

Inspection report for Hinckley East Sure Start Children's Centre

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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre coordinator and centre staff, the local partnership coordinator, health professionals and partners who provide services and parents. Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Hinckley East Children's Centre is a phase two centre that started delivering its services to the public in October 2008. The small purpose-built centre is co-located with the contact centre. It has a large family room, two smaller rooms, and two offices - but no on-site childcare facilities. The centre meets its core purpose and is open five days a week for 48 weeks of the year. The centre delivers a range of programmes from other centres in the locality.

The centre is the hub in a cluster of seven centres in the Hinckley and Bosworth locality. The governance of the centre is delegated to the locality partnership group. A coordinator is responsible for the management of the seven centres and the locality programme, as well as line management of the extended team staff. She reports to a locality partnership coordinator who provides the strategic oversight and reports to the locality partnership group. The group includes parents and is responsible for providing programmes and activities in response to the identified need through the commissioning of services.

The centre covers the wards of Hinckley de Montfort and Hinckley Castle and has 835 children under the age of five in its reach area. Some 7.1% of the population is classed as the most deprived nationally in an overall relatively affluent district. The percentage of workless households with dependent children in Hinckley East is 2.2% compared to the county average of 2.5% and the national figure of 4.8%. The percentage of 16 –18 year olds young people in the Hinckley East reach area who

are not in education, employment or training is 4.3% broadly comparable with the borough and county average. The numbers of teenage parents and pregnant teenagers as well as the percentage of babies born with low-birth weight are high in the reach area. Other issues facing the reach areas are the high rates of obesity among children at the point of entry at school and high rates of smoking at the time of delivery.

Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those expected for their age. The families who live around the centre are mainly of White British origin with 4.1% from minority ethnic backgrounds. Many of the minority ethnic residents are migrant workers from India. They stay for a period of between 3 months and two years.

Since its opening, the centre had 2,938 families registered with the programme from the locality, 454 in Hinckley East. Most of the provision is targeted and in the last year, the centre attracted 74% of its parents from 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 families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Highly experienced and well-qualified staff empower the parents in the Hinckley East reach area to achieve good outcomes across all Every Child Matters themes for themselves and their children through many invaluable learning and development opportunities. The centre is outstanding at providing wide-ranging support for its users, evaluation of its services, use of resources to provide value for money and engagement of users in developing provision. Leaders, managers and staff have developed a culture of openness, inclusion and respect where all users feel welcome and valued.

The centre has been highly successful at providing a seamless service through its stated aim of 'One front door'. In the words of one parent, 'It is like passing a baton, not letting go but giving smooth transition, offering the right care.' Parents benefit from smooth transition between various partner services, because they do not have to repeat information to various agencies. The combined effort of various services

working well together has transformed the lives of a large majority of users from the targeted groups. Strong leadership has provided good quality provision and outcomes for users. The centre demonstrates good capacity to improve with firm foundations to sustain and improve its services.

The centre is excellent at evaluating its services to demonstrate how they have benefited parents and children. The staff have increased the awareness, knowledge and skills, as well as enthusiasm, of over 60 parent-volunteers who take responsibility for running various activities at the centres in the locality.

The centre's partnerships with its commissioned services are particularly strong. However, the partnerships with other providers, although good, have some weaknesses. While making referrals, some key partners particularly the social care specialist service, the health service and Jobcentre Plus do not always provide appropriate details in time, other referrals sometimes have insufficient information and clarity about the needs and barriers of the user families and the expectations from the children centre staff. These issues are further compounded by the fact that the centre staff are not always able to get answers to some routine information requests in good time.

Staff and parent-volunteers, receive good-quality training and professional updating. Some volunteers are capable of delivering a number of services at a basic level, sufficient to meet the majority of the information needs of parents, thus freeing professional staff to provide higher-level services where their expertise is crucial. Partner agencies conduct good evaluation of the impact of their services at individual level but not as a reach area to demonstrate overall impact.

The centre relies on its partners and other users to refer new users but does not promote its services routinely. For example, it does not promote its services through GP surgeries or other public services but relies on the health visitors to promote the centre. Although the centre reaches the large majority of the targeted groups in the area, it does not reach all the families with children under five years of age. The take-up of services such as smoking cessation and breastfeeding support is not as high as it could be, particularly among young parents and teenage mothers. The centre has made good progress to target its services at fathers.

Leaders and managers have collated data, often manually, from various sources to target its provision successfully at the vulnerable groups and to demonstrate the impact of its services across many national indicators. However, collating the information puts enormous pressure on staff and diverts them from their work with the families. Data are not always available in good time and is not always accurate at the ward, 'the reach' or locality level. In some cases, services have ceased collecting data, for example on unintentional accidents and emergency admissions of children into hospitals. In other cases, the local authority does not have a data-sharing agreement. This does not help the centre to fully ensure its services are targeted appropriately.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Promote the centre's services more effectively particularly through GP services and other public services.
- For the local authority to work with Jobcentre Plus, health service and social services to establish accurate, timely data that is based on ward, locality and the reach area so that the centre can target its services more effectively, especially for breastfeeding and smoking cessation.
- Extend the partnerships with partners to enhance the impact of the children's centre work by setting out clear expectations of the quality, timeliness and standards of the referrals, communications and expected outcomes from each partner.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Users attend the sessions and service in good numbers and most continue to come regularly. The mothers-to-be achieve excellent outcomes as they learn many practical parenting skills including preparation for birth, feeding, bathing and sleep hygiene. The take-up of services is high among the young parents and those from vulnerable groups such as families with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or parents of disabled children. Parents suffering from postnatal depression are helped to fully recognise symptoms and take steps to overcome their depression including by forming their own support networks.

The numerous benefits of the children's centre services were well summed up by one parent when she said that, 'If it had not been for Baby Beginnings, I would not know what to do.' Parents learn about healthy lifestyle and adopt many aspects in their daily life such as cooking healthy food on a budget and exercise. They grow in self-confidence and their self-esteem improves as well as aspirations for the future for their children and themselves. They understand fully the benefits of breastfeeding such as emotional attachment, immunity from some diseases and the reduced risks of obesity. Those who embark on breastfeeding continue to do so for longer than six weeks; however, teenage parents do not take it up in sufficient numbers. The rates of breastfeeding and smoking cessation among young people remain low.

Parents and children feel safe in the centre while attending and undertaking various activities. Parents and their children fleeing domestic violence feel well protected at the centre. Family outreach workers are skilled at conducting Common Assessment Framework assessments. The number of children on child protection plans has increased. However, to protect them from harm and reunite them with their families, staff intervene early to reduce or abate concerns which has led to reduced levels of monitoring. Through rigorous risk assessment processes, parents have become more adept at reducing the risk to their children in their home environment; 'Safe Start' has issued 105 home safety kits issued after risk visits.

The number of active users of the library has increased significantly. This develops a lifelong love of books among children from a very young age. Parents acknowledge

the limitations of television and learn the art of reading and talking to children, thus providing a wide range of stimuli to help develop young brains. Children enjoy learning and form positive relationships with parents and adults. While in the centres, children learn from older children and learn to care for the younger ones. The centre has made good progress towards narrowing the gap as the rates have been decreasing steadily over the past two years.

High percentages of parents improve their skills in English, mathematics and computer skills through adult learning courses, enhancing their employment prospects. They obtain useful and timely help from the centrally located multi-access centre on seeking jobs, developing curriculum vitae and enrolling on vocational courses to improve their employment prospects. Parents also learn a range of skills such as running, planning and evaluation of the programmes and bids for commissioned work as well as taking an active role in decision-making and the governance of the centre. They promote the services to other parents through a well-produced newsletter. A few aspire to new careers. Parents make good contribution in supporting other parents through mentoring and acting as champions for the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target 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 children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

Through highly-effective outreach work, the staff have developed a strong and detailed knowledge of their community. The centre is meeting the needs of the community well through broad ranging and purposeful activities.

The two-year health checks, weaning workshop and infant massage helps parents gain confidence and skills swiftly. Parents realise the importance of sessions such as 'Boogie Bods', 'Wriggle and Move' that use music and movement to promote physical activity and future development of their children. These activities have helped the parents and children gain confidence, improve concentration and enhanced their

enjoyment. The sessions are well planned and linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage. The programmes such as 'Stay and Play', 'Big Talk', 'Speak-a-Boo' and 'Tiny Talkers' effectively support early language development for the children. A rolling programme of speech and language also successfully promotes the early development of communication skills among children; most of whom are making good progress.

Learning provision from outreach centres and bespoke provision is provided promptly at the local centres, helping parents to learn with their peers. The centre's 'Simply Sign' programme for disabled children is highly effective. Parents of disabled children benefit from highly useful sign language to communicate with their children.

The 'Hello' programme and dual language books are very useful ways to include migrant workers and value their languages and culture. Parents with limited command of English receive strong support from more fluent English speaking parents. The centre is working well to improve social cohesion as parents are getting on well with each other. Through an outstanding project, working with a locally-based major employer, the borough council has reduced the level of hate crime and diffused racial tensions in the local neighbourhood. This has enhanced the image of Hinckley where migrant parents as well as local people now feel safe.

Timely advice on seeking jobs, vacancies and careers are developing skills for the future for parents. Links with the youth service are highly effective to attract young parents into the service to benefit from advice on health including smoking cessation, sexual health matters and tackling drug and alcohol abuse.

The care, guidance and support of families are excellent. These include routine follow-up by parent-volunteers and 'buddies' who welcome parents to the centre. Free taxi services enable parents to attend sessions and activities in other centres.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The governance and accountability arrangements are clear and well understood between the local partnership group, the borough council, the county council and the public service board, Leicestershire Together. The accountability body has strong representation from a wide range of stakeholders including parents. They attend regularly and make a positive contribution to challenge the children's centre to focus

clearly on improving outcomes for all users. Professional support and supervision is of high quality. Day to day management of the centre is efficient. The county council is fully aware of the performance of the centre although it has not yet held an 'annual conversation'. It is working at strategic level to secure commitment and accountabilities from other partners. The roles and responsibilities are clear and most partners understand their respective roles. However, the partners have not all outlined how they can be more effective and efficient by clearly stating the expectations of each other.

The evaluation of service is excellent. The commissioning group selects partners only after careful scrutiny. The centre has good awareness of obesity issues and has plans in place to run a new care pathway for overweight children.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust. The Criminal Records Bureau checks on staff, volunteers, extended team and contractor staff are routine. Staff are well versed in early detection of child protection issues and take appropriate action swiftly. The multi-agency cooperation is purposeful. The response from the Children's Social Care Services to any safeguarding requests is highly efficient.

The centre uses its resources extremely well to ensure parents and users achieve the best outcomes. These include staff expertise from various partner agencies and the facilities within the Hinckley and Bosworth borough council. Parent volunteers make an outstanding contribution to the range of services. The centre provides outstanding value for money by meeting the needs of the wider community and targeted groups.

The centre promotes equality and diversity well through its services. The centre staff provide excellent support on a range of issues for the users. Inclusion of all groups and respect for them is reflected in the culture, ethos and the practice of the centre. Staff are highly empathetic and have good awareness of the needs of the families. Users are treated with respect and staff are increasing the use of parents' experiences from different cultures in learning sessions.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
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	2

adults	
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	1

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hinckley East Sure Start Children's Centre on 14–15 February 2012. We judged your centre as good overall.

Thank you for taking the time to speak to us and offer your opinions of the centre so freely. Almost all the parents and carers to whom we spoke told us that they enjoy coming to the centre and are highly satisfied with the level of service and support that you get. You particularly value the help from the 'Baby Beginnings' programme as it has helped you to improve your confidence and ability to face the challenges of bringing up children. You say that you now have a much greater appreciation of the health, emotional and physical needs of your children. Many of you have a much clearer idea of how you can interact with your children by providing them with a wide range of stimulating activities rather than relying on the television. You have told us how you use the skills learnt in the sessions and from other parents to make a significant difference to your life style. We were pleased to hear that you have begun to lay solid foundations for the future of your children and your own future.

You told us that you value the excellent support that the centre provides for a whole range of things. Staff are extremely helpful and very professional in their approach. They work exceedingly well together in an extended team, sharing good practice and supporting each other. You know how to safeguard your children and protect yourself and your children from abuse of all kinds. The centre has excellent links with the women's refuge. You told us that you have formed a community of your own where you have overcome isolation and learn from each other.

We were particularly pleased to hear about the contribution that you are making in the decisions about the programmes and the running of the centre. You are making some excellent contribution as volunteers. In the process, you are developing many

valuable skills. You say that you feel confident that the centre will act on your feedback. Some of you feel confident enough to request education and training opportunities from the local adult education service. You told us that you value the joint working of various partners because you can get all the help you require from one centre. We judge that the centre provides a good range of valuable training.

Many of you have started learning to improve your future employment prospects and by taking short qualifications. The centre is safe and easily accessible where you feel listened to and respected. It offers a good range of services in response to your needs. The centre is well run and managed effectively.

To improve the services further we have asked the leaders and managers to take three steps to improve the quality of its services. We have asked the centre to better publicise the services of the centre through GP surgeries and other public places; to work better with the partner agencies to secure data in good time relating to the centre and the reach area and to work better with its partners to improve the working practices around referrals and communications.

Your honest and frank opinions have helped us immensely during the inspection. We enjoyed meeting you and sharing your joy of learning and hearing about how you have improved the lives of your children. We wish you and your families well for the future.

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