

Inspection report for Chestnut Children's Centre

Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	375478
Inspection dates	14 – 15 April 2011
Reporting inspector	Gillian Bishop HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY310307 Chestnut Day Care

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.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the senior leadership team; representatives from the local authority; representatives from the advisory board and health services; frontline workers; representatives from local community organisations and partner agencies; representatives from local schools and day care providers and parents and other users of the centre's facilities.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Chestnut Children's Centre is a phase one centre, designated in 2005 and which derived from a Sure Start Local Programme. The centre's reach area includes Brackenhall, Deighton, Sheepridge East Fartown and Bradley. The centre serves a community which experiences high levels of child poverty, unemployment and crime. The children's centre is located within the multi-agency Chestnut Centre that also houses a library and information centre, Youth on the Hill Youth Forum, Neighbourhood Policing Team, Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing, Chestnut Cafe, Castle and Minster Credit Union. The Chestnut Day Care, which provides the affiliated childcare, is also co-located.

The reach population has 36% of children aged under five years living in households dependent on workless benefits. This compares to a Kirklees average of 19%. The centre serves a community that is ranked within the top 30% of the most deprived areas in the country although eight of the ten super output areas are within the 10% most disadvantaged, and four, are within the lowest five per cent. Most children

enter childcare and early education with a narrower range of skills and abilities than those expected for their age, particularly in their communication language and literacy and social skills.

The children's centre reach area is culturally very diverse with the largest populations from a White, mixed White and Black Caribbean heritage and Pakistani heritage. Other than English, the most common languages known to be used within the community are Urdu, Polish, Punjabi, Kurdish and Arabic. The reach area also has the highest number of asylum seekers in Kirklees.

Governance is provided by the local authority and there is an advisory board with representatives from the children's centre, local elected councillors, school, local authority, partner agencies and the voluntary sector. Parents and centre users are also represented on the board. A multi-agency team, which includes health visitors, midwife, outreach and family support workers, Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) and Jobcentre Plus provide services from the children's centre and some are based on site.

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

'I don't know where I would be without it' confirms how parents feel about the Chestnut Children's Centre. The centre is recognised as the hub of a large community and for many, it is known as the 'one stop shop experience' due to the range of health, welfare, social amenities and advice services available. Parents and carers value the centre as a safe, welcoming and friendly place to be, hence why the community café and library are alive with constant activity. The centre promotes a sense of warmth and well-being, which is inviting to all families and once engaged, parents, carers and children make great strides in their independence, learning and ability to make sustained and positive changes in their lives. This, coupled with the concerted support from centre staff and the cohesive range of provision across multi-agency teams and organisations, ensures outcomes for families are good and

strongly improving.

Safeguarding arrangements are strong due to robust policies and procedures, which are understood by staff, partners, parents, and carers. Procedures for the recruitment and vetting for all centre staff are secure and service level agreements with partner agencies ensure the suitability of all those whom families come into contact. Intervention and prevention work with families in crisis or at risk, is open and transparent ensuring statutory duties are clearly understood, and used as a bridge between formal and informal services. This, alongside the effective implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), ensures assessment of need is thorough and effective in preventing difficulties escalating.

Provision is good overall, although the centre provides outstanding care, guidance and support. The wealth of excellent information and literature combined with sensitive encouragement and 'hand holding' has enabled many parents to improve and sustain better life chances and secure high aspirations for both themselves and their children. 'This place has changed my life', 'I never knew I could feel so good by going back to learning', 'My confidence is sky high' are typical comments from parents. The centre has created a fully inclusive environment with a combination of universal, targeted, and outreach services, which meet a wide range of needs and tackle health inequalities. However, whilst the number of registrations to the centre is high, gaps in staffing have led to a delay in developing outreach services to the wider community, inhibiting access by more families.

Collaboration with Jobcentre Plus, Fresh Horizons, Kirklees College and other adult education services are well developed ensuring all centre users have good access to information about training and employment opportunities. However, the impact of some of these services in supporting participants into education, employment or achieving qualifications is sometimes unclear because data collated only capture a partial picture and not the full impact. Similarly, the availability and take up of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes and outcomes for some health promotions are not systematically collated.

Leadership and management of the centre are strong across all levels. The children's centre manager, although relatively new to post, is highly regarded for her professionalism, efficiency and the consistency in which she communicates with the full range of partners. Equally, the local authority works in partnership with centre leaders and the advisory board to provide good and improving quality performance management. Consultation processes with users are good due to the well-established Family Forum and parent representatives on the advisory board, enabling leaders to capture a range of views and evaluate service delivery. Centre leaders, the local authority and the advisory board have a firm understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement, hence the accuracy of their self-evaluation, their drive to create sustainable provision and the centre's good capacity for further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to develop and match services to unmet needs by increasing the engagement of families in the wider community and improving the availability of ESOL classes.
- Work with all children's centre partners to consistently capture, evaluate and measure the full impact of the centres work.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for parents, carers and children are good. Cook and Eat classes, access to the community garden and opportunities for growing vegetables ensure adults and children develop a positive attitude to healthy living and this is reflected in a steady decrease in local obesity levels. Parents accessing the One Stop Shop, baby and midwife drop in clinics state they benefit from swift advice about childhood illness, ante-natal concerns and practical guidance about poor sleep patterns and current weaning practices. Subsequently, parents feel reassured and more confident in their parenting skills. Targeted services such as the 'Contraception and Sexual Health' clinic are helping to address high conception rates in the area and the successful Baby Café is encouraging the prevalence of breastfeeding without which, mothers state they are more likely to give up. Overall centre data indicate an upward trend against most of the national health indicators although data are not always collated to show the impact of signposting to some additional health services, such as smoking cessation.

Parents state they feel 'emotionally stronger' and they have improved relationships with their children due to their participation on the Parent Pals course. Comments such as 'I'm so much calmer with my children' and 'I really enjoy playing with them now' confirm the positive outcomes for these families. A significant number of families have accessed the Safe at Home scheme, which has helped to reduce the risk of accidental injuries to children. Centre users state feel 'exceptionally safe and protected' in the centre and those who have completed CAF training report an increased willingness to engage with the process. Early intervention pathways are effective in preventing difficulties escalating and in providing intensive support for children on child protection plans and for families in high risk circumstances. Consequently, centre data indicate a substantial reduction in the incidents of domestic violence. Where specialist services have been employed to support very vulnerable women in pregnancy, there is significant evidence to show that families have remained together despite the potential for newborn infants to be received into care.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provision within the centre and that of the registered childcare is good. Despite their low starting points in learning, children who access centre services make good progress due to the high quality learning environment, the successful implementation of the Child's Journey programme and the systematic support and guidance from children's centre teachers and speech and language therapists. Consequently, centre data confirm a year on year improvement in children's educational achievements, which ensures they are better prepared for the transition to school. Babies into Books, Lets Talk workshops and the Speech and Language Clinic are having a positive impact on children's early communication and language skills. Equally, these interventions have heightened parent's awareness of how to support learning through everyday play experiences. Thus, parents are frequently reading books to their children and loaning them routinely from the library. The intensity of this work and thoughtfully adapted play environments ensure that outcomes for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities attending the centre or receiving family support are also good.

Regular satisfaction surveys, activity evaluations and the contributions of the Family Forum provide the centre users with a voice and an opportunity to influence and shape service provision. This work has commenced with a poignant mission statement written by the group and progressed to a key role in planning a parade and music workshop for the forthcoming Deighton Carnival. Parents who previously described themselves as 'very shy, lacking in confidence and self-esteem' are now bursting with a renewed sense of purpose in their newly accomplished role on the advisory board. They describe how collectively they have a 'bigger voice' and they are busy planning their agenda for their 'residential team building' session. Parents previously intimidated by a professional environment are now actively debating how services should look in the future and they love it every minute of it!

Many parents have attended the Moneywise programme, received financial advice from CAB and information about current changes to the universal benefit system from Jobcentre Plus. This they say, has helped them to understand how changes may affect them and what to do about it. Parents and carers state they have embraced the benefits of joining the Castle and Minister Credit Union because this is encouraging their children to improve their own economic stability by opening a saving account and to avoid debt in the future. Centre users engaged in Key 2 Work and the Step Up Training acquire work-based skills and experience which has supported them into employment, learning and volunteering or provided valuable opportunities for them to gain basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Comments such as 'I feel as if I could anything now', 'I'm so excited about what I might do next' and 'I just want to work in a place like this' are characteristic of the aspirations many of these centre users now have.

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
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The extent to which children are safe and protected, and 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	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre has firmly established procedures for assessing and prioritising families' needs and secure referral pathways across a range of multi-agency teams compliment this. Co-location and strong relationships with health professionals ensure families are registered with the centre soon after birth if not earlier. As a result, interventions are swift, particularly for families on the higher tier of need. In addition, the re-structuring of family support has led to a more bespoke provision for those requiring intensive and individual support within the home and for those who can be supported within activities at the centre. The care, guidance and support parents and carers receive are outstanding. The wealth of advisory literature, excellent levels of personal care and attention, which include collection from home, friendly text messaging and help to attend and coordinate medical appointments, empower parents to initiate and sustain significant changes in their life. 'I'm so organised now, I'm a better parent and I can do so much more for myself'. This comment replicates the views of many.

An increasing range of data provided by the local authority and the Primary Care Trust provides the centre with a secure profile of this diverse and transient community. Data are effectively used to develop a good range of services which meet a range of needs and which successfully engage families who are particularly vulnerable. For example, a highly specialist midwife service combined with the Eden Project provides a 'one stop sanctuary' of maternal support to women who are especially at risk. These women benefit from access to a specialist midwife and other medical services, guidance about substance misuse and sexual health - at one time and under one roof. This, they say, encourages them to access appointments, which they might not necessarily attend.

A particular strength of the centre is the intensive support for families experiencing domestic violence. In many cases, CAF's and child in need plans have led to intensive and tailored packages of support, which include referral to the 'Sanctuary Scheme', funded childcare through the You and Two project and progression to Parent Pals and other adult learning and training. As parents state, 'there is something for everybody'. However, centre staff are aware that they must not be complacent as

there are still families within more distant locations who have yet to access the centre. Consequently, they have established a Stay and Play within St Thomas' Primary School in order to widen their reach and this has proved to be very successful. The recruitment of staff to vacant posts has been delayed due to restricted recruitment drives by the local authority, preventing a more concerted development of outreach services. However, steps to address this are due to be implemented.

The One Stop Information Shop and Baby Clinic provide access to health visitors, CAB and a Stay and Play session to which participation rates are high. Services are flexible to need, hence the evening group for young parents and the extended opening hours of the building. In addition, the co-location of health professionals, housing and police services ensure families can access services at any point in the day. The centre constantly reviews and evaluates services and makes necessary amendments to the activity programme where user needs change. For example, funding has been secured to re-launch a Teen Parents Group to support them into learning and a 'Getting to know You' consultation has already taken place.

Once engaged, parents and carers make good gains in their learning, often progressing from courses such as Parent Pals to accredited courses such as Level 2 Food Safety, paediatric first aid and EDCL Information Technology courses. Fresh Horizons provide further opportunities for personal development through the Youth on the Hill Youth Forum and volunteering scheme. The availability of a crèche and the good take up of childcare places support the retention and completion of these courses by most the participants. In addition, good support and training for local childminders ensure a steady increase in the number of childminders gaining a good inspection outcome. The cultural and linguistic needs of the reach population are extremely diverse, however, the community's full engagement and contribution is supported by means of interpreters, translated literature and pictorial guidance. Although the centre staff signpost parents and carers to ESOL classes provided by Kirklees College, access to ESOL in general is problematic and the college does not provide sufficient information to confirm who has benefited from this service over time.

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?

2

Leadership and management at all levels are good. The centre manager is highly organised, motivated and ambitious for the centre. Professional supervision is regular and systematic which has a positive impact on improving the skills of the workforce and the quality of services offered. The senior leadership team and the advisory board are strongly committed to raising the community's aspirations and personal and economic stability through focused, purposeful and well-targeted support, and good outcomes for centre users provide evidence of their success. Their knowledge of the local community, together with the firm challenge from parent representatives, ensures the community has a strong voice and an opportunity to influence services for the future.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and effective in promoting the safety and welfare of staff, centre users and families. Thorough risk assessments procedures exist and vigilant reception staff appropriately manage security within the multi-purpose building. Safeguarding policies and information leaflets are displayed around the building, reminding all centre users that the protection of children is everybody's responsibility. Staff receive high levels of specialist training which ensures they remain alert to worrying signs and are able to take proportionate action in relation to their concerns.

Equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are central to the centre's work; thus, services are designed to address a wide variety of needs such as worklessness, isolation and lifestyle and welfare issues. Systematic monitoring of attendances by fathers, young parents, children with disabilities, lone parents and minority and ethnic groups ensures the centre is well informed about how well services meet a broader range of needs.

The range, availability and quality of services are strengthened by many effective partnerships, which enhance the provision for families. The Deighton Brackenhall Initiative and Fresh Horizons are particularly prominent community associations and provide a unique range of social, enterprising and learning opportunities for centre users. Firm links with social care ensure services for those at greatest risk are intensified, and community health visitors and midwives ensure a cohesive range of universal and targeted health and maternal services, which families living a variety of lifestyles can benefit from. The building is extensively used and plans are in place to overcome gaps in staffing and further develop outreach services. This, coupled with effective financial management, ensures the centre provides good value for money.

Service evaluations in the main are of good quality and include an impact summary to demonstrate the difference it makes to the community and its population. All stakeholders contribute to self evaluation process and the advisory board holds the centre to account by investigating and challenging service improvement plans before agreeing to support them. Earlier service plans have provided a clear strategic steer for service delivery but they have not always been routed in ambitious and challenging targets which to some degree, has prevented the centre from demonstrating the full impact of its work. Although the business and service plans for

the forthcoming year are still work in progress, they are more robust, include measurable and quantitative targets and are highly focused on an accurate analysis of local need.

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	2
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	2
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	2
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 Ofsted report Chestnut Day Care has been considered as part of this inspection. The setting was inspected at the same time as the children's centre and achieved a good outcome judgement.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Chestnut Children's Centre on 14-15 April 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for the lovely welcome and for being so willing to speak with inspectors during the inspection. Those of you we spoke to said that the centre provides you with a place of safety and enjoyment and lots of opportunities to improve your health, education and independence. We strongly agree with this, in fact we found the centre provides outstanding care, guidance and support. Comments such as, 'I'm a much better parent' and 'I honestly don't know where I would be without it' confirm how much you have benefited from the centre's work. We found that the centre is particularly good at knowing who is most in need and this is helping staff to provide the right kind of family support or a little bit of hand holding to help those initial nerves when trying something new. You told us that the centre is 'a place for everybody and a one-stop shop experience'. We agree with this too, because the centre caters well for lone parents, people out of work, disabled children, young parents and people who are particularly isolated or vulnerable. We also found that staff provide some very good support for families experiencing domestic violence. However, there are still people in the community who are yet to benefit from the centre's services. Therefore, we have asked leaders to develop some additional services in the wider community.

Staff know that people in the community come from a wide range of different backgrounds, cultures and religions and they speak lots of different languages. This is why they try to help you communicate and participate in all centre activities by providing interpreters, information in different languages and they point you in the direction of courses for English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). However, we found that access to these courses is sometimes problematic and the centre is not clear how many of you actually use them. Therefore, we have asked them to look into this.

You told us how much you enjoy Child's Journey workshops, Babies into Books courses and the Stay and Play sessions because these are helping you to help your children make good progress in their learning. We also found that parents and carers have many good opportunities to make equally good progress in their own personal learning journeys. For example, those of you who have completed the Parent Pals course told us how you have progressed to roles on the Family Forum and the advisory board and your increased confidence and self-esteem is helping you to play a key role in developing services for the future. Some of you are very busy planning activities for the Deighton Carnival and a team-building weekend, and you love every minute of your newfound roles.

The centre has provided information which confirms that you are leading better lifestyles because you are cooking and buying healthier food, ensuring your children have their immunisations and you are accessing services about sexual health. We know that the One Stop Shop, Baby Cafe and drop in baby and antenatal clinics are

very popular, which confirms that you are keen to get good advice from your health professionals. You told us that you feel safe in the centre because it's very secure and you have trusting relationships with the people who work with you. We also found that the centre has good safeguarding arrangements which you, staff and other agencies all understand.

All the parents and centre users we spoke to were impressed with the way in which the centre is managed and led. We agree with this too. Leaders work hard to provide a good range of opportunities that raise your aspirations, life chances, and good partnerships with other professionals and community associations, such as Fresh Horizons and Deighton Brackenhall Initiative, provide some additional learning opportunities and a pathway to work and volunteering. We found that the centre staff have good systems to monitor the services and activities to make sure they meet your needs. However, they do not always collect a full range of information to show the difference their work makes to your lives, so we have asked them to address this as an area for improvement.

Thank you for speaking with us and we wish you good luck in the future.

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