

for which
relation or fro
point of view
Change
become diffe
transformat
condition, c

2024/25

SC023483

OPERATIONAL REPORT



Alternatives

Counselling & Listening Rooms



OVERVIEW

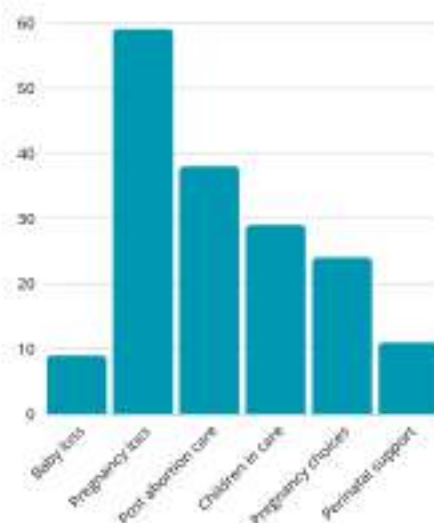
This year, we celebrated significant milestones: marking 30 years as a charity serving the people of Dundee with a ceilidh and celebratory meal, and relocating to our beautiful new premises in December. Our dedicated team delivered a wide range of services, including counselling, mindfulness groups, and wellbeing workshops. We provided supervision, training, and reflective spaces for professionals, and launched our partnership with perinatal services to offer both group and individual support. Our participation in baby loss awareness events and memorial services, in collaboration with NHS perinatal and maternity services, SANDS, SIMBA, and BIRCH, has strengthened our presence and impact in the community.

The youth team has made a notable impression in Dundee schools, becoming a trusted provider of creative and innovative school counselling, supporting over 70 young people, as well as offering unique long-term specialist youth counselling. With this growth comes a period of thoughtful consolidation. We remain committed to fostering a supportive, nurturing team environment and creating spaces, both physical and emotional, that enable our counsellors to deliver the highest quality service to every client we serve.

SUPPORTING LOSS AND DISTRESS

WHAT WE DID

- 181 clients engaged
- 3012 sessions of counselling
- Perinatal and Neo-natal parents groups
- Reflective practice facilitated for other agencies
- Participation in the annual Baby Loss Memorial Service
- 50 baby loss comfort bags distributed
- 2 Mindfulness Now groups delivered



57%

INCREASE IN
REFERRALS

"Great service and allowed me to understand a lot more about myself and my partner."

"I cherished having someone who would listen to my worries without interruption."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

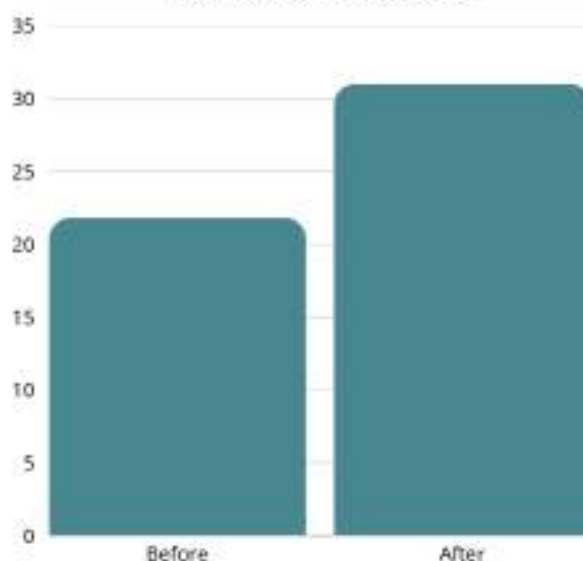
WHAT DIFFERENCE DID WE MAKE?

We measured levels of wellbeing with our clients before their counselling and again afterwards. A 40% increase in wellbeing scores indicates substantial improvements in distress levels among our clients, showcasing the effectiveness of our service.



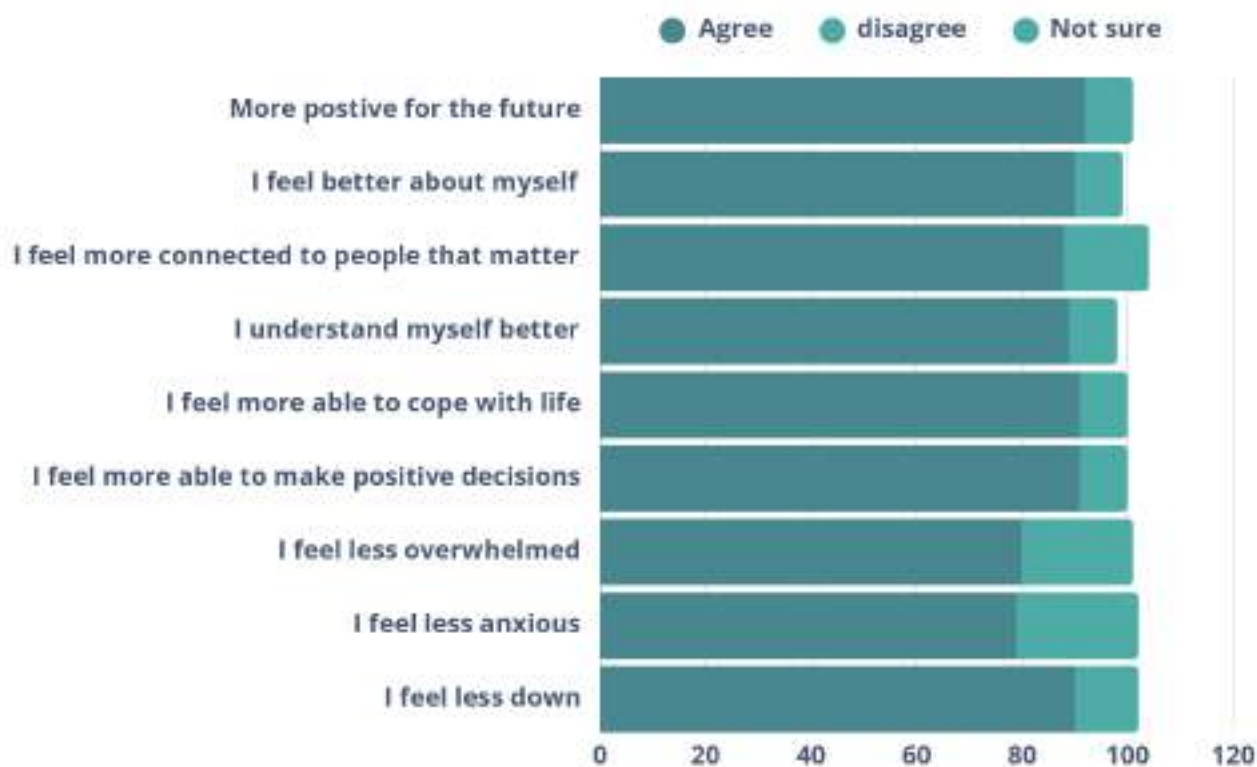
"I don't know how to describe how much counselling has helped me. I didn't realise how low or lost I was and the counselling helped me process the worst time in my life. I feel stronger and more confident in myself and I can't thank my counsellor enough for helping me get here."

Client wellbeing scores



LASTING CHANGE

IMPACT



"I felt so at ease talking to my counsellor, it was like speaking to a friend who knew exactly how I was feeling. Everything that I said during my sessions I felt was listened to and responded to in a thoughtful and nurturing manner."



BIRCH PARTNERSHIP

This year our dedicated outreach team have been working in partnership with the BIRCH team at TCA, jointly supporting the parents who, for many reasons, have looked after children.

The strength in this partnership is the holistic approach we can offer to individuals who have experienced complex trauma and loss, complimenting the wider support BIRCH workers offer with our therapeutic interventions. We have been involved in supporting BIRCH groups, delivering a first dad's group in partnership with the BIRCH male worker, wellness workshops, creative projects and one to one counselling.

Our team have also been able to support the BIRCH team sharing expertise and learning through provision of supervision to their team members.

Our team and clients have benefitted from this collaborative approach, the relationships we have built across our teams and the encouragement this brings.

- 10 birth parents supported
- Workshops on grief, loss, and safety and stabilisation after trauma
- Reflective practice sessions facilitated for the BIRCH team
- Pilot Dad's group in partnership with the BIRCH team

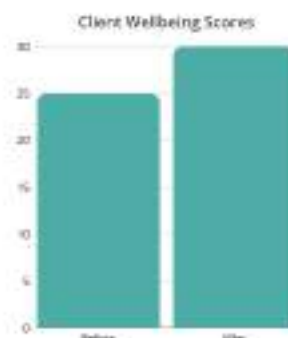
"I am over the moon I am so glad I said yes to counselling...We started working on everything bit by bit.. I will never forget what it has done for me.. If I know anyone needing counselling I will refer them to us as I can't say enough about how grateful I am for all the help I have had."

PERINATAL PROJECT

This year we have launched our ground breaking partnership with the NHS perinatal team, securing funding to offer group and individual counselling for women in the perinatal period who do not meet the criteria for psychological services. This partnership allows women to access counselling, with support from perinatal services if concerns regarding infant or maternal health arise. Our team provides monthly group reflective space for maternity and neonatal psychology staff, sharing expertise in values-led reflective practice.

"Makes you feel no judgment and safe to talk about what you please. I was given many tools to help me through my troubles and I feel I have improved internally. My last session was really amazing as an emotional support dog was offered and I feel I greatly benefitted from it. It made me feel more calm and in tune with myself."

- 21 parents engaged with counselling
- 4 parents groups delivered
- Maternal journaling workshop groups
- Therapy puppy workshop
- Monthly Neo-buddies group for parents whose babies were in NICU
- Counsellor present on neo-natal ward supporting parents
- 6 reflective practice sessions delivered for maternity and neonatal psychology team



WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

In the past year, our youth services program has achieved significant progress in providing essential support and interventions for young people. We secured three contracts to deliver counselling in Dundee schools, building on the success of our animal-assisted therapy program at Rockwell, an offsite education facility. Here, our relational and creative approach effectively engaged young people where traditional talking therapies had failed.



- 4 Workshops in the community for young people
- Addressing themes of emotional regulation, friendships, relationships and transitions
- 4 Therapy dog workshops throughout the year for young people at Rockwell developing skills in connection and awareness of body language and regulation
- Volunteer placement provided to Emma studying Psychology with Abertay University
- 5 children and young people counsellors working in 3 Dundee schools
- Bringing positive change to young people facing challenging circumstances

"I've had fantastic feedback from the young people I've referred to [DOWNLOAD](#). They have made incredible progress and have achieved new goals after processing trauma and wellbeing challenges. This support has been life changing for my young people."

"Counselling at Alternatives has been completely different to any other supports I have tried in the past, it has massively helped and I have enjoyed my experience"

CHANGING LIVES

The team has delivered several workshops to young people in the community, aiming to increase self-esteem and facilitate connections with others. These workshops are delivered in a strengths-based approach and address topics such as emotional regulation, resilience, friendships, relationships, and managing changes or transitions. Additionally, we have conducted workshops at Rockwell featuring our therapy dogs; these sessions have provided an engaging environment for participants to develop skills in connection and increase their awareness of body language and energy.

- 12 young people received 104 sessions of animal assisted therapy
- 74 young people received 558 sessions of specialist youth counselling
- 106 Young People Supported
- 866 Sessions Delivered



"Counselling has helped me look at things from a new viewpoint and experience new things with an entirely new mindset. The sheer kindness of my counsellor as well as the environment of our settings has been more than any other treatment I have received."

STUDENT PLACEMENTS

Each year, Alternatives provides counselling placements to five students, with a strong emphasis on mentoring, training, and developmental opportunities. This year, two of our trainees have continued their involvement as volunteers, and one has joined our perinatal team. Our trainees contribute significant value to our funders and enrich our team's learning environment through their immersion in learning and active participation. We appreciate the commitment, compassion, and expertise they have demonstrated in serving our clients.

"I have absolutely loved my placement at Alternatives. My original plan was to stay for one year, but I enjoyed it so much that I decided to stay during my final year. Everyone was so kind and welcoming and always made me feel part of the team. I was invited to join team days and training days which I really appreciated. Their support and encouragement over the years has helped me grow in confidence and has shaped the counsellor I am today, I will forever be grateful for this opportunity."

"Extremely helpful to create a lasting memory for the one I lost. The key was understanding it was a form of grief I was going through which I hadn't realised. Thank you for being there, listening and giving me helpful tips for the future."

- 43 clients supported by our placement students
- Students counsellors have engaged in neuro-doodle workshops/ Memory making workshops with SIMBA, Mindfulness groups, Sound bath workshops and our team DREAMS day workshops



*Jamie-Lee
Trainee Counsellor*

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS IN DUNDEE



In 1994 Alternatives were established to respond to gaps in care for individuals experiencing complex or stigmatised loss and distress and have supported thousands of men and women both locally and nationally. Evolving from a listening service into a dedicated counselling centre, we have become a treasured part of the community of Dundee, and in October 2025 we chose to celebrate this community of compassionate listeners, funders, donors and supporters with a ceilidh and meal at the Apex hotel. Thank you to everyone who attended and made this evening so special.

"Thank you for a lovely evening of good food, company to mark and celebrate the achievements of Alternatives Counselling"



Our Projects

Reflect

Pregnancy loss counselling
Pregnancy decisions counselling
Pregnancy support
Post abortion care
Infertility counselling
Agency Training
Student Placement Program
Professional debriefs and supervision

Outreach Service

Pregnancy loss and distress
Specialist counselling for birth parents who have children in care
Birth parent groups
Partnership with the BIRCH Project
Agency training and supervision

Perinatal Counselling

Counselling for parents with a child under 2 years
Therapeutic perinatal groups
Neo-buddies parents group
Support service to parents with a child in NICU
Partnership with NHS Tayside PMHT

Infant Loss Counselling

Baby loss counselling
Counselling for individuals affected by the death of a child
(under 2 years old)

Download Youth Counselling

Counselling in schools
Counselling for under 25's with distress or anxiety
Young people groups and workshops within Rockwell
Learning Centre and other Dundee schools
Preventing Crisis
Creative Approaches
Therapy dog

WE HAVE MOVED!

In December 2024, Alternatives began a transition to a facility that more closely aligns with the requirements of our staff and clients. We secured new premises at 11 South Tay Street and, as of 16 December, commenced operations in this location. We appreciate having a workspace that supports and values both our team and those we serve.



The new site features four well-appointed counselling rooms that benefit from ample natural light and generous space, providing an environment conducive to creativity, group sessions, training, and development activities.

"A lovely peaceful space"



you are all **OUR TRUSTEES** fab

Alternatives is overseen by a board of trustees who are responsible for the charity's strategic direction, policy development, and financial decision-making. The board works with team members to support the planning and implementation the service.

Members who served on our board for the year ending March 2025

Shona Mason - Chair of the Board

Nicola Reed - Safeguarding Lead

Sam Muirberry - Governance

Jennifer Inglis - Operational Matters

Elizabeth Waine - Mentor

Antonia McGowan - Training and Networking

Alternatives are committed to the accountability and support of membership with external agencies. We abide by COSCA ethics and code of practice. We respect the dignity, worth and uniqueness of all individuals and affirm their autonomy.

- **COSCA - Counselling and Psychotherapy Scotland (Organisational members 3579)**
- **Youth Scotland (membership number 35009971)**
- **OSCR- Scottish Charities Regulator (SC023483)**
- **ICO- Information Commissioner's Office (ZA808571)**
- **Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Action**

SUPPORT

Alternatives Counselling is fortunate to receive support from a diverse range of funders and individuals, including local and national trusts, clients, and community members committed to sustaining this service in Dundee.

Your dedication has provided encouragement during challenging times, enabling our counsellors to assist those experiencing significant loss, contributing to the training of future counsellors in Dundee, and assisting individuals with comfort bags upon arrival for procedures at Ninewells. We sincerely appreciate your support.

- CORRA Foundation
- Henry Smith Foundation
- Northwood Charitable Trust
- Essentia Foundation
- Robertson Trust
- Spirit of Waracle
- VOLANT Charitable Trust
- WM Sword Charitable Trust
- Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund
- Alexander Moncur Trust
- NHS Charitable Trust
- Young Start
- Awards for All – community lottery fund
- Whole Family Wellbeing Fund
- And many more generous individual and anonymous donors