

Inspection report for Killingworth Children's Centre

Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	367821
Inspection dates	29 February - 1 March 2012
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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	310198 Childcare Killingworth

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.

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors visited a range of provision across the centre. They also held meetings with senior managers from the centre, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare partners health, education and children's social care professionals and representatives from Tyne Metropolitan College, Barnardos and the adult-learning alliance. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Killingworth Children's Centre is a phase two centre located in the north west of North Tyneside. It falls within the top 30% of deprived wards in the country. The reach population of the centre is just over 890. Recent figures show that over 20% of households are lone parents with dependent children. Estimated weekly income is significantly lower than the North Tyneside average and the percentage of children under five years old living in households dependent on workless benefits is around 18%. The majority of local families are of White British heritage. The proportion of children attending schools in the area, known to be eligible for free school meals, is above the national average. Most children enter childcare and early education with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than those expected for their age. The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average.

The centre is located in one building and operates as a 'one-stop-shop' model, providing the full core offer. The centre opened in 2006 and was developed from a Sure Start Local Programme. The centre hosts a full-time childcare provision for children from birth to school age. The team and centre managers work across the west of North Tyneside which

comprises five further children's centres. Governance arrangements transferred to an advisory board in 2010 who report to the local authority.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

'Killingworth Children's Centre is a fantastic resource with an excellent reputation within the community.' This comment, made by a parent, reflects the very high regard in which this outstanding centre is held within the community. Staff have worked relentlessly to achieve an exceptional level of trust, acceptance and respect amongst local families. Their unfaltering dedication and commitment has ensured that outcomes for the very large majority of people living within this locality have greatly improved, often in the face of the most challenging of circumstances. The combined actions taken to improve outcomes for families in relation to their safety and well-being is exemplary, with data showing that 100% of those subject to a child protection plan are currently supported through the centre's activities. However, managers are aware that more needs to be done to increase the proportion of mothers breastfeeding and to reduce the incidence of smoking, especially during pregnancy. In addition, there is a recognised need to further develop systems within centre activities to more clearly reflect the progress children make.

The senior team lead with a clear vision for excellence and a firm commitment to improving the life chances of every local family. They are focused on developing a centre which delivers a holistic service that ensures the development of sustainable families who are empowered to make informed choices about the future direction of their lives. Systems for monitoring and evaluation are highly sophisticated and reflect the very high priority given to self-reflection and self-challenge. Managers have worked hard to develop effective systems for data analysis which clearly reflect the impact of the excellent work undertaken. As a result, services and provision can be carefully planned and targeted to achieve maximum impact. This ensures the centre has an exemplary capacity for improvement.

Provision is exemplary both in relation to the high quality activities delivered within the centre and the flexible, individualised outreach work carried out by family support staff. The

importance the centre gives to reaching out into the community is commendable and ensures that services are provided to those families most in need of intervention and support. The expertise and breadth of knowledge demonstrated by every staff member within the centre is impressive and has ensured the provision of first-class support and guidance to all families. This deeply embedded sense of security which emanates throughout the centre ensures parents have the confidence to ask for help and support, increasingly before they reach a point of crisis.

The centre has a genuine inclusive ethos, with gaps in both the achievement and engagement of target groups of families narrowing significantly. The positive impact of this work is reflected in the increasing number of adults who have gone back into education and/or training, including becoming peer educators themselves. Equality is promoted sensitively, with robust systems in place to identify and tackle any forms of discrimination. The conspicuous impact of exemplary partnership working which promotes children's and families' emotional well-being is also evident across the work of the centre. For example, the centre run a hugely successful 'baby-ology' group which targets mums-to-be who suffer low mood thereby reducing the risk of them developing post-natal depression. This ensures a seamless and coordinated approach to safeguarding children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Build upon existing best practice in order to further improve outcomes in relation to increasing breastfeeding rates and decreasing the number of parents smoking at birth.
- Continue to develop systems that more clearly evidence the progress made by children accessing the centre's high-quality groups and activities.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Work undertaken in relation to the promotion of breastfeeding is beginning to successfully change local attitudes. This is due to the commitment and tireless dedication of front line staff including midwives, health visitors, family and peer support workers. The excellent support provided by the breastfeeding support group has contributed to a significant improvement in the numbers of new mothers who continue to breastfeed their babies. However, centre staff recognise that there is still further work to do to increase this rate, as well as securing a reduction in the number of mothers smoking at delivery. Support to encourage families to lead healthier lifestyles is excellent. The high priority given to weaning ensures that new parents are given accurate, timely information ensuring babies receive healthy, balanced and nutritious foods from the earliest age. The long-term impact of this work is reflected in the low incidence of obesity rates amongst reception children which, at 9.3%, is lower than the North Tyneside average.

There is an ongoing commitment to the promotion of issues around child safety and family support workers remain proactive in targeting parents who may need support to develop a better understanding of these issues. There is representation from the senior leadership team on the local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference. As a consequence, the centre has taken a lead on the development of effective support to those families experiencing domestic violence, with life changing results. Exemplary multi-agency support also ensures that children subject to a child protection plan or Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes are extremely well supported. The 'request for services' meetings ensure that appropriate information is shared between professionals, with care packages identified to meet individual need in a consistent and rigorous manner. This has contributed significantly to a marked reduction in the number of re-referrals.

Parents and children clearly enjoy the many high quality activities offered by the centre. The proportion of children achieving at expected levels at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage remains above the North Tyneside average at 69.5%. The centre's nursery has achieved the silver communication friendly award, a reflection of the high standards they maintain. The enthusiasm and dedication of the early years team and the early years educator ensures the provision of high quality education and learning experiences for all children, including those with disabilities and special educational needs. Staff recognise that work needs to be done in order to more clearly evidence the progress children make during their time in activities organised by the centre.

The very large majority of parents, including young mothers and lone parents, commented on how their confidence as parents has improved as a result of their participation in the activities offered by the centre. Parents who sit on the locality's advisory board have felt particularly empowered through their inclusion in recent training on roles and responsibilities of board members. This is a reflection of the importance the centre places on ensuring these key partners are able to contribute in a meaningful way. There is a thriving parents' forum and members are committed to numerous fundraising activities, seeing this as a way of giving back to the centre for all the support they have received.

Exemplary partnerships with the local college and training providers has enabled a large majority of parents to access a wide range of accredited training opportunities. The completion of these courses, has given individuals a real sense of achievement. One parent commented, 'Learning has turned my life around. I hope my enjoyment will rub off on my children.' Many parents told us how they are supported and assisted in setting and achieving their own goals, their confidence and self-esteem improving as a direct result. The centre can point to numerous examples of how parents have gone on to complete college courses and find employment in a range of roles, including as teaching assistants, childcare staff and through setting up their own successful businesses.

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
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The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
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	1
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.	1

How good is the provision?

1

The very strong centre team works closely with all their partners to ensure that everyone's needs are met. Weekly 'request for services' meetings ensure a holistic approach to service provision which effectively meets a range of needs for families with circumstances that make them very vulnerable. This rigorous assessment is a significant strength of the centre and one of the reasons why its work in meeting the needs of individuals and the community is so successful. Family support workers create highly effective action plans for families which lead to positive outcomes. This, combined with an excellent range of targeted and universal services, all of which have a clear purpose with intended outcomes, ensures outstanding impact across all areas of family's lives.

The centre has made substantial progress in recent years in reaching out and making contact with families across the local and wider area that it serves. Evaluations and data now show more fathers, young mothers and lone parents are using the centre and making very good gains in developing their self-esteem and parenting skills. Those we spoke to were eager to tell us how much they enjoyed time with their children both at the centre and at home. As one parent said, 'We just love it here!' The activities provided promote great enjoyment and offer excellent learning and development opportunities for all users. This is enriched significantly by the way staff celebrate users' achievements both within the centre and through regional and nationally recognised awards. These are much appreciated by parents and children alike, especially when they are celebrated through the local press and photographs in the centre.

The development of the 'Little Stars' group for disabled families and children and those with special educational needs provides a much needed lifeline, facilitating opportunities for families to meet others in a similar situation, reducing their sense of isolation. All staff are sensitive to the role of parents, ensuring they feel able to make informed decisions regarding the packages of care put in place for their children.

The personal testimony of families who receive support from the centre demonstrates that when support and care is most needed, the response from the centre is exceptional. 'This is the one place I feel normal.' said one mum, whilst another told us how the centre had

brought her, 'back from the edge'. In times of diminishing budgets the centre uses its resources exceptionally well to respond to families in crisis. The advice and guidance offered are outstanding with an excellent variety of partners visiting and working from the centre on a regular basis. A wide range of parenting courses is provided and parents attending with circumstances that makes them most vulnerable have gone on to gain qualifications and return to work. By holding sessions in the centre, parents have the opportunity to meet with others, thereby reducing the sense of segregation and isolation they feel. As one mum told us, 'I realised I wasn't the only mam on the school yard who has issues and finds life tough sometimes.'

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	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The centre manager and her senior team lead with vision and inspiration, ensuring the morale of staff remains high, despite a significant restructure within the local authority. Their work is underpinned by excellent communication with partners, alongside highly effective monitoring and evaluation of the services provided. Through a continuous cycle of review and reflection managers are able to ensure that all services have a clear purpose, measurable outcomes and meet the needs of users exceptionally well. The centre's improvement plan has clearly identified priorities, actions and targets, all of which are reviewed on a regular basis. The local authority plays an active role in overseeing the centre's performance, providing excellent challenge through regular meetings and a formal annual conversation.

There is a wide range of professional development opportunities for staff which are linked to robust strategies to monitor the quality and impact of their work. These include regular observations of practice and scheduled one-to-one's to discuss case loads, thereby ensuring all staff remain accountable for the achievements and progress of individual families. As a result, staff have a wide breadth of knowledge and teamwork is exceptionally strong. All staff show a great deal of initiative and high levels of commitment in their work, resulting in excellence in all areas of the centre's work and at many different levels. Specifically focused stakeholder meetings further ensure that all partners and staff are aware of what is happening across the area, which facilitates excellent partnership working and prevents duplication. The centre's close links with schools across the community also ensure that children make a happy and successful transition into school.

The advisory board is well established and has extremely effective representation from a wide range of partners, including parents. A lively parents' forum feeds into this, as well as informal feedback from activities and regular evaluations. The advisory board itself has an excellent understanding of its role, not only in supporting and challenging the centre leadership, but also in suggesting possible future initiatives and directions for development. Resources, including staffing, are very well deployed to ensure that delivery of services is as effective as possible. The building is clean, bright and extremely welcoming with every space used to maximum effect. The budget is carefully deployed and focuses support where it is needed most; as a result, the centre provides outstanding value for money.

The centre is extremely proactive in promoting equality and diversity. The role of the centre's facilitators has been central to its ongoing success in engaging many of its harder to reach groups, including by taking activities out into the community. As a result, the centre continues to reach those families whose circumstances make them vulnerable, narrowing the achievement gap for those most disadvantaged. This is further facilitated through highly effective protocols and partnerships with relevant organisations including the women's refuge, teenage pregnancy service, housing and the police.

Safeguarding is given the utmost priority with highly effective policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and protection of both families and staff. Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out for all who work or volunteer at the centre. Early intervention and a multi-agency approach underpin all that the centre delivers and this is central to its success in meeting the needs of those within its reach. Risk assessments are rigorous and the comprehensive lone working policy and procedures ensure staff are safe when visiting families on their own. Families are informed of the importance of safeguarding when they start at the centre. Parents we spoke to commented that they now better appreciated this to be a shared responsibility with the community and not just the 'job of the professionals'.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures 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	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1

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	1
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

Killingworth Children's Centre hosts full-time childcare provision for children from birth to school age. Five local primary schools, Amberley, Bailey Green, Holystone, Moor Edge and St Mary's Roman Catholic, with Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children over three years, are also part of the centre's remit. Information from their most recent Ofsted inspections has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children in this report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Killingworth Children's Centre on 29 February and 1 March 2012. We visited activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with you and professionals. Following this work, we have judged the centre as providing outstanding support.

The centre provides a wealth of excellent activities aimed at helping families improve their lives. Your views strongly support this as you tell us that you are happy with the activities you attend and services you use because they have helped you in lots of different ways. For example, some of you have received excellent support to continue breastfeeding and to learn more about healthy eating, whilst others have found the opportunities to undertake parenting courses to be 'supportive' and 'timely.' However, there are still too few mums choosing to breastfeed their babies and too many smoking during pregnancy. We know family support workers and health professionals are committed to passing on information about the benefits of breastfeeding your baby and we know that some of you have found sessions to help pregnant and new mums continue breastfeeding helpful and have valued the work of the peer support workers. Many of you have also taken advantage of the numerous training and volunteering opportunities available and we know that this has given you the confidence to enrol on further college courses or to go back to work. We wish you every success with this.

Most importantly, you tell us that you feel safe at the centre and can trust the staff, particularly when you most need it. You appreciate the advice and help of the family support

workers and have welcomed home visits and the opportunity to go with someone to a group until you build your confidence and make new friends. We found that the centre is doing an excellent job of helping you at times in your life when you most need it. We found that action is taken quickly and that different people and organisations work exceptionally well as a team to support both children and families.

The centre is working extremely well with other partners, such as health visitors, speech and language therapists and social care teams. You tell us that it is good to go to the many support groups and clinics and welcome the opportunity to talk to the health visitor or the family support worker in a relaxed, informal environment. A lot of parents, especially those who are bringing up children on their own, told us that they felt really happy on the days when they have an activity to go to and have found the friendships made through the centre to have been, 'long lasting'. There is exemplary support for disabled children and parents are encouraged to take an active role in meetings with professionals, ensuring they are involved in making important decisions about their children's future. You also clearly enjoy attending the many activities run by the centre. We have asked managers to look at further ways they can record the progress children make in these sessions and hope this is something you might be able to support them with.

We found that those people in charge of the children's centre are doing an outstanding job. Managers, together with partners and other staff have worked hard to make sure that everything the children's centre does for you will make a real, genuine and lasting difference to the area in which you live. We know that everyone who works with Killingworth Children's Centre shares this view. The centre has access to lots of detailed information to help them plan future activities and we know they listen to you because you enjoy attending activities they provide.

The centre has spent a lot of time ensuring that you are involved in making decisions about its direction and the different services it provides. We know that you feel genuinely respected and listened to as a result.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful and we wish you very good luck for the future.

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