

# Inspection report for Shadsworth Children's Centre

Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	365727
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Tim Vaughan HMI

Centre governance	Blackburn with Darwen Council
Centre leader	Cathy Reilly and Deborah Thompson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Shadsworth Children's Centre Nursery EY371644

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 additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the geographical early years manager, centre manager, senior leaders, a range of centre staff and representatives from the local authority. Discussions were also held with parents, grandparents and carers, members of the parent's forum, members of the management board, partners and service users. Inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE**

Shadsworth Children's Centre has developed from a Sure Start Local Programme and was designated as a phase one children's centre in 2005. The centre is located in the Shadsworth and Whitebirk area of Blackburn which is economically and socially disadvantaged, being ranked in the top 30% of the most deprived areas in the country.

A high proportion of local families are from White British heritage backgrounds and a small number from other ethnic heritages. Most children aged nought to four live in households where no one is working. The number of adults claiming benefits is 45%, which is three times higher than the national figure.

The centre closely operates with Accrington Road Children's Centre, and takes a campus approach to the delivery of services and activities. A local management board is responsible for the governance of both Shadsworth and Accrington Road Children's Centres. The early years geographical manager leads the services provided by both centres and coordinates those provided by its partners. An operational manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of each centre. A multi-agency

team that includes health visitors, midwives, outreach and family support workers, Credit Union and Jobcentre Plus provide services across both children's centres.

A wide range of services, activities and family adult learning are provided across the two children's centres, a community building and local college. Shadsworth Children's Centre is one of two specialist provisions offering child development services for children and families with additional or complex health needs. Most local children enter early education with a lower range of skills and abilities than that expected for their age. Until April 2010, the centre provided the full core offer with early years provision available on site. Consideration of future early years childcare provision on-site is being reviewed by Blackburn with Darwen Council.

## 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

This is a well-established children's centre which provides good support to children and families and is continuing to reshape and improve the services on offer. A key strength is that the centre has grown from consultation with local families as a Sure Start Local Programme and that this has continued during its growth as a phase one children's centre. This is demonstrated by the outstanding governance arrangements now in place to oversee the centre's work. Parents, including fathers, and grandparents are active in the management board and each of its sub-groups. They help to review and steer the work of the centre and this work is effectively led by a parent chairperson. This is complemented by good oversight of the centre by the local authority.

The purpose-built premises use daylight and a range of architectural features very effectively to create a modern, welcoming and comfortable building. Combined with the positive response to visitors at the reception and centre café, parents using the centre for the first time consistently said how welcome and at ease they felt. Many other local people across the age range use the centre regularly and they overwhelmingly stated that they value the services provided. Imagery around the centre reflects a range of ages, ethnicity and gender which helps the centre to be

welcoming and inclusive.

The centre is well used, partly because of the wide range of services available on site. Partnership between health, education and social care and partners such as the Police is outstanding because it is highly cohesive and well established. Outcomes for centre users are good as a result. The way in which user needs are assessed is excellent. It is well informed and tailored. As one parent commented, 'They listened and didn't judge me. They listened impartially'. This approach has been enhanced because of the time that has been invested in services working together in more integrated ways and learning from one another.

The centre's policies, procedures and work with other agencies are good in safeguarding children and their parents. The centre is recognised by users as a safe place to relax and learn.

Good management systems are in place for centre planning and development. While senior leaders and the management board evaluate the quality of provision regularly and have a clear vision for improvement, self-evaluation procedures are not yet sufficiently focused on measurable targets or data. Nevertheless, considering that outcomes are good and improving and together with its other strengths, the centre has good capacity to improve further.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve self-evaluation and planning by:
  - ensuring that targets are specific and measurable
  - using more data to demonstrate how the centre is making a difference to outcomes for children and families.

## **How good are outcomes for users?**

<b>2</b>
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The health of users is being improved in a range of ways. There is a high level of breastfeeding, achieved in part because the centre has worked to be a baby-friendly environment and acceptance of breastfeeding has been promoted with local businesses. There is a high level of smoking cessation in the reach area because of the promotion of smoke-free homes packs, consistent messages about infant health and a well-established Early Start programme of intensive health home visiting. Centre staff have a good understanding of attachment and bonding through partnership with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team.

There is active health promotion by the centre. Vitamin D is distributed to local parents via staff in the centre reception who have received specific training to do so. Sexual health is strongly promoted through posters and information and as a result, there is a good take-up of the free condoms on offer.

A strong emphasis is placed upon healthy living and the centre's work has been accredited by 'Smiling for Life', a healthy eating programme. The well-used community café provides a range of affordable and nutritionally balanced meals. 'Taste for Life' sessions run monthly from the centre to help parents to learn about how and when to wean their baby and what foods to use. The impact of this work is evident in the reduced levels of obesity for local Reception Year children.

Families feel safe when using the centre and are confident that they can share any concerns that they may have. Parents commented that children's safety is prioritised well across the centre. Children's safety in the home is improving as a result of advice and guidance from family support workers. Outcomes for children on child protection plans are good because families are treated with respect, given high quality access visits and individualised support. This is enhanced by excellent links to social care.

By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children in the reach area make good progress from their starting points. Activities such as 'Stay and Play' sessions at the centre build positive relationships and help to prepare children for school. Outcomes for individual children who have used centre services are tracked and this information is then evaluated to understand the progress that children have made. Centre leaders are working to further use this information to refine centre development priorities. The centre has a popular and very well-resourced library for home lending and throughout the building high quality children's books are accessible. As a result, parents are benefiting from good opportunities to share and enjoy books with their children at the centre and at home. Through training and support from the centre in developing their skills, groups such as teenage parents as well as fathers and male carers have improved their own learning, for example through a 'Dads Photo' project.

Users make an excellent contribution to the running of the centre. The views of children, including those with communication difficulties, are highly valued by the centre through regular consultation. Parents and local people are encouraged to share any concerns about community issues through a Police comments box in the centre foyer. More general comments about the centre are regularly gathered at parent groups and there are systematic and routine opportunities for parents to be involved in centre governance. Parents and other local people feel that their views are acknowledged, for example, in asking the café to provide Halal food. Because the centre is welcoming, listens to local people and uses their views to shape services, people of all ages use the centre daily. As a result, community cohesion is being greatly enhanced.

Support provided by the centre helps to promote economic stability. Children are encouraged to be active, inquisitive and independent learners in the range of activities provided. In addition, parents and carers are supported with a good range of advice in securing benefits, budgeting, accessing local training courses and in seeking work. A parent who had attended Work Club said 'I found it really helpful and was able to get one-to-one support just before going to an interview'.

*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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>1</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 excellent at assessing the needs of children and families. It has developed strong relationships with partners from the statutory, private and voluntary sectors. Many of these professionals work from the centre and this contributes to the highly effective network of support. For example, the on-site child development service is a key component in the centre supporting children with disabilities. The centre's sensory room also allows children, parents and professionals to have high quality play opportunities. All professionals are clear where their service sits in relation to the local authority levels of need. They work together very effectively to intervene and support children and families where necessary.

Early Years Foundation Stage provision across sectors in the reach area is mainly good or better. Activities for children in the centre are of good quality and this includes the space and resources available for parents and children to play and learn together during contact sessions. The Early Years Foundation Stage is clearly promoted through display. Books and attractive spaces to play are highly valued in the organisation of the centre environment. For example, children waiting for on-site appointments with health services can access appropriate play resources in the waiting areas. This was illustrated by one parent who said, 'There's a lovely, warm welcome...it feels like a play centre not somewhere you would come for an appointment'. Learning for adults is provided through a local college and individual progress and achievement are celebrated and acknowledged. This was illustrated by the way in which the college Principal recently presented certificates to parents.

The quality and range of services offered in the centre are good. The strong partnerships in place mean that provision is integrated and cohesive. Services are used well. This is illustrated by the fact that most local children under five are registered and the majority of them have used services in the past year.

Participation rates by target groups such as children in need, teenage parents and children from minority ethnic groups are good and improving. Centre staff and the local authority are aware that there is scope for more data to enhance the centre's self-evaluation of their reach, and the local authority is working to improve this. For example, statistics about fathers' engagement is hard to quantify due to limitations in local census data. However, men report that they feel very welcome in the centre and male users were very visible in the centre during the inspection.

Outreach provision includes strong links with Accrington Road Children's Centre through a campus approach to the delivery of services and activities as well as shared staffing and resourcing across the two sites. Another outreach site is well used for contact sessions for local children as well as contact sessions at Shadsworth Children's Centre.

Until April 2010, there was an on-site nursery as part of the children's centre core offer. This was through partnership with a private provider. The nursery then chose to move to another location. The centre limited the impact of this on children and parents by offering ongoing nursery provision for those local parents who required it until Summer 2010. Options for future provision are currently under review by the local authority. In the meantime, the centre has ensured that strong partnerships are in place with local providers so that current need is met as much as possible.

For local adults and young people there is a wide range of information available at the centre including about oral health, exercise, immunisations, smoking, safe behaviour, sexual health of men and women, training and employment, debt, childcare and school options. In times of crisis families feel well supported and the support and advice given to individuals includes: keeping safe; adult/child relationships; drug and alcohol use. A wide range of centre users are appreciative of the professionals who work with them, and they talk about the resulting impact on their lives, including for children in care, children with disabilities and those parents who feel isolated in the community.

*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>1</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
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Shadsworth Children's Centre has undergone significant change in the past year. The nursery provider moved to another premises and a wide range of service delivery has changed due to budget constraints and new local commissioning arrangements. During this significant upheaval the leadership of the centre have shown themselves well able to cope with such challenges. They have been positive and resilient. They value how staff feel and are sensitive to individual's needs. The local authority and management board share a view that the centre managers have turned the pressure of ongoing change into a positive opportunity to increase engagement with the local community. Managers have also ensured that clear actions have been put in place to reshape and sustain support to children and families. As a result, staff morale has been maintained, the centre has developed further and the reach of the centre has remained good and is improving.

Governance and accountability arrangements are excellent because they are well established and focused upon improvement. Representation on the management board includes personnel from social care and family learning as well as several parents and there is a clear understanding of roles. Through regular reports from sub-groups and well-attended meetings the board is able to give effective challenge and support to centre leaders. This is complemented by good local authority support to link the centre to strategic priorities.

The centre makes a good contribution to community cohesion with celebrations ranging from Eid to British Pie Week to International Women's Day. Winter Festival celebrations were so popular with local people that the income generated by the centre café was notable. Centre leaders promote a clear vision of inclusion for children, families and other local people. The integration of the child development service within the centre has meant that targeted services for disabled children are now community based rather than hospital based. As a result, children and parents feel more included in the children's centre and partnership working between education and health has been enhanced.

Safeguarding procedures to ensure the protection of users as they move around the site are effectively implemented. Staff have a clear understanding about their roles in identifying and reporting concerns. The centre has good systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment of staff. Families that attend the centre are particularly well supported at times of crisis. Partnerships with services including health and social care contribute to good outcomes for users.

Centre leaders and the management board know the centre well because self-evaluation is systematic and well established. The use of data and measurable



targets is less well established. Senior leaders are correct in identifying this as an area for improvement. Middle leaders are effectively engaged in leading aspects of work, and as one said, 'What we are good at is coming out with a consensus after having a debate'. There was high confidence in the centre manager and geographical early years manager.

Partnership working is particularly strong and well integrated. Relationships are very well established and effectively managed. There are excellent links with other agencies, the local authority, Accrington Road Children's Centre and the wider network of centres. One partner commented, 'This centre is very good at network links – they know the community and this has built up over a long time'. Together with good deployment of staff, well-focused planning and good outcomes at a time of significant change, this means that value for money is good.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>2</b>

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

Accrington Road Children's Centre shares leadership, governance and some staffing and services and is part of a campus approach with Shadsworth Children's Centre. It was inspected in February 2011 and judged to be good.

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**

Thank you for your help when we inspected Shadsworth Children's Centre on 9 and 10 March 2011. We judged the centre to be good overall.

We spoke to several of you about the centre's work. We really enjoyed chatting to you during your activities and around the centre and in the centre cafe. You expressed your opinions very clearly and they were very helpful to us. We were delighted to hear your positive views and how approachable and understanding you find the staff. I am writing to say what we found out about the centre.

You told us how much you value activities on offer and that coming to the centre has given you more confidence and has helped you make new friends. As a result, we were pleased to hear that many of you feel less isolated in the community and feel more confident as parents. We found that the centre is outstanding in how it assesses the needs of children, parents and other centre users.

The centre works extremely effectively with a wide range of partners including Accrington Road Children's Centre to make sure that services are well managed. We were pleased to find that the way that the centre keeps children, families and staff safe is good.

We judged that the management group who oversee the centre is very effective. We also felt that the opportunities for parents and local people to contribute to the centre were outstanding.

We were encouraged to see how hard the centre is working to make the centre a place for all ages of local people. We know how much you appreciate the fact that staff go out of their way to get to know you and your families and visit you in your homes. We can see how the centre is making a positive difference to your lives.

The staff work really hard to make the centre as good as it can be. We particularly liked the comment from a parent who said: 'They listened and didn't judge me'.

To help the centre continue to develop, we have suggested that they make it clearer how they will measure what effect their work is having and that they make better use of data when doing so.

Thank you once again for your help.

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