

Cheshire West & Chester – Winsford Group

Bradbury Road, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 3HN

Inspection dates	7 October–8 October 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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 children's centre group is good.

- The dedication of leadership, management, governance and staff throughout the restructure of the group to the new Early Support Service has resulted in good partnership-working with a wide variety of key partners to identify families and children in most need of their support. As a result, the group is improving.
- The very proactive outreach and family support team knows the community well, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. As a result of the excellent support given, many families are helped to move out of crisis situations.
- Children who regularly attend the centres' activities make good progress in their learning. Schools report positively about the difference the centres have made in preparing children for school.
- The centres use assessment well to identify children with the greatest need. Staff are also highly observant in all groups, clinics and crèches and alert to any child showing any early signs of need.
- Case recording is completed to a high standard and reflects the quality of the services open to all and those that need additional support. In addition, the files capture views and opinions of families, as well as the involvement of other professionals.

It is not outstanding because:

- The agreed protocol for sharing live birth information with the group has not been implemented by strategic health partners. Consequently, leaders and managers have some difficulty in ensuring that they are engaging with all families who most need their help.
- Too few parents contribute to decision-making about key priorities for the group.
- Management information is not always presented in a clear or meaningful format to help leaders and managers and the advisory board understand what needs to be achieved.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, governance and management by:
 - implementing the strategic agreement with the health authority to enable effective sharing of live birth information
 - developing the existing arrangements for governance by ensuring that more parents are involved in decision-making for the group
 - working with the local authority and key partners to further develop information in a clear and meaningful format.

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. The centres that form part of this children’s centre group are Wharton Children’s Centre; Greenfields Children’s Centre and Over Children’s Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings or telephone conversations with centre leaders and senior management; representatives of the local authority; members of the advisory board and a range of partners.

The inspectors visited all three children’s centres. They observed the centres’ work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Kathryn Gethin	Her Majesty’s Inspector, Lead Inspector
Susan Crawford	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Qaisra Shahrzad Ahmad	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Cheshire West and Chester – Winsford Centre Group consists of three children’s centres, Wharton Children’s Centre, Greenfields Children’s Centre and Over Children’s Centre. In 2013 a new integrated early support service for children 0-19 years was introduced. On-site childcare is provided by Sunrise Nursery at all three centres. Wharton Children’s Centre is within the grounds of Willow Wood Community Primary School; Greenfields Children’s Centre is within the grounds of Oak View Academy and Over Children’s Centre is within the grounds of Over Hall Community Primary School. Schools and childcare provision are subject to separate inspection arrangements and their reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>

Governance of the group is provided by Cheshire West and Chester local authority, in conjunction with a separate advisory board whose members include a range of multi-agency partners. The families identified by the group as most in need of support are: children living in areas of high deprivation; two-year-old children eligible for free education; young parents; children assessed as children in need or on a child protection plan and families affected by domestic abuse.

The Winsford children’s centre programme covers 85 square miles of a mixed rural and urban area. There are approximately 3,488 children aged under five years living in the area served by the group. Over Children’s Centre serves the majority of areas within the group that fall within the top 30% level of deprivation. The large majority of families are of White British heritage. The proportion of families with children aged under five years who live in households dependent on workless benefits is currently 10.3%.

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. The centres meet their core offer by offering a range of services which include: health services; stay and play sessions; adult learning and family support.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Winsford Children’s Centre group is valued by its users. Staff know the local community really well. Support and advice is targeted well and is effective in meeting individual families’ needs, including those subject to domestic abuse, families living in high areas of deprivation, young parents and those requiring intervention support. The needs of families less likely to attend, such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, are also well met.
- The Early Assessment Service is instrumental in identifying those families requiring support at an early stage, including those expecting children. The triage system ensures that cases are swiftly allocated and resources used effectively to support families. As a result of this work, good partnership-working and sharing of information of the families with most needs are quickly identified and early help is provided to ensure that problems do not escalate.
- An appropriate balance of services open to all and those who need additional support successfully engages a large majority of families in the area and makes a good contribution to their personal development and well-being. Home visits by family support workers and their partners form part of the highly effective outreach support that assists families who are most in need.
- Assessment and monitoring of progress in terms of families’ safety is highly effective. Parents are fully involved in assessing needs and agreeing to improvement targets. Referrals, outreach work, universal services, observations and assessments are all used very effectively to identify needs and match families to the services they require.
- All vulnerable two-year-olds have been prioritised and referred for nursery education funding. The group responded swiftly to the need to find additional places for high-quality provision for two-year-old funded children by utilising space within Greenfields Children’s Centre.

- The centres provide a good range of information for families on all aspects of care. Displays and posters provided inside and outside the three children's centres signpost families to a good range of services.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Children's centre staff contribute well to reducing inequalities and improving life chances. They track and check the progress made by children who attend the centres effectively. Children who regularly attend activities make good progress in their learning. Effective work is enabling the lowest-attaining children to catch up with their peers by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, the attainment gap has narrowed.
- The children's centre group has established good partnerships with schools and the private and voluntary sector through effective support groups such as the Early Years Forum. All members are aware of the learning and development needs of the locality to develop speech, language and writing skills. Those moving on to school are supported well and attend 'Ready For School' sessions. Schools report positively about the difference the centres have made in preparing children for school.
- Courses such as 'All about Me', 'Explorers to Talkers', 'Movers to Shakers', speech and language services, support for two-year-old funding and 'Head Start to School' are all tailored to meet need. Early evidence shows that these courses have a significant impact on families. All families are followed up six months after completing the courses to ensure continued improvements to their lives.
- Parents demonstrate good personal, social, parenting and educational development through training, one-to-one support sessions, making new friends at the centre and gaining confidence and self-esteem. Parents from the families that the centres have identified as most in need say how much they appreciate the good support from the centres' staff team.
- Adult learning programmes include Paediatric First Aid, 'Winsford Activity Groups' (WAGS), 'Explorers and 'Crawlers' group, and 'Active Citizenship'. Crèche support is provided for all adult learning programmes. Learners also have the opportunity to improve literacy through accredited programmes with other providers. Such good practice helps to improve life chances and reduce inequalities.
- Employability outcomes are good. The group follows the 'Ready for Work Strategy' which provides guidance and a clear pathway to develop employability skills. Parents have access to advice and guidance relating to work through employment mentors provided by the benefits team. As a result, they have a better understanding of how to manage their finances and apply for jobs.
- The quality of health provision is good. The centres offer a good range of provision to improve health and fitness. 'Stay and Play' sessions and baby groups are used well to teach parents about health issues and expected development levels. Breastfeeding support workers are in place. All mothers are happy and completely satisfied with the services that they receive and say that 'Cherubs' had helped them to maintain breastfeeding. The group has achieved improvements in nearly all aspects of health provision.
- Case files and records are maintained to a high standard. They show effective management of good partnership-working and significant improvements to families' personal, social and emotional well-being.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The group has made significant progress since the introduction of the Early Assessment Service. Resources are used well as a result of the strong partnership-working across the different agencies. The need for additional resources to support families subject to domestic abuse has been recognised and acted upon.
- Governance arrangements are well established. The local authority set challenging targets and

monitor these on a regular basis. Stringent commissioning arrangements are in place. These provide a robust framework to ensure that high quality and appropriate services are delivered. The highly committed leadership team knows the centres' strengths and where improvement is needed. The advisory board is led well and is well positioned to both support and challenge performance.

- The culture of safeguarding is embedded and robust policies, procedures and practices are in place. These ensure that safeguarding and the welfare of children remain at the forefront of the group. Strong partnerships and information-sharing with health and social care professionals help to keep families safe. This includes children in need and those subject to a child protection plan.
- Adults make a valuable contribution to shaping centre services, for example through a 'Parents' Forum', where they share their views which are heard and acted upon. However, too few parents are actively involved in decision-making with regard to performance and delivery within the group.
- Information is provided from a range of sources and used well to inform planning. However, it is not always presented in a clear or meaningful context. In addition the live birth information protocol agreed at a strategic level with health partners has yet to be implemented.
- The centres demonstrate a clear commitment to inclusion through its effective targeting of children and families. Families speak very highly of the support they receive, saying it has transformed their lives, helped to develop their confidence and self-esteem and improved their parenting skills.
- Supervision is well embedded within the group and valued by staff. Leaders and staff are well qualified and experienced. Staff access on-going training to ensure that the services they deliver have a positive impact on the lives of all centre users. Staff morale is high.
- Parents and children are consulted about their needs and any changes to services. They report a consistently high level of satisfaction with the quality and the ability of services to meet their needs and improve their life chances.

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 group details

Unique reference number	80417
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	447644
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3,488
Group manager	Claire Edwards
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01606 275802
Email address	claire.edwards@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children’s centres:

- 21309 Greenfields Children’s Centre
- 22286 Over Children’s Centre
- 23567 Wharton Children’s Centre

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