

Salisbury Central Children's Centre Group

24 St Edmunds Church Street, Salisbury, SP1 1EF

Inspection dates	27–28 November 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected as a group

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable	
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 group of centres requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Leaders and managers are not able to measure the continued engagement of priority families accurately. This is because information is not collected in a helpful and timely way.
- Although the number of children and families registered and accessing services is improving, too few parents from some priority groups regularly attend services.
- Systems to track the progress that children and adults make are not well developed or used systematically. As a result, leaders and managers are not able to confidently demonstrate the difference that the centre has made to improve outcomes.
- The local authority has an overly optimistic view of the centre's performance and the targets set are not always specific, measurable or based on outcomes for families.
- Progress towards addressing the recommendations made at the previous inspection of Salisbury City Children's Centre had been slow until the appointment of the new children's centre manager.
- Advisory board members have not been trained to effectively undertake their roles, use data and provide good levels of challenge and support.
- The range and number of courses available for adults are limited and this limits the centres' ability to improve the economic well-being of priority families.

It has the following strengths:

- Almost all two-year-olds take up their free entitlement to early education.
- The new centre manager has energised and enthused staff and partners alike, many of whom recognise the improvements that have been made to the accessibility of services and that are now being made to the quality of services.
- Families benefit from joined-up health services and activities to promote healthy living. These contribute to good rates of sustained breastfeeding and better than average levels of obesity.
- Information sharing about children who are looked after, those subject to child protection plans and those in need has improved very recently. This means that staff now know who these children are so that help and support can be provided.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve access to services by ensuring:
 - systems to collect and analyse information on engagement rates are strengthened to enable leaders to know how well priority families are attending
 - the proportion of priority families accessing services, particularly those living in the Friary area, lone parents and families living in workless households, increases
 - that almost all three- and four-year-old children living the most deprived areas access free early education.
- Improve the quality and impact of services by ensuring:
 - tracking systems are strengthened so that leaders can check the progress of targeted children and adults and adjust future services
 - that the range and number of adult learning opportunities are increased, so that the large majority of targeted adults improve their parenting and employment prospects
 - quality assurance processes are strengthened to ensure that all case files are of the same high quality.
- Strengthen the impact of governance by:
 - ensuring that the centres' improvement plan includes targets which are specific, measurable and based on outcomes for families so that their needs are met
 - providing training for advisory board members so that they understand data and provide good levels of challenge and support to leaders and managers.

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.

This inspection was carried out by three Additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with: the centre leader; front-line staff; and representatives of the local authority and Spurgeons. They also met with: parents; a social worker; a health visitor; a midwife and student midwife; and an early years advisory teacher. In addition, they spoke with representatives from early and adult learning providers and members of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited services delivered from both children's centres and jointly observed two sessions with staff.

The inspection covered the following centres: Elim and Salisbury City.

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

Inspection team

Michael Blakey, Lead Inspector	Additional Inspector
Aileen King	Additional Inspector
Patricia Collis	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Salisbury City and Elim Children's Centres form the Salisbury Central Children's Centre group. The number of children under five years of age is 1,653. Just over one in 10 live in the least advantaged areas that the group serves. The remaining areas are relatively more affluent, with some in the top 1% most affluent in England. Most families are White British with approximately one in from families from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. One in 10 children live in poverty and the proportion of families living in workless households is lower than that seen nationally.

Salisbury City Children's Centre is located next to a Methodist church in the centre of the town and there is no on-site childcare. It was inspected in 2011 as a stand-alone centre and judged to be satisfactory. Elim Children's Centre shares its site with South Hills City Nursery (URN EY473420). The nursery is subject to a separate inspection and the report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Spurgeons, a national children's charity, runs a total of six centres in the local area on behalf of Wiltshire local authority. A children's services manager oversees all six centres. The centres in the Salisbury Central group share an advisory board, which is due to merge with the advisory board of Little Folly Children's Centre, also managed by Spurgeons. A children's services leader oversees these three centres but services are not shared with this third centre. The staff team working across the group includes: a senior practitioner; three family support workers; two early years workers; and two administrators.

The centres deliver or signpost families to a range of services including health, adult learning and early education. They also deliver targeted family support work, often out in the homes of families in most need.

The centres deliver or facilitate access to: family support; early education; adult learning; and health services. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are generally in line with or above those expected for their age.

The centres have identified the following as priority groups: lone parents; children living in workless households; teenage parents; parents experiencing mental health issues or drug and alcohol abuse; and two-year-old children eligible for free early education.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Systems are in place to monitor the registration and attendance of families, including those expecting children. However, the way that the centre collects data means that the leaders and managers cannot measure the sustained engagement rates for some priority families.
- Overall, about half of the children living in the local area have made use of a service once or more over the last year. Around one fifth of children aged nought to three years access services more than five times. However, only a minority of lone parents and half of families living in workless households have attended centre services over the same period. Their sustained engagement is low.
- Families who are expecting children have good access to services. Midwives routinely refer families to the children's centres if they identify additional needs for an expectant parent. The proportion of teenage parents accessing services at least once is good, but the centre does not routinely check on their attendance over time.
- Recent changes to how health visiting clinics are delivered, partly as a result of a newly appointed health visitor lead, are starting to improve access for families to health services for everyone.
- The centre has good access to information about births in the local area. Staff use this information

well to let families with babies know about the children's centres and the services they provide. As a result, the number of children registered has steadily increased and is now around 72%.

- The centres have recently become more effective at targeting services towards those families in greatest need. As a result, almost two thirds of children living in the most deprived areas access services once or more, which is higher than the rate seen across the community the group serves.
- Most two-, three- and four-year-old children take up their entitlement to free early education. However, in the most deprived areas too few three- and four-year-olds make use of their entitlement. This is an aspect for further improvement, particularly given that achievement at the end of the Reception Year is not yet good in these areas.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- An adequate range of effective services are well located and accessible to families, including those in priority groups. However, services aimed at improving the economic well-being and parenting skills of adults are very limited. Those that are delivered are often of high quality, but not always well attended.
- Systems to track the progress that children and adults make as a result of attending children's centre services are not effective. Many of the early years providers in the area are now sharing information about the progress of targeted children. However, this is not completed systematically or analysed effectively by leaders and managers.
- Family support workers make a discernible difference to the lives of those families who take up their help, including some very vulnerable children and parents. However, staffing issues have limited the number of families that the centre has been able to work with over recent months. As a result, not all case files have been maintained to the same high standard.
- At just over half, the proportion of mothers sustaining breastfeeding is just above local and national levels. Likewise, the proportion of reception-aged children who were at a healthy weight in 2012 was well below levels seen nationally. The local authority has not provided access to any new data on healthy weights for over two years and the centres are unable to ascertain if this good picture continues.
- Two thirds of children achieve a good level of development in the Elim area and 61% in the city. This is slightly better than the national picture. However, achievement in the two most deprived areas is considerably lower at 23% and 33% respectively. The centres have only recently been provided with such detailed information and have not yet therefore had the opportunity to analyse this to inform future planning.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Progress made to address the recommendations of the previous inspection of Salisbury City Children's Centre has been too slow. However, more recently, the local authority has started to improve access to information, including that relating to children known to social care. They have also started to challenge the performance of the centres more effectively.
- The new children's services lead of the group has made a notable difference in a relatively short period of time. This is evident in the improving access rates and positive views of a wide range of partners and centre staff. Prior to this change in management the centre was not improving quickly enough.
- Staff value the supervision which they receive on a regular basis and family support cases are discussed to ensure families are effectively safeguarded. Staff also have access to, and take up, an appropriate range of training to support them to undertake their roles.
- The advisory board meets regularly but too few key partners are involved and members have not been trained to undertake their roles effectively. As a result, board members have not held leaders to account or helped them to drive improvements. Partners are confident that this situation is being rectified with the appointment of the new manager. Changes in leadership of the board, and the

merger with Little Folly Children's Centre advisory board, are already having a positive effect but it is too soon to judge the impact of these changes.

- Although the centre has made steady progress in improving access in recent months, targets for improvement are not clearly defined in the centre's plans. As a result, it is not always clear to leaders and those responsible for governance if the centres are improving quickly enough.
- Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and all staff and volunteers are safely recruited and trained. Looked after children, those subject to child protection plans and those in need are now all known to the centre as a result of improved information sharing since November 2014. Professionals work well together to support these children, but sometimes important information, including early assessment forms, are not shared in a timely manner.
- Recently resources have been used more effectively to provide a satisfactory range of services, which contribute to improving the well-being of families and particularly those in priority groups.

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 well-being 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	80116
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	447611
Managed by	Spurgeons on behalf of the local authority.

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,653
Centre leader	Rachel Draper
Date of previous inspection	Salisbury City 2–3 February 2011
Telephone number	01722 580034
Email address	rdraper@spurgeons.org

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 21079 Elim Children's Centre
- 22622 Salisbury City Children's Centre

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