

Inspection report for Longbenton Children's Centre

Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	367835
Inspection dates	15-16 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Elizabeth Srogi HMI

Centre governance	Barnardo's
Centre leader	Tony Goodrick
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected.
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Barnardo's Nursery URN310209

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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 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 centre managers, staff members, advisory board members, partner agencies, users, and local authority and Barnardo's officers linked to the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Longbenton Children's Centre provides services in the Longbenton, Forest Hall, Benton, West Moor and Palmersville areas of North Tyneside. It is governed by Barnardo's on behalf of North Tyneside local authority. There is an advisory board in place.

The centre provides services in its own premises and in other local facilities, such as the Oxford Centre and Balliol School, to meet local need as the reach area is elongated and all users are not within walking distance of the centre. The ethnicity of the area is mainly White British. There are 1356 children under five living in the area and most enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge lower than those expected for their age.

The centre is a phase one centre which provides the full core offer of both targeted and universal services. There is an on site nursery provided under its own

registration with Ofsted. This is subject to its own inspection and the latest report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk

In the area 30.2% of people are economically inactive this is higher than the local authority and national average and women are significantly more likely to be unemployed than men. Job Seekers Allowance is claimed by 227 people in the area, which is 5.4% of the population compared to 4.7% in the local authority and 3.7% nationally.

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

Longbenton Children's Centre is a good and improving centre. Outcomes for users are good and the services provided by the enthusiastic, skilful and well-qualified staff are based on effective evaluation, planning and assessment, which clearly have the needs and desires of the centre's users at heart. The centre promotes many and varied activities to promote both adult and children's learning and development and all users are actively encouraged to have high aspirations. Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data show results for children in this reach are improving significantly over time.

The centre has an excellent approach to safeguarding and the clearly documented procedures that include the centre's approach to child protection and health and safety for all are thoroughly known and implemented by staff. Centre staff work very well together and with partners to ensure that families, particularly those who are in difficult circumstances which make them potentially vulnerable, are provided with cohesive and accessible services to meet their specific needs. Safety is given high priority within the centre and staff work hard to improve users' understanding of how to keep their children and families safe. Users told us of how they have changed their ways at home and how attending first aid training has given them confidence in dealing with accidents. However, the lack of specific and tailored data on the number and specific causes for children under five needing hospital treatment for accidents is

impeding the centre in fully ensuring their work is having an impact. The ongoing and concerted efforts of staff have resulted in some improvement in obtaining this information. However, more measurable information is needed to show that the centre's approach is suitable and making a difference.

A significant strength of this centre is the outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support provided to all users. There is clear and compelling evidence to show how the centre takes every opportunity to provide the best guidance, care and support to the users of the centre either by themselves, their partners or by signposting to other services. Parents' and carers' comments overwhelmingly show how the centre has significantly helped them in times of difficulty, including where users have had mental health needs, child protection issues or domestic violence problems. Parents and carers highlight how an extremely positive outcome for them is the increase in their self-esteem and self-belief in their ability as parents following their involvement with the centre. Parents' and carers' comments include, 'without the centre I wouldn't be where I am now- I was a mess but now I'm confident and a better mum', 'I can't express in words what this centre has done for me' and 'I am learning to read and write in English in my own community'. The centre is fully inclusive and all staff, in their approach to the work they do, reflect a strong commitment to promoting equality and diversity. Users told us that everyone is made welcome by all staff, no one is judgemental about them and that staff go out of their way to ensure that their individual needs are met.

Leadership and management are strong and managers at all levels competently supervise the work of the centre. Self-evaluation is used effectively to determine the areas for development that are identified in the centre's service/locality business plan. However, the plan is not consistently precise and does not routinely use easily measurable targets with time scales clearly indicated. Overall, the good leadership and clear impact that the centre is having on children and families, along with an appreciation of the centre's strengths and areas to improve, indicate that the centre's ability to improve is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Refine the service/ locality business plan so that it more clearly identifies targets, measures and timescales.
- Improve further the ongoing work between the health authority, the local authority, Barnardo's and centre staff to accelerate the progress made in obtaining meaningful data on the number and causes of children under the age of five requiring emergency hospital admissions for injuries.

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. Healthy lifestyles and healthy eating are efficiently and enthusiastically promoted by all and early referral and intervention ensures that families who may be more vulnerable than others are well supported. Activities and courses, such as weaning parties, fun with food and the very popular 'Fakeaway' (cooking food instead of takeaway) are said by parents and carers to have had a significant impact on their own and their families eating habits, they now use more fresh food and have realised how much better the food tastes. Parents and carers highlight how they now know the value and importance of portion control, the healthiness of food and the advantages of eating together as a family. They are eagerly awaiting the production of a new recipe book, which is currently being put together to help them serve their families good home-cooked food while taking into account the low availability of fresh produce in local shops. Despite this raft of support, and although data show that obesity levels are decreasing slightly, this remains a target area for the centre. Dental health initiatives implemented within the centre in partnership with oral and dental health promotion staff have shown a marked impact on the health of children's teeth in the reach area. This was previously identified as a significant concern. The take-up of offers, such as help in stopping smoking and breastfeeding support, in partnership with others is having some impact and breastfeeding numbers are showing some slight improvement. The centre works in partnership with agencies, such as the youth service, to provide support and opportunities for teenage mothers.

The centre has a strong focus on promoting safety for children and families. Good preventative advice is given, work is carried out in conjunction with the fire brigade and there has been good take up of safety equipment for those who are eligible. Staff are committed to promoting safety and constantly demonstrate good practice in all activities and sessions. The centre is said by parents and carers to be a very safe place and they firmly believe their children are safe at all times there. Parents and carers report how attending such programmes as 123 Magic, which specifically focuses on parents' and carers' behaviour management, has not only improved their knowledge, but has also reduced the incidence of injury in their homes. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used effectively to ensure that families are given the support and help that they need, thereby preventing situations from reaching crisis point. There are clear examples from parents and carers and case studies of how the centre's input has helped children to come off and stay off child protection plans. Mothers who have attended the 'Freedom' programme, where the aim is to raise awareness of domestic violence, gives them choices and raises confidence and self-esteem, mostly acknowledge the impact of their lives on their children and have enabled them to make changes for the better.

During the inspection, parents, carers and children were seen to be thoroughly enjoying the activities on offer. The centre provides many activities where children and parents and carers not only play and have fun together, but where their self-esteem and belief in themselves is constantly encouraged. The range of good information on child development and the way, for example, crèche activities reflect the content of courses, such as 'Fun with books', are helping parents and carers understand how they can help to develop their own knowledge and self-esteem and

how they can help their children to progress and to develop their learning. The onsite nursery and centre staff work enthusiastically and productively together using very effective and similar monitoring and support systems. These ensure that every child who attends any centre activities has access to good quality activities that reflect the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage, that each child's learning and development needs are met and that no child slips through the net. A historical concern about children's speech and language development has driven a successful speech and language programme involving the nursery, centre staff and speech and language colleagues. As a result, there is a decrease in referrals for language services from mainstream schools. Overall, these good learning opportunities have contributed well to the clear and consistent improvement in the reach area of children achieving in the profile analysis at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage with at least six points in each of the scales in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. The percentage of those achieving these scores has risen from 43.85% in 2008 to 55.1% in 2010. This improvement is at a faster rate than at both local authority and national levels and is now close to the national average score of 56%. Children's skills and knowledge at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage show a positive trend and the gap between the lowest achievers and others is reducing. This is particularly so for those children who access nursery places through the supported placement scheme and who are successfully monitored as part of the 'well-being' programme, which ensures that progress is regularly monitored and any presenting concerns are addressed quickly. There are close links with local schools which has a positive impact when children are moving on to them.

The centre is pro-active in working with local childminders, not only to improve the care and education they provide, but in including them as a valued part of the children's centre. The childminders have recently set up their own forum which allows them to meet regularly within their own working commitments to discuss issues that specifically relate to them. Points from these meetings are fed into the advisory board by their representative member.

Children's behaviour throughout the centre is good. Parents and carers express their views through regular evaluations and clearly say they are listened to and are confident that suggestions are taken on board and are responded to quickly. They are encouraged to be part of the advisory board by the centre, but at this time this is not being very successful. However, they actively contribute to the management and decision making of the centre by using the parents' forum, which effectively feeds into the board.

The centre effectively helps to promote economic stability. For example, users are successfully encouraged to access training provided by the centre itself and by their partners, such as Tyne Met college and by the provision of a well used crèche. Access and continued attendance at courses is good, with the 'Skills for life' courses often being made up of 50% lone parents. Overall, since September 2010, 20 centre users have achieved a qualification. A significant result in 2010 was a centre user who won the local authority award for 'Skills for life learner of the year' and another

centre user has been nominated for this year's award. Parents and carers have accessed support for writing a curriculum vitae, and in making job applications; there has been some success in obtaining employment. The recent initiative to encourage children, young people and their families to participate in a savings scheme has exceeded the final targets and expectations at the halfway mark of the project; this impacts well on their ability to access such facilities as bank services. Volunteers are actively encouraged and are well supported to participate in the work of the centre.

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	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 uses assessment well in order to identify individual needs. It is carried out for everyone who accesses a service within the centre, whether they are universal or targeted services. All assessment is done in partnership with users and identifies starting points and desired outcomes. It is recorded on the centre's computer system, Livelink, which brings together all information on a family, including information from health visitors. It is regularly updated and this, together with good local knowledge, ensures individual needs continue to be met. Centre staff are trained and experienced in the use of CAF and it is being used effectively to ensure that assessments of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are thorough and the resulting support is effective. The care, guidance and support provided by this centre are an area of service in which it excels. This can be seen not only in the vast amount of very useful information that is displayed throughout the building, but in the diligent way that staff do not miss an opportunity to help families access services, progress and build on their achievements. Displays detail up-to-date employment and housing opportunities in partnership with housing and Jobcentre Plus and are often replicated in the various parts of the centre to ensure no user is disadvantaged by only accessing certain facilities.

Midwifery and health visiting services have until recently been successfully provided

in nearby venues. A recent development to have midwifery services on site and the planned introduction from September of health visiting services also on site is another positive step in ensuring that services are even more accessible and beneficial to users and to further improve the already good partnership working. The availability in the centre of the C card scheme for condom distribution and access to chlamydia screening for all in the community is contributing to the provision of and easier access to sexual health services. Case studies, parental comments and data show the centre is successfully encouraging new users to the centre. Centre staff are successful and creative in their approach to this using such methods as stopping people in the street or where the need is identified, providing one-to-one home support to enable users to gain the confidence they need before joining in the many group activities available to them. There are many examples of good quality and innovative outreach and support work and universal services to promote the learning, development and enjoyment of users, which is having a good impact on the outcomes for children and families. Achievement is thoroughly celebrated within the centre and every success is acknowledged by such things as the awarding of certificates.

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 are consistently good at all levels. The relationship between the local authority and Barnardo's, who has delegated governance responsibility, is effective and clear. An 'outcome service specification' has been recently introduced between the local authority and Barnardo's to further ensure all understand the expectations and desired outcomes for the centre and to ensure that users get a comparable but tailored service no matter where they live in the local authority. The way of working between Barnardo's and the local authority is, in the words of a senior manager for Barnardo's, described accurately as, 'Barnardo's has the delegated management for the centre but the leadership is shared'. The centre managers are held accountable by the annual conversations that are carried out in the centre and through the work of the advisory board and its sub groups. All staff are very clear of the management structure and have regular supervision, which as a matter of course includes safeguarding and equality and diversity. Annual appraisals are in place to ensure staff have a clear and identified time to not only reflect with

management on their performance but to identify individual training needs.

The centre has recently and continues to go through a period of change as the centre grapples with the need to provide services in a climate of budget cuts. All centre staff have been involved in a solution-based approach to this and their views have contributed to the centre's way forward. The centre has clear mechanisms in place to ensure the viability and suitability of its services; it works well with others to avoid duplication and to ensure good value for money.

Centre staff at all levels are enthusiastic, motivated and have a determined sense of purpose to make a difference to the lives of the children and families in the reach area. Evaluation is carried out at every opportunity and includes centre staff, users and partners. It is used well to plan activities and services and to identify specific areas for development for the coming year. Quarterly and annual reviews take place and the available data is used to inform planning. However, the data that is available on the numbers of children needing emergency admission to hospital as a result of accidents relates to those aged nought to 19 years and is, therefore, not specific enough to contribute to the centre's ability to be sure that their work on safety is having an impact. There is a service/locality business plan in place. However, whilst the plan identifies the areas for improvement it is less clear in identifying clear targets, measures and timescales to support the work of the centre.

The centre's commitment to ensuring the safeguarding of children and families is of a very high standard. All staff are subject to rigorous recruitment processes. For example, CRB checks are repeated every three years and a traffic light colour coding system is used to ensure that soon to expire checks are updated. This process is replicated for all volunteers who work in the centre. Staff access mandatory annual full day safeguarding training which is tailored to their current development needs. For example, the most recent training day focussed not only on 'back to basics,' but spent half a day specifically in developing their skills and knowledge in working with minority ethnic families in this area. This particular training need was identified from the staff's annual equality and diversity training and also relates to the centre's target for this year of increasing the number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds with which they work.

There are very clear procedures and protocols for effective information sharing and these together with good partnership working successfully ensures that work with families and children at risk and in need are effectively prioritised. Parents and users spoke unanimously about how they feel safe in the centre and how they know that centre staff will take any action that is necessary to ensure their children are safeguarded. Information from partners, such as health and children's services, identifies the good partnerships that are in place and is used to promote cohesive and productive working and practice arrangements in order to meet the needs of individual needs of families. The health visitor was emphatic in her opinion that she would not be able to do her job without the close working arrangements she has with centre staff.

Equality and diversity is at the heart of all the centre does and the displays and information available reflects this. The centre is determined to improve the life-chances of all children and families in the reach area and despite the numbers using the centre increasing they have identified and are determinately working to discover why some families do not access services and to improve the level of participation by families from minority ethnic backgrounds. The capacity for the centre to promote equality and diversity and to contribute to community cohesion is further enhanced as it is an ARCH reporting centre. This is a group of organisations in the wider area who are working together to stop hate crime in the area and therefore provides a mechanism for both the community and centre staff to get the right help and advice and where necessary take action.

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	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 findings from the inspection of Barnardo's nursery held on the 13 June 2011 contributed to this inspection. This report is available on our website at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 Longbenton Children's Centre on 15 and 16 June 2011. We judged the centre as good overall with two outstanding aspects.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation and talked with a range of children and adults including parents and carers, staff senior management representatives and partners. We were very pleased to speak with so many of you either in our specific meeting or as you participated in the centre's activities. You made your views very clear to us and we have used them to help us make our judgements.

We are very pleased to tell you that your centre is working extremely hard to support you and your families and we agree with your overwhelmingly positive comments that the care, guidance and support provided to you is outstanding. You told us how the centre staff work together to make things better for you and that many of you had made positive changes to your lives following your attendance at the centre. You told us how you have made friends by coming to the centre and how you have been helped to increase your own skills and in particular to improve your self-esteem and belief in yourselves as parents through the effective and often tailored learning programmes you have attended.

We saw many of you and your children thoroughly enjoying the activities on offer and you told us how such programmes as 123 Magic and Fit for life had helped you to be better parents and to understand yourselves and your children more. We were pleased to hear how activities at the centre have helped you support your children's learning at home and of how many of you have been successful in gaining qualifications and now have aspirations to enter employment.

All staff in the centre work really hard to identify and plan how they can further help to improve your lives and with this in mind we have asked them to improve their documents so that the plans show clearly how they are going to do this and by when. We have also asked them to work with senior management and health colleagues to get better information to show that all the work they do in helping you and your children to stay safe is working. We know that many of you have ideas about what you want the centre to do and that you are very enthusiastic about your parents' forum. We would ask to continue your involvement in this and to encourage other parents and carers and members of your community who already use the centre and those who do not, to be involved.

Thank you once again for taking the time to talk with us and for making us so welcome in your centre. We can see why you value your centre and the staff who work with you so much and wish you every success in the future.

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