

Inspection report for Tyldesley Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	384193
Inspection dates	18–19 August 2011
Reporting inspector	Johan MacKinnon

Centre governance	Collaborative Leadership Committee
Centre leader	Mrs Yvonne Brown
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Poplar Street Tyldesley Greater Manchester M29 8AX
Telephone number	01942 883279
Fax number	01942 883284
Email address	Lyndsey.Daly@wigan.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Tyldesley Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	N/A

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.

Published: September 2011

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 two additional inspectors. The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, users and volunteers and representatives from the local authority, Collaborative Leadership Committee (CLC) and partner services. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's planning and evaluation, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Tyldesley Children's Centre is a phase one children's centre serving the township of Tyldesley and surrounding wards. It shares its site with Tyldesley Health Centre. Since March 2010 it has been partnered with Tyldesley Primary School with governance provided by a CLC. The headteacher of the primary school has overall responsibility as the head of the centre. A member of the school's senior management team provides strategic leadership and a full-time project coordinator provides day-to-day management. The centre runs activities in three satellite centres in Astley, Shakerley and at Tyldesley Primary School.

The centre serves families from widely varying social and economic circumstances. There are just over 800 children under-five in the area covered by the centre. Of these, around 300 are from families who fall within the most disadvantaged 30% of families as measured by a range of social and economic indicators. In one ward, families fall within the lowest 10%. Generally, the proportion of families without work is higher than normally seen and children's attainment on entry to school lower than for most children of their age. A high proportion of families is of White British heritage, with only 3% from minority ethnic groups, which is well below the average.

At the time of the inspection, the centre had just emerged from a prolonged period of reorganisation, in response to a reduction in funding.

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

Tyldesley Children's Centre provides a satisfactory service to its community. It has been through a period of significant turbulence over the last 18 months. This has led to a new governance structure, new leadership and the loss of the centre's café and crèche facilities. The new team was not yet fully in place at the time of the inspection. The new strategic leader and project coordinator have already, in a period of just a few weeks, formed a strong working partnership and show a clear understanding of the current and future priorities for the centre. It is testament to the commitment and dedication of key staff, particularly those in the link worker role, that provision for the community has been adequately maintained throughout this period.

Strong and improving partnerships have been an important contributor to this. Centre users express full appreciation overall for the importance of the centre in their lives. However, parents and carers feel that the loss of the crèche and the café has had a negative impact on the social and support services that the centre provides. The partnership with health visitors effectively supports the centre in ensuring that a large proportion of families in the reach¹ area are registered with the centre. However, the subsequent take-up and impact of wider services across the community is no better than satisfactory. The centre is aware of this and is effectively putting in place steps to improve the take-up across the area and to identify and overcome barriers to full and sustained engagement.

The work of the centre in supporting the most vulnerable families in its community is one of its strengths. The coordinated work of the link worker provides these families with the opportunity to better their lives. Improved partnership working between the centre, childcare providers and primary schools means that the attainment of children under five across the reach area is showing steady improvement. Furthermore, the gap in the achievement of children in the most disadvantaged circumstances compared to others is narrowing. Effective partnership working with Jobcentre Plus is reducing worklessness in the area. The centre has considerable success in helping parents and carers complete non-

¹ The area served by a children's centre is known as its reach area.

accredited training such as parenting courses. However, it is less effective in supporting adults to obtain qualifications in literacy and numeracy. This is because links with the local secondary school and college are under-developed.

Safeguarding is good in all its aspects and is a core element of the centre's ethos and practice. Users feel welcome and secure and children learn to manage risk through, for example, participating in physical activities.

Centre staff know well the needs and progress of the individual families that it supports. There is not, however, an effective assessment of need across the community of the reach area in order to support more effective development and targeting of activities and provision. The centre responds appropriately to priorities identified by the local authority's own analysis of data about Wigan, for example, in providing a dental health programme. However, the centre does not consistently collate or always have access to information specific to its locality. The large number of volunteers that contribute to the provision of centre services illustrates its success in helping users acquire the skills and knowledge to become trainers.

Governance and leadership are satisfactory and improving. The Collaborative Leadership Committee (CLC) is fully supportive of the centre. However, it has largely been absorbed during its first year of operation in managing changes in staffing and budget. This has meant that it has not yet consistently developed its monitoring and accountability roles and has not been able to fully challenge the centre to evaluate its impact more effectively. The centre's makes satisfactory use of data and feedback from users to assess local need, to evaluate and provide evidence of impact and to set appropriate targets. The role of users in management and governance is underdeveloped. The CLC and centre leaders show a clear understanding of the centre's key strengths and areas for improvement. The most recent development planning includes appropriate priorities and strategies to secure the required improvements in monitoring and evaluation. As a result the centre currently has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that leaders and managers make full use of all available data and local information to direct services effectively, evaluate the centre's strengths and impact and set challenging targets for improvement.
- Improve access to services, support and education and/or training for the community by providing more social opportunities at the centre and through the provision of childcare enable more parents to attend training.
- Improve educational opportunities for adults by further developing links with other providers such as with secondary schools and colleges.
- Ensure that users of the centre have more opportunities to contribute to the development of services and a better representation on the Collaborative Leadership Committee (CLC).

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Outcomes for families are satisfactory. They are improving in a number of areas and are good in some. The centre provides a range of activities which satisfactorily improve the health and well-being of families. Learning programmes such as 'Mini Chefs' provide opportunities for children as young as two years-of-age to make healthy choices about what they eat. Parents and carers are actively involved in working with their children in such sessions, learning alongside their children. The centre provides useful support to new mothers and breastfeeding rates after six weeks are higher than in the local authority overall.

The most visible impact of the work of the centre is on the health, safety and well-being of individual, vulnerable families being supported by the link worker. The link worker liaises closely with key partners in health and social services, particularly health visitors and outreach staff from 'Right from the Start', to ensure that the needs of these users are met. Comments such as, 'I don't know what I would do without the centre.' and 'The centre has been a lifeline for me.' indicate the value that these parents place on their relationship with the centre. The centre is not currently able to provide clear evidence of impact across its reach area on some of the key health indicators as it has not, historically, collated data that would show trends of improvement. Centre leaders are aware of this shortfall and have begun to take steps to ensure better strategic use of such data.

Children are kept safe and protected well. The centre is safe and welcoming and all planning, for off-site and on-site activities, involves appropriate risk assessment. Within activities, strategies are used which explicitly support children's developing understanding of how to consider safety and risk. The centre guides users to a suitable range of services and resources which support families' and children's safety. For example, support is provided through the 'WAVE' domestic violence project. Also, children who have witnessed domestic violence are a target group for accessing two-year-old funding for nursery places. Feedback from parents and carers shows that all respondents identify improvement in their confidence and family life and almost all felt that their parenting skills had improved - particularly through access to parenting courses provided by Action for Children.

Children's enjoyment and achievement is good. Integrated strategies for childcare for children aged below five are leading to good improvements in the target areas of communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development by the time that these children begin formal schooling. The qualified teacher and lead childminder, facilitated through the centre, have key roles in improving the skills of the childcare community and standardising the assessment of children's progress across these providers. Closer engagement with the primary schools in the reach area, for example through the use of schools' staff to deliver provision at the centre and satellite centres, is also increasingly supporting improving outcomes.

Children and their parents and carers are developing satisfactory skills for the future overall. Parents enjoy and appreciate the activities provided through the centre, such as 'Men Matter' and 'Stay and Play' at the Astley Tots' Plot site. Children respond well to staff and show respect and concern for each other during activities. They participate enthusiastically and are proud of what they make, for example, in artwork and music. The 'Triple P' parenting course has had a positive impact on children's behaviour. There has been more limited impact on improving the educational and economic outcomes for adult users. There are, however, some encouraging, emerging trends in reducing worklessness through the involvement of Jobcentre Plus and increasing access to nursery funding for low-income working families. The lack of crèche facilities is now limiting the potential for further improvement for parents and carers through attendance at training courses. Opportunities to exploit the skills and resources of secondary and college providers in the area, for adult learning and sustained engagement of some key groups, have not previously been taken. The new centre leaders are actively pursuing these avenues.

The centre benefits from the input of a significant number of volunteers in providing services. The volunteers began their involvement as centre users. The commitment and enthusiasm of this group has not, however, been as effectively harnessed as it could have been to develop user engagement in the management and governance of the centre. The 'Building User Group', the parents' forum, has fallen into disuse during the last 18 months. The centre is beginning to develop community cohesion in its most challenging areas, for example, through the recent partnership established with the Police Community Support Officer and projects to engage young people at risk of anti-social behaviour in Shakerley.

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
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	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

3

The centre makes satisfactory use of assessment overall. It provides effective assessment of needs once a family is known to them. It does not, however, collect and make full use of local data and health information to ensure that it understand the challenges of its reach area as well as it knows the full local authority profile. This limits its ability to understand

which services are most needed within its community and to respond effectively to changing local need. Local knowledge has, however, ensured that a range of key services have been delivered directly at the Shakerley Community Centre site. The quality of the individual activities and programmes provided by the centre is good, but the team knows that there is potential to make better use of its facilities to increase the range and level of provision and so secure engagement and impact more widely across the community.

The close working partnerships with health and social services ensure that detailed assessments of potentially vulnerable families are in place and the centre's knowledge of the changing needs of these families is secure. Case studies and feedback from users indicate that families receive well-integrated and sensitive support and that strong relationships based on trust are established between the centre and families. The 'Men Matter' project is contributing effectively to the health and parenting skills of fathers, for example, through gardening activities and swimming lessons with their children. The new centre leaders are actively pursuing the development of new partnerships and creative ways of working and commissioning services, as well as different ways of funding activities, in order to secure the future improvement of provision. For example, they are exploring the possibilities of locating a range of midwifery services within the centre.

The centre promotes learning and enjoyment well. The activities provided through the centre are planned well and effectively promote learning and enjoyment. Physical activities, including outdoor play, and music are used well to engage and stimulate; the enthusiasm of the children is clearly apparent. The centre has worked with partner providers and commissioned services to ensure that the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is integral to the development of all activities for children and is explicitly referenced in planning. The aims of each activity are clear and parents are supported well in developing ideas and resources to use with their children at home to continue learning beyond the centre. The training and support networks provided by the qualified teacher and lead childminder, such as the weekly good-practice sessions for childminders, are steadily improving the provision in childcare settings within the reach area. The centre is working actively with strategic partners within the local authority to coordinate more precisely targeted support within the childcare community.

The environment in the centre is friendly, supportive and welcoming but staff, users and partners feel that it has lost its 'buzz' since the loss of the café and crèche. The sense of community and easy access to friendly, helpful company that the café is said to have provided were important factors in making new users feel welcome. Centre leaders are fully aware of this and are actively seeking ways to provide more opportunities for members of the community to meet socially.

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	2

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The current governance and leadership of the centre have been established so recently that the implications of some roles and functions are not yet fully understood. The CLC structure, with high levels of representation from education partners, has brought improved commitment and contribution from local primary schools, with positive impact on outcomes for young children already evident. The strategic involvement of the health and social care partners is lower, with no social care representation on the CLC, although practical working arrangements with both of these partners are strong. The voice of the community on the CLC is relatively small, with only two representatives in a body comprising 16 members. The absence of an active user forum to inform the work of these representatives, and consultation which is not always clearly focused, limits the contribution of users and the community to governance and management and, therefore, their opportunity to shape provision.

Staff and governors are highly committed to improving lives and outcomes for the local community, but data and review have not historically been used sufficiently well to measure and demonstrate impact effectively. The centre or its commissioned providers take feedback from users on all provision. However, this is often focused simply on satisfaction rather than being supportive of improvement planning. The members of the CLC are, therefore, not sufficiently well informed to challenge the work of the centre. Current leaders are aware of the shortcomings of previous evaluation systems and are taking appropriate steps to make evaluation and target-setting robust. Immediate plans for the future, and actions taken recently, show that the centre leaders understand where the strengths and weaknesses in provision lie and are planning for improvement in the required areas. The satisfactory impact of the centre's work on outcomes for users means that it offers satisfactory value for money.

Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily and there is emerging evidence of the narrowing of the gaps in achievement between children from disadvantaged families and the rest. The centre's volunteers provide positive role models, including for users and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The centre is aware that it could do more to provide services at a wider variety of times and the loss of the crèche is also limiting access for some parents and carers. Safeguarding arrangements are good and are regularly reviewed. Clear procedures are in place for reporting concerns and effective collaboration with other agencies helps to reduce the risk of harm to children.

Partnership working with the key partners in health, education and social care as well as the private and voluntary sector is good. Centre leaders are well aware of the need to develop further, creative ways of working with partners to compensate for the loss of its own staff. They have begun to take steps towards this. Partnership with volunteers from the

community is a growing strength. A significant number of volunteers started in the centre as parents and carers. They have sufficiently developed their skills and knowledge to be able to lead activities. The centre is committed to the concept of inclusive and integrated service provision and works well with partners towards this goal. The project coordinator has the full confidence of the community. One parent told inspectors that she is an, 'inspiration' to the centre and community.

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	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

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 Tyldesley Children's Centre on 18 to 19 August 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us. It was helpful to get your points of view on how the centre helps and offers support. You told us that you enjoy good relationships with the staff and feel completely safe and secure when seeking advice and guidance. We agree with you that the staff are welcoming and helpful and were glad to hear how much the centre is valued. The centre has experienced a huge amount of change over

the last 18 months and has had its budget cut significantly, and you told us how much you miss the café and crèche facilities that were lost as a result of the changes. The café provided an important social and contact centre when you could have felt isolated and the crèche enabled parents to attend courses and seek other support which they would otherwise not have been able to reach. We agree with you that the centre needs to develop facilities to support all parents and carers wishing to access all it has to offer.

The activities that we visited were of good quality and were planned effectively to ensure that your children learn and develop well. The children clearly enjoyed the activities, such as 'Jive Bunnies' and 'Mini Chefs', and parents who attended were fully involved and enjoyed the time with their children. We think that those of you who are experiencing difficulties in your lives are supported well to make your families and children healthy and safe. Centre staff work well with other services and providers, such as health visitors, to get to know families well and make sure that they are meeting your needs. The centre staff are working hard now to extend the range of activities that they can offer, both at the centre site and at other places, such as those currently used in Shakerley and Astley.

Some of you are working with the centre as volunteers, taking an active part in making the centre a truly community enterprise. The volunteers are also gaining valuable experience, training and qualifications, which will help to improve their future working lives. The work of the centre with local primary schools, nurseries and childminders is improving your children's skills in communication, language and literacy before they start school. The centre asks you for feedback on the activities and courses that you attend, but since the user group stopped meeting you do not have as much opportunity as we believe you should have to take an active part in managing the centre and making decisions about its future.

The staff and members of the Collaborative Leadership Committee (CLC) are highly committed to the centre and its community and we have asked them to make some improvements. We have asked that they more fully understand the needs of the whole of the community to involve it more, and ensure that services are directed really effectively. We would like them to check more effectively if the centre is really making a positive difference to the community. We have asked the centre to ensure there are facilities to enable all parents and carers to access its activities. We have asked them to work more closely with the secondary school and college to improve the opportunities for more parents to achieve further training and qualifications.

Thanks again for your help and we wish you all the best for the future.

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