

Inspection report for Harehills Children's Centre

Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	362493
Inspection dates	8 – 9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Rachael Flesher HMI

Centre governance	Leeds City Council
Centre leader	Carol Edeson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	NA
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY338756 Harehills Children's Centre 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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, representatives from professional partnerships, representatives from the advisory board and the local authority, parents and carers.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Harehills Children's Centre is a phase one, stand alone purpose built centre. It is located within the inner city area of Harehills, north east of the centre of Leeds, West Yorkshire. The centre also delivers services from a satellite centre situated within the grounds of Hovingham Primary School, Harehills. Harehills Children's Centre has been providing a full core offer since April 2006. It serves a community living in the top 5% most disadvantaged areas in the country with high levels of worklessness, domestic violence, crime and anti-social behaviour.

Children enter the early years provision with skills that are much lower than those expected for their age. The centre serves families from a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds, many of whom speak English as an additional language. The centre also serves a transient population due to the increasing level of asylum seeker families and Gypsy Roma Travellers living in the centre's reach area. Harehills Children's Centre has its own advisory board, which is made up of representatives from various professional partnerships and the local community, parents and carers and centre staff. The children's centre is governed by Leeds City Council.

The centre has an early years education and childcare provision previously inspected by Ofsted in 2006. A report for the nursery can be accessed 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

The overall effectiveness of Harehills Children’s Centre is good leading to good outcomes for users. Safeguarding is given utmost priority. Highly effective systems, policies and procedures are in place and stringently followed by all concerned to assure the protection, safety and well-being of children and other users. Risks are assessed and minimised thoroughly. Staff receive regular training and updates on safeguarding and child protection and are confident to carry out their duties to protect children. For example, they recently followed whistle blowing procedures to safeguard children. Protocols and practice for making referrals and sharing information between the relevant agencies are exemplary.

Self-evaluation meaningfully involves users and partners and provides the centre with an accurate appraisal of its effectiveness and what it needs to do in order to secure further improvements. Plans for the future are well targeted to bring about further improvement to outcomes and provision. However, systems to rigorously evaluate and demonstrate the impact of the provision and outcomes for users are not fully developed.

The centre has established strong partnerships with local health visitors and midwives who provide services from the centre to support the good health of children and their families. This has resulted in further children and families registering at the centre and using the services. However, information held by the Primary Care Trust on the location of those in the pre-natal stages of pregnancy and new parents is not always being shared with the centre and there is a lack of a coordinated approach to supporting these families and to secure early intervention.

This is a very welcoming children’s centre which is highly valued by its users. It has established itself at the heart of this diverse community and users enjoy coming to the centre and using its services. The children’s centre makes considerable efforts to understand and meet the extremely diverse needs of users and the wider community. Staff are supported to develop their knowledge and skills and receive regular training. This training, coupled with effective information sharing between users, partner services and the centre, ensures they know the changing needs of the

community and how to meet these effectively. The role of the family outreach workers is crucial to this success.

The inclusion of children and their families is central to the centre's vision and the centre is proactive at removing barriers that may prevent vulnerable groups accessing the services. This has resulted in narrowing gaps in engagements with some key minority ethnic groups, for example, Gypsy Roma Travellers, the Chinese and the Asian communities. Services are overall effectively targeted to the needs of users and well attended and utilised. However, the centre has not fully considered how to use the available space creatively to ensure it is maximising this invaluable resource. For example, providing highly sought after stay and play sessions for children and their parents and carers.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- In partnership with the local authority improve systems to evaluate and demonstrate the impact of the provision on outcomes for users.
- Improve information sharing between the Primary Care Trust and the children's centre to ensure a fully coordinated approach to locating and supporting all parents, through pre-natal and ante-natal care
- In partnership with service users and other key partners, consider creative ways of using the space of the children centre more effectively to improve the range and appropriateness of services provided to meet the needs of service users.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Parents and carers are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy through the activities provided based on the 'HENRY' and 'Change for Life' programmes. The centre places a strong focus on reducing childhood obesity through promoting healthy eating and physical exercise. Much of the local housing lacks outdoor space, therefore, children have limited opportunities to play outdoors safely. As a result, the centre ensures the well resourced outdoor play area is fully utilised and promotes the importance of fresh air and exercise in a safe environment, which is highly valued by users. In partnership with health visitors and midwives, a range of services are provided to support new and expectant parents and carers and improve healthy outcomes. These include the Haamla Group, an ante-natal group for women from ethnic minorities, the baby group and the toddler group run by the family outreach workers. New parents state they have been well supported to initiate and sustain breastfeeding and the groups provide opportunities to develop friendships and share hints and tips with other new parents and carers.

Children using services at the centre are extremely well safeguarded and users state they feel very safe at the centre. Children on child protection plans, the most vulnerable, and those subject to Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes, are very well supported through the thorough tracking and monitoring of their cases and good partnership working and information sharing with other agencies. Case studies show good evidence of improved outcomes for these children. Family and parenting support activities are having a positive impact on improving parenting skills and reducing incidents of harm or injury to children. The home safety checks, carried out by the family outreach workers, have improved parents' and carers' awareness of how to keep children safe and the numbers of accidents in the home has reduced.

Children make good progress from their starting points in developing the skills that will help them in the future. The centre works very effectively with partner services to identify and support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents and carers feel fully included stating there is a fully coordinated approach to supporting their children's development both at the centre and at home. As a result, they are achieving well. Good information and guidance is provided to parents and carers regarding choosing and applying for a place at school and they are very well supported during times of transition. Schools report that children are well prepared to attend school. Users state they enjoy coming to the centre, using the services and are developing their confidence and employability skills, particularly those who speak English as an additional language. There are good interventions in place to ensure all users can communicate through the use of interpreters and translated materials. Users state the centre has made them 'pleased to get up in a morning' that they 'feel less isolated' and that through the centre they 'have someone to talk to, you're not on your own'.

Good support, advice and guidance is provided to improve the economic stability and independence for families through the centre staff, Jobcentre Plus, debt counselling and the job shop. All professionals working with families are aware of these services and actively signpost those who would benefit from these services. As a result, these are well utilised. There is particular support for those families seeking asylum and those from minority ethnic groups who need additional support to access benefits and services.

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	1
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
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How good is the provision?

2

The centre effectively assesses the needs of users through using a range of strategies including CAF processes, their own assessment arrangements and assessments used by other agencies. The key to the centre's assessments of the needs of families and the community is to approach families with sensitivity and at appropriate times in order to keep families engaged in the centre and services. The centre, in particular the family outreach workers, spend considerable time and effort building up relationships with families to gain their trust and encourage them to share any issues they are facing in order to ensure support is well targeted. Any concerns regarding welfare of children are immediately addressed. This approach has been extremely effective in engaging often hard to reach groups. It also ensures high quality care and support for families in times of crisis. This is highly valued by users.

The quality and range of services offered by the centre, or on their behalf, are good overall and meet most of the users needs well. This is due to the centre and partner services sharing an in depth knowledge and understanding of the changing needs of the wide range of vulnerable groups in their extremely diverse community and providing services well matched to those needs. For example, The Welcome Group was set up in response to concerns from health visitors regarding the well-being of Roma families from Eastern Europe. In order to support children and adults with emotional issues, particularly in times of crisis, the on site counselling service is available. This is extremely well utilised and in high demand. The centre promotes purposeful learning well and activities are of good quality. Personal developments are celebrated and users show pride in their achievements. Services and interventions provided by the centre, or on its behalf, have improved outcomes for children and their families.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
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

Governance and accountability arrangements and clear roles and responsibilities at all levels of leadership and management are very well established and understood by all. Stringent safer recruitment procedures are followed and all relevant checks are made to ensure that all staff are suitable and safe to work with children. Strong partnership working ensures an integrated approach to service delivery. The centre has actively encouraged partners, such as health workers, to deliver their services on site which has improved information sharing and partnership working, particularly in relation to early intervention and prevention work. The advisory board includes a wide range of user representatives from partner services, parents and carers and members of the community. The centre values the advisory board and is actively recruiting more parents onto the board and the parent forum. Parents' and carers' views are sought well and feed into the parent forum and then into the advisory board meetings to ensure any issues are heard and addressed. The centre also places great importance on listening to children and seeking their views. All staff have had training and all have adopted the importance of really listening to what children are saying and identifying any cues that may lead to safeguarding and child protection concerns.

The advisory board is seen as a key source to developing future services and ensuring the children's centre is meeting local need. This is achieved by actively seeking views of parents and carers and partner services to identify key priorities through effective consultation. The advisory board and the centre manager monitor and evaluate the centre's performance in relation to the development plan, which provides strategic direction for the children's centre. It plays a key role in setting ambitious targets and driving improvement. Staff and services routinely reflect on their practice and evaluate the outcomes of the services provided, although evidence of impact, particularly in the long term, is not always sufficiently rigorous. Parents and carers state that the centre has a 'strong drive and direction, trying to grow and reach out to people'.

Overall, the centre uses and manages its available resources well to meet the needs of users and the wider community providing value for money. Resources are of high quality, particularly those used to support the learning and development of babies and children through the baby and toddler groups run by the family outreach workers. Staff advise parents and carers on providing cost effective treasure basket and heuristic play resources to support children's play and exploration in the home. The clothes swap service is also extremely well utilised, providing much needed clothing for babies and young children. Staff are effectively deployed although in short supply following a local authority freeze of all recruitment.

The centre provides all users with a sense of belonging with users stating they 'feel like they belong'. Centre staff and services have a very good understanding of needs, cultural issues and problems encountered as minority ethnic groups integrate into a

different culture. For example, families from the Gypsy Roma Traveller community highly value the services and support provided by the centre stating 'No one has ever done anything like this for Roma families in our country'. The centre actively promotes equality and diversity, tackles discrimination and is improving community cohesion.

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	2
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

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 Harehills Children's Centre on 8-9 December 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. Like you, we found your children's centre to be very welcoming and friendly. Everyone receives a personal welcome when they arrive from all the staff, and you told us you feel there is always some one there to talk to you. You also told us the centre makes you 'pleased to get up in a morning' and that you 'feel less isolated' 'you're not on your own' and you feel like you belong. We are pleased your centre makes you feel this way. We believe this is due to the good systems that are in place to engage you in the centre and its services and to sensitively assess your family's needs. The family outreach workers are crucial to this success as they invest considerable time building trusting relationships with you where you feel confident to share any issues you are facing. Then, with the support of the centre leadership team, they identify the services and activities you would benefit from and ensure these are provided. As a result, your centre successfully supports you through the many challenges you and your families face, improving your circumstances.

The staff at your centre and the partner services work well together, sharing information and resources to make sure you get the right support when you need it. However, information sharing systems between the Primary Care Trust and the children's centre to ensure a fully coordinated approach to locating and supporting all parents, through pre-natal and ante-natal care are not effective. We have asked your Children's Trust to improve this.

Your children's centre has established itself at the heart of your community and everyone understands the needs of your diverse community very well. This is partly due to them seeking your views. The centre evaluates how well it is doing and has a good idea of the strengths and weaknesses. However, we have asked your centre to improve its systems to evaluate and demonstrate the impact it is having on improving outcomes to ensure it has good evidence of this. The services and activities your centre provides are, on the whole, well matched to the needs of the range of vulnerable groups it serves. As a result, services and activities are well utilised. A range of case studies provided by the centre, and some direct feedback from yourselves, demonstrates the positive impact these are having on improving your family's outcomes. However, we also know that some of you have expressed a need for more opportunities to stay and play with your children at the centre. We looked into this and have asked your centre to consider creative ways of using the space of the children centre more effectively to enable them to provide more services to meet your needs.

Your centre is providing your children with a good start in life and is preparing them well for school. It is also supporting you to secure better outcomes for your families and is narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged families and the rest. It does this with great determination and dedication. We wish you all the very best for the future.

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