

Inspection report for Little Hulton Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Salford
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Reporting inspector	Gillian Bishop HMI

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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	511458 Little Hulton Sure Start Children's Centre Nursery

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 one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre coordinator and staff, representatives from the local authority, representatives from the advisory board, various health professionals, frontline workers, parents and other users of the centre's facilities. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Little Hulton Children's Centre is a phase one centre located in the Little Hulton ward in the north west of the city of Salford. The centre provides services for families residing within five main housing estates known as Amblecote, Baronfold, Peel, Madamswood and Kenyon. The catchment area includes eight super output areas which are in the top 30% most deprived in the country. Families living in the area experience significant difficulties associated with high levels of poverty and low levels of adult literacy, numeracy and unemployment. The very large majority of families residing in local wards are of White British heritage with an increasing number of East European, Black African and Asian families.

The average child poverty rate across Little Hulton and Walkden is 49.3% in comparison to the Salford average of 27.8%, and the national average of 19.7%. In four out of the eight areas within the locality approximately one in two children are living in out-of-work poverty with 47% of children under five living in households dependent on workless benefits. The Amblecote area of Little Hulton has the sixth highest child poverty rate in Salford, with over 60% of children living in households reliant on out-of-work benefits (taken from community profile September 2009).

The centre received designation in 2006 and it provides the appropriate range of services to meet the core purpose. The strategic management of the centre is undertaken by the local

authority alongside an advisory board. A children’s centre cluster coordinator manages the day-to-day running of the centre. Partner agencies include health professionals, the speech and language service, the Jobcentre and the Starting Life Well Team (SLW). An outreach team works alongside a designated family support service provided by the Early Intervention and Prevention services (EIP) locality team.

An affiliated childcare provision managed and run by the local authority is co-located. Separate inspection arrangements apply for this provision and the Ofsted report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Little Hulton Children’s Centre achieves satisfactory outcomes for children and families within the reach area. Parents value the support extended to them and they confirm that they regularly contribute to the improvement of services and some are beginning to play a more active role in decision making and governance processes. The centre has experienced significant change within its staffing structure and there continues to be an increase in external teams beginning to co-locate. The day-to-day management of the centre is secure with an experienced centre coordinator recently appointed. Arrangements for staff supervision and their continuous professional development have been established, ensuring that they have the right skills and expertise to undertake their challenging work effectively.

The planning and self-evaluation cycle is improving and beginning to include partners, parents and the advisory board. Business plans provide a sound basis on which to improve and shape future services, although they are too broad, lack clarity about how performance towards plans will be measured and challenging targets to secure rapid improvement. Furthermore, the quality of evaluation across all its activities and between the centre’s partners is not consistent. A good range of services and activities successfully attract fathers, teen parents and other target groups although the collation and scrutiny of data are not systematic, preventing a clear analysis of the engagement of all groups particularly

those from Black and minority ethnic groups. Despite 92% of families being registered with the centre, approximately 40% of these have yet to engage and some families only access designated health appointments preferring not to engage in others. Furthermore, the centre has been slow to develop services off site to enable access to the wider community. Consequently, the overall effectiveness of the centre and the capacity to improve are satisfactory.

Outcomes are satisfactory overall with good outcomes for safety and some aspects of their personal and educational achievement. A multi-agency approach to the delivery of health promotions and services has resulted in a gradually improving trend in relation to breast feeding rates and childhood obesity. However, breastfeeding rates remain below national and local averages and childhood obesity rates are higher. The lack of strategic representation by midwives on the advisory board prevents their expertise and guidance being utilised to steer proposed development plans to sustain the trend of improvement.

Children in the Early Years Foundations Stage make good strides in their learning and development and centre data confirm a narrowing of the achievement gap. Good outcomes are embedded in quality activities such as 'Story-Rhyme and Play Time' and 'Little Lowry's', which nurture children's creativity and willingness to learn. Positive parenting courses show good outcomes for families who participate and a regular programme for family literacy and numeracy enables parents to learn new skills and support their children's learning at home. However, the lack of evaluation across partners prevents the centre from demonstrating the full impact of adult learning programmes and ultimately, the difference it makes to reduce the significantly high levels of worklessness within the community.

The implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) alongside secure referral pathways and cohesive multi-agency support underpins the safety, well-being and protection of families resulting in good outcomes in times of crisis. Safeguarding procedures are robust and parents feel they and their children are kept safe.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes and the economic well-being of all families by:
 - increasing adults' chances of future employment through access to training and qualifications based on their identified needs and interests and systematically monitoring their effectiveness.

- Improve provision and leadership and management of the centre by:
 - developing more outreach services within the catchment area to meet the needs of families who remain hard to reach
 - improving the collation and analysis of data and information, particularly about the engagement of target groups, to inform the evaluation of outcomes more meticulously and accurately, and, in conjunction with the local authority,

- governing body and centre partners, use data and information to set ambitious targets in the centre improvement plan
- working with Bolton Hospital Trust to establish a strategic role by midwives, in order to support and sustain improvement in breastfeeding and obesity rates.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Families benefit from a range of activities which promote their willingness to live healthier lifestyles. Parents describe how 'Big Cook, Little Cook' has encouraged them to cook meals from scratch instead of buying expensive ready made foods and the 'First Food Group' provides new mums with weaning advice ensuring babies receive a healthy diet from the start. A sharper focus on improving breastfeeding rates and specialist breastfeeding provision for mother's experiencing difficulties has resulted in a 10% improvement in the numbers of mothers sustaining breast feeding past six to eight weeks. However, many of the new strategies designed to sustain this improvement are still embedding. Centre data also confirm a 10% reduction in obesity in reception aged children although obesity remains higher than national average. There is an also a positive trend in the reduction of teen conceptions and immunisations although the impact of 'Smoke Free Spaces' is unknown because outcome data is not shared with the centre.

Parents report that 'this place is the best; it's a safe and a friendly place for me and my family' confirming that the centre provides a haven for support and safety. A large proportion of parents access positive parenting courses which enable them to improve their children's challenging behaviour and the frequency of temper tantrums, hence why mothers report 'our home is calm now' and 'its so nice to go shopping without worrying about a tantrum happening'. The coordination of the multi-agency work associated with children who are subject to child protection plans or who are in significant need, has resulted in greater stability and independence within the family home which families have sustained. The effective implementation of the CAF process underpins the initial assessment of need and the successful coordination of appropriate services ensuring families receive outreach support or more intensive family support as required.

The extent to which children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy and achieve is good due to purposeful activities such as 'Busy Babes' and the expert guidance from the educational lead teachers. This is equally so for disabled children and those with special educational needs who access appropriate services via referral to Portage and engagement with the 'Rainbow Group'. Targeted interventions such as 'Talking Tot's' and intensive language programmes have successfully bridged gaps identified in children's speech and language development ensuring that children attending all types of provision across the reach area are better prepared for the transition to school. Furthermore, parents report that literacy and numeracy courses have enabled them to improve their own skills giving them confidence to build on learning at home.

Parents confirm that they are confident to raise their views when they feel services could be improved because staff value and listen to their opinions. Some parents are beginning to

engage in more formal opportunities to discuss future services within the 'Chit Chat Group'. These contributions have played a key role in group activities expanding and have also provided a forum to discuss safety issues such as those relating to road safety. Furthermore, there is a growing band of volunteers due to a renewed focus on their recruitment and two parents have very recently joined the advisory board. However, these parents are in the very early stages of their governance role.

Parents are well signposted to financial and employment services and training and in some cases parents have proceeded to engage in courses such as psychology, nail technology and accredited literacy and numeracy courses. A few others have proceeded to gain work experience leading to employment in administration work and one is now a Breast Feeding Infant Worker. Despite secure partnerships with a full range of local adult training providers such as Salford Adult Learning, One Stop Shop and the Jobcentre, details about parents success and progression in their personal development is not clear due to weak information sharing practices.

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	3
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	3
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.	3

How good is the provision?

3

The effective use of the CAF alongside allocation to family and outreach support via the Referral and Initial Assessment Team ensures interventions for families are appropriately tailored to meet varying levels of need. The centre provides both targeted and universal provision for families which has led to some success in increasing attendances by all target groups. Fathers' and grandparents routinely visit the centre and activities are beginning to attract more families from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. However, the use of data to track engagement by groups or to investigate trends or reluctance to engage is not systematic.

The achievements of adult learners are celebrated, which places value on their success and raises their aspirations. Some parents have benefited from practical courses, such as food hygiene and first aid, and the newly introduced volunteering programme is enabling eight parents to access a formal training course which includes employability skills training and a volunteer placement. However, the centre has yet to assess the learning needs of parents more formally to ensure training opportunities meet the needs of all target groups. Furthermore, systems to monitor developmental progress are not sufficiently developed, this for example, prevents the centre from knowing how many teen parents have moved into training, education and employment.

Parents receive good care, guidance and support and this is consistently reported by parents who state, 'it brightens my day when I come here' and 'any time I need them, they are there; help with bedtimes, help with making appointments, I couldn't do without them'. The wealth of literature about sexual health and domestic violence help lines and the frequency of 'Baby Clinics' and easy access to on site health professionals, reassure parents that help is always on hand when they need it. Parents routinely spoke of 'improved home life and relationships with their children' following their engagement with the parenting programmes eagerly sharing their achievements, when they begin to reap the rewards of new behaviour management strategies.

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	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The newly appointed centre coordinator, in post for only six months, has quickly established herself as a motivated and strong leader who holds high aspirations for this deprived community. She leads by example and holds equally high expectations of her team, advisory board and partners. The advisory board is well established and has a stable and wide membership who fully support and value the centre and its work. However, procedures for the board and local authority to interrogate performance and hold the centre firmly to account have not been robust as data have not been systematically used to inform progress made by the centre overtime.

The centre has established contacts with various partner agencies some of which work collaboratively. These include the Starting Life Well Team, Early Intervention and Prevention Family Support Team and the Health Improvement Team. The centre coordinator has taken tentative steps to strengthen partnership working across all agencies by improving

accountability in order to address difficulties with regard to information sharing protocols. However, this requires a more strategic steer from the advisory board and local authority.

The centre has an inclusive ethos and strives to provide services which are pertinent to needs, hence well targeted provision for teens and disabled children and embedded interventions to improve inequalities in children's speech and language and school readiness. Parents attending 'Chill and Chat' nurture this ethos with ongoing plans to promote diversity through the celebration of various festivals. Comments such as, 'it's important for children to learn about other people and their cultures,' demonstrates the commitment by parents to raise their children's social awareness of others. However, the centre is still to secure greater economic stability for its residents than it can currently demonstrate, so more families can secure a better future.

The centre is consistently busy and the majority of groups are well utilised. The building provides well for specialist health services and a wide variety of playrooms and training space are consistently in use. In the main, a large majority of parents engage well with the wide range of services and they make good use of opportunities to share views and influence the shaping of future services and this is leading to a more active role in governance arrangements. Most children in the reach area are registered as a result of clear referral pathways used by partners and health professionals and the large majority of children are confirmed to be engaged. The centre is well established in the community however, services have yet to be developed off site to make them more accessible to 'harder to reach families'. Furthermore, the lack of consistent evaluation prevents evidence of stronger outcomes. As a result, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Safeguarding procedures are robust due to secure policies procedures which work effectively to keep staff, families and visitors safe. Records and recruitment procedures to ensure the suitability of those employed or visiting and working with families fully meet with statutory requirements. The centre provides cohesive multi-agency support for an increasing number of families experiencing domestic violence through effective outreach support, links with specialist services and well placed literature about support agencies. Staff are astute to safeguarding issues due to good levels of training ensuring parents reporting concerns are appropriately advised as to how matters should be dealt with.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3

The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	3
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.	2

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

The inspection report from Little Hulton Sure Start Children's Centre Nursery was used to inform judgements during the inspection of the children's centre.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Little Hulton Sure Start Children's Centre on 21 and 22 March 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with a number of you, and the staff and volunteers who work with you. We found several good features as well as things which we would like the centre to improve. For example, the wide range of health promotions and the availability of midwives and health visitors on site for 'Baby Clinics,' ensure that parents get health advice when they need it. There is also an increase in the number of children being immunised and the number of mother's who are helped to breastfeed their babies for much longer. In addition, healthy cooking classes and activities such as 'Bubble Buddies', are helping to reduce obesity levels. However, the centre is aware that they need to continue to improve both obesity and breastfeeding further so they have beginning to look at ways to build on these improvements. Furthermore, parents told us that their children are eating much healthier foods and they consistently told us that the centre is a 'safe and welcoming and a great place to get information, help in a crisis and a place to make new friends'.

We found that children and parents thoroughly enjoy 'Story-Rhyme and Play Time', 'Baby Massage' and 'Big Cook and Little Cook'. We also found that the centre provides good quality activities for all children, helping them to make good progress in meeting age related goals by the time they finish Reception Year. You told us that access to literacy and numeracy classes and positive parenting courses were also helping you to help your children, with their learning at home. This, in some cases has led to some of you going on to be volunteers and seeking work. However, the centre staff have not always kept records and information to show how many this applies to, which prevents them from demonstrating how effective they have been over the period of time the centre has been open. So, we have asked them to work better with their partner agencies to improve this and to consider these issues in the future development plans.

Parents we spoke to reported that staff listen to their views about how well services meet their needs which has helped the centre to increase particular groups which are very popular, allowing more families to attend. We also found that some parents regularly contribute to the improvement of services through the 'Chill and Chat' group and some are beginning to play a more active role in decision making and governance processes, however, these are new arrangements. The centre has done well to register most of the families in their area and it was good to see father's grandparents, teen parents and people from different ethnic groups visiting the centre. However, not all of the families registered are using services so we have asked the leaders to investigate why this is and consider making more activities available in the community for those families who prefer not to come to the centre.

The leadership of the centre is satisfactory overall as the centre manager, advisory board and the local authority have to do more to improve the way they gather and use all the information about families in the reach to continue to improve their services and your life chances. The new centre coordinator is aware of this and she has already taken steps to improve the way in which partners work together and share information. However, she needs help from the local authority and other professionals and partners to do this so we have also asked them to work with the centre more effectively and to help with developing the centre's action plans.

We had a lovely time at your centre and we would like to thank all those who took time to speak with us.

Good luck in the future.

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