

Inspection report for Yiewsley Cornerstone Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Hillingdon
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Centre leader	Paul Mathers
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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre users, leaders and managers, health and local authority representatives, front line workers and partners.

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

Information about the centre

Yiewsley Cornerstone Children's Centre was designated in 2007 as a phase two children's centre. It is located on the edge of a social housing estate and adjoins the Baptist church. Just over half of families in the reach area live in one of the 30% most deprived wards in England. The remainder of families live in a 70% area of disadvantage. Overall the proportion of families in the reach area in receipt of workless benefits is well above national and local authority averages. The reach area covers about half of West Drayton ward and about half of Yiewsley ward. The reach area is made up of social housing, privately owned and privately rented accommodation.

The centre is a stand-alone centre which is run by the local Yiewsley Cornerstone charity on behalf of the local authority. The centre offers a range of community services to local residents of all ages. All of the children's services and activities are delivered in the Yiewsley Cornerstone Children's Centre building and the centre also makes use of rooms within the Baptist church to deliver some activities. The majority of families living in the centre's reach area are from a White British background with an increasing Black and minority ethnic population, predominantly Asian families. The Board of Trustees oversees all the work of the charity. There is also an advisory board specifically for the children's centre aspect of the charity made up of community representatives and parents.

Data indicate children enter early years provision with a narrower range of skills and abilities than typically expected for their age. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, 64% children in Hillingdon reach a good level of development across all areas of learning, including communication, language and literacy.

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

Meeting the needs of families is at the heart of what this good centre does. There is an air of calmness from the moment you enter the centre. As a result parents return to the centre and comment that they have tried other centres but have always come back to Cornerstone. Participation rates are improving with over 69% of families in the reach area registered with and accessing centre services. However the centre does not receive live birth or new to area information. Although relationships with health colleagues work very well operationally there is no requirement for health workers to ensure families are informed about their local centre. As a result, it is difficult for the centre to identify all families in its reach area or investigate who is not using centre services and why this is the case. That said, the centre knows its community well and has actively sought out local information from staff, professionals and parents to ensure services are targeted at those most in need.

The exemplary safeguarding practices in the centre ensure children are safe and families very well supported. The sensitive assessment of their specific needs results in individualised packages of care and very effective personalised support. In times of crisis families turn to the centre and know they will receive the help they need. There are many examples of where centre staff have gone out of their way to support families subject to domestic violence ensuring they are found a place of safety. As a result children and vulnerable adults are exceptionally well safeguarded and there is clear improvement in the confidence and abilities of parents.

The centre’s engagement with its users is exceptional. Children and adults achieve well and many improve their skills due to the quality and impact of good learning opportunities. As a result adults are helped to improve their economic stability.

Families are fully involved in all aspects of the children's centre from delivering activities to sitting on the Board of Trustees. The ethos of the centre is to empower parents and children. As a result parents' views inform all decisions the centre makes through a variety of approaches that take account of their needs. This includes opportunities to complete anonymous question cards before each forum meeting and challenging the centre through representation on the advisory board. Over 30 parents are currently involved in volunteering in the centre and wider community. This is acknowledged as a real strength of the centre and as a result they have been nominated for the Queen's Award for Volunteering.

Value for money is outstanding. Leaders constantly review services and activities to ensure they continue to meet needs and are cost effective. Because the views of families always inform activities and services they are very closely matched to their needs. The deployment of staff knowledge and expertise, along with support for them to gain new skills, ensures high-quality provision for all families who attend and sustainable, targeted services.

There is good capacity to sustain improvement as the centre's actions to overcome weaknesses have been concerted and effective. The delivery plan clearly identifies provision and services for the coming year, grounded in a detailed and accurate analysis of families' needs. However the plan does not include baseline data or measurable targets where these would be helpful for showing impact. It is not annotated or updated on a regular basis to show where progress is being made or where changes are needed. As a result the centre is limited in its ability to evidence the impact of its work on the outcomes for all families from the reach area.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Health services in Hillingdon and the local authority should continue to work together to agree at a strategic level how new birth and new to area data can be shared with the centre so that it can:
 - gain a greater understanding of the community within the reach area
 - identify which families in the reach area are not using centre services and investigate why
 - ensure it is targeting and meeting the needs of those who are most vulnerable and hardest to reach.

- Further develop the delivery plan to include:
 - baseline data and measurable targets where these are appropriate to enable the centre to more clearly evidence the impact of its work on the outcomes for families and particularly those most in need of support
 - progress updates or annotations identified through monitoring and evaluation that will enable the centre to show where rigorous evaluation and parental feedback has had an impact on delivery.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Health outcomes are improving. Breastfeeding rates have increased by nearly 20% in the last year. Obesity rates continue to be an issue. However the centre is working effectively to reduce obesity by providing healthy eating advice and cookery sessions helping improve parents' understanding of a healthy diet. Smoking cessation rates are low. The centre is aware of issues that currently prevent families from giving up smoking and successfully concentrates on helping families create smoke-free homes. Baby clinic runs alongside 'stay and play' sessions encouraging families to be involved in other centre activities. The centre holds 'small talk' sessions enabling families with concerns to receive an assessment of their children's early language and communication. The Speech and Language Therapy Service states that the number of families who do not attend appointments is significantly reduced when the service is held in the children's centre. Midwifery clinics in the centre enable parents to become acquainted with staff and find out what is available even before the baby is born.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. Safety assessments carried out during home visits and guidance from centre staff are improving families' understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves safe. The centre's involvement with families who are subject to domestic violence ensures that families who are at risk are listened to, any concerns are acted upon and interventions are targeted. Several case studies show where the centre has gone the extra mile to ensure parents are safe and secure after they go to the centre for help, including taking the local authority to task for having nothing in place to support men subject to abuse.

Despite low profile scores in the reach area not yet meeting the local or national average, children make good progress from low starting points. The centre proactively uses issues picked up from nursery on-entry assessments to focus activities particularly on children's emotional development which is very low and boys' writing which is low in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores. There are many interesting opportunities for parents to enjoy, play and learn with their children through activities such as 'stay and play'. They are also involved in a variety of training courses. Courses are helping parents to improve their skills, giving them confidence and encouragement to support and value their children's learning at home.

Parents have many opportunities to contribute to governance of the centre through the parents' forum, advisory board and Board of Trustees. The centre is seen as the hub of the local community. The last satisfaction survey shows over 99% of parents who use the centre are happy with services and activities. All parents spoken to express how grateful they are to the centre for the support they are given and how much they are empowered to take control over their lives. The high number of volunteer at the centre is testament to how much it is valued by the community. Many of the current staff team started their engagement with the centre as parents and volunteers.

Unemployment in the area remains high. As a result the centre has developed a variety of ways to build parents' confidence and improve their employability through courses such as literacy and numeracy. The Pathway Programme is also successful in providing individualised support for parents to prepare for the world of work including practical activities such as CV writing.

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	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	2

How good is the provision?

2

A large majority of local families participate in centre activities. As a result some sessions now have booking arrangements to ensure families in the reach area have priority for places. There is a mix of universal and targeted services to ensure those who find it difficult to engage in large groups have their needs met. A number of activities such as baby massage provide both targeted and universal places that ensure the centre does not become stigmatised. Staff use assessment frameworks well to identify and rigorously assess individual needs.

Activities for children are well planned and cover all areas of learning. Play sessions are evaluated and children who attend crèche sessions have learning journeys which are shared with parents. The centre enables individuals to improve and value their own and their children's learning through workshops and parenting courses as well as through literacy, numeracy and IT training. All achievements at the centre are celebrated and families are rightly proud of their accomplishments.

Families are provided with excellent care and support. Several parents spoken to said how they preferred this centre because of the care and support they are given and the positive ethos and caring atmosphere. There is a wide variety of informative literature about services available to families. The centre also contributed to an informative leaflet for fathers whose partners are breastfeeding, now distributed throughout Hillingdon. The exceptional knowledge and expertise of the family

support worker, and the dedication and commitment of all staff ensure personalised support. All parents spoke highly of the help and support they have received. Parents who shared their stories with inspectors stated, 'I don't know where I would be without this centre.' Case studies clearly show where centre staff have helped to turn lives around. This, combined with strong partnership working, ensures those most in need of care and support receive it.

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	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Although data are not used as well as they could be in delivery planning, patterns in attendance or need are quickly identified. Leaders carry out searching investigations as to why attendance declines or proposals do not work to ensure the centre remains cost-effective and continues to meet the needs of families in the reach area. As a result there is a clear link between evaluation and the priorities for improvement. The views of families are central to self-evaluation and as a result targets are focused on what will have the greatest impact on the area. However the centre is aware of the importance of distinguishing between wants and needs, and where parents want an activity but there is no specific need for it the centre empowers parents to set things up for themselves.

Supervision arrangements are clear and well understood by staff. Each senior manager is responsible for aspects of the centre's work and identified staff, helping to improve performance. The advisory board has representation from professionals, councillors, the community and parents. While partners understand their roles in challenging the centre and ensuring integrated provision they sometimes become sidetracked during meetings. The Board of Trustees' governance and accountability arrangements are firmly embedded and highly effective. Meeting minutes clearly show they understand their roles and the purpose of the centre and as a result they are effectively holding the centre to account for its performance.

The comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues in the reach area and the exemplary safeguarding arrangements in the centre, including rigorous recruitment checks and exacting risk assessments, result in exceptionally high-quality practices which enhance children's safety and well-being significantly.

Staff make the most of every inch of the centre to ensure families' needs are met.

The central kitchen hub is always busy and attracts families to the centre even when they are not attending sessions. The bright and friendly centre shows that families in the reach area are valued. Staff are constantly updating their knowledge and gaining new skills and expertise because the centre is very conscious of the need to ensure services are sustainable at a time of reducing budgets.

The centre is fully inclusive and has been effective at removing barriers to access and improving engagement of target groups. As a result gaps between groups are closing. However the centre knows that it needs to concentrate its work and resources in the year ahead to ensure the most vulnerable, including families with a member who is disabled or has special educational needs are receiving the support they need, especially where they do not wish to attend specialist provision for children. Families from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds attend English for speakers of other languages classes in the centre while their children are cared for in the crèche. This helps to introduce families to other centre services.

Partnerships are firmly established resulting in integrated services. Partners sit on the advisory board and take part in centre activities such as fun days, or provide sessions such as baby massage. Partnerships with health are strong on the ground and health workers value the additional dimension the centre provides while parents wait for appointments. The centre is regularly requested to be involved in projects or to provide a venue for them, as partners know they can depend on the centre to look at the wider needs of the whole community.

Parents are fully involved in centre governance and the design and set up of services. Along with question cards there is a suggestion box in the entrance and a 'you said – we did' board that clearly shows parents where their suggestions have been acted upon. Although it is not provided with live birth data the centre can show that it is engaging with all target groups from its manual breakdown of records on the Hillingdon-wide database.

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
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure 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	1
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	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	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	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 Yiewsley Cornerstone Children’s Centre on 16 and 17 January 2013. We judged the centre as good overall. During our visit we spoke to a number of you, observed activities and met with staff and professionals who work with the centre.

Many of you went out of your way to tell us how much you enjoy the activities and have benefited from the services provided through the centre. Those of you who spoke to us said that your children’s centre is a friendly and welcoming place. Many of you had tried other centres but always came back to Cornerstone. All of you we spoke to said that staff are friendly, helpful, supportive and non-judgemental. The number of parents registering with the centre has improved and the centre is working very hard to support vulnerable families and those with additional needs. However the centre does not get new birth or new to area data from health partners to help it to more clearly identify families in the area who do not use the centre and find out why. We have asked the local authority and health partners to work together to find ways of sharing this information with centres.

The centre has developed strong partnerships with other professionals, especially health and adult learning. You told us about how good you had found the literacy and numeracy courses and as a result your confidence had improved and the centre was now helping you to start looking at preparing to return to employment. We could see how comfortable you felt in the centre and that you made good use of the bright and cheerful facilities, especially the kitchen hub. We also noted how accessible the excellent care, guidance and support you receive is. Many of you commented on the help you have been given by the family support worker and other centre staff and how this has made a big difference to you and your children’s lives.

Children have enjoyable, well-planned, activities to do which help them learn. They do well because centre staff are skilled in providing interesting activities during ‘stay

and play' sessions to help them develop. Staff continually strive to improve the quality of care and education that is on offer. They share children's learning journeys with you if your children attend crèche sessions and build on what your children already know and can do. As a result your children enjoy their time in crèche enabling you to concentrate on your own learning. We were impressed by how well you are supporting your children's learning at home by attending training courses to improve your own knowledge and skills.

Safeguarding is given the highest priority in the centre and staff have an excellent understanding of how to keep families safe. Relationships with other agencies ensure you get the help and support you need when you need it. Those of you we spoke to said how much they appreciated that there is always someone to help when you need it. Many of you who have felt isolated and alone with your problems say you have no longer felt unable to cope with life's difficulties as a result of the help and support you have received from the centre, especially those who have needed to get away from domestic violence situations. You told us you had made friends from attending the centre especially where you were new to the area or had no family close by.

One of the biggest strengths of the centre is the involvement of users. Many of you are now involved in volunteering at the centre and some of you are involved in decision making through the advisory board and Board of Trustees. All of you we spoke to said how you could speak to anyone about your concerns or ideas and that you would be listened to. You have many opportunities to contribute to evaluation in the centre and your feedback is essential in ensuring that delivery plans continue to meet your needs. However we have asked leaders to further develop their plans to include baselines and measurable targets where appropriate, as well as updates on progress and changes to services, helping the centre to more clearly show their impact.

Thank you to everybody who took the time to come and speak with us and to let us know what you thought about the centre. We are very grateful to you all and wish you and your families every success for the future.

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