

# New Life Children's Centre

Low Grange Avenue, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland, TS23 3EQ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 July 2014
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not previously inspected

<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		<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of practice and services		<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### The centre is good because:

- The centre's registration figures have risen significantly in the past year. This is due to a clear focus on marketing the centre's good-quality services by the passionate staff team. As a result, a very large majority of local families access and benefit from the facilities at the centre.
- Close work with a range of partners, such as health and the daycare on site, ensures that families identified as most in need are very well supported and receive the right level of support that they need to improve their life chances.
- The centre works effectively with early years partners and some schools to ensure almost all eligible two-, three- and four-year-olds access good-quality funded early education. Specific sessions to help those children that need additional support are beginning to have a positive impact. As a result, these children are starting school with the independent skills they need to be better prepared for the next steps in their education.
- Safeguarding practice is well established and the safety of children is prioritised well. Professionals work very well together to provide early help services. Together they closely assess the needs of each child and their family to address and significantly improve their outcomes.
- Effective leadership, governance and management contribute to improved provision and services. Good knowledge of the community and well-targeted plans are used to tackle identified weakness effectively. Consequently, the centre has good capacity to improve.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough fathers from the area are using, and therefore benefiting from, the centre's good services.
- The number of mothers who choose to breastfeed their babies is low.
- Only a few parents are benefiting from the good opportunities the centre provides to be actively involved in shaping the centre's future services in the family forum and the advisory board.

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

- Improve access to services by broadening the activity programme to make it more attractive to men.
- Improve the good health of families by:
  - working more effectively with key partners to better promote the advantages of breastfeeding in order to help increase the number of mothers choosing to do this.
- Improve the leadership, governance and management of the centre further by:
  - increasing the number of parents who are willing to become more meaningfully involved in decision making and supporting the centre's priorities – for example, by becoming members of the family forum and the advisory board.

## 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 cluster manager, staff and key partners. They met representatives from 4Children, the local authority and members of the advisory board. The inspectors reviewed satisfaction surveys and they took into account parents' and children's views.

The inspectors conducted an observation of an activity jointly with the children's centre cluster manager and they reviewed evaluations of the centre's work.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, such as the centre's self-evaluation, development plans, data and a selection of case files.

## Inspection team

Sue Pepper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jean Webb

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

New Life Children's Centre became operational in 2008. This single centre covers a small highly populated area that includes Marsh House, St Aidan's and Wolviston. The centre operates from the New Life Family Centre situated in Low Grange on the outskirts of Billingham.

The centre delivers family support, health services and adult learning. New Life Day Care is offered from the same site as the centre. Oakdene Primary School is located near the centre. The daycare and school were not part of this inspection and their reports are available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The vast majority of families are of White British heritage. There are approximately 860 children under five years of age living in the community. The majority of children enter early years provision with skills below those typical for their age.

The majority of families live in areas ranked 30% most deprived nationally. Low Grange has some of the most deprived areas in the whole of the borough. Data show that the number of children living in workless households is high and 41% of families are dependent on the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. The centre has identified teenage parents, lone parents and children living in workless households in most need of its support.

The cluster manager is responsible for two children centres. New Life shares an advisory board with Northern Communities Children's Centre. The centre is managed by 4Children on behalf of the local authority.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- Good partnership work with midwives ensures prospective parents are identified early. Expectant mothers are contacted at an early stage of pregnancy, which results in the creation of a family file. Meaningful contact is made with new families moving into the area. Careful records are maintained that show contact, activities attended, intervention and the good impact this is having on those families who are harder to reach.
- Parents describe staff as 'very helpful'. Those families who need particularly perceptive intervention and additional help, such as teenage and lone parents and those from workless households, are very well supported by the centre or signposted to suitable services until their needs are well met.
- The centre has successfully established itself as the hub of the community. As a result, the numbers of self-referrals from parents are increasing. Consequently, a large majority of vulnerable families identified by the centre are helped to address specific issues, such as substance misuse and debt, more effectively.
- The 'Healthy Start' clinic held regularly at the centre is very popular and well attended by families living within and outside the centre's area. Mothers regularly weigh their babies and speak to a health visitor if they have any concerns about their child's health and well-being. As a result, a very large majority of local families are attracted into the centre to access the good guidance and support to improve the health of their child and family.
- The take-up of the free nursery entitlement is good. The centre works closely with early years partners to encourage most parents to access funded education places for their children. The centre helps to ensure that a vast majority of eligible two-year-olds access good-quality places, including those from the families that the centre has identified in most need of support. As a result, these children are ready to make a good start in their early education.
- Fathers are welcomed at all the centre services and those who choose to use them are very positive about the difference this has made to their lives. However, only a minority of fathers and grandfathers regularly attend and therefore benefit from these activities and meetings.

**The quality of practice and services****Good**

- A good range of well-resourced, high-quality services are delivered; some are open to all while other services are specifically targeted at those families most in need. For example, at groups such as 'Rhythm Babies', parents learn the importance of early face-to-face stimulation with babies to promote communication. All services are carefully monitored to identify the impact that they have on improving lives.
- Children's achievements are well captured in 'Magic Moment' booklets. Parents are shown how to use 'progress wheels'. As a result, they can monitor their child's individual development and support their future learning.
- The centre has focused on activities to reduce obesity levels and increase breastfeeding. Parents get a great deal of enjoyment from a range of healthy eating sessions and physical activities such as 'Funky Feet' for all the family and specific exercise classes for parents only. As a result, obesity rates in children are reducing and are now at a level comparable to national rates. However, although breastfeeding parents are supported well, breastfeeding rates remain low.
- The centre is developing good partnerships with some schools to help prepare children identified as most in need of support for their transition into nursery. Recent data suggest this is beginning to have an impact and helping to slowly reduce the gap in children's achievements. As a result, more children are ready to start school and keen to learn.
- Parents are developing good parenting skills, which help to greatly improve their confidence and relationships within the family. Parents that attend more intensive courses specifically for those referred to the centre by partners, such as health or schools, benefit from a wider package of good support. As a result, these families feel less isolated and more able to cope with the demands of a young family.
- The centre provides a good range of information and advice. Staff offer a wide range of high-quality learning opportunities for adults that respond to the needs of families that the centre has identified as most in need of its services. The availability of the crèche enables a large number of adults with children to attend relevant courses. They achieve very well and, as a result, improve their economic well-being and life chances.
- Employability courses prepare adults for work, particularly through confidence building and through the development of job application and interview skills. A well-established health and social care course at foundation and intermediate levels is effective in helping adults secure work for which there is a high demand locally.

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

- A clear culture of continuous improvement is well promoted by the local authority and leaders of the centre. Astute target setting and monitoring of the centre's performance, resources and overall effectiveness contribute to the good performance of the centre. Self-evaluation is ambitious; the performance management of staff is well established and effective. As a result, staff are well qualified and passionate about reducing inequalities for families, for example through the engagement of more males.
- Good relationships are in place, particularly with health professionals. Good use of data and the cluster arrangements for sharing staff resources are used well to effectively plan and deliver a wide range of high-quality services to meet the needs of families.
- 4Children ensures all the required policies and procedures are in place to guarantee equality of opportunity and good safeguarding practice. High-quality case files are maintained due to robust quality assurance systems. A high priority is given to health and safety in the centre to ensure the safety of families and the continual development of staff's awareness. For example, photographs are taken of the provision and circulated to staff when any risks are identified so that they are swiftly addressed.
- The Common Assessment Framework process is very well established and used well to coordinate effective early support to prevent the escalation of some situations, such as substance misuse,

getting worse. In addition, the needs of those children subject to a child protection plan are particularly well met.

- A good range of methods are used to seek parents and children's views. Feedback is regularly sought following the delivery of services and this demonstrates high levels of satisfaction.
- Opportunities such as the 'listening ear' and the 'special tree' are used effectively to collect family views. The 'You said we did' board keeps users well informed of any changes the centre makes following communication with staff.
- The joint advisory board successfully brings together a range of partners including a few parents who regularly attend and challenge the centre to continually improve. A wider range of parental views are sought by the established family forum, but attendance at these meetings is variable and, on occasion, low. This hampers the centre's knowledge of a greater number of families' views on ways to tackle the centre's priorities.

**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 well-being 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>	22101
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockton-on-Tees
<b>Inspection number</b>	442883
<b>Managed by</b>	4Children on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	860
<b>Centre leader</b>	Ben Chisanga
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01642 561748
<b>Email address</b>	ben.chisanga@4Children.org.uk

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