

# Inspection report for Brampton Children's Centre

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Local authority	Derbyshire County Council
Inspection number	366381
Inspection dates	16–17 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Alison Veall HMI

Centre governance	Derbyshire County Council
Centre leader	Alison Lancashire
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Little Angels Neighbourhood 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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre coordinator; the district manager; staff members; members representing the advisory board; local authority staff linked to the centre; a range of partner agencies and users. They observed the centre's work and looked at sessions in operation at 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

Brampton is a phase one children's centre providing the full core offer to communities in a selection of wards within the Chesterfield district, some of which are among the 30% most deprived within the country. It is situated on the Brampton Primary School site. The centre delivers a range of services such as health support, adult courses, outreach services, regular 'Stay and Play' sessions, an early learning intervention programme (PEEP) and a fruit and vegetable cooperative. The children's centre's designated nursery provider is Little Angels Neighbourhood Nursery, the report of which can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). Generally, children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills lower than expected for their age, particularly in personal, social and emotional, and communication, language and literacy development.

The children's centre is run directly by Derbyshire County Council and has its own advisory board made up of partner agencies and community members. A large majority of families using the centre are White British with a growing number from minority ethnic groups including those from Asian and Eastern European backgrounds. The proportion of users who live in workless families is higher than the county and lower than national averages as is the proportion receiving state benefits.

The centre is managed by a centre coordinator who has responsibility for one other centre and a Chesterfield-wide team comprising volunteer coordinators, a parenting worker and a 'dads' worker'. A district manager has overall responsibility for these services along with a further six children's centres.

## 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

Brampton Children's Centre delivers satisfactory support to children and families within and beyond its reach area. There are, however, a number of strengths. The centre has a robust approach to safety, safeguarding and safe recruitment. Effective risk identification and high quality case recording ensure that children are afforded good levels of protection. Children's centre staff who deliver a multiplicity of tasks use these systems well in order to ensure that the needs of vulnerable families are met through their actions and through those of other professional involved in individual cases.

Other strengths include the quality of care, guidance and support offered to users by all who work with them. The contribution made by all agencies involved in adult learning is good, with a growing number of parents and carers moving into training and employment. Parents report about the warm welcome they receive from the centre and how the non-judgemental attitudes of the staff make them feel confident in asking for help and support. They state that their requests are positively received and are addressed wherever possible. Equality and diversity is promoted satisfactorily although the centre cannot be certain of how equitable its service delivery is until it is able to accurately monitor outcomes. The centre has been effective in engaging fathers and users from the ethnic minority communities through its range of courses and out reach work.

The centre has developed a number of initiatives in order to improve the health and well-being of its users with involvement from various health-related agencies. The Acute Hospital Trust enables midwifery services to provide details of teenage

pregnancies. However, data in relation to other pregnancies are not shared consistently. This prevents the children's centre from engaging with prospective parents early enough to have an impact on decisions regarding breastfeeding. It also prevents them from being able to offer support to prospective parents who may feel isolated, worried and anxious.

There are clear lines of management and accountability within the centre which ensure that the staff and most partner staff who work with children and families know what their roles and responsibilities are. Supervision and monitoring of the centre staff are given high priority. Staff report that they feel valued and have confidence in the support they receive if they experience a problem. A significant strength of the centre lies in the commitment of its staff to the development of their skills to carry out a wide range of tasks.

The children's centre demonstrates a strong commitment to gathering the views of its users following their involvement with staff and after attendance at courses and groups. This information is used wherever possible to tailor and refine the centre's service. User involvement is not as strong when it relates to the advisory board. The board, which is made up of a range of partners, has recently undergone a change in its membership. It gives good levels of support and adequately questions and challenges the centre but it is not fully conversant with its role and purpose. Information is fed into the board from the parents' voice group. However, this practice is not consistent and, as there is no user representation on the advisory board, it limits the opportunities users have to be involved in the strategic overview and development of the centre.

Improvements in the way in which local authority's intelligence and performance monitoring data are captured now enable the centre to have a clear indication of the population it should be reaching within the local community. In addition, the self-evaluation indicates that the centre generally knows where its strengths and weaknesses are. However, because of changes and previous lack of tracking and monitoring of outcomes and inconsistencies in the way data are supplied by some external partners, the centre cannot be clear or specific about the impact of its work. This has also affected the centre's ability to set sufficiently ambitious and measurable targets, leading to it having satisfactory rather than good capacity for sustained improvement and giving satisfactory rather than good value for money.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the provision by:
  - improving the accuracy and availability of local authority and health data specific to the reach area
  - ensuring these data clearly inform planning and are rigorously monitored to demonstrate the impact of the centre's work.

- Improve governance by:
  - improving the clarity of the role and purpose of the advisory board
  - ensuring parents and carers are more involved in the strategic overview and decision making of the centre.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>3</b>
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The centre offers a range of services which satisfactorily promotes children's and families' physical and emotional health and well-being. There are several positive examples of health professionals and centre staff working together effectively to deliver universal services. Parents are unanimous in their praise for the 'Baby Play and Weigh' sessions. As one mother commented, 'It gives you chance to know how well your baby is doing, you mix with other young parents and you get help and advice from the centre workers, it is great.' Although breastfeeding rates fluctuate within the area, they are improving. Parents speak positively about the breastfeeding support group, but they also comment on its inconsistency. The baby weaning group delivered by children's centre staff and the fruit and vegetable cooperative are supporting parents and carers in providing a healthy diet. Anecdotal evidence from the centre suggests these groups are having a positive effect on reducing the obesity rates in children. However, the lack of any reliable health data in relation to this and smoking cessation means that the centre is unable to measure its progress against national or county indicators. Immunisation rates are measured and they show a consistent success rate between 95% and 100% which is higher than the 2008-09 and 2009-10 national figures.

The well-established safeguarding procedures and practice ensure that children are afforded good levels of protection. Safety and security within the centre and its external venues are monitored through effective risk assessments. Effective partnerships between health visitors, the home improvement agency, fire and rescue service and the children's centre staff ensure that all families are given advice and any eligible family is provided with free or subsidised home-safety equipment, thereby reducing the risks to children. Social care and voluntary agency professionals talk positively about the impact of the centre's work on children and families who are subject to Common Assessment Framework procedures or child protection plans.

Children using the designated nursery, the children's centre 'Stay and Play' sessions, PEEPS and the play workshop are relaxed and happy. They enthusiastically join in with a range of good-quality activities and are supported well by committed knowledgeable staff. Feedback from headteachers suggests that the children who have attended the children's centre benefit from the provision which includes the 'Ready for Nursery' group. They report that when children begin nursery they settle very quickly and are in a much better position to learn than those who do not attend. However, children's attainment by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory and below that found within the district and county. The children's centre is aware of this and has put strategies in place to bring about improvement.

The centre and its partners are making good progress in relation to its adult learners

and its ability to support them in improving their economic well-being. There is clear progression from involvement in activities such as children’s centre volunteering through to engagement with the Connecting Families Project, Family Learning, Skills for Life and Jobcentre Plus. Jobcentre Plus reports significantly higher numbers of users who attend appointments at the children’s centre than at the job centre. The centre ensures equality of opportunity by its commitment to maintaining an open-door policy and through the development of respectful relationships with all users and visitors to the centre. The commitment by the ‘dads’ worker’ in developing activities that would appeal to them has ensured their ongoing involvement with the centre. The centre ensures that the voice of parents of children with disabilities is heard through the involvement of a member of staff from ‘Fair Play’ on the advisory board. However, despite these strengths, users do not have a strong voice in the overall strategic direction of the centre.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</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?**

**3**

A significant strength of Brampton Children’s Centre is the commitment made by the whole staff team to delivering a service that meets the needs of its users who are known to them. Users’ comments such as, ‘I felt very well supported from day one’, ‘encouraged to meet new people who know what it is like’, ‘involvement with outreach workers helped my confidence’ gives an indication of the feelings of the families with whom the children’s centre has engaged. A weakness of the centre relates to its ability to demonstrate how consistently it is meeting the needs of all families within its reach area, including those who are most vulnerable. Comments such as, ‘Once I found out about it I didn’t look back’, and ‘Before I knew about the centre I was so low’ show that not everyone in the reach area is aware of its existence and the services it offers. The ‘dads’ worker’ has encouraged the involvement of fathers in activities such as ‘Men Behaving Dadly’ and ‘Daddies Do Care’ ensuring that fathers are involved and recognise the important role they play in their children’s development.

Sessions and courses are of good quality and informative. For example, a well-attended 'Baby Play and Weigh', a breast-feeding support group and a multiple-birth group are provided in partnership with the health-visiting service. All provide stimulating opportunities for parents and children to enjoy quality time together. Babies and toddlers explore in a safe, nurturing environment, parents receive useful advice and support from professionals and a volunteer, and have valuable time to share experiences with each other. The centre links effectively with the Connecting Families Project and refers vulnerable families in order to minimise some of the risks associated with family breakdown, domestic abuse and parenting difficulties.

Children's centre staff have a good understanding of the Common Assessment Framework. They use it effectively to identify services and action that leads to improvement in children's welfare, health and well-being. Effective multi-agency working ensures that families access the appropriate support. Social care agencies comment upon how the good-quality information provided by the centre supports the children-in-need decision-making process. They also comment that the work undertaken by the centre often prevents cases reaching crisis point and moving from prevention into protection.

In partnership with a range of agencies, the centre has been successful in promoting a significant number of adult-learning opportunities which are leading to improved economic and social well-being. Users' confidence is boosted by the praise and encouragement given by the centre staff. As one user commented when discussing the progress they had made, 'Always being told you can do rather than you cannot means everything to me.'

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>3</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>3</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?**

<b>3</b>
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Arrangements for governance and accountability are in place, but they are not consistently understood by parents, carers and professionals. Some members of the advisory board are relatively new and they do not have a clear understanding of the role and purpose of the board. Neither is there sufficient representation of the views of parents and carers. Staff confirm that they have an understanding of governance arrangements as a result of presentations by the management team. At appropriate



times, staff also contribute to the centre’s self-evaluation processes and future planning.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust and keep children, parents, carers and staff safe. Systems in place ensure that all staff are subject to enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks and that the relevant child protection training is in place. Confirmation that third-party staff checks have been undertaken can be evidenced by the children’s centre coordinator. There are systems in place to ensure that staff are safe when lone working. They are monitored effectively by the administrator within the centre who plays an important role in supporting the delivery of services.

The centre’s reach area covers a large geographical area. In order to ensure that users are able to access a range of services, which it is not possible to provide from its relatively small base, the senior leadership team has made concerted efforts to identify external venues that are suitable and will allow for consistent delivery of services. They have had some success. However, parents told us that they prefer it when activities are delivered at the centre. They make comments such as, ‘You know where you are when you come to the centre,’ and ‘You know it will always run at the centre.’

A notable strength of leadership is its commitment to work in partnership with a range of agencies in order to improve the economic well-being of its users. Centre staff work very well with parent volunteers who are treated as equals and who contribute effectively to the work of the centre. Their value is recognised, and a number have successfully moved on from voluntary work into further training or paid employment as a result of their experiences. The centre works effectively with its local authority’s Family Information Service to ensure that childcare is not a barrier to employment.

Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily at the centre. Courses, such as English for speakers of other languages, support families in developing their confidence and skills, as well as building up a network of friends. Users who come from a range of cultures and backgrounds feel that they are welcomed and part of the centre. The centre has accurately evaluated its provision in relation to this area and has identified as an emerging priority the need to further ‘bridge the gap’ in relation to cultural diversity.

Managers have made concerted efforts to develop systems to monitor and evaluate the provision, and improvements have been made. The key actions identified within the centre’s business plan generally link to the emerging priorities within the self-evaluation. However, data that are received and used are not always specific to the area the centre covers and are not complete. It is, therefore, difficult to identify what criteria the centre has used to monitor its outcomes and plan its future priorities.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional</b>	<b>3</b>
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<b>supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</b>

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

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Brampton Children's Centre on 16 and 17 February 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

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. We also read some of the things you have written about the centre when you have been on courses or attended activities with your children. Through our discussions and observations we consider that the centre's particular strengths relate to safety, safeguarding, care, guidance and support and learning and development.

You told us that you enjoyed activities such as the 'Baby Play and Weigh' sessions, the play workshop and the breastfeeding support group. Your comments were mostly positive and they helped us to see how the centre helps you by providing what some of you called 'a lifeline when things are difficult'. We also found that the centre is good at helping people to develop their skills by becoming volunteers within the centre or moving onto further training. As a result, some of you have moved into employment. We were impressed by how many of you seek advice and support from Family Learning, Skills for Life and Jobcentre Plus.

We are pleased that you feel so safe in the centre and are making sure your children are safe at home too. The centre is also good at helping children in need to be safe by working well with other agencies such as social services. Your evaluations of the parenting courses state that they are effective and are helping you to improve your children's behaviour. This means that both you and your children are leading less stressful lives.

Children's centre staff and professionals from other agencies work hard and are committed to delivering a wide range of services. This is not as effective as it could be as the children's centre does not have key information and is not in contact with all families within its reach area. To make the centre as good as it can be we have asked the leadership and management team to make some improvements.

We have asked them to ensure that the local authority and health data is available, accurate and relative to all of you who live in the Brampton area. We also want them to use this data when planning and monitoring how well it delivers its services. In order to make sure the advisory board is as effective as it could be we have asked that its role and purpose be clarified. We have also asked the team to make sure that the advisory board is clear about its role and purpose. In addition we have asked that more of you be involved in the decision making of the centre.

Thank you very much for your welcome and openness with inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and sharing your stories. We wish you every success in the future.

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