

Inspection report for Deanery Road Children's Centre

Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	365821
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Christine Davies HMI

Centre governance	London Borough of Newham
Centre leader	Olivia Lowe
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	None
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	East London Childcare Institute (Deanery Road) EY310135

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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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with managers, staff, parents, members of the advisory board and representatives of partner organisations. They talked to parents, staff and children. Inspectors observed the centre's work, reviewed case studies and looked at a range of relevant documentation including users' evaluations of sessions that they attend.

Information about the centre

The centre is located in the Stratford area of Newham, close to high street shops and the commercial area. It is a phase two centre providing a full core offer of services, including 61 Early Years Foundation Stage daycare places in the nursery that shares the site. The centre opened in 2008 to serve an area that is among the 30% most deprived in the country. The area reached has few open recreation spaces and is bounded by major roads and railway lines.

The majority of families in the area live in public or private rented accommodation and one third are overcrowded. Nearly 40% of families face worklessness and receive benefits. The diversity of the population is very high. It changes rapidly due to the high turnover of young families moving in and out of the area. Currently, the largest ethnic group of users, nearly one third, is White European and the majority are Polish. More than 20 languages are spoken by the centre's users and 80% speak English as an additional language. Children's levels of skills and experiences when they come in to the centre are lower than is typical for their age, especially in language development.

The premises consist of a converted modern building with small, safely enclosed areas to the rear. The centre has an office, training room, crèche or play room and three other smaller rooms for their sole use. The remainder of the building is used by the nursery, midwifery services and five other voluntary funded social support organisations. All the building's users come through the same reception hall area.

The centre is managed by Newham Training and Education Centre (NEWTEC), a voluntary sector training provider specialising in childcare and health and social care, and is funded by the London Borough of Newham to which it is accountable. An advisory body is in place. A review and reorganisation of the children's centres in the local authority area was under way at the time of the inspection. The programme of activities to be provided by this centre and the composition of the advisory board were under reconsideration. The core team of staff includes the team leader, two outreach workers, a family support worker, a childminding network officer and a receptionist/administrator.

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

2

Main findings

The centre offers satisfactory support to young children and their families and carers. Leaders and managers have a strong vision in place that matches the purpose of Sure Start children's centres. In three years, the centre has built effective partnerships to benefit users. The centre has maintained levels of provision during the local authority's far-reaching review of children's early intervention services to minimise the effects of change on users. Satisfaction, particularly among the large proportion families in the area who may not put down permanent roots, is high.

Staff are knowledgeable about the diverse groups that make up the local community and the priorities for the area. They systematically link up with other organisations that support families' learning, leisure, health and economic stability. Users, including those facing complex problems in their lives and those who have challenging behaviour, receive a warm welcome and very positive relationships are established. Staff skilfully use their connections with other organisations in the area to secure specialist physical and mental health services, housing and benefits advice, and child protection services for families. Centre staff work well with multi-agency panels to plan and secure resources for children in need and to secure protective services for children at risk of harm.

This inclusive outreach model of working ensures that the centre knows about almost all young families in the area and plans for most needs. The centre designs the groups to be open and accessible to all. One parent of a child with autism said how pleased she was that her child could attend the crèche while she took up a course.

However, the centre does not regularly review its policies to assess the impact of services on all users and potential users including children, and parents of young children, with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Provision is good when viewed as a whole, although the expertise of children's centre staff is stronger in supporting adult users' learning than in working directly with children. The provision that contributes to the care and development of children is satisfactory. Tracking, monitoring and challenge to the quality of some aspects of provision for children are limited. As a result, learning and development outcomes for children are satisfactory overall but inconsistent. Children are supported adequately in the crèche and the nursery, and they enjoy attending. Their development and preparation for starting school through the centre's activities are satisfactory overall. Children are keen to learn when activities are planned specifically for them.

Other outcomes for users are good. The health of the centre's regular users is good. Parents grow in confidence and learn skills that help them to manage their children's behaviour and take up healthy lifestyles. Parents say that the popular Stay and Pplay sessions that are open to all help them and their children to socialise and make friends quickly. When talking informally to staff, they find out what else is on offer, particularly when seeking routes to qualification and employment. Leaders and managers do a good job to get parents involved in the parents' forum and advisory board in the short time that many attend the centre.

The centre takes prompt and effective action to refer children and vulnerable adults to specialist services and to agencies for their protection. Staff keep children and adult users safe in the rooms and rear garden. Staff and volunteers are fully vetted and visitors to the centre are well supervised. Users overwhelmingly say that they feel safe and secure. However, shared use of the building, with the nursery, midwives and community groups, presents some security risks at the front doors and gates. The centre assesses risks but has not yet done enough to ensure that all users always put children's safety first.

Leaders and managers are highly ambitious to bring about improvement in young families' lives in the area. The centre has a broadly accurate view of how well it is doing and, as a result, performance has consolidated and is improving. Partnerships with other organisations and users give firm grounding for the centre's good capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The centre's managers should ensure that the outcomes for children's learning and development and the provision for children in all the centre's activities become consistently good or better by:
 - enabling staff to work together closely to plan programmes and activities that match children's needs and interests, with the guidance of a suitably qualified early years practitioner
 - keeping track of the progress of children who attend the community provision regularly, taking their starting points into consideration, and making adjustments if children are not progressing well.
- The centre's managers should assess more rigorously the impact of their policies and provision for all groups of users and potential users, including children and parents with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- To reduce the risk of serious accidents to children who may leave the premises unescorted, the centre should:
 - work with all partners and users, particularly parents, to raise awareness of the security risks that the main doors and front gates pose for children
 - promote safe procedures such as keeping gates shut when not in use.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Attendance across the range of learning and recreation activities is high and users' evaluations continually praise the social aspects of meeting families with different ethnic and religious backgrounds and with different languages and cultures. One parent's evaluation summed up the views of many, saying 'We all get so much pleasure seeing our children make new friends and learn together. It does not matter where we have come from or if we are only just learning English. The staff always help us to join in.'

Staff focus on giving a warm welcome to all individuals and, as a result, users' self-esteem and emotional well-being improve. Parents talk directly to nutritionists and health visitors when they drop in to Stay and Play sessions and parents' awareness of general health issues is good. Parents take up healthy eating and active lifestyles with the guidance of the centre's staff. Women are supported into parenthood through midwifery services based in the building. The centre successfully promotes breastfeeding and smoking cessation among users. Take-up of both immunisations and dental checks for children in the area is good.

Children most in need of protection and families in need of specialist health and children's services get prompt attention. Families facing a crisis or danger from domestic violence are protected immediately by joint work of the centre and other services through well-developed referral systems and 'Every Child Matters' multi-agency panels. Safeguarding policies and procedures are clearly understood by staff. Users improve their knowledge of how to keep children safe on the roads and in their homes. Accident rates in the area have fallen as a result of a well-funded home

safety campaign that came to an end in March 2011, and the work continues through the advice and guidance of outreach and family support workers.

Families with young children say that they thrive and feel safe and secure at the centre. Staff, and many parents and children, use the equipment safely within the centre. The centre has been thorough in assessing risks inside the centre and few accidents or incidents happen. However, still too many parents ignore the need to supervise children well at the building's shared front door and to shut the front gates when they come in and go out, which potentially presents a great risk for children attending.

Parents and carers enjoy the variety of activities, and the opportunities to meet others and to get informal support and advice. Learning to be confident parents and how to stay healthy continues in all activities. Parents learn specific skills well, such as weaning and managing their children's behaviour, in the programme of workshops that they have chosen with the centre staff. Their progress is monitored skilfully when they attend 'Triple P' parenting courses. One parent said 'It was the best course ever. It helped me to be consistent and saved my marriage because my husband respects me as a mother.'

Children's progress in learning and development varies greatly from activity to activity and is satisfactory overall. In the better planned sessions in the nursery and throughout the centre, children learn well because the staff design activities specifically to match children's skills and interest. For example, children thoroughly enjoy football crazy sessions and themed stay and play. They are not so keen to learn and participate in the less-well-structured crèche sessions.

The centre's activities help children as they begin to build the social skills they need for starting school through experience of play and learning in a group. Most children who attend regularly, including those with English as an additional language, improve their communication skills because of the staff's expertise in promoting 'Every Child a Talker'. In practice, the centre can only track outcomes for the 50% of children who go on to schools in the immediate area. One parent's comment was typical: 'I wish we could stay in touch with the centre and our friends but my daughter's school will be far away.'

Staff use a variety of languages and non-verbal means of communication to ensure that as many users as possible contribute to evaluations. Large numbers of parents are keen to attend the occasional meetings of the parents' forum group so that their ideas are put forward to the advisory board. Users gain confidence through participation. Many users take the first steps to economic independence through the centre's volunteer programmes. Adults who do not speak English as their first language progress well through English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes. Many go on to gain employment through childcare courses or through preparation for registration as a childminder.

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	3
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

Assessment of users' needs and progress is good. The centre interviews potential users sensitively and in depth when they first make contact. Staff collect details from other organisations working alongside and use interpreters to ensure that they understand speakers of English as an additional language. The 'registration form' for users has been commended in a recent local authority audit as a model of good practice that could be adopted by other centres in the area.

As users continue to attend, knowledgeable staff consult with health, development and social care professionals through formal panels. Co-working ensures that the centre adapts its services well to users' needs. Staff make sure that services are effectively integrated. The centre contributes routinely to assessment for other services, such as children's statements of special educational needs or their individual education or care plans.

Adult users who attend regularly gain confidence and learn from the expert tuition in parent workshops. Learners are spurred on to do well in English classes and one parent said 'We want them to give us harder work so that we can get a higher level certificate.' Achievement is celebrated and adults' progress is well documented in case studies. Close links with the provider organisation, NEWTEC, enable all parents who want to do so to take up further training and routes to qualification, in a growing number of vocational studies. The skilled support provided to childminders has resulted in local childminders gaining improved grades at inspection in the last year and two have gained a level 3 NVQ in Childcare and Education.

The centre does not systematically note and track the progress of children regularly attending the crèche or stay and play activities. There is limited oversight of the community provision by a suitably qualified early years practitioner. This results in differences in the quality of activities provided as some are not planned in enough detail for the children attending. The good practice built up in some Stay and Play

activities is not effectively shared.

The range of classes and groups is highly appropriate to the current priorities identified with partners in the area. It provides the opportunities that users say they want, which include regular groups, tuition on specific subjects and access to information, advice and guidance from knowledgeable professionals when they need it. Parents benefit from the accessibility and wide-ranging knowledge of staff. Parents approach outreach workers at the library 'Story time and crafts' to find out about getting school places or find out what workshops are running at the centre. Parents ask about potty training and fussy eating in stay and play groups to extend their learning following workshops on these topics earlier in the year.

The level of care provided to children in the nursery and in the centre overall is satisfactory. With a wider focus on adults' skills and users' well-being as a whole, other aspects of care, guidance and support are good. The inclusive practice and caring attitudes of staff extend into all activities. Staff and others working with the centre pool their information to give advice and to secure resources for users in times of crisis. The situation for many vulnerable families, for example those who are workless or very young parents, is improving because of the information and guidance given.

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	3
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	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The current arrangements for governance and accountability are sufficiently clear to give satisfactory continuity during the review of children's early intervention services taking place in the local authority at the time of the inspection. The provider has highly ambitious strategies in place to make sure that priorities for the area will continue to be met. The advisory board has a growing range of partners. Day-to-day management within the setting is good. Internal management information systems are in place and being strengthened to meet future needs. Line management and professional supervision arrangements promote good morale and have brought about some improvement in staff skills in working with the most vulnerable users, such as adults with mental health problems.

Inclusion of all children and parents in the area is central to the leader's vision for

the centre. Managers have worked effectively to ensure that what the centre offers is understood widely in the community and that all families, no matter what their background or circumstances, are attracted to use the services. The centre is emerging as an important venue for most families in the area. Attendance at weekly provision and open days is good. All legal requirements are met. However, the assessments of impact of all policies and provision on groups of users and potential users, for example on people with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are too superficial.

Partnerships have a good impact on helping the centre to learn about needs in the area and deliver the good range of integrated services for health, safeguarding and well-being. Child protection policies and procedures and those for the protection of vulnerable adults are good. Referral systems and local information sharing through the 'Every child matters' panels are particularly effective. Safe recruitment, vetting and visitor procedures are in place. Although most aspects of safeguarding are good, staff and managers have more to do to ensure all users of the premises help to keep the building secure for children.

Partner organisations and users contribute routinely to the centre's evaluation of its effectiveness, which is accurate in most respects, although the extent of differences in outcomes for children and adult users are underestimated. There are clear links between the centre's evaluations and plans to develop a wider range of voluntary sector partnerships in future. The centre seeks the views of users regularly and takes them into account. Parents help the centre to decide on the content of some activities and the days on which they should be run. For example, the centre found that fathers do not want separate provision and they met parents' wishes to reinstate messy play. Parents do not have an extensive say in shaping priorities.

Value for money is satisfactory as many potential users are reached and resources are satisfactorily deployed. The centre has a good track record of meeting the priority needs for the area. Managers are developing the centre's performance management and evaluation procedures rapidly, with good effect on improving some aspects of performance.

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	2
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	3
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	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	3

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

The NEWTEC Deanery Road Nursery (registered with Ofsted as East London Childcare Institute (Deanery Road) provides early years childcare on the same site as the children's centre. The provision was inspected on 25 February 2009. Because it is part of the core provision of the children's centre, the findings of the inspection contributed to the children's centre inspection judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Deanery Road Children's Centre on 9–10 June 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall with some good, strong work done by the centre to get to know you personally and give you help when you most need it.

We were very pleased to be able to talk to some of you about the centre's work while we were inspecting. I would like to thank the people who came in especially to meet with us on days when they do not normally come to the centre.

Here is a short report of what we found:

The centre offers a good range of support to young families. The managers and staff know in great detail about the issues for young families in the area. They understand that the main pressures come from overcrowded housing and unemployment. Also, the centre works well with the many families who only live in the area for a short time. We see that you are very satisfied with the types of activities and information the centre gives you to meet your main needs.

You get sound, helpful guidance to find schools and childcare or courses, training and advice about going back to work if you want to. You appreciate the help in taking the first steps to employment through attending classes and using the crèche.

The activities provided are suitable for the age groups of children that come to the centre. However, we found that some activities are better planned and more exciting for all the children than others. So that all work is as good as it can be, and all children will learn and develop as well as they can, we have asked staff to work more closely together to take note of individual children's progress, under the guidance of a suitably qualified early years worker, and share their best work with each other.

We were very pleased to see how much you and your children enjoy learning at football crazy, Stay and Play, messy play and singing activities. Sessions are well attended because the staff take notice of the times and days when you want to come. One parent who moved to the area recently summed up the views of many, saying 'It's good fun for me and my boy. Messy play is perfect timing. We come here after lunch and meet so many other young children who like to play in the afternoon. I am glad I found this centre. They really know what we like to do.'

Most of your children learn to talk well when they attend regularly, or go to the nursery, because some staff have been well trained to help children in this part of their learning.

We found that you become healthier and more confident when attending the centre. Many parents told us how much they had learned about helping their children to eat and behave well, which has made family life happier for some.

Your relationships with staff are very positive. You find it helpful that that you can see midwives at the centre and get visits from health visitors, breastfeeding counsellors and nutritionists.

Knowledgeable centre staff quickly find other organisations to give you help if the service that you need is not provided at the centre. This works well in a crisis or for groups who need specialised help for their circumstances, such as for very young parents and for children with severe and complex needs.

The centre has good policies and procedures for keeping you safe in the rooms and rear garden. Only suitably vetted staff are allowed to work at the centre. Managers liaise with other organisations in the building to make sure that visitors are signed in and out and wear badges for your security.

Although you told us that you feel safe in the centre, we were concerned about some safety aspects of the front gates and doors. We know that the centre wants to make the building easy for all users to get into, including for those with difficulties in seeing or getting about; but this also means it may be easy for children to get out onto the busy roads. You can play your part by always shutting gates and doors and by never allowing your child to open the main front door or gates without your permission.

All users are treated with respect and you say you enjoy the company of families from the many different ethnic, religious and language backgrounds in the local community. To make sure the centre includes as many young families as possible, and ensure you all get the best out of attending, we have asked the centre to

consider the impact of their policies more regularly. We ask that they consider all users and potential users including children, and parents of young children, with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders and managers have a strong ambition to improve your life in the area through cooperation with other organisations. The centre has good potential to continue building up the services and to make sure that every one of their activities is high quality and that you will benefit all-round.

We did not inspect the nursery as it is not long since it was last inspected. We took the previous inspection findings into account. There is a separate report about the daycare on our website.

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