

Inspection report for Cheviots Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Enfield
Inspection number	383893
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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 manager and staff, representatives from the local authority and the advisory group. They also spoke to partner agencies such as health and social work services, voluntary organisations, parents and other users of the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Cheviots Children's Centre, designated in March 2007, is a specialist centre for families with children aged from birth to five years with disabilities including physical, learning and sensory impairments, some of which are profound. It also provides community resources and support to non-disabled children and their families. Services are offered from 11 newly refurbished rooms with activities running from 9am until 3pm weekdays during term-time. The centre arranges 'Family Fundays' during school holidays and uses other children's centres to deliver groups during the summer break.

The centre is managed as part of Enfield Joint Service for Disabled Children and has a separate budget managed by the centre manager. Although the centre serves the needs of disabled children across the whole of the borough, it is technically part of the Lavender Children's Centre cluster. The cluster arrangements enable the centre's services to meet the full core purpose. The centre is directly managed by the local authority and has its own advisory group reviewing the services.

The cluster reach area is within the Chase, Highlands and Town wards in the London Borough of Enfield; there are 3,165 children aged from nought to four years in the cluster. There are two super output areas within the 20% most deprived in the country, with two in the 30% most deprived. The rest of the reach area falls within the 50% most deprived. The main ethnic group in the reach area is White British, which at 70% is significantly higher than the borough average. A wide range of other ethnic groups make up the remaining 30%. The number of nought to four year olds living in households dependent on workless benefits is 24%, which is above the national average. The proportion of eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, at 3.35%, is considerably lower than the national average.

Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are typically in line with the levels expected for their age. However, the majority of children who access the centre are at a significantly lower developmental stage than would be expected for age.

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

Cheviots Children's Centre makes outstanding provision that meets the needs and improves the outcomes for all the families it serves. Exceptionally experienced staff have excellent levels of knowledge and skills and can call on an extensive range of specialists to provide highly effective support for children's multiple and complex needs. Adults and children benefit greatly from their contact with the centre. Outcomes across all areas are outstanding. 'They have nurtured us as a family; we are so grateful for all they do', being a very commonly held view.

The specific safeguarding needs of the most vulnerable children are interwoven through all of the centre's work and as a result care, guidance and support are outstanding and result in families feeling 100% secure in using the centre. Families talk about their whole lives changing through contact with the centre and everyone

who spoke to inspectors during the inspection voiced their amazement at the expert level and breadth of support they had received. A comment that summed up these views was, 'I can't fault this centre; staff are fantastic and know my child extremely well.'

The centre has done much to champion the cause of disabled children in the community through outreach work in schools and other children's centres as well as some activities being open to all children. Consequently, equality and diversity are fundamental priorities and families, who often feel isolated, are given confidence to widen their horizons. Parents play an exceptional role in supporting the centre through formal groups such as the 'Our Voice' parents' forum and 'Parent2Parent', a group of parents commissioned to carry out research projects. A large number also attend advisory group meetings. This body fulfils its duties well in reviewing services, but relatively newly appointed members who have not been trained are still developing their role in challenging the centre. In addition, there is a relatively high ratio of staff and local authority members compared to the other services who sit on this group.

Key priorities are known and worked towards by everyone involved with the centre. However, the service plan devised by the local authority does not record priorities succinctly enough nor are all the targets measurable or timescales precise. Nevertheless there is a very accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development and a constant striving from all staff and partners to improve the lives of the most vulnerable families. The centre manager's passion for the pursuit of excellence in all of the centre's work is shared across everyone involved with the centre. This has had a very significant impact on provision and outcomes and ensures that the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Extend the membership of the advisory group and facilitate training that enables members to provide more challenge to the centre.
- Work with the local authority to develop a succinct service plan and use data to ensure targets are measurable and time specific.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Many of the children who access the centre have complex health needs. The excellent links with services such as dieticians, occupational therapists and the specialist nurse consultant ensure that tailor-made packages can be delivered and that all families engage well with health services. Families who access the universal activities also state that they have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lives, with children eating fruit after each session for example and the 'Immunisation Awareness' week providing useful and effective advice. Families' emotional and

mental health is extremely well catered for with a sensitive understanding of the specific needs of families of disabled children. For example, sleep workshops and signposting to structured parenting programmes at other centres have been highly effective in improving families' lives.

Many children using the centre have little sense of danger and so every step is taken to ensure their safety. Home visits and supporting families to access funding for safety equipment such as special chairs and harnesses do much to improve children's safety as does one-to-one support in how to safely lift and feed children. The centre manager also line manages a team of specialist social workers who are co-located within the building. This ensures a constant flow of information around any safety concerns. As a result, the outcomes for the great majority of children who are looked after or subject to a child protection plan or supported under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) are excellent. All of the families spoken to, whether they have a disabled child or not, have extremely high levels of confidence and trust in staff and feel their parenting skills have improved as a result of their expert interventions.

Children make excellent progress as a result of their contact with the centre. One parent summed up the view of many by stating, 'He has dramatically changed through coming here.' The very close partnership with the Early Intervention Support Service provides home visits, key workers and excellent levels of support for transition to school. Also very close links with the borough's special and mainstream schools ensure parents are supported to make the right choice for their children. 'Transition Passports' and tracking through videoing often tiny but highly significant steps as well as anecdotal evidence from parents and teachers, demonstrate that the centre has a highly positive impact on outcomes. 'Family Fundays' and sessions such as the 'Homestart' group and 'Stay and Play' are much enjoyed by the many participants and very effectively planned around children's early years development and learning through play.

Outcomes for adults are also excellent as the large majority are developing their parenting skills very effectively. Many go on to use their specific knowledge and understanding of raising a disabled child to support others. Parents contribute exceptionally well to the governance of the centre. 'Our Voice', the parent forum, produces a regular newsletter with several hundred recipients. Many parents have gone on to provide training courses, attend conferences or set up groups such as 'Down Town', for children diagnosed with Down's Syndrome. The 'Parent2Parent' group carries out research into transport needs, among other matters related to coping with a disabled child, and parents are also involved in the tendering process for specific services. This has very positive outcomes not only for their confidence and self-esteem but also in extending their enterprise skills alongside enhancing services for all.

The economic and social well-being of a great majority of the most vulnerable families has been greatly enhanced by the centre. Many parents are full-time carers and so unable to access employment but the excellent levels of support ensure that

they are able to maximise their benefits and other entitlements. For example, a very large number have received cold weather payments. In the past year, 86 families have been supported to access free nursery places for two-year-olds. The centre has also trained a substantial number of childminders to be 'Champion Childminders', giving parents access to suitable childcare for respite purposes or opportunities for employment if they so choose.

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	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

Due to the extent and impact of outreach work throughout the borough, the numbers from all the target groups accessing services at Cheviots and being supported to attend other children's centres are growing significantly each year. For example the number of fathers, encouraged by targeted services such as 'Fathers' Sundays', more than doubled as did the number of children and parents accessing services overall. Families from Black and minority ethnic groups supported by the centre rose by 50%. The centre is also highly responsive to changing needs through very careful analysis of local data such as the significant recent increase in babies diagnosed with Down's Syndrome. It has already taken steps to meet the anticipated needs of this group. Because the well-located activities are all of high quality, the participation and attendance rates are excellent and this has a very positive impact on outcomes for families. One parent summed up many other views with, 'It is a place you and your child belong; the activities are good and help you interact better regardless of their condition.'

Achievement is celebrated extremely well through a graduation ceremony for 'Champion Childminders' and by taking many photographs of children's achievements. There are very high aspirations for everyone and adults respond extremely well to this, with some using and developing their skills to a significant level to support others. Highly individualised learning and development for children

through groups such as 'Playing and Moving' ensure that outcomes for the most vulnerable children are excellent.

The extent and quality of care, guidance and support for families are exemplary. Although only designated as a children's centre relatively recently, services for disabled children have been delivered from the building for many years and some highly experienced staff have been involved for a considerable period. Fortnightly Early Support Resource Allocation Panel (ESRAP) meetings, chaired by the centre manager, plus the exceptional range of well-integrated partnership work mean that parents rightly see the centre as a one-stop shop for high-quality advice and guidance. Families who are most in need of support or where there is a particular crisis or trauma such as bereavement, are exceptionally well supported, leading to outstanding outcomes for the great majority. 'They have nurtured us as a family; we are so grateful for all they do', reflected many parents' comments.

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 centre manager, working very closely with the Head of Joint Service for Disabled Children, ensures that there is very high-quality supervision and professional development for all staff. The social work team, centre workers and specialist outreach staff are managed extremely effectively with very clear lines of responsibility. Having them all managed under the umbrella of the children's centre ensures there is a streamlined service for the most vulnerable families. The relatively new advisory group reviews the centre's work effectively but members have lacked training to enable them to challenge rigorously and membership is still relatively narrow. However, all partners are fully involved at a strategic level through many other relevant panels and boards.

Inspirational leadership and high aspirations result in a clear focus on continuous improvement. Although the manager is crystal clear about how to meet ambitious targets, the unwieldy format of the service plan makes it difficult to record and measure progress towards achieving them. Nevertheless, well-targeted planning that takes full cognisance of families' views has already had a very significant impact on outcomes for families, especially those most in need of support.

The centre provides excellent value for money because resources, including the vast

knowledge and expertise of staff, are used and shared with other services to a very great extent. For example, organisations such as 'Homestart' and the toy library are supported to run highly effective groups in the centre. Families feel that resources exactly match their needs. They are particularly appreciative of the newly refurbished building with so many rooms to use including the excellent sensory and soft play rooms as well as specific resources for children with multiple and complex needs.

'Disabled children are everybody's business' is the centre's mantra and this constant striving for inclusion means that equality and diversity are outstanding. Parents are encouraged to access universal services elsewhere and are accompanied where necessary. Staff expertise shared with other centres ensures that disabled children are fully included in a wide choice of activities. Joint working such as setting up a group for autistic children in another centre enhances families' understanding and acceptance of difference. Open sessions at Cheviots mean that a very wide range of families from all target groups accesses the excellent resources and this has a very positive impact on outcomes. Creche facilities, short breaks and respite care for their children ensure that parents have easier access to courses or can help support the centre's work.

Safeguarding everyone including staff, but especially highly vulnerable children, permeates all areas of the centre's work. Centre staff and all partners are appropriately checked before recruitment or delivering services. There is exemplary practice such as bespoke training, exceptionally robust risk assessments and in-depth multi-agency work that leads to continuous information sharing. The outstanding partnerships that exist are integral to meeting the needs of families and contribute to excellent outcomes across all areas. The centre's participation on panels such as ESRAP, ensures that tailor-made support can be put in place for families usually from the hub of the centre. Excellent links with private, voluntary and independent organisations such as Homestart, the toy library, nurseries and special schools make a significant contribution to enhancing families' lives and ensuring the children have the best possible opportunities to make progress.

Families from all target groups are unanimous in their praise and gratitude for the work of centre staff and the impact it has on their lives. 'Thank God for Cheviots' was a heartfelt common theme shared with inspectors. Parents' desire to be fully involved in developing services and sharing their experience with others reflects this. Their views are constantly sought and acted upon as are those of their children. The use of 'Picture Exchange Communication System' and child-friendly cameras enable children to record what they like and dislike, and videos capture the reactions of non-communicative children and so ensure their views are also fully taken into account.

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
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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

Not applicable.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Cheviots Children's Centre on 14–15 November 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for your participation in the inspection; it was very helpful to have your views which were all unanimously positive and were summed up by one parent saying, 'Thank God for Cheviots!'

During our time in your centre we visited all of the activities taking place, such as the 'Homestart' and 'Playing and Moving' groups, met with staff and representatives from the local authority and the partner agencies and looked at a wide variety of documentation including the centre's service plan.

Everyone we spoke to, including those who work with the centre, was full of praise for the work the centre staff are doing to improve the lives of disabled children in the borough and other children who access services from the local community. Typical

comments were: 'I can't fault this centre; staff are fantastic and know my child extremely well' and 'They have nurtured us as a family; we are so grateful for all they do.'

There is outstanding provision to meet sometimes very complex needs. Exceptional levels of safeguarding, care, guidance and support resulting from highly experienced staff and exemplary partnerships mean that outcomes across all areas are excellent. As a result families are helped to lead healthy lives extremely well. Support through parenting courses and sleep workshops as well as individual help result in you being very clear about how to keep your children safe. Children make excellent progress while they are at the centre and the amazing help they are given when they move on to school or nursery ensures that they continue to benefit in the longer term.

You told us that a great many of you have also gained hugely from your contact with the centre; for many, that is through excellent support to ensure you are receiving all the financial help you are entitled to, or to access equipment such as buggies and harnesses so that you can go out more easily and confidently, and widen you and your child's horizons. Very many of you play a vital role in the centre through Parent2Parent, Our Voice and attending advisory group meetings. This means that you are fully included in developing the services that meet your often very specific needs best.

There are some minor things that we have asked the centre to improve. These are to extend the number of people from partner services who sit on the advisory group and then make sure that they are trained well so that they can challenge the centre more as well as review their work. We have also asked that the centre and the local authority slim down the service plan so that it is easier to see where the really key priorities are and to ensure that all of the targets are easier to measure by using data and time-frames more comprehensively.

It is very clear that the centre's ethos of 'disabled children are everybody's business' drives the work of the extremely committed staff, inspirationally led by the centre manager. By ensuring staff expertise is shared in the community, more disabled children from all walks of life are accessing and benefiting greatly from a wide range of support and services. With very strong leadership and management, outcomes that are already outstanding and the full support of excellent partnerships, the centre has an outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

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