

Inspection report for Conway Court Children's Centre

Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	386939
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2011
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Centre leader	Martina O'Leary
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Honeycroft Playgroup

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.

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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre and area managers as well as members of staff and representatives of the local authority. Discussions were also held with a variety of families who visited the centre during the inspection, members of the cluster advisory board and representatives of the partners who work with the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Conway Court is a phase two children's centre which opened in December 2008 and provides the full core offer of services. It is located within the local health centre in the Sackville Road area of Brighton and Hove. The area it serves includes one of the 30% most deprived areas of the country, with high levels of multi-occupancy and poor accommodation. A small minority of families are affected by unemployment, although the proportion seeking benefits is above average. Most families are of White British origin, although a significant minority come from a wide range of ethnic groups. The local authority and Primary Care Trust provide governance to the centre through two Section 75 agreements. There is an advisory board with professional and parent representation, and 'Parent Voice' also contributes to the evaluation and support for the centre's work. A Sure Start service manager oversees the day-to-day running of the centre. The centre operates a health-led model, providing services from health professionals including midwives, speech and language therapists and health visitors. Its work is also supported by a family involvement worker, a qualified early years teacher and early years visitors.

Services are provided from a large multi-purpose room and a range of consulting rooms. Centre services are also provided at the Gateway Children's Centre sited at West Hove Infant School with which Conway Court works in close partnership. The centre has a service level agreement with the Honeycroft Playgroup, which shares

the same campus, to deliver integrated education and care for children, and a range of training opportunities for their families. It works closely with a range of partners, including local childminders, to provide for the specific needs of children and their families, including those with a disabled family member or who speak English as an additional language. Some services, such as those supporting teenage parents, are provided directly by the local authority. There are 1540 children under five years of age living in its reach area. The proportion of children at the age-appropriate levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage is well below average.

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

This outstanding centre has made a considerable difference to the lives of families in the area it serves since it opened three years ago. Families are full of praise for the support they receive, which is especially well tailored to meet their needs and aspirations. 'Staff are fantastic' and 'Brilliant support from health visitors and early years visitors' are typical comments. Safeguarding procedures are excellent and families experiencing considerable problems speak movingly of the support provided, typically calling the centre and its staff 'a lifeline'. The outstanding use of data and users' views in the centre's very regular and rigorous self-evaluation leads into excellent action planning. Centre staff quickly identify areas that can be improved further and are taking action to address them. Their previous success and the rapid progress made in the first three years indicate that the centre has an excellent capacity for even further improvement.

Through the work of health visitors and midwives, the health-led model has been instrumental in ensuring that the centre has contact with all families in the reach area. Retention rates are high, with most continuing to use centre services because they recognise the great benefits they receive. Evidence of the impact of this is seen, for example, in the high levels of breastfeeding mothers, the rapidly rising attainment of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the decrease in workless households in the reach area. The centre has excellent identification, assessment and monitoring systems in place to ensure that its resources are very effectively targeted at the most needy families. These families' lives are much

improved, for example through their enhanced workplace skills, excellent advice on how to achieve healthy and safe lifestyles and access to affordable childcare. There is evidence of the centre's strong success amongst all target groups, such as teenage parents and families with a member who has a special educational need and/or disability and those for whom English is an additional language. Links with partner organisations such as Honeycroft Playgroup, JobCentre Plus and the Seaside View Child Development Centre help provide excellent advice and support for families.

This is a centre where equality of opportunity is at the heart of all its work. Because of the very sensitive approach of staff, families quickly realise that they are there to help and not judge. Consequently they confidently share their problems, recognising that staff really care about their concerns and provide them with very effective ways of addressing them. Outreach work provided by health staff, early years workers and childminders ensures that needy families do not slip through the net. Families subject to a child protection order or the Common Assessment Framework receive excellent support that makes a real difference to their lives.

More recently, the centre has benefited greatly from the expertise provided by its early years teacher. Focusing her input wisely, the training and support she has provided for staff working with the most needy families has been invaluable. Together with the support of the family involvement worker, this has ensured that these parents and children have significantly improved their achievements. Activities such as 'Positive Play' and 'Triple P' have made a real difference to parenting skills. Consequently, the achievement of vulnerable children and of parents is excellent. The very popular learning and development activities that all children in the reach can attend are good and ensure they achieve well. Currently, with the support of the early years teacher, centre staff are working hard to enhance this aspect further by more closely identifying the different developmental stages of children in the planning and assessment of activities.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Extend the quality of provision to support children's learning and development, especially through ensuring that planning and assessment for all activities focuses on the developmental stages for different age groups.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The very warm and welcoming environment encourages users' great enjoyment of centre activities, which are very popular. The inclusion of adults and children in the full range of activities, including through specialist support at home, is a major strength. As a result, the outcomes for targeted groups such as lone parents or families affected by disability have improved especially well.

The high priority given to the health and safety of families helps users gain especially strong skills and knowledge in these aspects. The excellent commitment to

breastfeeding and knowledge of nutritious foods gained through advice or cookery activities has improved the health of families considerably. The incidence of obesity in centre children has improved and is below the city average, and a large majority of teenage mothers succeed in giving up smoking in pregnancy. Children enjoy the centre's healthy snacks, developing excellent eating habits. Good-quality toys, activities such as 'Crawlers and Toddlers', and regular visits to the local park enhance physical development. Improved emotional health is clearly evident in the lives of parents suffering post-natal depression. Excellent commitment to families' safety ensures children play happily together, use resources very carefully and learn to take risks. Excellent monitoring and support for vulnerable families have significantly reduced the number of non-accidental injuries to children visiting city hospitals. Behaviour management programmes and the availability of home-safety equipment through 'Safety Net' have greatly improved families' knowledge of safety at home.

The excellent relationships between staff and families generate an outstanding environment in which families gain confidence, self-esteem and an exceptionally strong capacity for supporting the centre's work, including through 'Parent Voice'. They know their views really do count and feel very secure in asking for advice or support, being extremely appreciative of changes made to reflect their views. Parent volunteers leading or setting up their own groups have resulted in some exceptionally well-targeted support, for example for multiple births or eczema. Most children are very well behaved, sharing with others and playing happily together. Excellent records are kept of children's responses to activities and are used to adjust these to meet their needs and interests. Parenting skills have improved especially well, particularly in managing behaviour and in supporting children's learning at home, evident in the enhanced language development and confidence in exploring new things. Those parents and children who need to do so quickly gain the skills and confidence to express themselves in English, considerably improving their experiences in the centre and beyond. Excellent opportunities for training, including that provided by partner organisations, make a real difference. This is evident in parents' greatly increased access to benefits or employment and further training such as for the nursing profession or a university degree. Strengths such as these greatly improve families' economic and social well-being and their future opportunities, evident in the decline in workless households in the reach area.

Outstanding learning and development opportunities for vulnerable children, including those provided by the Honeycroft Playgroup or local childminders, help them make significant gains in important skills such as those for literacy and numeracy. The achievement of children attending universal learning and development activities is good. However, until recently, activities have been less well focused on the developmental needs of individuals which reduced their achievement.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<p>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>1</p>
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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	1

How good is the provision?

1

A full assessment is made of the health, well-being and social needs of each family in the reach area. Early identification of families with a specific need ensures targeted support is swiftly put in place and that provision for targeted groups is excellent. Child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework are especially successful in addressing the needs of families most at risk. Assessment of need is carefully synthesised with data analysis, evaluation of activities and verbal feedback from parents, to ensure the centre and its partners offer the full range of activities to meet families' needs, including those of fathers. Parents agree their needs are met exceptionally well and are delighted that staff are planning to provide more holiday time activities.

Parents and partners agree that care, guidance and support are excellent. Staff and other professionals, such as those from JobCentre Plus, visit activities to talk informally with parents, who very much appreciate this approach. Consequently, their needs and aspirations are provided for exceptionally well, including through signposting families to organisations such as the Salvation Army. Parents themselves are an excellent source of support, with peer supporters for breastfeeding in their pink T-shirts being a common sight in city hospitals. Many examples of exceptional improvement in the lives of families subject to, for example, substance misuse or social isolation are evident. Where there is a significant need, or a reluctance to visit the centre, excellent support is provided at home either by health professionals or early years visitors.

Excellent learning opportunities are available for adults and for children with significant needs. Centre activities such as 'Positive Play' and the sleep clinic support parenting skills especially well. The toy library makes a significant difference to ensuring children benefit from toys that support their learning at home. Dads and granddads are welcome at weekly activities and appreciative of the Saturday 'Stay and Play' group. Some courses, such as those to help parents learn English, run in partnership with Honeycroft and the local authority, provide a crèche. An excellent range of courses for parents to gain important literacy and numeracy, vocational and money management skills are regularly available from partners such as the Workers' Educational Association or Brighton and Hove College, often at no cost to parents.

Those children at most risk of underachieving receive funded placement at Honeycroft Playgroup, where the quality of learning is excellent. Specific learning programmes for children from target groups are equally good. Current learning and development programmes associated with the Early Years Foundation Stage for the large majority of children are good and there is a determination to increase the effectiveness of the planning and assessment of these.

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?

1

There is an excellent commitment to meeting the needs of all families in the reach area. As the centre has become well established and known and its comprehensive collection and use of data have been refined and extended, it has gone from strength to strength. Underpinning this success are the excellent liaison and working relationships with all partner providers who support the needs and aspirations of families with children under five. This ensures there is an exceptionally well co-ordinated approach to meeting families' needs and excellent liaison when dealing with a child protection order or the Common Assessment Framework.

The health-led model has been especially successful in engaging and maintaining contact with families and has made an outstanding difference to their lives, most notably in being healthy and staying safe. Safeguarding policies and procedures and inter-agency liaison are exemplary. The vetting of staff and visiting professionals and risk assessments are very robust. Child protection is given high priority and procedures for monitoring the safety and well-being of all children and adults most at risk, for example from domestic violence or emotional health concerns, are excellent. The outstanding promotion of equality and diversity and prevention of discrimination are clearly evident in the achievements of families with a disabled family member and the excellent relationships between users from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds. The centre's participation in the very successful International Day held in a local park is testament to this.

Through an exceptionally well thought out management and accountability structure, governance is excellent, with safeguarding high on the agenda at area and team meetings. The advisory group provides the centre with a high level of challenge and support and very useful feedback on the effectiveness of services. This, together with excellent self-evaluation and that provided by parents, ensures action planning is very effective. The centre's ambitious targets are founded on the premise that all

families should have access to high-quality services. This has led to the outstanding prioritisation of services and resources and the employment of highly skilled staff, who have excellent training opportunities. As a result, the centre provides excellent value for money.

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 in setting 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

Inspectors considered the evidence from the 2010 Ofsted report on Honeycroft Playgroup.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Conway Court Children's Centre on 16–17 November 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We would like to thank all those of you who spoke to us during the inspection, including those of you who came into the centre especially to do so and the many professionals from partner agencies. You all told us how valuable centre services are to you and our evidence agrees with this.

The centre is exceptionally well run and staff are especially good at providing you with a wide range of high quality services, especially well adapted to meet your different needs. They take very good account of the feedback you give them and make sure they record your children's responses to activities as well. You are very appreciative of this and support the centre's work especially well through membership of the advisory board or 'Parent Voice'. Some parents volunteer to help the centre's work, often suggesting and helping to set up and run activities themselves or sharing their experiences with other parents. This is of real benefit to families.

You told us that staff are extremely approachable and that if you have a problem or difficulty, they are very focused on helping you to deal with it rather than making you feel you are at fault. You say that staff are always there to give you advice and you are very appreciative of the many opportunities for 'having a chat'. This helps ensure that the care, guidance and support they give you is outstanding. The centre and the partner organisations they work with are excellent at keeping you and your families healthy and safe. Staff are exceptionally well trained in this aspect and the checks they make on the centre and people who use it are especially effective. You are given excellent advice on how to keep yourselves and your families safe and have access to safety equipment for your home. We are especially impressed by the numbers of you who breastfeed and also the fact that so many of you volunteer to help new mums do so as well. Centre staff are also very good at providing nutritious snacks in activities and lots on advice to help you cook healthy meals. Adults or children who have a specific need or disability receive excellent support, for example from the health visitors or early years visitors.

Both you and your children are very enthusiastic about the centre's activities, which are very popular. The centre has got exactly the right balance between services for families who need a bit more help, for example in managing children's behaviour or supporting their learning and development at home, and those that all parents of children of a specific age can attend, such as 'Baby and You' and 'Crawlers and Toddlers'. Together with the centre's partners such as the Workers' Educational Association and Brighton and Hove College, staff provide you with many opportunities to learn skills to help you get back into work or to apply for the benefits you are entitled to. Those of you who want to become more fluent in English have access to courses at Honeycroft, where they also provide a crèche. Our evidence shows these activities make a significant difference to families. Those

children who are at risk of falling behind in their learning and development receive excellent support, including through the Honeycroft Playgroup. Activities to support the learning and development of other children are good and have begun to improve further as the result of the work of the early years teacher. We have asked centre staff to carry on doing this, especially through making sure the planning and assessment of these activities take full account of the developmental stages of the children who attend.

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