

Inspection report for Family Tree Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	362976
Inspection dates	9 – 10 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Jean Kendall HMI

Centre governance	NHS East Lancashire Community Health Services
Centre leader	Jenny Whitbread
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	The Family Tree Centre Tunstall Square Brierfield BB9 5GZ
Telephone number	01282 648001
Fax number	01282 606748
Email address	jenny.whitbread@eastlancspct.nhs.uk

Linked school if applicable	NA
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY336909 Tree House Nursery full day 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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with senior managers and staff, health care professionals, local authority representatives, outreach and family support workers and groups of parents and carers, childminders and carers. They had telephone conversations with the chair of the advisory board and social care professionals. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Family Tree Children's Centre was designated a phase one children's centre in February 2006. It is a former Sure Start Local Programme, which has been operating in the area since 2003. It serves the wards of Brierfield, Reedley, Clover Hill and Walverden in the borough of Pendle, Lancashire. The area experiences relatively high levels of social and economic disadvantage including twelve super output areas. There are currently 1802 children within the centre's reach area. Approximately 20% of children aged nought to four years are living in households dependent on workless benefits. The majority of families are of Pakistani heritage; approximately 27% are of White British heritage and others are from Eastern European or mixed backgrounds. A high proportion of families speak English as an additional language, their first language being mainly Urdu or Punjabi. There are four bilingual workers at the centre who support a range of services.

Family Tree is one of three centres led by the NHS East Lancashire Community Health Services, the other two being Colne and Chai Children's Centres. In August 2008, these three centres merged under a single management structure and combined advisory group, although each has its own dedicated centre manager and workforce. The Family Tree centre provides the full core offer, including childcare and early learning, family support, health and childminder network support. It operates from two premises, with the main base in Brierfield and a satellite centre operating from premises adjoining McMillan Nursery School in Walverden, Nelson.

The centre has a 30 place full day-care nursery, 'The Tree House Nursery' which is managed by the centre. Children enter the early years provision with knowledge and skills that are below expectations for their age. The setting was last inspected in October 2007; the inspection report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for 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

Family Tree Children's Centre provides good quality services across the range of its work. Aspects of provision are outstanding including the care, guidance and support for families facing difficulties and health provision generally. The centre has excellent procedures to safeguard vulnerable children and adults and an outstanding approach to promoting equality and diversity. Outcomes are good overall and excellent in health. Leadership is good at all levels with a shared drive to improve outcomes for users and the wider community. Given these strengths, and the strong teamwork underpinning services, the centre has good capacity for sustained improvement.

The centre's highly inclusive approach ensures the centre is well used by different groups in the local community. Staff and users are friendly and welcoming so that any newcomers feel immediately at ease. The centre itself forms a highly cohesive community where diversity is celebrated and users from different ethnic groups are keen to learn from each other. Users speaking English as additional language are able to access services fully with support from the centre's bilingual workers and language lines. Services and activities are well attended by a wide range of users including fathers, young parents and those in most challenging social and economic circumstances. Parents and carers are highly satisfied with services, stating for example, 'Children are really happy coming here. Adults are loving it too'. Centre staff know the community well and take good steps to ensure outcomes improve for the most vulnerable.

The centre is easily accessible and welcoming of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They receive good support in the nursery and through specialist services that support speech and language development. However, the number of families with identified additional needs engaging with services is

relatively low. Staff do not currently have a clear view of the level of need within the community but are working proactively to remove any barriers to access.

Trusting relationships between staff and adult users mean that adults facing crisis or in difficulty feel able to seek guidance. The centre provides an extremely safe environment for both adults and children, supported by very robust safeguarding arrangements and risk assessments. Integrated family support and outreach for a whole range of users provides excellent care and support tailored to specific need. Where appropriate, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used effectively to help prevent difficulties escalating. Families with child protection plans are well known and receive good support. There are very strong partnerships with community services and charities supporting women experiencing domestic abuse, providing excellent integrated support for these women. Parents and carers are appreciative of the support they have received, saying of centre staff, 'They give you help when you're struggling and take a real interest in you.'

Children thoroughly enjoy the wide range of opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in the nursery and stay and play sessions. Parents and carers similarly enjoy the opportunities to socialise and develop their skills. Adults report that they have benefitted greatly from the parenting skills courses and adult learning including English language courses. There are good relations with the local college, Jobcentre Plus and the Citizen's Advice Bureau but there is limited evidence to show the impact of provision on adults' achievement and economic stability. Adult users say they would like more opportunities to participate in adult learning.

Strongly improving health outcomes from low baselines are promoted through very strong partnership working between centre staff and health professionals, including general practitioners, midwives, health visitors, emotional health team and specialist therapists. Partnership working with schools and other childcare providers in the locality are less well developed and partners feel there is scope to strengthen arrangements for joint planning of services and events. There are currently no formalised arrangements to enable the centre to assess the impact of its work on longer term educational achievement and ensure that children build on what they know and understand when they move into school settings.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Use feedback from users to plan further adult learning opportunities and evaluate the impact of the centre's work on improving family's economic stability and helping adult users gain entry into employment and training.
- Strengthen partnership working with schools and childcare providers in the area to plan services and assess the impact of the centre's work on longer term educational outcomes for children.
- With partners, gain an overview of local services for families with special educational needs and/or disabilities and ensure that the centre's services are

well publicised and meet needs.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Health outcomes are improving strongly from low baselines because users receive excellent integrated services and advice. The promotion of health amongst expectant families and new babies is a particular strength supported by very effective liaison with midwifery services and health visitors. Following a significant increase, the percentage of mothers initiating and sustaining breastfeeding is now close to the national average. There is a high take-up of immunisation in the area.

Healthy lifestyle and diet are actively promoted through outreach services, family support, early years and all centre-based activities. The flourishing allotment provides a fun and informative approach to promoting healthy eating. The proportion of obese children in the Reception Year in local schools has decreased and is lower than average. The promotion of oral health remains a high priority for the centre as, although improving, there are still comparatively high rates of tooth decay amongst children.

Adult users and children say they feel very safe and well protected at the centre. Staff are trusted, so that users feel confident to share any concerns. Children are relaxed and confident, playing happily together in the various childcare settings. Safety in the home and community is promoted effectively through all home visits and specifically through partnership with the Accident Prevention Service (ACAP). Families receive good advice and safety equipment following thorough assessments. Emergency hospital admissions for under-five-year-olds caused by unintentional and deliberate harm are reducing, but they remain high and are a continuing priority for the centre. Road traffic accidents are similarly high and a continuing focus for the centre through road safety events.

Children thoroughly enjoy a whole range of activities and make good gains in their learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is embedded in all childcare provision. The nursery and crèche place a strong emphasis on language development and provide a good range of experiences reflecting children's interests and learning styles. The nursery's most recent assessments indicate that most children make at least satisfactory progress in their learning from low starting points. Parents and carers report that their children 'have really come on' and that the stay and play activities give adults 'chance to make friends and socialise'. Recent inspection reports also indicate that children in the care of childminders are making increasingly good progress in their learning.

Children with special education needs and/or disabilities are provided for well and make good progress in the different settings and drop-ins. Those speaking English as an additional language make good progress because both they and their families receive good support. However, children's outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are below average overall in schools in the area. While there are

good systems to support children in transition to school, the centre does not have the means to evaluate the impact of its services on longer-term outcomes.

Adult service users report a high level of enjoyment and significant gains in their personal and social development. Parenting skills are developed very effectively through the thriving dads' group, various stay and play and baby groups, child development and parenting courses. All are very well attended, reflecting the high demand and good retention rates. Partners provide families with constructive advice to help stabilise their economic position, signposting services as appropriate. Case studies and discussion with service users indicate that integrated support has helped several service users stabilise their financial position and some have gained access to further education and training. The well attended 'Practical English' courses provided by outreach workers and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes make a significant contribution, helping families to access services and cope with everyday situations. Opportunities for adult learning are proving increasingly popular and parents and carers say they would like more.

Centre users make a good contribution to the work of the centre. Children are confident in their interactions with adults and with each other. Adults are welcoming to newcomers and respectful of each other. They have good opportunities to give their views on the range of services and suggest further improvement through frequent evaluations and feedback. However, although their contributions are encouraged, there are currently no parent representatives on the advisory board.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
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

The centre provides good quality services for its users. The care, guidance and support for families in difficulty or facing particular challenges are excellent. The early notification of pregnancy enables services and activities to be sign-posted early

through the midwifery and health visitor services ensuring that families can access those that are relevant. There are many examples of how families have been helped to stabilise their financial position and develop their confidence and emotional well-being. Centre staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding and child protection issues so that referrals made to social care are appropriate

Families in difficulty receive excellent integrated support early on and are supported well, using the CAF if appropriate. Parents told inspectors that 'practical help is there for you when you need it and support just flows from all different agencies'. Outreach services are highly effective in meeting the needs of families known to the centre and in taking services into the wider community. The excellent support for women who have experienced domestic abuse is supported by strong partnership working between the local women's refuge and other agencies.

Centre staff know the local community well and provide a good range of services to meet specific needs, particularly in relation to health. The inclusive and welcoming environment ensures that the different communities served by the centre all benefit from services. All ethnic groups are represented in the range of activities and users enjoy learning from each other. The centre engages well with fathers and young parents. However, the number of families with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities accessing services is low. The needs of those who do attend are clearly identified so that appropriate support can be planned.

Provision to help children learn and develop is good. The well attended drop-in sessions for parents, carers and children are enjoyed by children and adults alike. All make good gains in their learning. The qualified teacher has supported improvements in the nursery and crèche settings with good quality training in the Early Years Foundation Stage and joint training with the speech and language therapist. Childminders receive good quality provision at the childminder drop-in groups and effective support from the childminder network coordinator. Consequently, children and childminders have increased opportunities to socialise and achieve.

Courses provided for adults are well attended and provide good quality learning and development in parenting and childcare, basic skills and use of English. Fathers make considerable gains in the 'Fathers and Kids Together' (FAKT) group. Centre users indicate that they would like more courses to progress their own learning. Parents and carers told inspectors that the quality of advice and information about jobs and benefits are helpful in managing finances. However, the impact of services to promote adult learning and support parents and carers into education and employment is not known, making it difficult to plan the most effective services.

and other users	
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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management are good overall. Approaches to promoting equality and celebrating diversity and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are outstanding. The centre is very successful in engaging different groups in activities and services. It pays very good attention to the ethnic and cultural needs of its reach population, providing excellent language support and outreach services. It provides an extremely safe environment where diversity is celebrated and all groups learn from and respect each other. The centre is fully accessible and welcoming to families with parents or children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

All staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding and child protection procedures and work very effectively with partner agencies to safeguard children and vulnerable adults who may be at risk. Parents and carers and children say they feel extremely safe in the centre and confident to share information with staff. There are robust procedures in place to ensure staff are recruited safely with all relevant checks taking place. Procedures to protect staff are also very well developed, using the 'solo protect' devices to ensure the whereabouts of lone workers are fully documented.

Governance and accountability arrangements are well understood by all professionals and key partners working out of the centre. Close relations with the NHS East Lancashire Community Health Services ensure that targets are shared and provision is very well integrated for users. Good performance management and clearly understood supervision arrangements ensure work is of consistently good quality and staff receive relevant professional development and training. Staff clearly enjoy their work, a typical comment being, 'It's fantastic working here. Seeing the gains made by people we work with is so rewarding. We are also able to develop our skills and grow professionally'.

Strategic planning is based on accurate self-evaluation and a thorough knowledge of the community. Staff make a good contribution to self-evaluation through reflecting on the impact of their work. They clearly understand the shared priorities and are fully committed to improving services.

Parents and carers have regular opportunities to contribute their views to the centre

staff and through the user involvement group. They are able to evaluate services through feedback following family support or participation in group activities. However, there are currently no parent representatives on the advisory board, from any of the three centres. Consultation with the wider community is being promoted through the use of 'participatory appraisal' but is at early stages of development.

The advisory board has a sound understanding of local needs and priorities across the three centres it oversees. Most partners are represented, but some board members report difficulties in arranging meetings with full attendance. There is very strong partnership working with health, social care and voluntary agencies supporting women experiencing domestic abuse. Consequently, the services promoting health and the safety of children in difficult domestic situations are of high quality and effective. However, education partners feel there is scope to strengthen and enhance partnership arrangements to improve joint planning of services and events.

Resources are managed well to ensure services meet the needs of the community and the most vulnerable benefit, securing good value for money. Services and activities held at the centre are well attended, reflecting users' enjoyment and high levels of satisfaction. Outcomes are improving for most users; those facing particularly challenging circumstances are extremely well supported.

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	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	2
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

Information from the most recent Ofsted inspection of The Tree House Nursery, EY336909, has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children.

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 Family Tree Children's Centre on 9 and 10 December 2010. We judged your centre to be good overall. It has some outstanding features, including health outcomes for users and the quality of care, guidance and support provided by staff.

During our visit we looked at the centre's plans and documents. We talked with a number of you and the professionals who work with you. Many of you told us that the centre is extremely welcoming and friendly so that everyone feels at ease. We agree with you and think that you play a big part in this. Everyone at the centre gets on really well together. We were impressed by the way you learn from each other and take an interest in each others' different cultures. The harmonious atmosphere makes it a joy for everyone at the centre. Consequently, the services and activities are very well attended and enjoyed by lots of different groups, including dads and young parents.

The centre is accessible and welcoming of children and adults with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good support in the nursery and the various stay and play sessions. The centre also provides good support for speech and language development with support from specialist therapists but these sessions are not very well attended.

The centre does some things exceptionally well. All the professionals work closely together to ensure that you are provided with a safe environment. Children play happily together and are safe and well cared for at the centre. You told us that you have a high level of trust in staff and feel confident in approaching them if you ever need help. We found that families facing particularly challenging circumstances receive excellent support and practical help. The centre has good links with community services and charities that support women who are experiencing domestic abuse and this helps to ensure that vulnerable children and adults are kept safe.

There are also excellent links between health professionals and centre staff. The midwives, health visitors and general practitioners work closely with centre staff to make sure your health needs are met. As a consequence, your health outcomes are improving strongly. Other outcomes are also improving. It is clear that your children enjoy the wide range of stay and play activities and we saw that babies really like the 'baby moves' and 'massage' sessions. The nursery and crèche provide a good range of experiences that reflect your children's interests, helping them achieve well. The active childminding network, with its good quality training, similarly helps to improve outcomes for both adults and children.

You told us that you enjoy the learning opportunities provided by the centre. Many of you find the classes for 'practical English' and English for speakers of other languages particularly helpful. The many courses and events focusing on aspects such as cooking, health and safety and parenting skills are also very well attended and participants make good gains in their learning. Some of you told us that you would appreciate more opportunities for adult learning and we have asked the centre leaders to look into this possibility.

The centre manager provides good leadership and is well supported by a caring and hard working staff team. They have good capacity to make further improvements and ensure outcomes for you continue to improve.

There are three things we have asked centre leaders to work on. One is in relation to adult learning opportunities. We have asked them to gather your views to plan further adult learning opportunities for you. We have also asked them to evaluate the impact of the centre's work on improving families' economic stability and helping you gain entry into employment and training.

The second recommendation is to strengthen partnership working with schools and childcare providers in the area to plan services and assess the impact of the centre's work on longer-term educational outcomes for children.

The third is to gain an overview of local services for families with special educational needs and/or disabilities and ensure that the centre's services are well publicised and meet needs.

Thank you very much for your welcome and openness with inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and sampling the centre's work. We wish you every success in the future.

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