

Inspection report for Willington Children's Centre

Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	367175
Inspection dates	29 - 30 May 2012
Reporting inspector	Tara Street

Centre leader	Jane Birtley
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Willington Children's Centre Chapel Street Willington County Durham DL15 0EQ
Telephone number	01388 746740
Fax number	01388 748371
Email address	jane.birtley@nhs.net

Linked school if applicable	114066 Willington Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY334205 Surestart Willington Children's Centre 314137 Nursery Time

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including; health, education and children's social care professionals. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Willington Children's Centre is a phase two, purpose-built centre situated adjacent to Willington Primary School in County Durham and was designated in 2007. It offers a range of services which include health services, social care, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education, family outreach services, crèche facilities and a sensory room. Services are also provided at two outreach satellite centres based at Crook Health Centre and Tow Law Community Centre. These buildings also provide various facilities including crèche facilities, multi-purpose training/meeting rooms and toy library facilities.

The centre is situated in an area identified as having the highest levels of deprivation; with 10 of the 16 localities sitting within the top 30% of Super Output Areas (SOA). Of these, three are in the top 10 of the most deprived in the district. There are 1445 children aged nought to five years in the reach area with 59% accessing services in the centre. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding unemployment, domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, youth crime, substance misuse and low levels of literacy and numeracy. The population is mostly White British with smaller, but growing, percentages of other ethnic groups, some of whom speak English as an additional language. Levels of

unemployment are high with 74.05% of children living in households dependent upon workless benefits and many of the existing jobs are low paid. Housing is mostly social or private rental. Most children enter early years provision with knowledge and skills that are slightly below expectations for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. There are links to the 11 local primary schools. The centre's linked childcare provision is provided by Nursery Time; it is subject to its own inspection and the report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The local authority has recently undergone a significant restructure and the children's centre is now part of the new One Point Service. This service provides integrated services for children and young people from pre-birth to nineteen years. Governance of the centre is provided by Durham Local Authority in conjunction with an advisory board that includes providers, delivery partners, voluntary sector organisations and members of the local community, parents and other users that attend the centre. The centre is part of a hub and spoke model of provision comprising of four children's centres. It is managed by a hub manager who is based in Barnard Castle One Point Hub. She is supported by two senior lead professionals, four principal family workers and an administration team leader.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

Willington Children's Centre provides a good-quality service for children and families. In particular, effective care, guidance and support and good safeguarding arrangements have a positive impact on the safety and well-being of families. The good quality and wide range of activities offered in the centre, such as 'Activity Time', 'Busy Babies' and 'Cook for Life' groups promote learning well and, as a result, enjoyment and achievement are good.

Outcomes for users are good and skilled family support workers provide effective one-to-one care, guidance and support to families in times of crisis. 'I do things I would never have done before and now have a brilliant relationship with my child' and 'there is always something to do and someone to talk to' are typical comments expressed by parents. Joint working with health colleagues aids the centre's very good early intervention work and helps

to prevent some difficult situations from escalating. However, the centre acknowledges that more work is still to be done to increase the number of mothers that sustain breastfeeding.

Safeguarding is given a high priority and all parents say they feel very welcome and safe at the centre and its satellite venues. Successful multi-agency work provides a robust approach to ensuring that the individual needs of families are met well, particularly for those families with circumstances that make them vulnerable and those subject to a child protection plan. Close work with the Multi Agency Team further enhances integrated delivery of family support for older children and young people.

Adults' knowledge of parenting skills is developing very well because of the support they receive from staff and peers. They engage well with the learning opportunities provided such as 'Skills for Life' sessions and literacy and numeracy courses, and there is a sense of enjoyment in all of the centre's activities. The centre successfully engages with the majority of its key target groups. However, the centre recognises that although fathers are welcome at all services, numbers engaging with the centre are low.

Parents participate well in a range of evaluations, reviews and focus groups that encourage them to contribute to the development of the centre's activities. Parents are keen to volunteer and are well represented on the local advisory board.

Leaders and managers are ambitious and motivated to continue improving the provision, building on its strengths and reaching the families whose circumstances mean they are most in need of support. The inclusion of all children and families is central to the vision of the centre manager. Because of the manager's and staff's very good knowledge of the reach area, the analysis of the centre's major strengths and areas for development includes the key target groups and the factors that may influence outcomes. However, self-evaluation and development planning does not yet make full use of all available data to set specific targets which would strengthen the advisory board's ability to provide effective support and challenge. Nonetheless, effective leadership and management, good outcomes for users and quality provision combined with the clear vision and drive of the centre manager demonstrate a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve health outcomes by continuing to work with partners to increase the numbers of mothers sustaining breast feeding.
- Increase the involvement of fathers by engaging further with those not accessing the centre's activities.
- In partnership with the local authority, develop further self-evaluation processes and development planning by making full use of all available data to set specific targets,

therefore enhancing the advisory board's ability to provide effective support and challenge.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre works very closely with health partners to address any problems at an early stage. Attendance at antenatal and baby clinics and 'Bumps to Birth' groups are good and this has a positive impact on parents' understanding of child health and development. In addition, parents enjoy a good range of activities to develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles such as healthy eating and cooking courses, 'Weight No More' and weaning sessions. As a result the incidence of obesity among Reception Year children is low at 9.2%. The centre actively promotes the benefits of initiating breastfeeding through its 'Breastfeeding Group' and workshops and as a result has seen some improvement in this area. However, despite this, current data show that only 14% of mothers sustain breastfeeding at six to eight weeks. The centre manager and staff are aware of this and are continually looking at ways to improve outcomes in this area. Parents value the open and honest support provided by the centre workers. 'The centre has changed our life so much, if we did not have the brilliant support from them I'd still be stressed and worried all the time. I know if I ever have any problems with my child I can ask them for advice or get support' is typical of views expressed.

The centre is sensitive to the needs of families with circumstances that make them most vulnerable and does all it can to help them stay safe. Parents are supported in minimising risks in their homes to children through useful advice and guidance and the provision of low-cost safety equipment if this is required. As a result, parents are more self-assured and confident.

There is good evidence of improved outcomes for those subject to a child protection plan and looked-after children due to very effective family support work and signposting to appropriate courses and support groups. Parents of all children are seen by staff as essential partners in the improvement in outcomes for families. Early intervention for families with children identified as at risk or in need is helping to keep children safe and is supporting their progress. The whole staff team demonstrates a very good understanding of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes.

Children play and adults develop their skills in a welcoming environment with friendly and approachable staff. There has been an increase in the number of children achieving 78+ points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales, which represents a good level of development. Data show this has steadily improved from 46.98% in 2009-10, to 51.83% in 2010-11 and 54.66% in 2011-12. The achievement gap between the lowest 20% and the rest is steadily closing and has reduced in the last year by 4.79% to 24.71% in 2011-12. Adults enjoy courses aimed at developing their parenting and life skills. One parent said, 'I have learnt a lot of skills in how to manage my child's behaviour'. Other users commented

that: 'They have helped me with my maths so I can now help my child at school' and 'It's given me belief in myself'.

The centre provides good opportunities to work as a volunteer or contribute to decision-making and governance. As a result of attending the centre, parents acknowledge that their social networking skills have improved. Some parents have started to take responsibility for some of the sessions such as setting up a community café and a domestic violence peer support group. Good links with the Jobcentre ensures that job vacancies are publicised and users are signposted to a good range of adult training courses, some of which are accredited and have led to employment.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	2

How good is the provision?

2

Staff's good knowledge and understanding of the community they serve lead to the delivery of good quality provision. Prompt and effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) enables staff to provide good care, guidance and support and services to families. Consequently, centre staff have built strong, trusting relationships with parents. Feedback from users is used effectively to enable the centre to change the provision to benefit users' learning and development needs. For example, a 'MAD's Group' has been set up to support young parents specifically. As a result, the flexible range of services provided meets the needs of most users who access it. Participation is good. The centre is focused on providing services for families with the greatest need and is successful in working with target groups, such as workless families, teenage parents and those experiencing domestic violence and substance misuse. However, although data show that 22% of fathers engage with the centre, particularly in the popular 'Dads n' Kids' group, others are proving more difficult to reach.

A good percentage of parents complete courses they commit to and achievements are celebrated well. The centre provides basic skills, literacy and numeracy classes and 'Helping in Schools' courses as required. A good range of specific programmes which promote

parenting skills is offered. These are adapted to provide bespoke services to support targeted groups to help build their self-esteem and a wide range of parenting skills. As a result more parents are able to manage challenging family situations. In addition, by holding sessions in the centre and in other outreach venues, parents have the opportunity to meet with others, and reduce the sense of segregation and isolation they feel.

A well resourced toy library and 'Chatter Bags' are used to good effect in the area to develop some children's communication, language and literacy skills as well as promote positive interaction between parents and their children. Children have access to good-quality crèche facilities whilst their parents enjoy sessions such as 'Skills for Life' and first aid training. Crèche staff plan a good range of appropriate challenges for children to explore and learn, both indoors and out. The centre has strong links with the linked private childcare provider and the co-located school. Staff understand the benefits of working closely with schools in terms of supporting children's smooth transition into the next step in their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Good leadership and management of the centre have a positive impact on outcomes for families. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. There are clear links between strategic planning and service provision leading to improvements. Day to day, the centre manager is very well supported by an enthusiastic staff team who channel their passion for their work to good effect. Staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and their performance is well monitored by leaders and managers. The advisory board has good representation from the community and parents and this ensures that local views are clearly expressed through its meetings. As a result, the centre's identified priorities link effectively to those of the wider area. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the key issues facing the centre. There are sound links between the centre's evaluation of its services and the priorities set out in its development plan because the manager and staff know the reach area very well. However, currently insufficient use is made of all the available good data in the evaluation process to set specific targets. This limits the centre's capacity to demonstrate further the full impact of its work on improving outcomes and the ability of the advisory board to provide even more effective support and challenge.

Efficient sharing of resources, including staff expertise across the three centres increases what the centre can offer and prevents the duplication of work and secures good value for money. The work of the family support workers is targeted effectively on supporting families in times of need.

Equality and diversity are promoted well, there is a strong culture of respect and inclusion is promoted well. The centre staff are pro-active in ensuring that parents are empowered to tackle any discrimination. They plan regular events to develop families' understanding of differing cultures and they are sensitive in removing any barriers to engagement. Families with disabled children and those with special educational needs are well supported through universal services and access to a sensory room. They also receive support to access Portage groups, which support young children and their families, at other nearby centres.

Good safeguarding practice is adopted across all areas of the centre's work. The premises at each site are safe and secure. A single central record provides evidence of rigorous vetting and recruitment procedures and the checking of partner providers' practice is robust. Some families live in areas where there are high levels of deprivation. They experience circumstances which can make them particularly vulnerable, such as a combination of substance misuse, issues with debt and, or domestic violence which generally impacts on mental health and feelings of well-being. When risks or potentially harmful situations arise, children are well protected by the effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and work with multi-agency partners. Case studies show how sensitive partnership work helps parents to cope with difficult situations, thus reducing risks to children.

The centre seeks and makes good use of feedback from users to develop and improve the range and quality of its provision. As a result, user satisfaction is high.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.	2

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Willington Children's Centre on 28 - 29 May 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you very much for talking to us and letting us come into your sessions. The information you gave and the stories you shared with us helped us to make our judgements. Many of you told us how accessing the centre has supported you to improve your lives and how you now have more confidence. It was clear that you are proud of your achievements. You told us about how much you appreciate the welcoming services and the good support the centre staff provide for you. This is because they want the very best for you and your families. Some of you told us: 'It's good to come here; it's been a Godsend' and 'No-one talks down to you, they treat you as equals'. You also told us about the friends you have met and the things you have learnt as a result of your involvement in the centre's activities. You all expressed high levels of satisfaction with the centre.

The centre has formed strong partnerships and partners combine their professional experience, knowledge and resources very well to meet your individual needs. They work closely together to assess any difficult situations effectively. They know what support they, or others, can provide for you in times of crisis and they have built trusting relationships with many of you. We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well-trained in meeting your needs. You said that you feel that your children are safe at the centre and that advice from them helps your families stay safe at home.

You enjoy the sessions with your children such as 'Busy Babies', 'Activity Time', 'Baby Massage', and 'Toddler group'. Those parents with children in the crèche, value the good care their children receive. We know the proportion of mothers who breastfeed is relatively low. We have asked the centre to work closely with their health partners to make sure more of you are given sufficient support to enable you to continue to breastfeed once you have decided to do this. We found that children benefit from accessing services at the centre and make good progress from their starting points. The centre is working well with the Jobcentre and adult education services to give you good access to courses to help improve your own education and future employment opportunities. The centre is successful at engaging with

the majority of families that really need some support but it still needs to find ways of engaging with more fathers from local families.

Your children behave well and you learn more about how to stay healthy and active. The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities it offers. It changes how and when it does some things because of what you say. A good number of you are involved in making decisions about your centre through being on the parents' forum and advisory board.

We found that all the staff are keen to promote equality and diversity. Many of the families with the greatest needs are enjoying sessions to help them and their children. Families treat each other with respect. The centre works well for everyone in the community, irrespective of their background or disability, and in doing so it contributes well to community cohesion. The centre collects much information from you, the local authority and its partners and uses this information to make the centre as good as it can be. We have, however, asked it to use this information more effectively so that it can more accurately show how the centre is making a difference to you and your families. In addition, this will enable the advisory board to provide even more support and challenge.

Thank you again for taking the time to talk with us and we wish you and your families every success for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.