

South Ayrshire Women's Aid Housing Support Service

Ayr

Type of inspection: Announced (short notice)
Inspection completed on: 13 November 2017

Service provided by:
South Ayrshire Women's Aid an
incorporated association

Service provider number:
SP2004006770

Care service number:
CS2008177955

About the service

South Ayrshire Women's Aid was originally registered on 24 August 2005 as a housing support service under collective management. The service is now governed by a Board of Directors and operates as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. The current service was reregistered under this new status in November 2009. The service is also registered with the office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

South Ayrshire Women's Aid provides support, information, refuge and outreach services to women and their children who are experiencing domestic abuse. The refuge has a capacity to accommodate eight women and their children. Refuge support, court support, follow on and outreach services are also provided to children and young people.

The service's office is located in the town centre of Ayr. The service is affiliated to Scottish Women's Aid. An outreach service for women in rural areas provides confidential support and information. In addition, an 'out of hours' emergency on call service is available.

South Ayrshire women's aid objectives include the following:

'To offer support and information to any women and their children affected by domestic abuse'.

'To encourage women to determine their own futures and to help them achieve it'.

What people told us

We visited the service on the 28 August 2017 and on 22 September 2017. During our inspection visit we spoke with a group of five women. Following our inspection visit we spoke with seven women by telephone. We sent five service user Care Standards Questionnaires (CSQs), one of which was completed and returned.

We received positive feedback from women we spoke with. Women told us they had benefitted from the care and support they had received. Service users told us they received emotional support as well as practical assistance. Practical assistance included help with, for example completing application forms, attending appointments and how to keep safe. A number of the women we spoke to had commented that they thought the staff were very busy and that they thought the service would benefit from having more staff. One woman we spoke to told us that she had benefitted from the support she had received from South Ayrshire Women's Aid but that she had found living in the communal refuge challenging due to the high level of needs of some of the other residents.

Women made the following comments:

'The staff in here have so much kindness'.

'Staff feel like your big sister, not your keyworker. They remember everything you tell them'.

'I think it would be good to have someone based at the police station who can offer this support'.

'I can tell things to a stranger I wouldn't tell my family'.

'My keyworker helps me see things from a rational point of view'.

'They help you to stop and think about things and see them from a different angle'.

'Getting the donations from people who don't even know you helps you realise people are kind'.

'You make pals through doing the group programme. You learn there is light at the end of the tunnel'.

'This is the first place I came to where I felt I could discuss what had happened without being judged'.

'We've become our own wee support group, they taught us that. We know we're not alone'.

'I don't think they do enough to advertise Women's Aid'.

'They need more staff. I think they must run themselves ragged'.

'They are very busy but not too busy to speak to me'.

'They are an ear to speak to ... they are just a phone call away. They understand what I've experienced, they are like a breath of fresh air'.

'They are there every step of the way'.

'They have made a difference to me. I was isolated ... I didn't have friends. I'm out and about, I'm no longer afraid to speak to people. My health has improved and my kids are healthier'.

'They make phone calls, they chase up grants. Staff are so patient and pro-active, they act immediately, they are very willing and they do everything they can'.

'My kids have had a great time. We had trips and we got free tickets to go to the cinema. I love knowing the kids are safe in the refuge'.

'I'm well recovered. I used to think I was the problem, they have helped me to understand'.

'The service I have received has helped me overcome my abusive past. I am listened to and respected'.

Self assessment

The service was not asked to submit a self assessment prior to this inspection visit.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	5 – Very Good
Quality of staffing	not assessed
Quality of management and leadership	4 – Good

What the service does well

South Ayrshire Women's Aid had its own website which was a way for service users, potential service users and professional agencies to find out about the service. Women told us they identified the areas of their life where they needed to be given support. Women were actively involved in drawing up their own personal support plan. We heard that staff were flexible and 'went that extra mile' to deliver the support women required.

The service users described positive supportive relationships with staff members. Support was provided both one to one and in groups. We heard, from women being supported at South Ayrshire Women's Aid, that they felt respected and cared for by staff who were non-judgemental. Women told us that the service helped them to understand and gain insight into their experiences. We spoke to women who had participated in the Freedom Programme delivered by the service. This programme helped to promote awareness of the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships. This programme had helped women to make informed choices regarding their relationships and keeping themselves safe. The service had in house counselling facilities but could also refer women to external specialist counselling if required. The service had organised social opportunities for women to meet together.

South Ayrshire Women's Aid received donations from a number of organisations. These donations were then passed on to service users who required this support. Donations included household items for establishing new tenancies. The service also referred women to foodbanks if required. These donations helped to ensure women and children were not left without items they required. Staff helped service users to complete necessary forms (benefit claims, housing applications) if they required this assistance. We heard that staff members accompanied individuals to attend appointments with external agencies, if women felt in need of this support.

Staff liaised closely with relevant agencies to ensure that supports delivered across services were streamlined. This included management participating in regular MATAC (multi agency task and co-ordination group) meetings. The MATAC group collated information in relation to abusers. The service also engaged with the Disclosure Scheme to support prevention strategies (e.g. to inform women of past domestic abuse incidents).

Women told us the level of support they received helped them to feel cared for and supported. A designated staff member (not a support worker) had responsibility for conducting evaluation interviews. This provided women with an opportunity to feedback on their experience to a staff member who was not directly involved in providing support. This provided another way for women using the service to have a voice in informing developments in service provision.

The service invested in prevention by carrying out awareness raising work at local schools in relation to domestic abuse, healthy relationships and cyber bullying. Staff from within the service delivered training to housing professionals in relation to domestic abuse. The service participated in a multi agency working group on child sexual exploitation.

What the service could do better

We found that South Ayrshire Women's Aid included a number of relatively new staff members. There had been a turnover of staff within South Ayrshire Women's Aid. The service should explore the reasons for this. There should be an investment in improving staff retention as continuity of staffing is important in providing and sustaining quality of care and support to service users.

At the time of the inspection the refuge was operating at full capacity. The service was attempting to increase their available accommodation, including the range of accommodation. This was in order to meet a wider range

of needs as well as a high level of demand for refuge accommodation. At the time of the inspection visit negotiations were ongoing with South Ayrshire Council in relation to this.

South Ayrshire Women's Aid was a busy service and staff worked hard to meet the high level of demand facing the service. The service should continue to find ways to develop its resources in order to meet this high level of demand.

The service had agreed to explore the option of carrying naloxone (an opiate blocker which when administered in the event of overdose could be life saving).

Progress with these areas of improvement will be followed up at the next inspection.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
28 Jul 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 4 - Good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 4 - Good
1 Aug 2013	Unannounced	Care and support 4 - Good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 4 - Good
21 Nov 2012	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very good

Date	Type	Gradings	
		Environment Staffing Management and leadership	Not assessed 5 - Very good 4 - Good
20 Jul 2011	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good Not assessed
2 Sep 2010	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good
21 Dec 2009	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good Not assessed

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