

Eastleigh Central Children's Centre Group

Chamberlayne Children's Centre, Chamberlayne Road, Eastleigh, SO50 5JL

Inspection date 26–27 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
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 children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Not enough families from the Caterpillar Hill area or teenage parents are accessing services. This is because leaders have not looked closely enough at the full range of information to plan and match services to meeting the needs of these families.
- The centres do not routinely receive or seek information from health partners to help them target services precisely to supporting those families who may benefit the most. For example, the centres do not receive information on all the new births in the area, regular information about immunisation rates or the take up of two-year-old assessment checks.
- Leaders do not always check that staff have thoroughly assessed and recorded the needs of families, the proposed support required and actions they have agreed. This makes it difficult to measure whether their work, including one-to-one support, has made a difference to families' lives.
- Until recently, on-site Jobcentre Plus advisers gave parents valuable help and advice in finding work and further education courses. This on-site service has now ceased and the centre has not yet identified a suitable alternative for giving parents employment advice and guidance.
- Not all parents know how they can be involved in shaping the services offered by the centre or that the parent forum is being re-established.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- Staff develop good relationships with parents and gain their trust. As a result, parents access the support they need, gain confidence and improve their parenting skills.
- An increasing number of families most in need of support are benefiting from high-quality play sessions. These sessions help children, including those with additional needs, to prepare for the next stage in their learning.
- The number of mothers taking up and sustaining breastfeeding has increased significantly as a result of effective breastfeeding support.
- The staff work well as a team and their commitment to the families they support is clear.

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 Chamberlayne Children's Centre, Aviary Children's Centre and Caterpillar Hill Children's Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with representatives from the commissioned provider Action for Children, a senior leader from the local authority, health partners, adult education and Jobcentre Plus partners, early years partners, parents, family outreach workers, other centre staff, volunteers and representatives of the partnership board.

The inspectors visited a range of activities across the two centres, activity sessions at the Valley Park Community Centre and Fleming Park Leisure Centre and visited the Caterpillar Hill Children's Centre. Visits to activities were undertaken with the commissioned provider, who also attended all team meetings.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Wendy Ratcliff	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Janet Rodgers	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steffi Penny	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Eastleigh Central is a group of children's centres located in Eastleigh, Hampshire, run by the charity Action for Children on behalf of the local authority. The group is made up of three centres: Caterpillar Hill, a phase three children's centre, Chamberlayne and Aviary, both phase two children's centre. Action for Children has been responsible for running the children's centre group since April 2012. There has been a significant change in staffing structure since this time. The Children's Services Manager, who oversees the cluster, took up post in August 2012 and one of the centre coordinators took up post in January 2013. A second centre coordinator has recently been appointed. There are three partnership boards, which include key partners. The merger of the Aviary and Caterpillar Hill partnership boards is underway. The children's centre group offers a range of services to meet its core purpose.

Chamberlayne Children's Centre is open each week day from 8.00am to 4.00pm. The centre is on the same site as Norwood Primary School and Chamberlayne Pre School, run by a private provider. Aviary Children's Centre is open on Monday and Thursday from 9.00am to 3.00pm and from 9.00am to 12.00pm on Wednesday and Friday. Families accessing the centre at other times are directed to the Chamberlayne Children's Centre. The centre shares the same site as Nightingale Primary School and the Aviary Nursery, which is run by the local authority and includes provision for children who are disabled or have special educational needs. Caterpillar Children's Centre is open on a Monday from 9.00am to 4.00pm. The centre is based in Chandlers Ford Library. The information point for the centre is open throughout library hours; Monday and Wednesday from 9.00am to 5.00pm; Friday from 9.00am to 7.00pm; Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 9.00am to 4.00pm.

Schools and registered early years providers are subject to separate inspection arrangements. Reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>.

There are 3,914 children under five years living in the centres' reach area. The centres serve a large geographical area, including areas that are in the town of Eastleigh and rural areas where families are at risk of isolation due to poor transport links. Although the area is not identified as deprived overall, there are pockets of deprivation among areas considered to be more affluent. Around 12% of children live in households dependent on workless benefits, but this varies across the reach, reducing to 3% in more affluent areas. Most of the population is White British with smaller percentages of families from minority ethnic groups. Children's skills vary when they start in early years provision but are typically average with weaker aspects in communication and language.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of families the centre reaches by carrying out a detailed analysis of needs to find out why those in the Caterpillar Hill area and teenage parents are not accessing services.
- The local authority and the centre should work with partners, in particular health partners, to improve the range and relevance of data that are available in order to match the services provided to the meeting the needs of the most vulnerable families.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that systems for recording the assessment of families' needs, planning of services and measuring the impact of the centres' work are fully effective.
- Identify and provide suitable advice and guidance to adults about employment and further education and keep a closer check on how well those who do access courses get on.
- Ensure all parents know how they can be involved in shaping services and the governance of the centre.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The centre is not making enough use of the information they have available to find out why some families are not accessing services, particularly from the Caterpillar Hill area, where families are at risk of isolation. However, leaders do know the main trends of the area and have used information about levels of deprivation and local knowledge to review the range of services available. As a result, the number of children and families from most target groups accessing services is increasing.
- Not enough teenage parents are accessing services. The centre is working with midwives to increase the number of young parents accessing services. Where face-to-face contact is made parents, particularly younger and older mothers, say this increases their confidence to attend group activities at the centre.
- Assessment for individual families who require specific help is used sufficiently well to identify need and plan one-to-one support. All staff have received training in the use of Action for Children assessment and recording tools, but these are not yet being implemented by all staff. As a result, it is not always clear how well the needs of families have been identified and whether or not support has helped improve families' lives.
- Centre staff work productively with a wide range of professionals, such as pre-schools, schools, health visitors and social care professionals, to identify and prioritise families in most need of support. They work closely with partners and share appropriate information through the Common Assessment Framework procedures to support families identified as needing specific help, particularly to reduce the risk of harm to children.
- The centre helps families who are eligible to take up their free entitlement to good quality early years places. As a result, almost all of eligible two-year-olds are accessing services. The centre has begun to track the progress of this group of children in order to measure the impact of its work.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The centres are not yet measuring the impact of some of the key work they are doing with children and families. For example, written evaluations for activity sessions do not always draw well enough on data to show the full effect for families and celebrate some of the best work that is being done. Staff are gaining confidence in the use of agreed systems and recording tools in order to help them show more clearly whether or not the universal and bespoke services they provide are helping families to make improvements in their lives.
- A few parents have gained employment in the last six months with the support of Jobcentre Plus advisers or through volunteering at the Chamberlayne centre. The on-site support from Jobcentre Plus advisers has now stopped and, although help is available in local Jobcentres and the local authority is discussing future support, the centre has not identified how they will provide parents with employment advice and guidance at the centre.
- Parents have good opportunities to gain literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) qualifications at the Chamberlayne centre. Adults enjoy their learning and gain confidence and skills that enable them to help their children with homework, write formal letters and read books for pleasure. However, the centre does not collect information from adult learning providers often enough in order to measure the number of adults who gain qualifications as a result of attending a course.
- Staff provide effective one-to-one support for families who need the most help. Staff gain parents' trust through parenting courses and targeted activities in the home. This has resulted in some children moving off child protection plans, families gaining confidence to attend activities held in the centre and others improve their home environment, children's diet and behaviour.
- The centres provide good quality sessions to support children as they prepare for school. In 2012, around 67% of children achieved a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is above both the local authority and national average. The achievement gap is closing and, at 22%, is narrower than seen nationally. The evidence from the Keep on

Talking pilot shows a reduction in the number of children at risk of speech delay. Children's centre support teachers are usefully looking to widen this project to engage more schools and early years settings.

- There is good quality health provision and effective interaction between professionals and families. The arrangements between health visitors, breast feeding support workers and volunteers is working exceptionally well. As a result of support provided, 91% of babies attending breast feeding support services are exclusively breastfed to day 10.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders know that more needs to be done to increase the number of families in most need of support accessing what the centre has to offer. They know the centres' strengths and have set targets to improve, such as increasing the number of teenage parents and families from the Caterpillar Hill area accessing services. They have not yet used all the information available to them to find out why these families are not engaging in greater numbers.
- Centres do not receive information about all the families in the area, such as new births and pregnant teenagers. The local authority is working with health partners to improve the relevance and frequency of the information centres receive.
- Leaders are aware that the impact of the centres' work is not always clear. They are implementing improved systems to assess, plan and monitor the impact of the centres' work. They are supporting staff with the implementation of these systems to ensure they are effective.
- Not all parents know how their views contribute to shaping services. A number of parents are represented on the advisory board and the centre is in the process of re-establishing the parent forum to ensure their views contribute to decision making.
- Comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures are in place to support the centres' work and staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. The lead practitioner routinely audits case files and has identified that recently introduced systems to monitor the effectiveness of one-to-one work with families is not consistent. As a result, it is not always clear from record keeping how needs have been assessed, services planned and progress measured.
- Resources, due to gaps in staffing, have been a challenge in recent months and resulted in the centre having to risk assess and prioritise services. For example, the identified improvements at Caterpillar Hill were delayed. The full staff team is now in place and deployed adequately across the cluster in order to maximise the staff skills to the services on offer, and funding has been secured to increase administrative support for the centres' reception areas.
- The local authority undertakes at least four visits to the centres each year to monitor and measure the effectiveness of their work. It offers additional support visits where these are required and has an accurate understanding of the centres' strengths and where they need to improve.
- The partnership board members are aware of their governance roles and responsibilities and recognise the different centres' strengths and what needs to improve. There are recent examples where members have challenged decisions, such as the reduction in some services, to ensure the needs of families continue to be met.

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	80022
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	423313
Managed by	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3,914
Centre leader	Tina Monaghan
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	02380 626960
Email address	chamberlayne@actionforchildren.org.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 20145 Aviary Children's Centre
- 20622 Caterpillar Hill Children's Centre
- 20620 Chamberlayne Children's Centre

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