

# East South Lakeland SureStart Children's Centre

42a Grasmere Crescent, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 6LP

<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 February 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Access to services by young children and families		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of practice and services		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- A minority of families living in the reach are registered and engaged in services. Although registration and engagement rates are improving, the centre has not yet engaged with a large majority of families in some of the groups it has identified as being most in need of its support.
- Systems for tracking the progress of children's learning are not developed well enough for the centre to know how much progress children make from their starting points.
- Few adults take part in training and few act as volunteers. The progress of adults who take part in courses is not effectively tracked.
- The centre does not make best use of the information that it receives to ensure that actions for the future are based on an accurate view of the centre's performance, or that the advisory board have the most accurate view of how well the centre is doing.
- Targets set by the local authority and the centre leaders lack challenge and are not precise enough to drive improvement well.
- Systems for information sharing with social care partners do not always ensure that the centre has the most accurate information about families in need in its area.
- Parents are not sufficiently involved in decision making to help the centre to move forward.

### This centre has the following strengths:

- Staff are well qualified and receive regular training to develop their skills. They are well motivated and successfully increase parents' confidence in their parenting skills and sense of self worth.
- Leaders and those in governance ensure that the services and individual support provided by the centre staff are of good quality and impact positively on the well being of children and families.

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

- Improve the quality of leadership, governance and management by:
  - ensuring better use of data to more accurately inform plans for further development
  - ensuring that the local authority and others in governance set more precise and challenging targets to drive improvement
  - improving the information and knowledge of the advisory board so that they can more effectively hold the centre to account
  - developing parents' role in making decisions to help the centre improve further.
- Improve the quality and impact of services by:
  - developing the tracking of children and adults learning so that the centre knows the progress made from starting points
  - increasing the number of adults taking part in adult learning and becoming volunteers.
- Improve access to services by:
  - increasing the number of families who are registered and engaged in the centre services, including those living in the area of highest deprivation, and families with children eligible for two-year-old funded places
  - improving information sharing with social care partners to ensure that the centre has the most accurate view of the needs of families in its area.

## 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 senior leaders, staff members, local authority officers, partner professionals from other agencies, advisory board members and parents. The inspectors visited the 'Stay and Play' session held at the centre and the 'Inbetweenies' sessions that took place at Kendal West centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation form, improvement plans, policies and procedures, and children's case files.

## Inspection team

Elaine White, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
David Ellwand	Additional inspector
Barbara Wearing	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

The centre opened in 2010 and is based at two sites, one in Kendal East and one in Sedbergh. The sites are approximately nine miles apart. The centre is one of four centres in the South Lakeland cluster. The day-to-day management and provision of service delivery are the responsibility of Barnardo's, as part of a contract with Cumbria County Council. The advisory board oversees the work of the East South Lakeland and Kendal West centres. Many services across East South Lakeland and Kendal West are shared.

There is one children's service manager who is responsible for all four children's centres in the cluster. The manager is currently on sick leave and a temporary manager has recently been appointed.

There are 1075 children under five in the reach area. The area is predominantly affluent with pockets of deprivation. In partnership with other professionals, the centre offers a range of services including health care and information, sessions to help parents support their children's learning and development, and individual advice and guidance.

Most families in the area are White British, and there are a small number of families of East European heritage. Approximately 13% of children live in households dependent upon workless benefits. Most children's skills and knowledge on entry to early years provision are in line with those typical for their age.

The main priority groups assessed in need of the centre's services are identified as: disabled children, children with additional needs and children of disabled parents; expectant teenage parents, teenage parents and young parents under 25 years of age; families with children living in areas of highest deprivation; families living in the most rurally isolated area; and families with children eligible for two-year-old funding.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Requires improvement

- The number of families registered with the centre and accessing services has increased in recent years, but remains just under half of the total number of families in the area. Improvements to the partnership with health visitors means that all expectant parents are now invited to register with the centre either before the baby's birth or at the first post birth visit. This measure is increasing the number of families registering with the centre.
- The centre is successful in engaging with most of the families with disabled children and children with additional needs, and young and teenage parents in the area. The majority of those living in areas of highest deprivation, and families with children eligible for two year old funding, are involved in the centre.
- Centre staff generally use data and local knowledge well to identify families who may need the centre's support, and to ensure that services provided are appropriate. However, data relating to families with children eligible for two-year-old funding is not always used to ensure the centre has accurate view of the extent to which it is engaging with this group.
- Services are provided in different venues and across the four centres in the children's centre cluster. They are sometimes provided on an individual basis in parents' own homes. This helps to ensure that those living in more rural areas are able to access services they need.
- Families participation in services is monitored well to ensure families in most need of support attend.

- Information sharing with partners ensures that families' needs are generally well assessed and met. Centre leaders are aware that the centre is not always routinely informed about the children living in the area that are subject to a child protection plan, or who are identified as being in need, as those families whose needs are being met by other professionals. The centre is working to improve this information sharing.

### **The quality of practice and services**

### **Requires improvement**

- Systems are not in place to track the progress of children from their individual starting points. Therefore, the centre cannot demonstrate that children are making good progress and does not have robust systems in place to identify gaps in their learning.
- Few parents are engaged in adult learning. The centre signposts adults to courses but this is not tracked to show whether adults attend or complete courses or move on to further learning. The centre is working with partners to design courses to better meet the needs of families. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- A small number of parents are well supported to act as volunteers in the centre. The centre has yet to extend this work to provide more adults with chances to develop and contribute their skills.
- Groups run for parents are of good quality. Activities such as the 'Inbetweenies' session are well planned with a strong focus on developing parents' skills in supporting children's learning and development. Some parents reported that they implemented the learning from the group at home.
- There is an appropriate balance of services which are open to all families, and those provided to meet the requirements of families most in need of help. 'Bump Start' sessions are held for expectant parents, and sessions such as 'Stay and Play' cater for parents with babies and young children.
- A 'Bym Bam' session for young and teenage parents is highly valued by those who attend, as are the 'Sparkles' and 'Play and Chat' sessions for parents with disabled children and those who have special educational needs. This impacts positively on improving life chances and reducing inequalities.
- The centre works to improve health outcomes through advice on breastfeeding given at antenatal groups, and session such as 'Let's get Cooking' to promote healthy eating. The most recent information indicates that breastfeeding rates are improving, but that obesity rates are still above the national average.
- Well-planned support is given to parents identified as having suffered from domestic violence and to those experiencing post-natal depression. As a result, these adults report increased well-being, confidence and self-esteem, helping to improve their life chances.
- Centre staff work in partnership with 'Child bereavement UK' to meet the needs of young children in need of support following bereavement. This ensures that children are well provided for by the children's centre and the early years settings that they attend.

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

### **Requires improvement**

- The temporary children's service manager has a good awareness of the centre's strengths and weaknesses and is committed to driving further improvement. She is ably supported by a well-qualified staff team who are highly dedicated to improving provision and reducing inequalities.
- In recent years centre leaders have made improvements to the rates of registration and engagement. However the rate of progress has been hindered by a lack of clear plans for future development. Data has not been used to develop precise, challenging targets and this has slowed the rate of progress.
- The local authority is aware of the need to improve the effectiveness of checks on how well the centre is closing the gap and reducing inequalities, including the setting of more robust targets.
- The advisory board is supportive and is provided with information about the centre's performance.

However, centre leaders and those in governance have not ensured that the board's members have the most accurate view of how well the centre is closing the gap and reducing inequalities. This makes it difficult for the advisory board to effectively hold the centre to account for its performance.

- Effective safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and are well understood by staff. Positive and close information sharing between professionals ensures that the right support is provided to families in need in the area who are referred to the centre, including those subject to the Common Assessment Framework process.
- Staff provide good sustained support for families in crisis, including those who have been subject to a child protection plan. Centre leaders are working to improve information sharing with social care colleagues so that they are routinely informed about the children living in the area that are subject to a child protection plan, or who are identified as being in need.
- Parents speak highly of the centre and its impact on reducing isolation and improving their parenting skills, confidence and well-being. They make their views known informally and these are taken into account in making adaptations to services.
- The centre has taken on a volunteer to promote parental involvement in the centre's work. However, currently no parents are members of the advisory board and there is no established parents' forum. Therefore, parents are not involved in a meaningful way in shaping the direction of the centre.
- Staff are well supervised and attend a range of relevant courses to further their skills and expertise.
- Centre leaders work hard to ensure that financial resources are used as well as possible to provide a range of services that meets the needs of those who are registered in the area, including those in the more rural areas. It has yet to meet the needs of a wider range of families in the area.

**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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	23725
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	454013
<b>Managed by</b>	Barnardos on behalf of the local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1075
<b>Centre leader</b>	Anne Armstrong
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01228 221177
<b>Email address</b>	anne.armstrong@barnardos.org.uk

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