

Inspection report for Park Lane Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Haringey
Inspection number	366400
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Nina Bee

Centre governance	London Borough of Haringey
Centre leader	Claudette Barton
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	139 Park Lane Tottenham London N17 0HB
Telephone number	0208 489 4945
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	claudette.barton @haringey.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Park Lane Childcare

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 additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held discussions with the centre manager, her deputy and staff including the senior leadership team, a member of the local authority, representatives from a range of the services offered, and parents and carers. The work of the centre was observed and a range of documentation was looked at.

Information about the centre

Park Lane Children's Centre was designated in December 2005 as a phase one centre. It is run by a centre coordinator and managed by the local authority. The Local Planning Group supports the school as an advisory board. The centre provides the full core offer such as family support including advice on training, employability and benefits, child and family health services, outreach and home visiting and childcare. Children who enter nursery provision have skills and development below those expected for their ages.

In addition to services run in Park Lane, families, their children and other users have access to services run by the centre in two other local children's centres as well as a local secondary school. The centre serves families living in the Northumberland Park Ward which is the most deprived ward in Haringey. It has high levels of deprivation. A large majority of families are unemployed.

Just under half of the families come from White British or Other White backgrounds. A range of minority ethnic groups are represented, the largest being from Black African and Caribbean families. The percentage of families where English is not the first language is high.

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

Park Lane Children's Centre is a safe and welcoming place for its users to visit. The overall effectiveness of the centre is satisfactory, but it has a number of good features.

Provision, overall, is good. A significant strength is the care, support and guidance that is offered to its users. Mutual trust and respect are key to the work of the centre. As a result, users say they feel well supported especially when they are experiencing major difficulties in their lives. One parent, reflecting on the support she has received said, 'My problems have not gone away, but I am happier because I am well supported by the centre.' The good relationships throughout promote positive cohesion in the community. In addition, there is a strong focus on making sure users have equality of opportunity to access all services and activities on offer. For example, crèche facilities are provided when adults with children attend services or activities provided at the centre. The centre's approach to safeguarding, child protection and safer recruitment are secure. Staff and users have a good understanding of the importance of safety and keeping children safe. Just under two hundred users, for example, have taken up the opportunity to learn how to make sure their homes are safe by installing items such as smoke alarms. There is effective promotion of inclusion with good support for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Centre staff and external agencies work effectively to encourage families to adopt a healthy lifestyle. A healthy living day, for example, was recently organised for parents, carers and children which focused on many issues related to keeping healthy and looking after themselves. Centre staff know families well and so are able to assess and cater effectively for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Activities and courses are well thought out and cater specifically for individual needs. As a result, they promote learning effectively.

However, outcomes are satisfactory. The number of participants in activities, sessions and courses is variable and at times numbers are low. The centre manager and the deputy, in particular, have a good local knowledge of the area they serve

and so understand well the difficulties many families face. Together with the management team, they are committed to attracting further users. The Local Planning Group, which consists of representatives from local agencies and other staff who work in the centre, as well as users, regularly meets and plans. However, there is no rigorous system to evaluate the impact of the work of the centre and thus make it even better. The group is aware that current data provided by the local authority do not go into enough detail to enable centre staff to successfully target all hard-to-reach groups.

Partnerships are good and enable leaders and managers to develop a clear grasp of the groups that have the most success in reaching users and the ones where more focus is needed. For example, a centre priority is to try and encourage more mothers to breastfeed.

The provision for existing users is good. The way users are cared for and supported and good partnerships throughout, set against the task for all parties involved in management to find ways of attracting more hard to reach potential users, results in the judgement that the centre has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the local authority to ensure that more refined data is promptly provided to ensure that all hard to reach groups are effectively targeted.
- Ensure that evaluation is sharply linked to the impact of the services and informs future development planning.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Outcomes are satisfactory. Strong links developed by the centre with a local community school encourage families to maintain good health when they attend sports activities, such as swimming and family days. Weigh-in clinics, at the centre, provide mothers with information about keeping their babies healthy and fit. These sessions allow mothers to learn more about their young babies and their needs. The centre promotes safety effectively. Users are well involved in regular fire drills and informed what to do in case of a fire. The centre offers space for supervised access sessions to provide support to maintain bonds between parents and their children in safe surroundings. The needs of vulnerable children are met effectively, especially through a successful course that focuses on both them and their families. The centre keeps detailed documentation for those children with specific needs, such as those with child protection plans or who are undergoing Common Assessment Framework (CAF) monitoring.

Users are able to gain confidence to enable them to access further learning. As a result, they are able to support their children better when they start school. A range of courses and activities are offered to improve adults' learning in a number of areas, such as in learning English, developing information and communication technology skills (ICT) and improving parenting skills. These courses offered to adults have enabled them to develop their confidence and think about future employment.

Evidence shows a good number of families took the opportunity to go the seaside for the day. Drop-in sessions give both children and their parents and carers opportunities to socialise. In consequence, children learn how to take turns, learn from others and share as they learn skills for the future, particularly those related to personal and social skills and early communication skills. Behaviour is good. In addition, discussion with parents, during these sessions, enables staff to direct them to services which help them develop economic stability and independence. This advice has led to adults gaining confidence and self-esteem in different ways. A number of parents have gained self-esteem from helping as volunteers in the centre and have had access to a range of courses such as to learn more about first aid.

Numbers are, at times, low in some of these sessions, raising the issue of reach. The centre does not have the impact it could on outcomes mainly because of a lack of suitable, detailed data about the reach area from the local authority.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

2

Staff know their existing users well and so are competent at assessing their individual needs. They are especially good at providing for families in crisis by directing them to agencies to enable them to improve aspects of their lives. Centre staff work well in partnership with many experts in the immediate locality so are able to assess a wide range of needs, including vulnerable children and those with special

educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, speaking and listening skills are focused on well through the work of speech and language therapists. Parents who are new to the country benefit from English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses which give them the language skills needed to find employment. The ante-natal and post-natal sessions give mothers to be and new mothers the opportunity to meet up and to talk to a variety of health specialists. Outreach workers signpost the way for parents and carers and certainly make a difference in their lives. Parents spoke of how the centre had 'saved them' and 'was a lifeline' and how they had 'gained so much in confidence'. Although attendance rates are variable, the quality and range of the provision the centre offers is good.

The care, guidance and support which current users receive are good because individual needs are effectively catered for. When families have real difficulties the centre supports them effectively and this is really appreciated by individuals. Good guidance, such as 'Speakeasy training' which helps parents talk to their children about sex, relationships and growing up, helps parents develop better parenting skills. Parents who completed this course last year received an Open College Network qualification. Users who have difficulties related to issues such as obesity or alcoholism are directed to the Community Health Trainer Service.

The centre is aware that it does not reach as many hard-to-reach groups in the local community as it could, for example lone parent fathers. Lack of detailed data from the local authority is hindering success in this area, but the centre is making a good effort at overcoming this using its own sources of evidence of need. The centre has had good success with fathers attending Free Fun for Families sessions held in the local library on Saturday mornings. These recent weekly sessions have seen a significant increase in the number of fathers participating. They have been well attended by users, even on wet Saturday mornings. One parent commented on how his children are suddenly gaining an interest in books.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	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

Leadership and management at all levels are satisfactory; day-to-day arrangements work well. The centre is soundly supported by the local authority, the Local Planning

Group and the centre manager and her staff. All have worked diligently to ensure that there is a good range of provision for existing users and developing provision for others including those hard to reach. Staff at Park Lane and the partner agencies work effectively together to provide good care, guidance and support and provision for the users of the centre.

Development planning is in the process of review as the local authority has correctly identified that it needs to be far more closely linked to the centre's self-evaluation. Although provision is good and is based on clear targets, lack of sufficient monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the services, activities and courses offered is preventing them from being even better. One aspect of this is that there is too little emphasis on, and recognition of, the impact of the good provision that is offered.

Equality and diversity are satisfactory. The centre actively promotes the inclusion of all its users, including vulnerable families and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. An audit has been completed by the centre and, as a result, they are developing links to reach groups such as Traveller Gypsy Roma and children with disabilities living in their area. Centre staff and the agencies and partners they work with ensure that users' needs are met through accurate assessments. Case studies show that outreach support to vulnerable families is good. Good support from external agencies enables the centre to quickly identify and support families and their children who have specific needs.

Users are positive about the provision that is offered to them and appreciate how the centre helps them. Their views and concerns are taken into consideration, for example in relation to courses that are offered. The views of partner agencies are also taken into account when developing provision. Arrangements for safeguarding children are thorough. There are effective checks on people who work in the centre. Child protection arrangements are reviewed regularly and staff are well trained. These procedures ensure that everyone is safe and secure during their time in the centre.

The local authority is aware of the need to provide more background information to support the centre in improving users' access to the centre's good provision. Currently, resource use is satisfactory and the centre offers satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	3
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

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. 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 Park Lane Children's Centre on 22 and 23 February 2011 and would like to thank you for the help that you gave us on the inspection.

We judged the centre as providing satisfactory support to you and your families. As part of the inspection we looked at the centre's plans and documents. We also spoke with staff and others who work with you. We were pleased to hear such positive comments from those of you whom we spoke to.

We saw mums coming to get their babies weighed and visiting the midwife. We also saw photographs of some of you and your families enjoying a day out at the seaside. Other photographs showed your children playing happily alongside others.

One of the things your centre does well is the way it supports and cares for you. The

staff are a friendly team who know the area well. They are particularly good at helping children in need to be safe, by working with the appropriate services. The staff at your centre are good at identifying what is needed to improve the lives of families and then making sure they get the right support.

Outreach workers do a particularly good job especially if you are alone, having difficulties or new to the country. If you want to improve your skills so that life is a bit easier being a mum or a dad or you want to try and get a job, the centre runs a few courses for you to get involved in.

People who use the centre are now much better at making sure they eat healthily and take regular exercise, such as swimming which some of you do. Quite a few of you have had advice about safety and now your homes are safer places. We think the centre is a safe place for you and your families to visit.

We have asked the centre to improve the way it evaluates the services it provides to ensure that everything it plans for the future is of maximum benefit to your community. We have asked the local authority to provide more detailed data so that more people in your community can be helped in respect of improving outcomes for children, families and other centre users.

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