

Inspection report for Yew Tree Children's Centre

Local authority	Liverpool
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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	Yew Tree Nursery at Yew Tree Children's Centre EY393224

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 head of centre, staff, service users, partner representatives, representatives of the local authority and representatives of the body commissioned to provide the centre services. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Yew Tree Children's Centre operates from a shared site with Yew Tree Health Centre in Liverpool. The building houses various health services, including two General Practitioner (GP) surgeries. The centre started as a former Sure Start Local Programme. It was designated as a phase one centre in 2006. The local authority commissions Parks Options Ltd to provide the centre services and employ staff. The Sure Options Board is a subsidiary company which has responsibility to oversee both Yew Tree and Kensington Children's Centres. Yew Tree Children's Centre provides the full core offer of integrated childcare and early learning, health, family support and outreach and links to Jobcentre Plus. The centre has an onsite nursery which caters for 54 children aged from birth to five years. Crèche provision is regularly provided to support families in accessing services. The nursery is subject to separate early years inspection arrangements. The inspection report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The majority of the population in the Yew Tree ward is of White British heritage with a small percentage of minority ethnic groups. Recent figures show that 1308 children under five years live in the reach area and 23% of these children live in families dependent on workless benefits. The centre is within the 30% of most deprived wards in the country, with 43.8% of the ward being within the most deprived 10% nationally.

A high proportion of children enter school with skills below those expected for their age. The centre has an established advisory board which is made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents.

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

3

Main findings

'It's lovely to come here, I wouldn't have coped without the centre', is a typical comment from those using the centre's services. Staff create a welcoming atmosphere in which trusting relationships are established. This contributes to the effective care, guidance and support offered to the families that use the centre.

From its position within a health centre, managers and staff have established an effective partnership with health professionals, which has a positive impact on outcomes for families and children. In recent years the centre has focussed its efforts on meeting the needs of the families in the most deprived parts of its reach area. This has been effective in ensuring that most of its most vulnerable groups are engaged with the centre. The centre is particularly successful at engaging with teenage parents and disabled children and those with special educational needs. The centre can demonstrate that its most vulnerable families have effectively increased their level of engagement with the centre and that outcomes for these families are good overall.

The range of services provided has increased in recent years. The centre provides a broad range of services to promote children's good progress, including their communication, language and literacy skills. Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores demonstrate an increasing percentage of children reach a good level of development. Children's individual progress is monitored in some sessions provided, but in others this takes the form of a group evaluation which makes it more difficult to ascertain children's rate of progress. Parents report positive impact from parenting courses provided at the centre. Individual case studies demonstrate that some families are improving their economic well-being by gaining qualifications or progressing to further training, education or employment. The centre has successfully participated in a recent initiative, the 'Doula project', which has

resulted in volunteers gaining accredited qualification to support mothers in the six weeks before and after birth. The centre signposts parents to further training courses but currently does not monitor the impact of this on parents' level of qualification or economic well-being.

The centre provides an inclusive environment. It works well to meet the needs of its most vulnerable groups. The centre can demonstrate that it is engaging a cross section of the community, including some minority ethnic groups. However, the centre provides limited resources and initiatives to increase understanding and celebration of diversity.

Centre leaders and the Sure Options board, supported by the advisory board have a good understanding of the strengths of the centre and areas of development. Action planning links with strategic planning and identifies the most important priorities for development. Some clear targets and timescales are included in development planning but this is not always consistent. The centre can demonstrate improvements to provision and to the engagement of its most vulnerable families. The overall level of engagement has recently been affected by an increase in the centre's reach area by 38% in 2011, from 1179 to 1308 children aged under five years. Leaders and managers have clear plans to address this issue and have introduced a Community Engagement Strategy, aimed at further increasing the levels of registration and engagement. This strategy is now showing impact. Data show that in the first quarter of this year the engagement levels increased from 35% to 40%. This trend in improvement demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Refine action planning by consistently including measurable targets, clear success criteria and timescales to increase the effectiveness with which the advisory board and other accountable bodies can hold the centre to account.
- Further develop systems to monitor and evaluate adults and children's learning.
- Further develop the centre's approach to celebrating diversity to encourage an understanding of different backgrounds and cultures within the community.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The vast majority of families are engaged in a range of integrated health services which are housed in the health centre. Immunisation rates are high. Evaluations of courses to improve healthy eating, such as 'Cooking on a Budget,' and activities to promote enjoyment of exercise, such as a 'Cycle for Health' course, indicate that a large majority of users benefit from these courses. Breastfeeding rates have dropped in recent years, but there are indications that the good level of support provided at the 'Bosom Buddies' breastfeeding group is beginning to have an impact, as rates for the most recent quarter are higher than in the previous year. Children behave well and safely in the centre. Regular courses such as 'First Aid' and 'Home Safety' are well attended and support parents in keeping their families safe. There is clear evidence to show that families in circumstances that make them more

vulnerable are effectively supported by nurturing programmes and a range of parenting programmes. Staff are well trained in child protection and Common Assessment Framework (CAF) procedures and are proactive in making use of these. Case study evidence indicates good progress for children who are subject to a child protection plan.

Data show that children's level of achievement in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores has risen from 43% in 2009 to 51% in 2011. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and others has narrowed from 25% in 2009 to 21% in 2011. Systems to monitor the progress of disabled children and those with special educational needs and those attending courses provided by speech and language professionals demonstrate that children make good progress. In other sessions, children's individual progress is not as effectively monitored.

Parents are confident to express their views about the centre and are actively encouraged to do so by centre staff. Parents typically comment that, 'Staff always listen to our views and take on board our ideas'. A small number of parents are involved in the advisory board or parents' focus group. The centre is beginning to establish its role in the life of the community, but parents and partners report that the centre is not as well known as it could be.

Case studies demonstrate that some families using the centre are improving their economic stability and independence. Initiatives such as the 'Volunteers Into Placement' (VIP) project have been successful in helping some parents into employment or training and the recently introduced 'Doula project' provides positive outcomes for those parents involved.

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	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?

Centre staff know their families well. They have developed a broad range of provision which effectively meets the needs of most target groups. For example, provision for disabled children ensures that all of those in the reach area are engaged in the centre. Parents report that the 'Chill and Talk' session for parents and disabled children and those with special educational needs provides a valuable support service. They report that the spacious sensory room is a valuable resource for them to access with their children and positively impacts on their well-being. The centre also engages with the majority of teenage parents, and can demonstrate that most of the families living in the most deprived areas are engaged in the centre's services. Data indicate that a minority of fathers are engaged in the centre. A regular number attend the fortnightly 'Dad's Club', and the centre has plans to increase this engagement further. The centre has been creative in its efforts to engage the families who have been traditionally harder to reach. For example, it has introduced a successful art session 'Sold on Art' held at a local community venue.

Parents greatly value the broad range of activities provided. They speak highly of the parenting and speech and language courses, and how they have benefitted their and their children's development. Parents value the good level of care, guidance and support they receive from centre staff. They report that the centre is very welcome and attending sessions has reduced their feelings of isolation and built their confidence. As one parent commented, 'It's good to know you are in the same boat and to get support'. The centre can demonstrate its effectiveness in meeting families' needs in times of crisis. Parents also report that the centre is effective in breaking down barriers of mistrust in encouraging parents to engage with social services and other partner agencies.

Parents benefit from courses provided by the centre such as first aid, food hygiene and home safety, which impact positively on outcomes. The centre celebrates the achievements of adult learners. For example, those trained to be volunteers for the 'Doula project' attended an award ceremony on gaining their qualification. However, the centre is not able to fully demonstrate the impact of its provision and signposting to adult learning as this is not always monitored.

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	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leaders have a good understanding of the needs of the local area. Leaders at different levels understand the clear governance and accountability arrangements in place. The Sure Options board and local authority provide a good level of support and challenge, and the advisory board provides a supportive role. The impact of this governance arrangement is that the centre promotes good outcomes for centre users.

Self-evaluation is accurate and the centre makes good use of data to identify priorities, such as further increasing engagement and breastfeeding rates. However, target setting is not always consistent within improvement planning, which at times limits the effectiveness of the Sure Options board and the advisory board in holding the centre to account.

Parents report a high level of satisfaction with the centre and their views are used to shape services. For example, the centre has provided a 'Cooking on a Budget' course specifically for young parents in response to parental requests. Effective policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children and families using the centre, including robust vetting procedures. Staff attend annual training in child protection and a clear referral system ensures that families needs are met in a timely way.

The centre welcomes and includes all families. It is aware of the different groups it serves, and is proactive in providing services to meet the needs of the local community. For example, the centre provided an 'English for Speakers of Other Languages' (ESOL) course for Polish speaking families in the area. However, actions by the centre to celebrate diversity and culture and provision of resources to develop this awareness are more limited.

The centre has strong partnerships with health professionals and others which positively impact on outcomes. For example, close links with speech and language therapy sessions help to ensure children's good progress. A good level of information sharing with the broad range of health professionals within the building in which the centre is located helps to ensure that families are effectively supported. The centre provides good value for money. It uses its resources effectively and provides good quality provision leading to good outcomes for families.

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 secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2

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	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.	2

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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Yew Tree Children's Centre on 21- 22 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We know that you find the centre very welcoming and friendly, and that staff take care to get to know you and your children. You spoke about the good level of support that staff give you, and how you have found friendship and support through attending the centre. We found that staff work effectively together with a range of other agencies to find out about those of you who may need support and therefore can target support to meet your needs.

You told us that staff take your views into account and alter services if you ask. You told us that you enjoy the good range of services provided, which give chance for you to socialise and to support your children's learning. We know that you have particularly enjoyed the 'Cooking on a Budget' course, 'Messy Play' and 'Wonderful One' sessions. You told us that your children benefit from using the sensory room in the centre which helps to promote their emotional well-being. We found that the sessions provided at the centre help your children to learn well. We have asked the centre to make sure that they keep better track of learning for individual children. We know that the centre has helped some of you to attend training courses at local colleges, to become volunteers or to find jobs. We have asked the centre staff to make sure they know how well you have done if you attend a training courses at college, and whether the courses have helped you to move into further training or employment.

We found that the centre has strong partnerships particularly with health visitors, and other health professionals. This helps to make sure the centre is providing activities which help to promote your good health and emotional well-being. The centre also works well with, for example, the owner of the café within the health centre building to develop the cookery course that you enjoy and benefit from.

You told us that you all feel valued and included in the centre. We agree with this, but think that the centre could do more to encourage an understanding of different cultures and backgrounds in the community.

Leaders have clear plans to make further improvements, and to make sure that more people are able to benefit from the centre's services. We have asked leaders to make better use of data to make sure that there are clearer targets in planning so that the centre is even clearer about how well it is doing.

Thank you for talking to us about your experiences and taking time to meet with us. We appreciate your willingness to talk to us about your personal experiences.

Best wishes to you and your families.

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