

About PACT

Parents and Children Together (PACT) was set up in 1911 and aims to strengthen families and increase life chances for people from vulnerable and **disadvantaged backgrounds**. PACT works across the Thames Valley with a range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations and networks.

In addition to facilitating fostering and adoption, PACT delivers one-to-one support for families and operates Children's Centres and a number of social welfare community projects which are shaped to meet diverse community needs e.g. education and training, housing and debt. In 2011, more than 9,000 families used a PACT community project and we placed 88 children for adoption.

PACT's aims are:

- To improve the life chances of children, parents and individuals
- To support and counsel parents in the choices they make for children
- To provide a professional adoption, fostering and family support agency

Alana House

Alana House opened in April 2010 following the Corston Report, which examined the problems of female offending. The project aims to empower women to avoid behaviour likely to lead to criminal offending and so reduce the number of women in custody. Last year, over 300 women sought help from the project. Higher referral rates continue to show a rising level of local need for the service.

Alana House is the only project of its kind in Reading, and fills a significant gap in services. Other statutory and voluntary groups that provide these services are often uncoordinated and in different locations. For women with chaotic lifestyles, this makes it difficult to get help. Alana House is a 'one-stop-shop' where women can get the majority of the help they need in one place, increasing the likelihood that woman will be able to address their needs and become independent women making a valuable contribution to society.

*'It is my hope and dream and aim to ensure that Alana House is here for **as long as it's needed** so that women in Reading can receive the support that they need in a **specialist service**.'*

Sarah Holland, Thames Valley Probation Service

These sessions will allow the women to address their personal issues such as **drugs and alcohol addiction**, sex working, **domestic violence**, **lack of education**, **training and employment**, homelessness, and support them and their **families**, and improve their life chances. The Support Worker will produce an individual plan for each woman who will also benefit from specialist agencies including the Probation Service. Included in these sessions will be support, guidance and advice on budgeting and debt management, benefit applications, housing advice, tenancy issues and resettlement, personal development, **education and employment**. The aims of these support sessions are to reduce the women's chaotic lifestyles and improve each woman's independence and economic situation.

'If you'd asked me where I would have been two years ago, I'd probably have hit the deck by now. But I haven't, I've turned my life around and actually made something of myself. And I would recommend anyone to come here with anything they want help with. Its change my life for me.'

Maxine, Alana House service user

Why is this needed?

Reading is an urban area with high levels of need and is ranked in the lower third of income deprivation according to the latest government Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Last year Alana

House supported over 300 local women to address issues including poverty through a focus on education and training, and enabled them to become independent and a meaningful part of their local community. Alana House is so effective in its unique way of tackling a range of women's issues that many judges (including Judge Zoe Smith) often refer women to Alana House instead of custodial sentences in order to ensure the best outcome for these women.

Alana House operates a multi-agency, proactive approach and our partner agencies offer their services free of charge from our Reading premises. Our work with the New Economics Foundation has shown a considerable Social Return of Investment and societal impact: £14 saved to the public purse for each £1 invested in Alana House.

*'[Alana House] is a really **good use of resources**... and it's amazing to see the women's self respect grow and grow. If I was that person coming here to seek help, I would think that someone thinks I'm **worth doing this for.**'*

Her Honour Judge Zoe Smith, Reading Crown Court

What will be achieved?

The key outcomes help to improve the lives of the people who benefit from Alana House in a number of ways. Our project statistics show how women who have attended Alana House services go on to gain employment, move into safe and sustained accommodation, become better parents and reduce or end reoffending.

A recent report by Taker Tilly and the Cass Business School measured the social return on investment of Alana House. The research concluded that the effects of Alana House are "life-changing". Evaluated conservatively, over £35m of economic and social value, in the lives of these women and their children, is brought every year, from a running cost of under £200k. With taking Alana House as the catalyst for change, we recognise that it brings over £93m a year of value. This is over 200 times return, and an effect that is passed on to the next generation.

As High Sheriff, I am using my year to see what is being done in Berkshire to tackle the problem of offending and re-offending. One of the places that has most impressed me is Alana House which helps vulnerable women by providing individually-tailored help to get them back on their feet. I know from my discussions with other agencies in Berkshire that Alana House is highly regarded and valued, not least because there is no other service in the area providing this vital support for vulnerable women.

Charles Brims, High Sheriff of Berkshire

Sammy's story

Young mum Sammy was in a violent relationship and used binge-drinking as a way of coping with her problems. Her 18-month-old son Joshua was taken out of her care because of the risks he faced witnessing abuse.

Sammy came to PACT after ending her relationship and moving into temporary accommodation in a new area to escape her violent ex-partner.

With PACT's support Sammy managed to stop drinking, address self-esteem issues brought about by an abusive relationship and find a permanent home for herself and Joshua. Social workers were so impressed by her progress they agreed that Joshua could go back to his mother.

PACT is now supporting Sammy to achieve her next goal of going to college.