

Inspection report for The Gateway Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Bradford |
| Inspection number | 362604 |
| Inspection dates | 17–18 November 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Janet Stacey HMI |

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| Centre governance | The Children's Society |
| Centre leader | Julie Blundell |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
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| Linked school if applicable | NA |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | EY301258 The Gateway Children's Centre Nursery |

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 the centre manager, members of the senior leadership team, a member of the advisory board, users, headteachers, and a local authority officer linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at sessions in operation in the children's centre and in nearby locations. They also looked at a range of documentation including the centre's development plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

The Gateway Children's Centre is located in a purpose built community centre, constructed in partnership with the Ravenscliffe Community Association. The centre has evolved from a Sure Start Local Programme and became a Phase 1 children's centre in 2004. The centre serves a community that experiences high levels of social and economic disadvantage, being located in an area which includes some of the top 30% of the most deprived wards in the country. Unemployment rates and the number of families on benefits are higher than the national average. A range of integrated services that include family support, and early years' advice and guidance are offered on-site. Health services are offered at Eccleshill clinic which is based close to the centre. The children's centre also works with four other health clinics situated in the extended reach area.

The centre serves a population that is mainly White British, with some smaller South Asian and Black African communities. There has been an increase in Eastern European communities recently moving into the area. Evidence indicates that the skills and knowledge with which children enter the local Early Years Foundation Stage settings are well below those expected nationally for their age. The centre takes referrals from and supports families with children in six local schools. Childcare is provided by The Gateway Children's Centre Nursery under the governance of the trustees of The Children's Society. The nursery is registered to care for 41 children

from birth to five years and opens from 8am to 6pm every day for 50 weeks of the year. The nursery was inspected in 2006. The findings of the report can be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk. Onsite crèche facilities linked to training courses are provided by the family support staff.

Governance of the centre is provided by The Children's Society. An advisory board, which is made up of representatives from parents, neighbourhood partners, health and centre staff, contributes to the strategic management and direction of the centre.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

Overall effectiveness of the centre is satisfactory with some aspects that are good. The commitment shown by all staff to helping families in times of crisis is good. A real strength of the centre is the dedicated family support team. They work tirelessly to help families improve children's outcomes by helping reduce conflict within families, including domestic violence. The centre works closely with social services to protect children who may be at risk of harm. The centre manager is delighted that this successful work has been recognised by key partners. However, the consequence of this is that the number of referrals has increased to such a level that the centre staff are struggling to meet demand and have reached a stage where they are generally reacting to crisis support. As a result some families, particularly in the extended reach area, are not always receiving the advice, support and training they may need to help them improve their families' life chances.

The partnerships in the area are strong. They work closely with the centre staff to improve the health and well-being of most families in the immediate reach area and some families in the extended reach areas. The 'Health On The Streets' programme (HOTS) is a real asset. They link well with the centre to signpost families to their GP, dental and ante-natal services. A lack of willingness to improving health issues are

sometimes passed down from one generation to the next. The centre is aware of that these are barriers that need to be broken down and is working hard with key partners to try and change attitudes and help break the cycle of acceptance for the younger generation in the community.

There is a good mix of consultation and training rooms situated within the community centre. The resources are available for the children's centre to use which they do so on a regular basis, not only to provide training courses and activities but also to arrange counselling sessions and meetings with health and social services partners. These services are used mainly by families in the immediate reach area. Some families spoken to outside of the immediate community site are reluctant to access services at the centre. They cited reasons such as people smoking on the site and the aggressive attitudes by some of the users and visitors in the centre. This view of the centre was witnessed during the inspection when an intimidating confrontation took place in the community cafe. It is therefore difficult to say that the centre has a welcoming environment. A consequence of this could mean some users may not feel confident to seek advice and support.

High priority is given to safeguarding in the centre. All staff are appropriately vetted and recruitment procedures are robust. The head of centre has only been in the post since January 2010; she has quickly and astutely identified the barriers to improved life chances and has already started to implement systems to address this. For example, she has identified several satellite sites that have enabled families in the extended reach area to attend training in child development. Links with Jobcentre Plus are now firmly embedded and data is now shared with the centre so they can monitor the impact of this work. The centre manager is extremely well respected by all around her; her sense of drive and passion is helping to maintain a balance of stability and purpose. The governing body and advisory board fully support the centre. They know the key strengths and weaknesses of the reach area but are not sufficiently challenging the leaders, or the partners to tackle some of the key issues affecting the area and centre. As a consequence the centre's capacity to improve is somewhat limited, although the recent developments clearly show that it is going in the right direction and that overall capacity is satisfactory.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that a greater proportion of groups across the reach area access the services on offer by:
 - improving the sharing of relevant data with key partners such as the Primary Care Trust
 - assessing whether sufficient funding is being made available from the local authority to ensure the centre is able to meet high demands.
- Establish agreements with the Ravenscliffe Community Association, the local

authority and the advisory board to ensure that:

- users are welcomed in a safe and friendly environment
- diversity is celebrated to further promote social cohesion
- the work of the children's centre staff to improve health outcomes is better supported in the community centre environment.

How good are outcomes for users?

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Outcomes for parents and families are satisfactory and improving in some areas. The centre provides a good range of activities which are developed well in partnership with other agencies and professionals. Uptake of all courses is high and attendance is good. However, the majority of these are offered at the community centre. The fact that some users are reluctant to go into the Ravenscliffe estate where the community centre is based means they have fewer opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted through 'Cook and Eat' sessions at the centre which is delivered by a qualified trainer, incorporating food safety and hygiene, food preparation techniques as well as healthy eating on a budget. The course runs in conjunction with the centre's food cooperative where fresh fruit and vegetables are sold at low cost to promote healthy eating. However, also sold in the cafe are bags of boiled sweets. Users at the centre say they want the sweets in the community café. This impacts on the centre's and health teams' aims to educate users of the benefits of eating healthy foods. Centre staff and health teams give lots of practical, personal support in taking the first steps toward stopping smoking during pregnancy and the benefits of breastfeeding. However, some users who attend the centre and live in the immediate community comment that they are fed up with being given advice and they refuse to cooperate with the professionals trying to help them.

The Forest Schools Project has been adopted in the centre and in a local school. Parents, in particular dads and their children, explore local woods together, building fires and rope swings. These opportunities help with parent and child bonding and place a strong emphasis on self-care, encouragement of safe physical play and allow risk-taking in a managed environment. The centre has started to provide home safety packs to the most vulnerable groups in the area with the aim of reducing the number of accidents in the home, which are the highest in the district.

The centre provides plenty of opportunities for parents to play and learn with their children, such as 'Story Time' run at the local library, 'Family Play' and the 'Family Links' nurturing courses that operate at the centre and have recently been offered in the extended reach area. Parents who attend these courses value not only the knowledge they gain but also appreciate the social benefits. As one parent commented, 'If I did not have the centre to come to I would be stuck at home all day'. The qualified children's centre teacher works hard to develop the very good transition links with local schools. The centre and local headteachers are aware that

the Early Years Foundation Profile scores fluctuate year on year, with 2010 showing a slight decline in standards. All acknowledge more needs to be done in this respect. The centre is helping to establish 'Every Child A Talker' in a local school and the positive uptake of two and three year old nursery funding has enabled parents to recognise the importance of early education and how to interact with and talk to their children effectively. These initiatives have yet to show an impact but the local headteachers are confident that the work being done in the centre will start to show dividends in the near future.

Throughout the inspection, users were keen to share their experiences of how the provision has benefited their children and themselves. A parent who attended the 'Family Links Nurturing' course commented how it had helped her to gain a better understanding of her child's behaviour. Another parent commented how the course had given her the inspiration to go on to seek further training opportunities.

Some users are making a positive contribution to the community as they are taking part in a range of volunteering opportunities at the centre by participating in the Ravenscliffe Community Association's Volunteer Programme. This offers opportunities to work in the community café, fruit and vegetable cooperative, cover reception duties and develop the community garden. These opportunities are providing users with a chance to discover something they are really good at, develop a new skill and improve self-esteem. A parent who gained employment through this scheme said, 'A job became available at the centre and I got it. The people here have given me a sense of life.' The parents' forum gives users a voice. Membership is generally good but representation does not reflect the diversity in the reach area. As a result some voices are not heard.

The SMILE course, which is aimed at combating worklessness and low skills, assists users to connect with the labour market. Users also develop skills in preparing a CV. Take up of places on this course has been high and whilst the centre has had some successes from this course the number of families who remain on benefits and are unemployed in the area continues to be one of the highest in the country.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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| The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including | 3 |

How good is the provision?

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The centre provides effective assessment of needs. However, it does not identify the full range of families that could benefit from the provision. The centre offers a good rapid response when urgent help is requested or a critical need is identified.

Provision is enhanced through the committed work undertaken by the family support team. A parent who had benefited from this support commented, 'They have been a godsend to me; I wouldn't have had the strength to get out of it all without their support.' This is a testimony to the dedication the centre staff have in trying to reach those in the community who they know are in crisis. The early identification of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, involving the support of professionals, parents and carers, is good and means that children quickly get the provision they need.

The centre promotes learning and development well for its users. The HOTS officers work closely with centre staff to deliver a good range of courses, such as 'Baby Massage', 'Family Links' and 'Talking Health and Families'. Attendance at these courses is good and completion rates are high. Very good crèche facilities also help users to attend the courses, safe in the knowledge that their children are being well cared for. The centre celebrates all successes with children and families. An annual 'Celebration of Learning' event is supported by the mayor and all participants are presented with certificates. The centre has developed good relationships with local childminders who attend training courses in the centre and use the sensory room on a regular basis. The centre has worked with individual users in the past to improve their educational development and is able to demonstrate some successes in this area. For example, several parents are now attending the Open University. A parent who attended the 'Community Parents' course went onto to become a midwife and another became a family support worker. However, due to lack of funding, current links with adult education to provide basic skills have ceased. The centre manager acknowledged that the number of adults with low level education, training and skills in the area is one of the highest in the country and is working with HOTS and Newland Community Enterprise to enable some local people to train towards gaining a Level 3 qualification in childcare.

The centre leaders acknowledge that due to the high demands on the family support team to assist families in times of crisis the centre has not been in a position to fully meet the needs of users in the wider community. Courses and activities to develop knowledge of child development and behaviour management have only recently started to operate in the extended reach area.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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?

3

The centre manager provides clear, inspirational leadership. Her commitment, energy and focus on improving life chances for all families in the reach area are clear for all to see. 'She has a vision for this centre and she is taking us with her,' is a comment which typifies this new manager's commitment to improving the services the centre can offer for all its users. The management team has clear roles and responsibilities and staff have suitable professional development to enable them to carry out their duties effectively. Performance management arrangements for staff are secure with regular reviews and opportunities for professional discussion. The centre is responsive to the training needs of staff, and to develop and build their skills to help promote good practice. Clear service level agreements are in place and these contribute to the centre's ability to meet the demands placed on them. The centre is kept well informed by all partners who are very good at offering any additional support if required.

The centre has worked hard to develop social cohesion as the immediate reach area has a history of racial tension. However, the centre environment does little to promote a shared and common vision to help build a harmonious multi-racial society. For instance, a poster displayed in the centre celebrating the Muslim festival of Eid was removed and some parents objected to their children being given food to help celebrate the festival. Furthermore, the community centre in which the children's centre is situated does little to create an environment in which all religious institutions and people of faith can educate others on their beliefs and customs. As a consequence, racial intolerance in the area is perpetuated and barriers to ensure a welcome for centre users remain.

Partnership working is very good. The centre is committed to the concept of integrated service provision, building the team around the child. The HOTS team provide a key link between the health visitors and the centre and help to signpost children and families with different health needs to a range of agencies. However, whilst some key partners are fully committed to an integrated approach, the lack of live birth data from the Primary Care Trust means that whilst the centre is doing all it can, some families who may need support could remain undetected.

The centre's comprehensive range of policies and procedures are well embedded in the centre and applied routinely. Safeguarding arrangements are good and comply with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board requirements. Clear procedures are in place for reporting child protection issues and are fully understood and followed by all staff and key partners. The centre's leadership team share plans, progress and financial information with the advisory board at quarterly meetings. These meetings provide helpful updates on centre activity and opportunities for key partners to discuss current issues and plan future developments. Nevertheless, the advisory board is not fully supporting the centre in seeking additional funding to support the high demands placed on staff and to help address the attitudes of the community association in narrowing the gap for the most disadvantaged families in the area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood | 3 |
| The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community | 3 |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults | 2 |
| The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

The Gateway Nursery was inspected by Ofsted in November 2006. The findings of the report were not considered 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 Gateway Children's Centre on 17–18 November 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall with some good features.

Thank you to those of you who took the time to talk with us about the centre. It was helpful to get your points of view on how the centre helps and offers support. Those of you who use the centre confirmed that you enjoy good relationships with the staff and this helps you to feel completely safe to seek advice and guidance or to share your concerns. However, we were also told that some of you do not feel welcome at the centre and do not use the facilities due to the smoking that takes place, and sometimes the aggressive behaviour on some of the courses by other attendees. We know the centre has taken on board your views and are pleased that they are starting to look at venues outside of the Ravenscliffe area to ensure that all of you are able to access the good quality courses and activities the centre staff have to offer. We have also asked those in charge to meet with the Ravenscliffe Community Association to make sure that the centre becomes a warm and welcoming environment where everyone in the immediate and wider community can attend, feel safe and part of the children's centre community.

The activities we visited were of good quality. You remarked that taking part in them has helped you to learn about the importance of play and to find new ways of communicating with and understanding the behaviour of your children. The children themselves hugely enjoyed their sessions and we were impressed by your willingness to join in, particularly during the 'Physi Feet' session.

The managers know the community well and do their best to ensure that you are offered services that meet everyone's needs. They work well with other agencies like the HOTS team, health and social services and Jobcentre Plus to help families and individuals in the local area. The leaders know they are not meeting and supporting as many of you as they would like to. We have asked the local authority and the Primary Care Trust to look at how they can help the centre overcome these barriers

so that they are in a better position to help you and your children succeed in today's society.

Thank you again for your help.

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