

Wapping Children's Centre

15 Chandler Street, Wapping, London, E1W 2QL

Inspection date 1–2 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The number of local families who are registered at the centre is currently at 93%. The centre shows 63% of children (in 69% of families) who most need help access services. However, this figure counts individuals more than once. Therefore, the centre does not engage with a large majority and has no accurate system to identify how many families it is helping.
- The local authority and the centre do not have specific data about some of the different groups in the area and some is not always specific to the reach. Consequently, there is not a clear picture about how many families from particular groups are attending.
- The centre's team plan which sets out their targets, in conjunction with the local authority, is not specific enough to ensure its work is aimed at increasing participation of those who most need help. The measures to assess their success are not specific enough.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of some services provided because performance monitoring is not reliable.
- The centre is not able to fully demonstrate impact on outcomes for children who have attended services provided by the children's centre in relation to their achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- Well-established and mutually supportive partnerships with some schools, health services and other local groups ensure that parents are helped to give their children a healthy lifestyle and a confident start at school which is improving their lives.
- Reducing the risk of harm to children, especially the most in need, permeates through the work of the centre. The strong multi-agency involvement means that individual families who have been identified as needing support receive the help they require.
- Everyone is made to feel very welcome; parents greatly appreciate the lovely playrooms and great indoor and outdoor resources. The centre takes many services out into the community, which help them to be more accessible.
- The one-to-one early help that families receive, often when they have multiple and complex problems, is very 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. It was carried out at the same time as another children's centre which was Ocean Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the community lead and other staff, officers from the local authority, representatives from the health services and several other partners working with the centre. Inspectors met parents and representatives of the Locality Group and parent forum. The inspectors observed the centre's work and visited several activities, including one jointly with the community lead who also attended all team meetings. They looked at the centre's self-evaluation, team plan, a sample of case studies, safeguarding policies and procedures and a range of other relevant documentation.

The inspectors visited play and learning venues in the community.

Inspection team

Susan Crawford	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Christine Davies	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Wapping Children's Centre is led and managed by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It is a phase two centre and opened in 2008. Day-to-day management is the responsibility of the Community Lead who reports directly to the Locality Lead. The centre works closely in partnership with Ocean and John Smith Children's Centres, which are managed together as a locality through the South West Locality Lead. Currently, some team members are seconded or acting-up in their posts. The centre is supported by the South West Locality Stakeholder Group advisory board for the area and the parent forum; parents attend both.

There are approximately 1,884 children under five years of age in the reach area. Children enter early years provision at levels below those expected for their age. The centre serves three wards of varying need, this includes all of St Katherine's and Wapping and part of the wards of Whitechapel and Shadwell which ranks in the 10% most deprived. There are affluent areas in Wapping, particularly those areas closest to the River Thames which is located to the south of the reach area. Housing is mixed, with some rented social housing and privately-owned houses, flats and maisonettes. There are below average workless families against the London average. Families from Bangladeshi origin account for 42% of the population, with the second largest group being White British. The centre has identified its specific targets as children and families emotional well-being, communication and language, increasing parenting courses, increasing the number of people back into work, empowering parents to have a voice, reduction of hospital admissions for unintentional and deliberate injuries and reduction in obesity rates.

There are two main bases, although services are also delivered from 14 other venues. In partnership with other centres and organisations, the centre offers family play and learning, parenting support, information and advice on childcare, education, housing, training and employment and access to maternity and family health services. The Wapping centre is on three floors and contains a private childcare provider. The building is open 50 weeks of the year, Monday to Friday from 8.00am. until 6.00pm.

Ocean Children's Centre was inspected at the same time as this inspection. John Smith Children's Centre was inspected previously. Step by Step Day Nursery is inspected separately. All these reports can be found on the Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Work with the local authority to ensure that data are specific to the reach and relate to the centre's identified target groups, and use this information to adapt services to better meet the needs of those who most need help and build good levels of take-up of services.
- Work with the local authority and other centres in the locality to clearly define targets that are measurable and that relate specifically to the impact of its work with its identified key groups.
- Improve the monitoring and tracking of children over time to show the progress that they are making as a result of the centre's input.
- Improve the consistency and rigour with which centre leaders monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of the centre's work.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Centre activities, such as stay-and-play, are very popular; but, of those who attend, only a small proportion is families in most need of help.
- The local authority's data systems provide some of the information about key target groups, but

there are some gaps in the data for some groups, such as children with disabilities, parents with disabilities, teenage parents, children receiving nursery education funding and children who are vulnerable. Some data are also not specific to the reach area. Information gathered does not always truly reflect the number of vulnerable families who the centre has contact with; however, some information, such as Pathways to Employment, shows the positive impact the centre is having on getting people back into employment.

- Part of the centre's reach area is cut through by a major road, making access inconvenient for some. The centre has developed satellite services to take services out into the community to overcome this barrier. However, not enough work has been done to ascertain why numbers are low from certain parts of the community.
- Regular perinatal, postnatal and child health checks are held at the centre, as well as much appreciated breastfeeding advice, meaning that some expectant mothers and families have good access to early childhood services. Strong partnerships ensure that families who need additional support are referred to the centre.
- The tracking of children's short and long term progress is not effective and does not demonstrate how the centre improves outcomes for children who most need help.
- Effective links are established with some local schools, day care and early years providers by the children's centre teacher and play workers. Stay-and-play sessions are held in local schools which concentrate on preparation for starting school.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Parents speak very highly of the staff and of the support that services give to help their children learn and behave well. One parent's comment is typical of most families' views, saying, 'I can't praise the centre enough. I wish it was open all the time.' While parents' satisfaction is high and services are matched broadly to the areas priorities, the centre does not focus specifically on improving outcomes for families most in need when planning and evaluating services and does not track outcomes rigorously enough to demonstrate the impact for all key groups.
- The impact of the centre's work on improving families' economic well-being and skills is good for families working intensively with the centre in the longer term. The centre accurately assesses training and/or educational needs, although it does not set targets to ensure that the scarce courses locally for English for speakers of other languages and to increase parents' English and numeracy skills make a difference for families most in need. Where there is specific support given, such as from the weekly Housing and Domestic Violence Surgery, this has had a positive impact on families who are referred especially for benefits and housing advice and to ensure they are safe.
- Health outcomes for families are only available borough wide, but most show good results. Local data from the centre's health partners confirm good outcomes, such as very high breastfeeding rates and immunisation levels as a result of accessible health services and the centre's encouragement. Families say that they are helped to give their children a healthy and safe start to life through parenting courses and learning important skills such as paediatric first aid. Case files for families receiving one-to-one support or where other organisations are involved, such as through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process, are comprehensive and maintained to a high standard. Where families have turned to the centre, often where there are major traumas in their lives, they are given high levels of non-judgemental care, guidance and support which have a very positive impact on their lives.
- Parents are supportive of the centre; comments, such as 'everybody knows your name', reflect this. Views from the parents' forum meetings are acted on and passed on by the parent representatives of the locality group, leading to improvements such as the development of the outdoor area at the One o'clock Club. The centre has successfully recruited volunteers in the centre who have taken on various roles and responsibilities, such as supporting drop-ins and fundraising activities and carrying out administrative tasks.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The Locality Group includes a good variety of partners, such as health and social care representatives, with strong representation of parents' views from the parents' forum to help shape the service on offer. Together with the local authority, the board outlines the key priorities for the centre. However, the board presents limited challenge to drive improvement due to lack of detailed evaluation and limited questioning of the effectiveness of support given to the centre's specific priority groups.
- The current targets set in the team plan are not specific enough in relation to the centre's identified key groups and how effective the centre is in supporting them; targets are also not measurable, preventing the centre celebrating their success. The data provided by the local authority to the centre are not specific to the reach and, in some cases, information is missing.
- Day-to-day leadership and management by the community lead are good; staff are experienced and most are well trained, especially in aspects of keeping families safe such as how to support them where there are mental health and/or domestic abuse issues. Safeguarding policies, procedures and practices are in place, the reference to pre-existing injuries is currently being revised. Case studies demonstrate that the centre's involvement has helped to reduce the level of support needed for some highly vulnerable families.
- The building and the resources are of good quality and staff are used well across the two sites and the many satellite sites. The collaborative work of the family support workers and the educational psychologist ensure that children receive expert help to overcome specific concerns.
- Parents are frequently asked to evaluate services and returns show that they have a very high regard for the centre and how it helps their families.

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.

Unique reference number	23446
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	427583
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1884
Centre leader	Pat Wells
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	02073640423
Email address	mo_hammed.jolil@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

(Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

