

Derbyshire - Long Eaton Group

Lime Terrace, , Long Eaton, NG10 4LF

Inspection date 25–26 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:		
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Activities and groups for children in their early years are not consistently good because opportunities to promote learning more effectively are sometimes missed by staff. Systems for tracking and monitoring children's progress from their start points are not fully developed, preventing the centre group from showing the full impact activities have on children's learning and readiness for school.
- The quality of assessments completed under the Common Assessment Framework vary. For example, a few plans lack rigour because they do not clearly show the roles particular agencies will play in supporting families and timescales for some actions are too long.
- The centre is improving because the local authority has raised expectations about its performance. However, the integration of the MAT (Multi-Agency Team) service and the children's centre group is relatively new and not fully embedded.
- Governance arrangements have not been robust. Information available to the centre is not always analysed or good enough, to confirm that services are having an impact for families. Furthermore, local authority targets and priorities are not consistently used within the centre business plan preventing a faster pace of improvement and hindering strategies to manage and challenge performance.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- The centre is the hub of the community and has successfully reached the large majority of local families including most of its main target groups.
- The sensitive and often discreet work with families experiencing domestic violence is a strength of the centre group. Effective partnership working ensures help for these families is swift, carefully planned and effective.
- Parents play a meaningful role in the development of services and activities. A well-established 'Parent's Forum', alongside routine opportunities for parents to contribute their views, ensures parents feel a strong sense of ownership and pride towards the centre group.
- Volunteers are huge supporters of the centre group and they work hard to provide community events and groups such as the 'Little Stars Tea Time Club' for children with disabilities. As a result, the centre is described as a 'special and welcoming place to be'.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are Long Eaton 1 and Long Eaton 2.

This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with two children's centre coordinators, centre staff, officers from the local authority, children's social care and workers from the family support and MAT (Multi-Agency Team). They also met with health, education and early years partners, representatives from local schools, representatives from the advisory board, Jobcentre, adult learning providers and parents and volunteers. They looked at the centre's view of its own performance, the centre's development plans, a sample of the centre's policies and procedures, a selection of case studies and a range of other relevant documentation. The inspectors visited services on site and at Grange Primary School and Long Eaton health centre. Visits to activities were undertaken jointly with the centre coordinators, who also attended all team meetings along with representatives from the local authority and MAT.

Inspection team

Lead inspector Gillian Bishop	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda McLarty	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marianick Ellender-Gele	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about the children's centre group

Long Eaton Children's Centre Group comprises of two children's centres located on the same site and managed by the same advisory board and children's centre coordinator. The Long Eaton Group is located in the Erewash District in Southern Derbyshire and serves over 2,000 children aged from birth – five years. The centre group received designation in 2008 and provides the full core offer.

The reach area includes Long Eaton, Sawley, Wilsthorpe, Draycott and Breaston. Long Eaton 1 and Long Eaton 2 serve designated areas although families living across the whole of the reach area access services from both centres. Outreach provision is located at the Grange Satellite Centre, Long Eaton Health Centre and Sawley Community Hall. Centre data confirms that the large majority of families residing in the area are from a predominately White British background. There are a small but increasing number of children from Eastern European countries living in the area and a very small minority of Black and minority ethnic families (10.65%).

Long Eaton is a large town and the main employment is light industrial and retail. The levels of deprivation in the area vary with 58% of children under 5 years living in the 30% most deprived areas. In some parts of the reach area families experience high levels of unemployment, social exclusion and poverty with 23% of children under five years living in households dependent on workless benefits. The majority of children enter early years education with skills and knowledge below that expected for their age.

The centre is managed by the local authority alongside an advisory board. A children's centre coordinator manages the day to day running of both centres. The Family Support Centre Team and two Multi Agency Teams (MAT) are located on the same site. The children's centre coordinator is managed by the Multi Agency Team Manager.

What does the centre/group need to do to improve further?

- Improve and monitor more closely, the quality and impact of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - improving the consistency of teaching and learning across all early years groups and activities, particularly those provided to support school readiness
 - developing systems to consistently track and assess children's developmental progress from their starting points, so the impact of centre services can be measured over time.
- Improve the quality of assessments completed under Common Assessment Framework arrangements by:
 - identifying clear actions to improve the well-being of families providing tighter time-scales for families to address identified concerns.
- Work with the local authority, the advisory board and the Multi-Agency Team to:
 - improve the quality, timeliness and analysis of data to inform improvement planning more effectively
 - increase the rigour in which they challenge and quality assure the performance of the centre across all aspect of its work.
- Improve the effectiveness of the business plan to drive the pace of improvement by:
 - ensuring local authority performance indicators and targets clearly inform plans
 - including rigorous success criteria to measure the impact of service provision much more effectively.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Ambitious targets for registration and participation rates have secured access by the large majority

of families in the reach area. A firm focus on increasing and tracking the engagement of families such as teen and young parents, children with disabilities and Black and minority ethnic groups has increased and sustained their access to centre services. Centre plans are now in place to tackle lower engagement levels by families in workless households and fathers.

- Fortunately, the current absence of new birth data has not hindered early access to the centre services due to effective working relationships with health professionals and a range of jointly run services across the reach area. Furthermore, a multi-agency approach to referring families most in need of help are secure ensuring needs are identified swiftly and families are sensitively supported to access services.
- The centre has established a good range of universal and targeted provision tailored well to meet a wide range of needs and which provide a strong network of support. For example, regular crèche support for adult education courses removes potential barriers to access and, young parents groups and holiday activities for siblings alongside the 'international Stay and Play', enables more children and adults to access services which are matched to their needs.
- The take up of free nursery entitlement for three and four year olds is good and provision for two year olds is increasing. Assessment of children aged two years successfully identifies children who are most in need of early intervention and who require additional support in their personal, social and emotional skills and communication and language.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Good partnership working and effective assessment of families in greatest need ensures targeting of services for the most vulnerable families is discreet, effective and secures good care, guidance and support. The focus placed on improving the emotional needs of adults and children and supporting families fleeing, or at risk of domestic families is a real strength of the centre group.
- A good range of healthy living activities such as 'Cook and Eat', 'Magical Movers' and the 'Growing Project' alongside family walks organised by volunteers, are helping to increase families awareness of how to make a few healthy changes to their lifestyles. Additionally, the popular 'Yummy Mummies' breastfeeding group is improving the length of time some mothers sustain breastfeeding.
- Despite a number of interventions obesity levels remain higher than the national and the Derbyshire averages. Data available to track health trends generally is often unreliable and the impact of healthy lifestyle initiatives is not routinely tracked.
- 'Busy, Bees', 'Toddler Group' and 'Baby Peep' play sessions are all thoroughly enjoyed by children and their parents. Parents receive some good practical advice about how to nurture children's speech and language early, support their children's learning at home and prepare children for their transition to school. However, in some groups there is insufficient focus on learning because staff miss opportunities to challenge children's learning further or explain the purpose of the activities to parents.
- Some schools are reporting an improvement in children's personal, social and emotional skills on entry to nursery school due to the 'Ready for Nursery' sessions. However, systems to track and monitor children's progress from their starting points are not yet in place. Therefore, the centre group are unable to show the full impact that early learning experiences delivered through the centre group; have on children's developmental progress over time.
- A growing proportion of parents are beginning to access a good range of adult learning opportunities, improving their independence, confidence and employability skills. Some courses such as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) are tailored to need, and centre data indicate good take up of courses such as literacy, numeracy and first aid.
- Parents receive a wealth of guidance on welfare reform and financial management. Volunteering opportunities are good and have led to adult education tutor courses and qualifications in childcare, and in some cases employment. However, the lack of consistent tracking prevents the centre group showing long term economic outcomes for many families, particularly those from workless households.
- 'Positive Parenting' courses are routinely run and improve parents' confidence to manage their children's challenging behaviour in a positive and effective way. Parents who fully engage, value the

strategies they learn and the improved bond and relationship they have with their children. However, too many parents do not complete the courses.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management arrangements are beginning to settle following a local authority restructure and the integration of services for families in Long Eaton. Leaders receive good support and guidance from the local authority which is helping them to improve the way they work, assess the needs of the community more effectively and increase the number of families using their services.
- Where improvement targets are set, they are ambitious and challenging for leaders and provide positive results. However, performance targets and measures within the business plan are not used well enough to enable the local authority and leaders to demonstrate fully, the difference services make to families lives. For example, obesity levels have risen for three years but the centre cannot show how local authority plans and the centres drive to promote healthy lifestyles has worked.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are good. Staff working with families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable receive good levels of training and support ensuring they understand how best to assess and meet their needs. Good teamwork between the family support and children's centre workers ensures consistent and effective support for children in need or on child protection plans. Increasing use of the Common Assessment Framework is providing early and multi-agency help to more families although the quality of the assessments does vary.
- Leaders, staff and the advisory board know their community well which helps them to provide the right services in the right places, and reach families who are more reluctant to engage. However, their work is hindered by the lack of useful local data and information from some partners such as health. Data is not used well enough to make sure changes to priorities are identified sooner or to question performance or outcomes for families more closely.
- A key strength of the centre is the way in which it empowers parents to improve their personal skills and confidence enabling them to play a purposeful role as community volunteers, advisory board representatives and members of an active 'Parents Forum'. As a result, parents are involved in the delivery, sustainability and development of services.
- Financial management of the centre group is secure. The centre group is well resourced and staffing is deployed well across a good range of universal and targeted provision reaching more families. However, the centre have identified an increase in outreach and one-to-one support following the integration of the Multi-Agency Team and extended services. The impact of these changes are being monitored by the Local Authority.
- Parents do not differentiate between one centre and the other because they use and value the provision as a whole. They speak highly of the services provided for them and the positive difference they make to their lives.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's Centre Group details

Unique reference number	80208
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	423337
Managed by	The Derbyshire County

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2,200
Centre leader	Andrea Lowton
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01629 532625
Email address	andrea.lowton@derbyshire.gov.uk; anna.quail@derbyshire.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- URN 21847 Long Eaton 1
- URN 21848 Long Eaton 2

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