

Derbyshire - Bolsover Group

1A Welbeck Road, Bolsover, Derbyshire, S44 6DF

Inspection dates

Previous inspection date

10–11 September 2014

Not applicable

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not previously inspected	
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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Although registrations are increasing, the engagement of target groups, such as lone parents, teenage parents and children from families experiencing domestic violence, is too low.
- The centre group does not work sufficiently well with all local schools and childcare providers to make best use of information about children's development, to ensure that the achievement gap between the most vulnerable and their peers, is reduced.
- Centre group services are not always sufficiently well-planned to promote children's learning, and the monitoring of their progress lacks precision.
- The systems for tracking the progress of adults, who access partner services including further education and employment training, are not sufficiently well-developed.
- The advisory board is not fully effective in challenging the group's on-going development and holding it to account.

It has the following strengths:

- Families' outcomes are improving. Parents speak highly of the group. They value the care and support that staff provide and benefit from a range of appropriate services.
- Partnerships are strong. The centre group works very closely with a wide range of different professionals to provide a coherent package of support that is tailored to meet children and families' individual needs.
- Adults have good opportunities to extend their learning, parenting and employability skills. Through an exceptionally well-managed volunteer programme, several adults gain employment, develop their confidence and support other families.
- Family case files are meticulously maintained by staff and rigorously audited. Leaders check them regularly to ensure best practice.
- Staff are highly skilled, driven to reduce inequalities and improve the outcomes for children and families.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of priority children and families engaging with the centre group so that at least the large majority use services regularly, by:
 - ensuring that information provided by the local authority on the level of engagement of each target group is up-to-date and reliable
 - marketing and promoting the children centre group more widely across the reach area.
- Improve the quality and practice of the centre group's work to support children's school-readiness by:
 - working with all local schools and childcare providers to make better use of data, improve attainment and narrow the achievement gap of the most vulnerable children by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - ensuring that the planning of services and the observation, assessment and tracking of children are consistent across the centre group's services, are shared with parents and are used to plan future activities to ensure children make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Improve leadership, management and governance arrangements by:
 - ensuring that the advisory board plays a more robust role in the monitoring and evaluation of services to enable them to provide rigorous challenge and hold the centre group fully to account
 - developing systems with partner agencies to improve the tracking of the progress of individuals towards achieving their individual goals, qualifications and employment prospects.

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 group co-ordinator, local authority managers, quality manager, data officer, centre staff, adult education managers, members of the advisory board, parents and volunteers. Inspectors also met with: the manager of the co-located nursery, the headteachers of local primary schools, members of the early years team, health and other community partners.

The inspectors visited both centres in the group, Stepping Stones Private Day Nursery, Bolsover Health Centre, Doe Lea Community Centre and Bolsover Methodist Church. Activities observed included: 'Doe Lea Ducklings', 'VCI Passport Training,' for volunteers and 'Weigh and Play' at the Health Centre.

Inspectors also observed the centre group's work, and looked at a wide range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Qaisra Shahraz, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Tara Street

Additional Inspector

Deborah Sanders

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Bolsover Children's Centre is on the same site as Stepping Stones Private Day Nursery (URN: EY415752) and Arkwright Children's Centre is located on the same site as Arkwright Primary School (URN: 112632). Both of these settings are subject to separate inspection arrangements. Their reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The children's centres came together as the Bolsover Group in December last year. The group's reach area comprises twelve communities based within both Bolsover District Council and North East Derbyshire District Council which are mixed socially and economically, with pockets of disadvantage. Housing is mainly owner occupied, with some social housing and private rented accommodation.

The group is managed directly by the local authority. An advisory board is in place which supports the governance of both children's centres. The coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day running of the group. The Bolsover Group delivers services from the two children's centres and other community venues. It works in partnerships with a wide range of organisations to help meet its core purpose for children and families living in the area. Services include open access and targeted group sessions, family support, health services, adult education and counselling support.

There are approximately 1,211 children under five years of age living in the area. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are generally typical for their age. Most families are of White British origin. A few families come from minority ethnic groups. About 27% of families are dependent on work-related benefits.

The main target groups identified by the group are: children from families affected by domestic abuse, teenage parents, lone parents, and families living in the most deprived areas.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The centre group has made great strides in increasing the number of families registered, currently over 88%. It has accurately identified its key target groups but is not yet managing to engage and maintain contact with the large majority of these families. In particular, the engagement of lone parents, teenage parents and children living in families experiencing domestic violence, are currently too low. The information available to assist this aspect of the centre's work is not wholly reliable.
- The centre group has not yet given sufficient attention to promoting what it can offer to families with young children and expectant parents in order to improve their lives. This is a missed opportunity to help increase access and engagement, especially of target groups.
- Good communication and partnerships with local schools, police, health and social care professionals have a positive impact on some families' well-being, particularly those living in the most disadvantaged communities. Through effective sharing of information with its partners, such as health visitors, these families' needs are assessed thoroughly and

sensitively. Relevant support is provided, enabling them to access appropriate, services until their needs are met.

- Children and families in greatest need who have contact with the centre group are quickly referred to specialist early help. This includes specific projects like the 'Freedom Project,' which provides highly effective support to families affected by domestic violence.
- Family workers have good local knowledge of the varied and extremely difficult issues facing some families such as post-natal depression or those isolated at home. They draw successfully on this to plan packages of support that help reduce inequalities. One happy parent said, 'My life has massively improved, met new friends, improved my social skills and received fantastic support from wonderful workers.'
- Opportunities for parents who are eligible to receive funding for their two-year-old children to attend early education are good. A large majority of two-year-olds take up free places. Similarly, the vast majority of children aged three and four take up their free entitlement to early education in good or better quality early years settings.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Both children's centres in the group are welcoming places. Parents, who access the group's services, value the support provided by the extremely resourceful family outreach workers who provide helpful guidance about benefits, home safety and children's eating and sleeping routines. However, the quality of services and practice requires improvement because not enough priority children and families are benefiting from what is available.
- There is an appropriate range of services which balance those available to everyone with ones specifically for priority groups such as 'Baby Boutique' for families, including teenage and lone parents, with very young children.
- The centre group successfully runs a 'Pathway to Nursery' programme in conjunction with some schools to support children in getting ready for nursery. However, the percentage of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is too variable. The centre group does not make sufficient use of Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data from local schools to ensure that the achievement gap for the most vulnerable children is narrowing or to enable it to better plan future services.
- Staff provide appropriate resources and activities in sessions open to everyone based on the known needs of the children and families who attend regularly. However, planning of some sessions to promote children's learning, including how parents can best support their child's learning during play both in the session and when at home, are inconsistent. Records of observations, assessments and monitoring of the progress of each child who attends activities are not consistently completed. As a result the group cannot demonstrate that the needs of these children are being met and that they make at least good progress from their starting points.
- A key strength is the group's excellent programme in recruiting and training parent volunteers to help with the centre's activities, including the running and supervision of the parent-led play sessions. Parent volunteers speak highly of this invaluable experience

which enhances their confidence and skills. Through strong partnerships with adult education providers the opportunities for parents to gain formal qualifications and improve their literacy, numeracy, parenting and employability skills are good.

- Well supported by the health team, the centre staff place a strong emphasis on families adopting a healthy lifestyle. Immunisations rates are high and at 69% the proportion of mothers who continue breastfeeding at six to eight weeks, is well above the level seen nationally.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Family case files are maintained to a high standard by staff. They clearly record positive improvements in mental health, economic stability and the safety of families. They are rigorously audited by managers and this ensures children and families are appropriately protected.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. The centre group receives effective support from the local authority and the advisory board, on which there is a suitable representation of partners and parents, including as chair. However, though supportive, the advisory board is not checking the group's performance sufficiently well, or holding it fully to account.
- The centre group has a realistic view of its strengths and areas for development. Development plans are usefully focused on meeting local and national needs and targeting improvement. Resources are deployed efficiently and are of good quality including the sensory room at Arkwright Children's Centre used by children with additional needs.
- Quality assurance arrangements are well-embedded. Performance monitoring procedures, including the supervision of staff, monitoring visits, observations and annual conversations with the local authority are effective. However, the centre group rightly recognises that it does not have robust tracking systems in place to see whether all the parents it signposts to courses and activities elsewhere complete them, or how well they succeed in meeting their goals.
- The group coordinator is experienced, enthusiastic, and well qualified. She is well supported by a highly-skilled team of family support workers, who have specialist 'champion' roles including for breastfeeding. All staff and volunteers gain from a wide ranging programme of appropriate professional development opportunities.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. The safety of families including at home is a vital part of the centre group's work. Family support staff work extremely well with the Multi-Agency Team and make effective use of the Common Assessment Framework/ Early Help Assessment procedures to ensure that children, including those subject to child protection plans, looked after or in need, are protected against harm.
- The centre group celebrates diversity and promotes equalities well through the use of bilingual notices, books and multi-cultural toys for young children. Volunteers speak highly

of how they have benefited from a course unit on 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion,' as part of their volunteering, 'VCI Passport Training'. One volunteer told inspectors that the training increased their knowledge and awareness about gender issues and stereotypes; 'The session was really good – we have learnt to think outside the box and challenge our own opinions.'

- Users' views are actively sought and help the centre group to shape its services. The parents' board, with its 'You said' and 'We did' display, shows the actions taken in response to their views and provides useful feedback on what is being improved.

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	80770
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	451578
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,211
Group coordinator	Gwenda Culkin
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01246 826604
Email address	gwenda.culkin@derbyshire.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 20360 Bolsover Children's Centre
- 20107 Arkwright Children's Centre

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