

Derbyshire-Dronfield Group

Gladys Buxton Community Education Centre, Dronfield, S18 2EJ

Inspection date 3–4 July 2013

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

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The three children's centres in the area have only very recently started to work as a group and the local authority has not given sufficient attention to the strategic leadership and oversight of the new group of centres to make sure that the activities and services families receive will be of the same good quality and consistency as currently exists.
- The activities planned for children and families do not always focus sufficiently on some aspects of health and how well children are learning. This makes it difficult for the group of centres to measure the impact of these activities on children's development and their readiness for school.
- Feedback from parents, though gathered regularly, is not used systematically to inform the broad development of services and activities.
- The advisory board is very new and is not ready or well prepared to provide the level of challenge and support to make sure the centre group continues to improve.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- The group of centres is a focal point of the community and has successfully reached the large majority of families in its target groups.
- Parents value services and staff highly. The quality of activities, such as 'Discovery Play' and 'Healthy Eating' is consistently good and effectively promotes positive outcomes.
- The quality of family support work and the care and guidance offered to all who use services are good. Many explain confidently how much the work has helped to improve their lives.
- Strong and effective partnership working with, for example colleagues in the Multi-agency Team (MAT), local schools, health visitors and other agencies ensures help and support for children and their families is timely and effective.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre 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:

- Dronfield Children's Centre
- Killamarsh Children's Centre
- Eckington Children's Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the two children's centre coordinators, centre staff, officers from the local authority, local authority county councillors, managers from the MAT and social care service managers. They also met with health, education and early years partners, representatives from local schools, representatives from the advisory board, adult learning providers and parents and volunteers.

The inspectors visited the three centres and other local provision which ran play activities and early years provision.

They observed the centre's work, looked at the centre's view of its own performance, the centre's business plans, a sample of the centre's policies and procedures, a selection of case studies and a range of other relevant documentation.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Stella Butler | Her Majesty's Inspector Lead Inspector |
| Susan Smith | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Charalambos Loizou | Her Majesty's Inspector |

Full report

Information about the group

Dronfield Children's Centre group comprises of three children's centre located in Dronfield, Killamarsh and Eckington communities in the North East of Derbyshire. The group has very recently been established as part of a Derbyshire-wide re-configuration of children's centres into locality groups. The Dronfield centre group services a population of approximately 2,170 children aged from birth to five years. Dronfield and Eckington, both phase 2 centres, share premises with the MAT, and other community services such as Adult learning. Killamarsh is a phase 3 centre located in Killamarsh Infants school.

The reach area covers Dronfield, the largest of the communities and Eckington and Killamarsh, and includes smaller surrounding villages in the more rural parts of the locality. It is situated close to the border of South Yorkshire, and sits between Sheffield and Chesterfield. Families living across the reach area can access services from all three centres although many identify more strongly with those centres closest to where they live, as public transport is costly and not very frequent. Some outreach provision is located in local village halls and the local libraries. Centre data show that the very large majority of families are from a predominately White British background. There is a very small population of Black and minority ethnic families with approximately 78 children under 5 years of age in this group.

Dronfield is the largest town in the locality with many new transient families moving from other areas who have no roots or family connections. All three localities have a strong coal mining history and the area has suffered significantly as a result of the closure of the coal fields. Some regeneration funding has enabled small light manufacturing to become established and small and medium size businesses now proliferate where mining, steel production and engineering used to thrive. Strong intergenerational family networks particularly in the Eckington area has impacted on the take up of childcare, which has been low, and more targeted work with families has developed as a consequence. Many working families travel to Chesterfield and Sheffield to go to work on a daily basis. Pockets of deprivation vary across the reach area but overall 69% (1497) of children under 5 years of age are 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 13.6% (295) of children under five years living in households dependent on workless benefits. The majority of children enter early years education with skills and knowledge at levels expected for their age.

The centre is managed by the local authority and an advisory group. Two children centre coordinators share the day-to-day running of the three centres. These in turn are managed by the two MAT managers, whose teams are also co-located on the Eckington and Dronfield children's centre sites.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- The local authority should improve leadership, governance and management by providing a clear strategic steer and oversight for the management of the group, particularly regarding performance measures and quality assurance methods and ensure that all staff and stakeholders are fully engaged in this process.
- The group coordinators should establish consistent methods for evaluating the impact of the centres' work by establishing clear measures of success in the business plan for leaders, staff and the advisory board, to gauge how well each centre is improving.
- Board members and coordinators should regularly analyse the feedback from families to ensure that services continue to meet their needs and further priorities can be determined alongside challenging local and county council targets.
- The group coordinators should develop a coherent and consistent system for children's centre workers to track some aspects of health and the developmental progress of children as they engage in activities and in readiness for moving on to early years provision and school.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Coordinators and staff make good use of data and share local information between centre group and partner agencies to ensure that the large majority of target families are registered with the centre group and continue to participate in a wide range of family services and early years activities.
- Children centre workers are highly committed and collectively impart a broad range of skills, knowledge and expertise through their work with families. Each worker holds a case load of intensive outreach work and deliver universal services well. The outreach work is used sensitively and effectively to encourage target parents to access activities at the local centres so that they do not become isolated or stigmatised.
- Family support programmes have good take-up rates and provide good access to a range of services such as new birth visits, early years activities, nurture programmes and post-natal support for parents. These often lead to extended services and further access to specialist health, welfare and educational advice and guidance.
- All children receive two year old assessments at the centres by highly qualified and skilled health visitors. Centre workers often attend home visits with them which ensures that accurate information can swiftly alert multi-agency services to the needs of the most vulnerable and targeted families so that appropriate help is provided.
- The centre group is helping parents of disadvantaged two year-olds to take up their free entitlement to early education. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and their peers is narrowing, and significantly so in Killamarsh.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The quality, range and appropriateness of services offered by the centre are typically good. For example, the post natal group is well attended because it offers parents the chance to socialise as well as receiving good levels of information and advice.
- Nevertheless, the impact of activities for children and families is not routinely measured or tracked to demonstrate how well children are developing and making progress from their starting points. The centre does not therefore have evidence to show that the large majority of children from target groups are making good progress in readiness for school.
- The quality of care, guidance and support provided for families is strong. Families receive good general guidance about children's learning in activities and centre staff point them to good quality early years provision in the area. One-to-one support for families through home visits and specialist work is having a significant impact on their lives. Staff build trusting relationships with families and ensure they can access the correct level of support in a timely manner.
- Assessments of need and case files for outreach work are maintained to a high standard. The recording process that is used is clear and comprehensive. Case tracking demonstrates an effective approach and the quality of recording by children's centre workers is consistently good.
- The use of 'Every Child A Talker' is becoming strongly embedded within the centre's work. It is too soon to see the full impact of this work but early indications show that the effective assessment of children's needs is leading to timely, appropriate interventions which are improving outcomes and reducing inequalities for those children who are most in need.
- The group centre has a strong track record of engaging with fathers and there are effective partnerships with both employment and adult learning services that provide further access to improving skills that lead to qualifications, volunteer programmes or employment for parents. Parents are actively encouraged to take up opportunities to volunteer across the centre and take up is good. Two volunteers have recently taken up positions as chair and vice chair of the advisory group.
- Healthy outcomes require improvement because the proportion of mothers who breast fed their babies for 6-8 weeks is low and obesity levels are not reducing quickly enough. The impact of activities for children and families is not routinely measured.
- The centre group is successful at improving parenting skills and increasing their confidence through a broad range of parenting programmes or specialised self-awareness and confidence training like the 'positively me' sessions and also ante-and post -natal classes such as 'bumps to babies' and 'baby massage' .
- The Dronfield and Killamarsh centres, and to a lesser extent Eckington, are well established and act as a hub for the community. The centres are welcoming, inclusive and foster equality and diversity well. A good balance of universal and targeted services engage these families well and make a significant contribution to their personal development and well-being.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The re-organisation of the three children centres into one group is very recent and arrangements for leadership, governance and management are not yet embedded. However, the two centre coordinators and staff teams are working very hard, supported by the multi-agency team managers and the local authority, to ensure systems and procedures are re-aligned to support the new structure.
- New local authority systems to make sure there are clear priorities, targets and action plans are not fully established. This means the centre group is not able to use these systems confidently to evaluate how well it is doing across all the activities or demonstrate clearly to all stakeholders the full impact that these activities are having on families and the difference this is making to the families and children served by each centre in the group.
- Members of the newly established Advisory Board are representative, supportive and committed. They come from a wide range of local professions, interest groups and parents. It is in the very early stages of development and is not yet in a position to offer the necessary level of challenge and steer to sustain improvement or move the group forward.
- Work with partner agencies is consistently good and particularly so with health, education and social service professionals. This is a key strength of the centres' work.
- The staff regularly seek the views of parents during and following each activity provided by the centre group. Parents speak highly of the services, and often pay tribute to the efforts of the staff team and express their satisfaction with the services being offered. Several parents go on to volunteer. Currently, however, there is no formal way that parents views and ideas are used to influence the design and delivery of services.
- Safeguarding policies and practice are good. Staff are suitably qualified, and receive good levels of training and support to ensure all activities promote safeguarding so that children subject to a child protection plan, looked after children and those in need are well protected
- Resources are managed efficiently and services are appropriately targeted. The new arrangements to work as a group of centres is making sure that staff, services and provision are working more collaboratively to achieve greater consistency and avoid duplication. The shift to more focused outreach work to target the most vulnerable families is improving outcomes for them.

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

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique reference number | 80105 |
| Local authority | Derbyshire |
| Inspection number | 423336 |
| Managed by | The local authority |

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|--|------------------------------|
| Approximate number of children under five in the reach area | 2170 |
| Group manager | Anne Beard |
| Date of previous inspection | Not applicable |
| Telephone number | 01246-296010 |
| Email address | anne.beard@derbyshire.gov.uk |

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- Dronfield Children's centre
- Eckington Children's centre
- Killamarsh Children's centre

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