

# Inspection report for Haslingden Community Link and Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	365678
Inspection dates	20 – 21 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Kath Gethin HMI

Centre governance	Council of Management of Haslingden Community Link.
Centre leader	Barry Payton
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Bury Road Haslingden BB4 5 PG
Telephone number	01706 230116
Fax number	01706 238354
Email address	barry@hcl.org.uk

Linked school if applicable	N/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	309835 Haslingden Community Link Childcare

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.

## 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

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the head of centre, senior leadership team, members of staff, parent representatives, local authority officers and partner professionals from other agencies. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Haslingden Community Link and Children's Centre is located in Haslingden in the Rossendale valley. The centre has developed from a community centre and is unique in that it is a Company Limited by guarantee and Registered Charity operating as a Social Enterprise. It was designated as a Phase 1 children's centre in 2006. A commissioning agreement is in place between the local authority and Haslingden Community Link, for the delivery of Children's Centre Services. The centre is also a community centre providing adult education. The centre is situated in the top six per cent of areas in regard to levels of deprivation. The large majority of families are of White British heritage with a smaller number of Asian and Eastern European families. The area suffers from significant social and economic disadvantage, with high levels of unemployment.

The centre and associated partners provide a range of integrated services that include on-site full day-care provision, health, family support, adult training and information in relation to benefits and training. There are links to seven local primary schools. Most children enter early education with a much lower range of skills than that expected for their age. Haslingden Community Link Childcare Services was inspected on 17 January 2011.

## 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 users and the wider community**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

The children's centre is part of a journey that began back in 1998. The aspiration developed from a vision to inspire local residents by creating a 'clean, safe and welcoming environment where people of all ages and cultures can be found'. 'Promoting healthy living and supporting families to take on their personal responsibilities' 'It is envisaged as a centre of community focus, involvement and pride with opportunities for lifelong learning'. In 2011, this vision remains central to the ethos of the centre with some of its features being outstanding.

The head of centre and senior leaders lead by example and work as a highly effective team across the centre. They receive excellent support from colleagues to provide well integrated cohesive provision for all which in turn has led to it having a positive impact on the lives of users. The centre is becoming increasingly popular with local residents and provides good support for children and families. The number of users continues to rise and reflects the diverse nature of the community. Parents describe the centre as 'very welcoming and family friendly' and that they 'would be lost without it'.

Senior leaders have a clear vision for the centre and constantly monitor and evaluate the provision on a regular basis. User views are taken on board and activities are adapted to meet changing need. However, priorities within the centre plan do not have specific targets in relation to the most vulnerable groups to show the impact on all outcomes. The centre is a safe environment with highly effective safeguarding policies and procedures. Funding is an on-going issue and the centre is highly efficient and effective in managing its resources to ensure value for money in these challenging times.

Throughout the centre there is evidence of very good information, advice and guidance supported by extremely thorough assessments of individual need to improve the well-being of families. The vast majority of the key partners engage fully

with the work of the centre and demonstrate a high level of enthusiasm and a strong commitment to provide a seamless service to all users. There are good links through education to local schools. These links are not yet sufficiently developed to show the achievement of children at the end of the Reception Year who have previously accessed the centre. Direct involvement from the health and voluntary sector has led to excellent outcomes in health and staying safe.

The centre has a good record of improvement with an increasing number of users accessing the centre and its capacity to improve further is good.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Obtain data to evaluate the achievement of children who have accessed services provided or commissioned by the centre in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile by strengthening the links with the local primary schools.
- Sharpen the centre's business plan by identifying specific targets to be achieved for the most vulnerable groups, including those that are hard to reach.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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The centre has a strong commitment to the emotional and physical well-being of children and families. Discussions with key partners demonstrate the highly successful links that have had a positive impact on family health and well-being. A major success has been the on-site antenatal clinic which covers three of the main hospitals used. The vast majority of pregnant women in the locality register and receive antenatal care at the centre gaining invaluable advice, guidance and support. Courses, such as, 'from bump to birth and beyond' and 'bumps to babies' are very well attended and the local data reflects the positive outcomes through the increase in breastfeeding. The data showing the emotional health of children at 88% is nearly a third higher than the North West average, which is to be commended. Other success stories include: the fall in the less-than- 18 year-olds conception rate; the high percentage of children being immunised; the distribution of vitamin D tablets and the free toothbrush and toothpaste scheme. Case studies show how excellent multi-agency work has enabled parents with post-natal depression, feelings of isolation and those struggling to breastfeed, have been able to overcome these significant issues. Parents say that they 'felt at ease to ask questions' and 'they gained in confidence'. The support given to teenage parents is good and all are currently accessing the centre. All families are contacted following a new birth and receive a visit or information as required. The majority of these families retain contact with the centre accessing new groups and gaining skills. The promotion of healthy lifestyles is very well promoted through healthy heroes, a six week course that encourages more physical activity and healthy meals. The café is well used by the community offering healthy meals at a low cost. It is a pleasant environment to

sit in and relax.

Keeping children safe and all who access the centre is very high on the centre agenda. A recent survey of how safe users feel in the centre gave a 100% agreement to the question 'do you feel safe in the centre?' CCTV, number pads and key fobs add to the security of the building and the day-care and crèche cannot be accessed without the appropriate security pass. Notices around the building remind parents when they must remain responsible for their children. The centre is not subject to vandalism, adding to the feeling of safety, particularly for evening courses. Emergency admissions to hospital are 50% lower in the locality and no children have been involved in serious road accidents. There has also been a reduction in the number of children on child protection plans and no reported incidents of bullying. Staff are trained in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) levels 1 to 3 and act as the lead professional. Over the summer period there was a significant reduction in referrals to social care which was attributed to the 'fun4families' holiday scheme. Children are reminded of basic safety rules during activities and know that knives are sharp and need to be handled carefully to prevent accidents. Positive parenting courses are popular and parents report 'they feel much calmer' that 'behaviour management techniques have worked well' and that they would 'recommend the course to others'. The provision of safety equipment to homes, such as smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and safety gates, results in children being in a safer environment. The centre has a robust mobile phone policy whereby phones are not allowed where children are present. This policy is rigorously followed to ensure the protection of children.

There are good links between the centre and the day-care provision. The early years practitioner and day-care manager have high expectations and are part of the senior leadership team. Training is delivered across the centre resulting in a cohesive approach to learning. Children's learning is sensitively observed and assessed throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and this leads to any gaps in learning being identified and addressed. Good links with the local schools make transition a positive experience for the children as they leave to enter reception. However, data is not currently obtained from schools at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage to demonstrate the achievement of children who have attended the centre. The crèche is a well-used facility and parents say that staff are 'fantastic'. The enjoyment of the children is demonstrated when they show no inclination to leave the crèche at the end of the session but continue to engage in the stimulating activities and engage well with staff. 'Babylinks', 'dinklinks' and baby massage are popular with parents who learn how to play with and calm their children. Parents who attended a play and language course rated it as excellent and said that it led to an 'increase in confidence' and 'new ideas on learning and language development'. The role of fathers has not been overlooked and consultation with them resulted in the 'muck and mayhem' sessions at weekends in the outdoor environment. This has been a success and has been extended to include other male relatives and carers.

Children behave well throughout the centre. Observations in the childcare provision, crèche, activities and centre café show children are well behaved and respond well to

staff and parents. Friendships have built up and mums now meet in a 'mums4mums' informal meeting group in the café following baby massage. This has helped them bond with each other, prevent isolation and share any tips. As one parent said 'it is just good to get out of the house, feel comfortable and sit in the café. The centre is acutely aware of the diverse community and had a very positive response from a session in which 300 women and children from different backgrounds and cultures attended an event called 'girls allowed'. When questioned, everyone spoken to felt that people from different backgrounds get on well together both at the centre and in the locality. Staff lead by example and there is a sense of mutual respect. Parenting skills have improved and a forum for parents to contribute to the development and governance of the centre has been identified as a priority.

The centre has been successful in helping parents into learning, training and employment. In the six month period between April and September 2010, 18 different courses were run. As a result, participants have become volunteers, enrolled on other courses, gained employment and used new skills to support their children. A 'ready steady go', preparation to return to work, course in January this year was equally successful. There has been a 100% pass rate on the skills for life numeracy course and several learners have achieved level 1 in literacy. Parents say 'they are delighted to have a qualification'. The young parents group receive direct support to encourage them to return to further education, employment or training. There is a good take up of formal childcare, allowing parents the opportunity to access courses or employment. Welfare rights are based at the centre along with a host of information and advice. This has led to the economic status of families improving. A new agreement with Jobcentre Plus is now in place.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

The centre provides an excellent assessment service through close partnership working. Referrals come from a variety of sources, including the centre, health

workers, legal services and self-referral. Once a referral has been made, home visits are offered to assess need. This can also be undertaken as a one-to-one family support session or in a more informal meeting. The outreach team provide a vital service to families. They know the community well and engage with other agencies to provide a complete package to meet individual needs. Families are fully included in this process. Staff are well trained to refer and support children on the CAF. Although there are several teenage parents accessing the centre, it was recognised that there was a need to extend support to young mums up to the age of 22. This has enabled a wider range of young parents to have their individual needs met.

The centre prides itself on raising the aspirations of all users. The volunteer programme has been a success and seen as a stepping stone for some into employment. Childminders have become accredited through the network, gained a level 3 qualification and progressed onto a foundation degree. Good support from the early years practitioner has developed training on the Early Years Foundation Stage, observations and learning journeys for children. Recruiting and training Bengali and Pakistani volunteers to support users who may feel isolated has been welcomed and given parents more confidence.

The centre provides a wide range of services to meet the needs of the community that includes: childcare, outreach support; advice on a wide range of health and general well-being; parenting courses and formal learning. The centre is frequently used by Asian families to host pre-wedding celebrations, and it hosted an event named 'girls allowed' run by Headstart, a voluntary agency. This event welcomed nearly 300 women and children from different cultures and backgrounds to enjoy what was described as 'an evening of fun, food and pampering'. Since the enormous success of this course, a large number of women expressed an interest in joining new courses and further courses have included an Asian arts and craft session. The Eastern European community have also been included, with coffee mornings in the café followed by an evening meeting to enable both partners to attend. The parents identified the need to improve their English and the centre now provides a course on English for speakers of other languages. Craft sessions on international children's day and an Eastern European breakfast, have also been held with families sharing homemade delicacies.

The centre responds quickly and efficiently to users' needs. The good quality childcare provides a caring and purposeful learning environment where children thrive. The quality of information, advice and guidance is extensive and easily accessed. Sensitive information, for example, on domestic violence, is available in more discreet areas to allow for privacy. Home-start Rossendale is an essential part of the support network and works closely with the centre to ensure that the best possible support is available. Case studies show how swift interventions through excellent outreach work and a multi-agency approach, have improved outcomes for families.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

Clear governance arrangements are in place. Regular meeting are held with the local authority, senior leaders and the advisory board. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, but the centres' personnel, including the day-care staff, work as one team for the 'common good'. All senior leaders have high expectations and are passionate about improving outcomes for families. The centre has a great understanding of the community and meets their needs well. However, the current business plan does not identify specific targets to ensure outcomes are improving for all groups, including those that are hard to reach. The implementation of a new information system will improve the information available across all groups. All activities are monitored to ensure they continue to meet need and adapted as and when required, for example, by moving the day or time of a session.

The centre resources are managed with great insight to provide the best service possible for the community. Every avenue is explored and costs obtained to ensure the best value for money. The centre goes the extra mile and has made great savings on utility bills through obtaining heavily discounted tariffs with a sustainable energy company.

The centre is rightly proud of its diverse community and celebrates this by the range of events available. Asian, Eastern European and White British families all access the centre, contributing well to community cohesion. An increasing number of adult learners improve their skills and knowledge and support is in place for non-English speakers. The centre is fully adapted to meet the needs of any adult or child with a disability. Users accessing the centre say 'they have found the experience very positive'. Rossendale radio, broadcasting directly from the centre, is another way in which the centre uses the community well to promote services. Safeguarding is highly effective with rigorous and robust policies and procedures in place. Procedures have been implemented to protect children. Clear records are kept and the safe supervision of children is paramount. Safeguarding training is part of the induction process, therefore, staff are well informed. All training for staff and nominated leaders has been undertaken leading to a team that understands its responsibilities very well.



All courses are evaluated and the views of both adults and children taken into account. Children share their views by selecting a smiley face (or not) to show their satisfaction. Partnerships are a strength of the centre with the majority of courses provided by external agencies. Multi-agency work, particularly through health and the voluntary sector, excel when assessing need and working together to improve outcomes. Parents are represented on the advisory board and are very capable in challenging the centre to ensure their views are heard and contribute effectively to the management of the centre.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**The day-care provision was inspected in the same week as the centre and was judged to be good.**

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Haslingden Community Link and Children's Centre on the 20 and 21 January 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. We really enjoyed chatting with you in meetings and in groups around and near to the centre. You expressed your views clearly and they were very helpful to us. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contribution to the inspection.

We are pleased to say that the centre provides good support that helps families to improve their lives. Staff work extremely hard to meet all of you by visiting you at home and listening to your views. They work extremely well with health visitors, midwives, local schools and the voluntary sector. We were delighted to hear how helpful and supportive you find the staff.

It was a pleasure to sit in the baby massage session and to see the babies' enjoyment. The babies rose to the occasion and behaved magnificently. Likewise in the crèche, the children thoroughly enjoyed the activities and were in no rush to leave. Everyone we talked to spoke highly about the centre. Many of you said how you now had more confidence, had made friends and had learnt a lot about parenting skills which you were now putting into practice.

It was encouraging that more of you are using the centre and are beginning to get involved in the management through volunteer work and the advisory board. Hopefully some of you will be part of the parents' forum. These are important roles so keep up the good work.

To help the centre improve, we have suggested that the leaders find better ways to measure more accurately the positive differences that the centre is making to you and your families.

We would like to thank you once again.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)