



Avenues is a not-for-profit organisation, working across London and the south east, that provides support to people with complex needs, including learning disabilities, physical disabilities, autism and mental health problems. Our individualised support enables people to play a full part in their communities through understanding their needs, hopes and aspirations.

Annual Report 2006

AVENUES

AVENUES

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Challenges and opportunities

02

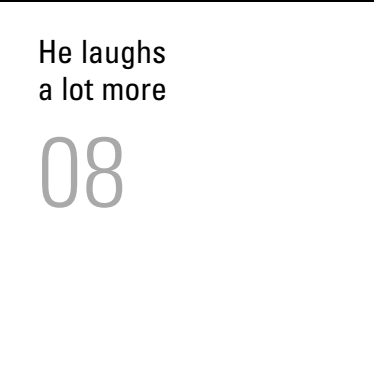
Eddie couldn't be in better hands

04



Making me more independent

06



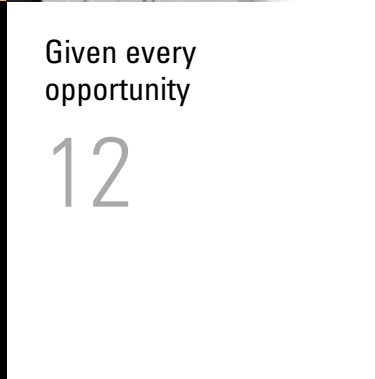
He laughs a lot more

08



We talk the same language

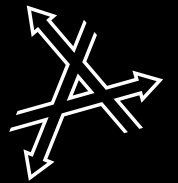
10



Given every opportunity

12

This year, Avenues supported over 800 people to live life to the full...



Good relationships are all important

14



Financial report

16



Quality in everything we do

18



Steve James
Chief Executive

Challenges and opportunities

This report highlights Avenues' achievements throughout 2005/06. It describes real successes experienced by service users, staff who continue to deliver high quality services and clear governance through the work of our trustees.

Despite substantial achievements we have a sense of unfinished business: a feeling that things could be better, that service users should be more involved. Our new business plan has this as a central theme. We are introducing person-centred active support (PCAS) across our learning disability services to ensure that people can exercise choice and feel real achievement in their lives. Avenues' mental health services will similarly concentrate on individuals through the care programme approach, while our new home care services will concentrate on a personal service, not just the delivery of "hours".

Coincidence and chance play a part in most people's lives – unplanned things happen, opportunities pop up. An individual approach to services means we can respond to chance, supported by the more traditional approaches to planning to ensure stability in someone's life.

This approach requires highly skilled and dedicated staff and managers. The new Avenues Academy aims to equip all staff to deliver high quality services. We will also increasingly employ service users to recruit and train staff in order to ensure staff are truly focussed on the needs and aspirations of the people we work with.

Avenues must respond to the shift to more individual services, with the move towards direct payments. We plan to work with young people with disabilities over 14 and their families, offering services which families can buy in, as and when required. This year we joined with the award-winning Southwark Home Care, a specialist home care provider for people with high dependency needs, and will continue to expand our support to people in their own homes.



Growth for us is not an end in itself. We are not an organisation that aims to do everything; we do a number of things well, concentrating on intensive support in areas such as challenging behaviour and home care aimed at people with mental health problems. Our development strategy reflects this approach. We want to deliver innovative services to all our existing and potential users, not a selected few.

We have planned carefully for the next few years but chance and coincidence will play their part. Avenues looks forward to the challenges and opportunities they offer.



Eddie couldn't be in better hands

My brother Eddie came to live here nine years ago. Mum died nine months before, but I know she would have been thrilled with this because it's so homely.

He loves it here. He's become much more assertive, because he has choices; he's blossomed. Avenues made me realise that he could do and understand much more.

For example, Eddie's been on holiday to Cornwall several years running. What he's achieved there was beyond my wildest dreams; things like abseiling, things that really pushed him to the limit.

The staff here are like one big family. I know if there's anything important going on, I can phone them and they'll phone me. Usually the manager here organises a barbecue every summer so the families can all get together. Avenues also holds a families meeting to keep us up to date with what's going on.

I think Avenues is a fantastic organisation. Eddie couldn't be in better hands.

Rosemary

Sister



Avenues works closely with the families of service users, both at a local and organisational level. Family members are involved with the planning of services for their relatives and are kept up to date through newsletters and meetings.

Relatives were also asked to contribute to the business plan through a question in our annual stakeholders' questionnaire, which is sent out every year to families and others involved with Avenues.



Making me more independent

I've been working for Avenues, doing training for new staff, for about a year and a half. I got nervous at first – I usually get nervous with new people - but not any more. I tell them about what Avenues is like.

I also work as a volunteer at a playgroup; I work with children with special needs. I like working with children. We usually take them on trips; you really have to watch them because they can wander off! You have to be quite quick.

I've been living with Avenues for a long time. I like my key worker, Karen; I know her well. I like the people I live with but I want to move to a place of my own, as I like it on my own.

Karen is helping me get ready. We went out shopping the other day for stuff for my new place and got some new curtains. She's helping me do things to make me more independent, like helping me to manage my own money.

Sandy

Service User
and Employee



With the emphasis on choice and individualised support, Avenues is now looking at alternatives to residential care. We increased our supported living provision, setting up a specialised service in East Kent, launched a report on alternative housing options for people with learning disabilities and challenging behaviour, and are developing ways to deliver services through our outreach teams.

As a social enterprise, we endeavour to ensure that employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities or mental health problems are available within the organisation. We work with other specialist organisations that support our service users to access work opportunities, whether it is paid work, work experience or voluntary work.



Avenues launched its business plan for 2006/09 in spring this year, identifying key areas that it will be developing over the coming three years. One key area of development is service user involvement.

We are setting up a service user involvement group to advise us. This year, we also developed and implemented a variety of tools designed to seek service users' views on what is important to them. Some of these were particularly aimed at people with high support needs and limited communication skills and initial evaluation has shown that staff and service users alike have found them valuable.

He laughs a lot more

When Michael first got to Avenues he wasn't able to do much for himself, and he used a wheelchair all the time. We found that he could walk a little, took advice from the local OT (occupational therapist) and now he sometimes walks using a frame, depending on what he wants to do that day. We're really proud of him for this.

Michael enjoys gardening, listening to music and going out on trips - even though he is registered blind he can see a little and loves the sunlight on his face and to feel the breeze. He regularly attends sensory sessions (where the senses of sight sound or touch are stimulated by lights, music or textures). At first he wasn't sure about these sessions, but we encouraged him to continue and now he enjoys them and has tried lots of activities like the trampoline. Anyone who has known Michael for some time comment that he laughs and smiles a lot more now than he used to.

Recently, Michael had an unexpected visitor - his nephew. He found out about Michael for the first time two years ago and had been trying to find him ever since. He eventually tracked Michael down and he and his wife have visited him, bringing photos of Michael as a baby. Michael really enjoyed all the fuss and attention from the family he never thought he had.

written by Michael's Key Workers, Maria, Debbie and Nicky.



Michael
Service User



We talk the same language

My role is a strategic one; I look at where we are going, imagine the future, and work with other organisations to make things happen.

Avenues is an organisation that we work with easily because we talk the same language. Avenues lives in the real world of constraints such as money, but it remains a principled organisation, with a focus on quality.

Following Valuing People, we had to look at how people with a learning disability could be involved in the planning and commissioning of services. Independent organisations such as Avenues play an important role in this.

We commissioned the Avenues to Challenge project¹, which was a good opportunity to change services in Kent for the better. We've also given funding to Avenues and another organisation, High Quality Lifestyles, to set up the Kent Challenging Behaviour Network. One project that will inform this network is Avenues' Challenging Managers Forum², which I thought was a very good idea. The network³ will be open to all organisations in Kent working with people with challenging behaviour.

The network's remit is not only to share good practice but also to influence and challenge people such as myself. It's another small step towards empowerment. It's important that people like me keep open to being challenged; we need to feel that the independent sector is willing to challenge us. I certainly see this in Avenues - people do challenge me and I appreciate that.



¹ The Avenues to Challenge project looked at two key areas: alternative housing options for people with a learning disability and challenging behaviour in Kent, and supporting two people living in a residential home in West Kent to move into their own homes. Avenues published a report on the project's findings this autumn.

² Avenues' Challenging Managers Forum, coordinated by our Challenging Behaviour Support Manager, is for our staff who manage services for people with challenging behaviour to discuss issues that have come up and share new ideas.

³ Kent Challenging Behaviour Network is being set up to share good practice and make links between organisations. It is hoped that the network will become the first port of call for planners, commissioners and regulators to consult on challenging behaviour issues.



Given every opportunity

I started working for Avenues about nine years ago; I'd come from Turkey and started as a support worker in Surrey. Then I moved to another house, which was just opening up, as a Senior Support Worker. A couple of years later I applied for the post of House Manager. I've now been a House Manager for almost two years.

The training opportunities at Avenues are excellent. The organisation has, I think, a professional outlook; you feel proud to say "I work for Avenues". I feel like I've been given every opportunity.

I like the approach they are taking with PCAS (person-centred active support); taking a person-centred approach is so important to how we work with service users.

I find it rewarding seeing the service users' lives improve and develop. If they seem happier or if they are more willing to try new things, then that's a big achievement.

Asli

House Manager



Person-centred active support (PCAS) is a way of supporting people with complex needs to take part in meaningful, everyday activities, regardless of their level of disability, enabling them to live more independent, fulfilled lives.

In September, Avenues recruited a PCAS Coordinator to deliver training to our managers in partnership with The Tizard Centre in Kent. This training is just one element of our comprehensive staff development programme, which we will build on with the Avenues Academy.

In August, Avenues was awarded full accreditation for delivering NVQ levels 2 and 3 in Health and Social Care. This was the next step towards the development of our NVQ Centre, which will offer training to other organisations as well Avenues staff.



Avenues Community Support Team (CST) is one of a number of mental health services we run, including a nursing home for people with mental health problems. We are also a member of the Mental Health Providers Forum.

CST offers support to over 160 people in the community. Around 75% of service users have some type of mental health problem. In addition they may have a learning difficulty, an acquired head injury, an eating disorder, or misuse drugs or alcohol.

CST's work ranges from motivating service users to get up in the morning, raising their self-esteem or attending hospital appointments with them to supporting them with all aspects of daily living such as housework or budgeting. The team also encourage people to take part in community activities, groups and societies, sports activities and entertainments.

Good relationships are all important

I've been collecting for years, since I was five years old. I started collecting beer signs. I appreciate everything I've got – I've spent hours and hours getting it. My musical box is my favourite piece.

I work at the brickworks one day a week, making handmade bricks; I really love it. I also go to college to learn how to restore pieces. I like this photograph of me with my prize possessions.

written by Derek

Derek lives in his own home with two other people, and I visit regularly to give him support if he needs it. I help him sort out his finances, prepare meal plans with him, and support Derek to play his part in keeping the house clean and tidy.

Encouraging Derek to keep his collection under control is a big part of this. Derek has a genuine passion for collecting, he has all the books, as any collector would; but he also has OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder), and that's when he needs outside help to manage. His collection can take over the house, which can cause problems with

the people he lives with. We've supported Derek to rent a storage unit nearby, helped him budget to pay for it, and that's made a big difference.

Derek's lived in other places in the past, and as a result he's had to give up large chunks of his collection, so putting part of his collection into storage was a big step. I remind him that he can visit the storage unit any time he likes. It's important to encourage him to be independent and to feel that he has got a space that's his own, where he can keep his collection safe.

We go out for a coffee or lunch on Wednesdays; it's good to do something sociable for a change, so that I'm not always the guy who nags him about his collection! Sometimes the others from the house come with us, which helps cement relationships. Good relationships are all important in this job.

written by Douglas, Derek's Key Worker



Derek

Service User



Financial report

	2006	2005
Incoming Resources	£	£
Service agreements	16,960,906	14,663,289
Residents charges receivable	567,394	520,693
Consultancy and training services	98,162	106,448
Grants	64,808	85,000
Donations	779	74
Investment income	21,106	15,222
Other income (See note 4.)	117,342	111,617
	17,830,497	15,502,343

Avenues has been successful this year in being awarded several grants, including:

- £20,000 from The Bailey Thomas Charitable Fund for the Avenues to Challenge project
- £3,500 from Learning Disability Development Fund in Kent, also for the Avenues to Challenge project
- £41,308 from Sutton and Merton PCT for the Orchard Hill project, for research and development into transition of services for people currently at Orchard Hill Hospital.

Avenues has continued to concentrate on improving the working lives and working relationships of our staff during 2005/06. In particular we have been involved in a significant project to improve and raise awareness amongst staff of equality and diversity issues in the workplace and how this translates to the delivery of quality services for our service users.

We have delivered a new model of job and pay grading to managers and corporate staff, funded through our reserves, to help with recruitment and retention of key posts and will be monitoring the impact that this has on employee turnover in the next twelve months. Looking ahead we will be rolling this work out to the rest of the organisation during the coming year. Investment from our reserves in Information Technology has led to improved communications and efficiencies, while investment in staff development has resulted in the development of the NVQ centre and the Avenues Academy. The Academy will deliver tailored programmes of study and vocational training, available to all staff, that meets not only individual development needs but also statutory requirements.

Avenues has well developed plans to grow in south east London. We have joined with Southwark Home Care and plan to develop more individualised services for people. Avenues is involved in a number of long standing tenders that show some signs of being resolved in the coming financial year and we are optimistic that we will be awarded new services.

Finally, following a period of review and consultation with key stakeholders, Avenues plans to expand into providing services for young people with disabilities over 14 years. These services, based on the traditional strength of the organisation, open up new opportunities to support young people through transition.

The White Paper "Our Health, Our Care, Our Say" opens up new opportunities for Avenues which we are currently reviewing. As part of this review we plan to expand our services to be funded through direct payments and individualised budgets.

The summarised financial information above are not statutory accounts but a summary of information related to the full accounts, audited by Horwath Clark Whitehill LLP and approved by the Trustees on the 25th July 2006. The opinion of the auditor was unqualified. Copies can be obtained from Avenues, River House, 1 Maidstone Road, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 5TA.

Auditors: Horwath Clark Whitehill LLP



Carol Homden
Chair

Quality in everything we do

At Avenues, we share one key aim – to enable all our service users to realise their potential by providing the quality support they need to live life to the full.

This year, staff have supported people to explore new opportunities, taking part in activities – from voluntary work to football - that many of us take for granted. Avenues Albion, our very own football team, is one example of innovative opportunities we are developing. Our exciting work in sport, exercise and arts will continue to transform opportunities available locally.

Staff have also helped build skills and confidence, enabling several people to move to live independently in the community. The Avenues to Challenge project lays out a clear path for exploring alternatives to residential group homes for people with learning difficulties and challenging behaviour and we shall explore both renting and buying homes through shared ownership in the future.

None of this would be possible without the commitment of our staff. We have worked to improve career progression and recognition as well as training by reviewing roles and strengthening regional management support. Gaining full accreditation for delivering NVQs for Health and Social Care exemplifies our commitment to developing our staff and has provided a vital step towards establishing our own NVQ Centre.

We have developed our governance approach to ensure that quality continues to be the watchword of everything we do. It has been a vital part of putting the organisation on a sound financial footing so that we can continue to invest in our people and our services.

I want to pay tribute to the hard work of all of our staff as well as the talent and commitment of the executive team, the trustees and our former chair, Eleanor Brazil. We have also achieved success thanks to our strong relationships with commissioning authorities and partners, and through the recognition of the quality of Avenues' provision by the regulatory authorities.



Our service users have set us an ongoing challenge - more choice in how they live their lives and more active support in their homes. Our new business plan sets out our ambition to respond and exceed these aspirations.

I look forward to working with everyone in Avenues to grasp this challenge, with passion and enthusiasm in all that we do - and to cheering on Avenues Albion to another successful season!

Thank you to everyone who shared their stories and took part in the photo sessions.

We would also like to thank the 25 primary care trusts and local authorities who have supported our work this year.

Trustees		Senior staff	
C Homden	<i>Chair (from 26/7/05)</i>	Steve James	<i>Chief Executive</i>
J Clough	<i>Treasurer</i>	Diane Walker	<i>Director of Corporate Affairs</i>
E Brazil	<i>(resigned as Chair 26/7/05)</i>	Jayne Kilgallen	<i>Director of Operations</i>
B Styles		Amanda Aldridge	<i>Director of Service Strategy</i>
P Marais		Jo Land	<i>Director of Human Resources</i>
N Ishmael			
P Waugh			
F Newman-Taylor			
K Goddard			
T Broadhurst			
J Howland			
S Price			
C MacKenzie			
S Wakeford	<i>(joined 26/7/05)</i>		
F Spencer	<i>(joined 12/9/05)</i>		

