

Inspection report for Sunshine Children's Centre

Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	383356
Inspection dates	21 - 22 March 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	107532 Mount Pellon Junior and Infant School
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.

Report Published: April 2012

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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 additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including; health, education and children's social care professionals. They observed the centre's work, accompanied staff on a home visit and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Sunshine Children's Centre is a phase two centre which is situated within the grounds of Mount Pellon Junior and Infant School in Halifax which was designated in 2008. It provides a range of services which include health services, social care, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education and outreach services. Crèche provision, group facilitators, family support and outreach are provided by a central team who are based at Jubilee Children's Centre.

The centre's reach area is geographically small compared to other reach areas in Calderdale but is a densely populated area which serves a community which experiences high levels of social and economic disadvantage. There are 694 children aged under five years in the reach area. The reach area comprises of five super output areas; with one in the 20% most deprived area, two in the 30% most deprived, one in the 40% most deprived and one in the 60% most deprived. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding obesity, unemployment, substance misuse, domestic violence and low levels of literacy and numeracy.

The population is mostly Pakistani and White British heritage with growing percentages of other ethnic groups, many of whom speak English as an additional language. To meet the diverse community needs the centre team consists of Polish, Czech, Slovak, Russian,

English, Bengali, Punjabi and Urdu speaking workers. Levels of unemployment are high and many of the existing jobs are low paid. Housing is a mix of private rental and privately owned housing.

Since September 2011 childcare has been provided through a range of local providers. Most children within the reach of the centre enter early education with knowledge and skills that are significantly below expectations for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. The centre's reach area feeds seven schools across the Central Halifax Area, although only one within the reach area.

Governance of the centre is provided by Halifax Opportunities Trust (HOT) which is a charitable organisation who has a contract to deliver Children's Centre services in Central Halifax on behalf of Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council. The centre operates in a nine-centre cluster and is one of six centres and three satellite centres in the Central Halifax service area of Calderdale. The cluster share an advisory board that includes providers, delivery partners, voluntary sector organisations and members of the local community and users that attend the nine children centres.

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

Sunshine Children's Centre achieves satisfactory outcomes for children and families within the reach area. Parents who attend the centre value the support extended to them. In particular, effective support to raise their understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves safe and good safeguarding arrangements have a positive impact on the safety and well-being of families.

Healthy diets and lifestyles are appropriately promoted but health outcomes are variable. For example, a multi-agency approach to the delivery of some health promotions and services has resulted in an improving trend in relation to mothers sustaining breastfeeding at six to eight weeks, immunisation rates and smoking. However, obesity amongst children in the Reception Year of primary school has increased over the last three years. Data on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile suggest children's achievements are well-below

national averages but are improving slowly. Opportunities for and user engagement in transition to school programmes, such as the 'Little Learners' group, are limited and lack the crucial involvement of the local headteacher. Partnerships with the local school are still developing. Adults are encouraged and supported in learning new skills such as sewing, first aid and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Achievements are recognised and well celebrated. However, only a minority of adults gain relevant qualifications to help improve their economic well-being. Case studies indicate that some adults become volunteers, return to work or training but the centre does not have complete records of all users' progress or destinations. The centre successfully engages with the some of its key target groups. However, the centre recognises that too few fathers engage with the centre.

Users of the centre are encouraged to develop positive relationships. Some parents confidently express their views and their ideas are used to shape some services to meet their needs. A new 'Community Champion' scheme has been established to ensure the views of families using the centre are heard. There is currently one champion from this centre who attends the advisory board meetings and they are keen to develop this role to its full potential. This is a new role and they are still undertaking their training. However, there is currently no parent forum to enable more families to contribute to the decision making and governance of the centre. This centre promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily. It is an inclusive centre and all users feel welcome and valued.

Attention to promoting safeguarding is a high priority. The effective 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. The work of the family link and support workers is effective. Staff are dedicated and committed to improving the home circumstances of many families that have complex needs.

The new centre manager has quickly identified the strengths and weaknesses of the centre's work. She has clear plans in place to improve the systems used by the centre staff. However, monitoring and evaluation systems do not currently include the setting of well-focused measurable targets with clear success criteria that help the centre to demonstrate the full impact of its work on improving outcomes. The manager is focused on the need to increase the participation rates of families and children engaging in the centre's services and activities, particularly lone and teenage parents. However, these improvements have yet to have an impact, therefore, capacity to improve is satisfactory. Consequently, the majority of outcomes for children and their families engaged with services are satisfactory.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes further by partnership working to:
 - develop programmes to support children's transition to school

- increase participation rates on adult learning programmes and progression into further education and employment and further develop procedures to track and measure the centre's effectiveness in this area
 - reduce obesity in children by the age of five years by continuing to work with partners in health, primary schools and early years settings
 - develop strategies to increase engagement with fathers.
- Increase the participation rates of families and children engaging in the centre's services and activities, particularly lone and teenage parents.
 - Improve leadership and management further by:
 - establishing a parents' forum in order to increase the number of families involved in the governance and decision-making of the centre
 - developing monitoring and evaluation systems through setting well-focused measurable targets with clear success criteria.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre has built some good links with health colleagues and consequently, the number of children accessing mainstream health services and the number being immunised have increased. There is satisfactory health promotion through leaflets, group activities, displays and during home visits. This has helped to increase the number of mothers initiating breastfeeding in the last four years by 32% to a figure of 76%. In addition, the percentage of mothers continuing to breastfeed at six to eight weeks has risen by 21% in the last three years to 52%. Courses, such as 'Cooking on a Budget', are beginning to develop parents' understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle for their whole family. However, this is not sufficiently showing an impact upon the levels of obesity for young children which increased from 9.6% in 2008–09 to 15.3% in 2009–10. Local knowledge indicates that 2010–11 data will also show an increase. The centre recognises that more work is needed to reduce obesity in children by the age of five years by continuing to work with partners in health, primary schools and early years settings.

Parents stated that attending 'Baby Massage' sessions has enhanced their relationships with their baby. The 'FRIENDS' group enables any parents who feel low or isolated to develop their understanding of the importance and value of play with their children. Most evaluations record increased levels in parents' confidence. A parent who had attended the 'Adult Counselling' service stated, 'it has helped me come to terms with a difficult beginning to being a mum'.

The coordination of the multi-agency work associated with children who are subject to child protection plans has resulted in greater stability and independence within the family home, which families have sustained. The effective implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process underpins the initial assessment of need and the successful

coordination of appropriate services. Staff have established trusting relationships with parents who confidently share and discuss their issues. Parents report that 'staff are friendly, approachable and helpful' and that 'everything has improved, I have moved forward and left the past behind'. Parents also describe how they have adopted new strategies to improve their children's behaviour at home since attending specific programmes for promoting parenting skills.

Data show the centre is slowly narrowing the achievement gap between the lowest 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest from 43.8% down to 32.5%. However, this remains a priority for the centre as these results are significantly lower than those for the local authority and the service area. A parent remarked that her child 'enjoys coming to the groups and is now more confident to play with other children'. However, programmes to improve children's transition to school, in conjunction with the local school and other early years providers in the area are limited. Adults have access to a satisfactory range of courses which can help develop their basic knowledge and skills; particularly popular are the 'Eastern European 'English for speakers of other languages' classes. There are satisfactory and developing programmes to encourage parents to progress into volunteering at the centre. The centre is aware that some users return to work or progress to education or training. However, there is limited evidence of increased participation rates on adult learning programmes and progression into further education and employment. In addition, the procedures to track and measure the centre's effectiveness in this area are limited.

The centre appropriately listens to and uses the feedback from families through questionnaires and surveys to shape and develop its services. A parent 'Community Champion' has recently been appointed to participate in the strategic decisions of the centre through membership of the advisory board. However, there is no parents' forum to increase the number of users contributing to the decision making of 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	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	3
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 centre offers a satisfactory range of activities which support users who attend to socialise with others in the community. For example, parents enjoy attending the 'Parent and Toddler' groups and 'English for speakers of other languages' sessions. However, although the number of families registered with the centre is high at 78% the numbers actually participating and engaging are low, particularly for lone and teenage parents, with a current engagement figure of 38%. Nevertheless, the centre's sphere of influence is slightly wider than the data reflect, through its work with other local children centres which families in this reach area may choose to attend instead.

The antenatal clinic session is well used and the midwife team, family support and family link workers work together to offer families advice and support to help with their young children's needs. Resources throughout the centre are of good quality. A range of literature, in different languages, provides parents with valuable information about sexual health and domestic violence helplines.

'Music and Action', 'Czech/Slovak drop-in session', 'Baby Massage' and 'Family Support drop-in sessions' are popular services. However, although some fathers engage with the centre, others are proving more difficult to reach. The centre recognises the need to develop further strategies to increase their engagement with fathers. Children have access to good quality crèche facilities whilst their parents enjoy sessions, such as 'Cooking on a Budget'. Crèche staff plan a range of appropriate challenges for children to explore and learn both indoors and out. Children's behaviour and independence skills are appropriately promoted. However, attendance at some groups, and therefore take-up of crèche places, is low.

Parents who attend the centre told the inspectors that activities are interesting, give them confidence, help support their children's learning and appropriately promote their parenting skills. A Jobcentre Plus drop-in session is held once a month and users can view regularly updated job vacancies on the information boards in reception.

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.	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The new manager is committed to extending services and providing the best life chances for local children and their families. There are sound links between the centre's evaluation of its services and the priorities set out in its development plan. However, more work remains to be done to make full use of all the available data in the evaluation process to set well-focused measurable targets with clear success criteria. More work is also needed to encourage more local families to attend and engage with the services at the centre, particularly fathers, lone and teenage parents.

Operational management is satisfactory and financial resources are appropriately managed. There are regular performance management arrangements and supervisions in place. Staff feel valued and are able to develop their own professional expertise through training opportunities. As a result, they are enthusiastic and passionate about their work. The manager has started to build and extend links in the community and recognises the importance of this in improving levels of engagement and outcomes for families in the reach area. Governance is supportive and the newly re-formed advisory board is keen to act as a critical friend in challenging and holding the centre to account for improving its work. Taking all this into account, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Good safeguarding practice is adopted across all areas of the centre's work. The premises are safe and secure. Training for staff is up to date. Fire evacuation procedures are well recorded. A single central record evidences good vetting and recruitment procedures and checking of partners is robust. The CAF is used well to target specific support for families and case studies demonstrate some sensitive multi-agency work.

Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily. Staff speak confidently about families' differing cultures and their growing understanding of known barriers as to why some families are not engaging with the centre's services. Bilingual staff offer effective support for some families. Families with disabled children and those with special educational needs are encouraged to attend the 'Little Treasures' support group, however attendance is very low. The centre actively tackles any discrimination and they are proactive at recording incidents and looking at ways of reducing repeat incidents.

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.	3

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

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sunshine Children's Centre on 21-22 March 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you very much for talking to us, letting us come into your sessions and visiting you in your homes. The information you gave and the stories you shared with us helped us to make our judgements. We also looked at the comments you made on feedback sheets and evaluations. You told us that you find the staff friendly and welcoming. You enjoy visiting the centre, attending activities and meeting other families.

The new manager and her team are fully committed to improving outcomes for families in the area. They ensure good safeguarding systems are in place for you. Partnerships are developing and are particularly strong with social care partners. We have asked the centre to work on improving all partnerships to promote stronger integrated working for you. In particular, to work with schools to help ensure your child is well prepared for entering the next step in their education. We have asked the centre to find ways to increase the number of adults who gain qualifications to help families go on to further training or employment and to become financially secure. We have suggested they continue their work with health, schools and other early years settings in the area to ensure that more local children are not

overweight by the age of five years. The centre is successful at engaging with the some of the families that really need some support, but they still need to find ways of engaging with more lone and teenage parents and fathers from local families.

We found that some of you enjoy 'Baby Massage' and you told us about the benefits of using massage to improve your relationship with your baby. We know some of you look forward to 'Parent and Toddler', 'Music and Action', 'English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)' and 'Cooking on a Budget' groups.' However, we noted that only a small percentage of families attend from the reach area and that attendance at some sessions are very low. Therefore, we have asked the centre to look at ways it can encourage more local families to access activities and benefit from the services that it provides for you.

We have also asked the centre to increase opportunities for you to be more involved in the decision making and monitoring of the centre's progress. We hope that some of you will be interested in doing this. We have asked the centre to ensure it has clear targets which can easily be monitored so that you can see what the centre has improved and where further work needs to be done.

We would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak with us. We are very grateful for your help and wish you every success in the future.

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