

Purfleet Children's Centre P3-5

Centurion Way, Purfleet, RM19 1PF

Inspection date		26–27 February 2014	
Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement Not previously inspected	3
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:

- Despite high levels of registrations not enough families, such as young and lone parents, and those who are workless living in the areas of most deprivation, are engaging with the centre.
- There are not enough opportunities to help parents enhance their education and progress to training, volunteering and employment.
- Too few eligible children take up their free entitlement to early education in the local area.
- Evaluations of services are not sufficiently detailed to contribute to the on-going development of high quality learning opportunities for families.
- Tracking systems are not yet sophisticated enough to record progress made by families through different programmes over time. This is partly because many initiatives are new and systems are under-developed.

This centre has the following strengths:

- Managers and staff of the centre, who were appointed last May, are delivering effective services. They have a realistic view of the centre and are committed to driving it forward to meet the needs of families. As a result the centre is improving.
- The centre and its partners work closely together to help some of the most vulnerable families, particularly those with low self esteem, depression and those experiencing domestic violence. Families say that with the help of the centre they feel stronger and more able to cope.
- Activities that are run for children and parents such as 'Stay and Play' and 'healthy lifestyles' are well attended and staff have good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, these sessions are effectively run and provide useful pathways for parents to get advice and access to services.
- The centre is an inclusive, vibrant, warm and inviting place and parents feel able to confide in staff.

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.

This inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with centre manager, senior leaders and staff of 4Children, the Chair of the advisory Board, representatives from the local authority and from partner organisations in health, education, children's social care services, and adult education.

The inspectors observed a 'Stay and Play' session and a welcome activity session for new parents.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation such as the centre's evaluation of its effectiveness and its development planning. They also looked in detail at family case files.

Inspection team

Joan Cawdron

Additional inspector Lead inspector

Anthony Mundy

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Purfleet Children's Centre is a standalone centre which was formed by merging the West Thurrock Children's Centre with Purfleet in March 2012. It covers the West Thurrock and South Stifford Wards, which are located either side of the M25. The centre is managed by 4Children, who gained this contract in May 2013 and links with other centres it manages in this area. The Children's Local Area Board which consists of partners, parents and staff provides governance to the centre.

The centre delivers a range of services including family learning programmes, play sessions, health clinics, one-to-one family support and access to a range of advice services for adults in relation to benefits and welfare support, and referrals to adult education services.

There are 1,125 children under-five-years of age living in the area. Almost half of these children live in the two most deprived wards in the area. The majority of families are of White British heritage, although increasing numbers of families are of minority ethnic backgrounds, with black African, Black British and Eastern European families now forming 25% of the population. The Purfleet and West Thurrock wards have a higher than local average proportion of lone parents at 29%, with almost half of these claiming income support.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge broadly typical for their age. Target groups identified by the centre are children aged nought to two years old who live in the areas of most deprivation, workless families and teenage parents.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Ensure there are sufficient opportunities across the area to engage target families in the centre's activities.
- Increase the number of opportunities for adults to access activities to improve their readiness to take up volunteering, education and training or work.
- Work with the local authority to identify opportunities to improve access to early education, for those two-year olds who are eligible for free early education.
- Improve the centre's approach to assuring the quality of the sessions offered so that they are continuously improved.
- Develop evaluation by using more sophisticated tracking and assessment systems that accurately measure over time the impact of provision on:
 - Children's learning and achievement and their readiness for school
 - Adults' learning and development to increase their opportunities to access employment and further education and/or training.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Referrals from health visitors ensure that almost all families are known. However, the centre is not yet engaging securely enough with sufficient families, particularly those most in need.
- The centre has been successful at registering families and offering support to some targeted families. Services for expectant mothers are provided in local health clinics, with some support offered by the centre.
- Staff are effective in keeping in contact with families through a manual follow-up system and by offering a mix of centre-based and outreach activities. Families enjoy activities such as making pancakes in 'Stay and Play' and learning how to use number activities through a family learning activity. One parent commented 'without contact with the centre this winter it would have been hard with no money and nowhere to go'.
- Staff are becoming well known in the area and are forming alliances with local community groups, schools, nurseries, childminders and other providers of services to the community. Activities are offered weekly in a health and community centre in West Thurrock to support those families who live in the wider reach area.
- Early intervention is a clear focus of the centre's work. Priority is given to referring families on for specialist services or individual support if staff have concerns about the safety or well-being of any child or family member. The centre refers children for further specialist assessment if they have delays in learning and development. They work with social care to provide support appropriately focussed in the community. The support they provide has resulted in a recent case being stepped down from children's social care.
- Staff work hard to secure details from the local authority about which children are entitled to take up the free entitlement to early education, and have identified that there are still a significant number of children who are unable to access this offer due to the shortage of appropriate places.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Successful partnership working with health services ensures that there is an appropriate range of activities and services to promote families' health and well-being. Healthy eating, depression, behaviour and speech and language are a key focus.
- Breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are good, immunisation rates are high, and two year checks are carried out. The centre works with nutrition specialists to promote healthy eating and active lifestyles. However, the proportion of children who are a healthy weight at Reception Year is lower than the national average.
- The centre and its partners give effective support, through individual work and specialist groups, for those families which access services and the centre knows are most in need. This includes, for example, those experiencing domestic violence, children who have autism, and those with undiagnosed behavioural needs.
- Links with Jobcentre Plus provide effective support to help families access welfare and benefits advice. Support provided to one family including benefits and housing advice and confidence building activities has led to the parent securing part-time employment. However, there are not enough opportunities for adults to access training and education programmes to help them prepare to access work.

- The paediatrician from the local hospital works with centre staff and health professionals providing excellent support to develop approaches with parents to improve personal skills, such as problem solving and positive mental attitudes.
- Access to family learning, referrals to programmes to support literacy and numeracy needs are made. Welfare advice and women's aid provide information and guidance that users value. However, currently only a small number of adult learners attend courses.
- Good support is provided through story time and sing-along activities in sessions and arrangements are in place to refer children with low communication and language skills to specialist providers.
- Current achievement of children in one of the two schools that are close to the centre show a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the gap in attainment between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest has narrowed, however in another school performance is not good.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The centre staff team are highly motivated, getting to know the area, and are clear on what the centre needs to do to improve. They work flexibly across the four centres that 4Children manage in this area. During a short period of time they have gained a wide range of information about the area, but are not yet working with enough families.
- The centre manager leads a small team whose members are all clear about their roles and the main priorities of the centre. The local authority recognises the significant progress that the centre has made with local families. There is a good focus on improving the engagement of families and their health and well-being. As a result, the registration and engagement of families has increased.
- The advisory board is beginning to play a more challenging role. The chair of the board is a key member of the local community and is very supportive in promoting the centre within the community. The parents forum is focussed on engaging with other parents to encourage registration and attendance.
- The centre meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding. There are appropriate policies and procedures in place to help keep children and vulnerable adults safe. Through links with social care, the centre knows the children in this area who are subject to a child protection plan, looked after children and those identified as in need. They provide support where appropriate, through effective use of the Common Assessment Framework. Case files are meticulous, well structured and outline progress and outcomes. They include supervision notes and evidence of quality audit checks.
- The needs of families living in the area are regularly updated through contacts with partners and families. Simplistic evaluations, including views of children and parents, are recorded on progress made during activities. Although sessions are monitored regularly, the centre does not have a consistent method for recording these observations, as a result, some improvement needs for staff are not always fully identified. While paper based tracking is satisfactory at the moment, with increasing numbers now engaging, it is important to be able to monitor more effectively the overall progress and impact on families and children over time.
- Resources are prioritised well to meet the needs of those families the centre knows are a key priority, while still offering some universal services to help them identify unknown needs. Financial monitoring procedures are in place to ensure that the centre operates within the budget allowed.

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 details

Unique reference number	22514
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	441403
Managed by	4Children on behalf of Thurrock local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,125
Centre leader	Joanne Kelly
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01708 863739
Email address	Joanne.Kelly@4Children.org.uk

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