

Bude and Launceston Children's Centre

Coronation Park, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 9DQ

Inspection date

13–15 November 2013

| Overall effectiveness | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| | Previous inspection: | | |
| 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 centre is not identifying systematically all of the vulnerable families who live in its reach area and it is not making sure that the large majority of families from target groups, including workless families, use its services.
- Apart from in early years settings, outreach work is at an early stage of development and is not yet reaching all the families most in need of support across the large rural area.
- Many of the centre's health-specific targets are not met because of the low proportion of vulnerable families taking up services.
- Leaders and managers are not setting precise improvement targets and this impedes their evaluation of the impact of the centre's work on improving the outcomes for families, and particularly those most in need of support.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- The children's centre is well regarded in the community and many young children and families, although not necessarily the most in need, access the services it provides. The centre is beginning to target some of its services at vulnerable children and families, for example in providing parenting courses for young parents.
- Outreach support for providers of early years education is especially effective and efficient in reaching more of the community. As a result, the gap in achievement for the lowest achieving children is closing, although achievement remains below that seen nationally.
- Safeguarding is given high priority. Family support workers provide good support for individual families living in the reach area to help them overcome personal challenges in their lives.
- The centre provides a variety of good quality services that are improving the health and safety of the young children and their families who access them.
- Good strategic leadership by the local authority is helping to establish effective systems for checking more rigorously on the centre's performance.

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 other children's centres which were Bodmin Children's Centre and Wadebridge and Camelford Children's Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with representatives from the local authority, the locality manager, the children's centre manager, members of the advisory board, staff, parents, volunteers and partners such as health and social care teams, early years partners and advisers from Jobcentre Plus and Citizens Advice Bureau.

The inspectors visited a local pre-school play group and child care providers, play sessions both in the Bude and Launceston centres, an antenatal clinic in the St Stephen's centre, a breastfeeding support group, and parenting programmes for young parents.

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

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Sue Frater | Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector |
| Jane Burchall | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Penny Mathers | Additional Inspector |
| Georgie Beasley | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about the centre

Bude and Launceston Children's Centres were recently merged to form one centre. They are part of a collaboration with Bodmin Children's Centre and Wadebridge and Camelford Children's Centre. The centres were reorganised in April 2012 and are under the strategic direction of the local authority. The local authority has divided the county into six localities. The three children's centres within the collaboration are in 'Locality Five'. The centre managers are line managed by the locality manager who, in turn, is line managed by the senior locality manager for the county. Each centre is supported by its own advisory board. The centres share some services, for instance family support which is managed by the local authority's Early Help coordinator. The local authority provides each children's centre with a qualified teacher to support early years settings within the community. Services such as support for victims of domestic violence are commissioned by the local authority across Cornwall.

Bude and Launceston Children's Centre covers an area of 195 square miles, including the two key towns of Bude and Launceston and 51 outlying villages. Services are delivered through a hub and spoke model, with the centre in Launceston being the hub and centres in Bude and the St Stephen's area of Launceston being the spokes. There are 2,089 children under five years of age within the area the centre serves. A very small minority of these young children are living in the lowest 30% most deprived communities on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. About a fifth of the young children are in families who claim out of work benefits. The population is mainly White British, with an increasing number of Eastern European families living in the Launceston area.

The children's centre provides support for children's health, safety and early years education, as well as support for their families. The children's attainment on entry to school is below age-related expectations. The centre in Launceston is co-located with a team of midwives, health visitors and child and adolescent mental health services.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve access and services by working together with partners to engage the large majority of vulnerable children and families in the centre's services, by:
 - identifying all vulnerable children and families across the reach area
 - assessing their needs and reviewing their needs regularly
 - making suitable provision to meet their needs and adapting provision as needs change, for example for the increasing number of workless families
 - providing more outreach activities to engage the very large majority of vulnerable families in the centre's services.
- Improve health-related outcomes, including increasing sustained breastfeeding rates, reducing the numbers of mothers smoking during pregnancy and reducing the level of childhood obesity, by encouraging more of the families most in need to use the good quality services on offer.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - setting precise targets that lead to specific improvements in the outcomes for vulnerable children and families
 - involving leaders, managers and the advisory board in evaluating rigorously the impact of the services on meeting the targets and improving families' well-being.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The centre is successful in engaging many young children and families in its services. However, it has not identified systematically all of the vulnerable young children and their families across the

reach area to make sure that the large majority of them access the support they need.

- As partners are co-located, the centre is well placed to identify vulnerable children and the specific needs of their families as, increasingly, it is sharing information and data with midwives, health visitors and early years settings. This is better established where the services are co-located in the centre in Launceston than in Bude, but is not yet systematic enough to ensure that all vulnerable young children are identified and supported.
- Alongside the universal services that are offered to all families, there are parenting courses for targeted groups of young and lone parents, those who speak English as an additional language, and parents whose children have additional needs. All sessions are, however, centre-based in Bude or Launceston, and not easily accessible to families in rural areas.
- Outreach consists of effective support for individual families by the family support work team and for early years settings. As fewer young children attend early years settings than in other localities in the local authority, the centre cannot be certain that it is reaching all vulnerable young children.
- The centre manager draws on a wide range of assessments, made by staff and partners, to match services suitably to the needs of families who access them, including specialist services. Non-attendance at courses or consultations is followed up appropriately and, where possible, services are adjusted to better meet the specific needs of the family.
- An increasing number of eligible families with two-year-old children take up their free entitlement to early education. There is no available data to indicate how well this compares with the total number of eligible families in the reach area. Assessment at age two years is carried out in early years settings or by health visitors. It identifies which of these children are most in need of early intervention. The centre is working well with families and other agencies to enable most of the children identified through this process to access the help they need.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The quality of practice and services is good. However, the data show that not all services are improving outcomes and reducing inequalities. This is because the services are not being accessed by the majority of vulnerable children and their families.
- Many parents volunteer to help run services, for example as breastfeeding peer supporters, and this often leads to further family learning or training. The centre is successful in helping identified parents to access family learning, further training and employment, especially in childcare. It does not yet have a strategy for widening the opportunities for training and employment to engage the increasing number of workless families.
- Many of the centre's health-specific targets are not met, in spite of there being good provision to address them. Over a three-year trend, the proportion of obese or overweight children and the proportion of mothers known to be smoking during pregnancy have all increased, and levels of breastfeeding have decreased.
- Inequalities in education are being reduced because outreach work enables the children's centre teacher to support all early years settings. As a result, providers are improving their use of observation and assessment to inform the planning of activities. Activities are increasingly meeting the individual needs of the children, although not all children attend early years settings.
- Learning journey records show that the vulnerable children who do attend early years settings are making good progress from their starting points in their personal, social and emotional development, physical development and communication and language skills. While their achievement is below age-related expectations when they start school, the gap in their achievement is closing rapidly.
- The centre manager draws on a wide range of assessments by staff and partners to match services suitably to the needs of families who access them, including specialist services. Non-attendance at courses or consultations is followed up appropriately and, where possible, services are adjusted to better meet the specific needs of the family.
- Some of the parents from target groups, such as young parents, attend parenting courses, for instance Young Mums Will Achieve, that enhance their parenting skills well. The centre's information

clearly shows the positive impact of the courses on improving family life.

- Almost all of the adults who are supported by the centre develop a good understanding of their responsibilities for their children's well-being and how to ensure the safety of their families. Early help and targeted intervention provided by the family support team, and supplemented by other professionals as necessary, are particularly effective in helping some vulnerable families to ensure young children are safe and healthy.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority is providing clear direction for, and raising the expectations of, the children's centre through a county-wide coordinated early help strategy. However, it is not setting precise enough targets to drive improvement more quickly. For example, the centre has not been set a measurable target by which to increase the proportion of vulnerable families using its services.
- Annual monitoring and evaluation by the local authority's school improvement service are helping the centre to rightly focus its action planning on areas of underperformance, such as health-specific priorities. However, the centre is not monitoring and evaluating the impact of its work on all target groups regularly enough. This limits its ability to respond more flexibly to the changing needs of families in the community, for example by supporting the increasing number of workless families into employment.
- The local authority is providing suitable training for the advisory board to enable it to hold the centre to account for its performance in reducing inequalities for the most vulnerable children and families. To support this process, the local authority has appointed a chair of the board who is a local headteacher with expertise in monitoring and evaluating information and data.
- The centre manager provides clear direction for her staff through performance management and regular supervision. The new systems and procedures, which are consistent across the locality, have yet to be linked more clearly to measurable targets and outcomes for vulnerable children and families in the reach area.
- Parents and children are consulted regularly about how well the provision meets their needs. The use of the feedback to inform action planning is at an early stage. Most of the parents consulted are satisfied with the service. No complaints and many compliments have been received.
- Robust policies and procedures for safeguarding ensure that the safeguarding and well-being of children, which includes their readiness for school, remain at the forefront of the centre's purpose. Case studies demonstrate that the centre works effectively with parents and carers to reduce the risk of harm to children, including those subject to a child protection plan or who are looked after. All the required safer recruitment checks on staff and volunteers are carried out and recorded well. The safeguarding policy/guidance for Cornwall Children's Centres and staff training are up to date.
- Financial resources are appropriately managed across the locality by the locality manager, who is increasingly targeting the resources to improve outcomes for those in most need.

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. |

Select details

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Unique reference number | 21750 |
| Local authority | Cornwall |
| Inspection number | 427534 |
| Managed by | The local authority |
| | |
| Approximate number of children under five in the reach area | 2,089 |
| Centre manager | Michelle Measey |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01566 770823 |
| Email address | mmeasey@cornwall.gov.uk |

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