

Inspection report for Armley Moor Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Leeds |
| Inspection number | 383615 |
| Inspection dates | 8 - 9 December 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Rachael Flesher HMI |

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| Date of previous inspection | Not applicable |
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| Linked school if applicable | Not applicable |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Armley Moor Children's Centre EY317005 |

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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 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

Armley Moor Children's Centre is situated close to the city centre in the west of Leeds. The centre was designated as a phase one children's centre in December 2005. It operates from two sites; Armley Moor located in the health centre and Chapel Lane Annex. The centre also provides outreach visits in the home. Both sites are situated just off Town Street, where there are a range of local amenities. As both sites are situated on good bus routes, families come to Town Street to use the children's centre service and other amenities.

The centre serves families of which 90% live in one of the 10% to 30% most deprived areas in the country. The majority of families in the area are White British, with 23% from minority ethnic groups, including a large and increasing Eastern European community and a small number of families seeking asylum. For some of these families, English is an additional language. Twenty-one per cent of the community are transient families, predominantly White British, who move in and out of the area, often only staying for short periods of time.

There are high levels of drug and alcohol misuse, domestic violence and crime. The number of children subject to child protection plans is higher than in similar areas. There is a high level of privately rented accommodation resulting in families often only staying in the area for short periods of time. Housing is a reoccurring issue for families, with many living in poorly maintained properties with limited or no outdoor space. Sixteen per cent of children aged nought to five years are living in household's dependant on workless benefits and 23% of families in the reach area are lone parent families. Children enter early years provision with skills below those expected for their age, particularly in relation to their communication and social skills.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

This is a good children's centre. Effective evaluation processes ensure strengths and areas for development are accurately identified and clear plans are in place to address the majority of weaknesses to secure continuous improvement. Staff routinely seek the views of partners and those using the centre and use this information well to shape services and evaluate the effectiveness of provision. The services and activities provided are, therefore, accurately matched to the users' needs. Staff and partnerships also have a good understanding of the make up of their community in their reach area. As a result, the majority of families, particularly the most vulnerable, are engaged well with a good range of services and are achieving good outcomes. However, the role of the outreach workers in engaging more families in the wider community is less well established. In addition, although the centre makes good use of data in its future planning this is not always provided regularly and sufficiently enough for all its needs.

All staff and partners give high priority to safeguarding all children and families and their safety and well-being are enhanced by the robust and consistent implementation of policies, procedure and practice. Referrals of vulnerable families are swiftly addressed through early intervention and good partnership working and information sharing.

Activities and services are of good quality and families are well supported to improve their outcomes. Children make good progress from their often low starting points. A good proportion of adults are supported to develop their skills for the world of work and access personal development opportunities and qualifications. Families receive good care, guidance and support particularly the potentially most vulnerable and those facing times of crisis through professionals working closely together. The gaps between the outcomes for the most disadvantaged families and target groups and the rest are narrowing as a result.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the numbers of children and families engaged in centre services and activities, thus improving the outcomes for even more families by:
 - developing the role of the outreach workers to enable them to be out in the community for more time promoting the centre and targeting more families
 - the local authority improving partnership working with midwifery to ensure data is shared on the location of expectant parents.
- Ensure the centre has an ongoing knowledge and understanding of how many families are engaged in services from each target group by:
 - staff ensuring all those accessing services are appropriately recorded
 - the local authority providing data reports more regularly.

How good are outcomes for families?

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Very good partnership working and effective systems for assessing the needs of vulnerable children have a positive impact on outcomes for children who are looked after and those subject to the Common Assessment Framework process or 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. As a result, there have been no recent house fires in the area and serious accidents have decreased.

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their often low starting points in developing their skills for the future. The centre ensures a strong focus on the areas of development where children are achieving less well. Good quality transition arrangements are in place to ensure all concerned are fully aware of each child's stage of development, needs and interests and provide for these accordingly. A high proportion of three-and-four year olds are accessing their free nursery education entitlement and the most vulnerable two-year-olds are accessing 15 hours of childcare a week, through a government funded two year old nursery pilot. The centre is working with parents to ensure good attendance. It also supports parents to develop their understanding of how to promote their child's learning, development and positive behaviour at home. Early years settings are supported to develop their quality, ensuring that all children have access to good quality provision. As a result, all children make good progress and the gap between the lowest-achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest is narrowing well.

The majority of adults are engaged in training, adult learning and personal development courses and some are involved in the volunteer programme. As a result, they are developing their employability skills, including their personal and social skills. Outcomes for families seeking suitable employment are good. Good information, advice and guidance is provided to parents regarding childcare options, financial issues, benefits and tax credits, thus improving their economic stability and independence.

The majority of families in the reach area are engaging with appropriate health services. A good percentage of babies are breastfed at six to eight weeks and many mothers sustain breastfeeding. Effective support is provided to expectant parents and new parents to promote good outcomes for their families. The centre supports families to improve their health and well-being and as a result, children are enjoying healthier food because families are cooking healthier meals and providing more nutritional snacks.

Most families using the centre express their views and feel listened to and some are engaged in the governance of the centre through the parents' forum. The centre has established itself at the heart of the community and the majority of children and families living in the wider community treat each other with respect.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

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| The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| 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 | 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?

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The centre works well in partnership with other services to ensure assessment of the needs of children and families are robust, well-informed and lead to early intervention. However, currently the outreach workers do not have sufficient time to promote the engagement of more families from the wider community as the majority of their time is taken up supporting the most vulnerable families. Families using the centre are well supported to contribute their ideas and opinions and most express their views and contribute to shaping services. The principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage are embedded across all provision to promote children's learning and development. During stay and play sessions, children have very good opportunities to play outdoors and promote their physical development, which

parents highly value as their homes often have very limited safe outdoor play space. Parents value the opportunities to form support networks and friendships through attending group activities. For example, baby massage and the baby group, which is effective in providing support and guidance to new mothers, limiting isolation and providing opportunities to talk with professionals about their child's development. However, the centre is not routinely provided with information on the location of all expectant parents to enable them to engage and support more families earlier.

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 welcoming and friendly and the provision is safe and secure. A wide range of good quality information, advice and guidance is provided in a range of home languages to support those for whom English is an additional language. The centre ensures that it tracks the numerous families who leave the centre reach area to ensure the valuable information it holds is passed to relevant professionals in the area to which they move. This promotes the consistency and continuity of interventions, care, guidance and support. In times of crisis, families, particularly the most vulnerable and in most need of intervention are well supported. As some parents stated 'They care deeply about you. I would not have been in the place I am now without the centre's support', it is a 'really good centre. I don't know what I would have done if they hadn't been here to help' and 'I'm a better Mum because of the children's centre'. One professional stated 'staff do not shy away from giving difficult messages but also maintain positive relationships with parents'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

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The inclusion of all children and families, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is promoted very effectively and diversity is celebrated. The centre plays a significant role in the life of the community and is breaking down barriers to further community cohesion.

The centre has a strong, highly skilled, experienced and qualified staff team who are committed to improving the outcomes for all families and are highly valued by partners. The centre manager is tenacious and challenges at every level to drive forward improvements. Governance and accountability arrangements, as well as clear roles and responsibilities at all levels of leadership and management, are well-established and understood by all. The advisory board, local authority and parents' forum challenge the centre and staff, leaders and partners routinely reflect on their practice and provision to secure continuous improvement. Users' views are sought and used to contribute to good self-evaluation and

shape services. Self-evaluation provides the centre with a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development and is used to inform planning, although some of the data it receives are limited. The centre provides good value for money.

Safer recruitment procedures are followed well and all relevant checks are made to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. All staff receive good-quality child protection training and are confident in their role to safeguard children. Risks are thoroughly assessed and minimised. Staff are effectively deployed. Good professional supervision and management arrangements are in place to monitor the performance of staff and ensure their safety and well-being and ongoing professional development.

The centre takes a full and active role in developing and implementing a variety of partnership activities, which ensures effective partnership working that enhances opportunities for families in the area and has a positive impact in securing good and improving outcomes.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

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| 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 in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes | 2 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups | 2 |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults | 2 |
| The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose | 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. | 2 |

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

The findings from most recent inspection report for the children's centre's early years provision, Armley Moor Children's Centre, contributed to the centre report and judgements. This report can be accessed at www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Armley Moor Children's Centre on 8 and 9 December 2011. We judged the centre as good 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, highly skilled and committed to improving the outcomes for your families. You are accessing a good range of health services and the good health of your families is developing as a result. For example, a good proportion of mothers' breastfeed their babies and you are cooking healthier meals and providing healthier snacks for your families. You and your children are safe when using the centre and staff are swift to intervene early with any safeguarding concerns to ensure children are safe and families are fully supported. The centre has helped you make your homes safer and children are having fewer accidents.

You and your children are learning and developing well. Your centre supports children to make good progress. Good partnership working ensures schools have all the information they need to help your children settle into school and support their learning and development. The majority of adults are engaged in training, adult learning and personal development courses, with some accessing the volunteer programme. You are developing your employability skills as a result.

Your centre has a good knowledge of the needs of your community and works effectively with other professionals to ensure the most vulnerable families are supported and the services provided meet the needs of your families. Staff value your views and use these to ensure their services and activities are matched to your needs. As a result, your centre has successfully engaged a good proportion of families in centre services and activities, particularly those who are most vulnerable and in most need of support. The inclusion of all children and families is promoted, diversity is celebrated and families using the centre reflect the community it serves. However, currently the outreach workers do not have sufficient time to promote the engagement of more families from the wider community as the majority of their time is taken up supporting the most vulnerable families. In addition, although the centre makes good use of data in its future planning this is not always provided regularly and sufficiently enough for all its needs. Your centre and local authority have been asked to improve this.

Your centre provides your families with good care, guidance and support particularly when you are facing times of crisis with good results. As some of you told us 'They care deeply about you. I would not have been in the place I am now without the centre's support', it is a 'really good centre. I don't know what I would have done if they hadn't been here to help' and 'I'm a better Mum because of the children's centre'. One professional stated 'staff do not shy away from giving difficult messages but also maintain positive relationships with parents'.

Your centre strives to be better and is always looking for ways to improve to ensure it is making a positive impact on improving the outcomes for you and your families. Your centre has a good capacity to improve further the outcomes for more families living in your community and to continue to narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest. It does so with great determination and dedication. 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.