

Crawley 2

Langley Green Centre, Stagelands, Langley Green, Crawley, West Sussex. RH11 7PF

Inspection date 14-16 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Inadequate	4
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group is inadequate. It is not good because:

- The local authority is not effective in its role in helping the centre group to improve. Current procedures for setting targets and making improvements are too complicated and prevent managers from delivering services which families need the most.
- Too few fathers, families from different ethnic groups and children from workless households access services.
- Not enough children, especially two-year olds, eligible for free early years education access early years provision. As a result, not all children are sufficiently well prepared for starting school.
- Governance arrangements are weak across all centres. The centre partnership groups do not sufficiently challenge leaders or help the centres to improve.
- The quality and impact of services is variable. Family outreach workers work tirelessly with limited resources to maintain the range of centre activities whilst also managing complex family support work. There are too few workers to cover the high demand for this work.
- Boys do not achieve as well as girls at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The centres have not addressed this. Links with adjoining schools are not very strong.
- The centres do not routinely measure the impact and quality of their work. There is no tracking in place to monitor children's achievements in learning or parents' progression through training.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- The team manager and centre staff know the needs of the local communities extremely well.
- Links with health professionals are strong and many health services are run directly from the centres. This has a positive impact on improving some aspects of children's health.
- Families who do use the centres appreciate the help, support and guidance they receive from staff.

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 Langley Green and Ifield Children and Family Centre, Northgate Children and Family Centre, and Southgate Children and Family Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings and discussions with the two team managers of the Crawley locality group and each centre coordinator; the local authority's early years and childcare team manager and associate advisor; senior leaders and managers in the local authority; family outreach workers; volunteers; representatives from commissioned services; parents and centre users, and representatives of the centre partnership group.

The inspectors visited a range of services taking place at each of the centres, including 'Play and Learn' sessions, multi-agency meetings and child health clinics.

They observed the centres' work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Jo Caswell	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Penny Fisher	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marianick Ellender-Gele	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Hutchings	Additional Inspector
Joan Lindsay	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

The Crawley 2 children's centre group is one of two groups which cover the Crawley locality. The two groups consist of five children's centres in total. Each group is led by a team manager and coordinators hold responsibility for the daily management of each centre. The children's centre groups work collaboratively together, sharing many services and integrated leadership. Both groups were inspected at the same time. The inspection report for the Crawley 1 group can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The Crawley 2 group consists of three children's centres – Langley Green and Ifield Children and Family Centre, Northgate Children and Family Centre, and Southgate Children and Family Centre. The centre group delivers the full range of children's centre services, including early education, adult learning, parenting support, health services, speech and language therapy and family welfare. Governance arrangements are provided by two centre partnership groups on behalf of the local authority. One group is currently being established for the Southgate centre. An existing group provides governance for both Langley Green and Ifield, and the Northgate centres. Langley Green and Ifield Children and Family Centre is located on the site of Langley Green community centre and Langley Green Primary School. A registered pre-school also shares the same site and is linked to the children's centre. Northgate Children and Family Centre is located on the site of Northgate Primary School. The Southgate centre operates from within Southgate Primary School and is linked with one early years setting. None of these settings were inspected at the same time as the centres. The most recent inspection reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

All three centres serve very diverse communities close to Crawley town centre. The Langley Green community is ranked as the third most deprived ward in Crawley. The area served by the centres includes the highest proportion of children aged under five years from Asian families. Overcrowded homes are a significant issue for families. The population of Langley Green is transient with many families taking extended holidays with relatives overseas. This has led to Langley Green Primary School recording the lowest level of pupil attendance in West Sussex. There is a significantly higher than average number of parents, grandparents and carers living in the Langley Green area who suffer from ill health. The lack of affordable housing and high unemployment are issues for families across Crawley. An increasing number of children live in workless households and this figure has risen since 2009 to its current level of 29%.

The Crawley 2 group of centres serve a multi-cultural population. A significant number of families speak English as an additional language. Crawley is the most ethnically diverse area of West Sussex. Services within the Crawley 2 centre group are targeted specifically at teenage parents, lone parents, families from minority ethnic groups, low income families, children from workless households, parents with emotional health issues, families requiring help with health lifestyle choices, children with disabilities, families living in the most deprived areas and children being supported by social services. Some 3,625 children under five years of age live in the group's reach area. Children's skills and understanding on entry to early years provision are typically below, or significantly below, those expected for their age.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- The local authority should review and improve the quality and use of data in order to:
 - ensure the centres have a clear picture of how well they are engaging with all priority families in the locality
 - ensure that centres know how many two, three and four-year-olds in the locality are taking up their entitlement to early education places
 - set relevant priorities that are based on knowledge of the locality
 - inform action planning and set targets that are precise, achievable and measurable.
- The local authority should ensure that the centres are provided with the support they need to enhance the quality of early education delivered in universal sessions and provide activities to narrow the achievement gap, especially for boys.
- Improve the effectiveness of both the centre partnership groups to:
 - ensure the centres' performance is regularly monitored and the team manager is held effectively to account
 - ensure robust support is provided to help the centres to improve.
- Ensure coherent systems are well established to effectively evaluate service delivery and demonstrate the difference that services are making to children and families in the locality.
- Develop partnerships with schools, early years settings and adult learning providers and introduce systems to track children's and adults' progress from their starting points in order to ensure families are making good progress in their learning and development.
- Review the role of the family outreach worker to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to prioritise individual family support work and the provision of good quality universal early education.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Inadequate

- Due to the excessive amounts of data provided by the local authority, the team manager is unable to accurately assess whether all priority families access services. Data is sometimes unreliable and too much information masks the fact that some families do not benefit from centre services. For example, although initial registration data looks very positive, in 2013 in Langley Green, only a small minority of children from workless households engaged with the centre. This indicates that base line data provided by the local authority is unreliable. Therefore, centre staff are unable to confirm how many families should be reached. For example, the centres are unable to determine exactly how many teenage parents live in communities served by the centres. This means the centres cannot deliver services consistently matched to local need.
- The actual take-up rates of free early education for two, three and four-year olds is unclear. As a result, the centres cannot be sure exactly how many children are benefitting from high quality early years provision. Data provided by the local authority indicates the take-up rate for eligible two-year olds is low.
- Universal 'Play and Learn' groups operate from all centres. This means all families can engage and attendance levels are generally good at Langley Green and Ifield, and Northgate. However, attendance at some groups at Southgate has been poor. For example, the childminder group has not been successful in engaging local childminders and only two parents attended the 'Bumps to Babes' group during the inspection.
- Centre staff, particularly family outreach workers and family information service assistants, work relentlessly to understand the needs of families and signpost them to relevant services. All staff have a very good understanding of the complex needs of the communities served by the centres and use innovative strategies to encourage more families to attend. However, resources are extremely limited and access to some family support is sometimes delayed due to the insufficient number of family outreach workers available.

- Families with high levels of additional needs, such as those with children subject to a child in need or a child protection plan, are supported appropriately to access services.
- There is effective support in place for disabled children. The Langley Green and Ifield centre is used as the 'hub' for services. Centre staff work together with the Portage team and deliver a weekly group for children and their families. The well-resourced sensory room and toy library are used effectively by members of the community and are recognised by professionals as good resources for disabled children.
- Joint working arrangements with the Family Nurse Partnership mean there is designated support for the teenage parents known to the centre.
- The Local Assistance Network provides valuable support for families at times of crisis, including those with emotional health problems, and this has helped more families in need to access centre services.
- A support group for fathers and male carers, 'RH10 Men' meets on a monthly basis, although numbers attending are still relatively low. The group offers a good range of activities to help fathers and male carers understand some aspects of children's development. However, the group has not sufficiently focused on helping parents understand how to support the learning needs of boys. Given the recognised under-achievement of boys at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, this is a priority area.
- A range of ante-natal services are delivered directly from the centres. This ensures the expectant mothers and prospective parents who access these services receive appropriate levels of support.

The quality of practice and services

Inadequate

- All centre staff work exceptionally hard under difficult circumstances, due to limitations in resources and reductions in funding, to ensure safeguarding issues are prioritised. In the recent year when staff absence has been a critical issue, all staff have worked above and beyond what is expected to deliver as many services as possible and continue to maintain a varied programme for families. However, these services have not always been targeted at the main priority areas. This is because data made available to centre staff is not useful and has not been used to set specific centre objectives
- Support to improve the economic well-being of parents and carers is available and there are some opportunities for parents to undertake courses, such as first aid and cookery courses, to enhance their personal development. Some parents who speak English as another language have benefitted from language classes. A small team of volunteers work within the centre and there has been some success with this. A few have progressed on to employment and credit the centres' influence in raising their confidence. However, the opportunity for other adults to progress into formal training and accredited learning is inhibited, because staff do not routinely assess the individual development and training needs of parents who wish to return to education and employment. Links with external training providers are still at an early stage and the tracking of parents' progress is not routinely monitored.
- The quality of early years provision is weak. Due to the limitations in the number of family outreach workers and the significant pressures on centre coordinators and the team manager, centre services are not systematically reviewed. Sessions lack focus and several parents told inspectors they would like to gain more from the activities by understanding how to support their children's learning and development at home.
- There are no systems in place to monitor children's development and progress. Targeted services do not implement procedures to track children's starting points when they first begin attending sessions or identify any potential signs of developmental delay. Consequently, when children move on to school, the centres have minimal evidence to demonstrate how they have contributed towards supporting children's achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Parents using the centres' services appreciate the benefits it brings them. Many parents told inspectors they had made friends at the centre and it had reduced their feelings of isolation. One parent stated she had felt 'inspired' after an advisory session on weaning and now prepares freshly-made food for her babies. Another parent expressed the view of many by stating, 'If the centre was

not here, I do not know what I would do.'

- Centre staff work in close partnership with health professionals to promote families' well-being. The centres have been part of the Healthy Children and Family Centre programme and this has increased staff's knowledge of promoting good health outcomes. Health visitors spoken to by inspectors were keen to acknowledge the positive impact of delivering health services from children's centres. One health visitor described children's centres as 'amazing'. There has been good support in Northgate for the promotion of breastfeeding and child health clinics are well attended, resulting in lower levels of childhood obesity in this community. However, the improvement of other health outcomes is harder for the centres to evidence due to the lack of tracking and limited evaluation.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Inadequate

- At centre level, the team manager and centre coordinators work efficiently together. Through their local knowledge of the communities served by the centres, they fully understand what families need. However, the local authority does not help the centres' leaders to deliver highly focused services which have maximum impact on improving the lives of local priority families. This is because information drawn from data analysis is not used to target relevant services. Therefore, it is difficult for the team manager and her staff to accurately and robustly measure the impact of the centres' services on making required improvements.
- It has been a difficult year for the centres due to the long-term absence of the team manager who has only just returned to work. However, the team manager from the Crawley 1 group must be commended for the way in which she has overseen the management of both Crawley groups and led the entire staff team during the year. This has meant services have continued to operate and staff have benefitted from clear direction and regular supervision.
- The local authority clearly demonstrates a strong commitment towards providing high quality children's centre services. However, too much focus has been placed on devising extensive performance management systems which are not used efficiently to monitor the centres' under-performance. For example, too many targets are set for the group to achieve which are not based on accurate, robust data analysis. Objectives in the service delivery plan are not based on an in-depth understanding of the priority needs of local families and so lack precision.
- Governance arrangements are ineffective. The development of the centre partnership group is still being established at Southgate. However, arrangements at the Langley Green and Ifield, and Northgate centres are slightly better where this group is now beginning to understand its role in monitoring the centres and holding the team manager to account. However, this work is still at an early stage and there is limited evidence of any well-embedded systems which are making a clear difference in driving improvement. The lack of accurate data, precise targets and performance measures mean those responsible for governance cannot contribute efficiently towards the centres' continuous improvement.
- Despite a clear message from the local authority highlighting the under-achievement of boys at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, this has not been set as a strategic priority. The Early Years Foundation Stage results from 2009 indicate children living in the communities served by the centres continually achieve less well than the county and national average. Only 25% of boys from the Langley Green and Ifield area achieved a good level of development in 2013. The group has not received on-going support from an early years teacher to address this under-achievement. Therefore, the centres' programmes do not routinely address this and the under-achievement continues year-on-year.
- Partnerships with key stakeholders, such as schools and early years provision, are not fully established. This means even when centres share the same site as schools, partnership working and the sharing of information is limited and expertise is not utilised. Targets are not shared at strategic level which means partner agencies cannot be held account for their own performance and contribution towards the centres' services.
- Safeguarding arrangements are in place and contribute mainly effectively towards protecting vulnerable children and families. Written policies and procedures ensure staff working with children

are appropriately trained and have a clear understanding of the procedures to follow to protect the welfare of children. Agencies work together effectively and centre staff respond swiftly to any concerns about a child and family. The use of the Common Assessment Framework procedures is improving and there is evidence of good joint working between all agencies. This has led to a reduction in the number of vulnerable children being referred to social services. The centres' close involvement with a number of agencies ensures children subject to a child protection plan, or a child in need, receive appropriate levels of support.

- The centres have been operating with significantly reduced resources. The family outreach team is under-staffed and there are too few staff in place to cover the high demand of work needed in this area. The family outreach workers' role is too diverse and covers too many areas of responsibility, including involvement with intensive family support work and the delivery of early years universal services. This is currently being recognised by the local authority and the role is under review. The lack of input from an early years teacher has significantly affected the quality of early years provision. These issues have had a negative impact on the quality of service the centres wish to provide and limits the group's ability to promote equality of opportunity for all.

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.

Select details

Unique reference number	80266
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	430110
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3,625
Centre leader	Tika Patel
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01293 651747
Email address	Tika.Patel@westsussex.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 80266 - Langley Green and Ifield Children and Family Centre
- 80266 - Northgate Children and Family Centre
- 80266 - Southgate Children and Family Centre

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