

Telford and Wrekin - Hadley Castle Group

Hadley Learning Community, Crescent Road, Telford and Wrekin, TF1 5JU

Inspection date 19-21 November 2013

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

- The number of families taking part regularly in locality activities is rising and, although the vast majority are from the most disadvantaged communities, they are not yet the majority of families from the area and some target groups are not accessing services.
- The centre evaluates some of its activities, taking into account the views of parents and partner organisations, which helps them to assess what activities to plan for in the future. However, all information available is not used effectively to track how well groups, individual children and families are doing to help make precise future plans and to know what impact they are having on families.
- There are not enough opportunities to engage parents in volunteering activities to help them prepare for progression to training and employment.
- The proportion of breastfeeding mothers in the locality apart from Newport is lower than the national average. The number of mothers smoking in pregnancy is high. There are high levels of obesity amongst Reception Year children.
- The vast majority of early years provision in the area is good or better. However this is yet to impact on the Early Years Foundation Stage scores in all areas of the locality.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- Families coming into contact with the centres are safeguarded very well. Staff effectively focus their efforts on working with families who are in urgent need and give the highest priority to getting services in place for children and families who are suffering or are at risk of harm.
- Services that are used by families are well planned to meet families' needs and interests. 'Playing Together' and 'Chatterbox Wednesday', are well attended and provide an effective route for families to contact children's centre staff to get information, advice and access to other services.
- The advisory board knows the locality and the families it serves well. Its members are very supportive and challenging of the centre's leaders and the work of the centre. This effective governance contributes to driving improvements.

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 Hadley Castle Children's Centre, Oakengates Children's Centre, Donnington Children's Centre and Newport 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 group manager, local authority officers, team leaders, senior managers and staff from the locality, the Chair of the advisory board and Parents Panel. They also met with representatives from partner organisations in health, education, children's social care services and adult education. They looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case files, safeguarding procedures and a range of other relevant documentation.

The inspectors visited all four Children's Centres and various sites where activities were taken out in to the community. They saw a number of activities, including the Baby Grow Group, Child Health Clinic, Chatterbox Wednesday, Playing Together and IT for beginners.

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

Inspection team

Susan Crawford	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Maxine Mayer	Her Majesty's Inspector
Karen Cooper	Additional Inspector
Ann Taylor	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre/group

The Hadley Castle Locality Children's Centre Group consists of four children's centres located in the north east of the Telford and Wrekin local authority area.

The Group Manager and wider team are based at Hadley Children's Centre. Two Early Intervention Team Leaders have delegated responsibility for the front line services across the children's centre group. An Early Years and Childcare Team Leader has responsibility for the support to childminders and early years settings across the locality. Children's skills on entry to early years provision are below expectations for their age.

The locality contains 5530 children aged 0–5 and 2260 of these children live in neighbourhoods ranked in the 30% most deprived in England. 15% of children in the locality are from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. Many children under five years of age are living in families that are claiming benefits although there are areas of affluence.

All of the core services are managed and led by Telford & Wrekin Council. The four children's centres are led by a single leadership team and a single locality advisory board. There is a stakeholder group for each of the four children's centres made up of key partners from the community including schools, Jobcentre Plus, health, adult learning, childcare providers and children's centre staff. The locality children's centre group has a Parent's Panel that supports leaders with decision making and the design of services.

The four children's centres offer a range of universal, targeted and evidence based support services to meet the children's centre core purpose. These include childcare and education, family support, universal and targeted play, support around domestic abuse, evidence based parenting programmes, support to early years and childcare providers, support for childminders, activities to promote communication where English is an additional language, group based support to raise resilience in vulnerable women, targeted support for new parents who are yet to use the children's centres and targeted group provision to support first time parents.

Hadley Children's Centre is situated in Hadley Learning Community and is co-located with a range of maternity, health, childcare, school, leisure and library facilities.

Oakengates and St George's Children's Centre operates from a range of community venues including Oakengates Children's Centre (nursery school and childcare) and the Salvation Army facility.

Newport Children's Centre has a range of early childhood services available on the Newport Infant School site, Youth Cafe and Cottage Care venue.

Donnington Children's Centre has a range of early childhood services available on the Donnington Wood Infant School site and health centre.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Improve access to the centre by developing a robust strategy, in conjunction with partners, to improve further the participation of all target groups, particularly those from the 30% most disadvantaged areas, teenage parents and those suffering from drugs and alcohol abuse.
- Put in place with partners workable systems to collect accurate information by tracking the progress of children and adults from their starting points by measuring impact, to include the difference that is made over time.
- Increase the number of volunteers and give them opportunity to help in the delivery of the work of the locality through volunteering activities, to help them prepare for progression, training and employment.
- Address health priorities, in particular continue to improve the numbers of mothers initiating and sustaining breastfeeding and reduce the number of mothers smoking in pregnancy and reduce obesity levels in children.
- Improve the educational outcomes for children by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure that the achievement gap is closing in all areas of the locality.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Staff know the needs of families in the area well. Early Intervention Practitioner make great efforts to get to know their communities. Staff work with the local authority, health, education and social care partners to keep information up-to-date. Only a minority of families in the area attend the centre's although these are often the families with the greatest needs. The centre's staffing capacity to reach out to involve more families has been hindered by the local authority's reorganisation of children's centre groups in 2012 however this has now settled down.
- The network of volunteers to support the work of the locality is currently under-developed. They have identified this as an area requiring improvement and are implementing a new strategy in order to promote volunteering opportunities.
- Children and families access a range of services when they are in regular contact with the centre. Attendance is high at good quality stay-and-play sessions such as 'Playing Together' and 'Chatterbox Wednesday' which is for families who have English as a second language. Occasionally sessions are oversubscribed which means that families are turned away. Take up of appointments at Citizen's Advice Bureau, are also high and show that they are successful in supporting family's gain the benefits that they are entitled to.
- There are good arrangements in place to ensure that all children take up the free entitlement to early education. Centre staff and partners are able to identify those children aged two years who are in most need of help. As a result of this support children start school better prepared for learning. However, children's achievement at the end of the foundation stage is below expected levels.
- Home visits managed by early intervention practitioner provide highly personalised support and access to other services. Staff work well with families, developing trusting and constructive relationships to support improving outcomes.
- The inclusion panel works effectively with partners to support families who have children with additional needs. The successful allocation of relevant services helps to reduce inequalities.
- The centre keeps basic records of attendance and some details of work with any other agencies. It does not track all children and families' progress in the activities they take up. Information is not routinely gathered about the achievements of children and families as they move on from children's centre services, to help the centre assess its long-term effectiveness.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Centre staff plan and deliver activities for children in sessions such as 'Play Together' and

'Chatterbox Wednesday' each session is evaluated and staff use this to plan the next session. Some observations take place and referrals are made as a result of this for additional services which help families' needs to be met. There is, however, little continuous observation, assessment and planning of next steps for individual children. This means that it is difficult to chart their progress from their starting points and see how they are progressing over time.

- In 2012, 59.7% of children living in the reach area achieved a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, which although it is below the national level has improved over a three year period. This steadily improving picture is yet to impact on narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest.
- The promotion of services for adults to improve their education, work opportunities and financial well-being is good. However, information to evaluate and track the impact of training and job seeking support is weak.
- Parents comment on how the support that they have received has helped them. For example, how to manage their children's behaviour more effectively and how to better manage their finances. One parent said, 'I think if I didn't come here I would go out of my mind at home'.
- Successful partnerships with health services ensure that there are some activities and services to promote families' health, safety and well-being such as 'HENRY' and healthy snacks during all sessions such as 'Baby Grow'. However, despite healthy eating programmes obesity levels of children at the end of Reception Year are higher than the national average.
- Midwifery services make early contact with expectant mothers including some teenage mothers and they are encouraged to register with the centre at this stage. The locality is aware that there are a number pregnant mothers who smoke whilst pregnant and levels are above the national average. Quit 51 provide a drop in at health clinics to provide smoking cessation advice and support however this has only just started so they are unaware of how successful this is.
- Breastfeeding information and support, is of good quality. This is starting to impact on the numbers of mothers initiating breast feeding, the data from the local hospitals shows that there has been an increase from 64% to 72% since August 2013 which is almost in line with the national average of 74%. However the locality is not aware of how successful they have been in supporting mothers to sustain breast feeding up to six to eight weeks.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have managed the centre's structural changes and new staff team competently. Support from the local authority is strong with the provision of data and some new recording systems and approaches to working with families. Policies and procedures, along with good management systems, contribute to the improvements being made.
- The borough has developed an effective referral system for children aged nought to 19 years known as 'Family Connect' which enables the accurate assessment and early identification of need. Where a need for a specific service is identified, the triage team ensures that families receive the correct support from the most appropriate agency to make positive changes to their lives. If the assessment is that children's centre services are required a referral is made the families needs are then considered at the fortnightly allocations meeting where needs are matched to specialist services and individual support given if there are concerns that any child or family is at risk of harm.
- The needs of children are appropriately met with trained staff using the Common Assessment Framework effectively. Regular support and supervision meetings and the establishment of a more reflective process ensure that staff are well supported and consistently work at a high level of professionalism. The successful implementation of the safeguarding policies and procedures contribute to the local authority's early help agenda, the role of the early intervention practitioner is understood by other professionals which ensures that resources are used effectively because they are allocated to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families.
- Early intervention practitioner now work as a coordinated team across the locality with requests for support being referred to one central children's centre team known as the 'Allocation Partnership' which then allocates staffing according to need. Improvements are beginning to be seen through

the use of a beginning and end assessment. It shows that there has been a significant improvement following targeted interventions for those who most need help. These impact measures are not consistently used across all of the locality's services.

- A new 'Locality Advisory Board' is being established under strong leadership to better reflect the new structure. Systems are in place that provide information on which families do, or do not, access early childhood services. It is too early for any evidence of trends in improvement to be identified to show the reduction in inequalities. The board currently do not have a parent representative but do have good links to the strong and well attended 'Parent Panel'.
- Parents using locality services feel they are listened to and well supported by sensitive staff who are described as 'always having time'. Parents feel that their views are listened to and acted on via processes such as 'You said, we did' and the 'Parent's Panel' where their views are passed to the 'Stake Holder Meeting' which allows all partners to have a clear understanding of what parents views are.

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	80241
Local authority	Telford & Wrekin
Inspection number	424858
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	5530
Centre leader	Scott Jones
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as a group
Telephone number	01952 388077
Email address	scott.jones@telford.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- URN: 21338 Hadley PFI Children's Centre
- URN: 20968 Donnington Children's Centre
- URN: 22127 Newport Primary School & Children's Centre
- URN: 22224 Oakengates Children's Centre

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