

Leicestershire - North West Leicestershire

3 High Street, Coalville, LE67 3EA

Inspection date

4–6 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	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:

- Leaders, the local authority and North West District Council share a strong commitment to improving the lives of families with children aged 0-19 years living in the locality area. As a result of effective planning based on the effective use of information, the centre is improving strongly.
- The well-qualified and highly committed staff team and all of key professionals work very well together to provide a good service to children and families, particularly those most in need.
- The locality provides good care, guidance and support to all parents, particularly those who are most vulnerable. This is achieved through effective one-to-one support, parenting programmes, and opportunities for parents to gain necessary skills and knowledge. This builds self-confidence and has resulted in parents' greater resilience and support to their children.
- Safeguarding and the welfare of children are at the forefront of the work of the centres. Partnership working with children's social care professionals is highly effective and as a result all vulnerable children receive excellent support.

It is not outstanding because:

- The number of families who engage in children's centre activities across the locality is high at 87%. This is improving year on year. However there are pockets where this level of sustained contact is lower, particularly around the area served by Moira and Warren Hill Children's Centre. Current systems for monitoring the centre's performance do not focus sufficiently on identifying those families who do not currently access services in order to plan how to overcome remaining barriers.
- The progress children and adults make when they attend some children's centre activities is not recorded sufficiently well. Planning and delivery of activities for children do not always take sufficient account of how best to support parents in developing their understanding of the purpose of an activity to enable them to know if their child has achieved or is progressing. The good system in place to monitor and evaluate all of the centre groups' quality does not cover all services.

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. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are:

Ashby Sure Start Children's Centre, Coalville Sure Start Children's Centre, Ibstock Sure Start Children's Centre, Measham Sure Start Children's Centre, Moira Sure Start Children's Centre, Northern Parishes Sure Start Children's Centre, Thringstone Sure Start Children's Centre and Warren Hills Sure Start Children's Centre

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

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre locality manager, the locality partnership co-ordinator; senior leaders and managers in the local authority at borough and county level; health, education and early help partners; parents; family outreach workers; early years practitioners; schools; volunteers; representatives from commissioned services; and the chair and representatives of the locality partnership group.

The inspectors visited the eight centres, Warren Hill Primary School and Homestart offices.

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

Inspection team

Susan Crawford, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Cliff Rose	Her Majesty's Inspector
Debbie Sanders	Additional inspector
Nicola Edwards	Additional inspector
Geoff Dorrity	Additional inspector
Pippa Wainwright	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Services for children and families in North West Leicestershire are delivered in eight locality areas. The North West Leicestershire locality children's centres service is managed directly by the local authority at both county and borough level. The locality partnership board, comprising key partners, assists in its governance.

There are eight children's centres in the locality that are managed by the children's centre coordinator. The North West Leicestershire locality covers the wards of Appleby, Ashby Castle, Ashby Holywell, Ashby Ivanhoe, Bardon, Breedon, Castle Donington, Coalville, Greenhill, Hugglescote, Ibstock & Heather, Kegworth & Whatton, Measham, Moira, Oakthorpe & Donisthorpe, Ravenstone & Packington, Snibston, Thringstone, Valley, Whitwick. The group has been established since 2008 with one phase 1 centre and seven phase 2 centres. Services are shared across all of the children's centres and the centres are open five days each week.

There are approximately 5,477 children under five years of age living in the locality area. Data demonstrates that the population is mainly White British with a small eastern European community who are a target group within the children's centre locality. Whilst levels of deprivation are low some areas experience higher levels than others especially in Warren Hills, the phase 1 centre. Just over 760 children live in income deprived areas and over 2,110 children live in rural areas. Low numbers of children under five years of age are living in families that are claiming benefits. Levels of obesity among children are high in some areas. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to school are at the levels expected for their age in most areas with the exception of Warren Hills where levels are considerably lower than expected for their age.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality and impact of all provision for children and adults by:
 - embedding systems to monitor all services and track the progress children make from when they start attending
 - supporting volunteers and commissioned services to better understand the links between group activities and child's development so that they are confident to support parents with their child's on-going learning
 - routinely gaining information from adult learning services about learners to enable the locality to track individuals progress into further learning and employment.
- Increase further the number of families living in the Warren Hills and Moira area who do not access services by ensuring that monitoring and review focus on those families who are not currently attending in order to overcome remaining barriers

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The group of children's centres in the North West locality have a good understanding of the needs of the families that live in their district. This is informed by the centre's own activities, an accurate analysis of the good data provided by the local authority and effective partnerships with most other local agencies. As a result, the large majority of families in the district are known to the centre.
- The locality has been successful in ensuring that most local vulnerable families who are registered are regularly involved in centre activities, including fathers and those who may be suffering from domestic abuse. However, regular contact rates with the families most in need around Warren Hill and Moira Children's Centre are lower. While this has been identified through effective monitoring, there has been less of a focus on looking at who is not accessing services in order to inform on-going work to engage them.
- The prospective parent form is completed by midwives with pregnant mothers. This has been effective in securing early identification of any difficulties families might be experiencing. Where the need for support from other agencies is identified, a referral is made. Other prospective parents who may need additional support are referred to 'Baby Beginnings' which is accredited and provides advice and guidance on all aspects concerning preparing for parenthood. Since September 2013, 252 forms have been completed of which all families received some kind of contact with the locality. This process ensures those who most need help gain it at the earliest opportunity before their baby is born.
- The centre works well with early years settings, including childminders. This aids the smooth transition of children as they move into pre-school and nursery settings. The quality of early years provision is very good with almost all achieving a good or better outcome at their inspection. Almost all families who are eligible take up their entitlement to free early education places for their two-year-old children. However, the take-up for three-year-olds is not as good.
- The centres are particularly successful with their parenting programmes where a very large majority of parents complete the course such as 'Parent Involved in Children's Learning' commonly known as 'PICL' this is a rolling programme which helps parents to understand how their child learns so that they can continue this at home.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- A wide range of good-quality activities are delivered by the children's centre team. The location and content of these activities are constantly reviewed in response to the centre's growing understanding of the needs of the local community, as well as feedback from parents. Parents say that they are able to flourish because they are given the confidence to take advantage of opportunities that have improved not only their lives, but the lives of their children.
- Where children attend school or registered early year's provision, the majority make good progress in their learning. In all areas of the locality the achievement gap is closing. The progress of children is recorded less well where they attend children's centre activities, such as 'stay and play sessions'. This is because volunteers and some staff do not always use knowledge of child development when planning and delivering these sessions. As a result, parents do not always gain a clear understanding of the links between the aims of group activities and their own child's development.

- Clear health priorities have been identified at a strategic level in the children's centre area where they are most needed and there is a clear focus on these within sessions. For example smoking cessation is delivered in Warren Hills children's centre as part of 'Baby Beginnings', universal ante-natal sessions and at Coalville children's Centre as part of 'Baby and You' programme. The impact is then measured at the end of the programme through the learning evaluations completed by parents and most parents stated they had improved awareness, and had more knowledge of the impact of smoking whilst pregnant.
- Effective relationships with family learning has ensured that a growing number of parents access and complete a good range of adult learning opportunities. The centres can give examples of how this has improved parents' confidence and employability skills. Volunteering opportunities are very good and have led in a few cases to employment. However, a lack of consistent tracking prevents the locality showing the longer term impact for families, particularly those from workless households and lone parents.
- Parents using the centres feel they are listened to, supported and welcomed. All parents and carers spoken to were very positive about how the work of the centres is making a positive difference for them and their children. For example, one parent stated that, 'It makes you step back and take a proper look at what your child is doing. I suddenly realised she was learning'. A father said that he wanted to volunteer to help the centre because he felt that he wanted to give something back.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The local authority has a clear strategy in place to improve the lives of families living in North West Leicestershire and sees children's centres as an integral part of their strategy's early help delivery and success at a local level. Service delivery across the locality is strengthened further due to the strong partnership working with commissioned services and key agencies. This, combined with the close monitoring of performance against set targets and a clear procedure established for working together, has secured real and sustained improvements for a large majority of families and represents an efficient use of resources.
- The high quality of the data and information provided by the local authority ensures that targets are accurate and ambitious. Some health data such as breastfeeding initiation is not readily available and some is not presented in a consistent format to enable the locality to make a comparison, for example teenage pregnancy rates. Self-evaluation by the centre's leadership team is perceptive and leads to the clear identification of key issues for on-going improvement.
- Robust supervision arrangements and good opportunities for staff's continuous professional development ensure they are a well-motivated, qualified and experienced team. This results in good quality practice which engages and sustains families' interest and secures their well-being.
- All staff, volunteers and commissioned services, such as Homestart, have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of procedures to keep children and families safe. This is supported by the very strong practice within the 'Early Help Service', where referrals for children 0-19 years are discussed and allocated to the most appropriate service at fortnightly meetings. The locality work closely with health and social care colleagues in order to reduce the risk of harm to children, including those subject to child protection plans, looked after children, and those identified as in need. By working together, partners have had a significant impact on the lives of many families, including those whose difficulties have been evaluated using the 'Family Star' assessment tool.
- Parents using the centre feel they are listened to and are well supported by sensitive staff. This is reflected in the many examples of the impact the good levels of support and good quality services

is having on improving the life chances of children and families. Parents feel that the centres is open to anyone in the area and everyone is made to feel welcome through groups and organisations such as 'Menphys' who support families with children with disabilities and special needs and through the 'Helping Young Parents Achieve' group which supports parents under 25 years before and after the birth of their baby with parenting skills, health issues, benefits advice and most importantly to have fun.

- Governance arrangements are strong. The locality partnership group has strong leadership and members have a firm grasp of what is happening in the centres, including the use of performance management, and knows the locality priorities and target groups well. Its members are clear about how well the centre is helping children and families, thereby reducing inequalities. The local partnership group and parents forum are used very positively to enhance the leadership of the centre.

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	80077
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	424782
Managed by	Leicestershire local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	5,000
Centre leader	Claire Murr
Date of previous inspection	Not Previously Inspected
Telephone number	0116-305-5993
Email address	claire.murr@leics.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 20123 Ashby Sure Start Children's Centre
- 20771 Coalville Sure Start Children's Centre
- 21599 Ibstock Sure Start Children's Centre
- 21979 Measham Sure Start Children's Centre
- 22032 Moira Sure Start Children's Centre
- 22202 Northern Parishes Sure Start Children's Centre
- 23308 Thringstone Sure Start Children's Centre
- 23450 Warren Hills Sure Start Children's Centre

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