

# Kingston upon Thames – Surbiton & Tolworth children's centre group

Alpha Road, Surbiton, Surrey, KT5 8RS

**Inspection date** 14–15 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This children's centre group is good.

- Parents and carers highly value the services and groups on offer. Parents typically describe staff as 'like an extended family', and that when it is needed, 'there is always someone to pick you up.'
- The good range of universal and targeted services successfully attracts families and contributes well to their personal development.
- A strong emphasis on multi-agency working provides excellent value for money.
- There are effective and mutually beneficial working arrangements with other agencies, in particular health and the two adjacent schools. As a result, the needs of families are swiftly identified and met well.
- Staff use the high quality, well-resourced and inviting outdoor play areas effectively to promote the benefits of outdoor play to children's health, development and well-being.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Managers' data analysis and use of data do not fully inform staff and service users of the impact of the centres' work.
- Systems to track progress and measure how the group is making a difference to children and families' lives are not yet well established across all aspects of the group's work.
- Some agencies are not providing information to enable the centre to engage with families at the earliest opportunity.

### 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

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with local authority managers, representatives from the advisory board, parents, centre staff, health visitors and midwives and representatives from a range of partner agencies.

The inspectors visited a range of services and activity sessions held at the two centres and spoke with the users of services.

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

### Inspection team

Sue Smith	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Jon Bowman	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sarah McDermott	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

In September 2013, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames realigned its children's centres into four locality areas and management transferred to the local authority. Previous to this, the centres were managed by the headteacher of the local primary school and the head teacher of the maintained nursery school. In addition, the London Borough of Richmond and the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames are working in partnership to offer services, including children's centres, within the two boroughs.

Surbiton and Tolworth is a group of children's centres in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The group is made up of two centres: Surbiton, a phase two children's centre, and Tolworth, a phase three centre. Both centres are run by the local authority. The group manager is based at Surbiton. Tolworth has its own centre manager who is responsible to the group manager. Health visitors are based at Surbiton. The community midwifery team work at each centre. The area family support team are managed separately within the local authority. Surbiton Children's Centre work very closely with Surbiton Children's Centre Nursery; this is a local authority maintained setting. Tolworth Children's Centre is on the same site and works very closely with Tolworth Infant and Nursery School.

The group has an advisory board which oversees both centres. The group offers a range of services to meet its core purpose. These include: post-natal appointments; play and learning; family support and adult and family learning opportunities.

There are 3154 children under five years of age living in the area the centres serve. It is a densely populated area with pockets of deprivation. There are around 2% of households with dependent children in receipt of workless benefits.

Around 32% of families living in the locality are from Black and Minority Ethnic communities. Around a third of the population in the area have English as an additional language. An increasing number of Eastern European families are using the centres. Children enter early years provision with level of skills, knowledge and ability typical for their age.

### What does the centre/group need to do to improve further?

- The local authority should ensure:
  - up-to-date information about live births in the area is supplied to the group manager
  - information on families moving into social housing with children under five years is shared with the centre manager
  - the named social worker informs the centre manager immediately when children become in receipt of statutory social services.
- The centre manager should work with the local authority to:
  - determine the most important data that are needed to assist further the continued drive for improvement so that the impact of the group's work can be better measured
  - expand the tracking systems in place across all aspects of the centres' work with children and adults.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The large majority of children and their families in the area engage well with the centres, including those from vulnerable and target groups such as those subject to child protection plans. The number of children who are most vulnerable being supported by the centres is increasing. Many families achieve good outcomes through their long-term involvement with the centres.
- Those families who experience problems are swiftly identified by health visitors and midwives. They share information routinely with children centre staff. This leads to the timely offer of help and support for children and families at the early onset of difficulties.
- Access for parents and carers to courses that help them develop the skills and knowledge that they need to gain employment and support their children's development is promoted well through crèche provision. This provides them with easy access to the good learning opportunities that are available.
- Good knowledge of the local community and feedback from families are used well to plan services and adapt the programme to better meet local needs. For example, the 'Early Birds' sessions have been developed to ensure that families with children who may have autism routinely access support.
- Almost all families eligible for free funding for three- and four-year-old children take up the offer, while the vast majority of eligible two-year-olds take up entitlement to free early education.

### The quality of practice and services

Good

- Family support workers, centre and school staff provide good support for those on child protection plans, children in need and those receiving help through the common assessment framework. Staff provide effective oversight of the welfare and safety of children, including when they first experience difficulties. Support reflects the wide range of needs that are evident and includes practical help, advocacy and access to specialist services.
- Adults receive good support that enhances their employability skills and builds their confidence and skills well. There are a good range of good quality learning opportunities that are closely matched to the needs of parents and carers, such as those for whom English is an additional language.
- There are reasonable opportunities for adults to take on volunteer roles in each centre. This helps individuals develop their experience and skills well. However, there is not a cohesive approach across centres to recruit, train and support volunteers in their role.
- Evidence collected throughout the inspection indicates the positive impact of services for families engaged with the group's services. However, systems have not been systematically introduced to effectively monitor all areas of the group's work, including tracking children's and adults' progress over time to measure the longer term impact of the group's work.
- Local authority data show that breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates, immunisation levels and the proportion of children entering school at a healthy weight exceed those nationally.
- Parents receive good support to help them improve their parenting skills through programmes which are tailored to meet individual needs. Parents gain increased confidence and develop effective strategies to help their children.
- The children's centre makes a good impact on children's early years learning. Children learn to be independent, grow in confidence and have a go at doing things for themselves. Targeted help with needy children is particularly successful in teaching them how to get on with each other, eat healthily and help to look after their surroundings.
- The resourcing of the outdoor play areas has been carefully considered and is successfully offering a safe and exciting environment for children to explore, use their imagination, communicate with each other, take risks and be outside in all weathers. As a result children and their parents have fun and parents feel confident in supporting their children's development.

**The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

Good

- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Suitable recruitment and selection procedures of staff are in place. Good liaison between health and children's centre staff enhances the vigilant approach to safeguarding children at centres. Inspectors observed safe practice at both centres.
- The formal system of sharing information about the most vulnerable children between children's social care services and the group is too infrequent. The tenacious centre managers ensure that they receive the information through informal means. As a result, families receive support from children's centres when they need it.
- There are good examples of parents' views shaping service delivery and design. Frequent consultation with parents shows high levels of satisfaction with services and parents are enthusiastic advocates of the centres. The group has recently introduced a parents' forum at each centre to give further opportunities for parents to express their views and become even more involved in decision making.
- Lines of accountability are clearly defined and understood. The local authority and senior management team have worked closely together during the transition to a children's centre group. The advisory boards for the two centres have merged and there is growing representation from a range of partners and users.
- Data are used reasonably well to inform judgements on the performance of centres. The quality of local authority data available to help the group to understand the needs of the area and their priority groups continues to improve. However, data on live births and when families with children under the age five move into social housing within the reach area are not yet available to the group.
- Action plans focus well on the key areas for improvement. However, targets and success measures are not always sufficiently precise to inform managers and the advisory board whether the centres are meeting the targets. More recent planning is of better quality and focuses well on the priorities for the locality such as improving the tracking of the progress of work with families.
- The children centres' tracking shows that they give children a good start as they move on to Nursery and Reception classes. Currently the centres only track a core group of children to a few nursery and infant schools, but they are working towards expanding this to a bigger sample. In particular, they are building up useful baseline data on two-year-olds who are eligible for free education so they can track their progress accurately as they grow up.
- Effective partnerships ensure that best use is made of available resources. The enthusiastic and loyal staff team are highly positive about their work and work very hard, often going the extra mile, to maintain a very high quality service delivery despite going through a period of transition and efficiency cuts. The local authority shows ongoing commitment to the existing children's centres.
- Users state that the premises are child- and family-friendly, inviting and welcoming. Some expressed the view that they find Tolworth friendlier than Surbiton. The centre manager is quite rightly monitoring the attendance at the popular 'stay and play' session at the Surbiton centre to ensure that the high attendance numbers do not impact on the safety of users. A good range of information is available and notices are displayed to further promote the safety and welfare of users.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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 details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80650
<b>Local authority</b>	The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
<b>Inspection number</b>	434489
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	3154
<b>Centre leader</b>	Teresa Wildash
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	02085476285
<b>Email address</b>	teresa.wildash@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

**This group consists of the following children's centres:**

- Surbiton Children's Centre
- Tolworth Children's centre

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