

# Stanley Children's Centre

Strathmore Road, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 8UE

**Inspection date** 22–23 October 2013

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

- The number of families using the centre is increasing rapidly, but outreach work has not been effective enough in overcoming the significant barriers, such as the size of the geographic area covered by the centre, to enable more families to make use of the services on offer.
- The centre has given careful thought to identifying those needing support the most and has been successful in encouraging those families to attend, but the commissioned providers who run most of the sessions are not always aware of who these priority groups are and how best to support them when they attend the activities.
- There are no consistent systems in place to monitor the progress children make either when they use the centre's services, especially those run by commissioned providers, or when they move on to nursery or school. This is also the case for adults supported by the centre or signposted elsewhere so that follow-up of long-term outcomes is ad hoc.
- Data provided by the local authority have improved very recently but are not yet detailed enough to enable the leaders, the local authority and the advisory board to set realistic improvement targets, monitor overall performance or check specifically on the impact of services on the groups needing support the most.

### This children's centre has the following strengths:

- The centre has been affected by and continues to go through a period of significant change. However the centre manager, despite only being part time, has ensured that staff morale has remained high and that parents have very positive views of the centre and are fully involved in shaping future services.
- Staff work very effectively with other partners including voluntary organisations to ensure that the right level of care, support and guidance is put in place for the most vulnerable families. This has been enhanced greatly by effective systems that enable the exchange of information between agencies such as social care and the centre.
- There are strong links in place with health partners that encourage families to access health services, and so benefit swiftly from specialist support such as speech and language therapy. Consequently parents and carers have a good understanding of how to help their children lead

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healthy lives and how to develop their communication skills effectively.

## **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 three Additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, officers from the local authority, representatives from local health services and other key partners including those commissioned to run services. They held discussions with parents and members of the advisory board. Several activities were observed by the inspectors including one jointly with the centre manager who also attended all team meetings along with a representative from the local authority.

Inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action plan, a sample of case studies, safeguarding policies and procedures and a range of other documentation.

### **Inspection team**

Joan Lindsay	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Sarah McDermott	Additional Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

The centre was designated in 2010 as a phase three stand-alone centre. Welcare, a voluntary organisation, was originally commissioned to run services at another location in the borough while a permanent building was being completed. On completion of the purpose-built centre in November 2012, adjacent to The Stanley School, the local authority took over the management of the centre. Further change occurred in September 2013; direct management is now undertaken on a shared basis by the London Boroughs of Richmond and Kingston Upon Thames. An advisory board has been in place since September 2013. The centre manager, who took up her post in January 2013, also manages Heathfield Children's Centre, although both centres have separate provision and are subject to separate inspection arrangements. Other staff include a full-time outreach worker, a post that is currently vacant, and one full-time and one part-time administrator.

Services are delivered from the main site which is open from 9.00am until 5.00pm Monday to Friday and every Saturday morning, 48 weeks of the year.

There are 4,661 children under five years of age living in the centre's reach area. Children enter early years provision at levels below those expected for their age. The centre's locality area comprises St Margaret's, Teddington and Twickenham and is the largest of five locality areas that make up the borough of Richmond Upon Thames. The area is relatively affluent with the majority of properties being owner occupied or privately rented. The centre serves 36 super output areas (SOAs) with none ranked in the 30% most deprived; four are classed as being in the 40–60% most deprived. Only 1.8% of children from birth to four years of age are living in out of work benefit claimant households, which is very low compared to the national average. White British heritage families account for 93% of the population, with the largest discernible other ethnic groups being Irish and Indian.

The centre has identified its priority groups as children who are supported by the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) procedures, disabled children and those with special educational needs, parents who are over 30 years old and two-year-old children accessing funded early education.

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

- Increase the number of families who benefit from the centre's services, particularly those from the priority groups who need most support, by:
  - making it easier for them to access services through increasing outreach work at suitable venues in the community
  - improving links with schools and other early years providers so that the centre is promoted more effectively.
- Establish methods to record the progress children make when they come regularly to the centre and the impact the centre has on adults' and children's achievement over time by:
  - working with commissioned providers to ensure there is a clear understanding of the need to monitor participants' progress over time and that they are fully aware of who the identified priority groups are
  - liaising with schools and early years settings to develop a consistent method to track children's progress when they move on
  - implementing a more effective system to measure the longer-term benefits to adults from the initial support and guidance provided by the centre.
- Improve the quality and quantity of data provided by the local authority so that it, along with the advisory board, can monitor the centre's performance, set realistic and challenging targets and measure the impact of the centre's work more effectively, especially on its priority groups.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- There are significant barriers to access given the very high number of children living in the reach area which is spread out geographically, the small size of the centre and the part-time nature of staffing. Despite these inhibiting factors, increasing numbers, including from the centre's identified priority groups, are using the centre but they are not yet the large majority.
- Links with the many schools and private, voluntary and independent providers for the early years located in the reach area are not yet well enough established to enable the centre to know most families with young children.
- The centre has given much thought to identifying the specific groups in its reach area that need support the most. It has been effective in engaging the large majority of those groups who register by providing specific services such as 'Sparkletime' and 'Singing Hands' for children with additional needs. Over 78% of parents who use the centre are from the identified key group of mature parents. Weekly Saturday 'Dads' Messy Play' sessions enable an increasing number of fathers to use the centre.
- Very good information exchange with other agencies means that the large majority of children who are most vulnerable, such as those being supported by the CAF process or subject to a child protection plan, are in regular contact and engaging with the centre.
- Good links with health partners, antenatal and postnatal sessions and child developmental checks held in the centre are increasing the number of families accessing services, including those from the centre's identified priority groups and expectant mothers.
- Specific surgeries held to support eligible families apply for funded places for two year olds are increasing access for this target group so that now almost half take up places; 100% of three and four year olds take up early education.

### The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- There is a good range of services that are open to all and those aimed at meeting particular needs such as supporting children's speech and language development or parents' concerns about

domestic abuse. However, although families enjoy the sessions such as 'Stay and Play', the focus on the needs of priority groups is too variable as providers are not always clear about who these groups are and so the quality and relevance of services require improvement in order to enhance the outcomes for families.

- Developing children's independence and especially their communication skills is a focus of the work of the centre, and good support from the speech and language service and the early years consultant promotes this. Parents typically say their children's speech and confidence have come on 'in leaps and bounds'. However, links with early years settings in the area are not yet developed well enough to run specific sessions to help with the transition to school or to track children's progress when they move on. This is partly because there are so many in this large reach area and limited staff time to establish effective links.
- The centre has rightly deemed there to be little need to extend parents' literacy, numeracy or employability skills and so has focused on improving parenting skills and supporting the specific needs of more mature parents who may feel isolated. Parents feel that their needs are met well in this regard and they have a good understanding of how to keep their children healthy and safe. Good health outcomes such as low childhood obesity and high sustained breastfeeding rates reflect this positively.
- When parents are supported directly by centre services or through signposting to those commissioned from other providers, the systems used to check the longer-term benefits on improving families' well-being or life chances are inconsistent.
- Well-established links with partners such as Homestart and Relate and full participation in multi-agency meetings ensure good outcomes for the centre's identified priority group of children helped by use of the CAF, as well as those subject to a child protection plan or who have special educational needs or are disabled. Parents feel they are given good levels of care, guidance and support although the case files do not consistently record this or reflect families' views.
- Parents feel fully involved in the centre and are active participants in the parents' forum and the newly established advisory board. However, there is only a small number of active volunteers at present.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

Requires improvement

- The arrangements for governance, leadership and management are new and evolving. For example, the advisory board has only been established in its current form since September 2013 which is also when the direct management of the centre became the joint responsibility of the London Borough of Kingston as well as Richmond. Although there have been significant very recent improvements in the quality and quantity of data, there is scope to improve this further so that it can be used more effectively to monitor the centre's performance, especially in relation to its identified priority groups.
- The centre manager, in post for nine months, has been very effective in steering the centre through a period of uncertainty and change but there are limitations on what she can achieve given her part-time role and the extremely large reach area. She has however, ensured that families who need support the most have received good levels of care, guidance and support despite the vacant outreach worker post, by good use of other agencies including family support workers.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and realistic and there is a clear understanding of what needs to be done to move the centre forward and overcome the barriers to encouraging more families to access services and to iron out inequalities.
- Safeguarding is given high status in the centre and the good exchange of information with social care agencies ensures there is a strong focus on reducing the risk of harm to families. This is especially so given the increasing incidences of reported domestic abuse and adult mental health issues. Staff are well trained to enable them to spot and deal with any concerns swiftly and appropriately. Consequently, the centre's identified target group of vulnerable families supported through the CAF process or those subject to a child protection plan are safeguarded well.
- Resources are stretched as the building can only accommodate 60 people and at present the small

rooftop outdoor area is out of use due to health and safety concerns. Most services are commissioned out but this is being reviewed in relation to how best to meet the needs of priority groups and achieve value for money.

- Families' high levels of satisfaction with the centre and their encouragement of others to attend are reflected through comments such as 'I cannot fault the centre on anything' and 'They are my first port of call.' Centre users' views are sought regularly and a noticeboard highlights what ideas have been taken up and helpfully gives reasons for those that have not.

**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.

<b>Unique reference number</b>	23116
<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames
<b>Inspection number</b>	432460
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	4661
<b>Centre manager</b>	Rachel Sheppard
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8734 3372
<b>Email address</b>	rachel.sheppard@richmond.gov.uk



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