

# a alternatives <sup>2018</sup> annual report



*To Accept;  
to take something  
to oneself  
to believe:  
to validate: to bear:  
to acknowledge:  
to allow*

## *Alternatives Dundee. Real space to talk*

Alternatives provide a non-judgemental, free and confidential space to women and their partners who are facing difficult pregnancy choices, infertility, or who need support following miscarriage or abortion. We also support birth mums after an adoption.

We recognise that many of these issues are hidden and secret. Often women feel that they don't have permission to feel emotions during these difficult times. It can be difficult to find someone who will listen without an opinion or telling you what to do. We provide a safe, accepting space where clients can work through some of these emotions.

*“this session really helped me because I didn't realise that I was feeling these things”*

*- post abortion client*

*“It really helped to talk with someone out of the situation”*

*- pregnancy choices client*

## Alternatives Dundee Youth. Being real. Being valued.

Since last year, Alternatives Dundee Youth \*note the change of name-new logo on its way!! has developed further. We recognise that whilst we offer a different kind of support to young people aged 12-25, we are also proud to be part of Alternatives, sharing the same aims and objectives.

Alternatives Dundee Youth are a creative and innovative team passionate about supporting young people in Dundee to improve well-being in three areas;

- self-esteem
- resilience
- decision making

Our team uniquely combine youth work and listening skills training to develop tailored one to one and group programs which allow young people to explore and recognise emotions, giving them the tools to express these in a safe way.

This process builds self-esteem and enables young people to make decisions that are right for them and develop ways of coping in challenging situations.

We work collaboratively with other Dundee agencies, offering interventions to existing youth groups identified as vulnerable and receive referrals for one to one support.

*“I am not aware of any other agency in Dundee offering this service”*

*-Anita Roworth, Third sector Interface/  
Dundee Council*

*To Attend To;  
to be present at something;  
to take care of something  
or someone.*

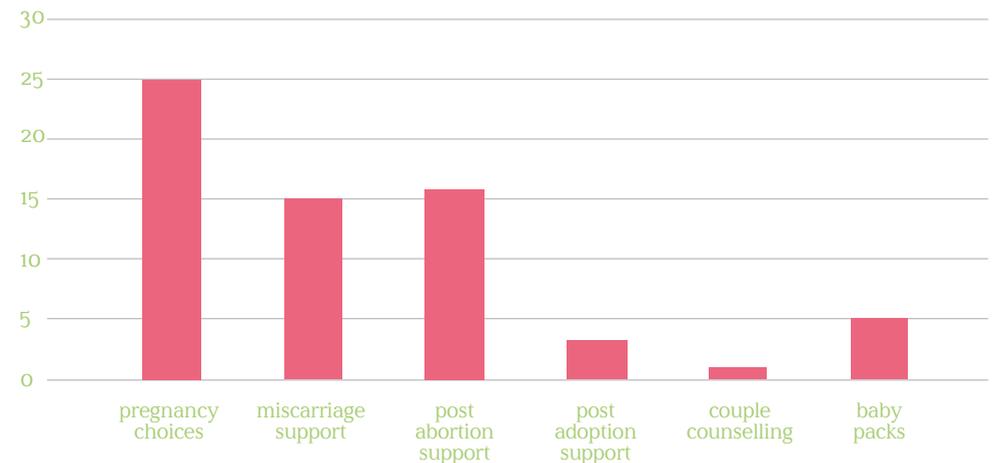
## What happened in 2017?

Throughout 2017, 65 women and their partners received support from Alternatives Dundee. They were listened to, understood, accepted and not judged. They were guided through the grief process, they were given the information they asked for. They were able to unravel feelings and know it's ok to express what you feel. Many women told us that accessing our service is the first time they have felt safe and able to talk with someone about the feelings and trauma they have experienced.

*“I am so grateful for this service at a time when I felt so alone and hopeless. My support worker was excellent at helping me understand what I was feeling. I felt very safe and able to just feel what I was feeling. Such an important service. Thank you”*

Of clients surveyed on completion of our post abortion and post miscarriage programs the following evidence has been collected;

- *100% were able to identify difficult emotions.*
- *70% were able to express these emotions in a safe way during their time in support with us.*
- *100% were able to identify where they were in the bereavement process and all identified that they had made progress in the work of grieving.*
- *All reported a decrease in physical symptoms associated with their abortion or miscarriage experience like sleeplessness, flashback, feeling very low. The average was a 40% decrease in these symptoms.*
- *100% of client assessments showed an increase in the indicator of self-esteem of an average of 40%.*



“Thank you for a great session this week. Didn't realise how much I was needing a good cry! I have been working on some of the things we talked about with good effect” - Client

## Client story

Lisa is 20 and came to alternatives following a late abortion. She was experiencing very low mood and talked about flashbacks about the procedure which she described as traumatic. She was feeling very low and was talking negatively to herself and felt that everyone else was talking behind her back.

Over nine sessions Lisa was able to talk through her experience. She was listened to by her support worker and stated that she felt glad that she wasn't

being told what to think and feel or 'to put it behind her' as she had been in the past. Again and again she commented how her support worker just listened in a way that helped her to understand her own thoughts better. After talking through feelings like anger and shame Lisa found ways to express what she was feeling. Journaling was a particularly useful tool for her. She also noticed a change in her family relationships and began looking for work again.

Lisa stated that her life had changed because of her support at Alternatives. At the beginning of her support she has scored her self-esteem as 1-very low. At the end of 9 sessions she felt her self-esteem was sitting at 7.

*“I appreciate this session, I feel much calmer”*

- client

*\*name and minor details have been changed to protect confidentiality*



**To Affirm;**  
**declare one's support for;**  
**uphold; defend.**  
**accept or confirm**  
**the validate.**  
**offer (someone)**  
**emotional support**  
**or encouragement**

## I'm the Girl I Want to Be

We have continued to run the *I'm the Girl I Want to Be* course at The Helm, Dundee Young Carers, and also to young mums at Homestart. These groups were well attended and gave the young women opportunities to grow in self-awareness, self-worth and resilience whilst exploring the world in which they live. All participants reported that their self-esteem had improved, and they felt more confident to recognise and express their emotions and their voice.

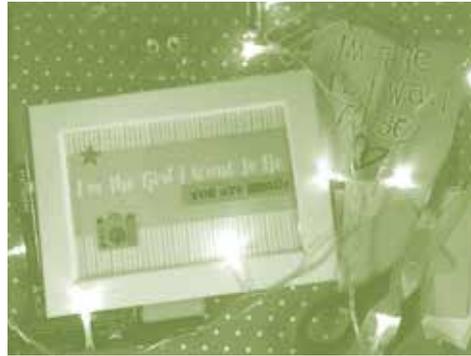
We are currently in the process of exploring how we might be able to support young women alongside Dundee Police.

### In the group I felt...

- Relaxed, easy to share and I felt at home.
- Secure that it was a safe space to share stuff.
- Safe, and I like that I had space to talk about the things I'm not sure about.

### I learnt about myself...

- That I am not the only one with insecurities.
- I am not alone.
- Knowing I am not alone.
- I didn't think I would like talking to the other girls but it felt good after.
- That I am unique, we are all unique.
- I learnt that I am really influenced by so many people which is sometimes good but mostly bad.
- I am myself and no one can replace me. That's is a reason to keep going.



## Bespoke workshops

Five workshops to The Attic, Menzieshill, The Helm, Prince's Trust on self-esteem, sex and relationships.

"The sessions have been a great safe place for the girls and have allowed the girls to grow better friendships with each other whilst learning to respect themselves and others better. Thank you so much for working with our girls! The sessions have been fab!" - agency feedback

*"I don't usually like talking but I feel safe here"*

- young person

*"Thank you for letting me tell my story. I feel like you have understood me without trying to fix me"*

- young person

## Download

*One to one listening for young people who need to be heard.*

Throughout our work we have met young people who have expressed a need to be heard and valued. Many are unsure about their lives and their emotions not through lack of information or education but through not having space to talk openly about the 'stuff' that has an impact on their lives. We recognise that feeling heard and understood increases resilience and has a strong link to positive mental health and wellbeing.

**In 2017/18 Download provided;**

- support to a growing number of under 25s pregnancy choices/post termination and miscarriage clients.
- nine hours of listening support to three young people.
- one hour of 'supervision/support' to a youth worker working with a young girl who has recently disclosed an assault.

## Mentoring

Alternatives Dundee Youth have a space for a youth volunteer to join our team and be mentored. This year we had Kirsty who joined us weekly and contributed to our team by supporting our social media, by creating resources, by helping decorate the office and by facilitating a focus group. Kirsty also took part in our interviewing panel for our latest team member.

We are grateful for Kirsty for her commitment and for her insight into the experiences of young people, enabling us to grow and better understand the young people we work alongside.

## See Kirsty's thoughts below:

"As part of my Community Links module at Uni I was required to volunteer somewhere for the year. I'd briefly been involved with Alternatives before and thought they offered a great service to young people in Dundee so chose to volunteer with their Youth Support team. I've loved my time here and have learned a lot about how charities work. It's been a very different working environment to those I've been used to, which has built my confidence in my own decision making and creativity. I am involved with making a video to be used in the youth groups

which has taken a lot of organisation. At first I was nervous to be trusted to arrange it myself but everyone was supportive and I ended up enjoying the process (even though it's not finished yet). I would have liked to attend and help with the *I'm the Girl I Want to Be* course but unfortunately it hasn't happened due to the timing. Hopefully I'll get the chance before I leave. Volunteering at Alternatives has helped me realise the type of job I'd like when I graduate and the experience I've gained here will hopefully help me to achieve this goal."

## Young person's story

Sami is 17 years old. She moved in with her Nan from the age of 12 years old. Her Mum was often drunk and Sami has helped care for her younger siblings after school. She often missed school. Sami learned about who we are when she participated in the *'I'm the Girl I Want to Be'* course.

At the end of the course she disclosed that she was pregnant and that no one else knew. Feeling safe in our group gave her the courage to tell a member of the ADY team. Sami received one to one support with our youth support worker over a number of weeks.

Trained in supporting decision making, her youth support worker gave her time

and space and allowed her to unravel her thoughts and feelings without being judged. She was able to signpost her to the appropriate agencies. She made a decision to continue her pregnancy and was able to access the right support in a timely way. The team felt that this was a particularly positive experience as Sami was able to make her choice with dignity through the care and support provided. It is likely that this was one of the first times she had experienced freedom to make her own decision without the pressure of another person's agenda.

*\*name and minor details have been changed to protect confidentiality*

## We want to share some of our highlights from 2017/18

- We achieved the Good Governance Awards!! This is the quality standard for Scottish Charities. This was a huge amount of work but we are delighted to have the assurance that our house is in order!! The graduation took place in May 2018.



- In December 2017 nine of our volunteers completed the COSCA certificate in counselling skills ensuring that all our team now have this recognised and professional qualification, ensuring the best levels of support for our clients. The course required a massive commitment from volunteers and we are grateful for their commitment and hard work!
- Three new volunteers trained in pregnancy choices support in February 2018. As we expand our team we become more accessible to clients. Our volunteers have already achieved the COSCA certificate in counselling skills. They then go on to complete our in house training in pregnancy choices support. We are delighted to see our team expand with committed and experienced volunteers. For the first time our volunteer training included a session delivered in collaboration with the nursing staff from Ninewells Hospital.

- In 2017/18 we have seen an increase in pregnancy choices clients with more referrals from health professionals;

*“My support worker helped me take a step back from my situation and think clearly - was a very positive experience”*

- pregnancy choices client

- In 2017 Alternatives began monthly group supervision sessions for volunteers providing training as well as a safe space to explore ideas and support one another.
- In September 2017 Alternatives delivered training on pregnancy choices to the a group of Dundee GP's in training;

*“Good information of what the service offers, thought provoking real life account from one of their patients. Thanks for the goody bags and cakes - very generous”*

*“Excellent talk! Highlight of the course”*

*“A very good presentation and good service which is provided and is good to be aware of this option for relevant patients”*

*“The highlight of the course was hearing from the staff at Ninewells for a different perspective and being able to explore ideas in a warm, non-judgmental group”*

- Alternatives Dundee Youth will be starting a group for young women in Lochee working in partnership with the Lochee Community Support Worker allowing more women to access our service
- Alternatives plan to deliver training opportunities to outside agencies supporting women facing pregnancy choices; We hope to transform the experience of women in Dundee who need a space to be understood and listened to without being told what to do. We believe that making more people

aware of how to listen well we can decrease the anxiety and pressure many women experience when deciding if abortion is right for them.

- Alternatives will improve our volunteer supervision. Two team members will complete the COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy Scotland) supervision in counselling certificate. We will also make supervision available to the agencies we work in collaboration with. Good supervision will improve the experience for team members making us more effective as supporters.

- We will offer one to one listening support to young people in schools; Alternatives Dundee Youth believe that young people need to feel listened to and heard, giving them the tools they need to understand and express difficult and overwhelming emotions and developing self-esteem.
- Post abortion support group beginning in June 2018; group support sessions will increase emotional literacy for clients and help them recognise that they are not alone.



## And finally... Welcome Amanda!

Last year we secured funding by The Robertson trust and the Gannochy Trust to recruit a second youth support worker for 24 hours per week for three years. After a good number of applicants shortlisted, we are so pleased to introduce you to Amanda Leitch. Amanda really impressed us at interview bring a contagious passion and enthusiasm for seeing young people in Dundee realise their potential.

She has recently completed her degree in Psychology and Counselling. She brings experience in working with young people in a variety of settings including working with volunteer Dundee as their youth volunteering worker. We are really looking forward to all that Amanda will bring to the team!

*Adventure;  
an unusual and exciting  
or daring experience.  
an adventure is a series of events  
that you become involved in  
that are unusual, exciting*

Alternative dundee wish to thank our many funders without whom this vital service would not exist:

**Henry Duncan**  
**The Robertson Trust**  
**The Gannochy Trust**  
**Dundee Integrated Care Fund**  
**The Northwood Trust**  
**The Souter Foundation**  
**Dundee Christian Youth Trust**  
**Tay charitable Trust**  
**WM Sword Charitable Trust**

We are also grateful to all the regular donors whose monthly and yearly giving is a huge encouragement and has a huge, often unseen impact on the wellbeing of Dundonians.

Alternatives dundee are organisational members of COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy Scotland). We are also members of Youth Scotland.



# alternatives

*your space to talk*

Alternatives Dundee provide a free, confidential and non-judgemental support to women facing pregnancy choices or who need support following miscarriage, child loss or termination.

Helpline 01382 221112

[www.alternativesdundee.org](http://www.alternativesdundee.org)

# alternatives

**DUNDEE YOUTH**

Alternatives Dundee Youth support young people with issues around self-esteem.

[www.alternativesdundeeyouth.com](http://www.alternativesdundeeyouth.com)

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