

South Gloucestershire – South Children's Centre Group

Hollow Road, Kingswood, Bristol, BS15 9TP

Inspection dates 22–23 January 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:

- Not enough local families in need of support use the centres or benefit from their services. Levels of attendance have increased rapidly since April 2013, but there are not yet good levels of engagement with a minority of some groups, including workless families and parts of the Kingswood area.
- Not enough eligible children benefit from good quality two-year-old funded nursery places so they do not have chance to gain a head start in their learning and development at an early age.
- Sound arrangements are in place to protect the safety and well-being of children and adults in need. However, case files are not sufficiently detailed or well organised to indicate the services provided and what progress has been made.
- Some services are not evaluated in sufficient detail to show the difference they make to those using them, and so leaders do not always know what works best for families at the centres.
- There are not enough opportunities for adults to develop their learning and skills, although those who do participate report great benefit.
- Leaders work well with most health partners to deliver a range of support which includes some breastfeeding support. However, the proportion of mothers who carry on with breastfeeding until at least six to eight weeks following birth is lower than local and national averages.
- There is limited space available at each centre and, despite careful timetabling and suitable use of community venues for some services, this limits the availability of a few services.

The children's centre group has the following strengths:

- The centres have established good partnership working since they were grouped together, streamlining services and sharing expertise.
- Governance is effective and the group is improving rapidly. The majority of families use centre services. Leaders correctly prioritise meeting the needs of those most in need.
- Parents who use the centres speak very highly of the positive difference it has made to their lives.
- Adults develop skills through being volunteers and some have entered employment as a result.

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 group consists of three children’s centres: Cadbury Heath Children’s Centre; Kingswood Children’s Centre; and Staple Hill Children’s Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty’s Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents and centre staff. They spoke with leaders and managers, as well as representatives from the local authority and a number of partner organisations. They also met with members of the centres’ advisory boards. Inspectors visited each of the three main children’s centres. They observed the centres’ work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Susan Mann	Her Majesty’s Inspector, Lead inspector
Jane Burchall	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Alan Comerford-Dunbar	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

In April 2013, South Gloucestershire reorganised its children’s centre provision and 15 centres were merged into the work of two group locality models (North and South) of three centres each, supported by a number of smaller ‘linked’ centres. Children’s centre services were combined with the authority’s Preventative Services team as part of this re-organisation. South Gloucestershire South Locality Children’s Centre Group consists of three main centres. These are Cadbury Heath, Kingswood and Staple Hill Children’s Centres. There are two linked centres, Hanham and Mangotsfield, which deliver activities provided by partner agencies, and also provide childcare for two-year-old funded children. All centres are managed directly by the local authority and each main centre has its own advisory board. All centres were established in the second phase of children’s centre development

There are 7,150 eligible children aged under five years living in the locality’s catchment area. This area is largely occupied by middle income families, although there are significant pockets of deprivation within this. The local authority has identified the three most economically deprived as priority neighbourhoods: 1,690 children live in these areas. In the catchment area as a whole, the large majority of families are of White British origin. Approximately 10% of families come from Black and ethnic groups, which is lower than found locally and nationally. The level of families in receipt of workless benefits in the group (14.6%) is just below local and national averages, but this proportion is higher in the Kingswood reach area (21.5%). Children’s levels of learning and development are variable when the children enter early years provision, but generally these are similar to levels found nationally.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of local families who regularly access centre services, particularly at Kingswood Children’s Centre, so that at least a large majority of those most in need of support are engaged with relevant services.
- Increase the proportion of children who take up two-year-old funded nursery places and ensure eligible children benefit from good quality early years provision.
- Improve the quality of case recording so each file provides a detailed and well-documented record of contact, access to services, partnership working, management supervision, action plan, and also shows the impact of services received by families in order to keep children safe.
- Improve systems used to measure the difference made to the lives of those families who use centre services so that the effectiveness of all the centre’s work is monitored accurately.
- Provide further opportunities to help adults develop their learning and skills, so that more can access courses and improve their level of knowledge, qualification, and employability.
- Work with health partners to improve the proportion of mothers who sustain breastfeeding to at least six to eight weeks after giving birth, so that catchment area levels are in line with those found locally and nationally.
- Work with partners to monitor and develop the availability of premises and staff deployment to provide further opportunities for families most in need so they access more services, including those for health and adult education.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The group knows its catchment areas well, but does not yet work with enough families to be good. The information provided by the local authority about the local area clearly identifies areas of need, such as priority neighbourhoods and workless households. This information is enhanced further by effective partnership working with health and other partners to determine local need.

Leaders make good use of this information to reach out to local families and those expecting a baby, and offer needed services. As a result, there has been a rapid rise in levels of attendance of many families in need of support: in April 2013 only a very small minority of families were engaged, but at the time of inspection, the majority are using services.

- The centres have been particularly successful in engaging with a large majority of young mothers, families with disabled children and many of those living in the poorest areas in the locality.
- Attendance figures show the average number of contacts with a centre for those most in need has increased more than threefold over the last nine months. However, a minority of families living locally who may benefit from services are not registered, especially some adults not in paid employment, and some living in areas of economic need within the Kingswood Children's Centre catchment area.
- In recent months, some groups have ended because premises are no longer available. Services delivered at Hanham and Mangotsfield 'link' centres and at community venues within the local area attract some families at risk of isolation, and transport is provided to enable attendance at the centre for some who need additional support. Work carried out in families' homes has increased over the past year, often working in partnership with social care and/or health partners so that services that are tailored appropriately to families' individual needs.
- Most three- and four-year-old children access their funded places to attend a local early years setting. However, the take up for two-year-old funded places is not as good: the centre's own information suggests that just over half of eligible children use their place at present. Leaders have recognised this weakness and the system of allocation has been reviewed, and implementation of a revised allocation system is imminent.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Case files for recording centre involvement with families are not good enough. Most files seen did not record contact with families and other professionals in enough detail to provide a useful oversight. This 'missing' information was available elsewhere at the centre, within computer files for example, and the centres could demonstrate that vulnerable children and families under their care are appropriately supported and enabled to stay safe. However, case files do not provide a comprehensive record of provision nor do they always indicate how well a family is progressing. This lack of clear overview makes effective monitoring more difficult.
- The range of services is adequate to meet the needs of local families; most provision is aimed at families in need, complemented by some general provision such as stay and play sessions.
- Adults greatly value the support they receive, as well as the determination of staff to find solutions to difficulties which improve their lives. The quality of care, guidance and support given to families is a strong point because staff empower parents to cope and feel more confident. A comment made by one parent was typical of the views of most when they said, 'I never really felt good about myself until I came here.'
- Effective partnership working with health services, including visitors and teenage parent midwives, leads to reasonably good health outcomes for most aspects. However, rates for sustained breastfeeding are worse than local and national levels (9% lower than the national average). Some peer breastfeeding support is offered and individual support is available. New breastfeeding initiatives are just beginning but these have had insufficient time to establish any improvement.
- Children generally do well and the proportion of gaining a good level of development is above national levels; although, in the Kingswood area, levels are slightly below average. The gap between the lowest 20% and the rest is narrower and so better than that found nationally. However, the programme for two-year-old funded places requires improvement, not only because too few eligible children access places, but also because the quality of this provision is variable.
- Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are mostly well prepared to start school. Good links with some local schools help deliver joint stay and play sessions attended by many parents, including those previously reluctant to engage.
- Adults may attend a suitable variety of courses that improve their parenting abilities as well as

their own learning and skills. Courses delivered in partnership with Community Learning enable adults to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, and understanding of English. However, demand for these courses exceeds availability, and so some are unable to benefit.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership, governance and management require improvement to be good because some elements of the group’s work are still taking effect following the reorganisation last year.
- The local authority exhibits a sound strategic overview of the centres, and is beginning to implement more rigorous challenge to set and help meet improvement priorities. The leadership team for the group has done a good job in reinvigorating the centres following the reorganisation, and senior workers and staff provide a cheerful and welcoming environment.
- The advisory boards perform their role well; each debates the effectiveness of the centre’s work and carries out scrutiny of its effectiveness that identifies weaknesses and drives improvement. There are some areas for development already being addressed: the advisory board for Kingswood Children’s Centre does not have a chairperson at present; and parents are not well represented on the boards, but do give their opinions via a Parents’ Forum and informal feedback.
- Basic evaluation of services monitors provision reasonably well. However, the centres do not track children’s and adults’ development in enough detail to show what difference centre services make to their learning, development and overall well-being. Participants and staff measure the outcomes of some courses, such as those giving parenting advice. However, detailed evaluation is not routinely made and, as a result, the centre cannot monitor the value of some of its services or be sure these are worthwhile.
- Safeguarding arrangements are sound. Recruitment and checking of staff and volunteers ensure they are safe to work with children and vulnerable adults. Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) identifies children’s needs, although a few CAFs completed by partner agencies are not as accurate as those completed by centre staff. A number of new initiatives, such as a ‘First Point’ referral system and a ‘Change Tracker’ needs analysis system, are not yet wholly effective.
- Case files are variable in the quality of recording. However, overall staff and managers have an adequate overview of each vulnerable child and family known to them in order to match provision to family needs and monitor their progress. Furthermore, strong partnership working with social care teams enables good sharing of relevant information and swift communication when action might be required.
- On the whole, centres provide a safe, bright, and cheerful environment with sufficient space for those attending sessions. There are a few occasions when the centres do not have sufficient space for the services local families might need. Good use is made of community venues and ‘linked’ sites to deliver additional provision. However, as attendance levels of families in need continue to rise, further pressure is put on existing resources. This results in some services run by partner organisations being limited, such as those delivering adult education, or breastfeeding support sessions.

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.

Group details

Unique reference number	80184
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	430106
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	7150 children under five
Centre leader	Kerry Pugsley
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01454 862974
Email address	cadburyheathchildren@southglos.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children’s centres:

- 20535 Cadbury Heath Children’s Centre
- 21701 Kingswood Children’s Centre
- 22920 Staple Hill Children’s Centre
- 21368 Hanham Linked Children’s Centre
- 21907 Mangotsfield Linked Children’s Centre

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance ‘Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted’, which is available from Ofsted’s website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children’s social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

This template is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130186.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to ‘Subscribe’.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 130186

© Crown copyright 2013

