

Inspection report for Crompton Children's Centre

Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	383662
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Rachael Flesher HMI

Centre leader	Mrs Charlotte Mitchell
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Chalfont Street Bolton Lancashire BL1 8JS
Telephone number	01204 334950
Fax number	01204 334978
Email address	Charlotte.mitchell@bolton.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	None
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	None

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 an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, centre staff and representatives from professional partnerships, the advisory board and the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Crompton Children's Centre is situated in the Crompton ward of Bolton. The centre was designated as a Phase 2 children's centre in January 2008. It operates from a single site and also provides outreach visits in the home. The centre leader has been in temporary post since July 2011. The local authority is currently conducting a review and restructure of services.

The centre serves families living in one of the 10% most deprived areas in the country. 74.4% of the population the centre serves are from Black and minority ethnic groups with the largest group being of Indian Muslim origin. For some of these families English is an additional language.

Families often have low levels of literacy and numeracy skills with limited or no qualifications, and low confidence. The majority of families are low income households, with women from Black and minority ethnic groups often staying at home and not always claiming job seekers allowance. Approximately a third of children aged 0–5 years are living in households dependant on workless benefits; 32.47% of families in the reach area are lone parent families.

The centre is governed by the local authority and has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, parents and partner professionals. The centre also has a parents' forum.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

The local authority, and subsequently the children's centre, has recently undergone a review of services and staffing restructure. As a result, the centre leader has only recently been appointed and centre service delivery and resources, including the appointment of staff, finalised. Through these times of significant change, staff and partners have maintained their enthusiasm, motivation and commitment to improving the outcomes for more families. However, due to staff shortages, depleted services, and a lack of secure leadership and direction, progress towards improving areas for development has been slow. Currently, only some of the children and families from key target groups are engaged in centre services to improve their outcomes. In addition, not all children are accessing their three-and-four-year-old nursery education entitlement, as parents do not always understand the value and importance of play in supporting children's learning and development and readiness for school. The centre does not have sufficiently robust systems in place for monitoring and demonstrating the impact of provision and services on the outcomes for families in the community, particularly in the long term. The recently appointed centre leader has swiftly and correctly identified key areas for development and has begun to make well-directed improvements, securing a strong foundation upon which to build.

Particular strengths of the centre are the good safeguarding arrangements and strong partnerships in place with a wide range of professionals and organisations ensuring effective integrated working and service delivery. Information is shared to ensure the needs of vulnerable young children and their families are identified swiftly and steps taken to address them. This ensures children are safe and protected and their outcomes are rapidly improving. The quality of care, guidance and support for families, particularly in times of crisis, is also good. Plans for the future are well targeted and the centre has the ability to further improve the engagement and outcomes for more families in the reach area.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the outcomes for more children and families by:
 - improving the engagement of families from target groups in the centre reach area
 - providing advice and guidance to parents, particularly from the Muslim communities, regarding the values of the Early Years Foundation Stage and children learning through play to ensure children are better prepared for school and enabled to make good progress
 - improving systems to monitor and demonstrate the impact of provision and services on the outcomes for families in the community, particularly in the long term.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Good partnership working and the effective systems in place for assessing the needs of vulnerable children, making referrals and intervening early are having a positive impact on outcomes for children subject to Common Assessment Framework processes, looked-after children and children subject to a child protection plan. Staff intervene swiftly to support families and, as a result, the centre is reducing the number of children needing child protection plans and preventing situations from reaching crisis point. Children and parents feel safe and are safer in their homes and communities as a result of home safety checks and resource provision. Emergency hospital admissions and accidents in and around the home have decreased as a result.

The indoor and outdoor learning environment and resources, including staff, are of good quality and the children accessing this provision are supported to make progress towards the early learning goals. As one parent attending the 'Chatter Matters' group stated, 'Today I have been given lots of positive ideas and advice to help support my child's speech and language development.' Children enjoy the provision. 'My child jumps up and down and is keen to put his shoes on when he knows where we are going. It gives him something to look forward to.' However, parents, particularly those from Muslim communities, do not always understand the values of play to promote children's learning and development and support their readiness for school. As a result, currently only 81% of three-year-old and 93% of four-year-old children are accessing their free nursery education entitlement and only some families are accessing the centre resources and services designed for parents and children to play, have fun and learn together. Improvements in the support and information for parents regarding their child's transition to school and the good partnership working between schools, parents and the centre are beginning to have a positive impact on engaging more parents in their children's learning and development through play, and

subsequently, improve children's readiness for school. As a result, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile and the rest is narrowing.

A majority of families in the reach area are engaging with appropriate health services. A good percentage of children are breastfed at six to eight weeks and many sustain breastfeeding. However, breastfeeding rates have remained stable for some time and uptake is less successful in White British mothers. The centre supports families to improve their health and well-being, particularly regarding healthy eating and exercise as currently 15% of children are obese when they leave primary school. Some families are involved in growing and harvesting a wide range of produce at the centre, of which they are extremely enthusiastic and proud. This produce is available for users to take home and use in their meals at home. This has encouraged some families to eat more vegetables. The café promotes healthy eating and the cookery club provides advice and guidance for parents which they value.

Some families using the centre are engaged in the governance of the centre through membership on the advisory board, parents' forum and volunteers group, leading to personal developments. The majority of families using the centre express their views and feel listened to. The centre is beginning to establish its role in the life of the community and the majority of children and families living in the wider community are developing respect for others.

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	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
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.	3

How good is the provision?

The quality of care for families provided by the centre is good and families receive effective, tailored support to develop their well-being across outcome areas. Staff are extremely welcoming and friendly and take every opportunity to promote the centre services and activities to the community. A wide range of good quality information, advice and guidance is provided. In times of crisis, families, particularly the most vulnerable and in most need of intervention are well supported. As some parents stated, 'I'd be lost without this centre. Whatever help I've needed they've provided', and, 'Nothing is too much for staff at the centre, everybody is equal'.

Assessment and information sharing between partners is used well to ensure all concerned have a good understanding of the needs of the community. The range of services offered is meeting the needs of the majority of families using the centre. Provision to help children learn and develop across all areas of learning is good and staff promote individualised purposeful learning well. As one parent stated, 'The black and white area and outdoor area are fantastic'. Another parent attending a stay and play session for parents and their children stated, 'I've never made my own play dough before. It's got me thinking that I could do some baking at home with my daughter'. The centre has begun to track children's long-term progress to further demonstrate the impact the centre has made to their success through school. However, the centre is only engaging with, and improving the outcomes for, some and not the majority of children and families from the target groups in the reach area. Encouragingly, all staff, partners and those using the centre are strongly committed to improving the engagement of more children and their families as they value the provision and services available and the improvement this can make to the outcomes for families.

Some parents are supported to improve their educational and personal development and reach their aspirations, as demonstrated through case studies and the highly motivated newly formed volunteers group. However, the centre has limited robust evidence available to demonstrate how it has enabled adults to progress to further employment, education or training as it does not currently track their long-term progress.

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	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Families using the centre, the wider community and partners support the centre's work and direction. The centre regularly and meaningfully seeks, and takes account of the views of different groups of users and users are satisfied with services. The centre uses these views to shape services and provision and promote user engagement. The centre has generally clear information about the groups of users that it serves and evaluates their engagement in the provision and services. Outreach services are rightly directed towards engaging with children and families from target groups who do not access services offered by the centre and are beginning to have an impact.

There is a strong commitment by partners to deliver services from the centre at every opportunity to encourage those hard to engage into the centre and promote their engagement with the wider centre services and activities. The centre takes every opportunity to develop and implement a variety of partnership activities with a range of organisations, groups and providers. For example, developing links with the Asian women's group and the local mosques to promote the engagement of Muslim families.

The centre promotes the inclusion of children and their families. The centre is accessible and services are coordinated to ensure children and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported. Staff greet families in their home language and bilingual staff and other services are well utilised to enable target groups who speak English as an additional language to access information and provision at the centre. Information notices to promote users safety and welfare are displayed in dual languages. The range of families using the centre generally reflects the community that the centre serves and diversity is celebrated through events. However, the environment such as displays, does not always illustrate the diverse groups living in the community.

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place and these are regularly reviewed to ensure they are up to date. The centre adopts robust safer recruitment practices to ensure all those who may have unsupervised access to children are safe and suitable. Training for all staff in relation to child protection and safeguarding is of good quality and staff are confident to carry out their duties to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. Procedures for making referrals and sharing information between agencies are effective. Risks are thoroughly assessed and minimised to promote the safety of users and staff who state they feel safe at the centre.

Governance and accountability arrangements are in place and understood at all levels and beginning to be embedded at centre level. Staff are well supported and valued by the centre leadership team. They state the centre leader is, 'Keen to listen and take our ideas forward', and are, 'encouraged to find solutions and be creative'. Staff have good opportunities to access training and development opportunities and to share practice and expertise with a range of professionals, which they value.

Overall self-evaluation provides the centre with an accurate appraisal of its strengths and weaknesses. Plans for the future are well targeted, and all staff, partners and many users are fully informed of what the centre needs to do to secure further improvement. However, processes for monitoring the impact of the provision and services on the outcomes for children and families, particularly in the long term are not fully developed to enable the centre to fully demonstrate its effectiveness.

Staff and resources are well deployed. Resource planning takes account of the need to ensure that services are sustainable and providing value for money and the centre facilities are increasingly being utilised by a range of services and provision. Services and activities are used well by a satisfactory range of families in the reach area and are having an adequate impact on their outcomes.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting 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	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
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.	3

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 Crompton Children's Centre on 16 and 17 November 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. Like you, we found your children's centre to be warm and welcoming. Staff are friendly, enthusiastic and committed to improving the outcomes for your families. Particular strengths of the centre are the good safeguarding arrangements and strong partnerships in place with a wide range of professionals and organisations ensuring they work well together to provide you and your families with the support you need. Information is shared to ensure the needs are identified swiftly and steps are taken to address them. This ensures children are safe and protected and their outcomes are rapidly improving. You and your children are safe when using the centre. Your centre has helped you make your homes safer and children are having fewer accidents.

You have access to services to promote healthy lifestyles and some of you are involved in growing and harvesting a wide range of produce at your centre, of which you are extremely enthusiastic and proud. This produce is available for you to take home and use in your meals at home. This has encouraged some of you to eat more vegetables. Your centre provides families with good care, guidance and support particularly when you are facing times of crisis. As some of you told us, 'I'd be lost without this centre. Whatever help I've needed they've provided', and, 'Nothing is too much for staff at the centre, everybody is equal'.

The centre staff and partners place great importance on encouraging families in your community to access the centre and services. Your centre generally knows the needs of your community and works effectively with you and other professionals to ensure the services it provides meet these needs. However, due to staff shortages, depleted services, and a lack of secure leadership and direction during the local authority review, progress towards improving areas for development has been slow. Currently, only some of the children and families from key target groups are engaged in your centre services to improve their outcomes. Your centre has been asked to improve this.

The indoor and outdoor environment to support children's learning and development is of good quality. Children accessing this provision are making progress and are supported to be prepared for school. As parents attending the Chatter Matters group told us, 'Today I have been given lots of positive ideas and advice to help support my child's speech and language development', and, 'My child jumps up and down and is keen to put his shoes on when he knows where we are going. It gives him something to look forward to'. However, not enough of you are using this provision and not all children are accessing their three-and-four-year-old nursery education entitlement as some parents do not always understand the value and importance of play in supporting children's learning and development and readiness for school. Your centre has been asked to improve this.

Some of you are supported to improve your educational and personal development and reach your aspirations, for example the highly motivated newly formed volunteers group. Your centre meaningfully seeks your views and uses these to make sure it is providing services that are most needed by your community. However, it does not have sufficiently robust systems in place for monitoring and demonstrating the impact of provision and services on the outcomes for families in your community, particularly in the long term. Your centre has been asked to improve this.

The recently appointed centre leader has swiftly and correctly identified key areas for development and has begun to make well-directed improvements, securing a strong foundation upon which to build. Plans for the future are well targeted and the centre has the ability to further improve the engagement and outcomes for more families in community. We wish you all the very best for the future.

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