

Warwickshire - Mancetter and Coleshill Cluster

c/o Atherstone Early Years Centre, Kings Avenue, Atherstone, CV9 1JZ

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

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable	
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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This group of centres requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Not enough children and families from priority groups sustain their engagement in appropriate children's centre group services.
- The take up by priority groups of the good quality, well-resourced sessions run by the centre group is not being checked closely enough.
- Children's school-readiness is not being given sufficient attention. There is high take up of free early education by young children, but overall achievement is well below the level seen nationally when they start school. Some of the information routinely provided to the centre by the local authority lacks detail and this impedes leaders' and the advisory board's ability to target improvement more precisely.
- Checks on parents' progress when they attend further education or skills training are under-developed. This restricts otherwise good work to increase parents' employability and financial health.
- The proportion of mothers continuing to breastfeed their babies is below county and national averages. Health partners have different information to that provided by the local authority and this confusion inhibits effective improvement.

It has the following strengths:

- Effective leadership has ensured good quality services, particularly in the communities where there is the greatest need, during a time of challenging organisational change. Staff show strong determination to do their best for children and families.
- The very strong health partnership and the availability of information about new births help the centre group to make early contact with children. As a result registrations are rising.
- Well-focussed support for families facing personal challenges helps them to build resilience and get back on track. Frequent meetings between key partners enable close checks on those most at risk.
- Parents benefit from specific programmes and staff expertise, so they build more confident parenting skills. Good work takes place to support positive behaviour management.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Increase the level of contact by all priority groups, so that at least the large majority of families access appropriate services until their needs are met. Make sure that the attendance of priority groups at sessions run by the centre group is more closely tracked.
- Enhance children's school-readiness by:
 - making contact with early years settings, particular those whose effectiveness is not yet good, and working with them to ensure the children in danger of falling behind receive the right package of support to maximise their achievement
 - tracking how well target children progress in their learning and development during the centre group activities they attend regularly, and planning appropriately for their next steps
 - seeking more detailed information from the local authority about the eligibility and placement of two year-olds, together with data to show how well children who have accessed the group's services achieve when they move on.
- Strengthen the work to increase parents' employability and financial well-being by:
 - establishing a robust system to get feedback from partners about how well parents progress when they undertake courses or training
 - using information about retention and success rates to help shape future services
 - re-establishing links with Jobcentre Plus and Citizen's Advice Bureau
 - developing the volunteering programme.
- Use the head of centre's evaluation of why some mothers are not breastfeeding, and capitalise on the effective work with health partners, to target increases in sustained breastfeeding and drive more rapid improvement. Ensure that all partners work from the same data set to support this aspect of work.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this group of children's centres 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 group's head of centre, staff, a senior leader from Barnardo's, local authority officers, partner agencies, volunteers and representatives from the advisory board.

The inspectors observed a range of activities at Coleshill and in community venues in the Mancetter area including a 'Nosh' session observed jointly with the head of centre.

They observed the centre group's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation. The head of centre and a Barnardo's senior leader attended all the team meetings.

Inspection team

Lead inspector, Christine Field	Additional inspector
Anne Ashworth	Additional inspector
Mary Dudley	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre group

The group consists of two children's centres: Mancetter Children's Centre and Coleshill Children's Centre. A range of services is provided; some services are provided in partnership with other providers to help meet local needs. The group serves a socially and economically mixed community that includes a number of rural villages. There are 17 distinct communities across the reach area, three of which, located in the Mancetter area, fall into the 10-20% least advantaged nationally. Mancetter Children's Centre operates all services from outreach community buildings. The centre was inspected previously in 2012, when it had standalone status. Coleshill Children's Centre is located in a separate purpose-built building on Coleshill CofE Primary School site. The school is inspected under separate arrangements. The schools and previous children's centre inspection reports are available at www.ofsted.gov.uk

The group has been managed by Barnardo's on behalf of Warwickshire County Council since September 2014. Each centre previously had its own advisory board; a new board is being formed and has met once to plan the changes agreed. Staffing levels have reduced over the last year from ten to four. The team currently comprises a full time head of centre, two part time development workers and administrative support. Staff are in the midst of re-structuring in readiness for a new centre grouping model that is due to become fully operational in January 2015.

There are 1,357 children under five years of age living in the reach area. Most families are White British. Rural isolation is flagged as a barrier to some families' access to services. Most children start in early education with skills and abilities below the level expected for their age.

The main priority groups are identified as: lone parents, children living in the least advantaged areas, and workless families.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Some 57% of children have had one or more contacts with the centre group in the last year. However, only a minority of lone parents and children living in the least advantaged areas use the group's services frequently. Information shows that the large majority of workless families access both centres' services but the group cannot demonstrate what impact this has on improving parents' economic-well-being.
- The centre group works effectively to run services in community venues to widen access to those at risk of isolation. Good work takes place, particularly with health and social care partners, to ensure that children and families most in need of support receive timely access to effective help.
- Centre group staff visit antenatal clinics and run sessions such as 'Bumps and Babes' with health partners. This work helps them get to know about expectant parents and follow up any concerns quickly. Live birth data has come on stream in the last two years; this helps the group to register children in much greater numbers than previously, and follow up where there are gaps. Overall, registrations currently stand at 93%.
- Local authority data show that there is high take up of free education by eligible two-year-olds. However, the centre group is not clear about where they access places or how well they are doing. In the recent past, visits were made to all early year's settings, and a 'Nurture Nursery' group was set up to provide additional support to young children in danger of under-achieving. Reduced staffing has curtailed this aspect of the group's work currently.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The centre group has managed to deliver good quality services during the protracted re-commissioning process, but the range of services requires improvement to fully meet local needs.
- Insufficient focus is being given to supporting children's preparation for school or to help workless families improve their employment chances. The group's work to track the impact of services on reducing inequalities is not good enough.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results for children living in the local area show that 49% achieved a good level of development this year. This is well below the 60% seen nationally. Information is not being captured to show how well children who have accessed the children's centre group achieve at the end of their Reception year in the adjacent school at Coleshill or any others. Additionally, there is no consistent way of checking the progress of priority children or in planning their next steps when they attend centre group services such as the crèche.
- Adult Community Learning partners work with the centre group to run various events aimed at improving parents' education and skills. An English level two course is currently running; all participants who completed 'Fun with Numbers' enjoyed the course very much, and flagged what they would like to do next. However, there is no systematic approach to meeting needs or in planning a clear pathway towards employability, especially for those who are workless.
- Links with Jobcentre Plus and Citizens Advice Bureau have weakened this year. Centre group staff's support for volunteering has helped parents to enhance their skills and gain paid work in the past, but there are no volunteers currently.
- Good information sharing between partners ensures that staff know and work well with the small number of children who have social care supervision. Support for families facing particular challenges is highly effective in helping them get back on track. Case files are maintained to a good standard and discussed in regular supervision meetings led by the head of centre.
- The 'Nosh', a five week accredited course focussing on preparing nutritious meals, is part of the centre's work with partners to keep children and families healthy. Childhood obesity rates are much more positive than seen nationally. However, sustained breastfeeding rates remain stubbornly low. The head of centre has undertaken a detailed evaluation of what the barriers are to better outcomes but has yet to use this to assist targeted improvement. Health and centre group data shows that 22% of mothers continue to breastfeed at six to eight weeks but the local authority data suggest 38%.
- Sessions such as 'Baby Massage' and first aid courses are well attended and raise parents' awareness about how to ensure their children's well-being. Over 30 parents have participated in parenting courses, with staff facilitating additional discussion groups about specific concerns such as behaviour management. Parents told inspectors how much they value the staff who they describe as 'just like friends - always there for you'.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The head of centre is working determinedly to ensure it is 'business as usual' for families during a time of great change. Re-organisation in one form or another has been part of daily life for over a year. Staffing has reduced during this time and there is uncertainty about jobs in going forward. The upbeat morale and high level of professionalism of the small staff team is recognised by parents who appreciate the services they receive. The rising registration is one indicator of the effective leadership.

- The local authority effectively monitors the group's service delivery and overall performance through its annual conversation visits, checks on registration and professional support meetings with the head of centre. Targets were set to assist development until September when the new provider, Barnados, took over. Comprehensive induction arrangements are currently in full swing and include new targets for the future.
- Governance is well-embedded. The advisory board is well informed and has played a significant role in managing the change process positively. Board members are clear about the centre group's priorities and have kept abreast of how well it is doing as tight resources become further stretched. There is evident challenge in the board's decision-making, but recently the focus has been on providing support to ensure the centre group maintains its effectiveness.
- Safeguarding is central to the work of the group. Policy and procedures, including staff vetting, meet current requirements. Effective use of agreed protocols reduces the risk of harm to young children, including those in care, subject to a child protection plan or in need. Integrated, multi-agency working, supported by bi-monthly meetings and timely information sharing, are positive features of safeguarding practice.
- Parents express good levels of satisfaction with the services they receive, especially specialist help such as for children's speech and language development. Grandparents highlight the value of the session held at Arley which helps them to support their grandchildren's learning. Some parents told inspectors how much they miss the sessions for their older children, such as 'Play and Learn', which are currently not running. The parents' forum helps shape services, and parents who serve on the advisory board are active and contribute to strategic decision-making.

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.

Centre Group details

Unique reference number	80217
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	447610
Managed by	Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,357
Centre leader	Cherylynne Harrison
Date of previous inspection	Not Previously Inspected
Telephone number	01827 718723
Email address	cherylynne.harrison@Barnardo's.org.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- Coleshill Children's Centre (URN 20793)
- Mancetter Children's Centre (URN 21905)

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