

Staffordshire - East

Staffordshire

C/O East Staffordshire Children's Centre, Waterloo Street, Staffordshire, DE14 2NJ

Inspection dates	18–19 June 2014
Previous inspection date	Not Previously Inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Inadequate	4
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for children and families

This group of centres is inadequate.

- The local authority restructure and their lack of leadership and management over a six month period from April 2013 until September 2013 has significantly limited the capacity of the children's centre group to improve. As a result, parents drifted away from the centres and the number of families engaging in services fell significantly.
- Leaders' access to accurate, meaningful data, particularly from health partners and the analysis of information about the needs of families within the area are not sufficiently robust. As a result leaders are not confident that all groups such as the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community have been identified.
- Leaders do not use data well to establish how effective services are and because there is not a detailed development plan they are not able to accurately measure if outcomes are improving fast enough for families.
- Not enough parents take up the opportunity to increase their employability prospects through volunteering projects. The progress of parents accessing adult learning courses is not systematically tracked.
- The district advisory board does not provide sufficient challenge to the children's centre group and too few parents make regular contributions to help to shape services.
- Leaders do not monitor whether the parents they signpost to adult learning and health programmes are successfully taking these up.

It has the following strengths:

- 'Harvey Girls' has been instrumental in successfully identifying, contacting and encouraging eligible families to take up their entitlement to a free place for two-year-old funded early education.
- Good liaison between the Local Support Teams and social care ensure that children get the right level of support.
- The Winshill resource centre provides a wealth of on-site services at one setting.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Improve access to services by:
 - working with the local authority and partners to gather and analyse up-to-date and accurate information about families and children
 - ensuring the information is presented in a way that enables centre leaders to be clear about which groups need its services the most
 - ensuring that the information enables the centre leaders to check that identified groups are regularly using services so that they can identify those that are not and encourage them to attend.
- Improve the quality and impact of practice and services by:
 - increasing the opportunities for parents to participate in a wide range of adult learning based on local needs and systematically track the progress of participants to check their level of skills and employability
 - developing clear strategies to improve volunteering opportunities for adults
 - developing further how information is gathered and used, including information from services to which parents have been signposted, in order to provide an accurate picture of the outcomes that children and families achieve in the different reach areas.
- Improve leadership, governance and management by:
 - improving information sharing between the children's centre group, health professionals and commissioned services so that targets can be accurately identified and reflected in the self-evaluation document and a development plan
 - working with the local authority to sharpen self-evaluation and the development plan so that all key priorities have individual targets and measurable success criteria
 - improving the way in which information about families' use of services is recorded and analysed so that leaders have a firm basis on which to evaluate the group's effectiveness and plan its future development
 - improving the understanding of the district advisory board in regard to providing an effective level of support and challenge
 - reviewing the extent to which resources are used effectively in areas where there is low attendance at sessions.

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.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings or telephone conversations with centre leaders and senior management; representatives of the local authority; members of the advisory board and a range of partners and parents.

The inspectors visited all three children's centres as well as satellite centres in the group. They observed the group's work, and looked at a wide range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Kathryn Gethin, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jon Bowman

Her Majesty's Inspector

Georgina Beasley

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

East Staffordshire Children's Centre group was established in April 2013. It consists of three children's centres: East Staffordshire Children's Centre, Stapenhill Children's Centre and Tynsel Parkes Children's Centre. East Staffordshire Children's Centre is located in Burton-on-Trent and links with Queens Street and Stretton Springs satellite centres and Yoxall St Peter's (VC) Primary School. Stapenhill Children's Centre is located in Stapenhill and links with Winshill Village satellite centre. Tynsel Parkes Children's Centre is located in Uttoxeter and links with Barton under Needwood and Rocester satellite centres and Tynsel Parkes CofE First School. On-site day-care is provided by Tiny Toez. The report of this inspection and the two primary schools are available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. Senior management comprises one head of centre and one commissioning officer.

Governance of the group is provided by Staffordshire local authority, in conjunction with a separate advisory board whose members include a range of partners. In April 2013 significant changes in how services and activities were managed and delivered took place. The group provides universal and some targeted services and activities. Services and activities for targeted families are delivered by the local authority Families First team. The district targeted services manager came into post in September 2013 and works alongside the district children's commissioner.

The Borough of East Staffordshire covers a predominantly rural land area with many villages and two main towns. There are approximately 7,396 children aged under five years living in the area served by the group and the numbers continue to grow. The large majority of families are from a White British background. Levels of unemployment are below levels seen nationally. Around 11.6% of children aged under five years live in households dependent on workless benefits. Most children enter early years provision with skills below those expected for their age.

The target groups identified are: children in need; children on child protection plans; two year-old children eligible for free education; families from minority ethnic backgrounds; children needing support with speech and language and children who are overweight and obese.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Inadequate

- The information about families and children known to be living in the reach has not been available to the centre until recently. In addition, the information that comes from different sources and partners gives inconsistent information about the number of families registering and engaging with the group.
- Strategies for encouraging families including expectant parents to use what the centre offers have not been successful. New birth data has been shared only in the last month and the 'postcard' initiative with health services has not resulted in increased contact with families.
- While there are targets in commissioned services contracts to increase the number of minority ethnic families and those families living in the most challenging circumstances accessing services, there is no local area data immediately available to show whether a need exists and whether those services provided are being as successful as they should be.
- Significant barriers to engagement at some locations still exist. The centre does not monitor attendance closely enough to check whether target groups are attending regularly. Attendance at

Winshill 'Stay and Play' is very low and monitoring reports indicate that there were no attendees in recent months. In addition, an employability course at this site was cancelled due to the low number of adults registering an interest.

- The commissioned service, 'Harvey Girls', has been successful in identifying, contacting and encouraging eligible families to take up their free two-year-old funded education place. As a result, a large majority of families take up the offer. The local authority ensures that most children attend a setting that is good or outstanding.
- Parents increase their level of skills through the popular nurturing sessions. They learn how to better support their children and how to use different strategies to manage behaviour more effectively.

The quality of practice and services

Inadequate

- While there is a reasonable range of universal and targeted services available to the community, the group does not track the impact of these well enough to know how well children and adults benefit from the services it provides.
- Information and data are not collected or used in ways that help managers to identify the effectiveness of centres in supporting children and their families. In particular when families have been signposted to other agencies such as adult learning and smoking cessation.
- Not enough is known about the needs of local communities that are served by the centres. While data show that outcomes for children and families are mixed in the area, not enough is known by leaders and managers about the outcomes for children at a more local level.
- Opportunities for adult learning are too limited and not effectively coordinated or planned with other providers. There is no volunteering strategy in place and where commissioned services offer volunteering this is entirely incidental and not part of the planned delivery.
- Assessments using the Common Assessment Framework are satisfactory but vary in quality. They are not always fully completed and the outcomes for children and their families are not sufficiently clear. The tracking of the progress of children and adults is inconsistent across services and between different aspects of delivery.
- The 'Simply Play' and 'Numbers count' sessions have good attendance and participation by the targeted families invited to them. The focus of these sessions helps to prepare children for school. Nevertheless, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains below local and national averages.
- Learning in groups observed was of a good quality and children made good progress in their learning and development. Targeted support for language development show that those who attend make good gains in their vocabulary. Through structured parenting programmes, parents learn practical play activities so that they can better support their child's development at home.
- The Local Support Team provides effective practical help and support for more vulnerable families. Those with lower level needs get effective support through 'Harvey Girls' and most families take up the offer of additional support.
- At the Winshill resource centre families benefit from access to the child health clinic, domestic violence support group and job club in addition to those services delivered there. At 'Harvey Girls' users get priority help from the Citizen's Advice Bureau and access to legal advice.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Inadequate

- The leadership, governance and management of the group are weak. This is mainly due to the local authority review of services which has caused disruption to the management of resources, staffing and strategic oversight.
- The implementation of the new commissioning framework for universal and some targeted services resulted in major changes in service providers at the centres and other locations. As a result the number of families engaging in services fell significantly.
- Senior management and the Local Support Team are committed to improving the lives of local families and reducing inequalities. However, since the strategic change, the new leadership team and the systems they have introduced are not fully embedded and therefore effective.
- Data, where available, are inconsistent and at times contradictory. The group has only recently had access to live birth information and there are no clear systems in place to obtain a range of meaningful data from agencies. Consequently, the group has only limited information on the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families that reside within the reach area despite regular visits being undertaken by health visitors to this community.
- The local authority's approach to monitoring the performance of the centre has faltered in the last year. Specific, measurable targets were not set and the level of challenge has not been strong enough to demonstrate an improvement in performance.
- The district advisory board offers useful expertise but members do not challenge the group's impact sufficiently. They have not questioned whether the information and data presented to them gives a reliable picture of performance.
- Parents have been resistant to become involved in the governance of the centres. To alleviate this, Homestart has been instrumental in approaching parents to gain their views. However, this only represents views from a minority of parents.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and well understood. Staff have extended their knowledge by undertaking a wide range of safeguarding training including child sexual exploitation and missing children.
- Links with the social care team are strong. Good information exchange through weekly meetings ensures children and families get an appropriate level of support. This includes: looked after children; children on child protection plans; and those 'in need'.
- A good proportion of family cases are closed with good outcomes for families as a result of effective use of some aspects of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process.
- Supervision is held on a regular basis and staff are well supported. Case files are thoroughly discussed and professional development identified through the 'My Performance' model.

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	80619
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	430107
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	7396
Group manager	Gabrielle Gavin
Telephone number	01283 233400
Email address	gabriellegavin@staffordshire.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 21038 East Staffordshire Children's Centre
- 22919 Stapenhill Children's Centre
- 23374 Tynsel Parkes Children's Centre

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