

# Treehouse and Sunshine Children's Centres – Devon Locality 10

c/o Treehouse Children's Centre , Coronation Road, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 1TX

<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–17 July 2014
Previous inspection date	2 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This group of centres requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Too few children and families from some priority groups living in the reach area are fully engaged in activities provided by the children's centre group. The data provided by the local authority are not fully effective in detailing the registration and access of all priority groups.
- There is limited recording of the achievement and progress of children and parents when they access activities. Additionally, the evaluations of the work of the group are not clearly linked to the aims and objectives of the group and do not fully demonstrate the difference made to the lives of children and families.
- Not enough learning opportunities are provided for parents who need to improve their English and mathematics or for those who are keen to become more employable.
- Not enough two-year-olds in Treehouse's reach area take up their free education place. Links with playgroups, nurseries and local schools to assist the transition of young children in need of support and to improve their school readiness are under developed.

### It has the following strengths:

- The leadership team has made significant improvements to the effectiveness of the group since its previous inspection. The team has high expectations for young children and families and sets high standards for staff.
- Staff are enthusiastic about reaching priority groups and effective in improving the quality of services.
- Good working relationships with a wide range of partners benefit parents and children, by providing early help, keeping them safe and improving the quality of their lives.
- Parents are beginning to play a stronger role in evaluating and influencing the services provided. They feel valued and welcomed by staff and are confidently taking in the work of the centre group.
- The arrangements for the protection and welfare of children and families are a priority for all staff, with policy, procedures and practice all highly effective.

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

- Work with partners and the local community to increase the access to services by at least the large majority of young children and families across the reach area and increase the take up of free education places by eligible two-year-olds, particularly in Treehouse's reach area.
- Collect data in a way that gives clarity about the number of children and parents in the identified priority groups who live in the area, are registered and engage in activities that enable them to achieve positive outcomes.
- Develop the recording of achievement and progress of children and parents so that the children's centre group can clearly identify the difference made to the lives children and families as a result of their experiences.
- Improve the evaluations of activities so that they:
  - link well to the aims and objectives described for the activities
  - are analysed and used to measure the difference activities make, especially for those in the identified priority groups
  - can be used to set targets to improve provision further, especially for target children and families.
- Broaden the adult learning programme to improve the skills, qualifications and confidence of parents by:
  - developing staff's knowledge and understanding of the support and opportunities available so they can reinforce and promote employment-related learning
  - work closely with Learn Devon to ensure courses provided meet the needs of parents
  - making better use of resources such as those available through the National Careers Service.
- Make sure that the children's centre group, schools and registered early years settings in the reach area work together more effectively to meet the transition to school needs of children and to improve their school readiness.
- Increase the number of courses to support women who are, or have been, subject to domestic violence or abuse.

## 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 an additional inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents and service users, the local authority, members of the advisory board, the group manager and other members of staff and partner agencies.

The inspectors visited the two centres to observe activities, and the Nature Zone, and completed one joint observation with the group manager. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Inspection team

Nigel Evans	Her Majesty's Inspector
Denise Blackwell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Penny Mathers	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

Treehouse and Sunshine are two children's centres that form the Devon – Locality 10 group in Teignbridge, run by Action for Children on behalf of the local authority. Action for Children has been responsible for running both centres since April 2011. One advisory board governs both centres. A centre manager runs both centres and she is responsible to Action for Children's children's services manager. The priority groups confirmed by the advisory board include children in greatest need, children living in the target lower super output areas, children of teenage or young parents, and children living in households where incidents of domestic violence or abuse are known or reported.

The group serves Newton Abbot and surrounding villages. Although the area is not identified as being deprived overall, there are pockets of deprivation where many families are on either workless benefits or low incomes. The unemployment rate is 4.6% compared with the England rate of 7.2%. Local employment opportunities are mainly in retail and distribution, hospitality and leisure, care and administration.

Most of the population is White British, with smaller percentages of families from minority ethnic groups, some of whom speak English as an additional language. Many children in the area start early years provision with skills that are well below those typical for their age. Communication and language and personal, social and emotional skills are the weakest areas.

The centres meet their core purpose by offering a range of services that includes health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult learning and family support. Services are offered from the main children's centre buildings, a local allotment and some community venues.

### Inspection judgements

#### Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The staff of the children's centre group know their communities well and are working hard to increase the registration and engagement of families in the reach area. The very large majority are now registered.
- The sustained active involvement by families in the area covered by the Sunshine Children's Centre is low. Centre staff are aware of the barriers to engagement, including rural isolation and long-term unemployment faced by some communities. They are making progress in overcoming these obstacles by increasing their outreach work and working more closely with the community interest company that supports the new management team running the Buckland Community Centre.
- Target groups and families are generally given priority access to activities and other services.
- The work with target families clearly has a positive impact by improving parenting skills and overcoming the sense of isolation and loneliness felt by some parents. Extended involvement with families is managed well and case files show how support from the centres and attendance at activities are making a difference.
- The good working relationship with health professionals enables staff to contact parents during pregnancy or soon after birth and encourage them to access services or seek support if necessary.

- Although the large majority of two-year-olds across the reach area access their free education entitlement, not enough two-year-olds in the Treehouse Children's Centre area are taking up their entitlement.
- In too many cases the children's centre group staff are not given the details by the local authority of young children who would benefit from involvement with a children's centre worker in order to improve their school readiness, and support their transition to nursery or primary school.
- The take up of adult learning is too low. The number of parents taking part in adult education has declined since the last inspection. The range and availability of adult learning options are insufficient.
- Parents on the volunteer programme benefit from good support and guidance. They develop additional skills, confidence and expertise, as well as improving their employability.

### The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Partnership working and the sharing of social care information are strong. The lead practitioner is particularly effective in developing good relationships and effective ways of working with other agencies. The collaborative work with health professionals has improved significantly since the last inspection. Child protection systems are well understood and referrals are allocated swiftly so that families get the help they need.
- The local authority provides an appropriate level of support for the group, continuing to monitor performance and set appropriate targets for further improvements.
- The range and relevance of the universal and targeted services are satisfactory. Inclusion and reducing inequalities for the target groups are priorities for all staff, access to support is swift when needs are identified.
- Activities provided for parents and families are of good quality. Stay and play sessions are well planned and use a good variety of activities to encourage and support children's development. Parents in the priority groups have very good levels of attendance at the courses designed for them. Many parents were able to describe how the parenting courses and peer support significantly improved their relationships with their children and gave them strategies to cope with difficult situations.
- Support for families with children with additional needs is good. Children's centre staff work well with Portage workers to sustain the improvements in communication, behaviour and sociability. They encourage parents to use techniques developed at home and in the community. Staff support playgroups and nurseries by providing some of the communication cards used at the sessions run by the Portage team. The Step by Step sessions for children with additional needs make a significant difference to both children and their families.
- The individual interventions with parents who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence or abuse are good. However, the group is not meeting the demand for courses that will enable women to change negative patterns of behaviour and thinking and break the cycle of abuse.
- Children's centre staff are not fully aware of the opportunities available to encourage and support parents to develop their English and mathematics skills and improve their employment prospects. Although communication with the local community learning provider is good, the practical reinforcement and promotion in this area are insufficient.
- Planning is based on observations and assessments of children's needs and interests. Clear observations identify children's levels across the prime areas of learning. However, planning for sessions does not clearly show the area of learning the activity is aimed at developing.

Learning intentions are not always clear, especially for parents who support their children during sessions.

- Evaluations of activities and the wider work of the group do not always make the link with the aim and objectives of the activity or intervention and the outcomes for children and families.
- The links to the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved over the last year, although still require further improvement. Displays and centre-based activities encourage parents to use the ideas generated at home. However, centre workers do not routinely make explicit links between activities and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Although family case files are comprehensive and show that regular supervision of staff takes place, a few files are not sufficiently child-centred and do not always link the work of the children's centre to the outcomes achieved. Risk assessments on children and families, related to safety or lifestyle concerns, are not always referred to, even when they are in place. However, children and families are made safer because of advice, guidance and practical support given by workers.

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

Good

- Since the appointment of a new leadership team, the effectiveness of the group has improved greatly. The group manager leads by example, setting very high standards for the work of the centre.
- Centre staff have high aspirations for children and families. They are enthusiastic and passionate about their work. They share ideas and, as a result, rapid improvements are made to services based on what is working well and what needs further improvement.
- Following the last inspection, the group manager introduced rigorous systems to improve performance, tackling the identified inadequate areas with determination and energy.
- Staff receive regular supervision and the clear target setting at annual appraisals ensures staff have a better understanding of their wider role in providing a service that contributes to improving the lives of children and families.
- At the last inspection inspectors identified that the advisory board lacked direction and expectations of the members were unclear. The rejuvenated board now has very good representation from relevant professionals; a current user of the service chairs the board. The level of support, scrutiny and challenge of the work of the group and of each other is good. The board benefited from training provided by the local authority on understanding and using data effectively and uses this knowledge and confidence to evaluate reports and set improvement targets.
- Although managers and the advisory now have a better understanding of the use of data, further work is required to ensure that available data are used to clarify the effectiveness of the work of the group, identify why some priority groups are not fully engaged and modify how the group operates.
- Parental involvement is improving and parents now have a greater influence over the work of the group through the Families in Partnership group and regular informal contact. Parents feel valued by centre staff and are reassured that recommendations to improve the service are taken seriously. Where possible, services are designed or adapted following suggestions from parents.
- Relevant staff review the way in which children's needs are assessed and their progress monitored. They have started to make some improvements in how this is done; however, the actions are too new to show significant impact.

- Safeguarding is central to the work of the group. Information sharing protocols and strong professional relationships ensure that children who are subject to child protection plans, looked after or identified as a child in need are well known to the centre and are discussed regularly. The lead practitioner provides excellent oversight of these cases and uses his knowledge and experience of safeguarding within Devon to ensure plans and agreements are followed.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80242
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	446097
<b>Managed by</b>	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2056
<b>Centre leader</b>	Pat Dunn
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	July 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01626 337715
<b>Email address</b>	pat.dunn@actionforchildren.org.uk

### **This group consists of the following children's centres:**

- 22132 Sunshine Children's Centre
- 22133 Treehouse Children's Centre



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