

Young Parents Sure Start Children's Centre

Alexandra Road, Tipton, DY4 7NR

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2015

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 is a good centre.

- The centre is highly effective in its work with young parents. Staff work extremely hard to reach and support the high number of young, expectant mums.
- Strong partnerships have a positive impact on the number of young parents accessing the centre's services. A wide range of professionals work well together to help parents improve their well-being and life chances.
- A very large majority of young families most in need, access free early education places for their two year-old children.
- Young parents benefit from a wide range of tailor-made services which are offered mostly in their homes. The centre's services significantly improve young parents' health, social, emotional and economic well-being, as well as helping to reduce inequalities.
- Parents speak highly of the centre. They identify rightly that the staff provide good quality care, guidance and support for family workers.
- The safety and well-being of the young parents and their children is of prime concern to all who work with them and results in reducing any risk of harm.
- Leadership, management and governance are effective. Effective staff appraisal systems also enable the sharing of best practice. Close checks enable managers, the local authority and the governing body to successfully monitor the impact of the centre's services and the work of the staff to improve the outcomes for children and families.
- Staff and managers work very well together as a small hard working team who are driven to improving centre services and benefit the young families they are supporting.

It is not outstanding because:

- The centre has not succeeded in improving health outcomes relating to breastfeeding. The proportion of young mothers who breastfeed their babies is too low.
- There are insufficient opportunities for parents to participate in further education and training to develop their employability skills and enable volunteering and employment opportunities.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- In partnership with health professionals work effectively to increase the numbers of mothers who continue to breastfeed their babies to meet or exceed the level seen nationally.
- Increase the opportunities for parents to participate in volunteering, further education and training to develop their employability skills and help them gain paid employment.

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 Additional Inspector.

The inspector held meetings with the centre co-ordinator; local authority managers; representatives from the advisory board; parents; family nurse; Rowley cluster manager; young fathers worker; intensive family support worker; early help coordinator; specialist services manager; early years teacher; and two family support staff.

The inspector visited a parent's home with a family support worker and observed an activity, focussing on writing curriculum vitae (CV).

The inspector observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. The inspector looked at the centre's self-evaluation, activity plans, case files, safeguarding procedures, policy and practice and a wide range of other relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Qaisra Shahraz, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Opened in 2010, the Young Parents Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre located in Tipton. It is the only centre of its kind in England with a remit to support young families across the borough of Sandwell. The centre's key target group is young parents. It works primarily with those parents who have had their first child by the age of 19 years. Sandwell has the 26th highest teenage pregnancy conception rate in England and Wales.

The centre works in conjunction with all the other children's centres in the borough. It delivers family support in the home, through peer support groups and 'Stay and Play' groups and other activities in conjunction with partner agencies, in local children's centres and community settings.

There are 43 children under five years of age living in the area served by the centre. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are slightly below those typical for their age. The large majority of parents are White British. Some of the areas served by the centre have communities amongst the 30% most disadvantaged in England. Housing is mainly social housing or private rented accommodation. Most of the young parents are dependent on workless benefits.

The centre coordinator has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the children's centre. Governance is provided by the local authority and a shared advisory board with seven other local children's centre clusters.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The Young Parents Children's Centre is highly successful in its work with teenage mothers. Good information sharing with midwives and health visitors, enable staff to contact families from pregnancy onwards. As a result, young parents, across the borough of Sandwell, including those expecting their second child and some fathers, are known to the centre. A large majority of these targeted young parents, who are referred to centre services, remain engaged and sometimes for two or three years until their often complex needs are met.
- A wide range of targeted services are offered based on an accurate analysis of centre information and that provided by the local authority and partner agencies. Family workers, health and early years professionals work extremely well together to support vulnerable young families effectively.
- Staff are very sensitive to the difficult situations faced by young parents. To suit parents' personal circumstances most of the services are offered in parents' homes. Parents, in particular, value the specialist and highly personalised support provided in their home environment by the extremely resourceful family outreach workers who go 'that extra mile' to meet their individual needs.
- In partnership with other agencies the centre facilitates the engagement of those young parents experiencing domestic violence, parenting issues, mental health concerns, housing and financial issues, particularly well. 'They have helped me and taught me a lot', 'Staff do everything for me and sort out all my problems', 'They are really good people. As soon as we call, they will come' are some of the comments shared with inspectors by grateful young parents.
- The two-year-old progress check is used well to ensure that almost all children identified as needing early intervention through this process receive early help to access the support they need. A large majority of young parents most in need, access free early education places for their two year-old children.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The quality of services is good. Despite running with reduced staffing, a good range of relevant services including home-based activities as well as those offered in other local children centres are provided. Parents develop their self-confidence, emotional well-being and their personal lives as a result of the centre's good work and family circumstances are vastly improved.
- Health outcomes present a mixed picture. Most young families take advantage of the immunisation programme to protect their children. The centre places a strong emphasis on adopting a healthy lifestyle. Health-related sessions, such as 'Cook Well', 'Fabtots' and those held in parents' homes help to raise awareness of the importance of healthy eating. However, the take-up and sustained rate of breastfeeding babies among mothers remains significantly low.
- Parents appreciate the opportunity to learn from the family support workers and receive good advice about caring for their children through the centre's 'Changes' parenting course. Similarly, they improve their self esteem through the 'Chin Up' programme. However, the centre recognises that opportunities for adults, to improve their basic skills, gain formal qualifications and take part in centre's activities through volunteering which might help them back into employment, are currently under-developed.
- Children benefit from the specialist home visiting services offered by the early years teacher jointly with the family support worker. The use of a specific assessment tool kit enables children's abilities, and progress to be accurately gauged. The personalised home learning activities for children meet their needs well and have a clear focus on their speech and language development.
- Information, advice and guidance provided by the family support workers help to signpost and support young adults to other partners for advice about benefits and employment opportunities. They help with children's routines, cooking and fill in grant forms for new furniture. This includes parents with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for parents recovering from post-natal depression.
- For those young parents unable to access these services family support workers provide quality one-to-one support and guidance in their home. As inspectors observed during a home visit, this can include help with the filling in of a job application form or writing of a first draft of a CV for a job in retail.
- Case files are maintained to a high standard by family outreach workers who clearly record the positive impact of their work in assisting improved family outcomes. Case files are closely checked by managers through the 'pre-supervision audit', thus ensuring best practice in protecting children and families most at risk.
- Parents' views are gathered informally. Regular consultations with young parents' across Sandwell are used to plan centre services. This results in some services being regularly reshaped to meet the complex, wide ranging and frequently changing needs of young parents and their families.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Governance, leadership and management are highly effective. Those responsible for governance hold the management to account for the quality and impact of the centre's work. The centre manager is both challenged and supported well by the local authority and the advisory board. The local authority has set a clear strategic direction for the children's centre future development.

- Self-evaluation is accurate. Targets for improvement are clearly defined. The delivery plan is focused on appropriate priorities, which are shared with and understood by partners.
- The centre manager and her small team of staff are resilient, and work extremely hard to support families. They are highly skilled in adapting the services to suit the age of the young parents and their children, resulting in rapid improvement of, and good outcomes for, families. Families benefit from the efficient use of high quality resources which give good value for money.
- In partnership with other agencies working locally, managers have successfully implemented a quality cycle of activities using the, 'Early Help Quality Assurance Framework' to monitor the effectiveness of services. This includes the 'Moderation Panel Audit' and the use of 'Scorecard' and 'Outcome Star' as effective assessment tools to check the impact of centre services.
- Performance management arrangements are robust. Through the effective use of a 'pre-supervision audit' and 'Work Plan', staff are encouraged to critically reflect on their performance prior to their main supervision. Family support workers benefit from well-chosen staff development opportunities that both meet their personal needs, centre priorities and work-related requirements.
- Parents appreciate the inclusive ethos of the centre and the staff's dedication in removing inequalities. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to reducing barriers for young parents with often highly complex needs. At a practical level this includes the provision of bus tickets to parents, to enable them to access services across the borough of Sandwell. Where activities are less accessible in Tipton or in Rowley by public transport, the centre also provides community transport, including the use of a minibus provided by Krunch, one of its valued partners.
- Safeguarding protocols and procedures are consistently applied by knowledgeable staff. Staff take swift and appropriate steps to protect children who are at risk of harm. They routinely carry out rigorous home safety checks, thereby effectively raising parents' awareness about safeguarding issues. Staff use the Common Assessment Framework procedures very effectively with various agencies to support children in need or who are subject to child protection plans.

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 details

Unique reference number	23719
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	454483
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	43
Centre leader	Charlotte Hingley
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0121 5211544
Email address	charlotte_hingley@sandwell.gov.uk

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