

Inspection report for Coldhurst Children's Centre

Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	383658
Inspection dates	21 – 22 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Janet Stacey HMI

Centre leader	Karen Bennett
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Richmond Primary School 134246
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Richmond Children's Centre EY339761

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, centre staff, the chairperson of the governing body, headteacher, users, key partners and three local authority officers linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work, including a number of activity sessions and also conducted a visit to a family's home in the community. They also looked at a range of documentation including the centre's development plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Coldhurst Children's Centre is a phase 1 centre which was established in 2007 and is co-located in Richmond Primary School. The reach area is ranked among the 30% most deprived areas in the country with the majority of areas in the community ranking among the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods. Social issues affecting these areas are a high percentage of families on workless benefits and adults with no qualifications or skills to enable them to enter the workforce. Health issues affecting the area include a high percentage of women suffering from maternal mental health related problems. The number of adults requesting support for domestic abuse is rising. The majority of families in the area are of Bangladeshi origin. There has been an increase of Eastern European communities and asylum seekers recently moving into the area. The centre takes referrals from and supports families with children in four local schools.

Family support, and early year's advice and childcare are provided at the centre. Health partners are based at the Integrated Care Centre. The centre works with Moorside, Royton and South Chadderton health centres. The social team work is based at Prospect House and Royton Town Hall. Children in the reach area enter childcare and early education with a much narrower range of experiences and skills below those expected for their age. The centre operates a variety of groups and activities on site and at different designated sites across the community.

Governance of the centre is provided by the governors of Richmond Primary School in conjunction with an advisory board. A wide range of professionals are represented on the advisory board, these include centre staff, local headteachers, health partners, social work partners, local housing association, and users.

The centre has experienced significant staffing reductions and changes in the last year.

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 families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

Coldhurst Children's Centre sets out to establish itself as the heart of the community; where families can go to for support, advice and guidance and to be an accessible place in times of crisis. It has achieved these aims and demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvement. This is down to the outstanding leadership and governance of the centre, which from the onset has listened to the voices in the local community and understood that in order to give children the best start in life they first had to gain the trust from the community. The centre is now a thriving, busy place where all users say they feel completely safe and view the centre as a safe haven. This absolute trust in the centre staff ensures families, particularly those groups whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, benefit from a range of good quality services that are carefully tailored to meet their particular needs.

Notable strengths of the centre include the successful and sustained engagement with families when intensive support is most needed, the improvement of parenting skills and the provision of very effective emotional support in times of crisis. The centre places great importance to listening to both adults and children. As a result, gender barriers are being removed with more men starting to take an interest in their young children's learning and women becoming less isolated and making new friends. The centre fully meets safeguarding requirements and promotes equality and diversity very well. The analysis of the needs of those who use the centre and need crisis support is extremely thorough.

The vital relationship between the centre and health visitors has strengthened as centre staff are now undertaking all follow up visits to new births at three months and 12 months. However, not all health and social care related issues are being shared with the centre, such as mothers who sustain breastfeeding and the number of children and adults who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities who live in the area. In addition, while the centre is noting some successes in adults moving off benefits, Jobcentre Plus do not always share information highlighting the impact of their work. This lack of information sometimes impacts on the centre's determination to identify families who need their support to develop healthy lifestyles and to help users move out of poverty.

The centre's commitment to break cycles of deprivation, support parents and carers into employment and reduce child poverty has taken place against a background of significant staffing reductions. At the same time, the number of children and families needing support has substantially increased. Careful consideration now has to be given by the local authority to ensure that the centre is able to sustain the momentum and progress it has achieved so far.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should ensure that the centre has the necessary resources to help more users lead healthy lifestyles and to find work
- Improve the sharing of relevant data with partners such as the Primary Care Trust, social care and Jobcentre Plus.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre has been successful in actively involving men. For example, the 'Incredible Years' course ran solely for fathers. The sessions not only enabled them to learn behaviour techniques alongside their children, but also educated them on the effects of post natal depression and the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse. As a result of attending the course, they went on to establish their own 'Stay & Play' group where they learnt the importance of play in their young children lives. In addition, the number of men seeking support from domestic abuse has risen. A typical comment from one parent was, 'I have learnt to encourage my child more, as well as this my children are playing well together especially with their little sister'.

Fresh fruit, vegetables and healthy snacks are mandatory at all activities. The 'Let's Grow Project' educated families on the benefits of giving children a well-balanced diet. Historically, some families are reluctant to wean their child off a bottle. The centre is working hard to address this issue and has noted some changes in cultural behaviours but knows that more work needs to be done to ensure that all children enter school at a healthy weight and visit a dentist regularly.

The emphasis on helping children and parents who use the centre to be aware of how to keep themselves safe is outstanding. Users of the centre say that they feel completely safe. They know that they can trust the staff to help them in times of crisis or personal difficulties. Engagement workers visit all homes to help families, in particular new mums, understand how fitting safety equipment plays an important part in keeping their inquisitive children safe. Fire safety advisors also visit all homes in the area to help families understand the importance of how to make an escape plan in case a fire does break out. In addition, all homes are provided with smoke alarms.

'Baby Moves' sessions are very popular and help parents learn the positive value of physical stimulation including holding, movement, touch and voice and relaxation techniques. New parents are given an incentive to visit the centre as they receive a professional photograph of their child at the setting. Children make good progress in their learning when they attend the centre's provision and demonstrate good behaviour.

Users have excellent opportunities to offer suggestions and requests for activities that they feel will benefit their children. They regularly feed ideas via the popular 'Mother's and Father's Forums' to the parent representatives on the advisory board. Outcomes are shared on the 'You Said We Did' noticeboard which is strategically placed so that users know their views have been considered and what action has been agreed. The centre cites this as a remarkable achievement as when the centre first opened users did not contribute, rarely made eye contact and did not bring their children to the centre.

The centre has a number of detailed case studies which show how well individual families have made progress in their personal and social development and how some families have improved their economic stability. The centre works closely with Barnardo's who offer an advocacy and advice service. This successful partnership ensures families are able to access the benefits to which they are entitled which, in turn, has helped many families avoid getting into financial debt.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target 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	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre knows the families in the area well and has excelled in identifying the ones whose circumstances make them more vulnerable and who are in need of greater support. As a consequence, resources have been perceptively allocated in proportion to the scale and intensity of disadvantage. Outreach and engagement work plus effective one-to-one support are making a positive contribution to breaking down barriers, particularly for families who are at risk, isolated or who are new to the area. Joint home visits are often made with staff from a referring agency ensuring that family support is carefully focused on parents' and carers' needs. The centre is now obtaining more precise information about new births in the area and, as a result, the centre leader is confident they are registering and engaging a high majority of families with children in the area.

All parents and carers who spoke to inspectors were positive about the centre and explained the impact different services have had on their family's lives. They were particularly complimentary about the care, support and guidance offered at the centre and in their home and the good range of activities they could attend. A comment from one parent was, 'I was highly qualified back home I felt that I was nothing here. The centre has helped me undertake a conversion course. This has been a great sense of relief. I can go on now and fulfil my ambition.'

The centre provides nursery places for some of the most vulnerable two-year-olds in the area. Alongside this, the centre provides a wide range of family learning opportunities activities in the centre and at several sites across the area. These activities encourage both sets of parents to learn together and to become jointly more actively involved in their child's early education.

The children's centre teacher works closely with the local schools and has run two relatively successful 'Transition into School' courses. Headteachers report that the children who attended these courses settled well into Nursery and embraced the learning environment and settled more quickly than those that did not attend. Parents are keen to see these continue. While children enter school with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age, the Early Years Foundation Stage data show that children's communication and language and personal and social skills are improving as a result of the centre's success to involve parents and carers in their child's early learning. This is reflected in the good uptake of places by two and three-year-olds who receive nursery funding.

The centre is a very welcoming environment. There is a good mix of consultation and training rooms. The resources throughout the centre are of a very good quality. The centre ensures that good-quality information about many aspects of parenting, including advice about how to keep children healthy and safe, is freely available to parents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

6

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management are consistently good at all levels and excellent in some aspects. There is clear, motivating leadership from the centre leader. The centre offers outstanding value for money. The staff at the centre have faced many changes and challenges but never view anything as a problem. Instead, they always look for a solution. The centre leader has developed a well-qualified enthusiastic and talented team. This is a significant strength, not only within the centre, but also for the wider community. The governing body, advisory board and users have consistently set ambitious and challenging targets for the centre. They have actively challenged the local authority to ensure that they are fully supported to meet the wide-ranging needs of the community. The centre so far has never failed to meet these expectations.

The centre has developed some good partnerships, in particular with the headteacher of Richmond School who is unfailing in his support and drive to operate a fully integrated site where education and care work seamlessly together. The local mosques and Imams fully support the work of the centre and have been influential in raising the centre's profile and encouraging users to attend. The centre works closely with a wide range of health and social care partners but is often hindered by the lack of information that the Primary Care Trust, social care and Jobcentre Plus partners are able to share with them.

The centre's comprehensive range of policies and procedures are embedded well and applied routinely. The centre promotes diversity which is celebrated through resources and information which reflect different faiths, cultures, and backgrounds. Careful consideration has been given to the design of the centre so that all users can gain full access. The centre provides an effective level of service for the families with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities that are known to them.

Safeguarding users is a clear priority at the centre and keeping children and families safe is at the forefront of their work. The centre's comprehensive policies and procedures are well embedded in the centre and applied routinely. Case study evidence indicates that families have received well-integrated and sensitive support in times of crisis. Safeguarding arrangements comply with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board requirements. Clear procedures are in place for reporting child protection issues and are fully understood and followed by all staff and key partners. The receptionist at the centre is extremely vigilant in ensuring that no one passes through into the centre until they have signed in. All areas of the centre are protected by key pads and thumb recognition entry systems.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use of ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.	1

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

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* 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 Coldhurst Children's Centre on 21 and 22 September 2011 and spoke with many of you about the centre's work. We judged the centre as good overall with some aspects that are outstanding.

We really enjoyed chatting with you in meetings and during activities at the centre. You expressed your views very clearly and they were very helpful to us. You told us that you appreciate the fact that the centre staff go out of their way to listen to your views and to create a caring and safe environment for you. We can see that the centre does all it can to get you involved and staff work really hard to ensure that all the activities are usually exactly what you requested and what you need. It is clear to us that the centre knows local families and the wider community very well and we can see how the centre is starting to make a positive difference to your lives. Everyone we spoke to told us how much the centre

had helped you and your families. We were delighted to hear that some of you now feel more confident to support your children at home, particularly in their play and learning and that the centre has had a huge impact on improving how you feel about yourselves. We did notice that while the centre does provide you with lots of ideas and activities on how to provide healthy nutritious meals, some of you are not moving your children on to solid foods when they are ready to do so.

It was really encouraging to hear that many of you feel less isolated in the community and have been able to socialise more by popping into the centre or some of the sites used by the centre, and that some of you have now established your own network groups in the community.

The staff work really hard to make the centre as good as it can be. To help them we have asked that the local authority continues to support the centre and provide them with the resources they need to start to build on the trust the centre has gained with you and help more of you to lead healthy lifestyles and help you to find work and become independent. While there are many good partners working with the centre, we found that not all health partners and social care partners or Jobcentre plus work together to share information to help the centre prioritise and identify where help may be needed for those in your community whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.

Thank you to all the users that we met for your input into the inspection. It really was appreciated and we wish you all the best for the future and for the continued success of your centre.

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