

Inspection report for Communityworks Children's Centre

Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	376259
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Lorraine Rowson-Clark HMI

Centre governance	Communityworks Board of Directors
Centre leader	Jane Lees
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY337227 Communityworks Nursery

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 early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, staff members, board members, members of the parent forum, nursery staff, partner agencies, users and local authority officers linked to the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Communityworks Children's Centre was originally developed as a community centre and achieved children's centre designation in 2006. As a phase one centre, Communityworks provides the full core offer, including health and education services. There is a day nursery on site offering full day-care, after-school and holiday provision. It is registered for 50 children aged under eight years, all of whom may be under five years of age. It operates from 8am–6pm Monday to Friday, 52 weeks of the year. The nursery has achieved the Inclusion Quality Standard gold award and the ICAN gold award. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge, skills and abilities well below those expected for their age, particularly in relation to communication, language and literacy.

The local housing is a mixture of mainly social and rented accommodation. The centre serves a mixed ethnic population with a growing South Asian community (63% Pakistani). Languages spoken within the community are English, Urdu, Punjabi, Pushtu, Arabic, Bengali, Polish, Amheric, Hindi, Hinko, Tamil and Teluga.

There are 1021 children aged under five years within the centre's reach area. Approximately 61.5% of families reside in one of the 10% most disadvantaged areas of the country and 99.7% live within the 20% most disadvantaged. The number of

workless households is higher than local and national averages. The average percentage of children living in workless households is 69.4%.

The centre is governed by an independent charity and company limited by guarantee with a board of directors. Membership of the board is made up of five local representatives, two centre users, three church members, one local authority member and one member from education.

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

‘Everyone is so nice and helpful here’, typifies comments expressed by users and helps to explain why Communityworks is a good and improving centre. Some of its features are outstanding. The quality of the provision is a result of the commitment of the leadership team, staff and the board of directors who are determined to make the centre as good as it can be. Staff support each other well and show great respect for all users and visitors to the centre. As one user commented, ‘The staff here don’t look down on you, whoever you are; they all make you feel worthwhile’. Good partnership working results in effective transfer of information to ensure the needs of users are well met.

Outcomes for users are good; the centre is particularly effective in helping children develop positive relationships and in promoting users’ contribution to the governance and decision making of the centre. There are many strategies in place to support families in leading healthy lifestyles and these are having positive effects on children’s health, for example, children enjoying eating a healthy diet and joining in physical activities. However, data show that these are not sustained as obesity rates in the Reception Year remain high.

Adults and children are enjoying and achieving in many respects. Children and their parents and carers engage in a wide range of learning opportunities and are becoming confident in their learning and development. The on-site nursery has undergone a period of significant change and development in the last year, including the appointment of a new manager and the centre’s leadership team is beginning to

consider how to secure further improvement in outcomes. Children are progressing well, although the centre has not yet established strong links with all schools in the area in order to fully support children's transition to school and track the progress and achievement of those who have accessed the centre's services.

The centre is effective in keeping users safe and protected while in the centre. Through effective training and development of all staff and members of the board of directors, safeguarding is given a high priority and families receive excellent quality care, guidance and support. This is because the centre staff and partner agencies work well together to ensure that families, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, benefit from a wide range of good quality services that meets their particular needs very well. Staff signpost adult users to appropriate agencies for help and advice on many issues, such as debt and housing. Adults are also encouraged to access appropriate training to help them gain qualifications to improve their employment prospects. As a result, a small number have embarked on long-term training and have successfully secured employment or are undertaking higher education courses to degree level.

The centre is fully inclusive of all members of the community and staff show great understanding and respect, valuing difference and celebrating diversity. The range and quality of the provision on offer meets the needs of users exceptionally well and ensures that all members of the community, including the elderly, benefit from the services on offer.

Opportunities for parents, carers and children to express their views include feedback forms, the parent forum, the 'wish tree' and discussions with staff. Parents and carers are actively involved in decision making through membership of the parent forum and the centre's sub-committee, which also includes partner agency representatives and members of the local community. The management team is effectively challenged and supported to ensure the centre continually develops and improves in order to meet changing local needs.

Despite recent significant and challenging staffing changes, the centre has now established a stable leadership team to supervise the work of the centre, although this team has had little time to fully embed their working relationships. Self-evaluation and detailed data help the centre assess what is being done well, what could be improved further and evaluate the effectiveness of activities on outcomes. The centre's high quality provision and services meet user needs very well, despite large numbers of disadvantaged children in the reach area. However, it is not clear if, in future, the centre will have sufficient resources to enable them to continue to successfully target the priorities set by the Children's Trust Board. The management team has high aspirations and has set ambitious targets, with clearly defined success criteria and timescales, for the continued development of services. Good progress has been made to increase the number of registered users and improve services in response to need. This, together with the staff's commitment to improving the life chances of families in their community and the good leadership and management, demonstrates the centre's good capacity to improve further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Consolidate the new leadership and management relationships within the centre and nursery in order to continue to drive improvement and deliver better outcomes for all.
- Strengthen further the partnerships with local schools to enhance transition arrangements and track children's progress over time in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The centre provides a wide range of activities which are developed well in partnership with other agencies and professionals. Parents and children benefit from the health initiatives on offer and are developing a good awareness of adopting healthy lifestyles. Cookery classes and physical activities are very well attended and these are having a positive impact on improving the health of families. One parent commented, 'I really enjoyed the cooking course and use the recipes at home. I now cook more healthily for my children.' However, while many parents report that their children enjoy eating healthily, this is not sustained over time as data show that obesity rates in Reception Year remain high. However, because partnerships with some schools are not yet fully developed, the centre is not able to work with schools to support families in continuing with the healthy eating initiatives learned in the centre.

The centre is effective in ensuring that users keep themselves safe and free from harm and children's safety in the home is improving. The wide range of preventative measures and advice, including access to home safety equipment and training on home safety, ensure adults understand their responsibility for the ongoing safety of their children. Staff model safe practices well and the centre is a safe and welcoming place to be due to the vigilance of all adults and the completion of risk assessments of the building and activities. Effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensures that vulnerable families are supported well which helps to prevent situations reaching crisis point. Those children subject to a child protection plan receive carefully planned and cohesive services provided through effective partnership working.

There are many opportunities for parents, carers and children to play and learn together. Consequently, parents and carers are developing their knowledge of how children learn. Parents report that they, 'now know how to help their children play and learn at home'. The on-site nursery is well resourced and children actively engage in a range of stimulating activities, both indoors and outdoors. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Children with

speech and language delay and special educational needs and/or disabilities are given additional support through the speech and language therapist and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and all children are making good progress from their starting points. However, data show that the Early Years Foundation Stage profile point scores had been on a downward trend from 2007– 2009, although significant gains were recorded in 2010. Despite this, scores remain lower than the national average and the average for Bradford overall. Additionally, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the median score remains relatively unchanged. Partnerships with local schools have yet to become fully embedded, although there are good strategies in place for sharing information effectively.

The centre provides a wealth of opportunities for users to make a positive contribution. Children behave extremely well at all sessions; they are learning to share and take turns and are establishing very worthwhile relationships with others. Families develop very strong relationships within the centre and show respect, care and concern for others. There are opportunities for parents to express their views through regular evaluations of activities and surveys. Members of the parents’ forum and sub-committee fully understand their roles and responsibilities in decision making and governance of the centre and are not afraid to challenge and ask pertinent questions of the centre.

The centre helps to raise families’ aspirations and promote economic stability, for example, by encouraging and supporting users to access local training, helping them to secure benefits and gain access to debt and housing advice. The centre has been successful in encouraging parents to take courses in basic skills in numeracy and literacy. As a result, a number of parents have gone on to successfully achieve National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at Levels 2 and 3 in childcare and education. The centre has also supported adult users in gaining valuable experience through volunteering which has helped some secure permanent employment. Additionally, a small number of adult users have embarked on further study at degree level which can lead to professional qualifications.

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	1
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?

The range of services meets the needs of users exceptionally well and this is supported by outstanding care, guidance and support. Assessment is used effectively to determine the needs of children, parents and users. Consequently, the centre demonstrates a good knowledge of local families and the community which it serves. There is an extremely wide range of additional services which meets the needs of the whole community, including provision for older children, youth groups and the elderly living in the community. These all help to ensure that the centre operates in an ethos of valuing the whole family, 'from cradle to grave'. Children benefit significantly from having the elderly in the centre, particularly those who have no extended family members nearby. Local knowledge, comprehensive data from the local authority and suggestions from staff and individuals are all used to determine the programmes presented at the centre. Staff use CAF well to ensure that assessments of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are thorough and the resulting support is effective.

Home visits, leaflets and targeted advertising at schools all actively promote the engagement of more users. Many users are strong advocates of the centre, introducing friends and neighbours to the services on offer. Experienced family support workers are well known within the community and make tireless efforts to make contact with hard to reach families. Staff quickly gain the trust of users and provide exceptional care and practical support, as well as clear advice about all services available through the centre and through other agencies. Case studies show they are successful in encouraging new users to take advantage of the positive atmosphere offered by the centre. There are many examples of very high quality support work, including the regular toddler and messy play sessions, parenting classes and the cafe which provides an area for families to call into the centre and meet with others over a cup of coffee. Staff are always on hand to offer additional support and guidance for those who need it.

Jobcentre Plus operates a weekly service from the centre and adults are encouraged to take advantage of available training opportunities to increase their employment prospects. Participation rates are improving, and evaluations from users highlight how the opportunities provided to them have made a real difference to their lives. Free crèche facilities make it possible for users to access training and development opportunities easily.

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	1
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 are consistently good at all levels and are exceptional in relation to setting ambitious targets for driving improvement, the effective use of resources and the engagement with the wider community. Senior leaders have a very clear vision about where they want the centre to be in the future and this is shared with all staff members. Management communicate very high expectations to ensure that the centre is effective in improving the life chances of all users. Line management arrangements are clear and understood at all levels, which results in clear and effective governance. The board of directors and the children's centre sub-committee have a good mix of professionals, parents and carers and members of the local community. Together they ensure the centre offers the best services it can and are continually looking at ways to further improve the provision.

All staff show strong commitment to the centre and the community it serves; everyone understands the role they play in the centre's effectiveness. For example, administrative staff ensure all visitors and users are warmly welcomed on arrival; this is really appreciated by users who report that the welcome they receive on arrival makes them feel secure.

The centre has come through a challenging and stressful period which resulted in the management having to make some very difficult decisions. There have been significant changes to staffing at senior levels; the centre's deputy manager and the nursery manager have recently been appointed to their posts. However, the centre leaders have, so far, made good progress in establishing the new management relationships and are now beginning to build foundations for moving the centre forward. Effective arrangements for performance management and accountability are in place to ensure all staff are working to a common purpose.

Good working relationships with partner agencies and clear contractual arrangements between partners ensure everyone understands their role and responsibilities. Partner agency staff report that the centre works effectively with them to ensure the needs of families are well catered for. Centre leaders have a wealth of experience and skills which ensure that activities are sustainable; they very effectively build on existing provision and give appropriate consideration to reducing costs without reducing the quality of provision. Close accounting and forward-thinking by the centre manager has better secured the nursery's future financial viability by expanding the provision to increase the numbers of children it can accommodate. These strategies have resulted in the centre providing excellent value for money at the present time. However, the centre has concerns that future funding allocation may impact on the centre's ability to provide services to meet all the needs of the

children in their reach area.

The inclusion of all children and families is at the heart of the centre’s work. All users, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have access to the extensive range of experiences and services on offer. Information and resources reflect equality and the diversity of the reach area. Leaflets are available in a number of languages and translators are available for those who speak English as an additional language. The centre is accessible for people with disabilities and links with speech and language therapists and SENCOs ensure the centre is able to meet the diverse needs of users.

The leadership team has a good understanding of the centre’s strengths and where further improvements can be made. Self-evaluation accurately identifies the centre’s priorities for improvement so that targets are appropriately challenging and are concentrated on the areas which will have the greatest impact. The centre’s development plan is specific, focused and has clear success criteria with identified projected time scales. The plan is regularly reviewed to evaluate progress.

Following recent training by all staff, managers and members of the board of directors, there are secure arrangements in place to safeguard all users. Procedures for the selection and vetting of staff are strong and effective. Additionally, staff’s individual development needs are discussed at supervision which ensures relevant training is up to date. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the centre’s safeguarding procedures and clear protocols for sharing information, together with good partnership working, ensure that children and families at risk and in need are prioritised effectively. Parents and carers report with confidence that their children are well protected and that they trust the centre with the care of their children.

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	1
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	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	1

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 Communityworks Children's Centre on 11 and 12 May 2011. We judged the centre as good overall, although there are a number of features which are outstanding.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities and looked at the centre's documentation. We also talked with a range of children and adults including parents, staff, members of the board of directors, local authority representatives and partnership workers. We were pleased to speak to so many of you and to listen to your views. We really enjoyed talking to you around the centre and in the activity sessions you were engaged in. You made your views very clear to us and we appreciated your honesty in telling us how things really are.

We are pleased to tell you that your centre is working hard to support you and your families. Your centre is good at making sure everybody works together to make things better for you and encourages you to keep our families safe. We saw your children behaving very well in the centre, thoroughly enjoying their play and learning in the good quality activities they were engaged in. Many of you told us how the play activities and parenting sessions have helped you to understand about play and how children learn. We were delighted to hear how this has helped you feel much more confident about supporting your children's learning at home.

Your centre provides you and your families with extremely good care and support and there is an extensive range of exciting activities for you to participate in. You told us that you particularly enjoy the cookery and healthy eating classes and how

these have encouraged you and your children to eat more healthily. You also told us that you and your children are very well cared for and that you trust the centre's nursery and crèche staff to look after your children well, and we were able to see this for ourselves. You also told us how you have been helped to undertake training which has helped some of you to gain employment or embark on further study. We were delighted to see how the centre is making a real difference to improving your lives and to hear how much more confident you feel.

You told us that the staff are always there to help you and that they are extremely kind and caring. We could see for ourselves how the staff offer you excellent support whenever you need it. The centre works well with other professionals to ensure families and children receive the support and help that they need. Many parents told us that coming to the centre had increased their confidence and self-esteem. This is because centre staff are extremely good at helping parents improve their lives by making sure that they access the right services to do this.

The centre is well led and managed. The board of directors and the children's centre sub-committee have a good mix of professionals, parents and carers and members of the local community. Together they make sure that everyone's views are well represented and that the centre is effectively challenged to offer the best services it can. The centre manager and leadership team ensure that the finances of the centre, the supervision of the staff and plans for the future are strong. They regularly consider how best to improve services for you and your children and want to encourage as many families as possible to come to the centre. You can help by talking to friends about the exciting things on offer at the centre, including the centre café where people can meet and make friends.

It was clear to us that everyone is working hard to make the centre as good as it can be. To help them we have suggested they continue to build on the leadership and management within the centre and nursery in order to further drive improvement. We have also asked that they work more closely with local schools to help your children feel happy and secure when they move on to school. Additionally, this will also enable the centre to receive feedback on how well your children are progressing once they are in school.

Thank you to those of you who took the time to meet with us. We appreciate your openness in explaining about the work of the centre and how it has made a difference to your lives. We can see why the staff love working with you and wish you all every success in the future.

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