

# Worthing East Children's Centre Group

40, Crescent Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 1RQ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 July 2014
Previous inspection date	The group has not previously been inspected

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

- Despite much improved registration figures overall, not enough families from some of the centres' priority groups are accessing services and using them regularly. This is especially so for families living in The Wave Centre's area.
- Not enough has been done to assess the specific needs of some of the priority groups and to provide services to meet the needs of, for example, lone parents or families from minority ethnic groups.
- The centres do not provide sufficient information, advice and guidance for adults to help them improve their basic skills, education and employment opportunities. When adults have been referred to other partners, the outcomes for them have not been followed up consistently.
- The community partnership group (CPG) is not sufficiently challenging. Members are supportive but do not have a wide enough understanding of the group as a whole and the impact on the priority families. This hampers the group's capacity to improve.
- Leaders, governors and managers have not ensured that some health and safety procedures have been followed up swiftly and that risk assessments are rigorous enough.

### It has the following strengths:

- The group has successfully increased the number of registrations overall, and especially in the eight least advantaged areas, over recent months. This is despite significant upheavals in the leadership team.
- The group has been very effective in supporting children into free early education, especially eligible two-year olds. This has led to most of them taking up places.
- The large majority of children who are under the care of social services and other families supported by outreach workers engage very well. Their needs are effectively met through good levels of care, guidance and support and strong partnerships with other agencies.
- There is an effective volunteer programme that has supported a number of adults into employment.

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

- Ensure that more families from some of the centres' identified priority groups access and engage with services by:
  - assessing why some of those groups, such as lone parents and children with a disability, are not using the centres more, particularly those living in the area served by The Wave Centre
  - utilising information more effectively to check who is using the services regularly
  - developing services that meet the needs of specific groups, such as lone parents and families from minority ethnic groups.
- Enable more families, especially from priority groups, to improve their education, English language and basic skills as well as their employability by:
  - developing deeper links with local adult education, employment and other support agencies to provide a wider range of information, advice and guidance
  - creating a consistent method to monitor the outcomes for families in the short and long term that includes feedback from partners.
- Develop the challenge provided by the centre partnership group by:
  - ensuring members have a clear understanding of the measures of the group's success, especially in relation to identified priority families
  - ensuring members are familiar with all three locations and their specific challenges
  - increasing the number of parent representatives.
- Those who lead, govern and manage the centres should ensure that all health and safety checks are carried out rigorously. Any concerns should be dealt with swiftly, either in consultation with the landlord or directly by the local authority.

## 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 three Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the team manager, the interim team manager, local authority representatives and members of the centre partnership group. They also spoke to several partners, such as those from health services, early years settings, voluntary organisations and local churches. They met with parents and volunteers.

The inspection covered the following centres: Footprints Children and Family Centres at Crescent Road and Lyndhurst Road sites; and The Wave Children and Family Centre. Inspectors visited sessions and activities taking place at all three sites, including a joint observation with the team manager of the Baby Movers session.

They looked at a range of relevant documentation including the group's self-evaluation and improvement plan, a sample of case studies and safeguarding policies and procedures. A team manager and local authority representative attended all meetings of the inspection team.

## Inspection team

Joan Lindsay, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Claire Griffin	Additional Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

The group was created in October 2011 with the merging of two centres: Footprints Children and Family Centre, which has two sites, and The Wave Children and Family Centre. The two centres are managed by one team manager on behalf of the local authority. There are two centre coordinators. A centre partnership group provides one single advisory board for the Worthing East group.

The Footprints Centre opened in 2009. It operates from two sites, one at Crescent Road and one at Lyndhurst Road. The Wave Centre opened in 2007 and is situated in Broadwater Baptist Church, which is also the location of Jack in the Box Playgroup Limited (EY462953). The playgroup is privately run and was not inspected as part of this inspection. The inspection report for the setting can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). Footprints Children and Family Centre was inspected in October 2011 when it was judged to have a satisfactory overall effectiveness. The Wave Centre and the group as a whole have not been inspected previously.

There have been significant challenges for the group over the last 12 to 18 months, including the unplanned and serious long term sickness and absence for several months of the leadership team, including the team manager and her seconded replacement. A second interim team manager has been in post over the last six months. The substantive team manager has now returned to work.

There are 2,625 children aged under five years in the area served by the group. There are 24 separate defined localities in this area, a third of which are considered to be in the top 30% least advantaged in England. A further 12 are in the top 50% most deprived. Central ward, located in the Footprints area, is the most disadvantaged ward in Worthing. There are also pockets of affluence in the wards served by The Wave Centre. Most families come from a White British heritage. The percentage of children under five living in workless households is 23% overall, which is above national averages. Children generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at levels below those expected for their age.

The centre has identified priority groups needing most support as: families living in the eight least advantaged areas; teenage parents; children with a disability; lone parents of young children; children who are under social care supervision and children from minority ethnic groups.

### Inspection judgements

#### Access to services by young children and families

#### Requires improvement

- The centres have increased registrations so that now approximately 70% of children in the local area are registered and 60% have accessed services at least once. However, the numbers from some of the priority families who use the centres more regularly are not high enough. This is particularly so for lone parents, children with a disability and minority ethnic families in the area served by The Wave Centre.
- The centres have not done enough follow-up work to establish why some families are not using services regularly after they register. Some of this information has only recently been available and analysed.
- Not enough has been done to establish which services would best meet the needs of some priority groups, and therefore encourage more families to attend regularly. Where the centres have done this research, such as with teenage parents, they have had considerable success in ensuring they attend frequently until their needs are met. For example, at the Crescent Road site, a whole day is given each week to provide specific sessions for them, including an antenatal clinic.
- Improved links with health services have increased the numbers of families using services. The provision of antenatal and postnatal services delivered from the centres and breastfeeding drop-ins have improved access to families expecting babies and those with young children. For

example, 135 children have been registered since February this year as a result of health visitors registering families or centre staff attending clinics.

- The group has provided very effective support for families to access free early education, especially for eligible two-year-olds. Consequently, the very large majority take up their places, all in good or better settings. Nearly all three- and four-year-olds also take up their entitlement to funded nursery places.

### The quality of practice and services

### Requires improvement

- The range and relevance of services require improvement because there are not enough specific sessions to meet the needs of priority families. This is because the group has not carried out enough in-depth analysis of what some families needs are.
- There are only limited opportunities for adults to extend their skills, including their understanding of English, education and employability. Systems to ensure a consistent method to follow up any support or advice given by centre staff or their partners are not well developed. There are some links in place with partners such as Jobcentre Plus, but staff recognise that these, and partnerships with other services such as adult learning, need to be developed further.
- Tracking the achievements of children while they are using the centres and when they move on is only just starting, with families being offered the use of 'learning journals'. However, there is anecdotal evidence from parents and from nurseries that children make good progress, especially in their confidence and independence.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results show that local children generally achieve a good level of development that is slightly above the national average. Indications are that results from 2014 have improved substantially. The outcomes are analysed in depth, so that weaker areas, for example early writing skills, can be a focus of centres' sessions, such as Play and Learn.
- The quality of the services provided by the centres is generally good. Staff are good role models and there is a strong focus on developing children's early skills and supporting parents through structured parenting programmes. The service identification of need planning tool is effective in ensuring services have a strong focus on children's early development.
- Health outcomes are mainly good. The percentage of mothers still breastfeeding six weeks after birth is higher, at 56%, than the national average, although there are significant variations across different groups. Immunisation targets are largely met, assisted by holding an immunisation clinic at Lyndhurst Road. Childhood obesity levels are not significantly different to those found nationally.
- There is good information sharing with social care and other partners. As a result, the centres know all the children who are subject to child protection plans, are looked after or are considered children in need. This priority group engages well with the centre. Well kept, detailed case files and assessment tools show that the outcomes for those families who often have complex needs are generally good. Families who have been supported typically say, 'I don't know what I would have done without this place.'
- There are currently 18 volunteers across the group from a range of different family groups. Not only do those volunteers make a positive contribution to the centres but there has been significant impact on the lives of some, for example helping them into employment.

### The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

### Requires improvement

- The group has had a prolonged period of disruption to the senior leadership due to unavoidable long term absences of the team manager and the interim replacement. Consequently, not enough analysis of information about priority families' access and regular engagement with services has been done. Some initiatives and improvements are new and not embedded. This has had a limiting effect on the capacity to improve.
- Members of the centre partnership group do not have a wide enough knowledge of the group as a whole, or of how to interpret the data to show the centres' impact on priority families. This means

the centre partnership group is not effectively challenging the centres. There is a wide range of partners represented, but currently not enough families, especially those from priority groups.

- The local authority has an accurate assessment of the group's strengths and areas for development. It has put in a support package and conducted regular reviews over the last 18 months and provides generally good amounts of data for the centres. However, there has not been a strong enough focus on setting challenging targets in relation to priority families' regular use of the centres.
- The group is well resourced and staff are used effectively across the three sites, especially to provide services that are open to all, such as the very popular Play and Learn groups. However, the resources have not been used effectively enough to meet the needs of some priority families, or to provide enough support for adults to improve their education and employability. This has limited the group's impact on reducing inequalities.
- Health and safety checks are not always robust enough. Some repairs, for example to the outside play area at the Crescent Road site, have taken too long to be completed. Where the centre is the tenant rather than the landlord, not enough has been done to ensure that all the necessary checks have been undertaken by the building's owner.
- Child protection policies and procedures are effective. Staff are well trained, not only in how to support families where children are subject to child protection plans, the Common Assessment Framework, are children in need or looked after, but also in identifying and acting on any concerns.
- Families hold the centres and staff in high regard. They feel fully involved in shaping services, despite the lack of formal representation on the centre partnership group. This is because the family forum is well attended and they can give their views and suggestions via the Talking Tree. All families feel staff, including the family information service assistants, are all very approachable and welcoming. Families particularly like the fact they can drop in to use the centres as a community hub, stating, 'It encourages me to get out,' and, 'It has made a real difference to my life.'

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80773
<b>Local authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	442841
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2,625
<b>Team Manager</b>	Jac MacLean
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	The group has not been previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01903 276807
<b>Email address</b>	Jac.maclean@westsussex.gov.uk

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

- The Footprints Children and Family Centre (22768)
- The Wave Children and Family Centre (23275)

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