

Inspection report for Hatherleigh Area Children's Centre

Local authority	Devon County Council
Inspection number	404440
Inspection dates	February 2013
Reporting inspector	Jane Burchall HMI

Centre leader	Emily Evely
Date of previous inspection	This is the centre's first inspection
Centre address	Hatherleigh Community Centre Bowling Green Lane Hatherleigh Devon EX20 3HB
Telephone number	01837 811190
Fax number	01837 811190
Email address	Hatherleighchildrenscentre@barnardos.org.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY338693 Hatherleigh Pre-school

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: March 2013



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2013



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 the centre's management team, members of the advisory board, the local authority, Barnardo's, partnership agencies, members of staff and families using the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its development plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre and about the wider community.

Information about the centre

Hatherleigh Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre. It originated as a mini Sure Start local project in 2002 and was designated as a children's centre in 2007. It has been run by Barnardo's since April 2011. It is situated within Hatherleigh Community Centre and is co-located alongside the local pre-school. The centre meets its core purpose by offering a range of services which include health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes and outreach services. Services are offered from the main children's centre building as well as a range of community venues within outlying towns and villages. The centre works in a cluster with two other children's centres and works collaboratively with Okehampton Children's Centre.

The centre covers a rural area which includes Hatherleigh, North Tawton, Exbourne, Jacobstowe, Sampford Courtenay, Lewdown, Bratton Clovelly, Bridestowe, Northlew, Lewtrenchard and parts of Lydford. It is in an area which is not identified as deprived overall with only 8% of families dependent on workless benefits. The population is mostly White British with only 4% of families originating from other ethnic groups. There are 414 children under five living in the reach area. Typically, children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early year's education are in line with those expected for their 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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Hatherleigh Area Children’s Centre is making a strong contribution to improving outcomes for families because staff and leaders show high levels of commitment and work well together to meet the needs of the community. Staff have had particular success at registering a very high proportion of families in the reach area. The large majority of these families actively use the centre’s services. Leaders support families from target groups to access the centre. They have had particular success engaging teenage and lone parents, although recognise that some groups such as fathers, disabled children and families from non-White British groups are under represented.

A particular strength of the centre is the good quality care, guidance and support offered to families. Visitors to the centre receive a warm welcome by staff. In times of crisis, parents are able to turn to the centre in complete confidence that they will receive the help, support and guidance they need. ‘I don’t know where I’d be without the centre.’ ‘The centre helped me to survive.’ ‘The children’s centre has been a life-line to me,’ were typical comments made by parents. They confirmed that at times of low mood they know they can ‘pick up the phone’ and will always be able to speak to someone at the centre who will offer them a listening ear and help them identify practical solutions.

Staff place the safeguarding of children and their families at the heart of everything they do. Good systems are in place to support staff and implement the centre’s effective policies and procedures, including access to regular supervision. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and child protection issues and are particularly skilled in recognising early warning signs. They work well as a team to support families effectively to prevent escalation. Robust recruitment procedures ensure that staff working with children and their families are suitable.

Hatherleigh Area Children’s Centre is at the heart of its community and parents make a strong contribution to the centre. They are regularly consulted about the effectiveness of services and feel confident they are listened to. They are actively involved decision making, such as the recruitment of new staff, and through their

role on the advisory board. The strong parents' forum contributes well to the life of the centre, both through fundraising to support the sustainability of services as well as providing their view on the quality of services delivered.

Parents and their children enjoy playing and learning together. Staff work closely with parents and local toddler groups in order to model good practice and support the home-learning environment. This has seen an increase in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development. However, the gap in achievement between the lowest achieving 20% of children in the area and the rest has recently increased. Data to help leaders reverse this trend are too broad. The data do not give leaders sufficient information to enable a clear analysis of how to improve services in order to support children's learning and development better.

Most aspects of the centre's leadership and management are strong. In the short time the new centre lead has been in post she has quickly developed a good understanding of where leaders and staff need to focus their efforts and, as a result, self-evaluation is accurate overall. She has successfully addressed some areas such as strengthening safeguarding and assessment procedures. However, at present, the centre only demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve further. This is because plans to address other key priorities, such as a strategy to support improved evaluation of services, are in their infancy and have yet to be implemented. Overall strategic planning focuses too heavily on local authority priorities rather than the specific priorities for this centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Together with partners, develop the analysis and use of data regarding children's levels of development within the Early Years Foundation Stage and use the information gained to develop strategies to narrow the achievement gap.
- Increase the participation by fathers, children with disabilities and families from multi-ethnic groups.
- Review action plans to ensure an improved focus is placed upon the centre's key priorities.
- Implement the planned evaluation strategy and ensure evidence of impact on families is systematically gathered and used to inform future services.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families successfully learn about the benefits of adopting healthier lifestyles as there is a range of programmes to support and encourage them. Courses, such as Health, Exercise, Nutrition for the Really Young (HENRY), information on a range of healthy eating topics including weaning and one-to-one support, have increased parents' knowledge about how to provide their family with healthier diets. Sessions such as Sing, Jump and Jiggle and Bounce and Rhyme are specifically aimed at providing

opportunities for children to be active indoors. Parents confirm that they are replicating these experiences at home to increase their children's activity levels.

Clear and accurate information, an environment conducive to breastfeeding, and good support by staff and peer mentors has seen the level of mothers who initiate and sustain breastfeeding increase over time. Breastfeeding rates in the reach are very positive, with 78.95% choosing to breastfeed at birth and 72.73% continuing at six to eight weeks. Centre staff place a very good focus on supporting the emotional well-being of parents and their children. Services such as Baby Massage and Here's Looking At You Baby have supported the effective bonding and attachment of parents and their young babies. Many families endorse that their contact with the centre has had a very positive impact upon their improved mental health.

Parents confirm that the children's centre is a safe place and are very confident that they can share their worries with staff who listen to them and act upon their concerns. Staff support families well to assess potential risks within their homes and help them to make their homes safer through access to home safety equipment. Leaders have made good use of data from local hospitals to provide families with information to reduce the rate of hospital admissions, such as those relating to preventing head injuries and lacerations. Staff are knowledgeable about the steps they need to take to keep children safe. Their open and transparent approach with parents has empowered parents to make referrals themselves when they have concerns about children they know. An increasing number of families who are experiencing difficulties in their lives, including those subject to child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), are receiving good support through outreach work delivered by project workers.

Children make suitable progress in their learning and development. Their communication skills are supported in groups which focus on exploring language through rhyme and song. Parents' understanding of how to provide suitable play activities for their children is developed in Stay and Play, Busy Babies and Soft Play and Messy Play sessions. Parents are able to extend the play opportunities they provide at home as they access the centre's toy library. Through individualised support, including the use of parenting programmes, parents show improvement in their confidence and parenting skills, including how to effectively manage their child's behaviour.

Families clearly benefit from the opportunities provided by the centre for socialisation and this is helping to reduce the levels of isolation within the community. Parents are routinely engaged in governance and influencing provision through the parents' forum and the advisory board. They are encouraged to give back to their community through opportunities to volunteer their services, for example as breastfeeding peer mentors. Experience gained has contributed positively to some parents developing skills for employment. Centre staff make good use of specialist advice on finance, budgeting and benefits provided by the Citizen's Advice Bureau to support families on low incomes to improve their economic position.

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	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	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

How good is the provision?

2

Leaders and staff know their community well. They make good use of data provided by the local authority, as well as local information to identify groups within their community who would benefit from targeted provision. Due to good partnership working, staff have been very successful in reaching a significant proportion of families with young children in their reach area, many of whom regularly use the services. Accurate assessment systems mean that the needs of families receiving one-to-one support are effectively assessed and planned for. This includes the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which is embedded in the work of the centre.

Effective systems enable partners to refer families for support from the children's centre. Staff successfully identify when families attending universal services may benefit from more targeted provision. Good multi-agency working results in families with complex needs receiving well-coordinated and integrated services.

Staff take sessions to outlying towns and villages and, as a result, are increasingly engaging with target groups. Some parents access other relevant learning opportunities such as parenting courses, first aid training and courses regarding healthy lifestyles. Centre leaders recognise that adult learning is limited and are working alongside agencies, such as family learning, to develop this aspect of provision further.

Families have easy access to a good range of information, guidance and advice regarding topics which are relevant to them. Staff show families good levels of respect. For example, they are sensitive to the fact that families may wish to access information privately and enable this to happen. They display information regarding personal issues such as domestic violence and sexually transmitted diseases within

the toilet cubicles so users can access these without being observed by others.

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?

2

The centre is well organised with clear lines of accountability and effective staff performance management systems. Staff are given suitable levels of supervision appropriate to their role. This includes a good focus on the monitoring of how well families' needs are met and safeguarding issues. Staff are given good opportunities to access a comprehensive programme of professional development in order that they are knowledgeable and skilled. The centre is effectively supported by an advisory board. Members contribute well to strategic planning and challenge leaders and hold them to account.

Senior leaders and staff are motivated to seek improvement. The centre lead has recently developed a strategy to support improved evaluation of centre services and ensure a more systematic and consistent approach is taken to gathering evidence of the impact services. This strategy is yet to be embedded across the centre. The local authority monitors the performance of the centre against a detailed service plan. Targets are set to drive improvement, although these are not always closely linked to the priorities of the reach area. As the centre's improvement plan addresses all areas within the service plan it is somewhat cumbersome and does not enable leaders to clearly focus on improving the areas that would have greatest impact.

The centre provides good value for money. Accommodation and resources are of good quality. Staff collaborate well with other local centres in order that together they provide services which meet the needs of the community. Staff knowledge and expertise are deployed well to develop good quality provision; staff lead on areas of provision based upon their expertise and professional backgrounds.

The inclusion of all children and families is central to the centre's vision. All children, parents and families are valued as individuals, with centre staff focusing on meeting their specific needs. Children with disabilities who attend the centre are provided with suitable support by staff and access to the centre's newly developed sensory room. Staff also signpost parents to specific Step-by-Step provision run in conjunction with portage and delivered from another children's centre located locally. The centre is increasingly reaching more families through strong partnership working

and outreach work, although it recognises the need to focus efforts upon target groups who remain under represented.

Safeguarding arrangements are a strength of the centre and play a crucial role in keeping some of the most vulnerable families safe. Staff are well trained to recognise where families may be at risk of domestic abuse. They link well with other agencies to provide families with relevant support such as seeking a place of safety. Centre staff also work well with a range of other partners such as Citizens Advice Bureau and health in order that services are integrated. Leaders and staff are working hard to build further relationships such as with local doctors' surgeries and schools.

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	3
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	3
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

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hatherleigh Area Children's Centre on 27 and 28 February 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

We agree with you that the children's centre provides you with a good service which is helping you to make positive changes to your lives. We found the good care, guidance and support that staff provide to be a real strength of the centre. You told us how staff are always ready to listen when you need to talk with someone and do their best to help you to make positive changes to your lives. Many of you expressed how much you have valued this support, particularly at times when you have felt low. We were particularly impressed to see how many families had registered with the centre and were regularly using its services. We have asked the centre to encourage even more families to benefit from the good services they offer, particularly fathers, children with disabilities and families from backgrounds other than White British.

Centre staff do all they can to make sure you and your children remain safe. For example, they are well trained in how to safeguard children and managers have taken the correct steps to ensure that anyone who works with you and your children is suitable. Staff work closely with you to help you ensure that your homes are safe places for your young children and give you relevant information to help you prevent accidents.

It was very clear to the inspectors that you make a strong contribution to the running of the centre. Through the parents' forum you have raised money to help ensure that the centre is able to run a good programme of activities. You regularly share your views on the quality of services in order that they best meet the needs of the families in your community. Some of you have been involved in contributing to key decisions made by the centre, such as when new staff are recruited.

It was evident that you and your children enjoy coming to the groups provided by the centre. Staff are providing you with good ideas of activities you can do at home with your children and you make use of the centre's toy library so that your children have a range of toys to play with. Many children in the area are reaching good levels of development and we have asked the centre to gather more information to help support those children who may need extra help in their learning and progress.

We found that staff and leaders are really committed to providing you with the best service they can and they work well together to do so. They also work well with other professionals and children's centres to ensure that they can provide you with a good range of services. The centre lead has worked hard to ensure that the centre always runs smoothly. Although she has only been in post a short time, she has already made some changes that support the staff to meet your needs better. In order to improve further, we have asked the centre to make sure that it has a really good understanding of the difference it is making and that plans for development

clearly address the areas which are most important to the families who live in your community.

We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak with us and were willing to share your thoughts about the centre. We wish you all the best of luck for the future.

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