

# West Sussex - Crawley Children's Centre Group

Bewbush Children and Family Centre, Dorsten Square, Bewbush, Crawley, West Sussex. RH11 8XW

<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 April 2015–1 May 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	14–16 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
	Previous inspection:		
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		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Although they register with the children's centre group, teenage parents and families living in Broadfield, one of the most deprived areas of Crawley, do not regularly engage in activities.
- There is limited evidence available to show the quality and impact of children's centre services on families who most need support. Systems to reflect this are still in the early stages of development. Children from lower income families in some areas of Crawley are not sufficiently well prepared for starting school. Overall, in Crawley, boys achieve significantly less well than girls. Links are not yet fully established with the different agencies that provide support for families. For example, links with schools are still being developed; information is not obtained from specialists providing speech and language support; and midwifery services do not always inform the centres of the families, especially teenage parents, they are working with.

### This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- Leaders and managers have worked extremely hard since the last inspection to make improvements. As a result, services are now better organised and staff have a very clear understanding of their role.
- The support provided for families at times of crisis is good.
- The volunteer programme is used well to help parents develop the skills they need to return to education and employment.

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

- Improve the sustained engagement levels of teenage parents and families from Broadfield. Improve the links with schools, midwifery services and the speech and language team to:
  - increase the numbers of priority families regularly engaging with services
  - help children develop the skills they need for starting school.
- Make better use of the systems to track the impact of the centres' work on families with the most needs, especially:
  - the provision for boys' learning and the progress made by children from poorer backgrounds in their learning and development
  - the progress parents make after accessing family and adult learning courses and support services
  - to make sure that learning journals are used consistently well to track children's progress and identify any early signs of developmental delay.

### 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: Bewbush Children and Family Centre; Broadfield Children and Family Centre; Langley Green and Ifield Children and Family Centre; Pound Hill and Maidenbower 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 three Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers from the local authority, the children's centre group team manager, the chairperson of two of the centre partnership groups, early years consultants, family support workers, representatives from health services, adult learning providers and early years settings; volunteers and centre users.

The inspectors visited a range of services taking place across the area served by the group, including: 'Play and Learn Together' at Broadfield Community Centre; 'Play and Learn Plus' at Langley Green and Ifield Children and Family Centre; child health clinics; speech and language drop-in groups; family learning sessions; the 'Wee Minds' childminder group at Broadfield Children and Family Centre and a 'Discover Baby' session at Bewbush Children and Family Centre.

Inspectors observed the centres' work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centres' development plans, registration records, staff development files, and safeguarding records.

### Inspection team

Jo Caswell, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Penny Fisher	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kenneth Jones	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jameel Hassan	Additional inspector
Teresa Kiely	Additional inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

The West Sussex - Crawley Children's Centre Group covers six children's centres across seven sites. Until recently, these centres had operated under three separate groups, with the Broadfield Children and Family Centre managed on behalf of the local authority by Spurgeons. In September 2014, the local authority took over management of this centre and it became part of the Crawley group in January 2015. From April 2015, the centres previously organised under the 'Crawley 1' and 'Crawley 2' groups were merged into one group with the Broadfield Children and Family Centre. All centres are now managed by the local authority. An Early Childhood Team Manager oversees the management of all six centres in the group. Governance arrangements have recently been reviewed and a centre partnership group is being developed to oversee all six centres.

The centres serve a very mixed, culturally diverse area. Crawley is ranked as the second most deprived town in West Sussex. The communities around the Broadfield and Bewbush Children and Family Centres are ranked respectively as the second and fourth most deprived areas in the county. Broadfield has a high proportion (45.2%) of social rented housing. The Southgate area has a large number of temporary accommodation and hostels, in contrast with some more affluent areas. The Langley Green and Ifield centre is the closest to Gatwick Airport. Many families living in this community are in low paid jobs and undertake shift work. The Pound Hill and Maidenbower centres serve the least deprived areas of the town. The health visiting team is co-located at the Pound Hill centre. The number of workless households has continued to increase, especially in the Bewbush and Broadfield areas. The majority of families are of White British heritage, with around 38% of families from minority ethnic groups. In total, 21.8% of families in the Northgate area are of Asian ethnicity. This is significantly higher than the local authority average rate of 3.5%. Approximately 8,360 children aged under five years live in the areas served by the children's centre group.

The centre group provides a range of services to local families, including early years provision, family support, health clinics, adult learning, and advice and guidance on housing, employment and welfare issues. Typically, in most areas across the group, children enter early years provision with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age.

The centres have identified the main priority family groups as: workless households, including lone parents; families living in the most deprived areas, children subject to child protection arrangements and those supported by the Common Assessment Framework, teenage parents and disabled children.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Although the vast majority of families living in Crawley are registered with a children's centre, not all families access services regularly. The sustained engagement rates of teenage parents and families living in one of the most deprived areas are low. In the Broadfield area, just over half of families living in the least affluent communities have accessed services more than three times in a 12-month period.
- Information is not being shared by midwifery services regarding expectant mothers in the area. This hinders the centres' ability to identify and support priority families, such as teenage parents, at an early stage. The impact of this can be seen in the low number of teenage parents that are using the group's services regularly.
- The large majority of two-year-old children entitled to free early years provision access early years settings which are generally of good or better quality.
- Support for lone parents is improving. Across the group, most centres have maintained access with at least half of lone parents living in the area. At 63%, the engagement level at Southgate is higher than elsewhere.

- The centres have formed strong working relationships with other agencies supporting children subject to child protection arrangements and the Common Assessment Framework. As a result, the vast majority of the most vulnerable children are known to the centres and regularly access services.
- There is particularly good engagement and support for children with disabilities. The Langley Green and Ifield Children and Family Centre acts as the hub centre. Families appreciate the specialist services provided by the 'Play and Learn Plus' group and the additional range of provision available.
- A good number of families from the most deprived areas of Bewbush and Southgate continue to access services after registration.
- The numbers of workless families accessing services have continued to improve. Engagement in the volunteer programme has increased year on year. Across the group, 28 volunteers currently work in the centres.
- Partnership work to support recent initiatives with prisoner families living in the town is good. Successful targeted support has reached 100% of affected families that are known to the centres.

### The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Systems to monitor the quality and impact of the centres' work on vulnerable families are still in the early stages. Tracking procedures have not been fully established to measure the impact of services and support for families over a longer period of time.
- Procedures to monitor how well children achieve at school are still being developed. Although it is widely recognised that boys achieve less well than girls, systems to make sure that children from lower income families do as well as their better off peers are not sufficiently well established. As a result, the achievement gap between children from the most affluent backgrounds and the rest has increased.
- Attendance at the speech and language drop-in groups is good. However, at present, the speech and language team does not share information about the families using this service. Therefore, centre staff cannot plan to build on this work and support children through relevant targeted provision in order to reduce inequalities.
- Staff do not make full use of all activities to monitor and assess children's learning and development. Learning journals are not always used appropriately to track children's progress and identify any early signs of developmental delay.
- Good partnerships with Jobcentre Plus mean parents from workless households and lone parents can access information on employment easily. However, systems to track the progress of those receiving support are not in place. As a result, the centres are unable to show if these services are making a positive difference. A consistent approach to supporting parenting skills is adopted across all of the centres. Parents that have attended services report that their confidence and understanding of parenting improve over the course of the programme. However, formal processes to track the sustained impact of this work over time are only just being implemented.
- Breastfeeding rates are higher than the national average in some parts of the town. However, they are lower in Bewbush and Broadfield, and targeted services are in place to address this. Good support is provided through centre activities to help mothers benefit from specialist advice. Relevant programmes, such as the 'Cook and Eat' course, are in place to improve children's healthy development, especially in the Bewbush area.
- Opportunities for parents to develop their skills ready for employment have improved over the past three years. The number of volunteers has increased from 17 in 2013 to the current figure of 28. The robust and thorough induction programme, with regular supervision, encourages volunteers to explore a range of training. A third of volunteers has moved on to further education, training or employment.
- The early parenting group, delivered by the health visiting service, provides new parents with good information regarding children's care and development. As a result, parents gain greater confidence and maintain good links with children's centre services.
- The local assistance network has provided support to nearly 400 families in the area. This

emergency fund has helped families in crisis access food parcels and help with urgent gas and electricity top-ups. Parents really value this resource. Robust systems are in place to ensure that this support reaches those that need it most. Across West Sussex as a whole, significant investment has been put into the Crawley area to support families most in need.

- The family support team and outreach workers build very strong relationships with the families they work with and this means families receive the help they need. Parents are very appreciative of the extensive work undertaken by the family support workers.

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

Good

- Concerted action has been taken since the last inspection to move the centre forward. The local authority and senior managers have thoroughly reviewed centre services and the management structure of the group. As a result, roles and responsibilities are now clearly understood. Information about the centres' performance is now used far more effectively than it was and this helps leaders and managers to accurately monitor the centres' work and measure performance.
- Action planning and target setting are now far more focused and interlinked than previously. Leaders and managers, including the centre partnership groups, offer robust challenge to the centre staff and this helps to accelerate improvement. Considerable improvements have been made in a short space of time to address weaknesses and build strong foundations to secure ongoing improvement.
- Staff are highly motivated and confirm they feel closely supported by the leadership team. Regular supervision arrangements and a commitment to ongoing professional development mean staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge to carry out their role effectively.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good within all centres. Staff are appropriately trained and robust procedures are in place to maintain high quality case files. Good inter-agency working between all relevant parties means that vulnerable children identified as being in need of additional support, including those who are looked after, or supported by assessment arrangements, receive the help they need in a timely manner. Relevant assessment procedures are in place to ensure that all agencies work together to identify children's needs.
- Procedures for self-evaluation are rigorous and robust. Leaders and managers have an extremely accurate view of the level of provision. Targeted action plans are in place to address identified development points. This precise approach towards making improvements has resulted in the significant progress that has been made since the last inspection.
- Resources are used well across the group. The revised staffing structure means that relevant staff are deployed to drive improvements. For example, when leaders and managers identify services which need improving, such as specific 'Play and Learn' groups, early years consultants are given responsibility for making the necessary changes.
- Centre staff have worked tirelessly to promote services and work in partnership with other agencies. Despite continued attempts by staff, links with schools are still developing. Leaders and managers rightly recognise that more work is needed to improve this, especially in areas where children's skills and knowledge are known to be below typical levels when starting school.
- At a strategic level, information is not routinely shared by midwifery services and the speech and language team. This hinders the centres' attempts to ensure families are identified and can access the relevant services they need.
- Parents' views are regularly sought and their feedback is utilised to shape future services. The Family Focus groups are closely involved in the design of services and the planning of new programmes.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80266
<b>Local authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	453938
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	8,360
<b>Early Childhood Team Manager</b>	Elaine Blanks
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 January 2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	01293 651760
<b>Email address</b>	bewbush.cfc@westsussex.gov.uk

**This group consists of the following children's centres:**

- 20288 – Bewbush Children and Family Centre
- 20445 – Broadfield Children and Family Centre
- 21738 – Langley Green and Ifield Children and Family Centre
- 22412 – Maidenbower and Pound Hill Children and Family Centre
- 22206 – Northgate Children and Family Centre
- 22795 – Southgate Children and Family Centre

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