

Northamptonshire - Daventry

The Family Centre, Staverton Road, Daventry, NN11 4EY

Inspection dates

Previous inspection date

18–20 June 2014

Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not applicable	
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 group of centres requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Despite significant improvements in the level of registrations and engagement since July 2013, the percentage of users who benefit from the services remains low.
- The quality of services and their impact on families is variable and not yet consistently good. Newly established quality improvement arrangements are not fully effective.
- The opportunities for learning for adults who wish to enter employment are limited. As a result, the adults are not well prepared for voluntary work or employment.
- Managers do not have timely, accurate and critical data on the unemployed, pregnant teenagers and two-year-olds in workless households. Consequently, the data analysis and its use are not effective at targeting the provision and measuring its impact.

It has the following strengths:

- The levels of registrations and regular engagement from most of the targeted and vulnerable families are good. As a result, families have improved their personal, social, educational and health outcomes well by taking greater responsibility for their children and their families.
- Staff have good levels of skills and expertise that they use well to establish links with a range of partners. Needs identification is good, and partners work very effectively to provide enhanced services.
- Highly effective, swift and decisive action from the local authority and Action for Children has led to transformational changes in the quality of services from previous levels. This has resulted in much higher levels of registration and engagement, rapidly improving quality with improving impact on the targeted families.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Work with the local authority to ensure that accurate data from Jobcentre Plus and the health services are secured and made available in good time to enable the children's centre group to:
 - conduct a robust analysis of the data on each centre
 - set clear targets for engagement and measure progression of the families.
- Develop strategies to increase the number of children and families accessing services by:
 - using social media and the expertise of parent champions
 - improving the information, advice and guidance given to families
 - promoting the available courses and programmes more widely.
- Ensure all sessions are of consistently high quality and help the parents develop strong skills in helping their children to make expected or better progress by:
 - improving session planning by ensuring staff focus on devising learning objectives for all sessions and sharing these with the parents so that they can understand the purpose of all activities and use them at home with their children more productively
 - developing longer-term tracking of children's progress
 - recording the information precisely, keeping records and files to a high standard with sufficient detail to enable more accurate monitoring of skills' development and progress of families and children to avoid any duplication and improve efficiency
 - using observation and assessment more effectively to set targets for improvement
 - working with the local authority to develop joint working arrangements with early years providers in the area to support transition of children into early education to sustain good development.
- Work closely with the local authority, adult learning service, other providers of learning and Jobcentre Plus to facilitate greater levels of adult learning, vocational skills, information, advice and guidance, volunteering and other services to prepare adults for employment.

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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with local authority managers, representatives of the health authority, including a midwife and a health visitor, some early years' providers, Jobcentre Plus and other partner agencies.

The inspectors visited all the children's centres and Daventry, Brixworth and Long Buckby libraries. The inspection covered the following centres: Daventry East; Daventry West; Long Buckby and Brixworth.

They observed the full range of the centres' work running during the week including training sessions run by partners. Inspectors looked at a range of relevant documentation including

self-evaluation form, delivery plan, case-tracking, risk assessments, notes of meetings, performance reports and parent satisfaction surveys.

Inspection team

Harmesh Manghra, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Susan Crawford	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Geoffrey Dorrity	Additional inspector
Christine Blowman	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Daventry District has recently been organised into a group of five children's centre areas: Brixworth, Daventry East, Daventry West, Long Buckby and Woodford Halse. Action for Children is the lead agency for all centres except Woodford Halse. It took over the contract at the request of the local authority in this area on 1 July 2013. Daventry East Children's Centre was inspected as a single centre in September 2012.

A children's services manager provides strategic leadership to the Daventry and South Northamptonshire Children's centre groups. Two full-time team leaders manage the operations of two centres each. Two post holders, a lead practitioner and a business support team leader, who work half time, support them. Seven family support workers, equivalent to 5.5 full-time posts, support the group's work. The centres are not attached to any school and do not offer on-site crèche facilities. The advisory board has representatives from Jobcentre Plus, early years providers, the voluntary sector, the health services and parents.

The area is situated in north-west Northamptonshire and is mostly rural apart from the town of Daventry. With the exception of two lower super output areas in Daventry East and one in Daventry West, 70% of families in this district do not live in disadvantage. Most of the population are White British; 4% from a mix of minority ethnic backgrounds including Eastern European. Some 3,673 children under five years of age live in the reach area, of which 17% live in workless households, and 11% of the households are headed by a lone parent.

The group provides a range of health, social care, family support and education services from its centres, through home visiting and from many outreach venues. These include early years sessions, such as 'Stay and Play' and themed sessions for one- and two-year-olds. Services for priority families include parenting programmes, courses for families suffering domestic abuse, first aid, cooking on a budget and family learning courses such as English for speakers of other languages and mathematics. Jobcentre Plus runs monthly drop-in sessions from centres in Daventry. In partnership with the health authority, the centre group provides antenatal and postnatal support groups.

Of the 91 early years providers across the district, a large majority of settings in three areas provide either good or outstanding quality of service. The quality of early years provision in Daventry requires further development. Overall, children in this district achieve at the end Reception Year with a comparable level of development compared to county and national figures. In Daventry West achievement is lower.

The take-up of two-year-old places is above the county average and three- and four-year take-up is in line with the county average. The priority groups for the district are workless households in Daventry; vulnerable children, including those eligible for two-year-old funding, and children subject to child protection plans, children in need or looked after children; families suffering from domestic violence; minority groups in Daventry; and families suffering rural deprivation in some parts of Brixworth and Long Buckby.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Over the last 12 months, registration as well as engagement levels for universal services have increased, but remain too low in Long Buckby and Brixworth area. The centre staff analyse the trends promptly and encourage families to attend through outreach work, but this has not been fully effective in increasing registration and engagement.
- Engagement in the use of services from the targeted groups is good except for workless households and pregnant teenagers. The take-up of free entitlement to early education by three- and four-year-olds is lower than the national average.
- The provision for adults to acquire and develop new skills or seek employment is limited. The number of classes to meet the increasing demand for mathematics is very low. The take-up of classes to develop English language skills for migrant workers from East European countries is high. Opportunities to develop employability skills including volunteering are also limited. Jobcentre Plus runs useful monthly drop-in information surgeries for adults on the local employment opportunities.
- The take-up of health services is very high. The rates of breastfeeding are high and obesity levels among children are low. Attendance at the health clinics, run at all the children's centres is good. All two-year-olds receive an accurate assessment of their health and progress. By using accurate and readily available new birth data, staff target provision and services to meet the needs.
- Services are run from many centres throughout the reach area including some public places such as libraries and village halls to ensure that parents are able to get to the centres easily. Centres are safe, welcoming and often act as the hub of the community. The sessions are run at times to enable parents to deal with their other commitments.
- Staff know their area very well and identify the targeted and vulnerable groups promptly in consultation with the other agencies and early years providers. Engagement of such families is excellent as partnership working with the health authority is seamless in identifying the families and support them until their needs are fully met.
- All two-year-old children eligible for free nursery education access this, and some 75% of the provision is good or outstanding. The centre group has broadened its criteria for eligibility and provided 39 additional discretionary places to meet the needs of families living in rural deprivation.
- Early intervention features well in the centre's work, with priority given to those families who are referred by other agencies who are in most need. Some 65% of the centre's work is focused on targeted groups. Where concerns about the safety or well-being of any child or family member are raised, teams work well together to provide the support that is needed.

The quality of practice and services**Requires improvement**

- Centre staff plan and deliver an appropriate range of activities of variable quality to those children and families who access services. These include 'Stay and Play', 'Tiny Treasures' and 'Story Explorers'. Parents do not fully appreciate aspects such as emotional development, language skills and preparation for school, as staff do not reinforce the learning involved in all activities.
- A minority of session plans lack detailed links to Early Years developmental stages and prime areas of learning. Session evaluation does not include the progress children have made or link forward to the next session.
- In recent months, the centre staff have introduced observation, assessment and planning of next steps for individual children. The comments from observations are descriptive and do not relate the children's actions to the stages of their development and progress, making it difficult to monitor their progress from their starting points.
- The centre group does not promote and support sufficiently adults returning to employment. Adults are not referred to independent information, advice and guidance for further learning and employment. However, migrant workers from Eastern European countries develop good confidence, improve listening skills and self-esteem that helps them integrate better into British life.
- The majority of learning sessions are good. In such sessions, parents make good progress in learning new skills. Sessions on pregnancy, birth and beyond prepare new parents from targeted groups well for healthy eating, healthy lifestyles, birth and parenting. Young parents are well supported through one-to-one and regular sessions, with good levels of engagement particularly with the family nurse partnership. Many have achieved better bonding with their babies by attending baby massage courses.
- Family support workers provide good individual help and support to help parents develop confidence and skills to improve their families' life chances. In many cases, they are their only trusted source of help. This helps children to step down from child protection to child in need. Joint working has enabled children to avoid being put on the child protection register. A provider summed up the work of the group, saying, 'Productive partnership working achieves positive outcomes.'
- Staff have correctly analysed Early Years Foundation Stage Progress, Communication Language and Learning and Personal Social and Educational Development as the focus for targeted work in Daventry West. The centre group has run valuable training in 'ICAN' and personal, social and emotional development for all settings with a positive impact on practice and outcomes for children.
- Parents from targeted families have improved their knowledge of child development and developed better parenting skills. Parenting and programmes for families suffering from domestic violence have had a highly positive impact on targeted families. Children are more confident in groups.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**Requires improvement**

- The local authority has provided timely and effective support and robust challenge to the subcontractor to improve the provision rapidly to the point where it requires improvement. This included providing clinical interim checks and audits at regular intervals and an annual conversation to keep the subcontractor focused on key priorities.
- Staff are very proactive, energetic, highly visible and well regarded by partners. They have quickly developed good knowledge of the local groups. They conduct a thorough evaluation of the performance of each centre and target their energy and resources to improve the services. For example, they have focused their efforts on Daventry West, the poorest performing centre. However, data from the health authority and from Jobcentre Plus on pregnant teenagers and workless households are out of date or inaccurate, which means that leaders and managers cannot be certain they are reaching out to all potential beneficiaries of the services.
- Staff are well qualified and experienced. They have benefited from good staff development including mandatory and other training to improve their skills in planning and delivering sessions. This has enhanced the capacity, skills and knowledge of the family support workers to run a variety of sessions directly.
- Performance management and supervision of staff are satisfactory and improving. The children's services manager holds team leaders to account by setting sharp targets. However, supervision for the family support workers is too informal and imprecise to bring about a rapid improvement in quality or to ensure they are fully clear on their accountability.
- Newly established quality improvement arrangements are starting to have a positive effect in improving the provision. As a result of the parent satisfaction surveys, managers have refined the services by improving the content, methodology and delivery of services or have established new sessions. They produce valuable report cards that evaluate the programmes outlining the impact on families. Managers observe sessions with a view to improving practice; however, the quality of these and of consequent action plans to improve the provision are variable.
- Arrangements to safeguard children and their families, including those with social care involvement are effective. Staff, including partner staff, are appropriately vetted for their suitability to work with young children. They have good awareness of safeguarding matters that they use well to protect children and families from harm. Managers ensure that all vulnerable groups and families at risk are identified promptly and protected.
- The recently established advisory board has strong representation from all the major partners as well as voluntary groups and parents. It oversees the work of the group, identifies needs, offers help to set up new provision, receives reports on the performance and provides appropriate challenge to the managers. Arrangements to involve parents at sub-board level require further development.

- Resources at centres are satisfactory. Rooms are of appropriate size. Activities are well resourced, crèche facilities are good and staff are appropriately qualified. The centres including the outreach venues are safe and easily accessible and have good learning environment.

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.

Daventry Children's Centre Group details

Unique reference number	80094
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	442726
Managed by	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3,673
Centre leader	Jane Pitchfork
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01327 300317
Email address	Jane.Pitchfork@actionforchildren.org.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 20922 Daventry East
- 20923 Daventry West
- 21845 Long Buckby
- 20443 Brixworth

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