

4Children Children's Centres Interim Impact Report



What impact do our centres have on the lives and outcomes of children and families?



About 4Children

Our vision is for every child from 0-19 in every community to have the opportunities to realise their potential to play, learn, develop and be with their friends; and for every parent to access the support they need to build a better future for their family.

4Children works with children, young people, families, local authorities, and government to ensure access to locally based, joined up support for children and families. We have a 30 year track record of successful work as a national charity to improve outcomes for children and families and shape policy.

4Children is funded by DfE as the Strategic Partner for the Early Years and Childcare Sector, and to improve support for voluntary sector involvement in children's centres and business skills. We deliver early years education and childcare, family support and youth services across more than 100 settings, including children's centres, nurseries, out of school and youth clubs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the impact that our children's centres have on the lives and outcomes of children and families, and the extent to which we are achieving our vision.

With a high proportion of outstanding centres, we are uniquely positioned to consider the impact these centres have on the lives of children and families.

For the study we have chosen four outstanding children's centres situated across our network. We have chosen these outstanding centres on the basis that they are able to demonstrate that they reach their communities and in particular those in greatest need, but most importantly make a difference to the lives of children and families.

Our methodology included an in depth review of each of the four children's centres by looking at their demographics, data, targets and outcomes, views of parents, staff and partners, interventions / services, SEFs, centre plans and Ofsted reports.

4Children Children's Centres Network

4Children run 61 centres across England located in Essex, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Solihull, Leeds and Stockton-on-Tees. Our children centres pride themselves on:

- Outstanding opportunities for children, young people and parents
- Improved outcomes for children and families across the board; and
- Providing sustainable services that put children and young people at the core of their delivery and meet parents' needs through effective partnership working

The centres cover a range of environments including inner city, urban deprivation and sparsely populated rural areas.

- 43% of the 4Children centres inspected by Ofsted have been found to be outstanding compared with a national average of 14%
- 30% were judged to be good with several outstanding features



The centres within the study

We have identified four of our outstanding children's centres and centres with outstanding features for this study. When combined they cover a reach area of over 3,500 children under the age of 5 and 2,500 families in areas of significant disadvantage.

Carousel

The Carousel Centre is a phase one centre in Braintree, Essex. The centre has a reach of 1426 children and is in one of the most deprived areas in Essex. The centre is substantial in size, has developed a range of services throughout the age range 0-19 and is recognised as 4Children's exemplar centre. The challenges facing the centre include:

- An estimated 11% of children in the area have a disability
- 21% of children live in workless households
- A substantial traveller and Polish community

Bellefield

Bellefield is a phase two children's centre situated in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, covering largely urban areas. The centre has a reach area of 940 children and serves the community in one of Trowbridge's most deprived areas. The challenges facing the centre include:

- 505 lone parents live in the reach area
- 20% of children live in workless households
- Domestic abuse is a huge concern

Roundabout

The Roundabout Centre is a phase two centre in Witham, Essex. The centre has a reach of 673 children and is in one of the most deprived areas in Essex. The challenges facing the centre include:

- 25% of children live in workless households
- An estimated 12% of children in the reach area have a disability

Pewsey

The Pewsey centre is based on the campus of Pewsey Vale and Pewsey Primary School in Wiltshire. It is substantially rural with a large reach area extended to 87 square miles over 20 settlements with substantial elements of deprivation. The centre has a reach of 580 children and is in one of the most deprived areas in Wiltshire. The challenges facing the centre include:

- 20% of families in the area are headed by lone parents
- A substantial proportion of children live in workless households
- A growing migrant workforce



Synopsis of findings: Carousel

'The Carousel Children's Centre provides an outstanding service to families in its reach area. This results in outstanding outcomes for children and other users of the centre's services.'

Ofsted inspection report, October 2011

The outstanding Carousel Children's Centre in Braintree, Essex reaches 99% of the 857 families in their area, with 1,426 children under five (21% of the children live in workless households). The centre has an outstanding on-site nursery and after school club and a strong partnership with health services which are co-located in the centre. These include a Community Paediatrician, Health Visitor, Speech and Language therapist, healthy living team, Enuresis Clinic, Orthoptics Clinic, and breast feeding support. Breast feeding rates in the area have risen over the last year from 46 to 49% at 6-8 weeks, and child obesity at age 5 has halved from 10.7% in 2009 to 5.4% in 2011. This compares with a reduction from 9.6% to 9.4% over the same period nationally.

The centre promotes healthy eating and the importance of exercise through a Community Cafe run as a social enterprise by adults with learning difficulties which also provides food for the nursery. The nursery, providing places for over 120 children, emphasises healthy development through free-flow play between the exciting indoor and outdoor environments.

The centre offers families more than 30 services or interventions, including:

- Stay and Play
- Baby Bump
- Me groups
- Health Visitor checks
- Baby self-weigh
- Childminder drop-ins
- Support with parenting for teenage parents, young carers, and foster carers
- Support for the large Polish and traveller communities
- Outreach

One parent explained that the series of home visits made by the outreach worker had enabled her to overcome her post-natal depression: "I did not want to leave the house. After several visits, she persuaded me to go for a walk to the shops and soon after that I went to a group at the centre".

An integral youth wing provides a range of activities for 13-19 year olds, and funding has been raised for a Play Bus which offers free play sessions to all families with children under five.

The centre constantly evaluates its services and outcomes for families. The children's centre teacher supports staff to track children's progress, and children's learning journeys are recorded and shared with local schools; the gap between the lowest achieving 20% children assessed in the EYFS Profiles and the rest has reduced from 33.4% in 2009 to 30.4% in 2011 in the centre reach area.

'The combination of excellent leadership of the centre and very effective self-evaluation has resulted in excellent provision and outstanding outcomes for users.'

Carousel Ofsted inspection report, October 2011

Key elements of the research reveal that the Children's Centre has made significant impact in the following areas:

- The centre reaches 99% of families in the area, including:
 - » 83% of teenage parents
 - » 83% of black plus minority ethnic families
 - » 67% of children with disabilities
- Child obesity at age five has halved from 10.7% in 2009 to 5.4% in 2011
- 49% of infants are breast fed at 6 to 8 weeks
- The gap between the 20% lowest achieving children (EYFS) and the rest has reduced from 33.4% in 2009 to 30.4% in 2011.

Synopsis of findings: Bellefield

The Wiltshire County Council survey found that:

- ➔ 100% of parents are satisfied or very satisfied with the guidance and support offered
- ➔ 100% of parents are satisfied or very satisfied of impact of services and interventions; and
- ➔ 97% of parents are very satisfied or satisfied with all services (83% very satisfied)

The centre provides over 30 services and interventions, including breast-feeding support; stay and play (led by parents); health visitor checks; under ones, childminders, dads and young parent groups; and outreach. Each service and intervention is evaluated by practitioners and parents. Domestic abuse is a huge concern in the area, so the centre has been delivering the 'Freedom Programme' for women in abusive relationships, to help them to make informed choices. 20 women attended all or part of the last 12 week course, and none of them have returned to abusive relationships. One parent commented: 'The Freedom Programme made me realise that my relationship had affected my girls, and the more I attend the programme the easier it becomes to mend our homelife'.

100% of parents who came to the centre's Under Ones group said they had a clearer understanding of their babies' needs, learned new ways of playing with their baby, had been able to share concerns with other parents, and tried activities at home: 'we use the handout sheets and have made a treasure basket and one for the kitchen'.

The centre has a strong emphasis on supporting parents into education and employment, working closely with the ESF funded Families Action Programme. One parent who had been referred by the centre to the Employability Skills programme after two years out of work and volunteering at the children's centre said '*I am very pleased and now I feel a lot more confident about finding a job and working*'.

Key elements of the research reveal that the Children's Centre has made significant impact in the following areas:

- ➔ Over 80% of families in the reach are registered
- ➔ Over 50% of infants are breast fed at 6 to 8 weeks
- ➔ There has been a consistent reduction over the last three years of the number of children in reception year who are obese
- ➔ There has been a consistent increase over the past three years and as a consequence 60% of children achieved a total of at least 78 points across EYFS profile with at least 6 points in PSED plus CLL
- ➔ 84% of parents sampled indicate 97% are satisfied or very satisfied with the range of services provided

Synopsis of findings: Roundabout

Roundabout children's centre, based at the local schools in Witham, Essex provides more than 25 services or interventions for a reach area that includes 367 families, with 673 children under 5 years. 25% of the children live in workless households; 92% of families in the area are registered at the centre, with 84% attending regularly.

Services include stay and play; Tums and Tinies – a group for new parents and parents to be; Breast Feeding Support group; baby massage; Foster Carers Support group; All About Ones group, learning through play; childminder activity sessions and outreach. There is a close partnership with health services, and Parachutes - a local group for supporting families who have a child with additional needs - as well as Jobcentre Plus, which offers drop-in sessions with their Lone Parent Adviser at the centre. The centre has a number of parent volunteers, and several have taken on the role of Peer Supporters for the Breast Feeding Group.

Regular domestic abuse drop-ins are organised by Braintree Women's Aid at the centre. Roundabout has also developed excellent partnerships with Action for Prisoners Families, Essex probation service, the Bridge, Supporting Offenders Families in Essex, Ormiston and the National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders.

57% of children at the local schools, who have benefited most from children's centre services, achieved a total of at least 78 points across EYFS Profile, with at least 6 points in PSED + CLL, in 2011/12. 43.4% children achieved this in the reach area as a whole in 2011; 37.9% in 2010; 35.5% 2009.

A wide range of high quality family learning and parent support programmes are provided and evaluated. Typical comments include: 'It has helped me to understand how to deal with different behaviours and how to cope with everyday life' and 'I've made friends and learned so many new skills'. Popular 'stay and play' sessions receive 100% satisfaction ratings from parents.

An Advisory Board meets every six weeks to review the services and interventions the centre provides. The chair of the Board is a parent, and the centre also holds quarterly parents forum meetings, and reports on progress to the Braintree District Children's Centre Partnership Board.

'The centre's success is due to outstanding leadership and management, to the excellent team working of its highly motivated staff, and to its exemplary partnership working. As a result, the centre provides outstanding value for money. 4Children provides high quality governance and accountability arrangements. The centre swiftly tackles any identified weakness. It is committed to excellence in all areas and is working very actively towards further improvements in outcomes.'

Roundabout Ofsted inspection report, March 2012

Key elements of the research reveal that the Children's Centre has made significant impact in the following areas:

- 80% of families in the area are reached
- 79% of black and ethnic and minority families are reached
- 75% of children with a disability are reached
- 60% of children achieved a total of at least 78 points across EYFS profile with at least 6 points in PSED plus CLL

Synopsis of findings: Pewsey

The Pewsey community area covers 87 square miles. The surrounding area is one of small villages and large farm estates consequently it is very rural in nature. The index of 'multiple deprivation' indicates that Pewsey is within the top 20% most deprived areas in Wiltshire. Transport links beyond Pewsey are very poor. The area has few ethnic minorities although a growing migrant worker population.

The centre provides a full range of 28 services and fulfils the core offer. All services have provided at least one impact study. The range of services include; dad's group; clinics in partnership with health at GP surgeries; outreach stay and plays in villages; outreach workers cover two military camps so drop in sessions for both civilian and military families; Pewsey voices run with Wiltshire Council which looks at working with families in rural areas; baby massage; Curious Creations; work clubs; benefit advice sessions; domestic abuse support; first aid courses; under one's group supporting weaning, sleeping and early communication.

The centre provides outreach, which also covers two military camps and in addition there are sessions for civilian and military families across the reach area.

Key elements of the research reveal that the Children's Centre has made significant impact in the following areas:

- 80% of the families in the reach area are registered
- 75% of children with disabilities are reached
- 55% of infants breast fed for 6-8 weeks
- 56% of children achieve a total of 78 points across EYFS profile with at least 6 points in PSED plus CLL
- 75% of parents indicate a 95% satisfaction with services provided
- There has been a substantial reduction in children in the reception year who are obese

Summary of findings

The purpose of the study has been to identify the impact that our children's centres have on the lives and outcomes of children and families, and the extent to which we are achieving our vision.

The study looked in detail of four of our outstanding children's centres. We have used a methodology where we reviewed each centre in depth, looking at the following: demographics, data, targets and outcomes, views of parents, staff and partners, interventions/services and Ofsted reports.

The points we would draw from this study in terms of why we have been successful are:

- Integrated partnership working
- Holistic and strengths based approach for working with families
- Strong and effective leadership and clear plans for each centre
- Effective use of data
- Needs led, evidence based, outcome focused

The key areas where improvements have been made are:

1. Reaching Communities

All centres have been able to demonstrate to Ofsted that they reach over 80% of their most disadvantaged families. 4Children has developed a range of tools and processes to achieve this, and the effective use of data in terms of identifying those in need and then addressing their needs is crucial.

The study confirms that all centres have an excellent track record in reaching their communities and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable, for example:

- Carousel reaches 99% of families within the area
- Carousel reaches 83% of black and ethnic minority families
- Carousel reaches 83% of teenage parents within the area
- Roundabout demonstrates it reaches almost all of the teenage parents within the reach area and 80% of black and ethnic minority families
- Roundabout also reaches almost 75% of children with disabilities

2. Achieving Core Purpose

All centres are able to demonstrate that they achieve the core purpose of children's centres. Every centre was able to demonstrate that it provides about 30 services and interventions. All centres were able to demonstrate strong partnership with health and other agencies, to provide health visitors, speech and language and healthy living teams etc. Centres such as Carousel were able to demonstrate some unique services such as a community paediatrician also Roundabout has a close partnership to support families who have a child with additional needs.

These services include:

- Peer led breast feeding support groups
- Stay and play
- Health visitor checks
- Under ones
- Dads and young parents groups
- Ante-natal and post-natal support groups
- Healthy eating
- Numeracy courses
- Speech and language therapy
- Travellers, Polish and other minority ethnic groups

All the centres have embedded outreach services which ensure they reach all parts of the community and meet the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families. All centres were able to demonstrate that they achieved additional impacts, for example all centres were able to demonstrate that the proportion of mother's breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks in their area had increased. Furthermore, the proportion of children assessed as obese at age five had halved in three out of the four centre reach areas. All centres were able to demonstrate that not only were they reaching over 80% of the most vulnerable families but they were also able to provide these families with appropriate interventions, including support with parenting and support to deal with domestic abuse.

Furthermore all centres were able to demonstrate that in addition to achieving the core purpose they were making a substantial impact in the community with early intervention and with some of the most vulnerable families.

3. Family and User Satisfaction

All centres ensure each service is evaluated by practitioners and parents and therefore are able to demonstrate they record and validate family and user satisfaction.

Bellefield

100% of parents are satisfied or very satisfied with the guidance and support and the impact of services at the centre

“I have two children; I am living in England six years. This is my story. Before I met my outreach worker I was having lots of difficulties. The main worries were about my son's speech and I wasn't a confident mum due to language. When I met my outreach worker in 2011 my life changed for the better. I started to become more confident. My outreach worker came to my house every Tuesday to help my son and me. Every Thursday at the children centre there is a family group. Every Friday there is family learning. I am very happy because I learnt English. Now my son's speech is getting better. I am very grateful to the children centre for their support, their time and their lovely smile. The children centre is my second family.”

Parent at Bellefield children's centre

4. Outcomes and Impact

All centres record substantial user satisfaction and are able to demonstrate impact and outcomes. In addition, 4Children uses a number of tools and techniques to record the impact of interventions. These include SOUL, E-start outcomes data, and 4Children's own method of evaluation etc.

In this initial study, we have identified key areas where the impact on children and families lives has improved as a consequence of interventions.

- a) Support with parenting has had positive impact across all centres with families feeling empowered and more confident as parents.

'I feel like I have learnt a lot about my parenting, the ideas I am following have worked at home'

'This course has really influenced my extended family as they have taken on board what I have learnt and what I am doing'

'I feel liberated, I feel empowered'

- b) By implementing 4Children's internal process of tracking families, all centres increased reach substantially, focusing on the most vulnerable families
- c) All centres achieved an increase over 3 years in the percentage of children achieving 78 points with at least 6 points in PSED plus CLL. This is particularly pleasing given the challenges of the reach areas. Again all centres were able to demonstrate that they had made substantial improvements in the gap between the lowest achieving children in EYFSP and the rest.
- d) By implementing a range of strategies and through partnership working, all centres were able to demonstrate a reduction in child obesity across the reach areas.
- e) All centres can evidence a positive impact on breastfeeding through the number of parents sustaining breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks.

Sources

Ofsted, Inspection report for Bellefield Children's Centre, April 2012. Available at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/1951217/urn/20262.pdf> [Accessed 14 July 2012]

Ofsted, Inspection report for Carousel Children's Centre, September 2011. Available at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/1992719/urn/20386.pdf> [Accessed 12 July 2012]

Ofsted, Inspection report for Pewsey Children's Centre, July 2011. Available at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/1944779/urn/20381.pdf> [Accessed 9 July 2012]

Ofsted, Inspection report for Roundabout Children's Centre, March 2012. Available at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/2029755/urn/22372.pdf> [Accessed 4 July 2012]

Research methodology

4Children undertook analysis of data that covers the reach areas of the four children centres. This analysis was conducted internally by 4Children Children's Services Department.

Datasets used include those provided by HM Revenue and Customs, The Child and Maternal Health Observatory, Essex County Council and Wiltshire Council. Analysis was also drawn from the most recent Ofsted inspection reports for each of the four centres used in this study.

Please contact 4Children for future detail on research methodology.

