

Inspection report for Moorhouse Children's Centre

Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	365815
Inspection dates	29-30 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Janet Glover

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Rita Anson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	

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 meetings with centre staff, health professionals, local community partners, advisory board members, governing body representatives, local authority representatives, user groups and parents and carers who use the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its business plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre.

Information about the centre

Moorhouse Children's Centre is a Phase 2 centre in the 70% most deprived area of Rochdale. It was designated in July 2009. There are 574 children aged under five in the centre's reach area. The majority of children from the reach area live in Milnrow and Newhay electoral ward.

A range of universal and targeted services is provided at the centre or at accessible venues across the area. These include health, family support, early years education and adult training sessions. The Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through the crèche which is registered for 16 children aged birth to eight years. It supports parents and carers attending training on and off site, and also offers short respite crèche sessions. Parent and child sessions provide opportunities for learning through play. The centre works in close partnership with the nursery class and the Early Years Foundation Stage within the co-located school.

The vast majority of families are of White British heritage with the largest minority ethnic group being Pakistani. Fifty eight % of adults are in employment. The advisory board is made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents. An active parents' forum meets fortnightly.

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

This well-established children's centre provides satisfactory and improving support to children and families. Whilst some aspects of the centre's work are very effective, further work needs to be undertaken to ensure the service is consistently of a high standard. As a consequence, the centre's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The impact of actions to ensure the safety and well-being of children and their families is good. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Parents and carers report how safe and caring the centre is and they are full of praise for the work and the activities on offer. The centres approach to safeguarding, safe recruitment and child protection is good and fully meets statutory requirements. Parents and children show a good understanding of how to keep safe. Good, successful actions are taken to enable children to enjoy and achieve in their learning and development.

Centre staff work diligently to ensure that all children and their families have access to a wide range of services available. Staff provide outstanding support and guidance for families which are very much valued by those who receive it. Feedback from parents and carers confirms that the support from centre staff is outstanding. One volunteer, who originally did not want to come to the centre due to a lack of confidence, is now a volunteer and has enrolled onto a child care programme at the local college. The centre is a 'one stop shop' for users to gain support, advice and guidance from ante-natal, Jobcentre Plus, Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), speech and language therapists through to training opportunities and certificated courses. Centre staff work effectively with other relevant professionals and agencies to support children and their families referred to the centre, who are facing temporary or major challenges in their lives. Such joint working is helping to reduce the numbers of children placed on the child protection register and ensuring vulnerable families have multi-agency support for as long as they need it. One family stated that without the children's centre there would have been no hope of getting their children back from being looked after and this support was invaluable.

One mother stated that, 'Without the centre my whole world would have fallen apart

and I would have lost my beautiful girls into care. It has given me hope, strength and knowledge'.

Partners, such as those from the voluntary sector, health and social care, are positive about the work that they do at the centre and state that this partnership working is making a difference to the lives of children and families in the local community. The centre offers a crèche facility to support a 'time for me' service where parents and carers can have time away from their children to attend appointments, training or to have a break from childcare in times of stress.

The range of activities provided at the centre is good. These ensure productive, enjoyable learning and development opportunities for children and families alike. For example, parents and children play together at an early breakfast club which is open before school begins. This session was developed by the centre to engage those families who were observed queuing up each morning at the school gates with their children. This is now a thriving group and discussions are taking place about how to further identify and engage this group. The centre gathers the views and satisfaction rates of parents and carers using the services regularly, but they would like more families to be involved in helping to determine what the centre provides. An active parents' forum is in place but lacks focus, training, support and guidance on how to challenge and drive changes within the centre to improve outcomes. Currently, their major role is making decisions about what activities are offered by the centre and they do not fully represent or consult with the community that they represent. Although engaging with many local families, the team has identified that there are still a number of hard-to-reach families not engaging with the centre.

The centre's current self-evaluation and supporting development plan lacks clarity and does not always have clear, specific and measurable targets set to raise the impact and development of services across the reach area. Through regular feedback from parents and carers, evaluation of individual activities and case studies staff are able to see what works within programmes and sessions. However, the use of data to evaluate and monitor these activities is not sufficient to set challenging targets for improvement. The advisory board, which is representative of partners and parents and carers, is currently passive. It has received no substantial training or development to successfully equip it to lead and challenge the centre to ensure that targets set are consistently met and evaluated thoroughly. Although equality and diversity is embedded in much of the staff practice and ethos, it is not systematically reviewed or monitored to ensure up-to-date practice is followed and address emerging issues, for example, the representation of men within the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the collection and use of data and other information to improve planning and target setting. Use this information to ensure needs are met and to secure a better understanding of the impact of work done, including the actions

to include underrepresented groups.

- Support the advisory board to improve their ability to evaluate and monitor the impact of the centre's work in meeting the needs of this community, particularly for the most vulnerable.
- Support the parents' forum to provide leadership and direction to help them work more effectively on improving the range and quality of activities.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for centre users are good. Activities, such as 'Baby Moves', encourage new parents to bond and touch their babies and parents report that their children respond well to this when tried at home. Physical activity is well promoted throughout the centre and the 'Golden Grin' campaign is having a positive impact on outcomes for dental health. Breastfeeding levels although currently low, are being more effectively promoted by all staff at the centre. Currently, no peer support group is in place but training has been completed and a group is expected to start shortly..

Parents and carers feel safe and they state the centre has 'a warm and good feel about it'. This, they say, is 'because you can trust the staff here'. Parents understand and follow the safeguarding procedures because they know they are in a place to help and protect them. This has resulted in many parents and carers engaging well with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and has helped to reduce the numbers of families identified as having greater needs. Early interventions are highly effective in preventing difficulties escalating and provide intensive support for children on child protection plans, looked-after children and those who engage in contact visits within the centre. Most programmes and activities are monitored and evaluated by the centre. However, the collection and analysis of data is not used systematically to monitor the effectiveness of activities in relation to user's outcomes.

The extent to which children enjoy and achieve is good and crèche and play and stay sessions are of good quality. The necessity for high quality play and early learning is well promoted during activities, such as Rhyme Time, and within the monitoring of children's development by the early years staff. Parents state that positive parenting courses have made them more aware of the need to read, talk and play with their children in a more meaningful way. Furthermore, parents are developing a clearer understanding about how to support their child's speech and language development due to a number of initiatives supported by the centre staff through the speech and language team. Children are well prepared for the transition to school due to close links and an intensive course provided over the summer to prepare children for school.

Many parents, carers and members of the extended family are actively engaged in the parents' forum which meets once a fortnight to review the development of the centre. However, this group lacks training, leadership and management and does not

fully represent the views of the local community or challenge targets and direction. No terms of reference are available and the group currently sees its responsibility as identifying activities for the centre.

Through the provision of advice and guidance users develop a secure understanding of their welfare rights and learn positive strategies to improve their financial stability. Parents and carers state that their involvement in learning programmes positively impacts on their self-confidence and willingness to seek further education and employment. Examples were given of users supported to return to work.

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	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre meets its core offer well. The centre has set procedures for assessing the needs of children, parents and families. The centre provides useful, easily accessible literature and information about services, public health guidance and events. Information about domestic violence help-lines and sexual health promotions are displayed throughout the centre. Learning and development sessions and activities are of good quality with good engagement of users to help families progress in their lives.

Close liaison between children's social care, health services, schools and nurseries provide a secure bridge between support and formal services. Referral pathways for family support ensure the assessment process is effective in ensuring families receive tailored packages of care applicable to every member of the family. All services offered in the centre keep users safe. The centre's good quality relationships with families and their children allow staff to identify any safety concerns within families and intervene appropriately.

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre is outstanding. Support for users' well-being is particularly good and families report that their lives have improved because of the centre's tailored work. The staff support

some very vulnerable families extremely well. For example, families with children in foster care have been very sensitively supported to rebuild relationships. This has reunited some children with their parents. Staff continue to work with families on and off-site to help them to sustain these relationships. A very good quality behaviour management course with strong support from sensitive centre staff has improved relationships, behaviour and home safety for users and their children. Professionals, parents and carers express the view that parents would value more parenting courses being organised. The centre is trying hard to engage the population in the reach area, but they are aware that more needs to be done to bring families from the hardest-to-reach areas to the centre despite the work of the parent engagement worker.

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	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

All staff are supported through a coordinated approach to training and development. Regular supervision ensures centre staff carry out their work effectively. All staff are checked for their suitability to work with children and vulnerable adults, and activities are suitably risk assessed. Staff regularly contribute to the centre's self-evaluation and future planning. Analysis of the needs of the wider community is not fully effective and although plans have priorities for improvement, they hold few smart targets and very limited resource information. Accurate evaluation and monitoring of the impact of corresponding actions is difficult for managers, the advisory board and the local authority. This has been recognised by the local authority senior managers and actions are being taken to address the way development plans are written. However, it is too early to see any impact of these measures.

Governance arrangements are not yet fully established and there have been many new changes set in place. The local authority is beginning to provide robust challenges to the operational managers, through the annual conversation and performance audits. The advisory board is representative of partners and parents and carers. This group is currently passive and members stated that they did not fully understand their role. It has received no substantial training or development to successfully equip it to lead and challenge the centre. However, this board has committed individuals on it who want to take up this challenge with further support and guidance.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Staff report that it is embedded in all their practices. However, there is no systematic or detailed review of equality and diversity by either staff or the advisory board. Although some men do attend sessions at the centre, they are not represented well on either the advisory board or parents' forum. Currently, there are no targets or strategies in place to recruit or engage further with fathers/partners and no evaluation has been undertaken as to why they choose to attend certain activities. Fathers have met previously for agreed Saturday events but these are not currently promoted or advertised in the centre and attendance is poor. The centre is facing many challenges due to the current economic climate and despite some good outcomes the areas for further improvement in leadership and management reflect that the centre is providing 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	3
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 the Moorhouse Children's Centre on 29-30 March 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. It provides some good support to you and your families, in particular, in the way it helps you to lead healthy lives and achieve both educationally and personally. We visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and had discussions with some of you and some professionals.

The centre has many strengths, including the actions taken to support you and your children's safety and well-being and the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support offered by all staff who work with you and your children. The centre is working with many organisations such as schools, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) health and social care professionals to improve the range of services that are available to you. These partnerships are helping many families and children, particularly those who are most disadvantaged, to have a better start in life. Parents and carers have given us many examples of how the centre has helped them to gain confidence and build up good parenting skills.

The centre offers a good range of programmes and activities, including those aimed at improving the health of people in your area. The recent 'Baby moves' programmes are helping mums to bond and play with their babies. Future mums can now book in with the midwife at the centre. There is plenty of advice and support available at the centre on debt management from the CAB and on how to stop smoking.

Parents who spoke to us describe the centre as providing a safe and welcoming environment, they are confident that their children will be secure and well cared for. Some parents explained just how important the centre is in their and their family's lives. They told us that staff listen to them and help them to get the right help and support. We found that the centre was excellent in helping families at times in their lives when they most need it. The support is provided quickly and professionals and others work closely together to support both families and children.

The centre makes sure that they check whether you have enjoyed any courses or sessions in the centre and they make changes in response to your comments. Those of you who take part in courses like 'Rhyme Time' say how good it is in helping you

understand your children's development, in building confidence and self-esteem and in helping you to develop good relationships with your children.

The centre is respected in the local community because of the leadership from the manager and her team. Parents and carers told us how much they value them all individually. The manager knows that there needs to be a stronger advisory board and will be looking at ways to broaden and strengthen it. The parents' forum is thriving, but needs more support in knowing what direction it needs to travel to represent fully all of the community. The manager knows that she needs to make the centre even better by making sure that she has better information on the difference that the centre is making in families' and children's lives. She and her team want to use this information to plan for more activities and also to ensure that even more people can access the good range of activities that the centre provides.

Thank you to everybody who took time to speak to us, we are very grateful and wish you every success for the future.

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