

Coventry - North West 1

c/o Spon Gate Children Centre, Spon Gate Primary School, Upper Spon Street, Coventry, CV1 3BQ

Inspection date	5–6 November 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 children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The number of families from target groups using the centres is growing but is still not high enough.
- The information the centres get from the local authority on the families in the locality is improving. However, some data are not yet available, and some are not detailed enough to enable the centres to identify target groups with sufficient rigour. There is insufficient analysis of families who do not engage with the group's services.
- Opportunities for parents to improve their education and employability are limited. The centres do not do enough to engage volunteers in their work.
- The tracking systems and procedures used to keep close checks on the impact of the group's work on improving families' lives are not sufficiently thorough and this slows down improvement.
- Partnerships with the range of schools located in the centres' reach area are not as good as they could be and this limits the centre's work in supporting children's transition on to school.
- It is too early for the recent changes to leadership and management to show a sustained positive impact.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- Partnership working with health professionals, schools located on the same site as the centres, early years providers, childminders, portage, community and faith groups are strong.
- Outreach work is very effective in supporting those families who are referred to the centre and identified as in most need of help.
- The policies, procedures and arrangements to keep families and young children safe are good.
- The staff team's enthusiasm and commitment are key to making a difference to children and the families they serve. Parents highly value the care, guidance and support they receive and feel welcomed at the centres.
- The on-site early years provision at Radford children's centre is of high quality. All the children attending the provision are from target groups and 88% of children attending the provision have a support package in place.

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 Radford Children's Centre, Spon Gate Children's Centre and St Augustine's 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 Children and Families First service managers and data officers from the local authority, the children's centre group manager, team leaders, partnership co-ordinators, centre workers, sessional care manager, health and education professionals, partner agencies, early years practitioners, and representatives from the advisory boards. They also spoke to partner agencies and parents, and looked at outcomes of satisfaction surveys.

The inspectors observed the centres' work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centres' self-evaluation, delivery plan, a sample of case studies, safeguarding procedures and children's development records.

The inspectors visited Radford Children's Centre, Spon Gate Children's Centre and St Augustine's Children's Centre. Visits to activities were undertaken jointly with the centre manager, who also attended all team meetings.

Inspection team

Joy Law	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Susan Crawford	Her Majesty's Inspector
Anne Ashbourne	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Coventry North West 1 is a group of children's centres in Coventry managed by the local authority. The children's centre group (cluster) is made up of three main centres: Radford, a phase one children's centre; St Augustine's and Spon Gate, both phase two centres. The centres serve communities with high levels of deprivation. The centres became established as a group in September 2012 following local authority restructure and integration of services.

There are two advisory boards, one linked to Spon Gate children's centre, and the second linked to Radford and St, Augustine's children's centres, which include key partners and parents. The group offers a range of services to meet its core purpose, including family support, adult learning and health services. In addition to the centres, services are also delivered directly in the community, where parents are able to access them easily. Outreach work within family's homes is a key feature of the centres' work.

The centres are open each week day from 8.30am to 6.00pm, for 52 weeks of the year. Radford Children's Centre is located on the site of Radford Primary School. The centre offers sessional day care. St Augustine's Children's Centre is located on the site of St Augustine's Primary School. Spon Gate Children's Centre is located on the site of Spon Gate Primary School. Within the cluster there are 11 early years nurseries, nine pre-schools and 73 childminders. These providers are subject to different inspection arrangements. Reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>.

There are 4,049 children under five years of age living in the area the centres serve. Geographically the cluster is very diverse with a large area of rural land that falls within the city's boundary, it also encompasses some of the highest density housing which lies just outside the city centre. There is a wide range of housing types and styles including high-rise flats, Victorian redbrick terraced houses, post-war town housing and large detached rural properties.

Within the reach area there are 11.8% of adults with dependent children aged under five years who are not in employment, 8% (2,205) are lone parent households with dependent children, and over a third of which are female lone parents not in employment. Twenty per cent of children (2,125) live in low-income households. Teenage pregnancy is a city-wide issue with persistently high numbers: 20% (193) teenage parents are currently registered with one of the three centres in the cluster.

The majority of the North West 1 group population is White British (72%), with the other main minority ethnic groups being Other White (5%), Indian (5%), Pakistani (3%), and Black African (3%).

The levels at which children enter early years provision varies across the area with communication and language being the weakest aspect.

The centres' target groups are lone parents, teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers, children in Black and minority ethnic groups, children living in workless households, disabled children and children of disabled parents.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of families from target groups accessing children's centre services.
- Improve the use of data to ensure services are accurately matched to needs by:
 - the local authority making available accurate, relevant and up-to-date data, including health data, to enable the centres to identify target groups
 - leaders increasing the robustness of their analysis of data in order to identify families who do not engage with the group's services.
- Review the provision made for adult's further learning to ensure that they have increased opportunities to improve their education and employability, including opportunities to engage in volunteer work.
- Enhance and embed new systems and procedures to keep a close and effective check on the impact of the centres' work on the most vulnerable children and families, particularly regarding adults and children's learning.
- Improve partnerships with the schools located in the reach area that are not yet engaging with the centres.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Not all families who need it have access to the centres' work. The change in the local authority's focus for centres to deliver targeted services means that the group is currently reaching only 52% of local families. All families referred to the centre for support are from target groups. The centres successfully signpost families to universal services.
- The centres are welcoming and inclusive. Staff are sensitive to the differing circumstances of parents' and children's lives and take positive steps to break down any barriers. All three centres are of a high quality, very well resourced with equipment and maintained well. However, not all available space is used as well as it could be as much of the centres' work is outreach work in families' homes.
- The centres do not have accurate information on how many vulnerable two-year-olds live in their reach areas. However, through effective partnership working with local nurseries and health professionals the centres identify families who have young children who may be eligible to access two-year-old funding and encourage them to access their free entitlement. The centres' on-site high-quality early years provision is used exceptionally well to support children and families identified to be most in need of support.
- Until very recently the cluster was not aware of what the uptake of free entitlement to early education for three- and four-year-olds was. Data show there are 88% of children using their free entitlement. The centres are not doing as much as they could to ensure that more children take advantage of the funding which can help them to be ready to move on to school.
- Regular antenatal, postnatal and child health checks are held at the centres, as well as much-appreciated breastfeeding advice. Consequently, those expectant mothers and families identified have good access to early childhood services.
- Strong partnerships with health, early years providers, childminders, portage, community and faith groups means that target groups are identified early and supported appropriately.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Parents do not have enough opportunities to access sessions at the centres to help them gain qualifications that lead to employment. Parents expressed concern about using less accessible venues such as further education colleges rather than learning at the centres where they feel safe and comfortable. Opportunities for parents to volunteer at the centres are limited.
- Leaders have little involvement in the commissioning of adult courses and do not have a strategic

view of adult education to benefit the parents and the work of the centre. Adult Education partners see the centres' contribution as providing a venue. Nevertheless, some parents access good quality training such as English, mathematics, family learning and English for Speakers of Other Languages. However, there are limited progression routes available for parents and the centres are unable to confirm how many parents have achieved qualifications or moved onto employment due to a lack of information sharing between partners or tracking of adults' achievements.

- Staff use their knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage to plan suitable opportunities for children who attend the centres' early years sessions. In 'Family First and Baby First' sessions, children enjoy learning alongside their parents and a good focus is placed upon improving children's language and communication skills and reducing inequalities. Although staff seek parents' feedback, they do not have a full picture of the impact of these groups as they do not track the all-around progress children make.
- Information on the levels children achieve at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage show that most schools perform below the national average with the exception of those attending St Augustine's Primary School. However, evidence over time shows that the gap between the lowest achieving children and their peers is narrowing.
- Staff work well with health visitors, the speech and language team and other health professionals to support families who are in most need. 'Wellcomm screening' takes place across all local nurseries and through a dedicated team of workers who implement the 'Families Talk Now' project. This provides early intervention to support children who may have speech and language delay and helps parents develop their children's language skills.
- The level of care, guidance and support offered to target families is of a high standard. Partnership working with the 'Children and Families First Team', health, early years providers and other partners is effective to ensure information is shared and personal packages of support are provided to meet the individual needs of children and their families. Parents talked positively about how staff have helped them in times of need, how theirs and their own children's lives have improved as a result. Comments such as 'I don't know where I would be without it (the centre)', 'staff are fantastic', and 'it's like a family here', are a sample of what they told us.
- Health outcomes data for families are only available city wide and are often out of date. Therefore, it is difficult for the centre to target those who most need their help successfully. Families using the group's services feel 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.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority has a clear strategy in place to improve the lives of children living in Coventry and sees children's centres as an integral part of the delivery and success at local level, particularly for the target groups. Performance measures and challenge by the local authority have been less rigorous since the group was established allowing for staff and systems to become embedded. However, plans are in place to set challenging targets and performance measures in going forward. The group provides good outreach support and a varied range of services at the centres or through signposting to partner organisations.
- Leadership and management arrangements are becoming more settled following the local authority restructure and integration of services. Leaders and staff strive to provide the best services and activities to improve the outcomes for those families in need of support and know where centre strengths lie and what needs to improve. However, the development plan does not identify the impact measures that relate to the targeted families sufficiently well. It does not provide sufficient focus on key areas to improve.
- The lack of robust tracking, monitoring and evaluation, and access to accurate and reliable data mean that the centres are unable to measure accurately all access to services or capture the work that is done with external partners to identify whether the desired outcomes expected for parents and children are being achieved.
- Safeguarding and the welfare of children are at the forefront of the work of the centres. Improved

partnership working between the Children and Families First team, social services and the centres, combined with new systems and procedures, enable greater consistency and clarity to ensure those children subject to child protection plans, looked after children and those in need, are well supported in order to reduce and prevent further harm. Almost all families accessing the centres' services fall within the target group categories. However, there are still too many families not yet known to the centre or accessing the centres services.

- Governance, leadership and management arrangements are becoming embedded. The partnership advisory board has good representation from partner agencies, such as on-site headteachers, church groups, library and parents. However, some key partners, such as health and Jobcentre Plus are not represented. Partnership advisory board members meet frequently and have a good understanding of local needs and provide adequate support and increasing challenge to the centre and local authority.
- Staff are well qualified and well supported in their continuous professional development to ensure they have the necessary skills to deliver sessions such as nurturing and parenting programmes. Performance management and professional supervision are well established and consistently applied across all centres. Case files are closely monitored and maintained to a good standard.
- Leaders and staff contribute to self-evaluation and improvement planning. Children, parents and partners views are also taken into account when reviewing and planning services. Six monthly developmental surveys take place and the centres' next steps are to undertake user surveys to evidence the impact of the centres' work on children and families. Parents feel they are listened to and valued.

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/Children's Centre Group details

Unique reference number	80321
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	424745
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	4,049
Centre leader	Jane Mousley
Date of previous inspection	
Telephone number	0247 678 8444
Email address	jane.mousley@coventry.gov.uk;

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- URN 22454, Radford Children's Centre
- URN 22812, Spon Gate Children's Centre
- URN 22835, St Augustine's Children's Centre

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