

Waddesdon and Whitchurch Children's Centre

The Football Pavillion, Frederick Street, Waddesdon, HP18 0LX

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| Inspection dates | 14–16 October 2014 |
| Previous inspection date | Not previously inspected |

| Overall effectiveness | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| | Previous inspection: | | |
| 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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Only a minority of families are accessing the centre's services. Too few families living in Buckingham Park and Newton Longville, and those from workless households, are benefiting from the centre's activities.
- The children's centre's plans lack precision. Links between plans, priorities, targets and training for staff are not always clear. Monitoring and observation of sessions by leaders are too infrequent and are not used sufficiently to improve the quality of practice.
- The advisory board does not have all the information it needs to contribute fully to improve the centre.
- Partnerships with children's social care services, the family resilience service and some primary schools require further development.
- Systems to track children's learning and development are new and it is too soon to know whether all children are making good progress.
- Services to help parents into adult learning and employment are under developed.

It has the following strengths:

- The large majority of families in the area are registered with the centre.
- Staff are very skilled at communicating with families, who value their services highly.
- The majority of two-year-olds eligible for free early education in the reach area are taking up places.
- Support for disabled children and those with additional needs is good.
- The centre is providing good volunteering opportunities.
- Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the centre. They take note of the families' views when changes are needed and use external reviews well to improve services.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - ensuring plans are precise and indicate clear links between setting targets for staff and their training and development
 - providing detailed financial information to the advisory board so that checks on future plans, resources and staffing are matched to key priorities
 - monitoring more frequently the quality of group sessions to improve practice and inform future activities
 - embedding the emerging links with professionals in social care services.
- Increase the number of parents and carers engaging in activities, particularly families from unemployed households, and those living in Buckingham Park and Newton Longville.
- Embed systems to observe, assess and track children's progress and work in partnership with schools to ensure all children are well prepared for starting school.
- Ensure that parents regularly access adult learning and employability services, and track how these services improve their lives.

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors, working in conjunction with the inspectors leading on each of the other two simultaneous inspections.

The inspectors held meetings with Barnardo's managers and staff; parents and volunteers; partners in health, education, social care and community services; advisory board members and representatives from the local authority.

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

Inspection team

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|---|-------------------------|
| Marianick Ellender-Gelé, Lead Inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Shagufta Shahin | Additional Inspector |
| Rob Mottram | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about the centre

Waddesdon and Whitchurch Children's Centre serves a rural population. It was designated in November 2009. There are currently 890 children under the age of five years living in the centre's reach area. Most (90%) families are White British and about 130 children in the reach area are from minority ethnic groups. Children enter school with skills, knowledge and abilities that match those typical for their age. There is no on-site childcare or pre-school provision.

The centre is governed and managed by Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority. The day-to-day running of the centre is carried out by a services coordinator, supported by the Barnardo's area manager and a national team. The centre works in a cluster with Wing, and Ivinghoe and Pitstone Children's Centres to provide a range of services at the centres and in the community. These include activities for everyone and those from priority groups. It has its own advisory board. The inspections of Wing Children's Centre, and Ivinghoe and Pitstone Children's Centre took place at the same time and their inspection reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

As well as the villages of Waddesdon and Whitchurch, the children's centre serves the wards of Weedon, Newton Longville, Grendon Underwood and Quainton. The Buckingham Park housing estate is in the Weedon ward and transferred to the Waddesdon reach area in 2013. Although there are bus links between Waddesdon and the local town of Aylesbury, families have limited access to public transport. The rural area covered by the centre is predominantly affluent, although villages contain pockets of deprivation and some unemployment. Housing is mostly owner occupied, although the centre serves some areas of social housing. The number of looked after children and children subject to protection plans is low. Around 70 families have a lone parent.

The centre has identified its target groups as families at risk of greatest need, families with two-year-olds entitled to funded early education, families with no transport living in isolated rural areas and children living in households where no parent is working.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Engagement figures for families, and those expecting children, are too low overall at 44%. Only a minority of workless families, and families living in Buckingham Park or Newton Longville, are engaging with the centre's services. Staff are successfully reaching the majority of families living in isolated rural villages. This is because they use the mobile children's centre bus and link with existing community groups to deliver services in a range of local venues.
- The staff are not yet ensuring that they take every opportunity to register families. The large majority (66%) of families are registered across the area but, in some localities, registration rates require improvement. The very recent sharing of new birth data will assist the centre in continuing to improve this figure.
- Engagement with families referred to the centre by partner agencies, and families at risk of being in greatest need, is good. These families are provided with transport, if needed, so that they can access services promptly.
- Just over half of the eligible two-year-olds, and all three- and four-year olds take up their entitlement to free early education. The Stay and Play sessions are very popular. Staff ensure that families from the local reach area, and those most in need, are given priority to access places. However, a popular session at Buckingham Park has been cancelled and families have expressed the wish to see this re-established.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The quality of practice and services requires improvement because the centre is not yet tracking children's progress effectively. All staff have attended training on how to assess children's development, for example through the use of 'Learning Journeys'. However, it is early days and only eight children have had checks on their progress completed. The centre is, therefore, not yet able to show that all children are making good progress.
- The analysis and use of information on the Early Years Foundation Stage are insufficient. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception year is above national and county averages. However, the sharing of information with schools is not yet effective enough to support all children and narrow the achievement gap between children from less affluent families and all children living in the area.
- Family support workers and play leaders are welcoming and communicate effectively with parents and children, building good relationships. However, due to low overall engagement rates, not enough families are benefiting from the activities and services. Parents and carers, including grandparents, who access services are positive about the centre and feel that their views are listened to and acted upon.
- Evaluations of all sessions run by the centre are carried out regularly by staff. They are beginning to use this information effectively to inform their planning. However, staff observations are not always sharply focused on children's learning and development.
- Individual family files capture the impact of services on outcomes for families with greatest need. The use of the early help assessment is becoming embedded as more staff are trained. Tracking used to help leaders and managers monitor the overall effectiveness of the work is just being implemented.
- Family support work is of good quality and leads to positive outcomes for most families and children, including those with additional needs and disabilities. Staff refer families to children's social care services appropriately when concerns escalate. However, case recording systems are unwieldy and time consuming. Action plans to support parents and carers are completed and updated regularly, but they are not sufficiently focused on impact for families and sometimes lack precise timescales.
- Not enough families are accessing adult education opportunities and support into employment due to low engagement with workless families and under-developed links with agencies to support them. Outcomes for adults who access these services are not tracked. Volunteering opportunities are good and well managed by the children's centre. Volunteers receive a comprehensive induction and useful training in safeguarding and understanding their role.
- Children in the reach area are generally healthy. However, reducing obesity is a priority for the centre because the obesity rate is not reducing quickly enough. The centre provides support in this area, for example through cookery workshops and healthy snacks served in all groups. A striking display in the centre's activity room raises families' awareness of the amount of sugar in drinks and food.
- Joint working arrangements with health professionals, for example at baby clinics, are effective in supporting target families in need of additional support. Parents receive good advice to ensure children are safe and to improve their health and well-being. The small numbers who attend parenting programmes are positive about these courses. Several mothers told the inspectors that their confidence and understanding of their babies' communication skills and development needs had increased. They also reported that they had received helpful guidance from family support workers and play leaders.
- The centre is responsive to the needs of the area, for example running specialist groups for families isolated in rural areas. Young parents receive support with budgeting and mothers newly arrived in the area are supported sensitively to make contact and share experiences. One mother said, 'When I arrived I knew no one. The family support worker is always available and gives freely of her time, even if not on duty.'

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The advisory board is well established, with good parental representation and understanding of the needs of the local area. Members of the board help the centre to identify families who may benefit from services. Members challenge the centre on registration and engagement targets. However, they receive insufficient financial information to influence key developments and check the impact of their decisions.
- There is a lack of coherence between individual action plans and the overall plan for the centre to address main priorities. Timescales and success measures are not always precise. Staff attend training events, but these opportunities are not closely linked to the key priorities identified in the plans. The leaders' observations of direct practice are not sufficiently frequent.
- Partnership with social care services and the family resilience team is developing. A named social worker has been recently linked with the centre to strengthen communication. Early intervention and prevention services are establishing new ways of working together, such as through the forum meetings, but these are in the very early stages of development. Professionals acknowledge there is a need for improved information sharing and greater clarity of roles between children's social care services, the family resilience team and the children's centre to ensure that families are provided with a fully coordinated approach.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are comprehensive and staff know how to implement them in order to reduce the risk of harm to children and families in need. All staff are trained regularly and safer recruitment processes are followed appropriately. There are a low number of child protection or child in need cases with family support worker involvement in the area. The centre provides support for looked after children by providing a safe and comfortable environment for contact visits.
- Partnerships with pre-schools are well established and staff regularly attend early years network meetings. However, links with some primary schools are not strong enough. Partnerships with community groups, such as the local childminding network, toddler groups and the church, enhance the work of the centre. Good liaison is made with relevant professionals to ensure that children with a disability access services through the Barnardo's Little Breaks service.
- Leaders know what they need to do to improve and self-evaluation is accurate. Managers are open to external advice and the system of reviews are used well to develop services further. Supportive professional supervision and setting targets for staff are conducted regularly. These are appreciated by staff, stimulate their commitment and contribute to their training and development.
- Centre staff make best use of available resources to provide a wide range of services and support families at risk of greatest need. However, there is limited staff capacity to meet increasing needs in some areas, such as in Buckingham Park and Newton Longville. A strength of the staff team is their enthusiasm and dedication to cover each other's work at times of pressure. They also ensure that the environment is cheerful, welcoming and 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. |

Centre details

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| Unique reference number | 23432 |
| Local authority | Buckinghamshire |
| Inspection number | 447555 |
| Managed by | Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority |

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| Approximate number of children under five in the reach area | 890 |
| Centre leader | Sarah Elliott |
| Date of previous inspection | Not applicable |
| Telephone number | 07506 868752 |
| Email address | sarah.elliott2@barnardos.org.uk |

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