

Inspection report for The Children's Village Children's Centre

Local authority	Wolverhampton
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Linked school if applicable	n/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY304153 The Children's Village

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior management team, representatives of the advisory board, a range of agencies and parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The Children's Village is situated in the residential area of Wednesfield, near to Wolverhampton city centre. Wednesfield is amongst the lowest 20% most deprived areas in the country. The large majority of families surrounding The Children's Village are White British. The remainder are from Black or Asian groups. The area is characterised by high rise housing, low rise flats and maisonettes, high unemployment and social deprivation. Most children enter child care and early education with skills that are lower than those expected for their age. The centre provides the full core offer. The Children's Village has its own advisory board which is made up of representatives from Wolverhampton local authority, parents, the Primary Care Trust, neighbourhood partners, health and training providers, and centre staff. The centre also has a board of directors who meet regularly and oversee the centre's work. The centre has evolved from a Sure Start Local Programme and opened as a purpose built children's centre in 2005. The centre operates a number of groups and activities at four community venues within the reach area.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

The Children's Village offers good support for children and families. The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users is a strong feature of the centre's work. Parents and other users appreciate the warm and friendly welcome they receive when they visit the centre. For example, one parent typically commented, 'I have used other centres, but know I will always get a smile and how are you from the staff at The Children's Village.' Case study evidence indicates that families have received well integrated and sensitive support in times of crisis. This good quality care and support however, benefits only a minority of families within the reach area. The centre has appropriate plans to increase the proportion of centre users, particularly those from hard to reach groups, but their work has yet to impact fully.

The centre manager and all staff ensure the building is a safe and secure environment for all users. They have good procedures in place for ensuring the safeguarding and welfare of everyone who uses the centre. Being healthy outcomes for centre users and their families are good. Children are taught appropriate hygiene routines, such as washing their hands before eating, and parents enjoy cookery demonstrations promoting healthy meals. In addition, national indicators show that the proportion of babies breastfeeding at six weeks within the reach area, is above the local authority average.

Children who attend the Early Years Foundation Stage provision make good gains in their learning and in their personal, social and emotional development. Tracking data indicates that outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are improving across the reach area at a good rate. Although parents have access to a range of services to support them back into employment, such as Job Centre Plus advice, the centre does not currently provide accredited courses.

The centre's self evaluation is sound and is based on secure monitoring and evaluation procedures. Senior leaders and the advisory board have a clear view of the strengths and areas for development across the centre and this is reflected in the

thorough improvement plan. Although the centre evaluates its work in relation to national and local indicators systems to monitor the longer term impact are at an early stage of development.

The centre meets its statutory responsibilities for the promotion of equality and diversity. It has been particularly successful in engaging specific groups of ethnic minority parents. For example, providing a Baby Club at a community venue for some parents who are at an early stage of learning English. Good provision and outcomes, coupled with sound self-evaluation demonstrates the centres good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop more rigorous systems for disseminating information about the centre, to ensure that a greater proportion of hard to reach groups access the services on offer.
- Extend the range of opportunities available for adults to access training and learning opportunities that will lead to employment.
- Develop systems to evaluate rigorously the longer term impact of the centre's work.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The centre takes every opportunity to promote healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. This includes the provision of fresh fruit and water during groups or activities, excellent breastfeeding support and well-integrated services. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have good opportunities for physical exercise and access to specialist services such as speech development workers. Parents typically comment that they now think carefully about how to improve their families' health such as, 'I have learnt how to add flavour to our meals without adding salt.'

The safety and welfare of all the centre's users, including those who are most vulnerable, is a high priority for the senior leadership team. For example, 40 families have been supported by a care plan and a high level of service satisfaction has been reported. External agencies also report that the centre uses the Common Assessment Framework judiciously. Case study evidence indicates that looked after children and their foster families are experiencing positive outcomes as a result of the centre's work. The centre knows the families it works with very well. Consequently early identification and prevention play a key role in the centre's work to reduce harm to children.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are enthusiastic and inquisitive. This contributes positively to their learning. As a result children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in their learning. Transition arrangements to local schools are good and children are well prepared, particularly in their social skills. Case study evidence gathered by the inspectors, is typical in commenting, 'the centre has brought my children on really well.'

Centre users regularly contribute their views about the effectiveness of the centre and two parents currently sit on the advisory board. In addition, users are invited to evaluate sessions they have attended and the centre takes positive action to improve their services. For example, parents at one of the community venues requested a Baby Club for those who could not travel to the Wednesfield site. This has been welcomed by parents who told inspectors the Heath Town Baby Club has made a positive impact on their emotional well-being.

The Children's Village is well established and has a good reputation in the local community. It is particularly successful at integrating parents from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures. The centre is promoting community cohesion well.

Parents are encouraged to improve their parenting skills, for example through positive parenting courses, Little Teddies stay and play sessions, Baby Bop and Baby Club. They have a good range of information, advice and guidance regarding childcare options at the centre and in the local area. Financial advice sessions are well used by parents and a Jobcentre Plus adviser is based at the centre for four

days each week. The centre has offered adult learning courses in recent years, but currently opportunities for adults to extend their learning and secure their economic stability are limited.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

Robust assessment procedures are in place and as a result the centre knows its users very well. Partnership working across all the services based at the centre is strong. As a result, support for the most vulnerable families is effective. The senior leadership team, representing a range of service providers, meet regularly to ensure services are meeting users' needs. Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage have received training in observation, planning and assessment skills. As a result, the centre has introduced a helpful system to track children's progress across the birth to five age range.

Achievement is celebrated through positive displays and individual encouragement given to families. Outcomes for users are good, particularly in relation to national indicators. For example, the proportion of centre users from ethnic minority groups is 12% above the local authority average. The centre engages these users well but is aware that some hard to reach groups with the reach do not currently use the centre's facilities as regularly as others.

The centre provides a wide range of services and activities that meet the needs of the reach area well. It is particularly successful in engaging teenage mothers and children from minority ethnic families. Saturday morning activities are popular and enable the centre to reach a wider group of users, for example fathers and working mothers. The centre keeps detailed records of local participation rates in different activities offered but is at the early stages of developing a longer term record so staff can evaluate trends over time.

All parents who spoke to inspectors were positive about the centre and the impact different services have had on their families. They were particularly complimentary about the care, guidance and support they received from all staff. Vulnerable families in particular reported that the centre was making a positive difference to their lives and the lives of their children.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance arrangements are secure and there are clear lines of accountability in place. Members of the advisory board and the board of directors are fully committed to improving outcomes for children in the reach area and their families. Although centre staff are not directly employed by The Children’s Village the centre manager keeps detailed records that indicate all staff working at the centre have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

Dedicated, sensitive and good humoured leadership is provided by the centre manager and her senior team. As a result, staff are enthusiastic and relationships are strong. The centre runs very smoothly on a day to day basis and the well-being of all users is a tangible priority. The centre manager has developed robust systems and procedures to ensure that provision is fully integrated. Improvement planning is secure and involves all relevant partners. As a result of good leadership and management, outcomes for users and value for money are good.

Resources are well managed and carefully targeted towards users with the greatest needs. The centre is well-maintained and users comment positively on the welcoming, safe environment. The accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage is generous in size and includes a secure outdoor area.

The centre meets all the requirements with regard to promoting equality and diversity and tackling discrimination. Staff are committed to promoting the inclusion of all families within the reach area. The centre gathers information pertinent to different user groups and evaluates their engagement. For example, case study evidence indicates the centre has been effective in working with families who are new to the area and from ethnic minority groups. Children with disabilities are well

provided for both in the physical accessibility of the building and by access to appropriate professional support such as speech and language support worker or a special educational needs teacher.

Collaborative working is a strength of the centre's work. Centre staff are pro-active in sharing information and inter-agency working is well established and successful in identifying those families and children who are at greatest risk. The centre's child protection policy and guidelines are robust and all staff have been fully trained at the appropriate level in child protection procedures. Protocols and practices for referrals are well known and a high priority across the work of the centre.

The centre knows itself well and self-evaluation is accurate. Users' views are regularly sought and influence services provided by the centre. Systems to evaluate the longer term impact of the provision are beginning to be established. The centre is proud of its partnerships with parents and across a wide range of agencies. Parents are very satisfied with the services provided by the centre and the outcomes for their children. One parent typically commented, 'I couldn't give the centre any greater credit than the fact that my child has come on in leaps and bounds.'

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

Any other information used to inform the judgements made

during this inspection

Inspection report for early years provision EY304153 The Children's Village.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected The Children's Village Children's Centre on 7-8 July 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

The centre has many strengths, in particular, the quality of care, guidance and support received by parents and children. Parents told inspectors that they always received a warm welcome and a smile when they attended the centre and this was very much appreciated. The centre is safe, secure and all the appropriate checks have been undertaken to make sure staff are suitable to work with children. In addition, all the centre staff take every opportunity to encourage parents and children to stay healthy and lead healthy lifestyles. Parents told us that they particularly appreciated the cooking demonstrations.

Children who attend the Early Years Foundation Stage provision make good progress in their learning and in developing their social skills. This ensures they are ready to attend school. The centre provides opportunities for parents to use a range of services that will help them back into employment. However, the centre does not currently provide courses that will lead to adults gaining qualifications.

The senior staff lead and manage the centre well and they know what it needs to do to improve even further. The centre has sensible plans to improve the centre. Since opening in 2005 they have been particularly successful in encouraging families from minority ethnic groups to use its services. However, there are not as many families in the area using the centre as the centre manager would like. The centre responds to requests made by groups of parents to offer a wider range of services. For example, the centre has recently started a Toddler Club after a request from parents attending the Baby Group. The centre has started to check how many families are using its services over a longer period of time, but this is in the early stages of being developed.

We have asked the centre to improve the following:

- Provide more opportunities for adults to participate in courses and training at the centre.
- Make sure that as many parents and children in the local area as possible use their services.
- Develop a system to check how well the centre is doing over a longer periods of time.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.