

Leicestershire - Harborough

Farndon Road, Market Harborough, LE16 9BX

Inspection date	15–17 July 2014
Previous Report	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Good	2
		Not applicable	
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.

- Information sharing and data are shared effectively between partners. The group establishes good partnerships with health partners which enable them to become involved with targeted families in their area.
- All eligible two- year old and most three-year-old children are taking up their free education places.
- Barriers have been successfully broken down with some of the hardest to reach families including those within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.
- The well-qualified and very experienced staff work well to devise flexible and responsive programmes to meet the needs of the target groups with which they work.
- Parental involvement is a core part of the work of the group and results in parents not being just service users, but fully integrated into the life of the children's centre group.

It is not outstanding because:

- The group does not track how well adults make progress sufficiently well or effectively monitor outcomes for parents on further education, vocational, employability or parenting courses.
- Although joint observations between the senior management team and commissioned services take place these are few in number. Therefore the group cannot be assured that the good quality seen is consistent throughout the year.
- Due to the success of the domestic abuse project more resources are needed to meet the needs of the increasing number of families being referred who are experiencing domestic abuse.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality and impact of practice and services by:
 - Tracking the progress and monitoring the outcomes of adults on further education, vocational, employability and parenting courses.
 - Increasing the number of joint observations that currently take place to ensure the quality of sessions delivered is consistently high throughout the year.
- Increase further the amount of resources to support the increasing number of families being referred to the domestic abuse project.

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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings or telephone conversations with centre leaders and senior management; representatives of the local authority; members of the 0-19 steering group and a range of partners.

The inspectors visited all five children's centres. They observed the group's work, and looked at a wide range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Kathryn Gethin, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Derrick Baughan	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nina Bee	Additional inspector
Karen Cooper	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Leicestershire- Harborough Children's Centre group was established in April 2013. It consists of five children's centres, Market Harborough Sure Start Children's Centre, Broughton Astley Sure Start Children's Centre, Bushby Sure Start Children's Centre, Fleckney Sure Start Children's Centre and Lutterworth Sure Start Children's Centre. Senior management comprises the centre coordinator, business support officer, locality partnership coordinator and the quality assurance coordinator.

Governance of the group is provided by Leicestershire local authority, in conjunction with a separate 0-19 Steering Group, whose members include a range of multi-agency partners. The group aims to meet its core purpose through the new commissioning framework that is in place to provide services and activities to targeted families. Universal services are provided by health partners and the private and voluntary sector within the community. The target groups identified by the group are: two year-old children eligible for free education; children needing support with communication and language; post-natal illness; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families; young parents; children living in low income households and families affected by domestic abuse.

The Harborough District children's centre programme covers 250 square miles of a predominantly rural area with many villages and two market towns. There are approximately 4,638 children aged under five years living in the area served by the group and the numbers continue to grow. The large majority of families are White British. Levels of unemployment are below the national figure. A minority of children aged under five years live in households dependent on workless benefits. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge in-line with those expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Target groups and individual families are identified and well supported. The group is particularly successful with the number they work with in relation to mothers identified with post- natal illness, children with poor communication skills, young parents and those expecting children, vulnerable two-year-olds and children with physical development delays.
- The group has good relationships with health partners. All new births in the district are visited and family needs are assessed well. Regular referrals are made to the group by the health visitors to ensure families' needs are supported.
- The take-up of the free entitlement to early education by two- and three-year-old children is excellent. All two-year-old children in receipt of funding go to settings which have received 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted grades for their effectiveness.
- Good opportunities are in place for parents to improve their parenting skills and take part in further sessions where they can learn more about child development, such as, developing an awareness of how to improve their communication skills.

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families across sites in the district are well known to the group. Family outreach workers are fully aware of the families and has great success in encouraging these families to attend specific 'Stay and play' sessions within the Market Harborough centre.
- The domestic abuse project is having a positive impact on families' lives in the short time it has been running. As a result, only a small minority of victims stay with the abuser. However, the number of families requiring a service is increasing and resources to meet this need are stretched.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The group's work with young parents and pregnant teenagers is exemplary. Staff have a detailed knowledge of all such young people and use this well to engage with them. Meeting education needs and helping these young people to move back into learning, or into employment, are rightly a high priority.
- The group offers a wide range of provision to meet the needs of families, in particular parents, to help improve their parenting skills and quality of life. Much of this provision is delivered by the county adult education service. Attendance on these programmes is high and success rates are also high. However, there is limited tracking of progress.
- Support from agencies for family's economic well-being is effective. For example, in the three years that it has been running the Citizens Advice Bureau referral scheme has benefitted families to the sum of over one million pounds in debt saved and benefits reclaimed.
- The group has good arrangements for monitoring the progress of parents on the programmes that they deliver directly, or commission. Case files show clear assessment of adult education needs and what impact services have on meeting them.
- A small number of joint observations by the senior management team are undertaken throughout the year. However, this is not regular enough to ensure that the high quality expected within sessions is consistently met.
- As a consequence of the help and support received parents feel that they are listened to and comment that their lives have improved. A parent has since attended university, qualified as a social worker and now works for the domestic abuse project.
- Good partnerships are established with pre-school settings to enable young children to receive the support they need in preparation for school.
- Children and families benefit from centres which are safe, clean and welcoming. High quality displays provide a good variety of information to signposting families to other services on offer within the children's centres. This ensures that families are well-informed.

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

- Resources are well focused on the target groups identified as being in most need. Health visitors are instrumental in identifying children and families across the reach area and linking with the individual groups. Financial resources are scrutinised at length and used thoughtfully to enhance provision. However, the resources available for meeting the needs of the increasing number of families experiencing domestic abuse are currently stretched.
- Governance is effective. The local authority provides a strong level of challenge through the annual conversation. The multi-agency steering group is held to account through a rigorous reporting system.
- Supervision is seen as supportive and valued by staff. Case load are discussed in detail and issues identified. Staff speak highly of their line manager and morale is high. Staff are well-qualified and are very experienced. The importance of both mandatory training and individual needs are recognised and acted upon.
- Safeguarding is embedded throughout the group. Training is up to date and staff demonstrate a good knowledge of risks associated with their work. Early help assessments are used well to support families and ensure parents receive the support they need to enable them to move on with their lives. Case studies show how individual families in most need of intervention receive targeted support, thorough involvements of the early help family outreach team. This support includes children in need, including those subject to child protection plans.
- Parents spoken to were unanimous in their praise for the staff and the support that they receive. As one parent commented 'they are on your side, not on your back'. As a result, many parents have dealt extremely well with the challenges they have faced, and moved on in their lives.
- Good relationships with the local authority enables staff to develop a good understanding of the data established for their centre and use it to develop and improve provision and reduce inequalities in the area.
- Health partners comment that the partnerships between the centres are good. They feel that it is seamless relationship with mutual respect and no barriers. As a result, parents do not see the difference between the professionals when visiting the centres.
- Parental voice is captured in a number of ways and parents are on every management and project group. Parents benefit greatly from this level of involvement and the centre is able to be very responsive to families' needs.

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.

Group details

Unique reference number	80219
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	442720
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	4,638
Centre leader	Sharon Lee
Telephone number	0116 3055320
Email address	sharon.lee@leics.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 21933 Market Harborough Sure Start Children's Centre
- 20481 Broughton Astley Children's Centre
- 22282 Bushby Children's Centre
- 21183 Fleckney Children's Centre
- 21879 Lutterworth Children's Centre

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