

Inspection report for Chippenham Road Children's Centre

Local authority	Havering
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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 senior managers from the centre, frontline staff, parents, staff from partner organisations, members of the advisory board and a representative of the local authority linked to the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Chippenham Road Children's Centre was designated in 2007 and is situated in Harold Hill's central shopping area. Harold Hill is a large-scale social housing development, built at the end of the Second World War, and is situated in Gooshays Ward. Although Havering is generally affluent, there are inequalities and pockets of deprivation within the borough, particularly in the Harold Hill area.

The centre works in cooperation with the other children's centres in Harold Hill to provide services that complement each other and to share resources and staff. There are four children's centres within walking distance of each other. The centre is governed by the Children's Centre Local Advisory Group (CCLAG) and is managed directly by Havering local authority. The advisory board comprises of key partners including agency representatives, parents and the local authority. There are no daycare facilities at the centre. The local authority has made a strategic decision to develop a more targeted service and reduce the range of universal offer activities to families.

Data from 2010 show that the reach area ranks in the 20% most deprived in England; 29% of all families living in the Chippenham Road reach area who claim Child Benefit are out of work and receive Tax Credits, which is higher than the Havering average of 17.7%. Havering is less ethnically diverse than both England

and London, with 4.9% of the borough's population from black and minority ethnic groups. However, this proportion has been rapidly increasing in recent years. Children in the centre's reach area demonstrate skills, knowledge and abilities below the levels expected for their age on entry to early years provision.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

The centre provides satisfactory support to families and as a result outcomes overall are satisfactory. Children and their parents enjoy using the centre and feel comfortable within its welcoming environment. Services are valued and parents find staff very supportive; the respite crèche provision in particular is viewed very positively by those families that access it. The quality of care, guidance and support is a strength and staff have a good understanding of the needs of those accessing the centre's services.

The centre has made a huge impact on the lives of families, with children subject to child protection plans, resulting in outstanding safety outcomes for many families. Excellent referral systems coupled with very effective partnerships with key agencies have been instrumental in enabling this to happen. In addition, safeguarding is seen as a very high priority and the arrangements are outstanding. All staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of safeguarding procedures and the ongoing training is of high quality. As a result, the needs of families where, for example, domestic violence is a serious issue are very effectively met.

Services are designed to meet the needs of families and, as a result, a growing number of families are accessing the centre. The centre is working soundly to meet the needs of these families, who include teenage parents, lone parents and families who are identified as in greatest need. In 2012, there was a modest drop in the number of families accessing some universal services because of the strategic decision by the local authority to offer these services to targeted families only. However, the centre recognises there is still work to do in order to increase the numbers accessing the centre from the identified vulnerable groups and the more

deprived areas of the community.

Staff are highly motivated and committed to helping families improve their life chances. The centre has an accurate understanding of its strengths and shortcomings and has set accurate priorities for development, reflecting sound self-evaluation. However, actions are not always precise enough, with measurable targets, in order for the centre to demonstrate when these have been successful and what impact they have on improving the outcomes for families. The centre's capacity to improve further is therefore satisfactory.

The advisory board has wide representation and provides appropriate support to the centre. However, it is not effectively using data about identified target groups to hold the centre to account or provide a sufficient level of challenge. Parents feel their views are heard as staff involve them in evaluating sessions. Although the established parent forum has had a modest impact in influencing the centre's thinking, families are not yet systematically engaged in shaping services and the governance of the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work closely with the local authority and partners to improve the quality of data available in order to:
 - more precisely assess the needs of the community to target services for specific groups, particularly those identified as in greatest need
 - identify more precisely what outcomes the centre aims to achieve in improving the life chances of children and families when setting targets, and how these will be measured
 - track more sharply the impact that services have on improving the outcomes for families.
- Improve the effectiveness and challenge of the advisory board in holding the centre to account for the quality of its services.
- Develop the parent forum to systematically engage families in shaping services and involve them more fully in the governance of the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre provides a range of activities to promote healthy eating and physical fitness, for example the 'Cook and Eat' sessions for targeted families. Advice given during activities develops parents' understanding and ability to improve their children's health, including oral health and hygiene. Obesity rates in Havering are slightly higher than the national average and the centre has made a modest contribution towards addressing this. Parents are advised how to look beyond the advertising slogans to ensure the food they buy for their children is nutritious. Mothers receive support in regard to breastfeeding their babies through accessing

the breastfeeding cafe. Breastfeeding initiation and prevalence rates of mothers in Havering are below the average for England. The Breastfeeding Friendly Scheme has been launched to address this but it is too early to assess the impact. The centre has worked successfully to improve outcomes for many adults with mental health problems.

Guidance on safety and safeguarding is threaded very adeptly through all the activities at the centre so that parents become much more confident in managing their children's behaviour and keeping their children safe. As a result, accident rates for families in the area are low. The centre provides excellent guidance to families who have experienced domestic abuse and to families whose circumstance may make them more vulnerable. High-quality counselling services are secured for families at risk of breakdown, with evidence of excellent preventative impact. The outcomes for the high numbers of families in the area subject to Common Assessment Framework processes and those subject to child protection plans have historically been outstanding. There have been significant reductions in the number of children coming off child protection plans as a result of the centre's relentless engagement with these families. As one parent remarked, 'Without their amazing help, things would have turned out a lot different.' The impact of the centre's work with looked-after children has been equally positive.

The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage was below the national average in the reach area last year. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to children's starting points. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is above the national average but closing very steadily. The centre's respite crèche is a good example of sound learning and development. All activities are planned using the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and the use of 'learning journeys' encourages parents to recognise children's achievements. These are shared with other settings that these children move on to, enabling a smooth transition. Targeted parents enjoy attending the parenting programmes on offer which focus on bonding and attachment to strengthen family relationships.

Case studies show how some families have improved their economic stability through specific tailored support. Weekly sessions held by Job Centre Plus provide families with a range of information about returning to work, including information on housing and benefits. As a result, many adults have returned to work and some have embarked on vocational courses at a local college. However, the centre is not yet tracking the longer-term impact of such courses on the achievement or economic well-being of participants. Although clear systems are in place to elicit views from parents, not enough are currently involved in decision making, particularly at a strategic level.

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	3
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The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
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	3
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

How good is the provision?

3

The centre has provided mainly universal services in the past, but is now clearly focused on targeting services at the most vulnerable families, including those suffering from isolation, to ensure a better balance in provision and to meet all needs well. For example, the 'multicultural group' is helping remove the barriers faced by black and minority ethnic families concerning access to services.

Although the centre has strong knowledge about the families that are accessing their services, leaders recognise that more remains to be done to engage an increased number of families from key target groups such as fathers and families who have children with disabilities. The centre has useful information about the level of engagement of target groups, but currently insufficient data are available at reach-area level to enable the full impact of the centre's services to be monitored and evaluated.

The available accommodation, although limited, is used flexibly to support a suitable range of activities, most of which are now targeted rather than universal. This includes training for the centre's staff who, during the inspection, gained a deeper understanding of the practical issues around managing autistic children as a result of a well-delivered session by a group of confident young people who themselves have that condition.

The good care, guidance and support provided by the staff is making a real difference to families, who report that they feel much more confident, less isolated and have developed greater self-esteem as a result of the centre's timely interventions. A father whose child attended the respite crèche spoke about the child's 'good development of social skills' and confidence to interact with other children. The centre's effective partnership with Women's Aid has resulted in good support for women suffering from domestic violence.

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	3
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?

3

The centre runs smoothly and efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Professional supervision takes place regularly and staff value the opportunities for ongoing professional development and feel supported in their work with families. Effective partnerships with health professionals and other key agencies, such as the early intervention and assessment team, ensure centre staff target services at supporting families identified as in greatest need. However, the information the centre receives from the local authority on the demographics of the area does not help it to extend its reach to the wider community.

Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders are clear about the centre's strengths and areas to improve, although targets are not always specific enough and do not include success criteria by which to check the impact of the centre's actions on improving the outcomes for all target groups. The advisory board, although undertaking its role satisfactorily, is not yet providing a sufficient level of challenge for the centre. However, the board has wide representation and provides good support and clear strategic direction in relation to the revised offer provided by the centre.

Centre staff promote an inclusive environment for families. They help vulnerable families to access services by initially accompanying them to sessions in order to build their confidence. The crèche facility for the children of targeted parents plays a key part in enabling them to develop their personal, social and emotional skills and experience. This includes children with special educational needs, who receive good care and support. Cultural diversity is actively celebrated throughout the year.

The centre makes effective use of community venues to provide services across the area. Family support workers have a wide range of skills in order to cover the various aspects of children's centre's work, providing satisfactory value for money. Staff are exceptionally well trained in child protection matters and have a very secure understanding of safeguarding children issues. Targeted work with families subject to child protection plans or children identified as in need is highly successful and has a demonstrable impact on keeping children well protected and safe. Very effective systems, such as comprehensive staff recruitment checks, are in place to ensure those who work with children are suitable to do so.

The views of parents are satisfactorily taken into account and used to help shape services, for example through regular meetings organised by the centre. However, despite staff's efforts, families are not yet systematically engaged in the governance of the centre.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
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	3

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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Chippenham Road Centre on 18–19 February 2013. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We enjoyed talking to some of you during the inspection and would like to thank you for your contribution and time. Your comments and written feedback were very valuable and helped us in our work.

Your views about the centre were very clear. We agree with you that staff at the centre are caring and welcoming and provide you with good care, guidance and support, especially when you need it the most. You told us how much you value the services and support the centre provides and the way it is helping to improve your lives. Statements made, such as, 'Without their help things would have been a lot different' and, 'If I need advice, the door is always open' demonstrate the positive impact the centre has had.

Staff are exceptionally well trained in how to safeguard children and it is rightly seen as a high priority. The centre has very effective systems in place to ensure that anyone who works with you and your children is suitable to do so. Staff work outstandingly well with other agencies to ensure you and your children access the right kind of support where families are experiencing issues related to domestic violence. In addition, the centre works relentlessly with families with children on child protection plans, resulting in very good outcomes in the personal circumstances of these families.

You told us how you benefit from positive relationships with each other and with the centre staff. You clearly all treat each other with respect and consideration. You are rightly impressed by the good quality of provision in the respite crèche. Good planning for sessions derives from the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and covers a range of activities to stimulate and develop children's personal, social and emotional development. Targeted sessions, for example the multicultural group and that for Under Twos, are helping you understand how children learn and develop. You told us that you feel these sessions are helping to prepare your children confidently for pre-school as they learn how to share, make friends and show respect for each other.

The range of services is suitably designed to meet the needs of families and is accessed by a growing number of families. However, as you are aware, there has been a reduction in the number of families accessing universal services because many of these are now available for targeted families only. The centre is meeting the needs of families, who include teenage parents and families who require additional support. This is because the centre accesses data made available by the local authority about the community and staff know the area well. However, the centre knows it still has work to do in order to target services so even more families can benefit from its services, particularly those in the community who are most vulnerable. Therefore, one of our key recommendations is for the centre to work closely with the local authority and key partners to improve the quality of data about target groups in the reach area.

Staff are highly motivated and committed to help you improve your life chances. They know what they do well and the areas they need to improve. The centre has set accurate priorities for development. However, actions are not always precise enough, with measureable targets, in order for them to demonstrate when these have been successful and the impact they have had on improving the life chances for

families. The advisory board has good representation from the community and supports the centre well. However, we have recommended that the board use data more effectively to set strategic targets and challenge the work of the centre in a more formal manner.

We noticed that you have some opportunities to share your views. You offer suggestions when services require some amendment to meet your changing needs, for example the timings of sessions and requests for bringing back the 'Cook and Eat' programme. The centre recognises that it needs to encourage more of you to be involved in making direct contributions to the management of the centre and helping to shape services further.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us during the inspection and we are grateful for your views and comments.

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