

# Inspection report for Sure Start Hyndburn Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	362589
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Reporting inspector	Henry Moreton

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Centre leader	Mrs Anne Marie Foster
Date of previous inspection	n/a
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Linked school if applicable	n/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Little Stars nursery

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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 additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with members of Sure Start Hyndburn company's board, centre staff, health professionals, partner organisations, parents, carers and other centre users. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation.

## Information about the centre

Hyndburn is the smallest of the 12 district councils within Lancashire County Council. Its total population is about 82,000, and rising, with just under 10% from minority ethnic groups. Sure Start Hyndburn is one of seven children's centres which are placed in the most deprived neighbourhoods. Sure Start Hyndburn Children's Centre – Church and West Accrington offers services to families with children aged less than five-years-old. Levels on entry to early years' provision are below average.

The lead partner and accountable body for the centre is Sure Start Hyndburn, a company limited by guarantee, and registered by the charity commission as a charitable trust. A subsidiary company, Sure Start Hyndburn Services Limited, supports some aspects of the centre's provision such as the Little Stars nursery and the Star Bites café.

The early years provision provided by the Little Stars nursery at The Park Child and Children Centre was last inspected in January 2008. The quality and standards of care were judged to be good, while the quality and standards of the nursery education were judged to be satisfactory. The full report may be viewed at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Statistical data for Hyndburn indicate that the centre's users are from identified areas of deprivation. In Hyndburn there is a high level of unemployment. Average earnings

are lower than the county and national averages. There is a high rate of the local working-age population who are dependent on welfare benefits. Hyndburn has a predominance of pre-1919 two-bed terraced accommodation, a large proportion of which is in a poor state of repair.

Hyndburn has been working towards providing the core offer for children's centres since it was designated in 2006.

## 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

Sure Start Hyndburn Children's Centre – Church and West Accrington, provides good quality services. It is well led and welcoming to its users. New and prospective mothers, and fathers, benefit from a good range of services which promote well their health and their family's well-being. The centre effectively runs many groups which provide good opportunities for social interaction. Centre users value the emotional support they receive. Inspectors agree with their views. The centre's outreach service is effective in providing one-to-one support, and is effectively targeted to meet users' needs.

One of the many strengths of the centre is the way in which it brings together a wide range of services to quickly deliver support to its users. The many partners who spoke with inspectors were very positive about the centre's pivotal role in bringing them together to support the community.

The care, guidance and support offered to families, including those who are facing immediate difficulties or who are hard to reach, are of a high quality. As a result, many of those who are introduced to the centre are keen to continue to benefit from other aspects of its provision. Parents and carers who have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities have good access to the full range of provision offered by the centre.

The centre makes a good contribution in improving the health of families and the educational achievement of children, even though some of the stop smoking services, which include its stop smoking initiative for pregnant women, are under

review. A high priority is given to the promotion of safety and welfare and the safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. The centre's team members are very knowledgeable about the health, and vigilant about the safety, of all the centre's users.

The centre makes a good contribution to the economic stability of parents and carers, even though some parents who spoke with inspectors feel there is scope to develop provision in this area. They cite, for example, their need for more courses that lead to qualifications, and more courses aimed specifically at men. Inspectors agree with these views. Indeed, the centre does not engage its users enough in its decision-making processes.

The centre is well led. The potential impact of a long-standing and key vacancy at senior level has been minimised by the high levels of commitment by all the senior team. In this, as in all other things, the centre manager provides a very strong lead. Indeed, this centre has come a long way on its journey and in a short time, not least because of the dedication of the centre manager. Team members have a high level of expertise and are well supported by good quality professional development. The centre's senior managers also place great value on providing emotional support to the team members.

The board members have a good understanding of the needs of the local community. They wisely look to others to provide expert advice and guidance, including on finance and budgeting. As a result, they are now able to demonstrate the value offered by the many different services provided by the centre. The board has a good understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. While plans for improvement are ambitious, the specifics in terms of target-setting and the mechanisms for self-evaluation are not sharp enough. As a result, the success of the centre in terms of demonstrating its impact across the full range of its provision is not always well evidenced. This includes, for example, the tracking of the social and academic progress of children and families who are or have been centre users.

The centre provides good value for money. Given the good outcomes and the progress it has made to date, the centre has good capacity to build on its good provision and further improve.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Set smarter targets so the impact of all its services is easier for board members and senior leaders to evaluate.
- Improve processes to take more account of the views of more users in developing provision.
- Improve opportunities for users to attend courses, including for men.
- Work urgently with partners to resolve the issues caused by the review of the stop smoking initiatives.

## How good are outcomes for users ?

2

Outcomes for children and for parents and carers are good. Those for helping families keep safe are outstanding.

Users appreciate that signposting and referral to services is speedy as well as effective. As one user says, 'This venue is really good as you can see what else is on. I am using other facilities'. This is typical of most users, who report that they are able to access a range of services to improve the outcomes for their families. A typical comment about the midwifery service, for example, is that, 'It is easy to get to and the clinic is on at a good time'. Another, this time about the baby massage service is that, 'She finds it really relaxing. I felt it calmed her'. Children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after are benefiting from good support.

The centre works hard to raise the aspirations of those living within its reach and there is evidence that some users move on to further and higher education, and employment. One example of this is the childminders who benefited from this service themselves. There is some evidence that where families and children have benefited from contact with the centre, children have a better start to school life but the centre does not do enough to secure the data and other information which might help it to track these successes.

Users of the centre say they feel valued. Many describe how they have gained self-esteem and confidence. Users are rightly confident that the advice and support they receive from the centre is enabling them to lead a better quality of life. The centre is very sensitive to safeguarding issues and all team members are well versed in policies and practice.

Some users who first started using the centre when they were facing challenging times now readily join group activities and a few even take a lead. Parents make their views well heard on the Hyndburn's board but otherwise they are generally not influential enough in how the centre operates.

<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</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>positive relationships and users contribute to decision making and governance of the centre</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 centre is good at assessing the needs of children and families. As a result, support for users is carefully targeted, and there are various levels of support offered according to specific need. Attendance at the many sessions fluctuates but the centre is meticulous in recording who does what and when. Centre leaders use this information to adjust and adapt provision. Much of this is only possible because the centre enjoys excellent relationships with the statutory, voluntary and private services for children and families. Many of these services run from the centre or its satellite and this contributes to effective networking. The vision of the centre's manager and board, and the commitment of its team members play a significant role in bringing these services together.

The centre provides a wide range of services which improve the parenting skills and life chances of the community's families. These are invariably popular, though users and inspectors agree that there is a need for more courses that may lead to qualifications, and for more courses geared to men. Sessions observed by inspectors in the centre, in its satellite and in users' homes were of good quality and meet the needs of the community effectively. Good attention is given to ensuring the community is aware of the centre's core offer, though users told inspectors that this could be even better.

Partnership working is excellent. Midwives, health visitors, child minders, family support workers and others liaise effectively to support parents well, especially young mums. Antenatal and postnatal services are plentiful, and include: an antenatal clinic, a group for pregnant teenagers, a group for expectant mums and dads, a drop in well-baby clinic and a breastfeeding support group. However, at the time of the inspection some of the centre's services to encourage its users to stop smoking are under review.

The quality of care for users and the children in the centre is good. Support for users' well-being is good across the key outcomes and users' report that their lives have improved because of the centre's targeted support. Support and advice to individuals is good, and includes: parent-led groups such as the Sunshine Playgroup and Cheeky Tots, play and learn activities such as Breathing Space, groups and activities such as the Toy Library, Family Learning and Space for Dads. The online facility is well used by some users, including supporting them into further education and training, as are the links with Job Centre Plus. Good crèche facilities underpin all these provisions. Effective and specific support is provided to Gypsy Roma travellers and to women

who need support due to instances of domestic violence.

The centre's space centre is a particularly popular resource. This multi-sensory soft play room complete with music and DVD systems enables children to enjoy a wide range of sensory experiences, allowing them to have fun and learn in a safe setting. In contrast, the Star Bites café is an underused resource.

The centre is inclusive. The centre provides well for children who are looked after or who have special needs and/or disabilities. The strong team of family support and outreach workers know the needs of the community well and are very well briefed, and supported, by centre leaders. Reception staff set good examples and are welcoming to the many users who walk through the centre's doors most days of the year.

<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>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

Governance and accountability arrangements are good. Lines of accountability are clear and team members' work effectively together, and with the centre's many partners. The centre places a very strong emphasis on developing the skills of its team members. This ensures good professional development and training, as well as ongoing pastoral support. The team members who inspectors spoke to value this highly.

The centre manager works very closely with members of the company's board to plan and review all services. Good use is made of external advice including in reviewing the effectiveness of many of the individual programmes. There is potential to develop and extend this already good practice in order to focus on smarter targets and the securing of better quality data. Managers make particularly effective use of the centre's building resource, which is excellent. Links with the centre's partners are excellent.

Evaluation of the impact of the work with individual families takes place within the team and multi-agency meetings, case studies and through the diarised supervision of team members. This information, especially as it relates to transition as children and other users move through and out of the centre's reach, is not collated in a way



that the centre is better able to measure its full impact against its targets at a strategic level.

Safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. All checks on the suitability of team members directly employed by the centre are in place. The centre meticulously maintains a central register which records these checks. It also records rigorous records for those staff not directly employed. Inspectors spoke to team members about what they would do should they have any concerns about the well-being of children and they were clear about what to do. Training for this vital aspect of the centre's work is part of the induction package for all team members and is updated on a regular basis.

The centre's board members and its manager have an excellent understanding of the needs of the community it serves. The centre itself is welcoming and provides good opportunities for members of the community to meet and interact, whatever their ages and circumstance, and so promotes equality well. Although users told inspectors that the Star Bites café is not used as much as it might be and inspectors agree. As one user typically put it, 'it would be good if the café opened longer and had a better range of food including hot food'.

Otherwise, resources are used effectively. Robust financial management systems are in place and the centre manager ensures that resources are well used to ensure packages of support are offered to families in a timely and effective way. This, together with the good outcomes and the other good provision, means that value for money is good.

<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</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>commissioned to provide</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**

There is one childcare setting within the Hyndburn Children's Centre. This is the Little Stars nursery at The Park Child and Family Centre, which was inspected in 2008. The report has not been taken into account during this inspection since it is more than two years old. Observations of activities and discussion with nursery staff were undertaken as part of this inspection.

Sure Start Hyndburn Limited is responsible for two Children's centres: Church and West Accrington Children's Centre and Accrington South Children's Centre. The Church and West Accrington Children's Centre operates from the Park Child and Family Centre and the First Steps Outreach Centre. Both sites were visited by inspectors. Accrington South Children's Centre was not inspected, nor was any of its three sites visited.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hyndburn Children's centre on 28 and 29 September 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Your centre is well led and managed. It is very welcoming. You tell us that it provides good services which promote well your family's health and well-being. We agree with you. You may be assured that a high priority is given to safeguarding all users of the centre.

We think the main building at the Park Child & Family centre is a wonderful space where you can meet in comfort with others. You tell us that you value the emotional support you receive from the staff at the centre, and we agree with you. We think the centre's outreach work is really helpful to you.

One of the many strengths of the centre is the way in which it brings together a wide range of services which otherwise might find it difficult to do so. This means the centre is not only able to offer you effective support but it does so when you need it most. We expect you will not be surprised that the representatives from the organisations who spoke with us were very positive about the centre's pivotal role in bringing them together.

The care, guidance and support offered to you and your families are of a high quality. As a result, some of you are keen to continue to benefit from more than one of the centre's services. We have asked the centre to improve further what is offered to you in terms of achieving qualifications which may help you into employment, for instance.

Your centre makes a good contribution in improving the health of families and the educational achievement of children. Those of you who have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities have good access to the full range of provision offered by the centre. We find that some of the stop smoking services, which include support for those of you who are pregnant, are under review. We have asked the centre to look at this very important issue as a matter of urgency.

Your centre makes a good contribution to the economic prospects of its users but as I have already said we feel, like some of you, there is scope to develop provision in this area, including for men. In fact, even though you are well represented on the company's board, we think the centre could do more to engage you more in its decision-making processes.

The centre has come a long way on its journey and in a short time, not least because of the dedication of the centre manager. Team members have a high level of expertise. The dedicated board members have a good understanding of your

needs. They wisely look to others to provide expert advice and guidance. Board members have a good understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development but we have asked them to be more specific in terms of the centre's targets and in the mechanisms it uses to evaluate its performance.

So, as a result of all of this, we judge the centre provides good value for money. Given the good outcomes and the progress it has made to date, we also think it has good capacity to build on its good provision and further improve.

The inspectors have made the following recommendations to help improve the centre:

- Improve processes to take account of the views of users in developing provision.
- Improve opportunities for users to attend courses, including for men.
- Work urgently with partners to resolve the gaps in provision caused by the review of the stop smoking initiatives.
- Set smarter targets so the impact of all its services is easier for board members and senior leaders to evaluate

Thank you for your help with the inspection and best wishes for the future.

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