

Carlisle South – Botcherby SureStart Children's Centre

Botcherby Family Centre, Ennerdale Avenue, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA1 2TS

Inspection dates	28–29 January 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

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 leadership team have translated their vision of a centre that is a central part of the community into reality. The provision of activities and services at a wide range of community venues has ensured that they are easily accessible to all families. Good leadership and management have also increased the levels of life changing opportunities for families.
- Staff are extremely passionate about their work. High-quality support from senior leaders, including well-planned professional development, help staff to convert this passion into consistently good and sometimes outstanding practice. For example, the quality of support offered to families during difficult times in their lives is excellent.
- The large majority of families access a wide variety of good quality activities and services. These are well attended and help to improve the quality of life for children and their families. Some services, such as the support offered to families with disabled children, are exceptional.
- There are good opportunities for adults' to develop their skills and levels of employability through access to a wide range of courses and volunteer roles at the centre.

It is not outstanding because:

- The local authority does not set the centre sufficiently challenging targets to improve its performance. In addition, attendance on the advisory board by partners is quite sporadic. As a result, the centre is not being supported as well as could be in its move towards becoming an outstanding centre.
- The centre does not receive accurate and up-to-date information from health partners. This makes it hard for the centre to measure the impact of its work to improve health outcomes.
- Improvements to outcomes for children at the end of the early years period are relatively slow. The centre has not yet developed a robust strategic plan for improving children's communication skills or to involve even more families from minority ethnic heritages in activities.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the impact of the leadership and management of the centre so that life chances for children and their families improve further by:
 - working with the local authority to set more challenging targets that can be rigorously monitored by a well attended advisory board that involves a broader range of partners
 - collaborating with health partners at a strategic level to secure more robust and timely data so the centre can measure its impact of its health promotion work more accurately
 - increasing the pace of improvement for children in the early years by implementing a robust strategic plan to aid children's communication skills
 - encouraging even more families from minority ethnic groups to be involved in the centre's work.

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 three additional inspectors. The inspectors held meetings with the leader of the centre and the Resource Manager. They also spoke to other staff who work in the centre and a representative from the local authority as well as members of the advisory board. Conversations took place with staff from partner agencies, including a range of health professionals, staff from the adult education service and local schools as well as staff from the child and family support and child protection teams. The inspection team also held discussions with parents at different times during the inspection. Inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

The inspectors visited a number of venues including Harraby Community Centre, Botcherby Children's Centre and Pennine Way Community Development Centre.

Inspection team

Susan Walsh, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Cathryn Parry	Additional Inspector
David Ellwand	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Carlisle South – Botcherby Sure Start Children's Centre provides services to children, young people and their families living in Harraby, Botchery and St Aidan's wards. The centre has staff based at various venues including Harraby Community Centre and Botcherby Children's Centre. Many of the centre's services are delivered at range of locations in the local community.

The day-to-day management and provision of service delivery is the responsibility of Barnardo's as part of a contract awarded by Cumbria County Council. The county council has very recently made changes to the way the centre's performance will be monitored. An advisory board oversees the work of the centre. The centre offers early childhood services including family support and health services as well as aspects of adult education.

A significant number of families live in relatively disadvantaged circumstances. Of the families in the areas served by the centre, 28% live in households dependent on workless benefits. Most families are of White British heritage although there is an increasing number of families from minority ethnic groups moving into the area.

Most children in the area enter school with skills that are below those typical for their age.

The groups identified by the children's centre as most in need of its support include children who are in danger of being subject to a child protection plan; children living in minority ethnic households, children living in low income households, teenagers who are pregnant and young parents as well as families with a disabled child.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- A large majority of families, including those expecting children and those from groups who are in the most need of support, are registered with the centre and regularly access the support and activities that are offered. Due to a concerted effort by staff to publicise the centre's services the number of families accessing services is rapidly increasing. As a result, families are becoming more confident to engage in the centre's activities.
- The taking of activities out into local venues ensures that they are easy to access and are well attended, including by those who are less likely to do so. The centre has been particularly successful at involving and supporting families who have low incomes including helping them to gain employment.
- The take up of free early education at the age of two by those who are eligible is also high because parents are made aware of the places that are available for their children.
- Clear systems, combined with effective partnership work, ensure that the families in need of the most support are quickly identified and have access to relevant services to improve the quality of their lives. For example, good links with specialist midwives make sure that teenage and young parents are quickly identified and that the large majority benefit from the high-quality care offered by the centre. Likewise, strong links with range of other professionals ensure that the large majority of children in need or placed on child protection plans are involved the children's centre services.
- The centre provides a good range of activities for families from minority ethnic groups, including English lessons for adults and swimming sessions which are extremely popular. Nevertheless, engagement rates by this group of users are not quite as high as for other groups.
- Assessment at the age of two is used well to identify children who need additional support, particularly those who need extra help to encourage their development. Almost all local families who have a disabled child take full advantage of the wide range of valuable activities provided by the centre, including those that have been developed specifically for these families.

The quality of practice and services**Good**

- The centre provides a wide range of relevant targeted and universal services which are delivered in a variety of venues that are convenient to users. However, there are still a small minority of families who do not attend and therefore cannot gain from these good quality services. As a result, the impact of the centre on improving children's well being and the lives of families is good rather than outstanding.
- Support for families in times of crisis is of very high quality and is appreciated by parents. A typical comment was 'Brilliant! so helpful. It's been a lifeline' Families do not have to wait for support but can access regular drop in sessions where their needs can be attended to immediately. Where support is over a longer period of time case files and records are maintained to a high standard. The support for families where the use of drugs and alcohol has the potential to interfere with family life is particularly strong. As a result, the centre is seeing children who are living in healthier, happier households.
- The centre has recognised that rates in the area for sustaining breastfeeding are historically below average. However, much has been done to improve the way breastfeeding is promoted and level of support available to new mothers. Although rates of obesity at the end of the Reception Year are in line with national average; the centre is aware that the proportions of children who are obese rise sharply as children grow older. The centre has addressed this by including messages about health in all its sessions; for example, during 'Let's Get Moving' adults receive valuable demonstrations of the amount of sugar contained in some processed foods. The centre is also working to encourage attendance at smoking cessation sessions, particularly during pregnancy.
- The centre staff work very well to make sure that those who are in the greatest need are able to access a wide variety of adult learning opportunities. In addition, there is a well-developed and carefully supervised programme of volunteering that involves many local people. The progress of adults is carefully tracked and they are well supported in their endeavours to improve their skills. As a result, many move on to employment because they have better qualifications and higher levels of confidence.
- While some children in local schools are reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception class the speed of improvement for all children has been slow and many are still behind other children of similar age nationally. Improved availability of data has enabled the centre to identify that too many children have below average skills in communication and language, particularly boys and children living in areas where more families come from minority ethnic groups.
- Although the activities that are provided for young children are exciting and motivating there is a lack of a clear overall plan for promoting the development of communication skills for the children that are falling behind.

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

- The centre manager, together with the resource manager, has established an inclusive ethos that places the centre's work at the heart of the local community. There is strong emphasis on reducing inequalities through seamless team work between staff and strong working relationships with a wide range of agencies.
- Performance management procedures and supervision are thorough and link well to a good range of training opportunities for staff. This, together with the opportunities for staff to take on a wide variety of roles and responsibilities has resulted in a highly skilled workforce to meet the needs of families, particularly those that require more intensive support.
- Duties relating to safeguarding are taken very seriously. The Early Help process, which has replaced the common assessment process, is used well to identify need and reduce levels of risk. The centre provides very good support for looked after children, children who have been identified as being in need or who are subject to a child protection plan. In particular, they have worked well with colleagues in social care to reduce levels of neglect and prevent children going into care.
- There is insufficient up-to-date information about health that relates specifically to the reach area.

This makes it difficult for the centre to determine the full impact of its work. However, leaders make good use of local knowledge, and the limited data available, to ensure that services are delivered in areas where there is the most need for families to learn how to live healthier lifestyles.

- The way the centre's work is being monitored by the local authority has recently changed. All that are involved in the changes are enthusiastic about the potential of new partnerships to bring greater rigour to this process. The targets set by the local authority last year were limited in that they were not challenging enough to help the centre to secure outstanding practice. Nevertheless, the centre carefully evaluates its own work and ensures that resources and services are used effectively to meet the needs of young children and their families, particularly those who are in the most need of the centre's help.
- The advisory board discusses the available data and the comparative performance of the centre and questions are asked about the impact of the centre's work on reducing inequalities. However the lack of sufficiently challenging targets from the local authority, together with erratic attendance of some representatives of partner agencies, has hampered the advisory board's efforts to provide a robust level of challenge.

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	23723
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	454012
Managed by	Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,172
Centre leader	Sheraton Shaw
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01228 593810
Email address	shearton.shaw@barnardos.org.uk

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