

Airedale Children's Centre

The Square, Airedale, Castleford, West Yorkshire, WF10 3JJ

Inspection dates	9–10 June 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

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

- Whilst the local authority has taken decisive action to improve the impact of all centres in Wakefield, leaders, governors and managers have not yet developed robust improvement plans to ensure this centre makes rapid progress to improve the impact of its work and improves outcomes for families.
- Not enough families regularly use the centre's services until their needs are met.
- The centre's work to ensure parents with the greatest needs, participate in programmes to help them develop their skills and increase their employability, is not well established.
- The proportion of children who access funded early years places for two-year-olds is not yet high enough.
- The centre works well with a good range of health professionals. However, it does not yet gather and use local data to set targets to improve obesity and breastfeeding rates.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The process of managing significant changes to the centre's structure and to staff roles has been effective. It has ensured minimal disruption to services for families and staff remain motivated in their roles.
- Children who attend the centre make good progress and benefit from well planned activities which have clear aims and objectives that help to develop their knowledge and skills.
- The centre promotes safeguarding well. Staff are particularly astute at identifying different aspects of domestic abuse, such as 'teen to parent' violence that affects the safety of local families.
- Families receive good support to overcome a range of barriers. As a result, their life chances and the quality of their lives are continually improving.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Work with the local authority to improve the quality of leadership, governance and management by implementing a robust improvement plan that:
 - is shared and understood by all leaders and managers
 - includes measurable performance targets to ensure the large majority of families with priority needs use the centre until their needs are met
 - identifies strategies to ensure most eligible two-year-old children access free funded places.
- Further develop partnerships with adult learning providers and employment support agencies to:
 - increase the number of parents who participate in programmes that help them progress to employment, education or training
 - improve mechanisms for monitoring the impact and progress of parents who access adult learning or training.
- Further strengthen partnerships with health professionals to:
 - increase the percentage of mothers who breastfeed for sustained periods
 - reduce obesity rates for children in Reception Year.

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 Early Help hub and children's centre staff. They also met representatives from partner organisations, such as health, schools and social care. They also held meetings with childminders, members of the advisory board and parents.

The inspectors visited activities at Kendal Drive and the Acorn centre.

They observed the centre's work including activities, such as 'Chatter Matters' and the crèche. They looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's policies, action plans and case files. They conducted a joint observation of the crèche.

Inspection team

Priscilla McGuire, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anne Mackay	Additional Inspector
Eileen Grimes	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Airedale Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre in an ex-mining community in Castleford, Wakefield. In April 2015, the catchment area for the centre expanded to include two previously designated centres, Acorn and Ashtree. The centre is part of the Early Help hub and shares its building with other local authority services. Governance of the centre is through the local authority and the advisory board.

The centre offers a range of services to families. These include family support, health services, early years education, parenting training and adult learning. Services are delivered from the centre and from other venues in the community.

Many families live in social housing and some in privately owned homes. Over the last 30 years, there have been significant changes in levels of economic activity with an increasing proportion of women being employed and an increasing number of men working part-time. Around 31% of people live in neighbourhoods amongst the top 10 most deprived in England. Most families are of White British heritage.

There are approximately 3173 children under five years old within the community. Most children enter early years provision with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age.

The centre has identified the following as most in need of support: children: subject to child protection, in need and looked after, families whose lives are affected by domestic violence, children with disabilities and children living in households identified as 'troubled families'.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Most families are registered with the centre and have access to the services and support it provides. To reach out to more families, the centre makes appropriate use of social media to advertise services and activities. However, access to services requires improvement because not enough families regularly use the centre until their needs are met.
- Data are not used well enough to monitor whether all the families that the centre has identified with the most needs access relevant services. In addition, not all activities, such as home visits are always included in participation data. This limits the centre's capacity to accurately monitor use of services by priority group families.
- As a result of effective partnership work with midwives and through programmes such as Parents To Be', the centre offers effective guidance support to expectant parents. This 'programme includes helpful guidance for parents on topics such as 'bringing your baby home' and 'keeping your baby safe.'
- Through effective partnership work with a range of partners such as those representing health or schools, the centre shares information well. Staff also refer families with the most needs to the most appropriate service within the centre or externally to other agencies.
- Centre staff know the local community well and understand the barriers that prevent some families, particularly those who may be less likely to do so, from using the centre. This is why they use venues, such as a local rugby club and community centres to provide services in locations that will attract specific families with priority needs.

- Most three and four-year-old children access good or better funded early years places. However, the percentage of two-year old children who access places is not high enough.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The quality and range of services and activities provided by the centre is well balanced on services which are open to all and those specifically for the families identified as most in need of help. In addition, services are used well to help promote the well-being of families. However, not enough parents benefit from the good services offered by the centre.
- Tracking of children's progress shows that the centre is effective in helping to reduce inequalities and it also increases children's life chances. Sessions for children are well planned and have a clear focus on promoting their development and skills.
- Staff work particularly well with health professionals to provide services for families with most needs. For example, through effective partnership work with a consultant paediatrician that provides a service at the centre, children that require early intervention or support are swiftly identified and appropriate services are quickly put in place to meet their needs.
- Breastfeeding support and healthy eating are promoted well. However, breastfeeding rates are too low and the percentages of obese and overweight children in reception year are higher than the average for Wakefield. In addition, not enough data is provided to the centre about local obesity rates and no targets or objectives are set to improve health outcomes in relation to obesity or breastfeeding.
- Case study and case file evidence show that families with disabled children, those affected by domestic abuse receive good individual support. This is a direct result of the centre's thorough and robust assessment of their needs.
- The centre works effectively with other agencies to support parents with children who are on Common Assessment Framework (CAF) or child protection plans. This helps parents to develop a good understanding of what they can do to minimise the risk of harm to their children.
- Centre staff are beginning to work closely with an Employment Advisor to help parents progress to volunteering or employment. The centre also works closely with adult learning partners. However, the centre is not doing enough to monitor participation rates and progress of parents who participate in either informal or formal adult learning and training programmes.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority has taken decisive and positive action to improve the impact of children centres across Wakefield. This has led to huge changes in the structure and work of the centre. However, the process of managing change has been handled well by the Early Help hub manager who has worked hard to provide good and sensitive support to staff during the changes. Levels of staff morale remain good and parents report little disruption to services.
- The local authority provides a good range of information and data to ensure the centre can make a thorough assessment of local needs. Information provided includes a detailed 'state of the area' report which, for example, provides data about the health of both children and adults. However, this data is not yet used well enough to set measureable performance targets for the centre.
- The new Early Help hub structure is beginning to take shape and staff are getting used to their new roles. Some new systems, such as performance management and supervision procedures for staff, are still being implemented. As a result, it is too soon to see the impact of these. Nevertheless, those responsible for governance are aware of the centre's key strengths and areas for development.
- The quality and impact of the centre's work is monitored through processes such as evaluations of sessions. In addition, improvement plans are beginning to take shape. However, these do not yet focus enough on the specific actions that need to be taken to ensure the full impact of the centre's work can be more rigorously monitored and measured.
- Secure arrangements are in place to ensure governance is effective and that the new centre is held

to account by the advisory board. Although the advisory board is new, representation from partner organisations and from parents is good. Board members have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and some have useful experience of serving on other boards.

- Parents have good opportunities to contribute to the running of the centre. Centre staff also use social media to consult with parents. Through an active parents' forum and through their roles on the advisory board, parents contribute well to decision making at the centre.
- The centre promotes safeguarding well. It is particularly successful at promoting greater understanding of some of the more sensitive aspects of domestic violence. For example, through the 'Do it Differently' programme, the centre provides training and support to parents and children whose lives are affected by 'teen to parent' violence in the home.
- An appropriate range of policies are implemented to help families stay safe and to ensure staff are safely recruited and appropriately vetted before appointment. The staff team also includes a social worker and this, together with the centre's close working with social care teams, ensure children subject to child protection plans, children in need and those looked after receive appropriate support.
- Partnership arrangements are effective. As a result of the centre's effective partnership work with health, schools, the police and other agencies, resources and accommodation to meet families' needs are relevant and of a good quality.

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	20047
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	464696
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3173
Centre leader	Sarah Henry
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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