

# Gloucestershire - Cheltenham Locality

c/o Gardeners Lane Children's Centre, Gardners Lane, Cheltenham, GL51 9JW

<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–19 June 2014
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families	Good		2
The quality of practice and services	Good		2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management	Good		2

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This children's centre group is good.

- The centres work well with other organisations. These positive partnerships help the centres to register families, provide services, consider what support is needed and how well they provide it.
- Support for funded two-year-olds is very successful because the quality of activities is good and much thought is given by staff to supporting parents as well as children.
- Arrangements to protect the welfare and safety of children and families are excellent. These have a very positive impact upon improving the lives of local families, including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable.
- The new centre group has made a successful start to supporting families across Cheltenham in new ways. Leaders have a very clear vision for improvement and they have the knowledge and skills they need to improve the centres further. Staff are given excellent support and training opportunities to improve their work. The buildings and resources they use are of high quality.
- Responsibility for the centres through the Gardeners Lane and Oakwood Federation is organised thoughtfully and is giving a clear direction to the work of the centre group.

### It is not outstanding because:

- There are some young children and families from across priority groups in Cheltenham who are not registered with the centres or do not access the services provided.
- When the centre leaders and the local authority look at how well the centres are working, they do not always make enough use of the information about which families use the centres.
- Precise, measurable targets for the centre group from the local authority are recent, and checks on progress are at an early stage of development. Therefore, it is too soon for the centres to show the full impact of recent improvements in child and family health and education.

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

- Find those children and families across Cheltenham who are not known to the children's centres, particularly those from target groups, ensuring that they register and make good use of the services available.
- Analyse in more detail who is using the children's centres and make greater use of this information in planning and reviewing improvements over time within the centres, and with the local authority.
- Work with members of the governing body, partner organisations and the local authority to better establish the monitoring of progress towards the new performance targets.

### 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: Charlton Kings Children's Centre; Gardeners Lane Children's Centre; Hesters Way Children's Centre; Leckhampton Children's Centre; Oakwood Children's Centre; Rowanfield Children's Centre; Up Hatherley Children's Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with staff, leaders, partner organisations and representatives from the governing body, partnership board and the local authority.

The inspectors visited each of the centres. They observed each centre's work, spoke informally with parents and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

### Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Cliff Rose	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joyce Cox	Additional inspector
Trish Collis	Additional inspector
Aileen King	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre group

Gloucestershire - Cheltenham Children's Centre Group consists of seven centres across Cheltenham that share one overall centre leader and one advisory board. Since April 2013, the local authority has commissioned a local charity, the Gardeners Lane and Oakwood Federation, to manage the centres. The group offers a range of activities and services including family support, adult learning, outreach work, stay and play groups, child health clinics and parenting programmes. Health Visitors are based at two of the centres (Hesters Way Children's Centre and Gardeners Lane Children's Centre). A midwifery project, partly funded by the centres, is located at Gardeners Lane Children's Centre. Children in Cheltenham start their early education with a range of skills, and in some parts of the area, their abilities are well below what is typical.

The centre group serves 6,500 children under five years of age living within 75 super output areas. Of these areas, 12 are ranked in some of the poorest areas in the county. There are 17% of young children living in households where no one is working. Data demonstrate that the population is mainly White British, with a small proportion being from a range of minority ethnic groups. The centre group has identified target groups which include: young parents; minority ethnic groups; children who have special educational needs; children known to social care; and workless families.

Gardeners Lane Children's Centre is attached to Gardeners Lane Primary School in the St Peter's area of Cheltenham. It has a formal link with an early years provision - Little Smarties. The centre was designated as an Early Excellence Centre in 2002. Hesters Way Children's Centre is attached to Hesters Way Primary School in the Hesters Way locality of Cheltenham. Oakwood Children's Centre is located in the Oakley ward and links with Oakwood Primary School. It has a formal link with an early years provider – Little Explorers @ Pavilion. Rowanfield Children's Centre is attached to Rowanfield Infants School in the St Marks area of Cheltenham. Up Hatherley Children's Centre is based within the Up Hatherley Library and next door to a medical centre. Leckhampton Children's Centre is located on the site of Leckhampton Primary School and operates services from other sites including Leckhampton Baptist Church and Millennium Hall in Shurdington. Charlton Kings Children's Centre is based at Charlton Kings Library in the Charlton Kings area of Cheltenham. None of the schools or linked early years settings was inspected as part of this inspection; their reports are available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Arrangements to support children and parents known to social care, children in care and children in need are excellent. This is because links with health, and social care, are coordinated well, and there are very clear arrangements for sharing information about families known to other services.
- Each of the children's centres is registering an increasing number of local families each month. This is because a wide range of valuable links have been established between the new centre group and partner organisations to increase awareness about children's centres among families in Cheltenham. Many families are accessing support through the work of centres and partner organisations. For example, the location of midwifery and health visiting within the centre group is greatly helping pregnant mothers to take up appointments and to gain advice.
- Careful thought has been given to the mix of services open to all families and those for children and families with particular needs. As a consequence, families who spoke to inspectors said that they value the services offered, they feel welcome within the centres and that their views are respected.
- Children and families from target groups, for example families from minority ethnic groups, and

young parents, make good use of the services provided by the centre group. This is partly because staff use a range of venues to reach families and make extensive use of home visiting where needed. As one centre worker said to an inspector, 'We go wherever people congregate.' This success in reaching an increasing number of families is also because the new centre group has analysed local needs fully, so that staff have a clear understanding of their target groups. Nevertheless, centre leaders have identified correctly that there are still some children and families from across target groups to find and engage with the children's centres.

### The quality of practice and services

Good

- The group of centres has quickly established good-quality play and learning groups for children and parents; some of which is outstanding. These activities play a key role in helping to improve children's readiness for school. For example, the support the centres provide for funded two-year-olds is excellent. This is because of a close focus on the needs of the children and their families, and all funded children have access to help from a Community Family Worker.
- Families who are in most need are given excellent support through a range of bespoke programmes and family sessions. The centres' use parenting programmes very well to meet the needs of individual families with positive results. Health workers and smoking cessation services have increased significantly the percentage of pregnant women who stop smoking during pregnancy. One parent summed up the impact of the centres, saying, 'The centres have saved my relationships and my family.'
- The centre group is having a good impact upon improving life chances and reducing inequalities for target groups, for example workless families. There is high-quality adult learning, parenting support and welfare reform advice available. Progression opportunities for parents to move into work or further training are given high priority and many parents have successful outcomes. Learners are encouraged to evaluate their own learning and the positive impact it is having on their family life. Parents' successes are celebrated both informally and through formal centre events.
- Parents using the centres have improved their confidence and well-being as a result of attending groups and activities. Some have benefited from an active volunteering programme and the more recently created 'Champion' roles to further extend their skills and confidence. They also say that they benefit through the wide range of services available, including through using the community cafés where tasty, low cost, healthy eating is promoted well. However, it is too soon for the centre group to demonstrate that improvements in the health and education of enough local children and families are better than good.
- The model of services set by the Gardeners Lane and Oakwood Federation provides a wide range of relevant universal and targeted services for families living in Cheltenham. The large number of children's centres in the group, and their relatively tight geographical spread, allows for specialist staff to be deployed readily to areas of most need.
- Increasingly close links between the children's centres and early years settings, childminders and schools is helping to provide greater continuity of support for children and their families. For example, children with special needs, a target group, are being offered better help because the centres are assisting other organisations with child assessments, planning and reviewing, and staff training, where needed.

### The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Safeguarding is a strength across the centre group. Staff are given excellent support through regular supervision sessions given by leaders. Staff have well-planned access to training and team discussions, including safeguarding. Records of work with families are of high quality and successful links are made with social care colleagues to support children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans, and those deemed to be children in need.
- The centres have a wide range of positive links with other organisations to provide services for families and to plan and review the support provided. As a consequence, family needs are identified

clearly through early help assessments, often through close links with other workers such as those in health. The frequent and supportive liaison with other services helps centre leaders to avoid any duplication and competition of support and keeps the centres aware of issues affecting local families. Consequently, the good range of resources within the centre group are used fully to meet local needs and priorities.

- Centre plans are clear, appropriate and well thought through. However, the centres' use of data about which families participate in services is at an early stage of development. Consequently, centre leaders are not always clear enough about how many families from each target group that the centres are reaching.
- The Gardeners Lane and Oakwood Federation are giving a clear direction to the work of the seven children's centres. An innovative model of governance through a governing body, a strategic board and a partnership board is working well. Members are actively involved in checking the performance of services. Consequently, they know that outcomes, provision and leadership are good. The contributions of parents to governance arrangements are valued fully. The quality of the support from the federation is illustrated by the centre locality leader who said of meetings, 'I always feel reassured when I see them sitting there.'
- Precise, measurable targets for the centres have been introduced only recently. Hence, checks on progress by the local authority and by centre leaders using data about targets are at an early stage of development. This means that it is difficult for the centres to show the longer term impact of their work on education and health outcomes for children and families. The focus of local authority discussion with centre leaders has also been a little limited as to who is using the centres. Nevertheless, challenge and support to the centres from the local authority is helping the centres to improve.
- Leaders of the centre group have clear vision, high aspirations and a thorough understanding about how to improve child and family services in new ways across Cheltenham. The buildings and resources used are of high quality and leaders are very skilled at utilising the well-qualified staff team to contribute to centre planning and development. As a result, the centres have achieved much in a short period of time. However, there is no complacency; all involved with the centres understand that reaching all children and families from target groups is their key priority. The skills of centre leaders, together with the centres' other strengths, indicate that the centre group is very well placed to improve further.

**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>	80402
<b>Local authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	442712
<b>Managed by</b>	Gardeners Lane and Oakwood Federation on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	6,500
<b>Group manager</b>	Alison Hook
<b>Telephone number</b>	01242 252185
<b>Email address</b>	federation@cheltcc.org.uk

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

- URN 20634 Charlton Kings Children's Centre
- URN 21239 Gardeners Lane Children's Centre
- URN 21464 Hesters Way Children's Centre
- URN 21763 Leckhampton Children's Centre
- URN 23564 Oakwood Children's Centre
- URN 22565 Rowanfield Children's Centre
- URN 23380 Up Hatherley Children's Centre

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