

Derbyshire - Alice's View Group

Alice's View, North Wingfield, Chesterfield, S42 5XA

Inspection dates	25–27 November 2014
Previous inspection date	Not Previously Inspected

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		Good	2
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:

- Insufficient numbers of families from either identified priority groups or living in the areas of highest deprivation engage meaningfully with the group's services.
- The uptake of free early education for two-year-olds is too low.
- Systems to track the impact of children's centre work on child development are under-developed.
- Outcome and performance targets are insufficiently precise or challenging.
- The quality and use of data has limited the impact of leadership, managers and governance on further increasing the number of vulnerable families engaging with the available services.

It has the following strengths:

- Support for extremely vulnerable families is very good and shows a strong commitment to multi-agency working.
- Safeguarding arrangements are particularly robust.
- The number of children achieving a good level of development has improved significantly in the past year.
- Parents engaging in the children's centre services develop their parenting skills, confidence and employability well.
- Arrangements to collect and respond to the views of service users are innovative and effective.
- Good management structures and staff supervision ensure that the quality of practice and services is improving.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of families from priority groups and those living in the areas of highest deprivation engaging meaningfully with the group's services by;
 - making families with children under 5 years old living in the areas of highest 10% deprivation an additional target group
 - devising strategies to promote early childhood services and engage families so that a very large majority of each target group in each children's centre reach area engages with relevant services
 - ensuring that all families from the area attending either children's centre programmes or accessing the services of partner agencies are registered with the group.
- Increase the take up of two-year-old entitlement to free early education so that most target groups do so by;
 - working with partners to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the numbers entitled
 - ensuring that families are aware of their entitlement
 - further promoting the advantages of early education to them
 - helping them find accessible providers with places available.
- Continue to implement and develop systems further, to track children's development and the impact of children's centre work on it.
- Work with the local authority, managers and the advisory board to ensure that performance targets are sufficiently precise and challenging to drive forward improvement rapidly and to enable all concerned to monitor the group's progress and hold managers to account more effectively.
- Improve the quality of performance data so that leaders and managers can use them more effectively to set targets and monitor the group's performance by;
 - tightening administrative procedures to ensure that relevant information about those using the centres or accessing any partners' services in the centres is recorded and reported so that it is included in the relevant data
 - establishing protocols with early years settings being supported by the group so that all those attending such settings register with the children's centre group are identified if they belong to one of the target groups, engage with other relevant services and are recorded as participating in the services.

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings or telephone interviews with local authority officers, senior managers, centre staff, volunteers, service users, representatives from partner organisations, advisory board members, local primary school head teachers and nursery school and childcare setting staff.

The inspection covered all four centres; Alice's View, Clay Cross, Stonebroom and Tupton Children's Centres. In addition to each children's centre, inspectors also visited an adult education centre and provision in community venues.

They observed the centres' work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including safeguarding policies and procedures and parents' views from satisfaction surveys and evaluation questionnaires.

Inspection team

Lead inspector Clifford Rose

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ken Fisher

Additional inspector

Judith Elderfield

Additional inspector

Jean Samuel

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

The Alice's View children's centre group, which is managed by the local authority, consists of four centres in North East Derbyshire. The centres are: the Alice's View Children's Centre in North Wingfield and the Clays Cross, Stonebroom and Tupton Children's Centres in the towns/villages of the same names. Two coordinators manage the group jointly with each having a particular responsibility for two of the centres. The group forms part of a multi-agency team (MAT), managed by a team manager within the children and young adults service. The MAT is one of eight within the North East Derbyshire and Bolsover locality managed by a locality manager. Derbyshire County Council also has a quality assurance manager with responsibilities for all 54 local authority children's centres in the county. The children's centre group has a single advisory board, which is chaired by the head teacher of one of the primary schools in the area, and has members representing a range of partners and stakeholders. The locality manager and MAT team manager attend board meetings

The combined reach area is largely rural containing a number of small towns and isolated ex mining villages. The area has high levels of deprivation including, in North Wingfield and Clay Cross, areas in the highest 10% in the county. Many families live on benefits, and unemployment is inter-generational. In some households no family member has ever worked. The area is characterised as one where many of the population have low aspirations for their lives and their children's, and there is a general historical distrust of agencies and the Local Authority.

The area includes 19 primary schools. The total number of children under five years old in the combined reach area is 2385 of which 1546 live in areas of up to 40% highest deprivation. Alice' View reach area has 696 children, Clay Cross 571, Stonebroom 614 and Tupton 504 aged 0-4.

The Tupton centre opened in 2011 on the site of the Tupton Primary school and has not been previously inspected. The other three centres were all separately inspected during that year. Since then the Clay Cross centre has moved and is now in an integrated hub shared with the Adult learning Service in the town. The school is subject to a separate inspection and the report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk

The centres offer a range of universal and targeted programmes and drop in support for families, hosts partner agencies such health service clinics and provide crèches to support parents attending adult education or parenting programmes.

The group SEF identifies two priority groups as teenage parents and children under five years old living with domestic violence. It also recognises from local knowledge, partner agencies and data that drug and alcohol misuse and parents experiencing poor mental health are issues for the Group.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Too few families from identified priority groups engage meaningfully with the children's centres. Data indicate that all families from both priority groups register with the children's centres but only a third of teenage parents engage with the centres.
- The children's centre group does not classify families living in the 10% most deprived areas in the county as a target group. A large majority of these families register with the centres, but only a minority engage with the services. The larger number live in the Alice's View reach area.

- The take up of funded early education places for eligible two-year-olds is not high enough. Take up of three- and four-year-old places is far better. Not all eligible two-year-olds have a place in a setting judged by Ofsted to be at least good. Centre staff evaluate the use of such settings carefully on a case by case basis, tracking the children's progress and providing them with appropriate additional support.
- A large majority of all families with children under five-years-old are registered with the centres and a majority engage with the services. Parents who attend the centres are very positive about the impact that the various activities, both universal and targeted have on them and their children.
- Multi-agency working by, and with, children's centres is very strong. The families' needs determine the best organisations to be involved. This can include those dealing with debt management, housing and re-housing, children's education or healthy living.
- Targeted services focus sharply on families' identified needs. The incidence of domestic abuse and domestic violence is high. Appropriate specialists, for example, children's centre workers, health visitors, nursery nurses, police, outreach workers from the local domestic violence and sexual assault service, are involved in early help assessment meetings and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) to help resolve the situation.
- All children on child-protection plans are known to the children's centres. Almost all access children's centre services. Partnerships between staff within the children's centres and social care ensure effective plans to ensure a consistent and effective package of support when children no longer need the support of social care or when cases need to be escalated.
- Families attending ante-natal appointments and post-natal weigh-ins in the children's centres learn about the centres, their purpose and programmes of universal services. The shared hub with adult education on the Clay Cross site and on site crèches help parents to access learning.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The percentage of children achieving a good level of development on starting school has improved significantly. The gap between lowest achieving children and their peers is reducing. The introduction of the 'Every Child a Talker' (ECaT) programme is having a positive impact on language development.
- The range of universal and specifically targeted services for families living in the group's reach area is good. Universal services include; ante-natal and post-natal clinics, Baby Weigh, ECAT, Little Explorers, Messy Monkeys, Sensory Time, Stay and Play, and Story Time.
- A close working relationship with local nurseries and schools has a positive impact on children's transition to nursery or school. Consequently, children settle in quickly and are ready to learn. However, tracking of child development within the children's centre group is relatively new and not yet fully embedded. Staff do not yet use data routinely to ensure that high levels of engagement with the children's centres lead to a good level of development for more vulnerable children as they enter school.
- Effective multi-agency support follows a detailed early help assessment, when centre staff or partners identify a vulnerable family. Parents speak very highly of the non-judgemental support they receive and the significant impact on their lives. Comments such as 'the children's centre has been my lifeline' are frequent and heartfelt. Case files are well-maintained. Needs are skilfully assessed, prioritised and acted upon as quickly as possible.

- Skilful use of the Early Help Assessment and a common electronic tracking system shared with social services ensure that families receive appropriate levels of support. Health and safety and safeguarding have a very high priority and protecting the children from harm is paramount. Good inter-agency work and communication ensures that the most appropriate professional takes the lead role. Children's centre workers share their very good knowledge of early-years development and expertise with social workers and others.
- The centres support the development of healthy lifestyles. Parents receive advice on health care including breast feeding and weaning at on-site midwifery clinics and during activities such as baby massage. Staff signpost parents to specialist services where necessary. However, obesity levels are rising and too many mothers smoke in pregnancy.
- Staff encourage adults to participate in Family Learning and to gain literacy and numeracy qualifications. Adult learning service data show that those who complete courses achieve their objectives and many progress to other programmes. However, children's centre staff do not monitor individual parents' take up of opportunities or progression to other courses sufficiently.
- The group's response to domestic violence is good. Programmes to help the victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse regain their confidence and move on have a very strong impact. Children's centre staff, who work with the victims, make many referrals to the Derbyshire Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Service.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders do not make sufficient use of the available data to identify all the particular groups in the reach areas most in need of support. Consequently, targets set during the group's annual conversation and subsequently in its development plan are insufficiently precise or challenging. This detracts from the ability of children's centre leaders, their line managers and the group's advisory board to monitor or challenge the group's performance more effectively.
- Some data is incomplete. During the inspection, it became apparent that a significant number of families with children attending childcare settings supported by the group had not been included in engagement data. Other families have attended programmes in the centres without registering and were absent from both registration and engagement data. Managers took immediate action to rectify this situation.
- The group's senior leaders do not make sufficient use of other data. For example although programmes are well planned with appropriate capacities and staff allocation there is no routine production of data on actual attendance in order to make value for money judgments or influence future plans. There are no apparent health targets.
- The group's position within the Multi-Agency Team (MAT) and locality management structures strongly supports multi-agency working and a holistic approach to the support needs of vulnerable families. The MAT and locality managers recognise the good quality of the work being done in the group and strongly encourage the two coordinators to share good practice with other children's centres including two others in a neighbouring group for which the coordinators also have management responsibility.
- The supervision and line management of staff is strong. Managers support staff well but also take appropriate robust action to deal with poor performance. Staff development and managers' support for their attendance on appropriate training courses is good. Senior managers conduct regular external checks to promote 'customer-service excellence' and monthly case audits.

- The group sets a high priority on safeguarding. It uses the local authority's robust safeguarding policy and procedures, which cover the recruitment and employment of staff and volunteers and issues such as the use of mobile 'phones and cameras. Staff access a wide range of training courses and are fully informed about their safeguarding responsibilities.

- The group has an innovative and effective method of gathering parents' views and suggestions. Two weeks before the quarterly advisory board meetings staff run a series of 'lunchtime liaison sessions' in each of the centres. Parents attend and put forward their views over a light healthy lunch. Their suggestions or requests are incorporated into an action plan and put forward to the advisory board. The relaxed atmosphere and offer of lunch has effectively encouraged attendance where previous attempts to engage parents in more conventional parent forums had failed.

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.

Group details

Unique reference number	80009
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	453055
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2385
Group managers	Lisa Buxton & Diane Harrison
Date of previous inspection	Not Previously Inspected
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This group consists of the following children's centres:

- Alice's View Children's Centre (20063)
- Clay Cross Children's Centre (20748)
- Stonebroom Children's Centre (22945)
- Tupton Children's Centre (23366)

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