

# Carlisle West - Morton SureStart Children's Centre

Wigton Rd, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 6JP

<b>Inspection date</b>	8–9 April 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 is a good centre.

- The centre has been very successful at increasing the number of families who are registered. The large majority of those who are most in need of support and those who live in the most deprived areas make good use of the services that the centre delivers.
- Highly committed centre staff provide a good level of individual care, guidance and support to families both in the centre and through outreach work. Parents speak highly of the centre and describe it as 'welcoming' and 'a safe haven', and say that 'staff are always helpful and help to make things better'.
- Parents are gaining a sound understanding of how to support their children's development through play because of the good support from highly skilled early years staff. As a result, children are becoming better prepared to enter the more formal learning environment in school.
- Strong multi-agency partnerships and good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) procedures make sure that children at risk, such as those living with domestic violence, are well protected.
- Strong leadership and management, coupled with effective governance, are the driving forces behind the centre's good capacity to sustain further improvement. Leaders' good community knowledge means that they know what is working best and where scope for improvement lies.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The centre has not yet succeeded in reducing the number of mothers smoking in pregnancy or in encouraging more mothers to continue to breastfeed for a significant length of time.
- There are not enough opportunities for adults to access courses which help to improve their long-term employability, and their progress is not tracked carefully enough.
- Data on target groups, provided by the local authority, are not always sufficiently accurate and up to date so that they give centre leaders and the advisory board a clear picture of the full impact of the centre's work. Priorities are clear, but some improvement targets lack precision and this hinders sharper evaluation.

### 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 the children's centre resource manager, Barnardo's assistant director, local service coordinator, family support team leaders, senior leadership team and officers from the local authority. They also held meetings with centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including health, education and children's social care professionals.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions held during the inspection including, 'Baby Massage', 'Sensory room session', 'STAGS group', 'Let's Get Playing' Easter holiday activity session and a crèche. They also involved the children's centre resource manager in all team meetings.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, such as the centre's self-evaluation, development plan, a sample of case studies, parent evaluations, key policies and the centre's equality and safeguarding procedures.

### Inspection team

Tara Street, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Jackie Hughes

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Carlisle West - Morton SureStart Children's Centre is a phase two centre. The centre offers a range of services which include; child health services, family play sessions, parenting courses, adult learning, family support and crèche facilities. The centre manager also manages Newtown Children's Centre and staff work across both centres and also deliver services from community venues.

There are approximately 831 children under five years old in the reach area, of which 13.8% live in the 20% most deprived areas in the country. Within the reach there are significant issues surrounding isolation, health and young children's educational attainment. The target groups identified by the centre are: teenage parents, pregnant teenagers, fathers, disabled children and families who speak English as an additional language. A very large majority of families are White British with a small minority ethnic community. Housing is mostly social or private rental, with some large areas of high affluence and privately-owned housing. Levels of unemployment are lower than average, with 18% of children living in households dependent upon workless benefits. Most children enter early years provision with skills that are below those typical for their age. There are links to the eight local primary schools. These are subject to separate inspection arrangements and the reports are available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Governance of the centre is provided by Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority, in conjunction with an advisory board that includes representatives from the centre's partners and members of the local community.

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

- Improve the effectiveness of services in supporting children and families to develop healthy lifestyles by working even more closely with health partners to:
  - reduce the number of mothers smoking in pregnancy
  - provide further support to increase the number of mothers who sustain breastfeeding for at least six-to-eight weeks.
  
- Extend opportunities for more adults, particularly those not working, to enhance their economic stability by:
  - increasing the participation rates in adult learning programmes to aid progression into further education and employment
  - developing further procedures to track and measure participation and how well adults make progress when they access courses or programmes.
  
- Improve the way data are used by the local authority, centre leaders and the advisory board to measure the impact of the centre's work and to drive further improvements by:
  - ensuring that all data, particularly on target groups, are accurate and up to date so that they provide a clear picture of the engagement levels and impact of services on families' lives
  - establishing clear and measurable targets in all aspects of the centre's work by which leaders can check the progress being made towards achieving its priorities.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- The centre is proactive in promoting its activities and the benefits of the services on offer to families who live in the area, including those expecting children. This is particularly evident in more rural areas, where staff deliver services from a range of venues including community centres, libraries and schools. As a result, both registration and engagement levels have increased recently. At 81%, the very large majority of families are engaged in centre services, including the large majority of those whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable.
- Families benefit from a good balance of targeted support and access to the universal services offered by the centre and its partners. Home visits are aimed at reducing inequalities for families and they form part of the centre's effective outreach work. Highly committed staff provide good support, care and guidance in the home to assist families who are most in need and find accessing the centre difficult. This includes those parents who speak English as an additional language and young mothers.
- Staff go the extra mile to make sure that vulnerable families keep in regular contact, particularly in times of crisis. It is largely because of the trusting relationships they have built and their sensitive approach that the engagement of those most in need, including those living with domestic violence, is so good. Typical comments from parents include, 'I always feel lifted after coming to the centre' and 'they have given me my confidence back'.
- Highly effective joint working with a range of professionals has enabled the centre to provide good packages of individualised support and services for families, including use of the CAF. As a result, families supported in this way are successfully improving their health and social well-being. For example, close links with Portage workers mean that children with complex additional needs benefit from expert early help.
- All three- and four-year-olds and 81% of eligible two-year-olds are accessing their funded early education place in the range of good and better early years provision in the area. This represents the vast majority of local children and is due to the concerted effort of centre staff to encourage and support families to take up their place.

### The quality of practice and services

**Good**

- The quality, range and relevance of services and activities offered by the centre are good and, as a result of this, the take-up of services by those most in need is high. Parents and children play together in enjoyable well-planned sessions such as 'Let's Get Playing' which enable children to make good progress in their social and language development.
- Programmes such as 'My Life Now' have effectively enhanced parents' confidence in their parenting skills. The 'Let's get DAFT' (Dads & Families Together) dads' sessions on Saturdays and regular 'STAGS' (Second Time Around Grandparents Support) group for grandparents who look after their grandchildren for long periods during the week, also help to deepen family relationships. For example, one grandparent commented that, 'this is the one place where me and the children can be ourselves'. These services effectively reduce inequalities and improve the well-being and lives of families who attend.
- The centre supports children to make good progress in their learning and development. For instance, crèche staff assess and monitor children's starting points and the progress that they make while attending centre services effectively. Data show that when these children start school, a majority have made good progress from their often low starting points.
- Health outcomes are variable, despite the staff's hard work. The uptake of immunisation and health development checks is high. Staff offer good quality advice to parents about following a healthy and balanced diet. As a result, the proportion of Reception-age children who are obese has decreased and is now just above the national average at 9.4%. However, the number of mothers continuing to breastfeed at six-to-eight weeks is low at 34.15% and shows little sign of

significant improvement over time. In addition the number of mothers who continue to smoke during pregnancy is high at 17.9%, compared to the Cumbria average of 12.8%.

- There are too few adult education and training opportunities to help parents to improve their employability skills. This limits their progress towards paid work and their ability to support their children's learning. The systems to track adults' participation and progress towards learning and employment, particularly when signposted to other adult learning or employability services, do not provide clear evidence of the centre's impact on increasing the economic well-being of local families.

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

**Good**

- The leadership team has high ambitions to make the centre the best it can be and it has the full support of the extremely committed staff in meeting local families' needs. Everyone is involved in reviewing what is working best and readily changes tack when new developments are identified. The management and deployment of resources are effective and efficient, and financial monitoring is rigorous.
- Staff feel highly valued and well supported in their roles and flag up supervision and professional development opportunities as very positive features of management. They are well qualified, keep abreast of best practice and undertake useful training to extend their already good expertise. They are passionate about helping vulnerable families to overcome personal challenges and they are very responsive to individuals' needs.
- The local authority checks the centre's performance through contractual arrangements with Barnardo's, which manages the centre, and via an annual review. However, data provided by the local authority about target groups are not always accurate or up to date. As a result, they do not always give a sufficiently clear picture of the full impact of the centre's work on local families who have been identified as particularly vulnerable.
- Centre leaders have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre, and the priorities for development. Leaders make good use of the available data to help their understanding of the local area and the issues affecting families. However, apart from registration and engagement figures, the absence of precise measurable targets in the centre's action plan hampers leaders and advisory board members from gauging improvement effectively.
- Governance arrangements are clearly understood. The advisory board receives a good range of information about the centre's work and knows what its key priorities are. Members know about the way staff are managed and ensure that the centre is successfully tackling inequalities. For instance, parents and, more recently, children take an active role in the staff recruitment procedures.
- Families identify that they feel safe at the centre because safeguarding procedures are upheld consistently. For example, thorough vetting of staff's, volunteers' and partners' suitability to work with young children takes place, and there is regular update training about child protection and other matters. Case records for families at risk are maintained to a high standard and kept carefully, particularly for children subject to a child protection plan and looked-after children.
- Relationships among centre users and with staff are warm and friendly, and these underpin the good participation rates. Parents' views and ideas are routinely sought through a variety of consultation methods and show the high level of satisfaction among centre 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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	22055
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	430187
<b>Managed by</b>	Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	831
<b>Centre leader</b>	Nicky Robley
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01228 223417
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