

Inspection report for Shiremoor Children's Centre

Local authority	North Tyneside
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Childcare Shiremoor 310203

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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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors visited a range of provision across the centre. They also held meetings with senior managers from the centre, parents and carers, members of the advisory board and a number of partners, including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare partners; health, education and children's social care professionals and representatives from Tyne Metropolitan College, Barnardos and Jobcentre Plus.

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

Information about the centre

Shiremoor Children's Centre is located in the north west of North Tyneside. It falls within the top 10% of deprived wards in the country. The reach population of the centre is just over 1100. Recent figures show that over 20% of households are lone parents with dependent children. Estimated weekly income is significantly lower than the North Tyneside average, and the percentage of children under five years old living in households dependent on workless benefits is 18%. The majority of local families are of White British heritage. The proportion of children attending schools in the area, known to be eligible for free school meals, is above the national average. Most children enter childcare and early education with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than that expected for their age. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs is above average.

The centre is located in one building and operates as a 'one-stop-shop' model, providing the full core offer. There is a link corridor to the adjacent health centre, library and pharmacy.

The centre opened in 2003 and was developed from a Sure Start Local Programme. The centre hosts a full-time day care provision for children from three months to school age. The team and centre manager work across the west of North Tyneside which comprises five further children’s centres. Governance arrangements transferred to an advisory board in 2010.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

‘Without this centre I would have gone mad.’ ‘All staff are full of energy and highly skilled,’ ‘I have so much more confidence.’ ‘The support has changed my life, I feel alive again.’ These comments are reflective of the local community’s view of the impact of the work of everyone involved with Shiremoor Children’s Centre. All associated with this outstanding centre have worked hard to achieve an exceptional level of trust, acceptance and respect amongst local families. Their dedication and commitment has ensured that outcomes for the large majority of people living within this locality have greatly improved. Multi-agency partnerships are outstanding and provide the foundation stone from which to deliver a holistic service which ensures the development of sustainable families who are empowered to lead better lives.

The centre has a strong and energetic leadership team. Sophisticated systems for monitoring and evaluation ensure a cycle of continuous improvement in relation to the quality and impact of the services and activities provided. This demonstrates an exemplary capacity for improvement which is greatly enhanced by the depth of the centre’s data analysis. Members of the advisory board are fully supportive of the work of the centre and are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Recent training ensures that the majority of members have the capacity to effectively challenge the progress made by the centre against its targets. However, whilst local parents chair the board, there is scope to empower more parents and carers to contribute to the governance of the centre, including through more influential representation on the advisory board. The centre is aware of and has taken steps to address this.

The centre has worked hard to achieve an impressive participation rate. The very detailed information collected on initial membership forms ensures services can be specifically

targeted. Data shows that attendance at the centre's many activities is generally high, with 80% of families accessing the centre living in the most deprived wards in the reach area.

Inclusion is at the heart of the centre and challenging targets have been set to support the most vulnerable families through well targeted outreach provision. As a result, gaps in the engagement of target groups have narrowed significantly. The positive impact of this work is reflected in the increasing number of young parents and those claiming workless benefits who have gone back into education and/or training. As a result, equality is promoted sensitively, with robust systems in place to identify and tackle any forms of discrimination. The conspicuous impact of exemplary partnership working which promotes children's and families' emotional well-being is also evident across the work of the centre.

Safeguarding is given the highest priority, with exemplary policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and protection of both families and staff. All staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of child protection policies and procedures and are adept at identifying vital signs of any issues, referring quickly and appropriately when necessary. Parents and carers are also very clear about their responsibilities in relation to child protection. This along with effective partnerships, ensures a seamless and coordinated approach to safeguarding children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to develop work around participation to ensure more parents and carers are empowered to contribute to the governance of the centre, including through meaningful representation on the advisory board

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Shiremoor Children's Centre has effected genuine and lasting change in improving outcomes for the large majority of its local parents, carers and children. 'I can certainly say I would be a very different mammy without the care and support the centre has offered me' wrote one parent, whilst many others commented on how much trust and respect they had for all the centre staff.

Work undertaken in relation to the promotion of breastfeeding is starting to successfully change local attitudes. This is due to the commitment of front line staff including midwives, health visitors, family and peer support workers. The excellent support provided by the 'Up Close' support group, assisted by peer support volunteers and the much improved links with the Royal Victoria Infirmary continue to contribute to a sustained improvement in the numbers of new mums who choose to breastfeed their babies. Latest figures show that 45% of mums continue to breastfeed their baby beyond six weeks. Support to encourage families to lead healthier lifestyles is excellent. The promotion of healthy lifestyles threads through every activity within the centre. Children also have plenty of opportunities to learn about healthy eating, growing their own vegetables in the well resourced outdoor area, picking

this produce to eat at snack time. The impact of this work is reflected in the low incidence of obesity rates amongst reception age children. The centre also continues to work closely with the health and well-being champion to develop the family focussed Fit4life program. Without exception, parents and carers we spoke to showed an increased awareness of the importance of staying fit and healthy. Excellent partnership work in relation to smoking cessation has ensured a 10% reduction in the number of mums smoking at delivery over the past year.

Effective protocols exist between the centre and the local health visiting team. This ensures that family support workers remain proactive in targeting parents and carers who may need support to develop a better understanding of safety issues. Managers have noticed that parents and carers now have the confidence not only to ask for help, but to recognise their need for it, increasingly before they reach a point of crisis. Exemplary multi-agency support ensures that children subject to a child protection plan or Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes are extremely well supported. The 'Request for Services' meetings ensure that appropriate information is shared between professionals, with care packages identified to meet need in a consistent and rigorous manner. A wide range of highly effective parenting courses including 'Freedom Programme' and 'Triple P' have had a profound impact, ensuring the engagement of those families most in need of intervention and support.

The centre continues to promote a close working partnership between local early years providers, the early years educator (EYE) and North Tyneside's early years improvement team. The centre and nursery have achieved the gold communication friendly award, a reflection of the high standards they maintain in relation to the promotion of communication, language and literacy. Excellent partnership working has ensured the incorporation of important findings from health, psychology and education research into practice within the centre. For example, staff in baby groups focus on the importance of effective bonding between parent and child and the development of vocabulary, recognising the clear link between this and later attainment in school. Staff were able to provide many striking examples of outstanding progress by individual children particularly in relation to the development of their personal, social and emotional well being. Effective partnerships ensure that children are very well prepared for their transition to school. Photographs of school early years staff are displayed in the nursery corridors ensuring that children are familiar with these faces prior to both visiting and starting school.

An overwhelming number of parents and carers spoken to commented on how their confidence has improved as a result of their participation in the activities offered by the centre. There is a genuine commitment to ensuring the voice of the community is heard within the centre and that this influences the ongoing development of services. The importance the centre places on working with parents and carers is reflected in their 98% positive parental satisfaction return. Parents are in the process of developing the parents and carers network to ensure that this group better represents the views of the wider community. However, whilst the chair and vice chair of the advisory board are local parents, there is a recognised need to further develop opportunities for more families to engage in

the governance of the centre and to participate more meaningfully in key decision making at this level.

The centre has helped many parents and carers return to learning, training and employment, thereby providing economic stability and independence. The very successful training and volunteer programmes, commissioned through the Tyne Metropolitan College and Barnardos respectively, have been crucial in enabling a large majority of parents to access a wide range of training opportunities. Some parents and carers, having undertaken the centre’s ‘softer’ informal training opportunities, felt confident to pursue formal qualifications. One parent talked enthusiastically about her completion of a literacy course, whilst another told us how their experience with the centre had inspired her to volunteer as a breast feeding peer support worker. There is also compelling evidence of parents and carers finding employment as a result of their completion of training programs. One parent told us it had given her the push she needed to get out of the house and not just be a mum. Participation in centre activities has also empowered parents to set up their own network of support groups. For example, two mums set up a support group following their completion of the ‘Fit4life’ program.

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	1
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.	1

How good is the provision?

1

There is a shared vision within the centre to secure the very best outcomes for families locally. Staff have developed an in-depth understanding of the issues and challenges facing the community which enables them to provide specific, targeted support. For example, the centre has recently launched a comprehensive strategy to raise awareness of the dangers of borrowing from loan sharks, training local individuals to act as champions within the community. The expertise and breadth of knowledge demonstrated by every staff member within the centre is impressive. This is reflected in the high quality support and guidance received by families. One parent described how proactive the family support team had been. ‘If the family support worker hadn’t come to my house, I would never have left and my child would have missed out on making friends’ Another explained how the coordination of

support she experienced gave her the confidence to face issues and stop 'burying her head in the sand.'

The provision of high quality learning experiences is raising both the achievements and aspirations of local parents and children. The volunteer and training coordinators have exemplary systems in place to track and monitor the progress and achievements of parents providing an excellent picture of their learning journey, often into employment. Training to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills has enabled many parents and carers to better support their child's learning at home. The innovative community entrepreneur program is a first rate example of how the centre has worked to empower local parents to make a real difference to the lives of others in their community. One community entrepreneur told us about her local project which trains young parents to work in schools as peer tutors. Not only has this project impacted on the teenage pregnancy agenda locally, but all the parents who trained as peer tutors have gone onto further training and employment.

The development of the 'Little Stars' group for families and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities provides a much needed lifeline, facilitating opportunities for families to meet others in a similar situation, reducing their sense of isolation. The EYE works closely with family support workers to ensure individualised packages of support are put in place at the earliest opportunity. All staff are sensitive to the role of parents, ensuring they feel able to make informed decisions regarding the packages of care put in place for their children. The centre's adherence to an ethos of prevention and early intervention is reflected in the fact that the majority of CAF referrals are for children and babies under two years.

A comprehensive, wide range of high quality services and activities are delivered through the centre. For example, the popular baby-ology course was developed by family support workers in partnership with the psychology service. This antenatal group targets mums who suffer low mood, supporting them through birth, and thereby reducing the risk of postnatal depression. One parent said, 'Baby-ology has made a huge difference to me – sharing my worries and anxiety has helped me deal with my pregnancy...' The holistic approach to service provision is reflected in the seamless, individualised support which is provided for all families and children who access 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	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The local authority has recently implemented a significant restructure across all its children centre provision. Despite this, the senior leadership team, advisory board and key partners have maintained their relentless focus on improvement. All staff are extremely well supported through regular supervision and the implementation of personal development plans which ensure a coordinated approach to training and continuous professional development. Staff contribute to the centre's self-evaluation process and as a result have a clear understanding of their role in relation to effecting future planning and improved outcomes for families. All staff have an in-depth knowledge of policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding children and are highly confident to follow these as required. Effective financial management systems are in place to monitor day to day expenditure and delegation of responsibility for resources is at an appropriate level to ensure timely and effective packages of support. Staff are very well deployed and outreach to target groups in the locality is having a significant impact. This combined with a high take-up of services by local families, particularly the most vulnerable, ensures outstanding value for money.

The centre's management team have made a noticeable commitment to developing systems for monitoring and evaluation. As a result, they are able to draw on their substantial knowledge and understanding of the local community to identify future priorities and areas for development. This combined with robust data and excellent local intelligence has ensured the provision of well targeted and effective delivery and improvement plans. As a team they encompass a wide range of skills and professional expertise which complements the work of the centre. This has proved invaluable in relation to setting appropriate yet challenging targets. The role of the centre's facilitators has been central to the centre's ongoing success in engaging many of its harder to reach groups. Through the specific targeting of streets within the reach areas where attendance at centre activities has been poorest, facilitators have been proactive at ensuring activities are taken out to these areas using community venues including the popular Shiremoor adventure play park. As a result, the centre continues to reach its most vulnerable families, including fathers, children in need and those claiming workless benefits, narrowing the achievement gap for those most disadvantaged. This is further facilitated through highly effective protocols and partnerships with relevant organisations including the women's refuge, teenage pregnancy service, housing and the police.

The role of children's centre is seen as key to the successful delivery of the early intervention and prevention agenda. The ongoing commitment to and development of exemplary partnerships is seen as central to ongoing sustainability and securing the future work of the centre. As a result, the enthusiasm of all staff, partners and families within the centre permeates every aspect of its work. Individual strengths are recognised and used to develop services further. For example, the role of the centre manager as a MARAC (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference) Champion has been hugely valuable in developing strategies to target families in this situation. One parent described her experience as 'life-saving.' There are many excellent examples of how parents and carers have been given the opportunity to evaluate services, their responses affecting future service provision. The community's desire to give something back to the centre is reflected in the increasing numbers accessing the volunteer programme.

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	1
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.	1

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

Shiremoor Children's Centre hosts full-time day care provision for children aged birth to school age. Three local primary schools, Shiremoor, Backworth and Holystone, with Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children over three years, are also part of the centre's remit. Information from their most recent Ofsted inspections has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children in this report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Shiremoor Children's Centre on 17 and 18 November 2011., We judged the centre as outstanding.

The children's centre provides a wealth of excellent activities aimed at helping families improve their lives. Your views strongly support this as you tell us that you are happy with the activities you attend and services you use because they have helped you in lots of

different ways. For example, some of you have received excellent support to continue breastfeeding and give up smoking, whilst others have found the opportunities to undertake parenting courses, such as 'Triple P' to be 'supportive' and 'life changing.' Activities and provision for you and your children to attend has ensured that you feel less isolated. Many of you told us how much you look forward to meeting up with other mums, sharing tips and advice about a range of parenting issues. Many of you have also taken advantage of the numerous training opportunities available and we know that this has given you the confidence to enrol on further college courses or to go back to work. We wish you every success with this.

Most importantly, you tell us that you 'feel safe at the centre,' and can 'trust the staff' particularly when you most need it. You appreciate the advice and help of the family support workers and have welcomed home visits and the opportunity to go with someone to a group until you build your confidence and make new friends. We found that the centre was doing an excellent job of helping you at times in your life when you most need it. We found that action was taken quickly and that different people and organisations worked exceptionally well as a team to support both children and families.

The centre is working extremely well with other partners such as health visitors, speech and language therapists and social care teams. You tell us that it is good to go to the many support groups and clinics and welcome the opportunity to talk to the health visitor or the family support worker in a relaxed, informal environment. A lot of parents, especially those who are bringing up children on their own, told us that they felt really happy on the days when they have an activity to go to and have found the friendships made through the centre to have been 'priceless'. There is exemplary support for children with disabilities and parents are encouraged to take an active role in meetings with professionals, ensuring they are involved in making important decisions about their children's future.

We found that those people in charge of the children's centre are doing an outstanding job. Managers, together with partners and other staff have worked hard to make sure that everything the children's centre does for you will make a real, genuine and lasting difference to the area in which you live. We know that everyone who works with Shiremoor Children's Centre shares this view. The centre has access to lots of detailed information to help them plan future activities and we know they listen to you because you enjoy attending activities they provide.

The centre has spent a lot of time ensuring that you are involved in making decisions about its direction and the different services it provides. We know that you feel genuinely respected and listened to as a result. We were particularly impressed by the tireless work and dedication of the parent and carer network members and hope that more of you will feel this is something you would like to be part of. Some parents are also involved in making decisions about the future of the centre through the advisory board. We have asked the centre to encourage more families in the area to play a role in shaping the future direction of the work of the centre and hope that this is something more of you might like to be involved in.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful and we wish you very good luck for the future.

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