The Avenue Project Sitter Service
Child Care Agency
8 & 10 Tourhill Road
Onthank
Kilmarnock    KA3 2BH

Inspected by:          Valerie Walker
(Care Commission Officer)

Type of inspection:    Unannounced

Inspection completed on:  5 March 2007
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<td>Avenue Project Management Committee</td>
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<td>Care Commission Officer</td>
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<td>Suite 3, Academy Road,</td>
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Introduction

The Avenue Project Sitter service was registered with the Care Commission on 1st April 2002 and provides child care in the homes of the children depending on the individual needs of the Service User. It operates between the hours of 6 am and 10.30pm, Monday to Sunday, 52 weeks of the year. The service’s office is based at 5a-c Tourhill Road, Kilmarnock and covers the North West of Kilmarnock. The registration certificate was on display and there was a current certificate of insurance for the service displayed in the entrance foyer. The project is operated by a voluntary committee consisting of the parents who use the service. It is managed by a Project manager who has responsibility for both the Child care service and the crèche. The service is supported by East Ayrshire Council's Assistant Principal Officer in Early Years. The aims of the project include; To provide a reliable and flexible child care service offering trained staff via the crèche and sitters services to enable families to pursue educational, social, recreational and employment opportunities.

Basis of Report

The annual return was completed prior to the inspection visit, however the self evaluation form had not been completed prior to the inspection. Five service users had returned their 'how happy are you with the child care agency” questionnaires and two staff questionnaires had also been returned. During the announced visit which took place on 5th March 2007, between the times of 10am and 12.30pm, the Care Commission Officer spoke with the interim Project Manager and the administrator. The Care Commission Officer also looked at a range of policies, procedures and records including the following:
- The charging policy
- The child protection policy
- The confidentiality policy
- Recruitment selection procedures
- The whistle blowing policy
- Children’s information
- Written service agreements
- Insurance
- Staff records
- Training records

The Care Commission Officer took all of the above into account and reported on whether the service was meeting the following National Care Standards for childcare agencies.
- Standard 1 Information about the child care agency
- Standard 2 Agreeing the service
- Standard 5 Management and staffing arrangements

A Regulation Support Assessment (RSA) was carried out to determine what level of inspection activity required. The RSA is an assessment undertaken by the CCO which takes into account: complaints made against the service which have been upheld or partially upheld, requirements made in previous inspections, changes in the provision of the service, nature of notifications made to the Care Commission by the service. This service was
assessed as low risk. The Officer also took account of the Care Commission’s themes for the 2006-2007 inspecting year; Child Protection and Safer Recruitment.

**Action taken on requirements in last Inspection Report**

No requirements were made in last year’s inspection report.

**Comments on Self-Evaluation**

The self evaluation document was completed and returned in December 06, detailing the strengths of the service and one area of development in Codes of Practice; Training on codes of Practice, Childcare Co-ordinator to attend SSSC conferences and Sitters service network.

**View of Service Users**

Five questionnaires were returned stating that the parents were happy with the quality of service their child receives. Positive comments in the questionnaires included; ‘Every year an annual handbook is sent out to all users, it is a very professional informative handbook’ ‘the Avenue project were very supportive…..it is good that I can get a sit when needed. They are brilliant.’

**View of Carers**

Two staff questionnaires were returned prior to the inspection and stated that they felt they were well supported by the service and a variety of child related training had been made available to them.
Regulations / Principles

Regulation:

Strengths

Areas for Development

National Care Standards

National Care Standard Number 1: Information about the Childcare Agency

Strengths

The Avenue project sitter service provided parents with the aims and objectives for the service in a clearly written handbook. An information pack which included; information about accessing the service, the charging policy, the standard and quality of care parents and children should expect and a complaints procedure was also made available. Registration with the Care Commission was made known to the service users with details of staff recruitment procedures and the vetting of staff. The policies kept in the service’s office included; child protection, health and safety, infection control, confidentiality and equal opportunities. These could be viewed on request alongside the last inspection report.

Areas for Development

None in this standard.

National Care Standard Number 2: Agreeing the Service

Strengths

A third of the written agreements were reviewed by the Care Commission Officer. The examination of the written agreements between the parents and sitter service found they were completed with all necessary information in place. The type of care to be provided, staff’s role and responsibilities and payments were itemised clearly for the service users. Parents and Child Care Agency each retained a copy of the agreement. Reviews were the responsibility of the project manager and were noted to be undertaken on a six monthly basis. Staff introductions were well co-ordinated, introducing corresponding staff to families.
Relevant arrangements were in place to cover staff sickness and emergencies.

**Areas for Development**

Signatures of both the parties were not always observed on the agreements. This should be corrected as soon as possible. (See recommendation 1)
Workers should sign the written agreement at the same time as the parent.

**National Care Standard Number 5: Management and Staffing Arrangements**

**Strengths**

The sitter service provided a consistent service as promoted in the National Care Standards for Child care agencies.
The interim Project Manager provided good management of the Sitter service.
She provided good communication and was skilled in creating effective opportunities regularly to enhance working relationships with the childcare staff and service users.
Staff had regular contact time with the interim Project manager.
A staff recruitment policy was available and procedures had been followed accordingly. All of the sitter's files were inspected.
Staff had access to relevant training throughout the year including Child Protection and Drugs Awareness. Records were available detailing staff training.
The interim Project Manager had complete her SVQ in Childcare at level 3 and intended to participate in level 4 in the forthcoming year.
Staff had a copy of the policies and procedures of the service, including the whistle blowing and complaints policies.
They had also received individual copies of the Scottish Social Services Council Code of Practice.

**Areas for Development**

The interim Project Manager had been acting up for over two years but had to be formally interviewed and offered the post by the committee. This should be completed immediately to promote good management and encourage staff morale. This would allow her to register with the Scottish Social Service Council.
The service should consider reviewing their policy on obtaining references from referees who had known applicants less than two years.
Enforcement

None since last inspection.

Other Information

One recommendation was made in the last annual inspection report;
1. The childcare arrangements should be reviewed at least once a year for each individual family. National Care Standards for Child Care Agencies; Standard 3 – Service Arrangements.
This had been undertaken satisfactorily.

Requirements

None identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

1.
Signatures of both the parties should be on the written agreements between the service and parents. This should be corrected as soon as possible.
National Care Standards for Child Care Agencies - Standard 2; Agreeing the service.

Valerie Walker
Care Commission Officer