

Inspection report for Hancock Street Children's Centre

Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	383589
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY335037 Hancock Street Children's Centre

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the geographical and operational managers, senior leaders, a range of centre staff and representatives from the local authority. Discussions were also held with parents, grandparents and carers, members of the local management board, partners and centre users.

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

Information about the centre

Hancock Street Children's Centre has developed from a Sure Start Local Programme and was designated as a phase one children's centre in 2006. It is part of a network of 13 children's centres within the Blackburn with Darwen area and is funded through the local authority. The centre is based in the heart of the community in the Mill Hill ward of Blackburn and serves families living in one of the 10% most deprived areas in the country. The population is predominantly of White British heritage with 10% of the population from black and minority ethnic groups. A higher than average number of families face issues of poverty, high levels of long-term ill-health, low average household income, poor dental health and unhealthy lifestyles.

The centre operates closely with St Luke's and St Philip's Primary School and Mill Hill Early Years Centre and takes a coordinated approach to the delivery of services and activities. The centre is governed by the local authority and has a management board made up of representatives from the local community, including parents and carers and professionals. The early years geographical manager leads the services provided and coordinates those provided by its partners. An operational manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of each centre. A multi-agency team that includes health visitors, midwives, outreach and family support workers, Credit Union and Jobcentre Plus provides services across the children's centre.

A wide range of services, activities and family learning are provided at the centre, including specialist services for families and children with additional or complex health needs. Most children enter Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age. Childcare is delivered in partnership with a range of local providers; predominately Care4Kids which is very closely located. The centre delivers supported childcare places for two-year-old children, with St Luke’s and St Philip’s School transition provision for three to four year olds from within the centre. Until April 2011, the centre provided the full core offer with early years provision on-site.

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

Hancock Street Children’s Centre is good in meeting the needs of its community. Outreach programmes are extremely effective. Multi-agency staff teams ensure that families, especially those from target groups, are sensitively engaged within their own environment before moving on to the centre.

The centre is at the hub of its community and is a friendly and welcoming place where users feel their views are listened to. Partnerships are outstanding. There is, for example, a particularly effective focus group, Family Voices, which provides a forum for users’ views. The centre is actively investigating other consultation mechanisms, in order to further engage with those who have a limited contact with the centre. For many the centre provides a safe haven and a place to make new friends, ‘I do not know what I would have done without the children’s centre – the centre has supported me through a difficult time.’

The centre offers good quality support to children and families, which lead directly to improved outcomes. This is particularly the case in relation to health outcomes which are outstanding. There has been a demonstrable uptake in breastfeeding, a clear reduction of teenage pregnancies and the adoption of more physical activity by children and adults. The centre is very inclusive and users are treated with understanding and respect. The gap

between the attainment of some target groups is narrowing, particularly in relation to teenage mums.

Staff have high levels of expertise and are deployed very effectively across the area. There is excellent partnership working which ensures that users receive all the advice and support they need in a coherent and integrated approach.

The quality of its provision is outstanding and is reflected in the fact that the full range of services and advice available on-site are used very well. The care, guidance and support offered are outstanding. As one user commented, 'I've had lots of support from the centre. I love it. There's nothing else they could do for me'. Users are exceptionally well safeguarded. They feel safe and the full range of appropriate policies and procedures are embedded. A particularly effective programme of home visiting ensures that families most at risk understand the potential hazards in the home and are able to respond appropriately.

The local management board is committed to improving outcomes for the community it serves. Members have a good range of skills and experience and parents and carers are increasingly involved in decision making, although the use of data is not yet used routinely to measure outcomes and monitor user outcomes. The local authority provides strategic leadership and supports managers with good supervision. The centre, through its management and governance, has a clear vision for the future which contributes to a good capacity to improve in the future.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the rigour of the self-evaluation process, ensuring that areas for development are clearly identified and lead to measurable improvement.
- Develop the collection and analysis of data to improve target setting and to monitor user outcomes more effectively.
- Strengthen the strategies for increasing the range of users particularly in relation to those who are not regular clients of the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for centre users are good overall and outstanding in relation to Being Healthy and Staying Safe. There is a very extensive range of services to support local families in relation to improving health outcomes. A very large majority of families, including target groups, actively engage with the centre on a regular basis. Consequently, there is very clear and persuasive evidence of the centre's positive impact on health in the community. The success in reaching the targets for promoting breastfeeding has been recognised in the centre gaining the Believing Breast Feeding Stage 3 award. Pregnancy rates for 15-17 year olds have dropped considerably, due directly to the outstanding multi-agency support offered to

teenagers at risk. The community cafe offers nutritionally balanced and affordable meals, in a welcoming and pleasant environment. The centre offers many opportunities to encourage physical well-being. There is an attractive designated outdoor space for children’s play and learn activities and fathers enjoy and benefit from football activities. A number of appropriate health partners attend the centre to provide a holistic support network, for example, health visitors, speech and language therapists and oral health specialists.

All centre users report that the centre is a very warm and welcoming place, where they feel safe and their children can flourish. Children behave very well and there is an excellent understanding of potential hazards and how to keep safe. Family support workers actively contribute to families staying safe through targeted home visits. Safeguarding is exceptionally well promoted. Risk assessments are undertaken and well recorded. There is a very clear improvement in confidence and parenting skills from the majority of families in target groups. The centre offers exceptional support to users experiencing crisis and work across agencies to ensure that they are kept safe. The Common Assessment Framework is integral to identifying need and supporting outcomes. Where child protection plans are in place these are carefully monitored and provide excellent levels of appropriate support.

Children and adults enjoy learning and achieve well. Parents and carers increase their parenting skills and develop their language, literacy and language skills through programmes offered at the centre by a range of partners. Many families are clearly improving their economic skills and readiness for employment. Children are well-prepared for transition to school, with the local primary school now responsible for the transition stage. There is an extremely positive relationship between the school and the children’s centre, which is of mutual benefit. Centre users are engaged in the governance of the centre, with three parent members serving on the local management board. There is a real sense of ownership, with users talking passionately about ‘their’ centre and the difference it has made to their lives. The centre has become the real hub of its community.

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	1
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	2
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?

1

The centre meets the needs of its community exceptionally well. Outreach programmes are particularly effective in identifying, supporting and securing the engagement of families most at risk. This includes Travellers and women in refuge centres. The programmes are clearly tailored to respond to assessed need and there is a very strong commitment from staff to ensure that all community needs are met. The quality and range of services are excellent. There is evidence of partners working very effectively to ensure that assessments, including those carried out under the Common Assessment Framework, and assessments of children with additional needs are robust and well-informed. The centre has been particularly effective in meeting the needs of male users. A 'Dads' group, with an identified champion, ensures that men feel comfortable about using the centre and can contribute to the further development of the services offered.

The centre celebrates achievement well and helps to raise aspirations. Users grow in confidence and extend their personal and social skills well. Many of the case studies gathered by the centre clearly demonstrate considerable progress made by members of the target groups. A full range of activities take place at the centre, but the centre uses outreach particularly well to establish provision using local facilities that are accessible and non-threatening for target groups, for example, some provision for Travellers takes place on their own site.

The quality of care provided for families is outstanding. A highly personalised level of support is offered that meets individual needs, as well as those of the community. This stems from excellent assessment of need. Family support services have been streamlined and coordination between services is very good. This approach is particularly effective when meeting the needs of families and individuals in crisis. Very good information, advice and guidance are offered by a range of providers, which have a very positive impact on users' outcomes. Jobcentre Plus has a presence in the centre and Connexions offers particularly strong support to young mothers, aged 14-19. Clear signposting to other agencies including the local college encourages progression, where appropriate. The centre displays information and guidance on a range of health related issues, including smoking cessation, alcohol and drug misuse. More sensitive information regarding domestic abuse and sexual health is displayed confidentially in toilets and washrooms within the centre.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
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

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. The local management board is composed of a wide range of individuals with appropriate levels of skills and experience. The centre has worked particularly hard to recruit parents and carers on to the board. The board offers appropriate levels of scrutiny and acts as a critical friend to the centre. Reporting mechanisms in relation to finance and participation are now embedded, and the board is aware that it needs to require clearer targets across all performance measures to ensure more effective monitoring and evaluation. All staff receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal process is in place. The centre's good outcomes mean that it gives good value for money.

Leaders and managers are well motivated and committed to improvement. The self-evaluation process is inclusive and involves all stakeholders including parents, carers, children and staff. The judgements made in the self-evaluation framework document are broadly accurate and leaders and managers know the area they serve well. The centre's procedures for monitoring its performance are systematic enough to give a detailed picture of its performance. However, the link between evaluation and measurable targets set in the development or action plans is not sufficiently clear.

The centre is very well used and the environment is very conducive to learning. The centre is open daily and used for training and other community events in the evenings and some weekends. The centre is a pleasant and welcoming place and the community cafe is particularly effective in providing a non-threatening entry point to centre activities and services. Very effective deployment of staff across the reach area ensures that experience and knowledge is used most appropriately. Work has recently been undertaken on the development of sustainable resources. The centre is inclusive and all users are treated with respect. Some significant improvements have been achieved in the engagement of target groups, including single parents, fathers and asylum seekers. Strategies are in place to narrow the achievement gaps, and are particularly effective in relation to teenage parents.

The centre's arrangements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are excellent. Robust vetting and recruitment processes are in place for staff, members of the management board and volunteers. The highest priority is given to safeguarding and all policies and procedures are consistently implemented. Agencies work together to ensure close cooperation takes place in relation to early intervention, appropriate referrals and careful follow-up. All staff are appropriately trained. Outstanding partnerships provide an integrated approach ensuring that families, and target groups in particular, have more opportunities in life and greatly improved outcomes. The centre management team takes a very active role in establishing and sustaining these partnerships. Families using the centre are able to influence the shaping of provision. The Family Voices focus group, in particular, is an extremely effective way of expressing views which informs decision making. Centre staff are strengthening consultation mechanisms to get the views of users who have a more limited connection with the centre.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use of ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
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	1
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	1
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.	2

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

Information made available from the recent inspection of Hancock Street Early Years provision was taken into account.

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Summary for centre users

Thank you for your help when we inspected Hancock Street Children’s Centre on 29–30 September 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. Some aspects of the work are outstanding, including the care, guidance and support offered to families. We enjoyed the chance to talk with many of you during our inspection of the centre. We found that the centre was outstanding in meeting the needs of the community. You told us how friendly and welcoming the centre is and the helpful and supportive manner of the staff. You appreciate the way your views are taken into account when developing activities in the centre. You told us that you felt more confident in dealing with many of the issues facing you.

The centre works very closely with many partners to provide many activities at the centre. We were impressed with the information, advice and guidance offered at the centre. We judged this aspect of its provision to be outstanding. You told us how much you appreciated

the opportunity to get health advice, support in stopping smoking, and information on college courses, all at the same place. You liked the fact that this was accessible when you brought your children to play and learn activities. The centre itself is warm and friendly and you told us it makes a real difference to your lives. The community cafe welcomes visitors and encourages new users to take advantage of the all the services the centre has to offer. Hancock Street Children's Centre is a safe environment and there are many opportunities to make new friends and learn new things. You told us that you found some of the parenting programmes useful and the opportunity to prepare for job interviews was equally helpful. We know that you also appreciate that staff come and visit you in your homes to offer help and support.

The staff at the centre are very committed to making the centre even better. We have suggested that they use data more effectively to set targets and measure improvement. We have also suggested that they continue to look for more ways to collect the views of centre users, particularly those who do not come into the centre very often.

Thank you very much for your welcome. We enjoyed talking with you and we send you our best wishes for the future.

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