

# Sandwell - Tipton Cluster

24 Ridgeway Road, Tipton, West Midlands, DY4 0TB

<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 January 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	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 children's centre group is good.

- Despite periods of significant change, staff have worked tirelessly to continue to run groups and ensure families are not affected. Their work has resulted in the vast majority of families regularly accessing services. Registration rates for all priority families have continued to increase.
- The centre group is directly reaching the large majority of local families, including those most in need of support. Those living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, teenage mothers and vulnerable families all benefit from regularly attending its good quality services.
- Children benefit from good quality early learning activities held at the centres. As a consequence, when they start school, they are very well prepared for learning and make good progress.
- Centre group staff clearly understand the difficulties local families face and work hard to provide relevant services to help those most in need.
- The quality and range of services are consistently good. Leaders and managers continually monitor all on-site activities and programmes and ensure these are of high quality and meet families' needs.
- An increasing number of parents develop their skills through courses, volunteering opportunities, and by completing relevant training.
- Significant progress has been made in improving services since the new management arrangements began in January 2015. The new management team is highly effective and good improvements are already being seen.
- The protection of families who are most in need is seen as a high priority. Practice is effective in keeping the most vulnerable safe.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Monitoring systems are not fully effective in ensuring the good quality of case files.
- Although the centre checks the progress of parents who access courses at centres within the cluster it is not able to sufficiently track those who attend courses at other venues such as the local college.
- Health services do not always share up-to-date relevant information with the centres sufficiently well with regard to breast feeding and smoking in pregnancy. This means that it is difficult for centre leaders to make decisions, in the light of changing trends, about the health needs of local families and the impact of the centre's work.

### What does the group need to do to improve further?

Strengthen the good leadership and management arrangements by:

- ensuring all systems for recording information and maintaining accurate case files are embedded across the group and reflect the high quality work undertaken by staff
- continuing to improve the existing monitoring system to evidence the longer term impact of the group's services in particular on improving the learning and skills of adults who access training with external partners.

Strengthen its work with health partners and, in particular, Public Health, midwives and local hospitals to increase breastfeeding rates and reduce smoking in pregnancy so that improvement targets are met or bettered by:

- looking closely at existing services to see which are having the best impact on increasing breastfeeding rates and reducing smoking in pregnancy
- sharing information and data regularly and targeting resources more precisely.

### 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. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are Burnt Tree Sure Start Children's Centre, Tipton Sure Start Children's Centre and Great Bridge Sure Start Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre group manager, strategic lead, Chief Executive for Murry Hall Trust and senior leaders from the local authority. They also met parents, centre staff, representatives from bought-in services, health professionals, local head teachers and early years groups, members of the district advisory board and representatives from social care including the centre social worker.

The inspectors visited a range of services and activities taking place at each of the centres, including play and stay and baby massage.

Inspectors observed the centres' work, spoke informally with parents, conducted a joint observation of a play and stay session and looked at a range of relevant documentation. This included the group's development plan, Early Years Foundation Stage Profile information and reports on the centres' performance.

### Inspection team

Susan Crawford Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Joy Law

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tara Street

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

Services for children and families in Sandwell are delivered in seven locality areas. The Tipton locality children's centres service is managed by Murray Hall Community Trust on behalf of the local authority. The locality advisory board covers the whole of the cluster, comprising of most key partners and assists in the group's governance.

There are three children's centres in the locality that are managed by the children's centre cluster manager. The Tipton locality covers the wards of Tipton Green, Princes End and Great Bridge. The group has been established since August 2012 and recently gone through considerable re-organisation. Services are shared across all of the children's centres which are open Monday to Friday each week.

There are approximately 3,748 children under five years of age living in the locality area. The population is diverse with a mainly White British community and smaller Asian and Black community living in Princes End and Great Bridge. Burnt Tree has equal numbers of White British and Asian families. Tipton has nearly a third of young children living in households in receipt of workless benefits. Children's skills, knowledge and ability on entry to school are below the levels typical for their age.

The main priority groups identified by the centres include: teenage parents, families living in deprived areas, workless families, children being supported by social care arrangements and parents and children who are victims of domestic abuse.

The centre group offers a range of services for families and children under five years of age. These include child health services and family support, including outreach and signposting for those seeking employment. The group runs a crèche for some of its activities. The services are run from the three centres that comprise the group and different community venues, including Young Persons Children's Centre, Glebefields Primary School, Ocker Hill Primary School, St Martins Primary School, and Sacred Heart Primary School. Two of the children's centres have registered early years on-site provision, which subject to a separate inspection. The reports can be found on the Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Staff effectively use the information they collect about local families with young children to provide groups and services which accurately match their needs. Therefore, families make good use of centre's services and are improving their life chances and well-being.
- Staff work hard to successfully engage the large majority of families from the three main target areas of Princes End, Burnt Tree and Great Bridge. Engagement with Princes End has been successful due to the effective use of community venues to widen access to local families and using appropriate resources to help meet their needs.
- The centres are particularly successful in engaging with teenage mothers in partnership with the Sandwell Young People's Children's Centre and the family nurse partnership. Currently, 75% of teenage parents living in areas served by the centres regularly access services.
- Strong links with other agencies mean all children subject to child protection arrangements are known to the centre. At present, 91% of these regularly access services. The remaining 9% are

known and currently supported by other agencies.

- Baby clinics are regularly delivered from all of the centres and St Pauls Community Centre. This means parents, including parents-to-be, quickly learn about the support programmes available to them when they most need them.
- Parents, particularly those who are currently out of work, have good access to programmes which develop their literacy and numeracy skills. This enables them to successfully support their child's learning.
- Considerable work has been completed to engage adults, especially those who are known to be unemployed and lone parents, in training and further education. Consequently, at least 20 parents are taking up volunteering opportunities at any one time and a large proportion goes on to successfully gain employment.
- Most children take up free early education for three- and four-year olds as do an increasing number of eligible two-year-olds. The centre targets those who do not engage and as a result a further 54% now take up their two-year-old funded place. The group's close working relationships with schools and early years settings, including childminders, and the work of the early years advisor ensure that the large majority of young children access good-quality provision.
- Centre staff routinely use methods such as mapping exercises to check up on which families are regularly accessing services. They have good systems to ensure that families who do not attend are supported through other aspects of the centres' work, for example taking the play bus out into their local area and regular family events such as those held in local parks.

### The quality of practice and services

Good

- The tracking of children who attend children's centre services who go on to school or registered early years provision shows that the majority make good progress in their learning compared with those who do not access centre services.
- Partnerships with early years providers and schools are strong, supporting the quality and consistency of the early years offer delivered in a range of settings. Local support groups for early years provision value the support of the children's centre teacher and centre staff who have helped to build their capacity and skills in providing at least good quality early education. This aids children's transfer to school, reduces inequalities and supports their next steps in learning.
- Particularly good support is offered to parents who are victims of domestic violence. Consequently, families in crisis know where they can get the help and support they need.
- Staff are skilled in identifying and nurturing parents' skills. Parents enjoy the wide range of opportunities to extend their skills and knowledge, including English, mathematics and information and communication technology courses. Parents' progress is tracked when they attend internal courses. However, when courses are provided by adult education partners no feedback is given to the centres to enable them to see if their intervention has made a difference.
- Staff work hard to improve the health and well-being of local families. Designated courses are run to help parents and children understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. For example, staff have been trained in safe sleep which has helped to reduce infant mortality in Princes End. There is high uptake in children's immunisations across the area served by the group. However, some information provided by health is out of date and not specific to the local area. This includes accurate details about initial and sustained breastfeeding rates which appear low and smoking in pregnancy. The links with all appropriate health services are not yet strong enough to develop

strategies to bring about better breastfeeding rates and reduce smoking in pregnancy.

- Centre staff work closely with other services to provide a range of high quality relevant services that keep children and families safe. Timely and robust checks ensure families, including those at risk of abuse, receive the help and support they need. Detailed home visits and good partnerships with other agencies, such as housing, have significantly improved safety in the homes of some families.
- Parents were unanimous in their support for the centre when talking to inspectors. They clearly recognise and fully appreciate the positive impact that staff and services have on their lives. Typical comments included, 'You can be having a really bad day but you forget that when you arrive at the centre.' 'It's a happy place to go when you are down and need help'.

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

Good

- Leaders and managers have successfully taken the centre group forward through a period of many changes and staffing re-structures. Leaders have managed this process well, protecting most frontline services and resources. They have a clear vision for the development of the group's effectiveness and communicate this well to all staff. Resources are used efficiently and effectively.
- The new management team is highly focused on delivering services of a high quality and meeting local families' needs. Revised systems are now in place to help leaders clearly monitor the numbers of families registering with the centre group and accessing services. This means any slippage is quickly recognised, analysed and relevant systems are introduced to keep parents engaged with services.
- Improvements have been made to the way in which information is provided by the local authority. This helps the local authority and staff to monitor the impact of the group's work with families. Leaders and managers recognise that more work is necessary to fully embed this process to ensure the longer term impact of services on improving the outcomes for families is tracked closely.
- There are minor inconsistencies in the way staff record the work they do with families. This does not always fully reflect the good work and positive outcomes that have taken place. Discussions at staff supervision are not always linked to the case file so that all the information on a family is in one place. Potentially this means some information could get lost.
- The advisory board is very supportive of the centre group's activities and is chaired by a parent volunteer. The board effectively challenges the centre group on its performance and all members have high expectations of the group's ability to meet the targets set by the local authority. Self-evaluation is accurate, and staff and partners are clear about the group's strengths, weaknesses and future priorities.
- The centre group has established strong partnerships with a number of organisations working in the community to identify local needs and offer courses designed to meet them. Partners value the strong relationship they have with centre staff. They confirm the trust built up with parents helps families to seek help from other agencies, for example in times of crisis to help with housing, benefit advice and in cases of domestic violence.
- Safeguarding procedures to protect children in most need, and those known to be at risk, are good and effective. Excellent partnerships with other services, such as social care, the police, health colleagues and schools, mean children in most need are consistently supported well. As a

result of agencies working together and using processes such as the Common Assessment Framework so well, the numbers of children being supported by social care are decreasing.

- Good procedures are in place to identify accurately children's and parents' needs. Children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans, and those deemed to be in need are well supported. Early help assessment systems are used well to identify individual needs and respond with timely support.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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 group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80612
<b>Local authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	453916
<b>Managed by</b>	Murray Hall Community Trust on behalf of the local authority.

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	3,748
<b>Centre leader</b>	Lynsey Matthews
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not Previously Inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 557 4341
<b>Email address</b>	lynsey@burnttree.org.uk

**This group consists of the following children's centres:**

- 20514 Burnt Tree Sure Start Children's Centre
- 23322 Tipton Sure Start Children's Centre
- 21296 Great Bridge Sure Start Children's Centre



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