

Inspection report for Prudhoe Children's Centre

Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	384057
Inspection dates	19 - 20 April 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	diandjims@Prudhoe EY283465

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.

Report Published: May 2012

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

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

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with parents and representatives from the local authority.

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

Information about the centre

Prudhoe Children's Centre is in the west of Northumberland and opened in 2007. It is based in the ex-mining town of Prudhoe and serves the surrounding rural communities. It is managed by the local authority and is based on the same site as Adderlane First School and an independent nursery, diandjims@Prudhoe.

The centre provides services from its main site and at an army base, Albemarle Barracks. The centre uses a play bus to take some services to more isolated rural communities. The population is made up from a broad range of economic and social circumstances. A large majority of families live in areas within the 70% least deprived in the country, with some distinct pockets of deprivation surrounded by more affluent areas.

The proportion of children aged under four years of age who are living in households where no-one is working is low at 13.2% and 19.4% of families benefit from the childcare element of working tax credit. Children enter early years provision with a range of skills at or below those expected for their age. The vast majority of families within the area served by the centre are of White British heritage.

The centre provides a range of supporting services, including play opportunities, family learning opportunities, a crèche, outreach and home visiting, health support, parenting

courses and volunteering opportunities. The centre shares an advisory board with other centres in the locality. The board is made up of representatives from the community, professional agencies and parents.

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

Prudhoe Children's Centre meets the needs of its users well. Good leadership, management and effective partnerships lead to cohesive provision and good outcomes for families.

Effective working between the centre coordinator and the locality manager together with support from the coordinators of the other centres within the locality, provides good operational leadership, improves performance and drives up standards. The local authority's quarterly monitoring of the centre's performance and analysis of robust data contributes well to the improving provision.

The centre demonstrates a good capacity for sustained improvement. Outcomes are good and continuously improving because the centre constantly monitors the quality and impact of services and identifies how it can improve them. Families' views are highly valued and help to shape the range of services and activities offered.

Safeguarding is given a high priority in the centre; clear policies, procedures and effective staff training contribute to the safety and protection of families and children. Effective communication with other agencies enables timely sharing of information. As a result, the safety and progress of children identified as in need or those subject to a child protection plan are good.

The inclusion of all families and children is central to the vision of the centre and is fully promoted in all aspects of its work. The centre has a good understanding of its key target groups and engages well with the majority of these families. The centre is particularly successful in engaging with workless families and teenage parents but recognises in its self-evaluation and development plan is less successful in engaging with fathers and lone parents.

The results from the Early Years Foundation Profile for schools in the area indicate that results have improved over the last two years from 68.4% to 72% of children in Reception Year achieving at least 78+ points and 6 points in communication, language and literacy. Data indicate that the overall achievement gap between the highest and lowest achieving children is narrowing. Disabled children and children identified with speech and language difficulties make good progress.

Case studies and anecdotal evidence demonstrate that some families are improving their economic well-being by gaining qualifications or progressing to further training, education or employment. However, the centre and its partners have not developed systems to track adults' progress across all of the services provided, in order to measure the full impact on improving families' economic well-being.

The range of services meets the needs of families well. Care, guidance and support are good, particularly for families identified as in need. Early intervention is helping to reduce the escalation of issues. However, the promotion of learning and development is satisfactory. The centre recognises that some activity sessions are not consistently of the same high quality as others and is providing support for staff to improve their planning and delivery.

Partnerships with health professionals help ensure that families improve their health and well-being, and health outcomes are good. In 2011, obesity rates of children in Reception Year reduced from 12.8% to 10.7%. Overall breastfeeding rates are high and above the national average at 58%.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure all activity and learning sessions are of a consistently high quality.
- Develop systems to measure the full impact of adult learning and guidance on the economic well-being of families.
- Develop further strategies to increase the number of fathers and lone parents engaging with the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre promotes health and well-being well through its range of activities and partnerships with health services. Families using the centre are developing a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles because of advice and support which promote healthy living. One parent said: 'I now cook all our meals from scratch. My child prefers home cooked

dinners with fresh vegetables rather than fast food like chicken nuggets'. The level of attendance at health clinics is good and immunisation rates are high. The centre recognises that although overall breastfeeding rates are high, this ranges from 100% in an affluent area to 33% in a deprived area.

The centre is a safe and secure environment. Children who are subject to a child protection plan, Child in Need, or the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process receive effective individual support and, as a result, outcomes are good. Families develop a good understanding of how to keep safe and reduce the risk of injury.

Families state that they thoroughly enjoy their time attending activities at the centre and that they improve their parenting skills. Through a wide range of play and development opportunities, parents are learning how to support their children's learning. Children attending the centre are well-prepared for school. Transition is supported well and results from the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile show a steady improvement.

Adult learning courses and referral for employment advice are helping improve the economic well-being of some families. Case studies indicate that some adults improve their skills, gain qualifications and progress to further or higher education or employment. However, the centre does not have secure systems in place to demonstrate the full impact of training, support and guidance, provided by itself and partners, on improving the economic well-being of families.

Parents and children of different social, economic and minority ethnic backgrounds treat each other with respect. They make a positive contribution to the development of the centre. Centre staff routinely listen to and use the feedback from families to shape and develop its services. As members of the parents' forum and the advisory board, parents participate well in making strategic decisions for the centre. One parent said: 'We asked for a childcare course so we can get a job in the future. I have done my Level 1 and hope to start Level 2 soon.' Volunteers make a good contribution to the sustainability of the centre by becoming breastfeeding mentors and to the community through involvement in community projects.

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	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.	3
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How good is the provision?

2

The building is well-equipped to provide activities for families. The majority of families with children under five-years-old engage well with services at the centre. The centre has registered and engaged with 100% of workless families. Although numbers are increasing, the centre is less successful in engaging fathers and lone parents. The centre actively promotes activities such as the popular fathers' Saturday group 'Blokes, Bairns and Breakfast' to encourage its key target groups to get involved.

Strong partnerships result in effective care, guidance and support for families. Family support workers are successful in working with families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents particularly value individually tailored support and say that the centre has made a big difference to their lives. Parents have good access to information, advice and guidance on training, benefits and work. The centre effectively provides specific support for families who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances. One parent said: 'My child's speech is improving, he has more vocabulary and now listens.' Another parent said: 'By coming to "Story Time" my child has learned to sit and to join in songs and rhymes. He has changed so much.' The centre promotes and celebrates learning for families through a range of activities. Parents are encouraged to support their children through enjoyable sessions such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Baby Group'. Typical parents' comments were: 'I don't know what I would do without the centre. I have been on lots of courses including the parenting courses and become much more confident in myself. I have even done the "Parent Befriending" course so I can help others.' Good individual support and training has particularly helped improve the personal fitness and weight loss of adults. However, the centre recognises that the quality of delivery and interactions with children in some sessions are only satisfactory.

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	2
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?

The centre coordinator sets high expectations and clear direction for the centre's development. Day to day management is good and teamwork is a significant strength. Governance arrangements are clear and understood. The advisory board includes a good number of parents. They are well-supported so that they make an effective contribution to strategic decisions.

The centre actively seeks partnerships with parents, statutory, private and voluntary groups in order to enhance opportunities for local families, particularly the key target groups. As a result, partners contribute effectively to centre priorities and services are cohesive which results in good and improving outcomes. Staff and partners share high expectations and ambitions. The centre seeks and welcomes the views of all families through a variety of mechanisms and uses them well to develop the provision. For example, the childminding group asked for and now have an open forum so that they can get their views across. Sensory sessions have become more regular in 'Stay and Play' because the centre responded to parents requests.

The centre promotes the inclusion of all families and children in all aspects of its provision. Staff ensure that their diverse needs are well supported and barriers to access are removed. The centre works with other centres in the locality to provide structured play and development activities for children with Down's Syndrome and support for their parents.

The centre gives the safeguarding of children a high priority. It is effective in helping children and families stay safe through close attention to child protection processes and robust vetting and recruitment procedures. Strong partnerships are minimising duplication and enhancing safeguarding. The rate of re-referral for children in need has significantly reduced.

Outcomes for families are good because the centre constantly monitors the quality and impact of services and identifies how it can improve them. Precise data are analysed effectively in order to target the centre's work and set development priorities. The detailed action plan is effectively monitored and reviewed on a quarterly basis, which ensures continuous improvement.

The resources at the centre are managed efficiently to meet the needs of families, leading to good outcomes. Families using the centre express high satisfaction and state that provision and support are good and make a strong contribution to their families' well-being. The centre, therefore, provides good 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	2
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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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Prudhoe Children's Centre on 19 to 20 April 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you very much for talking to us and letting us come into your sessions. The information you gave and the stories you shared with us helped us to make our judgements.

Many of you talked about how the centre has helped you and your children. You told us how the centre has supported you to improve your lives and how you now have more confidence. It was clear that you are proud of your achievements. You also told us about the friends you have met and the things you have learnt because of your involvement in the centre's activities. You enjoy the sessions with your children such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Baby Group' which help your confidence and understanding of your children's development. We found that although some sessions are of high quality, other sessions are less stimulating and the quality of delivery is only satisfactory. We have asked the centre to make sure that every session is of a consistently high standard.

The centre works well with the adult education service to give you access to courses to help improve your own education and future employment opportunities. We found out that some of you have learnt new things, developed new skills and gained qualifications. However, the centre does not have systems to measure the impact of all of its services on the economic well being of families. We have asked them to improve the tracking of families' progress so that it knows how successful its services are.

The centre is good at engaging with the majority of local families that need support but recognises that it is less successful at engaging with lone parents and fathers. We have asked them to find new ways to try to increase these numbers.

You told us how the involvement with the centre is helping you to keep your children safe. We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained.

Your children behave well and you learn more about how to stay healthy. We found that health outcomes are good overall. The number of babies that are breastfed at six to eight weeks and the impact on childhood obesity is good.

The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities they offer. They change how and when they do some things because of what you say. Everyone seems to get on well together at the centre and there are opportunities to volunteer. Some of you are involved in making strategic decisions about your centre through being a member of the advisory board.

We found that all the staff are keen to promote equality and diversity. Many of the families with the greatest needs are enjoying sessions to help them and their children. Families treat each other with respect. The centre works well for everyone in the community, irrespective of their background or disability. Families value the support and specific sessions for disabled children and their parents.

The centre coordinator sets high expectations and clear direction for the centre's development. Day to day management is good and teamwork is strong. The centre has been continually improving and knows what it needs to do to improve further.

We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre, meeting you and your children, and we wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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