

Inspection report for Lakeside Children's and Family Learning Centre

Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	367827
Inspection dates	27–28 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Crawford HMI

Centre governance	Employment Needs Training Agency Community Interest Company
Centre leader	Geraldine Dowling
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Lakeside Children and Family Learning Centre EY330983

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 staff, users and representatives from the Employment Needs Training Agency Community Interest Company board, the advisory board, and services that use the centre.

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

Information about the centre

This is a phase one children's centre providing the full core offer since 2006 to a community ranked within the 20% most deprived in the country. The centre is managed by the Employment Needs Training Agency Community Interest Company (Enta CIC) which is a non-profit-making organisation. It is situated next to Witton Lakes and serves seven super output areas. The centre has recently revised its governance arrangements and a newly formed advisory board is in place. There is also an Enta CIC board on which the advisory board is represented.

The centre provides health and family support services, adult training, and information, advice and guidance on a range of subjects.

Unemployment in the area that the centre serves is high, and the proportion of families dependant on state benefits is well above the national average. There is a mix of families from minority ethnic backgrounds; half of the families are White British. The majority of children enter the early years settings with skills, knowledge

and abilities well below those expected for their age. There is an onsite nursery run by the centre.

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

3

Main findings

This satisfactory centre is making some positive strides to improve outcomes for users. There are some good elements. Strong safeguarding arrangements ensure that the centre is a safe and secure environment for all who attend. Those centre users who made their comments known are unanimous in their appreciation and praise for the improvements to their lives. The centre maintains important information about the precise groups of users it serves. However, the take-up of services remains low and the centre's engagement with families from the wider community is underdeveloped. Consequently, the equality of opportunity for users in the reach area is satisfactory. Those who take advantage of the services and activities provided report that the centre is making a positive difference to them and their families.

The satisfactory provision is underpinned by sound procedures to assess children and other users and successfully match them to appropriate services. Several parents and carers said they were very happy and secure with the welcome and care that they receive in the centre. One strong feature of the centre is the work of the family support worker and the pregnancy outreach workers. They provide invaluable support for the most vulnerable families. They are particularly effective in signposting parents and carers to additional services to promote their safety and well-being. There are good opportunities for adults to undertake courses that promote their economic well-being. There are extensive learning activities provided by the successful training partnership.

Governance and leadership are satisfactory and improving. The centre's improvement plan demonstrates an understanding of the target groups within the reach area and what needs to be achieved; it also considers the local authority's local priorities. Consequently, the centre demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for improvement. An advisory board has recently been established within the centre. Its

membership includes representatives from most partner agencies. Some members do not fully understand the governance and accountability arrangements of the centre. There are limited occasions for parents' and carers' views to be heard and opportunities for them to inform the shaping of the centre's services. Leaders and managers at all levels and all other staff demonstrate a passion and determination to improve the lives of users. Regular supervision of centre workers, including nursery staff, has resulted in improvements in the quality of services. There are appropriate and regular systems in place to evaluate users' satisfaction. However, the centre has limited methods in place to evaluate the improvement the centre has made to their lives, or the success of the centre's services in meeting local priorities. There are also too few opportunities for the centre's partners to contribute to the evaluation of its work.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the take-up of services offered by the centre by reaching out to and engaging with members of the community who are not accessing services.
- Improve the evaluation of the effectiveness of the centre by working with partners to gather information about outcomes for children and users, and the impact of services provided.
- Further develop the governance of the centre by:
 - clarifying and strengthening the role of the local advisory board to ensure it provides challenge
 - improving the extent to which parents and carers contribute to decision making.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

The emotional well-being of users, particularly those who have suffered from postnatal depression, is improved by their engagement with the centre. The centre is supporting new mothers, and providing targeted services such as baby massage. One parent at risk of isolation reported, 'The children's centre has been brilliant in offering advice and support and has always been there for me.' There is an adequate range of healthy activities such as 'Jiggle Up' exercise sessions. Parents and carers who attend these sessions report that they have noticed an improvement in their physical health. The centre delivers courses such as community cooking which promotes healthy life styles. Healthy eating was promoted through the centre's café. However, this has recently closed which has impacted on the centre's ability to deliver healthy meals. Participation rates and the use of the centre are gradually increasing, although the membership is not fully reflective of the wider community. Activities are not always well attended. The centre signposts to specialist services at a nearby children's centre which supports parents whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Risk assessments are skilfully completed, including safety and safeguarding audits.

Parents and carers receive advice on safety and have accessed home-safety equipment such as fireguards and stair gates. A case study shows how the introduction of a stair gate helped to reduce the risk of harm to a child who had previously fallen down the stairs. Children subject to the Common Assessment Framework, child protection plans or the centre's own assessments are supported well by centre staff and partner agencies. Case study information shows that outcomes for some children and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable are improving.

Services and activities are provided in a happy and secure environment. Those parents and carers who made their comments known report that they and their children feel very safe within the centre. Children are developing in aspects of their personal, social and emotional development and are generally making satisfactory progress. Parents and carers are growing in confidence in managing their children's behaviour because of parenting programmes. There are effective partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors, particularly with the local childminder network, which are improving the quality of childcare provision within the area.

Parents and carers contribute their views through valuable feedback and evaluations of the services provided. However, there are limited opportunities for them to participate in decisions and the management of the centre. There is only one parent and carer representative on the centre's advisory board and a parents' forum has not been established.

Parents and carers report how much they enjoy the courses they have successfully completed and are very proud of their achievements. They benefit from an extensive range of courses. For instance, specific courses help parents and carers manage their children's behaviour, and members of the teenage parents' group have gained valuable first-aid and food-safety Level 2 qualifications. Some parents and carers have accessed the nursery funding for two-year-olds with the support of the centre. There are courses such as 'Entry to Learning' which support adults to improve their numeracy and literacy skills. Introduction to basic English workshops have been developed to meet changing local needs. Case studies indicate that some adults have been successful in achieving vocational qualifications. Thirty-one lone parents were part of a back-to-work project coordinated by the centre which resulted in 50% of the parents gaining employment and two going on to higher education. Children are developing skills for the future through sessions such as 'Stay and Play'. The well-managed volunteer programme enables volunteers to develop a wide range of transferable skills. The centre successfully encourages volunteers to support activities including within the childcare provision and the administration of the centre. Several volunteers have been successful in achieving vocational qualifications and employment.

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	3
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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	3
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?

3

Family support and pregnancy outreach workers are making appropriate use of assessment to engage with families, particularly those who are made vulnerable by their circumstances. This ensures that centre staff have an understanding of the needs of parents and carers. Services on offer are improving users' safety and well-being and are tailored to meet their specific needs. Users who come to the centre looking for support and guidance receive relevant information and advice to help them raise their children. The centre appropriately nurtures and fosters confidence in parents and carers so that they are prepared to develop their skills and learning. The centre is instrumental in helping parents and carers access further education and welfare benefits advice and support.

The centre, in partnership with other agencies, has accurately identified services which are targeted at parents and carers who are potentially at risk of social isolation and exclusion. Teenage parents, mothers-to-be, and parents and carers who want to stop smoking are referred to services and supported by outreach workers. However, the impact of these referrals is not fully understood in terms of improved outcomes for families. The centre does not do enough to engage with the wider community. There are many families living in the community who are not accessing the centre's services.

All staff provide a warm, welcoming and secure environment in the centre. Strong and trusting relationships are developed between parents and carers and the centre staff. Several parents commented that the centre provides a hub of information, care, guidance and support and they rely on the centre for help on a wide range of issues. As one parent reported, 'The centre staff are very knowledgeable about all aspects of family life and are always there to support when needed.'

The range of activities and services meets the needs of most users appropriately. For instance, the newly formed 'Dads and Lads Group' is proving to be increasingly popular and is supporting the important role of fathers in the care of children; and the 'Teens with Tots Group' is a critical service which provides support and advice particularly for those experiencing domestic violence. The centre works effectively with the local childminder network to support and encourage the improved

consistency of the care and learning provided to families in need.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
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	3
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

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Leaders, managers and staff are motivated to seek further improvements and are increasing their effectiveness in focusing the centre's efforts on its priorities. The leaders have faced specific challenges including re-structuring, the loss of key members of staff, and the development of data collection. The centre is now in a more settled phase and leaders and staff are looking forward to a period of stability. There are appropriate performance monitoring systems in place to assure the work of the centre staff. Centre staff freely give up their time to support community events and to promote greater community cohesion. The centre staff have a 'can do' attitude and are focused on improving outcomes for all children and families. In this respect, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

The arrangements for safeguarding children and users are good. Staff are trained in ensuring users' safety, including child protection and the use of the Common Assessment Framework. Staff are alert to the needs of individual families who are encountering challenges and difficulties, and respond promptly and sensitively when referrals are made. Families experiencing crises, including domestic violence, are particularly well supported within the centre. Staff ensure that families are provided with a place of safety and are instrumental in ensuring they access appropriate services swiftly.

The number of people registered at the centre has increased over time and half of all children in the reach area under the age of five are members of the centre. However, there is still a large proportion of the community who are not accessing services.

Health visitors are starting to share information with the centre to ensure targeted services are prioritised for the most vulnerable. The data provided by health partners are invaluable to the centre and have helped the centre to successfully identify new births. Staff, partner agencies, and parents and carers make some contributions to the evaluation process. However, evaluation of the centre lacks consistent and secure evidence including information from partners of the impact on outcomes for children and families. Nevertheless, the improvement plan has clear links to the self-evaluation and it sets out targets and priorities.

Positive steps taken to include children and families are helping the centre to begin to engage with those from the wider community, including teenage parents. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those identified at risk of developmental delay receive appropriately targeted support in partnership with their parents and the nursery. The vast majority of children attending the nursery are said to be vulnerable and have starting points well below expectations. The centre is offering specific activities to address children's developmental needs. The centre's policies and procedures underpin the centre's focus to promote the understanding and the importance of inclusion for all.

The members of the advisory board are not sufficiently informed to challenge the work of the centre and they do not currently play a major role in shaping and improving the centre overall.

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	3
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	2
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	3
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 nursery was inspected on the 25 July 2011 and the overall effectiveness was judged as satisfactory. Children were reported to make satisfactory progress in their learning and development.

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 Lakeside Children's and Family Learning Centre on 27 to 28 July 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us. Your views were very helpful to the inspection team. We agree with you when you told us how welcoming and helpful the staff are at the centre. We think that the range of services and activities on offer is helping you to improve your parenting skills and enabling you to train and gain confidence. We think that those of you who are experiencing difficulty in your lives are well supported to make your families and children safe. We also know that the centre has helped some of you who have experienced real difficulties in the past to be much more confident and able to look forward to a brighter future.

We watched you thoroughly enjoying the activities, such as 'Jiggle up', where you joined in physical activities with your children. A few of you have volunteered to help in the centre, which has been invaluable in developing your self-esteem and skills. Those of you who made your comments known spoke of the centre and its staff with high regard. However, we think it is a pity that not enough people in the area are taking advantage of the activities on offer.

You told us that one reason why you like coming to the centre is because of the well-trained, helpful and friendly staff who work there. They try their best to help you to make improvements to your lives. Some of you were keen to tell us that, if you had not received help from the centre, you would not have been able to undertake training. Some of you said how grateful you were that the staff had helped you to gain the benefits to which you are entitled. The centre has introduced a number of activities to improve your health, such as the 'New attitudes drop in' which provides advice and free contraception. The advisory board does not provide sufficient challenge to the centre and not all members understand their role. We would like to see more of you on the advisory board so that you can influence how the centre is

run and the setting up of a parents' forum so that you can tell the centre what you want.

The centre leaders have been successful in safeguarding the families who use the centre. Leaders do not yet check well enough how the activities on offer are leading to improvements, both for you, your families and also for the community overall.

We have asked the centre to make some improvements. We have asked staff to make sure they are supporting the whole of the community and developing the membership of the centre. We would like more parents and carers to get involved in decision making and the management of the centre. We have asked the centre leaders to improve the range of information available to show how the centre is meeting the needs of children and their families, and to look at ways to improve their evaluation of the centre's work and the difference it is making to families in the community.

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