living in Reading who are experiencing multiple disadvantages; however, this core funding ended in October 2025. Alana House can no longer accept referrals from agencies outside the criminal justice system and The Royal Berkshire Hospital.

**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:** This work has continued and created an ongoing referral pathway for people in hospital who disclose that they are being subjected to 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 being subjected to domestic abuse.





# Women's voices

Pictured in the background: Alana House women took part in making decorations for the 'Carols at the Minster' event at Christmas





# Women's voices



Many women described feeling **believed** and **understood** for the first time

" When I met my keyworker, I felt heard for the first time "

" Thank you for not invalidating me - it means so much "

" Such a kind place to be "

" You made me feel seen, heard, and never alone "

" Your warmth, advice and non-judgemental attitude meant the world "

Women repeatedly emphasise the **kindness**, **warmth**, and **non-judgemental approach** of staff. This created safe spaces where individuals felt able to speak openly, process trauma, and begin healing.



# Women's voices



Many women report increased confidence, personal growth, and renewed belief in themselves and their future.

" You believed in me even when I struggled "

" I wouldn't be who I am today or where I am today without you "

" I finally have ID again - free of fear to walk around "

" Having someone who understands and can speak on my behalf makes a huge difference "

Women highlighted the importance of advocacy and practical support when navigating complex systems such as housing, courts, refuges, finance, and immigration.



Naomi Parker (1921-2018)



This photo of Parker bending over machinery with her hair pulled back in a red bandana was the inspiration behind "Rosie the Riveter."

## Women in history



Simone Biles (1997-Present)

Since stepping into the limelight at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro as a member of the "Fab Five," Biles has been shattering gymnastics records day by day.

Rosa Parks (1913 – 2005)



Parks, a leader in the local NAACP and the civil rights movement, iconically refused to give up her seat.

Back in the '50s, the rule in Montgomery, Alabama, was that if a bus became full, the seats at the front would be given to white passengers.

Pictured in the background : Alana House women took part in International Women's Day activities including looking at the stories of some incredible women who have changed the world.

Her willingness to disobey the rule helped to spark the Montgomery boycott and other efforts to end segregation in America.



# Anika's story

Anika\* was referred by the Safeguarding Lead at The Royal Berkshire Hospital following a disclosure made by Anika to the consultant and nurses who were treating her heart condition.

Alana House keyworkers had initial meetings with Anika at the hospital outside of family visiting times. A DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence) assessment tool was completed scoring nine which indicates low risk. However, Key Workers believed that this was an underestimate and was linked to Anika not recognising the behaviour of her husband and his family as abuse.

Anika became an inpatient at Royal London Hospital due to her heart condition which was unrelated to the abuse. However, during this time, more disclosures of abuse were made.

Initial disclosures included not being allowed to leave her house unsupervised, being verbally abused by her husband, threatened with being sent back to Pakistan and being made to work for her food/clothing by her mother-in-law. Anika was financially dependent on her husband and his family. Threats were made to evict her family from their home in Pakistan.

Anika decided to return home, knowing she could call Alana House for support if she needed to. One evening, she contacted Alana House, informing us that she had made the decision to leave and would need support to leave safely.

Alana Staff supported Anika to flee her home. Anika was taken to a hotel and provided with a new phone, food and other essential items. Anika was too scared to leave the hotel room for several days.

The hospital shared that Anika had refused surgery for her heart condition. Hospital staff were concerned this decision was influenced by her husband and her situation.

Soon after, Anika felt she was ready to speak with Key Workers at Alana House. Anika disclosed not only fearing for her safety but also for her family in Pakistan who were tenants in her husband's property there.

Alana House supported Anika with her application for MVDAC (Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession) which allows three months access to public funds.

Just minutes after she was able to leave, her husband reported Anika missing to the police.

An Alana House key worker previously reported Anika fleeing to the police. Alana House kept in touch with the police and the Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit regarding this and updating them on Anika's situation. Her husband was informed that Anika was safe, and no other information was provided to him.

Following an initial period residing in a refuge placement secured by Alana House, Anika has since moved on and is now living in temporary accommodation.

Anika's application for Indefinite Leave to Remain has been granted. As a result, her immigration status in the UK has changed, allowing her to live independently with no ties to the perpetrator, access to employment, and continue to secure appropriate housing.



# Sadie's story

Sadie\* was referred through Brighter Futures for Children, following her eldest daughter being removed from her care due to a history of domestic abuse in the family home.

Sadie's daughter has been placed in a children's home some distance from Reading, meaning that Sadie's time with her is very limited.

There is an upcoming final hearing to decide the long-term care plan for Sadie's daughter. **Alana House will support her during the court hearings.**

It was identified through the Independent Social Worker that Sadie should **attend Alana House for trauma informed support.**

Alana House has supported Sadie to apply for Personal Independence Payments to enable her to be more independent and manage her health needs.

**Her Alana House Key Worker will attend the Court Hearing and has attended the Social Care meetings that have taken place so far to advocate and support Sadie during this process.**

Sadie has another child who is only two through her new relationship.

**Sadie has serious health issues which have gotten worse as she has neglected her own health needs during the trauma she has experienced.**

The group work has included Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit, The Foundations Programme (a specialist support group for mothers living with maternal separation) and the Healing Trauma Programme.

**Sadie is engaging in the range of trauma recovery groups** run at Alana House, alongside on going practical and emotional support from sessions with her will Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) qualified Keyworker.

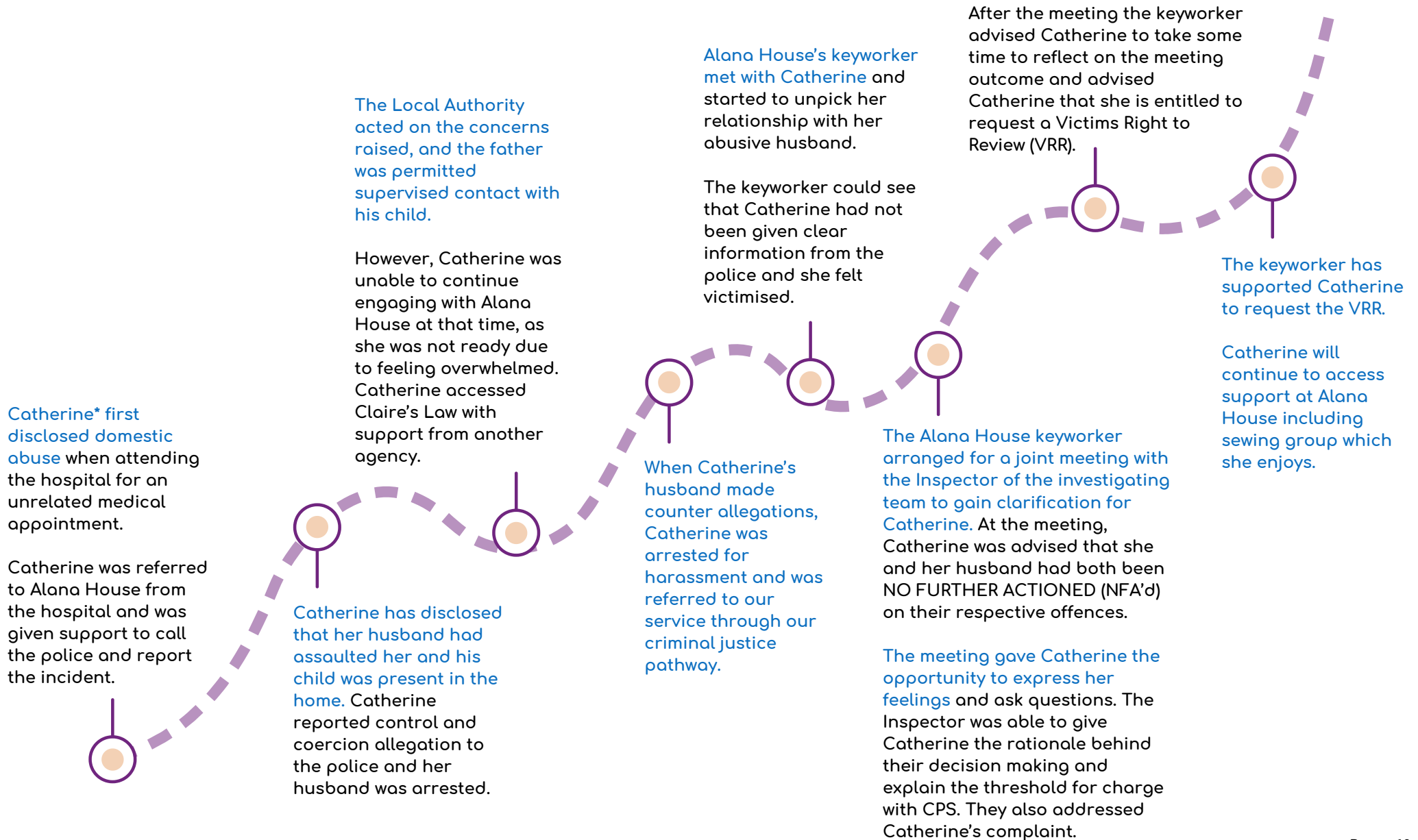


*Since I have met my keyworker, and attended Alana House **the support has been good as they go above and beyond for you. This makes me feel safe to talk.** I currently receive support for which I am grateful.*





# Catherine's story



# Referrals

Pictured in the background:  
Set up of the Sexual Violence  
Recovery Toolkit group room



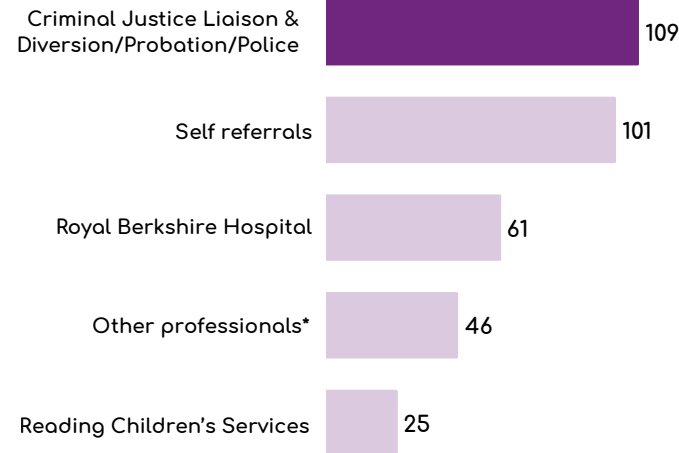
# Referrals

In 2025-2026  
we received

407

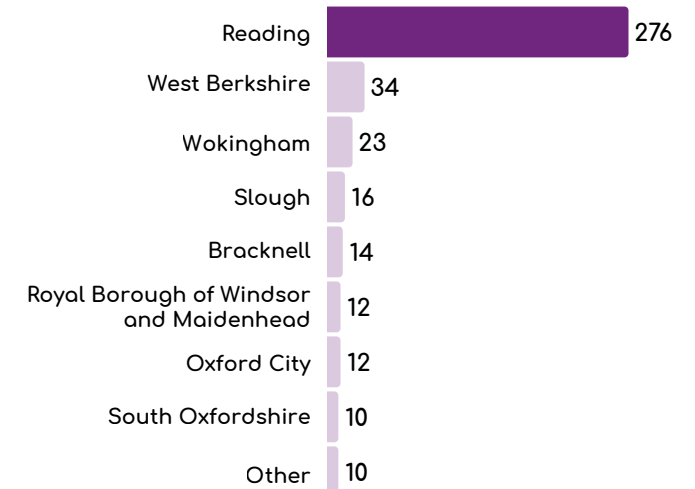
referrals

## Top 5 referral sources



This includes smaller charities, organisations and single professionals

## Location of referrals



At referral,  
service users present  
on average with

5

needs

out of 9

## Top 5 needs reported at referral stage



Mental health and domestic abuse violence and rape are the top 2 needs reported at referral confirming the pattern from last year.





# Key achievements and awards

Pictured in the background: work completed  
by Alana House women who took part in  
Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit sessions



# Key achievements

## Women supported

In 2025-2026, a total of

**218**

women received support  
from Alana House

## Length of engagement

In 2025-2026,

**293**

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

## Keyword sessions

In 2025-2026, a total of

**1054**

keyword sessions were  
attended by women

## Signposting

In 2025-2026, a total of

**301**

women were supported  
through signposting

## Counselling

In 2025-2026, a total of

**261**

counselling sessions were  
attended by 20 women

## Donations

In 2025-2026, a total of

**95**

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





# Awards



## Alana House wins the Highly commended award in the Voluntary and Community Impact Award



Pictured in the centre: Sabina, Alana House Manager and Maisie, Alana House Administrative Lead and Volunteer Co-ordinator, receiving the Inspire Justice Award.

Alana House has won national recognition for its work of empowering women with multiple or complex needs who are looking for support to help make positive life changes.

Alana House won the highly commended award in the Voluntary and Community Impact Award at the 2025 Inspire Justice Awards, hosted by Skills for Justice.

As the only women's community centre in Berkshire, Alana House provides a safe, supportive space where women can address trauma, develop new skills and take steps towards positive change.

This latest recognition at the Inspire Justice Awards adds to a growing list of accolades, including the Robin Corbett Award for Prisoner Reintegration (2024) and four Howard League for Penal Reform awards, most recently in 2023.

Accepting the award at a ceremony in Westminster, Alana House Manager Sabina, said:

"We're proud that Alana House has become a place where women feel heard, supported and empowered to change their lives. This award recognises the women whose courage and determination inspire us every day. By working together, we can break cycles of trauma and offending and create stronger, safer communities."

Supported by Police Oracle, HM Courts and Tribunals Service, HM Prisons and Probation Service, Community and SFJ Awards, Skills for Justice's Inspire Justice Awards recognises and honours the hard work carried out daily by thousands of justice sector staff across the UK.



FRESH  
START

Beautiful

THINK  
OUTSIDE  
THE BOX

The new  
GOOD LIFE

Group work



Best for SOLITUDE

There's never been a  
successful film on  
Sally Coulthard's  
loss from her Y



OPT FOR SIMPLE



and make  
people s

Pictured in the background: Alana House women  
took part in Healing Trauma groups and made  
beautiful collages as part of their last session.

Search for the  
SHEENHOLITS

Love your self again



# Group work

## Group sessions

In 2025-2026, a total of

310

group sessions were delivered

## Group attendances

In 2025-2026, a total of

94

women attended groups

## Alana House community café

In 2025-2026, a total of

48

café drop-in sessions were held

## Group details

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

- Baking
- Barista training
- Book Club
- Chai and Chat - Project Salama
- Change Grow Live substance misuse support
- Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit
- Foundations maternal separation support
- Healing Trauma
- Hope2Recovery
- Mindful Drumming
- Parenting
- Outing
- Sewing
- Trauma Informed Yoga

### One off groups included:

- Alana House Picnic
- Christmas sessions
- Mum and child baking group
- Probation supervision events/sessions at Alana House
- Service User Forum
- Managing emotions programme

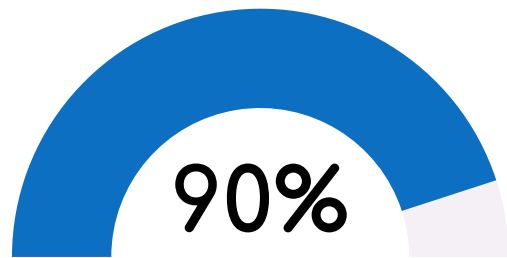


# Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit

DARTK is a 12-week group programme that offers an evidence based, trauma-informed and psycho-educational approach using cognitive behavioural therapy to enable group members to move forward from the trauma of experiencing domestic abuse. It [supports participants to develop positive lifestyle coping strategies, restoring a sense of safety and empowerment.](#)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is used to assess impact and track progress over time. It measures self-esteem through 10 statements that evaluate an individual's overall sense of self-worth. Service users complete the scale during their first session and again in their final session to help identify overall change.

In 2025-2026 we facilitated 2 DARTK programmes attended by 17 women.



Of women who completed the course showed an increase in wellbeing



"This week in group I felt relaxed, not as anxious as I was ill last week. Made me feel welcome and learning a lot about my feelings"

"I'm really enjoying these sessions and very thankful I was put forward for the group and would also accept any other help that is given to me"



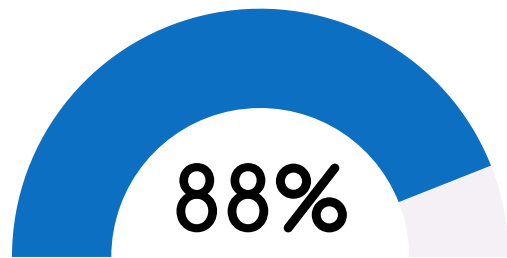


# Healing Trauma

Healing Trauma is a course for **women to gain a greater understanding of the impacts of trauma** and learn new strategies and techniques to **help feel grounded and safe**.

The **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale** is used to assess impact and track progress over time. It measures self-esteem through 10 statements that evaluate an individual's overall sense of self-worth. Service users complete the scale during their first session and again in their final session to help identify overall change.

In 2025-2026 we facilitated two Healing Trauma programmes attended by 21 women.



Of women who completed the course showed an increase in wellbeing



"I've learnt about relationships and how to set a boundary and how to open up about past trauma."

"Everything, the group itself, the teachers were so good. There was so much I learned and I feel so much more confident after it"

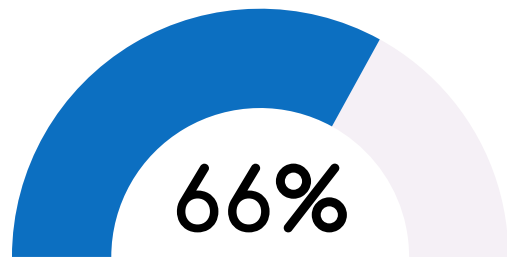


# Hope2Recovery

Hope2Recovery is a six-week programme that can be delivered online or face-to-face, as a group or as a one-to-one programme. This programme follows the trauma-informed principles of the Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit and uses a psycho-educational approach which avoids triggering or re-traumatising participants. **It is evidence based, gender neutral and can be used to support anyone experiencing abuse.**

The **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale** is used to assess impact and track progress over time. It measures self-esteem through 10 statements that evaluate an individual's overall sense of self-worth. Service users complete the scale during their first session and again in their final session to help identify overall change.

In 2025-2026 we facilitated 1 Hope2Recovery programme attended by 10 women.



Of women who completed the course showed an increase in wellbeing



[The most helpful thing was] "The halo effect – becoming aware of this changed a lot and was a seed sown that supported my freedom from specific dynamics and cycles in my life."

[The most helpful thing was] "The words given to me through the group that helped put into perspective and give clarity to what was happening"

# Outcomes



Pictured in the background: Alana House women enjoyed a fun session doing Easter crafts making some pretty flower arrangements in mini vases.

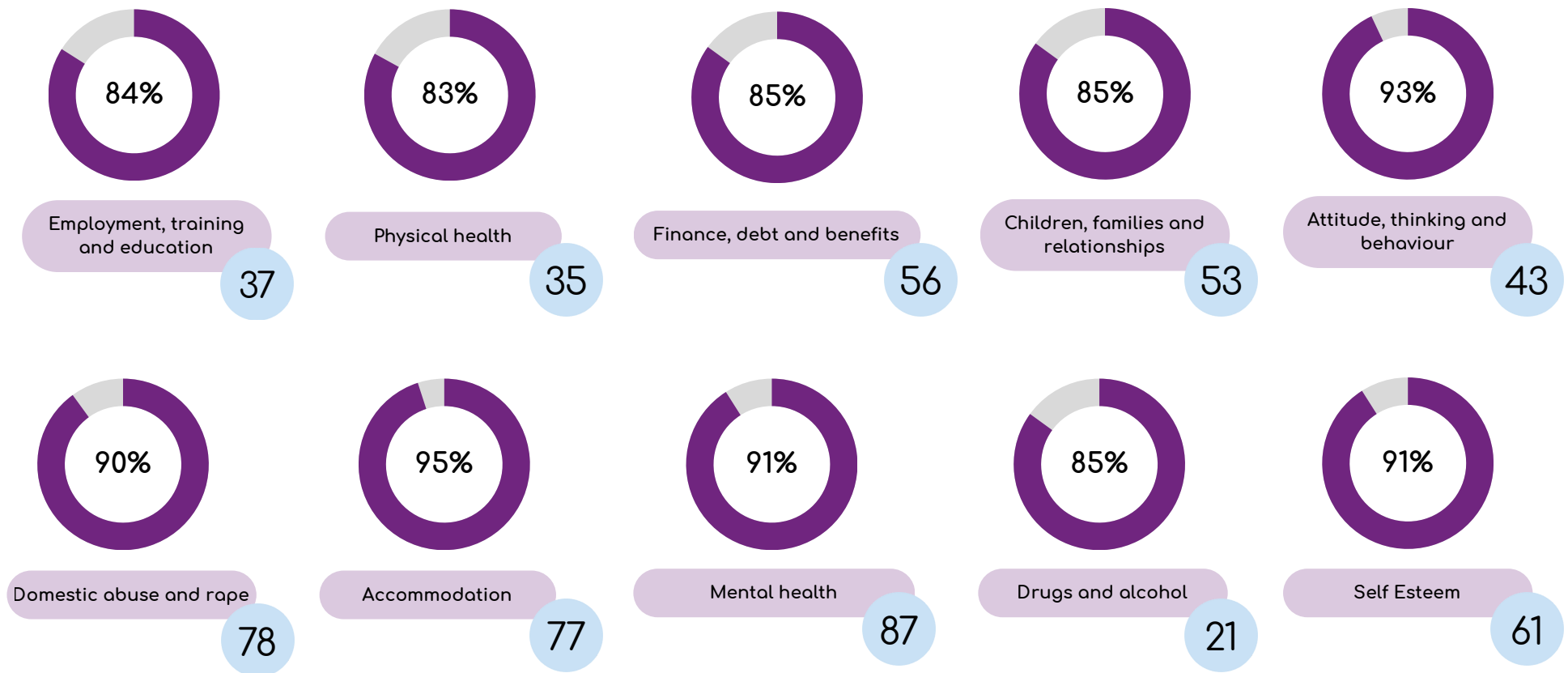




# Outcomes

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



● Number of women with scores recorded for each need

# Volunteers

Pictured in the background: Alana House women took part in the sewing group - and one woman made a beautiful wall hanging creation.



# Alana House volunteers

## Alana House Volunteers

**1687** hours of volunteering work was given by Alana House volunteers

**24** volunteers have supported Alana House activities

“Alana House offers something many women haven't experienced before — a space where they feel safe, heard, and not judged. For those facing complex circumstances, that sense of safety can be the starting point for real change.

Women often share that they feel less alone because of Alana House. Here, they are able to begin rebuilding a sense of self through connection and consistent support — support shaped around women's needs, with group spaces further strengthening this sense of belonging.

At the heart of this incredible support is a team that leads with compassion, strong ethical values, and genuine care. I feel honoured to be part of such meaningful work.”

Lisa, Volunteer Counsellor and Group Facilitator

— “ —  
I chose to support PACT as it is truly such an amazing charity, and very unique in its purpose.

Supporting women while facing the most difficult situations of their life is so important and crucial in today's tough society.

I'll be forever grateful for the team at Alana House for a great opportunity. Supporting the brilliant ladies who run the team has been a true privilege

Amelia, Custody & Courts Volunteer

— “ —  
We make all sorts of things – lavender bags, bean bags from sofa covers, cushions for VW vans, clothes, amazing wall hangings, bags and hats.

Women come saying they can't sew but find that with a bit of encouragement they are off and taking things home to sew. [...] We go by the mantra that there are no mistakes in sewing, just different ways of getting there!”

Georgina, Sewing Group Leader Volunteer



Pictured: Georgina holding a banner made by women who took part in the sewing group - this was taken to the 2026 London Marathon to support all PACT runners!



# Influencing

Pictured in the background: Students craft task as part of the EmpowerHer project (see page 28-29)



# Influencing



Government minister Sir Nic Dakin visited Alana House in June 2025 to witness first-hand the transformative work of our women's community project. During his visit, Sir Nic, the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Ministry of Justice, toured the Alana House women's centre in Reading, meeting women who have benefited from its services and hearing their powerful stories of how Alana House has supported them to build resilience and make sustainable, positive changes.

The visit also included a roundtable discussion chaired by the CEO from Clinks, with PACT staff, Reading central MP Matt Rodda and regional partner agencies HMPPS Women's Group and Thames Valley Liaison and Diversion Service around women's experience of the Criminal Justice System and the value and importance of Women's Centres. The minister heard evidence about how effective women's centres are at supporting women with reducing their re-offending and keeping families together.

The conversation highlighted the importance of sustainable funding for women's services and a whole-systems approach in addressing the complex needs of women in or at risk of entering the justice system.

Alana House welcomed a visit from a government minister in March 2026 who announced £32m in national funding from the Ministry of Justice to expand trauma-informed support for women in the criminal justice system. The investment follows an independent report from the Women's Justice Board which recommends community-based alternatives to custody to help women address the root causes of their offending. As part of the announcement, Minister of State for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, **Lord James Timpson** visited Alana House in Reading to meet staff and service users and hear first-hand about the transformative impact of the project. Lord Timpson spent time listening to women who shared their personal journeys, many describing how trauma, abuse and instability had shaped their lives.

The women spoke candidly about how Alana House's trauma-informed approach had helped them rebuild confidence, engage with support and stabilise their lives. Their stories highlighted the power of specialist women's centres in breaking down barriers, preventing reoffending and enabling lasting change.





# New initiatives and funding sources

Pictured in the background: Alana House women and their children enjoyed a day out to Beale Park.





# New initiatives

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## Staff training

- In 2025-26, we continued investing in Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) and Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) training for keyworkers, alongside CPD modules, ensuring expert, trauma-informed support for women affected by domestic and sexual violence. Ongoing accredited training and reflective practice strengthened staff capacity to address complex trauma, build trust and deliver high-quality support.

## Oxford expansion

- Alana House expanded into Oxford city centre and South Oxfordshire utilising Ministry of Justice funding. The service provides tailored support for justice involved women and women at risk of entering the justice system, in close partnership with Thames Valley Police and the Probation Service, we have delivered outreach services to Oxfordshire women to ensure continuity of care and ongoing support. Referrals from Oxfordshire are increasing as new partnerships strengthen.

## EmpowerHer - Young Girls Project with the University of Reading

- The EmpowerHer programme was developed as a gender-specific, school-based initiative that focused on the social and emotional needs of vulnerable 12-13-year-old girls. Alana House and Reading University co-designed a programme. We aim to build confidence and self-esteem, improve educational engagement and address the factors that create vulnerability to exploitation in order to positively impact future life chances. Course development and delivery were led by Professor Carol Fuller, Postgraduate Educator Lindsey Ford, and IDVA Hannah W.
- Working with a local school, we invited 16 students who were at risk of exclusion due to high levels of absenteeism and poor school behaviour and were assessed as not reaching expected academic potential. The programme began on February 2nd and ran weekly, excluding term breaks, until the end of the summer term. Outcome measures included pre- and post-course self-esteem assessments (e.g. Rosenberg Scale), alongside students' academic scores and educators' qualitative reports on behavioural change.
- Course content covered Development of Self (confidence, resilience, well-being, managing anxiety and emotions, understanding consequences) and Relationships (including healthy relationships and sexual exploitation). Delivery was co-created, activity-based, and delivered across settings, embedding learning through practice and discussion, with a strong focus on mentoring and developing future peer leaders.
- On 2nd June, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Reading, Professor Robert Van de Noort, attended a university-hosted certificate ceremony celebrating the girls' achievements, which included an art activity for students, caregivers and staff.



# Empower Her

## Students' feedback

" it has helped realise what being a woman is all about and how to feel good in my body "

" it helped to improve my self-esteem "

" it has helped to have more faith in myself "

" it was fun to talk about things that affect school "

" it has made me feel better about myself "



## School's feedback



*The EmpowerHER programme at The Wren has been nothing short of transformative. Through the care, dedication and warmth of Lindsey, Hannah and Carol, the students were able to build strong, trusting relationships that encouraged them to open up and share their thoughts and feelings in a safe and supportive environment.*

*Over five months, I've watched them grow into more confident, self-assured versions of themselves - finding their voices, embracing their worth, and supporting one another with genuine compassion. It creates a rare and powerful space where vulnerability is met with understanding, and where every girl feels seen, heard, and valued.*

*The impact goes far beyond these sessions - it will stay with them, shaping how they see themselves and their potential long after the programme ends.*

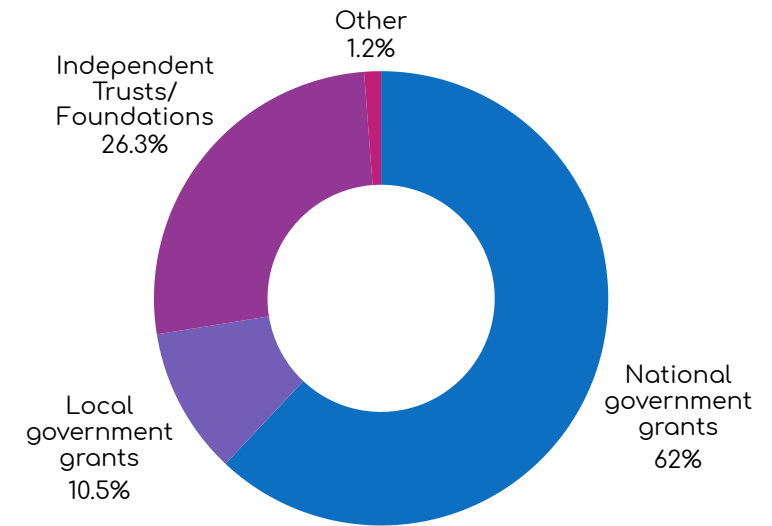




# Funding sources

## Funding sources in 2025-2026

- Delivery at Alana House has been sustained through a combination of committed grant funding, with key contributions from Berkshire Community Foundation, the Ministry of Justice, Reading Borough Council, and The National Lottery Community Fund. We have also received crucial support from individuals and community groups.
- Secured investment towards core costs from the Ministry of Justice and The National Lottery Community Fund during 2024/2025 has been critical in providing financial stability, enabling longer-term planning, and supporting a more strategic approach to service delivery into 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](http://www.pactcharity.org/volunteer)





-  [alana.house@pactcharity.org](mailto:alana.house@pactcharity.org)
-  [www.alanahouse.org](http://www.alanahouse.org)
-  2 Southern Court, South Street,  
Reading, RG1 4QS
-  Alana House
-  @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: Alana House women are supported through donations received from FareShare