

Derbyshire - Wirksworth Group

c/o Wirksworth Children's Centre, 30 St Johns Street, Wirksworth, DE44DS

Inspection dates	29–30 July 2014
Previous inspection date	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.

- Registrations are increasing year-on-year. All children and families who are most in need of support are known to the centre group and access the services it provides.
- In the majority of cases the centre group has built strong partnerships, particularly with health services and schools, and as a result, family lives are improved. All health and early years outcomes in the area are strong and improving.
- Effective multi-agency working ensures the group knows exactly what each family needs. Support is established early on so that parents and their children improve their well-being.
- Skilled staff carefully plan activities and help parents to enhance their understanding of how the activities impact on their children's development. Staff support and encourage parents to continue learning at home and this helps children to prepare well for school.
- Good leadership and management are driving the group's improvement forward successfully. Accurate self-evaluation, and the challenge provided by the local authority, underpin the good capacity for the group to become even more effective.

It is not outstanding because:

- The range and breadth of courses are too narrow to provide parents, particularly those who are workless, with enough opportunities to develop their education and employability skills.
- The information available, including some provided by partners, is not always used effectively by senior managers to track achievements or demonstrate the impact of services to improve planning.
- The advisory board is not yet sufficiently challenging when checking on the group's performance.

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

- Work with partners to ensure the large majority of workless parents access appropriate services to improve their qualifications and enhance their employment and career opportunities.
- Further improve senior managers' use and evaluation of information, including that provided by partners, to more accurately check on the impact of services, track individual achievements, and enhance the planning of future provision.
- Ensure that the advisory board implements its own action plan quickly in order to challenge the group's performance more rigorously.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group 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 group co-ordinator and senior managers from the local authority. They also held meetings with centre group staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners, including health, education, adult education, private and voluntary sector partners and children's social care professionals.

The inspectors visited Wirksworth Children's Centre, Ashbourne Children's Centre and observed a number of sessions including the Pathways group, and Toy Library.

They observed the centres' work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

The inspection covered the following centres:

- Wirksworth Children's Centre
- Ashbourne Children's Centre

Inspection team

Geoff Dorrity, Lead Inspector	Additional inspector
Catherine Hairsine	Additional inspector
Maureen Deary	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre group

Both Ashbourne and Wirksworth children's centres opened in 2009 and are managed directly by Derbyshire County Council. They were brought together into a group for management purposes in 2013. The children's centre group has a single advisory board. The group sits within the locality team of South Derbyshire and the South Derbyshire Dales and is managed through the multi-agency team. In the reach area of Ashbourne Children's Centre, 733 children are under five years of age. In the Wirksworth Children's Centre reach area, this figure is 433, making a total of 1,166. The group covers the southern area of the Derbyshire Dales, which is one of the least populated areas seen nationally. Information shows that at least 80 per cent of the population lives in rural settlements or market towns. The entire reach area of the group covers a total of approximately 160 square miles.

The two centres are ten miles apart. The two towns of Ashbourne and Wirksworth include a higher number of children under the age of five years than the surrounding rural settings put together. It is a mainly affluent area which is predominantly White British. Ten per cent of families who live in the area with children under five years of age are unemployed.

Wirksworth Children Centre is based in the Wirksworth Memorial Hall and provides a large community hall where sessions and activities take place for families, along with office space and smaller meeting rooms on the first floor. Ashbourne Children Centre comprises a small activity room where group sessions and other activities take place for families. The building is shared with the Adult Education service and further rooms are made available to carry out larger sessions and meetings. Activities also take place in other community venues across the area.

Together with their partners the group delivers a range of services which include ante-natal care, family play sessions, outreach support to individual families and children, particularly in the more rural areas, and information, advice and guidance to support parents and families. There is no on-site childcare at either centre.

The centre group has identified its priority families as teenage parents, children living in families where there is drug and alcohol misuse, children in need and 'troubled families'. They have also identified worklessness as an issue for some families in the area.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families **Good**

- Both centres provide a welcoming, safe and secure environment for children and families. Registrations show an upward trend year-on-year, and there is a clear and positive impact for priority children and families who are accessing services. Health partners see almost all prospective and new parents, and promote the services of the centre group successfully at each point of contact.
- The group has carefully analysed the information available regarding registrations and has identified that those families living in the most isolated rural areas are those with the lowest contact. The use of a bus to take services to outlying areas is proving positive in

extending engagement. Work is on-going to deliver these effective school-readiness sessions to these more remote areas.

- Partners support the centre group well in identifying those children and families most in need and, as a result, a high proportion of these families access services. The group is aware of those families who do not access services, and which agencies are currently working with these families.
- Although workless parents with young children are not identified separately as a priority, many have contact with the group, though not specifically to access services that will improve their employability.
- The overwhelming majority of three and four year-olds and most eligible two year-olds access their free education entitlement. Partners in the private and voluntary sectors who deliver the early education offer are well supported by the centre in providing additional support to these children and their families where this is needed.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- There is a good range of high quality activities delivered by the group's staff team and their partners to meet the needs of families in the community. There is a clear pathway of progression of services for young children from ante-natal to school. However, the centre group and its partners do not provide sufficient services to ensure that all parents, particularly those who are workless, develop their qualifications and employability skills.
- Partnership working is good. The centre works closely with partners to provide timely and relevant support to meet local needs, including those of 'troubled families'. This includes prompt advocacy to address financial worries, signposts to food banks and co-operatives and more specialist referral to health professionals, including discreet support for victims of domestic violence.
- The development of parenting skills is good, including that provided for teenage parents. Parents value the one to one support that they receive. They recognise the positive impact that this, and attendance at parenting courses, is having on increasing their understanding of children's behaviour and expected levels of progress, whilst at the same time improving their parenting skills.
- Activities such as 'Talking Toddlers' support children's language and communication development successfully through excellent planning, monitoring and evaluations. Parents report that their 'children's speech has come on in leaps and bounds', and that they have a better understanding of where their child should be at this stage in their development.
- The children's centres work collaboratively with local primary schools to make good arrangements for children to transfer onto the next stage in their education. Robust transition arrangements include the 'Pathways' group, where children learn routines and visit schools over the summer holidays, to improve their confidence and school-readiness.
- The centre group's information shows that children who regularly attend sessions make good progress. The centre group is working effectively to reduce inequalities as reflected in the school's assessments which show that children who have accessed children's centre services are more ready to learn than their peers when they start school.

- The promotion of healthy lifestyles is a positive feature of the group's work. Breast feeding support is planned and organised well to include workshop sessions on a range of health issues that help mothers form close bonds with their babies. The majority of health outcomes are better than the county averages.
- Children's centre workers are skilled and effective at moving parents and children from individual high level support to more universal services, including families where there is drug and alcohol misuse. Effective working with multi-agency partners secures early help for priority families most in need. The impact of support is well demonstrated in the comprehensive and informative case files. Families that access support from social services, housing, health visitors, or the Citizen's Advice Bureau through the children's centres, speak appreciatively about the good quality packages of support they receive.
- Whilst partnership working exists between the centre group and the adult education service, the breadth and range of the courses on offer are too narrow. They do not provide the workless families living in the area, especially in Wirksworth, with sufficient opportunities to up-skill and gain qualifications that will help them into employment. Volunteers give good support but the programme they follow is not yet accredited.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Staff are well led and managed. Managers regularly observe the quality of the team's work and staff attend appropriate training in order to improve their practice. This results in a highly skilled and qualified team who work very well together to support the most vulnerable families in their community.
- Staff feel valued and supported by their line managers. They are confident in their ability to identify needs, and are working actively to prioritise and access additional support from a range of partner organisations, to improve the lives of the children and families with whom they work.
- Close monitoring by the local authority means that senior managers are challenged at every level about the group's performance and this helps it to improve. The annual conversation and aligned improvement plan accurately identify areas for priority action which rightly focus on the need to use data more effectively to check on the impact of services.
- The advisory board was re-established following the re-structuring of the two centres into one group. It is in the early stages of developing its support and challenge roles. Members are very knowledgeable regarding priority groups and issues in the area. However, they do not receive data from partners in an effective way to enable them to robustly challenge the effectiveness of the group. The advisory board's improvement plan correctly identifies these areas for improvement.
- Many parents find distance a barrier to attending formal meetings, and so the centre group has developed different approaches to capturing their 'voice'. For example, 'You said, We did' boards display comments which are used to inform services, such as changing the times for the operation of the 'healthy food bags' to enable families wider access. The self-evaluation and minutes of meetings are sent to parents for their

comment and feedback. There are also regular evaluations of services and more formal consultations with non-users.

- Safeguarding meets legal requirements and is at the heart of all services which the centre group delivers. Clear and effective policies, procedures and practices ensure that the centre is working effectively to support looked-after children, children identified as in need and children subject to child protection plans. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) procedures are used well by partners to allocate timely support to those most in need.
- Resources are used efficiently to meet local needs and continue to improve outcomes for priority families. Effective local commissioning arrangements are in place to enhance services. For example, support for teenage parents in building positive relationships has been re-commissioned, as this service was identified as a gap in provision.

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	80018
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	442809
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,166
Centre leader	Kerry Chisnall
Telephone number	01629 531240
Email address	kerry.chisnall@derbyshire.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- (URN23631) Wirksworth Children's Centre
- (URN20119) Ashbourne Children's Centre

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

This template is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130186.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 130186

