

# Tavistock Children's Centre

Abbey Rise, Tavistock, PL19 9FD

<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 September 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
		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.

- The centre works very effectively with a wide range of partners. Good information sharing and a strong emphasis on working closely with other agencies mean the centre is successful in identifying and engaging with those families most in need.
- Referrals and work with families in their own homes are used well to ensure increasing numbers of families are matched to the right services and get access to specialist services in a timely way.
- A good quality service, sensitive to those most in need, is provided by staff that are creative and inspired by the enthusiasm of managers. Parents and partners report a high level of trust and respect for the staff.
- Highly skilled family support workers provide very effective one-to-one support with a high level of care, guidance and support. Parents particularly value the stability the children's centre provides for them in times of crisis.
- Safeguarding arrangements are strong and staff promote good safeguarding practices with families so they know how to keep their children safe from harm. Staff work well with Devon's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and this ensures families get the level of support they need.
- Good leadership, management and governance mean the centre is well placed to continue to improve.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Information from the local authority on the numbers of the most vulnerable children and families accessing the centre is not aligned with the local information the centre holds. This makes it difficult for the centre to measure the difference it is making to reduce inequalities accurately.
- The centre does not have strong enough recording systems in place to plan, record and evaluate children's and parents' development and progress. As a result, some opportunities for moving learning forward are missed.

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

- Work with the local authority and partners to:
  - strengthen the accuracy of information about which children and families are registered and participate regularly in the centre's activities and ensure that there is clarity about the sustained engagement of those most in need so that leaders can judge the difference the centre is making to reduce inequalities.
- Improve systems to:
  - plan and record activity sessions so that aims and objectives to promote children's and adult learning are clear
  - evaluate and record children's and parents' progress and use this information to inform future planning
  - record the observations of activity sessions, ensure rigorous feedback and use this to drive continuous improvement.

## 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 senior leaders, managers from the local authority and centre staff. They also met health, education, social care and police partners, parents, early years practitioners, volunteers, childminders, Jobcentre Plus staff and representatives from the advisory board.

The inspectors visited Woolwell Stay and Play to undertake a joint observation with the manager.

They looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action planning, a survey of parents' views, a sample of case files and safeguarding practice, policies and procedures. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Inspection team

Penny Mathers, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Christine Taylor	Additional inspector
Rob Mottram	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Tavistock Children's Centre has been managed by Barnado's on behalf of the local authority since 2007. The centre is part of the West Devon Cluster that includes Okehampton and Hatherleigh children's centres that are managed by Barnado's. An advisory board oversees the governance of all three centres.

Tavistock Children's Centre shares the site with Tavyside Health Centre and midwifery, health, police and social care services. The centre covers urban areas as well as large rural areas where public transport is limited. The area covers the parishes of Thrushel, Milton Ford, Mary Tavy, Tamarside, Lydford, Walkham, Burrator, Buckland Monochorum, Bere Ferrers and parts of Bickleigh. Three areas have high levels of deprivation namely Bere Alston, Princetown and Woolwell. A significant number of army families live in the Woolwell area.

A range of services is provided both in urban and rural areas and use is made of community venues to deliver sessions. The centre offers a range of universal and targeted activities including Stay and Play, baby massage, breastfeeding support, adult learning and family support. A range of parenting programmes are also offered. Other services include young parents' groups, antenatal courses, weaning support, and baby clinics.

There are 1,513 children under the age of five years living in the centre's reach area. Almost all of the families are of White British heritage. Much of the employment in the area is part time, low paid and often seasonal. As a result, the average income is lower than the national or Devon average. A few children live in workless households. Children start school with skills above what is typical for their age.

Priority groups are identified as young parents, lone parents, children with additional needs, children from Black and minority ethnic groups, families affected by domestic abuse and armed forces families.

### Inspection judgements

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

Good

- Registration rates have increased over the last two years because managers are relentless in their efforts to widen access. As a result, the large majority of children and families from priority groups are now registered. High numbers of families most in need live in Bere Alston, Woolwell and Princetown, where there is limited public transport. The centre overcomes this barrier by running activities from venues located in these communities, as well as providing one-to-one support.
- A very strong partnership and good communication with health professionals ensure families, including expectant parents, are registered at the earliest opportunity. Referrals from a very wide range of agencies and assessments are used well to identify what families need, and they are matched quickly to services that meet those needs.
- There are increasing numbers of young parents, lone parents, children with additional needs, and children from Black and minority ethnic groups, families affected by domestic abuse and armed forces families accessing services. However, there is a recognised need to strengthen the accuracy of information about participation rates.
- Staff work sensitively with families, especially those who are most vulnerable, to ensure they engage fully with centre services until their needs are fully met. For example, where parents are unable to attend baby massage, this skill has been demonstrated in their own homes to promote bonding. Parents told inspectors how they value this and about the positive impact services have on the lives of their children and themselves.

- Parents are informed by the centre about their children's eligibility for free entitlement to early education. Staff work with the parents so that children from families most in need take up their place. Assessments at the age of two years are undertaken with health colleagues and timely support is provided for children who have slow communication development or other additional needs.

### **The quality of practice and services**

Good

- The quality, range and relevance of the services are good, with the right balance between services available to all and those services supporting specific parents achieved. Timely support is available in times of crisis. Staff go above and beyond expectations to provide services that make a big difference to families' well-being. Parents spoke to inspectors about the warmth and empathy shown to them.
- Parenting courses and courses for those parents affected by domestic abuse, and a postnatal depression group, are delivered to a high standard. They are well attended by parents, including lone and young parents who value the support with continuing education. The centre has recognised that poor mental health is an issue for many families. Staff work hard to reduce levels of stress and reduce isolation.
- One-to-one care, support and guidance provided to families in most need, and particularly to young parents, are very good. As a result, parents report improvement in their self-esteem, confidence and in their understanding of their children's behaviour.
- Good quality health-focused services are available through close collaboration with health visitors and midwives who share the same site. Health colleagues are involved in decisions about how to improve services and reach those who would otherwise not access support. Support for antenatal care, breastfeeding and weaning results in a trend of improving breastfeeding rates, that are higher than the Devon average, and the obesity rates of Reception children are reducing.
- Information sharing and communication are good, so that families have a positive experience of a joined-up service from professionals. Very close working with support services for armed forces families, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, social workers and completion of the Devon Assessment Framework means those most in need, including children in care and those subject to a child protection plans, are getting the right level of help. Social work staff are confident in the skills of the family support workers to help families with complex needs.
- Partnerships with schools, early years providers and childminders are good. Schools speak highly of the collaborative work with families that encourage children's readiness for school. Relationships with employment and adult training services and the Citizens Advice Bureau are good, so that more training is being offered and parents are increasingly taking up opportunities to help them improve their lives.
- Volunteering opportunities are promoted well and all volunteers undergo comprehensive recruitment and training. Volunteers provide good breastfeeding support and support activity sessions. A small, but increasing, number of volunteers progress into employment.
- Session planning, observation and assessment are increasingly focused on reducing inequalities. However, recording systems require further development so that learning objectives for children and adults are clear and can be used to check on progress. Currently, centre leaders cannot easily see the difference the centre is making to improving children's and their parents' lives.

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

Good

- Leadership at all levels is effective and underpinned by a secure framework of policies and procedures that staff understand well. Managers use regular supervision, training and appraisal effectively to set goals and give constructive feedback. Staff are passionate about their work and feel well supported with good access to professional development.
- Governance arrangements are clear and the advisory board is well run. The board has an accurate

view of the centre's strengths and areas for development. Members are enthusiastic and provide a good level of challenge to assist the centre in moving forward.

- The centre has a culture of continuous improvement and the managers are responsive to feedback and strive for the services and systems that will enable them to meet the needs of families most in need, for example leading on an initiative with the learning community to better support children affected by parents being in prison.
- The local authority's annual check sets precise and challenging targets that lead to improvement, with some targets being exceeded. However, centre-held information on registration and engagement of priority families is different to that provided by the local authority. This makes it difficult for managers to easily measure the impact of the centre's work with those most in need.
- A good range of resources is used very creatively to provide the services that families need. Dedicated staff are innovative at finding solutions to provide the right services, especially when budgets are limited. For example, women who have experienced domestic abuse were provided with family therapy to build bonds and repair broken relationships between them and their children.
- Safeguarding is central to the work of the centre. Employment checks are completed and risk assessments are routinely carried out on centre-based activities. The Devon Assessment Framework procedures are used well to reduce the risk of harm to children, and families know how to keep their children safe.
- The family representatives group enables the views of families who use the centre to help shape services. Parents feel free to give their views and report a high level of satisfaction with the quality of services. Families are well involved in the running of the centre; for example, a very good safety awareness day was hosted by the centre and run by the parents for the benefit of all the families. Some family representatives also attend the advisory board.
- Systems to monitor the quality of services are mostly developing well. A good range of external checks is made on the work of the centre. However, observations of practice do not always focus sufficiently on how well practitioners have facilitated learning for children and their parents so that opportunities to improve are missed.

## 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.

## Centre details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	23113
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	44782
<b>Managed by</b>	Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,513
<b>Centre leader</b>	Abigail Sproats
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01822 614210
<b>Email address</b>	abigail.sproats@barnardos.org.uk

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