

# Knutsford Children's Centre

Manor Park North, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 8DB

<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 October 2014
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of practice and services		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Attendance at some sessions is low and the numbers of families engaging with services offered are not yet high enough.
- A lack of live birth data from the health authority hinders the centre's ability to identify all those not using its services.
- The gap between the skills of disadvantaged children and others is not closing quickly enough.
- The centre does not sufficiently track the success rate and progression for its adult learners to measure the impact of the provision.
- Parental involvement in decision making, planning and delivery of provision and measuring the impact of services is insufficient.
- Actions from self-evaluation and local authority annual conversations are insufficiently specific and measurable to ensure rapid improvement.
- The information that the local authority provides does not enable leadership, governance and management to easily and accurately judge the impact of its provision.

### This centre has the following strengths:

- The passionate and highly motivated staff are dedicated to supporting and meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged families.
- Family support workers work very effectively to meet the needs of families in crisis.
- There is a strong focus on keeping children safe, both in the home and when attending sessions in the centre.
- The provision to support women with postnatal depression and women who are lacking in confidence is very effective.
- Working with partners the centre provides a good range of on-site antenatal and postnatal services ensure that those who are expecting or have just had babies are well catered for.

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

- Increase the number of families from the rural area that benefit from the centre's services by:
  - more effectively identifying and contacting those that do not regularly attend
  - identifying and using more effective methods to raise the profile of centre within the community.
- Improve the quality and impact of services for families by:
  - working closely with parents, childcare providers and schools to improve children's readiness for school and rapidly close the gap between disadvantaged children and others
  - developing and implementing effective tracking of the success rates and progression of adult learners and use this information to inform the planning of future services.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - working closely with health authority partners to agree protocols that will enable the sharing of information, such as live birth data and other health indicators; using the information to plan provision and monitor the impact of services provided
  - working with the local authority to improve the quality of the data used by the centre to inform its self-evaluation of performance; ensuring that all data measures performance against the current population, using proportional measures to assist the centre make judgements against inspection framework indicators in its self-assessment
  - developing quality improvement plans following self-evaluation and local authority annual conversations that provide specific, measurable and time bound outcomes for each identified action; closely monitoring progress towards achieving these actions, including the use of milestones where appropriate, to ensure rapid continuous improvement in the quality and impact of provision
  - identifying and implementing effective methods of increasing parental engagement, such as volunteering opportunities, in planning and delivering provision and in the measurement and monitoring of performance.

## 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. It was carried out at the same time as other children's centres which were Oakenclough and Poynton Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with: centre staff; representatives of the local authority; the children's centre manager; a member of the advisory board; parents and users of the centre; representatives of organisations who work in partnership with the centre.

The inspectors visited activities taking place in the centre and a community located partner. Inspectors jointly observed one activity with the centre leader.

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

**Inspection team**

Michael White, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Sarah Drake

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Knutsford Children's Centre forms part of the Wilmslow, Knutsford and Poynton local area of the Cheshire East North Locality and operates as a collaborative with the Oakenclough and Poynton Children's Centre (URN 22223). Knutsford Children's Centre is a purpose built building located in the grounds of Manor Park School (URN 111237). Inspection reports for these organisations can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). The centre serves the market town of Knutsford and a large rural area that includes outlying villages.

The day-to-day management and provision of service delivery is the responsibility of the local authority. The collaborative is governed through a single advisory board comprising key partners and parents.

Data from the 2012 census shows approximately 1480 children aged under five years of age living within the area. Almost all families are from White British backgrounds. The population is diverse, with areas of affluence and pockets of deprivation. Longridge, near the centre of Knutsford, is the most socially disadvantaged area, has higher unemployment compared to the other areas and is in the top 30% most disadvantaged areas of the country. Some children enter nursery and reception classes with skills that are broadly in line with those typical for their age.

The centre offers early childhood services, including family support and health services, as well as aspects of adult education. The centre has identified the following families as most in need of their support as: families living in areas of 30% deprivation, young parents, maternal mental health and isolation and families with children aged from birth to two years of age.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Requires improvement

- Information provided by the local authority is based on 2012 population figures. In addition, the health authority have yet to share live birth information. This makes it difficult for the centre to fully know how many families and children live in the area. However, effective working at a local level with midwives and other partners enables the centre manager to identify some families that may have been missed.
- Registrations are increasing and across its area the centre registers the large majority of children aged from birth to four years of age, almost all from the area of most deprivation where the centre is located. However, there are wide variations between different parts of the area served by the children's centre, with only a minority registered in some rural parts.
- Staff have a good understanding of the families within the population served by the centre and of the different needs within it. Many of the families from the most economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, where there are higher levels of worklessness, make good use of the services. However, there is too much variation in the engagement of families from different areas, with only a very small minority in some rural areas.
- Due to the concerted effort to encourage families to take up their entitlement to funded early education places, almost all three- and four-year-olds and most of the eligible two-year-olds take up their entitlement. They are placed in a range of good or better early years provision. As a result, these children are getting a good start in their early education.
- Having the midwife and health visitor clinics on site provides a good introduction, for those expecting or with young babies, to the services that the centre has to offer. Many users, including those who feel isolated and those with maternal mental health issues, confirm that this is how they first became aware of the centre, rather than through the centre promoting its services in the wider community. Parents confirmed that they felt the centre was not well enough known in the community.

**The quality of practice and services****Requires improvement**

- The centre provides a suitable range of different activities which are open to all, or which are targeted towards those with particular needs. Sessions such as 'Rhythm and Rhyme' are enjoyed by those who attend and these focus well on extending babies' and children's communication, personal, social and emotional development. However, the centre's records show that only small numbers of families attend many of the sessions. As a result, the centre has yet to improve life chances and improve inequalities for a greater number of families in the area.
- Despite the Early Years Service working hard to improve the quality of early years provision, the proportion of children who have a good level of development is too variable and in some areas poor. The levels of development reached by disadvantaged children are well below average, although the gap between these children and those who are not disadvantaged is narrowing.
- Case studies, and parents themselves, testify to the good quality care, guidance and support provided for families, both in times of crisis and over the longer term. Centre staff use partnerships with other professionals well to ensure that families' needs are assessed accurately. They are also persistent in maintaining contact with families and, when necessary, pursuing other professionals to ensure that children receive the support to which they are entitled.
- It is sometimes difficult for the centre manager to measure the centre's impact on healthier lifestyles, because of lack of secure health data. However, the access to health professionals on site is good. The group that supports mothers to initiate and sustain breastfeeding is very effective and rates have risen significantly to well above the national average.
- Mental well being has a strong focus and the 'Lavender Group' is providing valuable and effective support for those that may be in danger of developing postnatal depression. Importantly, professionals with responsibility for safeguarding children consider that the work of this group is having a direct impact on reducing referrals for intensive work with families related to child protection issues.
- The young parents' group is valued by its users and is now self-supporting through the use of a volunteer. As a result, these adults are improving their parenting skills.
- Adults benefit from good opportunities to attend an appropriate range of courses delivered either in the centre or in community venues located in the areas of most deprivation. A very good partnership with the Citizens' Advice Bureau is very effective in supporting families to access their full range of benefits and to manage their debt more efficiently.
- The Strong Women course for women with low self-confidence successfully leads to volunteering, further training, employment and self-employment and one participant recently won an adult learning week award. However, the process for tracking attendance and the progress of most adult learning provision are insufficiently developed and only anecdotal evidence is available.

**The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management****Requires improvement**

- Insufficient sharing of information about live births makes it difficult for the centre to fully judge the access to its services. Local authority data is not always presented in an appropriate way to measure the impact of services. Important data about health targets is also not readily available. This restricts the way data can be used to plan services or to measure the impact of the centre's work.
- Staff make appropriate use of the welcoming accommodation and good quality resources to provide an appropriate variety of universal services. However, attendance at many sessions is low. Plans are in place to take more services out into rural areas, but these plans have not yet been implemented.
- The local authority works closely with the centre and provides valuable support. However, the annual conversation does not lead to a well-developed quality improvement plan. For example, the plan lacks specific, measurable and time-bound actions and targets. Consequently, insufficient challenge is made to ensure rapid improvement.
- Performance management and supervision of centre staff is frequent and appropriate. Staff share best practice and benefit from a good range of useful training to extend their expertise.

- A joint advisory board benefits from a good level of participation from partners and a few parents. The board received good training to prepare it for its support and challenge role and the effectiveness of this can be clearly seen in the board's minutes. However, the limitations with available data restrict the board's ability to fully challenge the centre's performance.
- Parents' forums, used previously, no longer operate due to low attendance. Alternative arrangements are not fully effective in engaging parents in the planning of activities or measuring the performance of the centre. The small numbers of volunteers involved in the delivery of sessions are appreciated by both centre users and staff, but the use of volunteers has not been fully developed.
- Staff take their duties relating to safeguarding seriously and their work is supported by comprehensive policies and procedures. Effective use is made of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process to appropriately assess need and to decrease levels of risk. A high priority is given to supporting children subject to a child protection plan, children in need and looked-after children.
- Good quality information is provided to parents and displayed in the centre on a wide range of safety and safeguarding issues such as e-safety and child sexual exploitation, which helps most parents keep their children safe.

**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.

**Children's centre details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	21723
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	447560
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1483
<b>Centre leader</b>	Sue Kenyon
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01625 374904
<b>Email address</b>	sue.kenyon@cheshireeast.gov.uk



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