

# Bridge Children's Centre

Lincoln Road, Newark, NG24 2DQ

**Inspection date** 21–22 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Access to services by young children and families		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of practice and services		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Although the centre is improving, not enough children and parents, particularly those in the most deprived areas and from the most in need of the centre's support, are actively accessing the centre's services.
- The proportion of mothers who breastfeed their children until they are six or eight weeks old are too low and too many mothers smoke while pregnant.
- Systems are not in place to check how well adults achieve on courses to which they are signposted.
- Data provided and used by the local authority, particularly with regard to those who might benefit from the centre's support and in relation to key health information, are not always sufficiently accurate and up to date. As a result, leaders and those responsible for governance do not have the necessary information to measure the full impact of the centre's work.
- The centre's development priorities are clear, but some improvement targets lack precision. This hinders sharper evaluation and monitoring to drive improvements.
- No parents are members of the local advisory group and there is no independent chairperson.

### This children's centre has the following strengths:

- Parents speak highly of the centre. They can rely on the staff providing good-quality care, guidance and support, particularly from family support workers who often visit families in their homes.
- Families from different target groups, such as young parents, Traveller families and those new to the country benefit from a range of dedicated services, which improve their well-being.
- Skilled staff work closely with partners to monitor the progress all children make across the range of early years settings in the area, and identify and address any gaps in their attainment. As a result, most children make good progress and are ready for school.
- Staff and leaders work together well as a team; they have vision and are committed to improving the centre's services and outcomes for the families they are supporting.

## 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 three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre coordinator, senior staff team and local authority locality manager. They also held meetings with centre staff, parents, members of the local advisory group 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 Clinic', 'Young Mums and Dads Group' and 'Stay and Play'.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation and development plan, parents' evaluations, key policies and the centre's equality and safeguarding procedures.

## Inspection team

Tara Street, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Joan Cawdron

Additional inspector

Godfrey Bancroft

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Bridge Children's Centre is a phase two purpose-built stand alone centre in Newark, Nottinghamshire. It offers a range of services which include child health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education, family outreach services and crèche facilities.

There are approximately 1,151 children aged nought to five years in the reach area, of which 48% live in the 30% most deprived areas in the country. The target groups identified by the centre are: low-income households, pregnant teenagers and teenage parents, and families from minority ethnic groups. Most families are from White British backgrounds, although there are a significant number of Traveller families and an increasing number of families from Eastern Europe, including Lithuania, Poland and Latvia. The area includes a privately owned site as well as temporary accommodation for Traveller families. Levels of unemployment are high, with 64% of children living in households dependent upon workless benefits. Most children enter early years provision with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. There are links to the seven local primary schools which are subject to separate inspection arrangements. The reports are available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Governance of the centre is provided by the Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership (NCFP), which took over responsibilities for the centre in June 2013. The day-to-day management and delivery of services are the responsibility of North Nottinghamshire College, which is a member of the partnership, in conjunction with a local advisory group that includes providers, delivery partners and members of the local community.

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

- Improve access to services by increasing the number of children and adults who use the centre's services regularly, including those from the most deprived areas and from target groups.
- Improve the impact of practice and services on health outcomes for children and families by working more closely with health partners to:
  - reduce the number of mothers smoking in pregnancy
  - increase the number of mothers who sustain breastfeeding for at least six to eight weeks.
- Increase the economic stability of families, in particular those on low incomes or who are workless, by establishing a system to follow up how well adults make progress when they access courses or programmes delivered by partner agencies, and use the information gathered to inform the planning of future services.
- The local authority should work more effectively with the Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership, centre leaders and the local advisory group to improve the monitoring and evaluation of the centre's work by:
  - ensuring that all data, particularly on target groups and key health information, which it provides to the centre is accurate and up to date so that it gives a clear picture of the impact of services on families' lives
  - establishing clear and measurable locally defined performance targets in all aspects of the centre's work by which leaders can check the progress being made towards achieving its priorities
  - appointing an independent chairperson to the local advisory group
  - involving parents more in strategic decision making by ensuring that they are represented on the centre's local advisory group.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

#### Requires improvement

- The centre has accurately identified its key target groups but is not yet managing to engage and maintain contact with the large majority of these families. This means that a number of children and families most in need of help, and those expecting children are not making the most of the services offered by the centre.
- Over the last six months, there has been a drive by leaders, staff and partners to improve the number of children and families registered for the centre's services. Targeted door knocking and leaflet distribution to local schools, childcare settings and libraries to advertise services and events have resulted in an increased awareness of the centre's services. As a result, numbers have improved and the large majority of children and families are now registered with the centre.
- Families who access the centre's services benefit from a good balance of targeted support and access to the universal services being offered. Family support workers provide effective support in the home, at outreach venues and in the centre to engage some families that are hard to reach. A family support drop-in session is also offered at two local schools for those who find accessing the centre difficult. However, not enough families are currently benefiting from the services provided by the centre.
- Family support workers have a good knowledge of the varied and often difficult issues surrounding some families, including those experiencing financial difficulties or isolation as a result of being new arrivals to the country. For instance, the centre has supported a parent in setting up an 'Eastern European Families Stay and Play Group' which is well attended and helps families to feel not so isolated.
- The very large majority of two-year-old children who are eligible for free nursery education take up their places. In addition, most three- and four-year-old children take up their funded nursery places.

### The quality of practice and services

#### Requires improvement

- The centre provides a good range of activities for those who attend, both in the centre and at outreach venues in the community. However, the low number of some target groups engaging with these services reduces the centre's overall impact on improving outcomes for children and on reducing inequalities and improving life chances.
- Health outcomes are variable. The uptake of immunisations is high, but not all of the centre's health-related aspirations are met. In particular, the proportion of mothers who keep breastfeeding for at least six to eight weeks is low and has decreased over the last three years. The proportion of mothers who continue to smoke during pregnancy is high and fluctuates from year to year. There is no sustained trend of improvement.
- Staff offer good-quality advice to parents about following a healthy and balanced diet. As a result, the proportion of Reception-aged children who are obese is just below the national average.
- Some parents have engaged in adult learning and followed courses, such as writing a curriculum vitae, paediatric first aid, English for speakers of other languages, English and mathematics. These courses are improving the employability skills of those who participate. The system to track adults' progress and measure the centre's effectiveness in this area when they signpost them to outside delivery partners is under-developed, and the information gathered is not used effectively to inform

the planning of future services.

- Parents enjoy a range of opportunities to extend their parenting skills and knowledge which has a positive impact on the course of family life.
- Staff are very knowledgeable and demonstrate good levels of professional early years expertise. They carefully identify, plan and provide for the next stages in children's learning and development. As a result, young children make good progress.
- Staff work closely with partners to monitor the progress children make across the range of early years provision and schools in the area, and to identify gaps in their attainment. They work together with increasing success to improve the quality of early years provision and narrow these gaps. This results in most children being ready for school.
- The centre is inclusive and promotes equality and diversity well for those who access its services. For example, groups, such as the 'Young Mums and Dads Group', and the provision of dedicated services at the local Traveller site, are organised specifically to meet these families' needs. Typical comments from parents include, 'Staff are really friendly and approachable, there is always someone to talk to when you need them,' and 'I have made friends, I was very lonely before coming to the centre.'

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

#### **Requires improvement**

- Leadership, governance and management of the centre require improvement. The centre is not yet having a good impact on improving outcomes for enough families. Rates of improvement have been slowed by major changes in staffing and the commissioning process which took two years.
- The local authority checks the centre's performance through contractual arrangements with Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership, which manages the centre, and via an annual review. However, data provided and used by the local authority about some target groups and key health information are not always accurate or up to date. As a result, it does 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 clear knowledge of most of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre, and the priorities for development. However, the absence of precise measurable locally defined performance targets set by the local authority and, therefore, in the centre's development plan hampers leaders and local advisory group members from effectively monitoring the impact of the centre's services.
- The local advisory group has recently been revitalised and a much wider range of partners is now involved. Members of the group receive an appropriate range of information about the centre's work and know what its key priorities are. However, there are no parent representatives and, as a result, the contribution of parents to shaping the future direction of the centre is too limited. In addition, the chairperson is not independent, as the centre leader currently holds this role.
- The centre leader and her team are resilient, highly skilled, hard-working and ambitious to improve. As a result, over the last six months there has been a strong drive to improve, and the engagement levels with the most vulnerable families has started to increase significantly. Resources are of good quality and are used appropriately to meet the needs of those who access centre services. For instance, premises are well maintained and are used flexibly to meet users' needs.

- Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust, and statutory requirements are met effectively. Family support workers, in particular, receive good levels of training and professional support, ensuring they understand how best to assess and meet the needs of the families with whom they work. In addition, close supervision alongside regular and robust case file management helps to identify any potential weaknesses in recordings, ensures that family files are kept up to date and progress for families is routinely reviewed.
- The centre makes effective use of the Common Assessment Framework to safeguard children subject to a child protection plan, looked after children or those who are identified as 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.

**Children's Centre/Children's Centre Group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20425
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	442869
<b>Managed by</b>	The Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,151
<b>Centre leader</b>	Annette Tutalo
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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