

Carlisle North Sure Start Children's Centre

Briar Bank, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 9SR

Inspection dates

Previous inspection date

2–3 December 2014

Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable	
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 is a good centre.

- Effective relationships with a wide range of professional partners, including those in health, schools, early years settings and social care encourage the good sharing of information at a local level. This has helped to ensure that a large majority of families identified as most in need of support access services.
- A range of good-quality sessions that are open to all, and those specifically for the families identified as most in need are offered across the area. These are matched carefully to the needs of families; they help parents to support children's early learning and development and to keep them safe and healthy.
- Staff are skilled because of the close attention that is paid to their professional development. This, together with high levels of commitment, ensures that the services they provide, such as parenting programmes and support for children and families with additional needs have a very positive impact on the lives of families.
- Leadership, governance and management of the centre are effective in most aspects. The centre knows its strengths and areas to develop. The effective centre manager is aspirational and dedicated to improving families' lives. As a result, the quality of practice and services is improving continuously.

It is not outstanding because:

- Systems to track and monitor the progress of adults who are signposted to adult learning courses with partner agencies are not robust enough.
- Data provided at a strategic level by the local authority and health partners are not specific enough to the reach area. The development plan lacks sufficiently precise targets for improvement so that the centre is able to measure more accurately its impact and celebrate success.
- There is insufficient challenge and support provided by the advisory board due to the lack of recent attendance by some key partners.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Implement systems to ensure accurate monitoring of the success and progress made by adults who are signposted to partner agencies for adult learning courses.
- The local authority should enhance the impact of leadership and management including governance by working with Barnardos and the centre manager to improve the monitoring and evaluation of the centre's work by:
 - working with health partners at a strategic level to ensure that the centre is provided with locality based health data that are accurate and up to date
 - improve further the centre's development plan so that all targets are precise and measurable
 - improve the level of challenge and support provided by the advisory board by increasing the attendance of all key partners.

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager and local authority representative. They also held meetings with centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners, including health, education and children's social care professionals.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions held during the inspection including, 'Let's Get Moving' and 'Family Learning, Arts and Crafts' and jointly observed a session with the play, learning and childcare coordinator. They also involved the children's centre manager and local authority representative in all team meetings.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, such as the centre's self-evaluation, development plan, a sample of case studies, parent evaluations, key policies and the centre's equality and safeguarding procedures. Throughout the inspection, they also took the opportunity to talk with adult and child users of the centre.

Inspection team

Tara Street, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Maureen Deary

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Carlisle North Sure Start Children's Centre is a standalone centre. It offers a range of services which include child health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education, home-based family services and crèche facilities.

There are approximately 578 children aged nought to five years in the reach area, of which 39% live in the 50 to 70% most deprived areas in the country. The families that the centre has identified in need of its services and support are: families living in the most deprived areas, children with additional educational needs, families experiencing domestic violence, minority ethnic community families and those families identified as in greatest need. Most families are from White British backgrounds with a small, mixed minority ethnic community. Housing is a mix of social or private rental with some areas of high affluence and privately owned housing. Levels of unemployment are low, with 4% of children living in households dependent upon workless benefits. Most children enter early years provision with knowledge and skills that are in line those typical for their age. There are links to the two primaries, one junior and one special school and childcare provision is delivered by a range of partners in the community. These are subject to separate inspection arrangements and the reports are available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Governance of the centre is provided by Barnardos on behalf of the Cumbria local authority, in conjunction with an advisory board that includes providers, delivery partners, members of the local community and users who attend the centre.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Most children and families in the area are registered with the centre and have good access to the range of services that are offered. Active involvement in the local community, including partnership work with social care, schools and health professionals ensures that the staff are made aware of families, including those expecting children, who are in the most need of their services. For instance, staff regularly attend the health visitor allocation meetings so that they are kept up to date with all new births.
- Staff work hard to involve families who fail to participate regularly, particularly those who may be less likely to do so. This has resulted in an increase in the number of families accessing the services. This includes those who are living in the areas where there is most economic hardship, families from minority ethnic heritages and those families as identified as in greatest need.
- Families' needs are assessed accurately and thoroughly. Multi-agency meetings are used well to ensure support is matched carefully to meet families' needs. Outreach and home-based family work is highly effective and involves a wide range of partners. For example, close partnership work ensures that families experiencing domestic violence have appropriate packages of support quickly put in place.
- Support provided to families whose children have additional educational needs is a particular strength of the centre. Staff are trained Portage workers and work effectively with families and partners to identify needs. For example, Makaton sign language courses are offered for both parents and professionals from across Carlisle. 'Messy Play, Movement and Sensory' play sessions are offered in partnership with the special needs school to help ease the transition into nursery and school.
- Almost all three-and four-year-olds are taking up their free education in good or better settings. The centre has worked closely with parents and the local authority so that the large majority of two-year-olds are taking up their free entitlement to nursery education.

The quality of practice and services**Good**

- A range of good quality and relevant activities is delivered by the centre's staff team and their partners. Parents and children play together in enjoyable, well-planned sessions such as 'Let's Get Moving', 'Time to Play' and 'Baby Play'. These enable children to make good progress in their social and language development and so get ready for starting school.
- Partnerships with local schools, early years providers and childminders to share good practice, training opportunities and new development are very good. As a result, the majority of children living in the most deprived areas achieve a good level of development by the end of the early years and the achievement gap is narrowing. For example, one headteacher commented that: 'Ongoing long-term work by the centre has resulted in a real change in some families' circumstances for the better.'
- Parents feel very well supported in knowing how to keep their children safe and healthy through highly effective parenting courses, first aid, healthy eating sessions, road safety discussions and talks from the police and fire service. As a result, families and children accessing these services are leading happier, safer lives.
- Families who find themselves in complex and chaotic situations receive prompt attention from centre staff. Family support workers work closely with key agencies and organisations to provide effective early interventions and to support families in times of need. They are particularly good at fostering good relationships, providing help and support where there is economic hardship and at helping multiple-birth parents. As a result, the centre is helping to improve life chances and reducing inequalities.
- The centre is not set specific health targets and does not receive accurate information about important health indicators in the specific areas served by the centre. This includes, for example, data about the proportion of mothers who breastfeed or who smoke in pregnancy, the take up of childhood immunisations or emergency hospital admissions for children aged under five years. Therefore, it cannot ensure that the centre's work is focused on those parts of the area with the highest level of need. Nevertheless, staff work hard with local health professionals to overcome these shortcomings. They offer good-quality advice to parents about following a healthy and balanced diet whenever possible. Staff also endeavour to support actively breastfeeding, as well as helping parents to keep their children safe.
- The centre provides a range of good-quality adult learning activities such as 'Family Learning, Arts and Crafts', 'Let's Get Cooking', 'Steps to Success' employability programme and 'Money Matters' to help with budgeting. As a result, many parents develop knowledge and skills that increase their chances of employment and of progressing to further education. However, not enough information is collected about the achievements of adults or about their progression once they have finished their course when signposted to partner agencies off site.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**Good**

- Governance, leadership and management arrangements are clear, well understood and generally effective. The local authority monitors regularly the performance of the centre. In addition, it provides appropriate data to the centre. However, there is insufficient up-to-date information about health outcomes that relate precisely to the reach area. In addition, while the centre's development plan identifies appropriate priorities to improve, the local authority and centre manager do not always set sharp targets for improvement on which to measure progress and successes. As a result, this hampers the effective monitoring of the centre's performance.
- The highly committed centre manager and her staff team are well aware of where the centre needs to improve further. They work well together and ensure that resources and services available meet the needs of young children and their families.
- A wide range of partners, including parents, are members of the advisory board. However, attendance by some key partners over the last six months has been low. As a result, the previously

strong level of challenge and support has diminished.

- Performance management and supervision are well established and methodical. They include direct observation of sessions and interactions such as home visits. Staff training and the appraisal process are linked very carefully to where the centre needs to develop further and to the aspirations and expertise of staff.
- The highly skilled workforce focuses successfully its efforts on having maximum impact on reducing inequalities, tackling discrimination and improving the well-being of local families.
- Case files and records are maintained to a high standard. The quality of record keeping and reference to the child's voice are given the highest priority in planning the type of support offered to a family. This means that early help has the maximum impact on the well-being of young children.
- Staff take their duties relating to safeguarding very seriously. Policies and procedures are thorough and the Early Help Assessment process is used well to assess need and to decrease levels of risk. The centre provides good support for children who have been identified as in need or who are subject to a child protection plan. This is helped by good working relationships with colleagues from social care.
- Parents demonstrate good levels of satisfaction with the centre and make their views known through the parent forum group, session evaluations, surveys and a 'You Said, We Did' board. As a result, parents have a meaningful role in helping to shape services at the centre.

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

Unique reference number	20568
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	447480
Managed by	Barnardos on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	578
Centre leader	Julie Fletcher
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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