

# Inspection report for Little London Children's Centre

Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	364894
Inspection dates	8 – 9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Alison Veall HMI

Centre governance	Leeds City Council
Centre leader	Nas Draxler
Date of previous inspection	Not Previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Little London Community Primary
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY331899 Little London Children's Centre

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 Inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the senior leadership team, local authority representatives, and representatives from the advisory board, health services, frontline workers, and parents and carers.

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

## Information about the centre

Little London Children's Centre serves a very disadvantaged area in the north west of Leeds. It serves a community living in one of the most deprived wards in the country. Issues facing families relate to high levels of unemployment, poor housing conditions, isolation, social deprivation, crime and vandalism. The percentage of workless households and those dependent on benefits is significantly above average. Children start nursery with skills and knowledge below levels expected for their age. Prior to children's centre designation the area was served by a Sure Start local programme. The locality has a highly transient population including refugees, asylum seekers and students. Over 70% of children and families are from minority ethnic groups with black African families being the highest single group. English is not the predominant language for many users. There are at least 28 other languages spoken within the area including French, Portuguese, Arabic and Urdu.

The local authority manages the provision and works closely with a local advisory board made up of representatives of all partner organisations, and parents and carers. The centre has integrated childcare and education provision and it has close links with Little London and Blenheim Primary Schools. The children's centre is next door to Little London Primary and a high proportion of the school intake is children who attend the centre. The centre responds to requests for services from a number of agencies with health services being the predominant one. The children's centre

offers a wide range of support services which includes family learning, family support and outreach as well as links to Jobcentre Plus and the local authority's Skills Shop service (Job Shop).

## 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 good and in some aspects outstanding provision at Little London Children's Centre is as a result of exemplary partnership working; strong and committed leadership and management; the drive and commitment of all staff and the support given by the centre's advisory board. The centre is attractive and welcoming. Throughout the building a wide range of good quality toys and equipment are available. The centre users are unanimous in their appreciation and praise for the improvements to their lives as a result of taking advantage of the services and activities provided. Users comment upon the effectiveness of outreach services and how they have been supported particularly in their approaches to housing. Outreach work is concentrated upon the lowest 10% of disadvantaged families ensuring contact is maintained with this vulnerable group.

The health and well-being of families is met well through a range of initiatives which occur at the centre and through development work via the Health and Well-Being Group. The safety of families within the children's centre reach is given high priority. Many families are isolated which potentially leaves them vulnerable. The centre works very well with police community support officers; they give advice to parents and carers to enable them to provide a safe environment both indoors and outdoors. Safeguarding is good. Through very effective partnerships and a strong commitment to safe recruitment practices children and families are afforded good levels of protection. The centre consistently delivers outstanding care, guidance and support through a full range of services. The support given to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is exceptional. They go the extra mile to do all they can to help these children succeed in society.

Parents and carers access a wide range of courses, which include Family learning; Story Sacks; Lets start learning; and English for Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL).

Users are also signposted to specific and generic courses aimed at improving their employment opportunities via Jobcentre Plus and the local authority's Skills Shop (Job shop). Volunteering opportunities and training has for some led to paid employment, however, numbers doing so are not yet significant. Outcomes in relation to how well users enjoy and achieve are good and rapidly improving. The centre has identified and implemented successful strategies that focus on raising children's attainment by the time they enter school.

The senior leadership team provides very effective leadership. There is a strong desire to see the centre succeed in raising the achievements of families. The staff team are supported in their own personal development and are given opportunities to update and improve their skills and knowledge. On occasion, local authority restrictions on budgets and a freeze on recruitment impacts on the extent to which staff can take up those opportunities. The senior leadership team accurately reflect on the service they provide, they identify their strengths and weaknesses but the data provided by the local authority is not yet fully integrated into the self-evaluation and planning process. The centre is supported and challenged by the local authority and the centre's advisory board, which consists of staff from partner agencies and a number of parents and carers, although parents and carers are very much in the minority. The centre is aware of the need to increase their involvement.

Considering the success the centre has had so far it has good capacity to improve further.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the provision by:
  - Strengthening evaluation procedures by making more effective use of information so that the centre is able to demonstrate how successful it is in meeting the needs of families within its reach area.
- Ensure parents and carers are more involved in the decision making of the centre by:
  - Increasing parent and carer membership on the advisory board.
- Ensure that adult learning opportunities support increased numbers of parents and carers into paid employment and improved economic stability.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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Children are afforded good levels of support and protection through excellent

partnership working and an effective 'team around the child' approach. The joint collaboration between the centre's family outreach workers, the commissioned family support workers and external agencies ensures high priority is placed on preventative work. Children subject to Common Assessment Framework processes are reviewed regularly ensuring their needs are fully met. Children's safety in the home is good and improving as a result of the ongoing commitment family outreach workers make, to ensuring that any eligible family is provided with free home safety equipment. Home visits ensure that families understand their responsibility for the ongoing safety of their children. Parents state that 'home safety visits have highlighted the dangers around the home that I wouldn't normally have seen.'

Child and family health services enhance children's, parents and carers emotional well-being. Parents and carers are very positive about the centre and its staff. They comment that 'staff go out of their way to help,' 'they never criticise, are always positive and 'when things are difficult they go that extra mile.' A varied range of health visitor and midwifery services are delivered from the centre. Parents and carers are encouraged to use the drop-in sessions to see speech and language therapists for advice and support in helping their children to develop their talking skills, they also attend the baby signing group and language together groups. Appointments are made with the city wide counselling service and Burley Lodge advice service that support parents and carers with a wide range of issues. Excellent immunisation rates of 100% are achieved within the area. Continued breast feeding at 6 to 8 weeks is not as successful, however, the centre are confident that the newly established breast feeding support peers will bring about improvement. Parents say how their understanding of healthy eating has improved as a result of attendance at the 'Enjoy and Learn' and 'Change for Life' events. Children within the nursery develop their understanding of a healthy diet through the range of healthy snacks and meals. Parents who speak English as an additional language access the centre's ESOL for health and ESOL for ante-natal groups, which ensures that whilst developing their understanding of the needs of their children, they are also improving their basic English skills. The centre works very effectively with the Health and Well-Being Group and as a result, families access a wide range of development opportunities, thereby improving significantly their children's health.

There are increasing opportunities for parents, carers and children to play and learn together and a range of good quality information and advice is given to parents and carers on all aspects of child development. All centre staff have a comprehensive knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and all activities are planned with children's development and learning in mind. At the initial point of contact the skills and knowledge of the majority of children within the reach area are identified as well below those typical for their age. Very effective partnerships between the children's centre and local schools particularly Little London Primary School ensure the support and advice given to parents and carers is consistent. Children who have attended the children's centre are showing consistent improvement in their achievements. Speech and language therapists and special educational needs coordinators ensure that children with speech and language delay and special educational needs and/or disabilities are given additional good quality support. As a result, data for the last

year show an increase in the number of children reaching 78 points across the assessment scales of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the gap between outcomes for the most vulnerable groups and others is narrowing. High quality procedures to support children's transition into and out of other childcare and education provision mean that all settings are fully informed of children's development and individual needs, ensuring they benefit from seamless provision.

Parents and carers undertake a range of courses including Level 1 and 2 literacy and numeracy. A substantial number of parents and carers complete ESOL courses which are provided in a creative way. For example, they are linked to healthy living, ante natal and stay and play sessions. There is evidence that for some it is improving outcomes and leading to further education. The number of parents and carers moving into employment is not yet happening in significant numbers. For many their starting points are low and there have been limited employment opportunities. However, well-established and very effective partnerships between the children's centre, the Jobcentre Plus worker and the local authority jobs and skills worker are preparing parents and carers well. The centre is effective in ensuring that users make a positive contribution. They are actively encouraged to participate in the decision making of the centre. Users' feedback on a range of issues via the suggestions box, the parent's forum, the annual survey and through discussions with staff. Feedback is meaningful and regularly used to shape services. Some parents and carers are active members of the advisory board with one of them holding the position of chair person. Currently, however the board's membership of external partners outweighs that of parent and carer members.

<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>2</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>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

The centre very effectively personalises services in order to meet the specific needs of users. The environment is safe and secure and children's well being is given the upmost priority. Extremely effective partnerships exist with a wide range of external

agencies. This ensures that all assessments such as those carried out under the Common Assessment Framework are robust and well informed. The centre is excellent at finding ways to support individual children and families, offering a rapid response when help is requested or a need is identified. Outreach work tirelessly supports families who are hard to reach or those whom for whatever reason find coming into the centre difficult. Families who are seeking asylum are supported through the process by the centre and its work with the Leap Empowerment Advocacy Participation project (LEAP) who in addition to giving personalised support also provide monthly drop in sessions at the centre. The inclusive nature of the centre ensures that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported through a wide range of initiatives. All centre staff and commissioned services staff provide outstanding guidance and effective signposting to a range of agencies such as the child development centre. The children's centre teacher supports childcare staff in the delivery of good quality play and learning opportunities for children with additional needs. Parents and carers praise the excellent help they have received not only in supporting their children in the centre but also during meetings and discussions with doctors, consultants and a wide range of health professionals. All families including those who find it difficult to communicate in English are supported exceptionally well in their dealings with housing agencies. Some parents and carers state they have been raising housing repair issues for some time, however, when the children's centre staff became involved things appear to happen more quickly.

A centre based qualified teacher and a named speech and language therapist act as a link between the childcare and education provisions. Agreed strategies are implemented and all staff access a range of joint training. This approach ensures consistency and has been one of the factors which have brought about good levels of improvement in the progress children make. Children are supported through the two-year-old pilot and nursery education grant places. Parents and carers are encouraged to become involved in their children's education with practical ideas and an excellent range of equipment to support play in the home environment. The centre and its partners are effectively narrowing the gap in children's attainment. 'This centre makes a significant difference,' 'without this centre families would be very isolated,' 'the number of children subject to child development plans would increase,' were some comments from a range of external partners that inspectors interviewed. The centre is very aware of the difficulties and challenges faced by families within its reach area. Parents and carers told inspectors there is always someone to talk to and that they feel valued and listened to by everyone they speak to.

Children's centre staff work tirelessly with a range of external training and employment agencies in an effort to identify courses which meet user's interests and needs. They signpost to relevant organisations and will offer support during meetings and interviews. For most parents and carers they identify a range of courses that will help to build confidence and basic skill knowledge. Parents talk positively about training and ongoing support and information from the centre. The staff team are committed to ensuring that as many parents and carers as possible access courses,

thereby increasing their confidence and their chances of suitable volunteering opportunities and paid employment.

<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**

Leadership and management are consistently good at all levels. Senior managers give good levels of support and clear direction to the centre manager of whom the staff speak highly. They state that she is a strong leader who is committed to the work of the centre, to them and to their professional development. The senior leadership team within the children's centre give good support and guidance to staff who say that they feel valued as individuals and that their contributions are recognised. High quality supervision and team work has created a sense of common purpose which has helped to create a safe and secure environment where there are high expectations of its users. The manager and staff have worked effectively and creatively to ensure the local authority freeze on recruitment has not had a major effect on the delivery of services. Everyone the inspectors talked to during the inspection, confirmed that the centre manager is well respected. Professionals comment that she will do whatever she can to improve the services offered to children and families. Resources are used very effectively. Additional funding and services are sought from a variety of places in order to supplement the children's centre budget. This ensures good value for money.

The inclusion of all children and families is fundamental to the centre's work and is demonstrated well through their work towards the Stephen Lawrence Award. Staff are effective in ensuring that all children and parents and carers, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have the same access to the range of experiences on offer. Staff's understanding of equality and diversity is raised through training and development events such as English as an Additional Language (EAL), Challenging Racism, Early Support and Understanding Asylum Refugee Status. Activities and resources promote children's understanding of diversity. Involvement in festivals and community activities such as the lantern festival which ends in the evening with a multicultural feast and Little London community day promote community cohesion well.



Safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet all statutory requirements. The 'team around the child' approach ensures that a wide range of professionals work together well to safeguard and protect children and families. Families are afforded good levels of support. Discussions with parents and carers evidence that they are well informed of the centre's policy on protecting children and sharing information with other relevant agencies. Recruitment practices are safe and follow Leeds City Council procedures. Good quality training and effective supervision ensures that staff are supported and children and families are protected.

The centre's service plan is ambitious and evidences high aspirations for its users. The plan identifies a wide range of strategies on how it will seek and use their views to evaluate the service ensuring that its activities and opportunities meet their needs well. It gives clear information on who is responsible for monitoring and when it should be done. It is clearly linked to the Every Child Matters outcomes (ECM) and shows a good understanding of how these should be met. The plan has clear success criteria but in both the plan and the self-evaluation there are limited qualitative and measureable targets. This makes it difficult for the centre to fully demonstrate the impact of its work.

<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>2</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**

Childcare is on site and an integral part of the children's centre. As the setting was not inspected at the same time as the children's centre the previous inspection report was taken into account.

There are two primary schools within the centres reach area: Little London and Blenheim. Information from the most recent section 5 inspection relating to the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been taken into account when writing about early year's provision and outcomes for children in the report.

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## **Summary for centre users**

As many of you know we inspected the Little London Children's Centre on 8 and 9 December 2010. I would like to first of all thank you for the welcome you gave us and for the time that you gave to talk with us. Particular thanks go to those of you who were willing to let us visit you at home.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults including parents and carers, staff, community representatives and partnership workers. The information given and the stories shared with us enabled us to judge that the centre is good with outstanding features in care guidance and support and partnerships with other agencies. The centre is working extremely well with a range of partners and providers such as social care, health services and education. We found that services work well together as a team to provide help and support to families where a child has physical or emotional difficulties. It provides good support for children to make sure they get a good start in life.

We have asked the manager of the children's centre, her senior staff and the local authority to look at how they can make things even better. We have asked them to continue to support you in your search for training and employment so that more of you can improve your economic well-being and independence. We know that you are willing to share your ideas and concerns with the parents and carers who are on the advisory board. We have also asked the centre to ensure that parent and carer involvement on this board is increased so that you can be more involved in the planning and delivery of services. The children's centre receives information from the local authority on how well they are delivering services. We have asked them to be

more effective in how they use this information in evaluating and planning services so that they are able to demonstrate more clearly how well they are meeting yours and your family's needs.

You told us how your children's centre has supported you and how your self-esteem and confidence has grown. It is evident that you are very proud of your achievements and those of your children. You told us how it had become easier to ask for help and how the centre had helped you in dealing with isolation and a range of other personal issues. You also told us about the friends you had made. Many of you said that the centre was fantastic and you do not know what you would have done without it. The centre obviously means a great deal to you, your children and in some cases your extended families.

You told us how much you appreciate the fact that the centre staff go out of their way to listen to your views and to create a caring and safe environment. We can see that the centre is working hard to get you involved and staff do all they can to ensure that all the activities are exactly what you need.

The senior leadership team and the staff make a real commitment to you and the centre. No wonder you trust them and use their expertise to support you when you need help. Some of you told us about how you had received help with housing issues and how you had been supported when attending appointments. You also said that the onsite support from the speech and language therapist meant that you were able to seek advice quickly. The manager has worked hard to make sure that everything the children's centre does for you will make a difference to the area in which you live. She makes sure that everyone who works with the Little London Children's Centre share this commitment and we heard lots of examples from you about how they are making a positive difference to your lives.

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