

# Inspection report for Benchill Sure Start Children's Centre

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Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	362440
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Reporting inspector	Sue Pepper HMI

Centre governance	Barnardo's and Manchester local authority
Centre leader	Debbie Koroma
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	The Sunflower Nursery, Barnardo's Family Action Benchill, Benchill Children's centre at Brookfield Gardens.

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with centre staff and senior managers, the advisory board, health professionals, local community partners, user groups and parents and carers. They observed the centre's and partner's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Inspection judgements

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

## Information about the centre

Benchill Children's Centre at Lyndene Road operates from a purpose built site owned and governed by Barnardo's and the local authority. The centre evolved from a local Sure Start programme. It was designated a phase one centre in 2004. It provides the full core offer of services to children and families in the Benchill part of Northenden and Sharston wards.

The area was known for being predominantly White British but in recent years there has been a significant increase of families from other ethnic groups settling into the area. The centre serves an area which includes some of the 30% most deprived wards in the country and unemployment is high. The number of one parent families is above average.

Local schools and nurseries report an increasing number of children entering their settings with low level skills for their age; some are very low, particularly in social and communication skills. The Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through various groups. The centre has an early year's provision on site; The Sunflower Nursery which offers sessional care for up to 30 children from two years of age. Full

day care is provided in the centre's satellite site at Brookfield Gardens. Here they offer up to 72 childcare places to children under eight years of age; of which, no more than 20 may be under two years. Barnardo's Family Action Benchill also offers sessional care for up to 32 children, of which, no more than 19 may be under two years of age. These inspection reports can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centre is open from 8.15am until 5pm, Monday to Friday, 51 weeks of the year. It is also open evenings and weekends on a regular basis and signposts users to a range of universal and specialised services. The centre acts as a hub of information for the district. It works closely with five children's centres in the Wythenshawe area. An established advisory board meets every six weeks.

## **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**

This is a good children's centre with some areas which are outstanding. Many parents referred to the centre staff as 'brilliant' because they have built trusting relationships with them. Exceptional partnerships with a wide range of agencies and first-rate links with providers of childcare and education underpin the effective work of the centre.

Partnership between the local authority and Barnardo's is seamless. Cohesive working promotes improved local knowledge of the changing needs of the wider community. Some city wide data is not entirely helpful because some information is unavailable. This lack of information impacts on the centre's knowledge of all families in the reach area. As a consequence, some families who may need support can remain undetected.

Care, guidance and support are excellent and promote equality of opportunity and inclusion well. Capacity to improve is promoted through reflective practice and self-evaluation of the centre's work is astute. The head of centre has a clear action plan in place for future developments. Some evaluation by key partners clearly demonstrates the impact of their work on outcomes for children and families whilst others are less informative.

The Early Intervention Team (EIT) is extremely effective and has improved outcomes for many families through their well co-ordinated outreach involvement. The well-established group running for Parents with Special Youngsters (POSY) is superb. Some innovative approaches encourage children and families to make huge changes to their lives which have had a positive impact on helping them to improve their lifestyles.

Attention to safeguarding users of the centre is exceptional. Barnardo's policies for recruitment, selection and training exceed statutory requirements. Voluntary work both enhances the capacity of the centre and empowers parents to develop skills and confidence which can lead to paid employment.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work with the local authority to ensure the centre has reliable information on the community it serves to enable them to narrow the gap for the most disadvantaged groups in the reach area.
- Ensure that all services consistently demonstrate the impact of their provision on providing long-term improvements for children and families.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2

All parents stated they feel safe at the centre and are confident to share concerns with staff. They appreciate the cosy lounge in the entrance foyer as it provides them with a place to relax. Families described the centre as 'a godsend' and a 'top place to come'. A pre common assessment framework analysis is conducted on all children, with parental permission, which helps to ensure help and support is targeted where it is needed. Significant and sustained improvement is evidenced for those children on child protection plans. Parental survival courses help parents to manage their children's behaviour. 'It's about not rewarding negative behaviour' was a typical quote from a parent.

Families are encouraged to have positive lifestyles and keep themselves safe by the EIT and outreach staff who effectively assess families in their own homes. Some parents have received practical support such as help with housing concerns. A focus on providing families with safety equipment helps them to minimise risks in their homes and keep children safe. Some families have benefited from training in keeping a healthy household. This intensive home-based behaviour modification programme is aimed at encouraging an effective cleaning regime. Valuable support from the outreach team has helped to prevent parents making the same mistake again and fewer children being taken into care. Parents commented on this practical support which gives them a great sense of well-being, 'it's like a good dose of medicine, it's a pick me up' or 'it helped me take a step in the right direction'.

The smoking cessation campaign, using the chemical soup analogy, has proved to be a huge success in explaining the harm passed on to children by passive smoking. As a direct result of this many homes are now smoke free. Families learn about the importance of healthy eating and road safety because the centre runs regular campaigns. Child appropriate strategies like Busy Bodies get children moving and the Sit Safe Sammi helps children to understand the importance of keeping safe in the car through both informative and fun practical activities. Both parents and children are encouraged to understand the difference between a risk and a hazard to develop their own assessment skills.

There are outstanding partnerships in place with health colleagues. Daily antenatal clinics and weekly midwives book-in clinics are very well attended. Parents said attending these often leads to them joining the Baby Massage or Stay and Play groups. Breast feeding is actively encouraged.

The new minor illness clinic is very well received and meets local need due to it being available when other surgeries are closed. Parents said they prefer using this clinic with their children because of the child friendly environment and easy access to appointments. Parents and carers see the centre as somewhere they can always come, especially in times of crisis. Some parents stated 'I wouldn't be able to cope if this wasn't here, I would be lost'.

The centre teacher has strengthened partnerships with all the local schools by meeting regularly with them and not just during children's planned transition. The centre has also run a pilot after-school club for children who need extra support; due to its success they plan to increase this facility at more schools. Although the Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores are below average, current data shows a marked improvement, especially where children have attended the Brookfield Garden's satellite centre and Barnardo's Family Action Benchill. The system in place for monitoring children's progress is much improved and well monitored. Learning journeys are used to track children's progress and celebrate key points of learning. Any children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported through individual education plans. The focus on communication and language is enhanced by encouraging singing and story telling using the well resourced story sacks. Parents often borrow these to enjoy developing communication skills with children in their own homes. Some parents have developed these sacks to encourage and support good bedtime and teeth brushing routines.

Barnardo's extensive volunteering programmes provide lots of opportunities for parents to build their self-esteem and knowledge of their strengths in order to make more informed choices about future careers. Parents said 'I can't thank staff enough'. Many groups running within the area have been supported with volunteers. The Shiny Tots, adult and toddler group is an example of a group started by parents who later became volunteers.

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</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 quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. There are strong links with the Children and Parents Service who provide counselling services and courses. The Freedom Programme provides support for those who suffer from domestic violence. The centre runs a stay in touch drop-in which compliments this work. Registration of

births is conducted at the centre by the registrar; this provides good opportunities to engage new parents. Any who register with the centre are sent invites to specific baby groups which are proving very successful. EIT is coordinated by a social worker and they use the Parental Assessment Manual to target intervention to successfully support families who may experience situations which make them vulnerable.

Some data the centre requires is unavailable or unreliable. Where the centre has city wide data only, for example, data on the prevalence of breastfeeding, they are beginning to gather their own information. They ask whether users of the centre intend breastfeeding so they can follow up this choice with supportive phone calls.

Early years provisions are of good quality and parents value staff's commitment in meeting children's individual needs and the provision of a good range of creative opportunities. Relationships with the speech and language therapist are well-established and designated persons conduct programmed work in the area. For example, the chatterbox group. This work is enhanced by the good links with the library services and Book Start who provide families with a range of book packs when children reach specific ages.

A new member of the staff team is eager to further engage fathers and is planning to develop an interest in theatre skills. One father claimed he lacked confidence but is now 'looking forward to going to the new dads' group.' Young parents can access specific groups and Speakeasy run courses regarding sex and relationships.

Rodney House works with the centre to provide specialist support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities at the Sunflower Nursery. The POSY group has gone from strength to strength. An extremely enthusiastic parent works closely with staff and volunteers. They meet at different times and venues in order to provide parents and carers with great moral support, advice and information. The aiming high group and regular drop-in sessions help make sure families with children who have additional needs are well supported.

There are several routes which parents can access to learn basic numeracy and literacy or take part in accredited courses. Strong links with training organisations like Manchester Adult Education services provide regular reports of the progression of parents who have accessed courses. Additional courses are provided for those who speak English as an additional language. The welcoming atmosphere of the centre engages new families. One parent commented 'I feel like part of the community'.

Barnardo's Family Action Benchill have identified that some parents and carers need to attend self-awareness courses before they are ready to access training. This targeted small group work is tremendously successful, it allows adults to deal with any personal issues they may initially have. In this way, parents are more ready to absorb and understand new knowledge and skills and ensure their whole family benefits from their new learning. Although the centre has developed good links with



Jobcentre Plus and they are working closely with lone parents, they are not providing the centre with data of the impact of their work.

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</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**

This inclusive centre pays good attention to equality and diversity. It meets all statutory duties and anti-discriminatory practice is embedded through training sessions such as Safe Zone. Extremely robust policies and procedures are in place which respect and value differences. Annual training ensures staff are kept up-to-date on research findings and this continually strengthens the safeguarding practice of staff, children and families which is an exceptionally high priority.

Some confusion is caused by the fact that more than one setting in the reach area is called Benchill Children's Centre so the different settings are currently differentiated by location. Day-to-day performance management and supervision arrangements for staff are good, as are the procedures at strategic levels to monitor services. Insufficient data or information which is city wide means the centre has to work hard to identify the specific needs of their local community. The centre knows the particular skills and strengths of each head of centre, staff and volunteers. Roles and responsibilities are delegated according to individual strengths to ensure they can more effectively manage resources and successfully target users' needs. This provides a very successful team around the family approach. Evaluations of outcomes are variable; some are good whilst others are more basic.

Good capacity to continually improve outcomes for children and families is demonstrated through the strong commitment to improve provision and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable families in the reach area. There are exciting plans in place for the future. Benchill Children's Centre is to be developed into a special resource centre. The new extension dramatically increases space available and the site is now co-owned with Barnardo's and the local authority. This is a further testament of the outstanding partnerships in place.

Voluntary work and training encourages local jobs to be secured by local people. Training ensures all staff are well equipped to meet future needs. At the time of the inspection another head of centre from a neighbouring centre effectively deputised

which further demonstrates the exceptional partnership and integrated working arrangements in place.

The advisory group is well-established and it is now being supported by a newly developing parents' forum. This new group intends working on membership to ensure it reflects the community and improving policies to make sure they are more user friendly.

<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>2</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**

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](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 Benchill Sure Start Children's Centre on 8-9 December 2010. We judged the centre as good overall with some areas which are outstanding.

This centre is well-established in the community and it works very closely with other agencies and linked providers of childcare. The Early Intervention Team (EIT) has worked very closely with some families in their own homes and as a result, some of you have made enormous changes which have improved your lives considerably. The centre provides a good range of services that are helping families to improve their relationships and have raised your awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles. For example, many of you now have smoke-free homes.

The midwives, health visitors and staff all work very well together to combine their professional experience, knowledge and resources to ensure they provide great support for you. Partnership working is outstanding. We have asked the centre to ensure all evaluations of their work with children and families are consistently good.

The centre provides excellent care, guidance and support. Attention to safeguarding children is exceptional. This is because the centre has high expectations and they all want the very best for you and your families. The centre make every effort to consult with you to ensure what they provide meets your needs. This is because they value and respect your views and they use them to change and improve the services they provide. We have asked the local authority to improve the information the centre receives so that they ensure no family misses out on the opportunities on offer at the centre.

Parents were eager to share with us how welcome they feel at the centre and how much they appreciate the support the centre has given them. Staff have built trusting and extremely positive relationships with you. Many of you described the centre as 'brilliant' and you told us how the centre helped you gain more confidence. Many of you have trained to be volunteers and some of you have helped run groups which have been very successful. The Parents of Special Youngsters (POSY) group is a very good example of this. Many of you have attended courses to develop your knowledge and skills which have increased your confidence and self-esteem. Some of you have completed courses which have led to qualifications and paid work.

The centre is hoping you will want to join the parent forum and advisory board to help ensure that the centre's plans are constantly meeting your families' needs. We hope you will be interested in doing this so you can become even more involved in decision-making.

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