

Inspection report for Sunderland Children's Centre New Silksworth

Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	362582
Inspection dates	15-16 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Elderfield

Centre governance	Sunderland Local Authority
Centre leader	Tracy Hassan
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	New Silksworth Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	New Silksworth Infant School Day care and Out of school care

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.

The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers from the centre and representatives from parents and carers, volunteers and the local authority. They also met a number of professionals including health, education, family and community involvement workers.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at: a range of relevant documentation, including key policies and safeguarding procedures; partnerships to meet the needs of the users; the effectiveness of the local authority support; challenge for the centre; and the impact of the leadership and management on provision and outcomes for users.

Information about the centre

New Silksworth Children's Centre is a phase 1 children's centre and is located in a large housing estate, which consists of a mixture of privately owned houses and post-war social housing. New Silksworth is a predominantly White British community. The main site is part of Silksworth Infant School. Some services are delivered in other buildings in the local area. In 2006, Sunderland changed from a model of local programmes to a city-wide model based around five locality areas. The leadership team in the west locality inherited the children's centre due to ward boundary changes in Sunderland in April 2010 and have been involved with the running of the centre for six months. New Silksworth Children's Centre is one of four children's centres in the west locality under the leadership of an extended area services coordinator. The centres share the same local advisory partnership board and the same senior leadership team.

New Silksworth Children's Centre meets the full core offer. There is a multi-agency team of staff, including health visiting, midwifery, paediatric and early years mental health services commissioned from three local health trusts, family support from children's services social care. Community involvement and essential services, toy library and home safety, from two local voluntary organisations are located in a neighbouring children's centre in the west locality.

The area served by the centre is one of disadvantage, including in its reach five communities among the 20% most disadvantaged in the country. There are high levels of dependency on benefits and low levels of adult qualifications compared to Sunderland as a whole. The number of children living in poverty, whilst similar to Sunderland as a whole is significantly higher than the national average. They enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with exceptionally low age-related skills.

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 New Silksworth Children's Centre provides good quality services. The leadership team is strong and works hard to ensure services are matched closely to the needs of the community. Parents and carers appreciate the work it does and recognise the positive impact it has on their lives. Families say they feel safe in the environment provided. However, the accommodation consists of one room in the New Silksworth Nursery School. Centre staff are based at neighbouring children's centre in the area. In the last six months, the number of users has doubled which has highlighted the problem of the accommodation size. Senior management, parents and carers are all aware of this and are working hard to find more suitable accommodation in the immediate area in order to fully meet the needs of the community. However, there is only one parent named on the advisory committee and there should be more support and guidance given to encourage to parents to become involved in this roll.

In the last six months the centre has effectively doubled the number of users, particularly those who are hard to reach. This has been through a concerted and effective approach to promote the centre's services and benefits to local families.

Parents and carers speak highly of the enjoyment they and their children get from visiting the centre and report they feel safe within it. This reflects the high priority given to the promotion of safety and welfare, equality and diversity and also the good safeguarding arrangements.

Observations by inspectors, data scrutinised, evaluations conducted by the centre and case studies demonstrate that the outcomes for users are good. They are strongest when the centre uses the expertise of the professionals to influence their work above and beyond what is expected and when information from course evaluations and data is used effectively. The centre provides targeted and effective support for vulnerable families. Interventions have led to clear improvements in children's behaviour and development, which are recognised by parents and carers and by other agencies. Staff use the Common Assessment Framework to identify the needs of families and to provide the most appropriate referrals and interventions.

The centre manager provides strong and effective leadership that puts high expectations for the community at the heart of the centre's work. Strategic and operational management of the centre are good. Staff at every level work well towards meeting the overall objective of providing services that link clearly to the Every Child Matters and Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes. Staff are also passionate and committed to the overall strategy of providing early support to vulnerable families and preventing problems from reaching crisis levels. Self-evaluation is accurate, self-critical, takes full account of the contributions of all staff and partners and it is supported by good quality data.

Partnership working is outstanding. It is effective and ensures that an increasing number of families are benefitting from a wide range of services. There are high quality partnerships with health professionals, which include a paediatrician who visits the centre on a regular basis. Midwives, health visitors and speech and language professionals all enhance the service and ensure that the family needs are met speedily.

Given the improving outcome, the shared ambition and drive, and effective action planning, the centre has a good capacity to build on its good provision and to improve outcomes further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase participation to ensure that parents and carers are empowered to contribute to the governance of the centre through meaningful representation on the advisory board
- Explore better use of the existing accommodation and find other accommodation in close proximity to the centre, to widen the services available

in order to fully meet the needs of the community.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The governance of the centre has recently been changed from the east locality to the west locality area of Sunderland. Staff are working hard to develop a clear pathway for engaging and supporting children and their families in ante-natal, post-natal and preschool years. Parents and carers have commented on the improved service and how it has enhanced their lives and it has been a life line in some cases. A strong multi-agency team works hard at improving services in the area and works well to meet its needs.

Pregnant teenagers have been targeted successfully and data shows they have attended many of the sessions provided to support them. Fathers and male carers are much in evidence in the centre with some qualifying as volunteers. Increasing numbers attend the 'dads and kids' activities at the Puma Centre. However, many can also be seen in other sessions. Dads say that the service has enhanced their skills and that they are always encouraged to express their views.

Data has shown that there has been a positive impact in the last six months with the focus on transition arrangements being good. The six-week programme entitled 'Getting Ready for Nursery' has been most successful. The qualified teaching and nursery staff, along with play and learn staff, have focused on children's development in the areas of personal, social, emotional development and communication and language and literacy to support the children into school.

Some adult education programmes are running successfully in both accredited and non-accredited courses. Subjects include 'Intro to Youth Work', risk assessment in play activities, First Aid, creative crafts, cake decorating and knitting and crocheting. Taster courses, which ran for three weeks in a partnership project, included arts and crafts, nail art and cake decorating.

Behaviour is good. The centre staff successfully promote a sense of belonging and respect that users appreciate. As a result, users and staff enjoy their time in the centre. Play sessions engage parents and carers by involving them in running the groups. They are also encouraged to suggest ideas for future activities.

Children are provided with a good quality learning experience and this impacts positively on their learning and development. One parent commented, 'My child has become more independent and now understands that it is OK just to have fun.'

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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 users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

Outstanding partnerships have been developed with social care. Outreach services are very effective in meeting the needs of the wider community. Sessions and courses observed by inspectors were of a high quality.

The effectiveness of the assessment of children's needs is outstanding. Babies explore in a safe and nurturing environment and parents are provided with excellent quality advice from a range of professionals. 'Bosom Buddies', the breast feeding groups, have been very successful with the support of the health care assistant who directs new mums to the course and to the peer support workers, helping to increase the take-up of the service. In an area where mothers do not traditionally breast feed the mothers are enthusiastic about the sessions and how the peer support has helped them to continue. The early learning provision provided by the children's centre is good and engages with the childminder network to improve networking and quality.

The family support, outreach workers and the volunteers are in place and have a positive impact on parents, carers and children. New mums are given a weaning bowl and spoon, introducing healthy eating from an early age. The toy library loans out toys to parents and carers to encourage children to play and learn. A universal safety pack is offered free of charge to new parents and an enhanced pack is available to all those who meet the criteria. The pack is comprehensive and includes a fire guard, safety gate, window restrictors, blind cord shorteners, non-slip bath mat, two stair gates and corner cushions. Since 2009, 1,800 packs have been provided to local families. This service is free and fitting is included. Parents and carers are signposted to 'WHOOOPS' sessions which highlight possible accidents to children.

The quality of care for users and their children is good. Support for users' well-being is good across all outcomes and families report that their lives have improved because of the centre's tailored work. A hydrotherapy pool is used for children with complex or additional needs. The 'Ups and Down' group, run by parents for children with Down's Syndrome, where they have peer support and access to other

professionals works well. The service offers a range of initiatives to support healthy eating and physical activity indoors. Children now bring carrot sticks as a snack instead of sweets.

The referral pathway is very good with links to external services. Workers are trained to identify families who need additional support and the paediatrician, midwife, health visitor, speech and language professionals all enhance the service and ensure that family needs are met.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre manager and leadership team have a clear view of the provision and ensure that high expectations for the community lie firmly at the heart of the centre's work. The advisory board shares their aspirations and is motivated and proactive in taking services out to the hard to reach and vulnerable. All have a good understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses and know where improvements should be made.

The action plan is well informed by self-evaluation, articulates the direction of the centre and identifies key actions for improvement. Continuous monitoring at every level of service delivery is evident and is being used to drive improvement. Good value for money is achieved by the sharing of both practice and human resources across the locality. However, the size of the room impacts on the range of provision available. The management team and parents and carers are aware of this and are trying to find suitable additional accommodation in the area in order to expand and fully meet the needs of the users. Parents who require a service not available in the centre are provided with taxis to get them to another centre.

Silksworth is a predominantly White British community. However, plans are in place to celebrate other cultures in the area. Disadvantaged and excluded groups are having their needs well met and the involvement of fathers and male carers in the centre is a testament to how hard the centre has worked on the inclusion of all in its

activities. Effective strategies are in place to engage the hard to reach families. Case studies show that staff have used the home visiting scheme effectively to provide home-based interventions and support for children with special educational needs and /or disabilities.

Good safeguarding arrangements are supported by clear lines of communication and collaboration between agencies to ensure children are safeguarded. All checks, vetting and recruitment processes meet current guidelines and staff have up-to-date training in safeguarding and child protection. Parents and carers say they feel safe in the centre and that the centre is safe for their children.

Self-evaluation is accurate and guides improvement across the centre. The commissioned services have robust evaluation systems with regards to the impact of their services and this is fed into the centre's action plans effectively. All staff interviewed showed high levels of dedication and commitment. The staff actively welcome feedback from parents and carers and this is collated through written evaluations, discussions and parental evaluation through the parent focus group.

Partnerships are outstanding. They are effective and ensure that an increasing number of families are benefitting from a wide range of services on offer. There are high quality partnerships with health professionals, social care, schools and early years settings. The staff co-facilitate parenting groups, for example, 'Bosom Buddies,' 'Mellow Parents', 'Triple P', 'WHOOOPS' and 'HENRY'. Parents and carers say all the groups are a life line and they enjoy meeting others. The parent volunteer service is successful with a high number of volunteers participating. These active partnerships do much to secure the health, safety and achievement of both families and children.

Regular opportunities for parents and carers to express their views are actively sought in regards to shaping services and evaluating the effectiveness. Their evaluations demonstrate high levels of satisfaction. The centre is increasingly effective in reaching out to engage with the community and this leads to more families using the centre.

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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2

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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
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	2

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 Silksworth Children's Centre on 15-16 December 2010 and we met with a number of you during our visit. We talked with staff from the centre, from other centres within the locality and from other organisations who work with your centre to provide services and activities. During our visit we were able to observe some sessions and activities. We judged the centre as good overall.

Those of you we spoke with told us that you enjoy coming to the centre and that you feel happy and safe there. You also told us that your children enjoyed coming to the centre and particularly enjoy activities such as Stay and Play and Busy Bodies. You also like being able to meet up with other parents and carers and share ideas. For some of you who do not have any relatives in the area, you particularly valued the opportunity to meet up with other parents and carers on a regular basis. Your children's centre provides good support and is very much at the heart of your community. The advisory board has only one parent named in the running of the centre; we feel you could make a positive impact in the centre if more of you could be encouraged to become involved with the board.

The centre staff are continuously reviewing how to manage the demand for popular activities and are looking for larger, suitable venues in close vicinity to the centre. From our observations, discussions and case studies we were able to see how much impact the centre is having on your lives. For example, some of you told us that you were able to improve your own health and that of your children after attending particular sessions at the centre or receiving guidance and support from some of the staff.

Your centre offers a good and varied range of activities, training sessions and craft sessions such as card making and the cake icing course. You can also get good quality guidance and support to deal with health problems, parenting and safety in your home. Some of you also told us that you have received help to make your homes safer for your children by having safety equipment installed. The staff at the centre offer you home visits if required and give you personal and individual attention to help you more confident parents and carers and to help your children succeed in life.

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us during our visit. We very much enjoyed talking with and we appreciated your willingness to talk with us about some of your personal experiences. We wish you all the best for the future.

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