

Telford and Wrekin - The Wrekin

Shortwood Children's Centre, Limekiln Lane, Telford, TF1 2JA

Inspection date	23–25 April 2014		
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	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:

- Parents play too little part in the leadership and governance of the centres.
- The centres are not engaging with enough families whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. There is not enough availability of the good quality services provided.
- Only a minority of children achieve a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the Malinslee area the proportion is considerably lower; and overall boys do less well than girls.
- Leaders have limited access to data to demonstrate the impact of the centres work on children and families over time; and action planning lacks a robust focus on improvement.
- There is little evidence that the range of health promotion activities are reducing inequalities over time, in relation to obesity, breastfeeding and smoking at the time of giving birth.
- There is insufficient tracking of adult learners progress and their pathways to employment and further education. Consequently, the centres can provide little evidence of individuals successes in this regard.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- The commitment and enthusiasm of leaders and staff is a strength of the group.
- Effective partnerships with key agencies including the Citizens Advice Bureau, Family Connect, some schools, and key health partners is helping some children and families to improve their lives and well-being.
- There is a good range of adult education and learning opportunities.
- Engagement with Traveller families and teenage parents is good.
- Performance management arrangements are robust and all staff receive good quality support by experienced and professionally qualified leaders.
- Leaders, managers and governance at all levels are ambitious for change and improvement. There are challenging and determined plans being implemented, designed to transform the way services are delivered.

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. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are Shortwood Children's Centre, Wellington Children's Centre, Malinslee Children's Centre and Newdale Children's Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre group manager, the centre leaders; senior leaders from the local authority and health; early intervention practitioners; early childhood providers, childcare consultants, volunteers; health and social care professionals, Jobcentre Plus, adult education and commissioned services; parents and centre users; and representatives of the centre locality board.

The inspectors visited a small range of services offered, including 'Playing Together', 'Let's Get Busy', Family Connect, breastfeeding support at the Princess Royal Hospital, and Job Junction.

The inspectors visited each of the children's centres except Malinslee Children's Centre which was closed for the Easter holidays. Many partner agencies were on Easter break, so were unable to make a contribution to the inspection.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including case files.

Inspection team

Deborah Udakis	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Susan Crawford	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter Towner	Additional Inspector
Ann Taylor	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

There are 12 children's centres in Telford & Wrekin. The Wrekin Children's Centre group was established in 2012. The group is led, on behalf of the local authority, by a centre group manager. Together with the centre leaders they hold responsibility for the daily management of each centre. Following restructure in April 2012, in addition to delivering the 0-5 years Sure Start Core Purpose, the group became a 0-19 age range family support service, offering a broad range of evidence based programmes with a completely new staff team and skills mix. The children's centre group works together, sharing many services and there is some shared leadership with the key health partners.

The Wrekin group consists of four children's centres; Shortwood Children's Centre, Wellington Children's Centre, Malinslee Children's Centre and Newdale Children's Centre. Each of the four centres deliver a range of services, including early childhood services, adult learning, parenting support, health services, speech and language therapy and family welfare. Governance arrangements for the locality are provided by the local authority and the locality board. Registered early years provision is located across the children's centres area. None of the early childhood settings were inspected at the same time as the centres. The most recent inspection reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The group covers a large geographical area and serves families with complex needs, including feelings of isolation, coupled with poor transport networks, urban poverty and poor social housing. In Malinslee the number of children living in households dependent on workless benefits is considerably higher than seen nationally.

The centres serve families who are predominantly from White British backgrounds but there are an increasing proportion of families of Asian, Eastern Europe, Black and Chinese heritage. In the Shortwood area, there are a higher proportion of Black and minority ethnic families, with 20% from Pakistani ethnicity, compared to the Borough average of 10.5%. In Malinslee, 75.1% of children and 65.3% of the children in the Shortwood area, live in the top 30% most deprived areas. Families living in the Newdale area are poorly served by public transport links and local amenities.

Shortwood Children's Centre serves an established Traveller community. Very few families attending the centres speak English as an additional language. Services within the group are targeted specifically at teenage parents, low income families, children with disabilities, families living in the most deprived areas and children being supported by social services. Some 4620 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 well below expected levels for their age.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attainment of all children by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that children are provided with consistently good or better quality learning opportunities
 - ensuring that those children who are at risk of falling behind their peers are provided with additional help and support so that they catch up and fulfil their potential
 - ensuring that assessments used to evaluate the child's progress are accurate
 - improving the quality and the consistency of sessions so that children are always making accelerated progress in their play and learning
 - recording accurately children's progress and development and always sharing these records with parents
 - consistently promoting and reinforcing the spoken and written language and helping children's

early knowledge of letters and the sounds they make.

- Continue to improve the effectiveness of services in supporting children and families to develop healthy lifestyles by ensuring:
 - that more mothers initiate breastfeeding and continue to breastfeed their child beyond six weeks
 - children’s obesity rates are reduced and
 - that the proportion of mothers smoking at the time of delivery is reduced.

- Improve the availability and analysis of data to demonstrate the impact of the centre’s work on the life-chances of children and families overtime; and improve action planning to include precise, challenging and ambitious targets for improvement across health, early years and adult education, for all groups, but especially those from target groups; and use rigorous evaluation to monitor progress against the agreed objectives.

- Increase opportunities for parents and carers to contribute their views and opinions, to shape services and activities, and influence the strategic direction of the centre.

- Increase the numbers of children and families engaged in centre services and activities, particularly those children aged one to two-years-old, by expanding the range and availability of activities and groups available to families and close to where they live.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The centres offer an important but limited range of targeted and universal services. Those parents who made their comments known said that they really like the services provided in their local community but that there are too few groups and services on offer during the week and during school holidays.
- Health Visitors provide essential support and close attention to babies under one year. Swift referrals are made by health professionals to the children centre group if necessary to ensure that the most vulnerable children receive the necessary services needed to improve their well-being.
- The centres have a long established and trusting relationship with Traveller families living in the locality. Engagement with these families and their children is good; as is the engagement with teenage parents. However, overall the centres are only having regular contact with 51.2% of families living in the area.
- Leaders and key partners have effectively identified priority target groups and areas for improvement. As a result, some recent important changes have taken place and positive initiatives are being developed designed to improve the current inequalities in health outcomes.
- Fewer one-year-old children access services because some new birth visits did not take place for a period of time. These visits have since been reinstated but the impact of this is yet to be seen in the engagement of these children in the range of children's centre services.
- Effective partnership working with the Citizen Advice Bureau to empower families to reduce debt and become aware of their spending habits, and to put parents back in control of their finances has improved their general sense of well-being.
- Partnerships with family and community learning providers are effectively helping some adults to access a good range of training and adult education. However, access to accredited English and mathematics courses are limited; and providers do not actively track and support the individuals next steps in learning; or ensure that appropriate pathways meet the needs and interests of learners in a timely way.
- The centre leaders have maintained their links with Job Centre Plus which is going some way to promote employability related learning for workless parents.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Most two, three- and four-year-old children take up the free entitlement to nursery education.
- The large majority of early childhood provision in the area was judged good or better at their most recent Ofsted inspection. However, children's attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage remains well below that which is seen nationally. In some areas of the reach children's attainment is exceptionally low, and boys perform poorly in communication and language compared to girls. The centres do not make consistently good use of learning journals or similar to track children's progress in groups.
- In Newdale, recent assessments show that children are making good progress and are on track to be at or above expected levels at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage, which is a clear improvement

on the previous year's performance.

- Skilled and experienced childcare consultants play an important role in helping to raise the quality of early years childcare in the area. For instance, one early childhood setting that required improvement was judged to be good at its recent inspection. However, overall the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers remains too wide, with little confirmed improvement seen over the last three years.
- Children with disabilities and/or special educational needs access a range of good quality services through effective partnership arrangements. Good relationships between qualified teacher support and speech and language services ensure children receive timely support and help to overcome difficulties.
- Overall, health outcomes are not improving quickly enough. High quality support and guidance is provided to new parents, including fathers and male carers, regarding the benefits of breastfeeding, in a sensitive and timely manner. Consequently, there are some positive signs of increased take-up of breastfeeding but the data has remained static over the last three years. However, obesity rates, in the Wellington area are significantly above that seen nationally at 17.4%; and in Malinslee, 28.3% of mothers are smoking at the time of delivery.
- Through the good quality care and guidance provided by the centres staff and partners, parents have grown in confidence. Staff are good role models. Trusting relationships are forged between staff and centre users and parents feel confident to access other services provided by the centre.
- There is a good range of parenting, leisure, pre-vocational and vocational learning opportunities provided across the locality. The voluntary work programme, while only attracting a small number of parents, is a positive development at the centres and is providing those individuals with work experience and invaluable training, supervision and support.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Performance management, supervision and annual appraisals all contribute to the effective leadership and management of staff. Staff are experienced, qualified, skilled and competent. They come from a range of relevant backgrounds and there is effective use of skill and knowledge sharing among the team.
- Senior leaders are positively engaged with the centres and are ambitious for change. They are planning to drive improvements through their transformation agenda. They have a good knowledge and understanding of what needs to improve and the key priorities of the centres.
- Leaders make generally effective use of available resources and the centres provide safe, warm, welcoming and comfortable space for children and families. Staff use good quality interactive resources when working directly with children, helping the child to express their feelings and to communicate them.
- A new process of data collation, recording and analysis was introduced in 2013 following concerns about the accuracy of the old system of recording. The new database is still being developed and until it includes all the required information it is proving difficult for leaders to demonstrate the impact the work of the centres is having on children and families over time.
- Action plans include some key priorities identified through the use of the data, but they lack clear

information about timescales, desired outcomes, the monitoring process and the review of progress made.

- There is some representation from parents at Stakeholder groups, and through the 'Tops and Pants' family feedback process, parents have contributed ideas and given feedback about activities, venues and timings of sessions. However, there is no parent representation currently on the locality board or in the role of governance.
- Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous. All safeguarding concerns are referred promptly and are carefully assessed by the multi-agency professional safeguarding task force, including centre leaders, that is based at Family Connect. Children and families in times of difficult are well-supported by the offer of early help and interventions provided. Consequently, children on child protection plans or similar packages of support are closely monitored and supported by centre staff who are well-versed in child protection and safeguarding protocols and procedures. Case files provide convincing evidence of improved outcomes for children and families as a result of these vital care plans. With good quality support and interventions, families have been able to stay together and with help have improved their lives.
- Monthly child case file audits and case supervision notes identified that case recording is systematic and routine. Where areas for improvement are identified, prompt action is taken to address any specific weaknesses. Staff training plans reflect the key priorities of the centres' work and ensures that staff remain sharply focused on providing good quality support, advice and practice.

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 Group details

Unique reference number	80252
Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	444626
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	4260
Group manager	Jayne Weaving
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as a group
Telephone number	01952 385577
Email address	jayne.weaving@telford.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 22711 Shortwood Children's Centre
- 22249 Malinslee Children's Centre
- 22119 Newdale Children's Centre
- 23476 Wellington Children's Centre

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