

Inspection report for Owlet Children's Centre & Family Centre

Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	365711
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Elaine Clinton HMI

Centre governance	Bradford Local Authority
Centre leader	Richard Holderness/Rachel Holden-Rowley
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Owlet Road Shipley Bradford BD18 2JG
Telephone number	01274 436600
Fax number	01274 530879
Email address	Richard.holderness@bradford.gov.uk Rachel.holden-rowley@bradford.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	N/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY337040 Sure Start Shipley

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.

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meeting with parents and carers, the extended services coordinator, the two area family support managers, members of staff and the advisory board, headteachers, partners and local authority officers linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work, both in the setting and at outreach centres, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Owlet Children's Centre has its origins in a Sure Start local programme. It became a phase one children's centre in 2006, providing the full core offer. Day-to-day management of the centre is the responsibility of the extended services coordinator who took up her post in May 2010. Two area family support managers, working as job share partners, have overall responsibility for the children's centre and the co-located family centre. The centre has its own advisory board which is made up of representatives from the local community, parents and carers, and voluntary and statutory providers. Governance of the centre moved to the local authority two years ago. In the last year, the centre's budget has been reduced and staff numbers have decreased.

Following the opening of Frizinghall Children's Centre in 2010, the centre's reach area was redefined; in consequence the centre now serves a predominately White British population, with some smaller South Asian communities. In the last two years, there has been an increase in the number of Eastern European families moving into the area. The centre serves a community of contrasts and includes a significant number of families who experience high levels of social and economic disadvantage, many of whom are in the top 30% of the most deprived wards in the country. Unemployment is high in many parts of the reach area and many of the available jobs are low paid. Evidence indicates that the skills and knowledge many children enter early education and childcare with are lower than those expected for their age.

A range of integrated services run from the centre, including health, adult education, support for teenage parents and family support. The centre's childcare is provided by Sure Start Shipley and managed by Children's Place. The nursery is registered to care for 70 children and was last inspected in December 2010. The findings of the report can be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

Owlet Children's Centre provides a very friendly, accessible and extremely safe environment for all its users. Throughout the inspection users spoke of how the centre has helped them to improve their lives. Typical views expressed by users are, 'they have opened doors for me, they are unbelievable', and 'the centre support has given me a sense of direction and self-worth'.

The extended services and the two area family support managers are enabling staff to perform and achieve highly at a time of significant change and uncertainty. The centre benefits well from the combined expertise of the two area family support managers, who make excellent use of their strengths to ensure that the centre provides exceptional value for money through sustainable working and excellent use of all available resources. The extended services coordinator uses her leadership skills to good effect. In the time she has been in post she has focussed on the audit and development of services in a structured way to further develop provision. In doing this she has included staff particularly well, ensuring that morale and enthusiasm are high. At the heart of this development is engagement with a range of partners and users to ensure that needs are being met, combined with a clear understanding of the importance of data to develop provision, set clear targets and measure the impact of services. These factors, along with careful self-evaluation procedures that take into account national indicators, demonstrate good capacity to improve.

The children's centre is committed to ensuring that development of the provision is increasingly influenced by the local community. To support this, leaders have

recently worked with a national research organisation to develop more effective ways of capturing feedback and ideas to further improve the provision. They are also committed to ensuring that the parents' forum is refocused and increasingly plays a significant part in the development of services. Data collection is well established, but the resulting analysis does not enable the centre to fully measure the impact it has. Planning is not, therefore, fully coordinated and ambitious targets are not agreed by the advisory board or used to challenge the centre managers to achieve highly. Senior managers have identified that the collection of information on the impact of specific centre-based activities, such as 'Cook and Eat' will provide a stronger foundation from which to drive improvements; leaders are implementing this initiative with pace.

Outstanding work has been established with teenage parents to develop parenting and nurturing skills, literacy and numeracy, and healthy living and cooking skills. Many of these parents are successfully progressing into full and part-time further and higher education and employment. The location of this group in a local community centre helps the parents to feel at home and they enjoy the use of the facilities available.

Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. An integrated approach and excellent knowledge of the Common Assessment Framework ensure that services are well targeted. Vulnerable families are identified at an early stage, and careful assessment of their needs is ensuring that they receive high-quality support from very effective family support workers. The centre's particularly flexible approach to service delivery, very strong outreach work and careful assessment of need is ensuring that there is an excellent range of accessible provision for families in the reach area and beyond.

Equality and diversity are promoted well, with well-established systems in place to identify and tackle any discrimination. Centre users comment on how non-judgmental centre staff are and how, 'Even when you have not been the best parent in the world, they see the best in you and help you to turn the corner'.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the role of the advisory board to enable it to play an increased role in shaping provision, in particular through the use of more robust performance management procedures.
- Further improve outcomes for families by:
 - routinely collecting and analysing data and other information about centre users
 - ensuring that targets set are ambitious, specific, measurable and focused on improving outcomes
 - regularly and systematically reviewing the impact of services through the use of comparative information and data.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

A wide range of activities across the reach area are promoting healthy lifestyles, and supporting parents and carers and their children to develop emotional, social and intellectual skills. Staff work closely with partners to ensure that the range of provision meets the needs of families and the priorities for the area. The appointment of a linked health visitor in the last year has helped significantly in this. Activities, such as 'Mini Music Makers' at the local library provide an excellent opportunity for parents and carers, their children and other community members to engage easily in a thoroughly enjoyable singing, dancing and movement session. The pleasure gained from these sessions is evident from the enthusiasm with which all participate, including some without children. The location of the session carefully introduces parents and carers to the library facilities. Other health related activities, include a walking group, 'Mini Movers' and 'Cook and Eat'; all are well attended, although the impact on families is not fully captured and evaluated. There is a high take-up of vaccinations in the locality and the percentage of obese children in Reception classes is reducing. The incidence of breastfeeding is well below the national average and the number of pregnant women who are smokers is much higher than the national average; these remain priorities for the centre.

The area has a high rate for teenage pregnancies and a particularly effective focus for the centre is its work with young parents. A wide range of integrated provision supports these parents particularly well. The extensive range of programmes on offer recognises the importance for these parents to have time to themselves. Wednesday football evenings provide fathers with just this opportunity, as do the well managed crèches that are available while courses are taking place. As one parent said: 'This group has been my lifeline, it has given me confidence not only with my child, but also in myself, I now know that I have not wasted my life'.

Users have every confidence in the centre being a safe and welcoming place. A highly effective 'team around the child' approach ensures that those subject to a child protection plan or Common Assessment Framework process are extremely well supported. Regular team meetings and ongoing liaison with parents and carers and partners, result in prompt intervention and support. This often reduces the need for more intensive social work support. Information from case studies and parents and carers about children who are subject to a child protection plan illustrates that, as a result of excellent and ongoing support through the centre, children's safety is enhanced. Similarly, there is significant evidence that parents and carers and children are developing a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and reduce risk.

Data from the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage for children in the reach area show that they are making satisfactory progress by the time they reach the end of Year 1. The latest data show an improvement in attainment by the lowest 20% in the reach area. The Parental Involvement and Children's Centres Programme is beginning to have an impact in supporting the most vulnerable children to settle in at

school.

Behaviour is exemplary. All staff are excellent role models for parents and carers, for example, the staff in reception demonstrate consistently exemplary behaviour. On the very few occasions when behaviour is less good, firm but sensitive action and support is provided. Parents are increasingly gaining confidence in sharing ideas about activities that can be offered and improvements that can be made. They readily share these ideas either individually or through the advisory group. As one parent said: 'I know that they really listen to what I have to say, they changed the use of a room so that it is more suitable for older children'. Leaders recognise the importance of increasing these opportunities through reinvigorating the parents' forum and making even better use of feedback. Leaders are currently acting on the outcomes from a national research organisation on how to improve the ways feedback is collected.

Through the centre's established links with Jobcentre Plus, parents and carers are able to get good help and advice on a range of matters, such as income and welfare benefits and employment opportunities. Skills that will enable them to progress in the future are developed through the wide range of provision that the centre offers. Volunteers are supported to gain level 2 and 3 qualifications, although the centre recognises that there remains scope to increase adult involvement in education and training.

These are the grades for 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	1
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	2
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 offers an excellent range of well-coordinated activities across the reach area. Outreach provision is thoughtfully located and is particularly effective in engaging increasing numbers of users because it provides a range of activities in very local communities. Managers are very careful to ensure that families access the

full benefit of the centre's services through well-attended family fun days, which are used to inform parents and carers of all the activities available. Many parents commented on 'the wonderful range of courses across the community,' and 'even if there is not a group running we can still come to the centre and use the facilities, it provides an island in the sun on the really bad days'. The most vulnerable families are well supported by staff to come to the centre. Parents are trained in the use of the sensory room so that they can use it independently when they wish; it is also readily available to other groups, such as childminders, to maximise the use of this excellent facility.

The needs of vulnerable families referred to the centre are assessed effectively and support is well organised across agencies. The Common Assessment Framework process is used particularly well to ensure that engagement with relevant agencies is prompt and effective. The centre carefully assesses and reviews the needs of all users and consults with groups as to where to target further provision. Individuals requesting specific help or guidance receive this promptly, and this may include attending other centres in the area. In all sessions, staff continually ensure that activities are interesting and relevant to users' lives. For example, children and parents engage in messy play while staff provide useful ideas on how this activity can be carried out at home in a confined space. Bilingual staff and expert translators support parents at interviews and other activities.

The quality of care for parents and their children is good. Families in crisis or facing particular challenges are supported particularly well. Family support workers from the family centre and the children's centre work together seamlessly to provide high-quality support. Staff respond swiftly and professionally, resulting in positive outcomes not only for the family but for wider community cohesion. As one user reported, 'if they hadn't acted as they did, and done it so quickly, me and my family might not be here today'. Support for users' well-being is a high priority and families report that their lives are better for having the specific help they need, particularly at low points in their lives.

Users are provided with good opportunities to improve their educational and personal development through training and volunteering. The centre recognises that it needs to do more to promote these opportunities to all parents and carers. Personal learning is celebrated well through special events and displays which recognise the successes of users. Teenage parents are supported particularly well to move onto further learning and employment through a well planned range of courses and activities that provide carefully thought out progression opportunities. Initial courses help these parents to gain confidence and communication skills, with later courses such as the Steps programme, helping them to move into employment through a range of taster and volunteering activities.

These are the grades for 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	1
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?

2

Since her appointment the extended services coordinator has had a significant impact on the range and quality of provision at the centre. Staff, parents, carers and partners talk about her 'determination to ensure the highest quality services'. Senior leaders have particularly high expectations of their staff, and the two area family support managers work together seamlessly to ensure consistent and clear messages. Partners and parents report on their 'really effective collaborative working; you can start a conversation with one of them, continue it with the other, and it is like talking to the same person'. The openness and friendliness with which staff work together is extended to the families who use the centre and reflect a real commitment to promoting equality and diversity. Effective performance management arrangements are in place to hold staff accountable for their work. Targets are set by the leaders and the local authority to drive improvement, and these are suitably based on an accurate evaluation of the centre's main priorities for improvement. However, many of the targets lack clear milestones or systematically measurable means of evaluating success. The advisory board is well informed of the progress and issues affecting the centre, but is not provided with sufficient detailed information on outcomes or impact of services. As a consequence, they are not able to provide robust challenge to the senior management team.

Governance of the centre is strong and the local authority provides the centre with good, consistent support. Projects are evaluated carefully by seeking the views of users formally and informally. Senior leaders are determined to ensure that the centre is sustainable and the resources used by the whole community it serves. Resources are managed very efficiently and creatively; occupancy is high. The centre provides excellent value for money.

The inclusion of children and families is at the heart of the work of centre. Positive images and carefully developed programmes demonstrate the centre's commitment to reaching out to the most vulnerable and isolated groups. Examples of this include the programmes for teenage mothers, tailored programmes to support the most vulnerable children to settle well into school and the recently developed home-visiting service for pre-school children with learning difficulties and /or disabilities.

Safeguarding arrangements reflect excellent practice, with a central list of information that can be easily accessed and used. Child protection arrangements are

well known and staff are extremely confident to use them. Outreach work with the most vulnerable in the community is sensitive and particularly effective. Policies and procedures to ensure the protection of children and other centre users are extremely well embedded so that people say they feel very safe. Intervention strategies are highly effective, ensuring prompt and high-quality multi-agency support. Outcomes for the most vulnerable children are improving

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	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
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	2

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

The outcomes for the children who attend the Sure Start Shipley private nursery provision linked with the centre were not inspected. However, the most recent Ofsted report for this provider was used as background information.

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 Owlet Children's Centre on 30 and 31 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank all of you who made us feel so welcome and took the time to talk with us during meetings or activities. We listened very carefully to what you told us and included your comments when we made judgements about your centre. Your comments were very helpful.

We decided that your children's centre provides a very wide range of services that are helping children and families in Shipley. Throughout the inspection we were constantly told by children and parents of the difference that the centre was making to them. One of excellent activities that we heard about was the teenage parents group and the help it is giving them to improve confidence and also to get qualifications. We know that dads really enjoy the Wednesday football and the Saturday activities that take place across Shipley.

I particularly enjoyed attending the 'Mini Music Makers' at the local library, I was really impressed with your enthusiasm and your knowledge of all the rhymes and songs. I even learnt some new verses for 'Row, row, row your boat' which I will use with my nieces and nephews.

We were very impressed by the way that the centre ensures that you are safe both at the centre and at home, through the checks it makes on visitors to the centre and through the information it provides for you on home safety. We also think that the way that the centre uses its staff and rooms is excellent, making sure that really good use is made of the money it receives.

The team that leads the centre is very motivated. Leaders know exactly what they want to do to ensure the centre continues to improve. They are very keen for you to be even more involved in this and are looking at the best ways to achieve this.

The centre provides many good opportunities for new parents to receive helpful information and advice about how to manage children's behaviour, weaning and healthy eating. The centre supports those of you who want to move into employment through its links with Jobcentre Plus, as well as providing many of you with opportunities to work as a volunteer at the centre.

We have asked the centre and Bradford Local Authority to do two things to make the centre even better. Firstly, we want them to look more closely at how the centre can improve by using information to help it plan services to meet your needs. Secondly, the advisory board needs enough information so that its members can monitor the progress that the centre is making and make sure that the centre sets targets that challenge it to continue to improve.

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