

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 24 MAY 2005

NORTH WEST KILMARNOCK LONE PARENTS RESOURCE (The Avenue Project)

Report by Director (Educational and Social Services)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the Education Committee of the services provided by The Avenue Project and proposals to regularise arrangements for support and monitoring.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Established in 1991 through “Urban Aid”, and managed by a voluntary management committee, the Project has been in receipt of annual revenue funding since 1998. The stated aims of the service are to;
- support and respite to parents and their dependants, priority is given to lone parents;
 - a flexible and reliable childcare service to parents and their dependants both in their own homes through a sitter service and in the Project crèche for social, educational and leisure purposes;
 - information and advice to parents and their dependants and referral where appropriate to other agencies.
- 2.2 Educational and Social Services Early Years Services assumed responsibility for the Project from Social Work in 2002.
- 2.3 Seventy three families with 121 children are currently registered with the service. On average 43 children per week are cared for in the crèche, 70% are under 3years of age. Thirty four families are supported by the sitter service.
- 2.4 Thirty Five percent of children attending the crèche and 56% of families accessing the sitter service have been referred by social work or health services on grounds of vulnerability / need.
- 2.5 The Project offers a childcare and family support service which compliments and augments local authority early years services particularly for families with children under three years. Close working relationships are maintained with social work, health and early years services to strengthen the safety net for vulnerable families and ensure best use of local resources.
- 2.6 The Project works closely with the Working for Families team to support this initiative.

3. QUALITY

- 3.1** The crèche service is subject to annual inspection by the Care Commission, as of April 2004 this also applied to the Sitter Service. The Project adheres to staffing ratios specified in the National Care Standards and Council funding reflects these requirements.
- 3.2** All Project childcare staff have or are undertaking qualifications and training through the Childcare Workforce Training and Development funding, which has had a positive impact on the quality of care. The 2004 and 2005 annual Care Commission inspection reports reflect quality improvements.

4. DEVELOPMENTS

- 4.1** The service currently operates from two converted local authority flats at 5 Tourhill Road Kilmarnock. The first floor premises are not ideal for childcare as rooms are small, are accessed via a concrete stairwell difficult for parents with prams and there is no attached outdoor play space.
- 4.2** Alternative premises which would improve the quality of provision and provide some full day care places for parents in work, training or education have been identified at numbers 8 and 10 Tourhill Road. The capital costs of relocating the Project and refurbishing the properties formed part of East Ayrshire Childcare Partnership's portfolio of bids to the New Opportunities Fund Quality Childcare Programme.
- 4.3** In February 2005 NOF confirmed an award of £137,000. For capital projects over £120,000 NOF require a 15-year lease. This was approved by the Housing Committee in November 2003. The planning application was determined through delegated powers afforded to the Head of Planning, Development and Building Standards and planning permission was granted subject to conditions on 23 December 2003.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Annual revenue funding in 2005-06 is £90,000 of which £82,177 of this will meet staffing requirements in relation staff: child ratios as determined by the Care Commission. Committee is asked to approve three years core funding linked to the Service level Agreement until 31 March 2008, subject to annual review.
- 5.2** The Council's model Service Level Agreement has been amended to reflect the requirements of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 and Disclosure issues and will be subject to further review over 2005.

6. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The Project provides childcare and peer support to vulnerable children and families in an area of multiple deprivation reflecting the aims of the Community Plan themes - Improving Opportunities, Improving Health and Eliminating Poverty.

- 6.2** The Project is supervised in accordance with Accounting Policy Bulletin 27 – Substantial Funding to External Bodies.
- 6.3** The Service Level Agreement includes terms and conditions necessary to safeguard the position of the Council.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that Members of the Education Committee:

- (i) approve the annual revenue funding linked to the appropriate monitoring through a Service Level Agreement; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

John Mulgrew
Executive Director (Educational & Social Services)

DMCA/KG/SR
3 May 2005

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1. Lease of 8 and 10 Tourhill Road Kilmarnock Housing Committee – 5 November 2003
- 2. North West Kilmarnock Lone Parents Evaluation Report 2003.

Members wishing further information should contact; Dorothy McAvoy Childcare Partnership and Development Officer Tel 01563 554956.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR