

Radcliffe Children's Centre Cluster

Coronation Road, Radcliffe, Manchester, M26 3RD

Inspection date	5–6 June 2013		
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group is inadequate.

- Too few local children and families, including those from target groups are benefitting from the range of services on offer.
- Parents are not involved in formal decision making through the advisory board.
- Data about the children and families the centres serve are not used well by centres in the planning and evaluation of services. Consequently, leaders are not clear enough about their work and what benefit is being brought into the lives of families.
- The centres are not able to demonstrate that they are having a good enough impact upon local levels of breastfeeding, rates of obesity or preparing young children for primary school.
- Support and challenge from the local authority, including through the annual discussion about priorities and improvement, has not had enough impact on the three centres in the cluster.
- Leadership and governance are inadequate. Centre plans are too complex and lengthy and leaders have tried to do too much at once. As a result, improvement is too slow and leaders are highly anxious about being out of their depth.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- When children and parents attend centre activities, they are kept safe, included in the session, listened to and treated with respect.
- Groups attended by families and the support on offer are improving and are of good quality, relevant and appropriate to needs.
- Each of the centres are comfortable and resourced well. Books for children and images on the walls positively celebrate differences between people.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are Coronation Road Children's Centre, Stepping Stones Children's Centre and High Meadow Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with centre leaders, staff and parents. Discussions were also held with the local authority, representatives of the advisory board and a range of partners.

The inspectors visited the three centres and some activities taking place elsewhere. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Cliff Rose	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jeremy Spencer	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Radcliffe Children's Centre cluster operates from three centres in the Radcliffe area of Bury. It is managed by the local authority through one cluster coordinator and the three centres share an advisory board. As a cluster of children's centres it has not been inspected previously.

Coronation Road Children's Centre is located on the same site as Radcliffe Primary School. The centre was designated as a phase two centre in January 2008. Coronation Road acts as a hub for a range of partners, such as the midwifery team. There are other services delivered at the centre on behalf of the cluster, for example Citizen's Advice Bureau, Job Centre Plus and Health Drop In. The centre was inspected previously as an individual centre in January 2011 and judged to be satisfactory.

High Meadow Children's Centre is located on the same site as St John's Church of England Primary School. The centre was designated as a phase three centre in February 2010. It has not been inspected previously.

Stepping Stones Children's Centre is located on the same site as Radcliffe Hall Primary School. The centre was designated as a phase two centre in January 2008. The centre was inspected previously in June 2011 and judged to be satisfactory.

None of the primary schools were inspected as part of this inspection. Their reports are available on the Ofsted website.

The three centres have undergone considerable change in their structure, staffing and services since designation. Most recently they began to work together as a cluster in December 2011 and this was formalised from 1 April 2013 which led to further changes.

There are 21 super output areas within the area served by the children's centre cluster. Following changes made by the local authority, this is fewer areas than at the time when the three separate centres were designated. While three areas are ranked in the 10% poorest in the country, three in the poorest 20% and two in the poorest 30%, the majority of super output areas served by the centres are more affluent.

The combined population of children aged 0-4 years living within the reach area of the children's centre cluster is 2,305. The number of children attending schools in the area who are known to be entitled to free school meals is above average as is the proportion of children who live in households which receive benefits for being out of work. In one of the three centres within the cluster the number of children in care is the highest in the local authority.

The vast majority of families are of White British heritage with a small number of minority ethnic groups but there is a sizeable Jewish community in one part of the locality. Most children enter early years provision with a lower range of skills than is expected for their age.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Improve access to centre services by:
 - increasing the number of local children and families who use the centres and benefit from the range of services on offer, including Jewish families and workless households
 - analysing in more depth which groups live in the local area, who is currently using the centres and which groups are reluctant to participate and how to increase their use of support and activities.

- Work more closely with partners to ensure that there is:
 - an improvement in the local levels of breastfeeding at six to eight weeks
 - a reduction in the levels of obesity among local Reception Year children
 - an improvement in the school readiness of young children, as indicated by the levels of attainment of children on entry to school nursery and at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- Improve planning and evaluation by:
 - establishing key priorities and actions and identifying precisely what the intended outcomes of the centres' activities will be
 - specifying the centres' target groups of children and adults and ensure that the majority access services
 - establish clear systems to monitor and review outcomes for children and adults
 - improving the quality of planning and make better use of data about the local area to plan provision and monitor outcomes for all children and families.

- Improve governance by:
 - ensuring that the advisory board receives clear, high quality information about the work of the centre cluster in each key priority
 - supporting the advisory board to steer the work of centres and to effectively challenge leaders about improvement
 - involving parents in formal decision making, including through the advisory board.

- Improve the quality of local authority support and challenge for the centre cluster, including through the annual conversation, so that:
 - improvement is more rapid and more focused upon outcomes and impact of provision for target groups, including children living in workless households and Jewish families
 - leaders manage the complexities of their role well and feel supported and confident about the work required.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Inadequate

- Arrangements across the centre cluster to ensure access to services by young children and families are inadequate. Not enough families from the local area engage with services in any of the three centres. While good partnerships with health visitors and midwives has enabled the centre to register the majority of local young children, the centre places too much emphasis upon the rates of 'contact', which can be a simple telephone call. Not enough attention is given to how many families use services, how often they attend and whether overall levels of engagement are improving over time.
- Partners from health report that being able to work from the children's centres has improved the take-up of appointments, for example, by those expecting children. However, the cluster is not tracking this information closely enough or making any detailed analysis of it in order to improve services.
- Where families choose to use the children's centre, leaders and centre staff know individual children and adults well. Staff make effective arrangements to ensure that these families are able to access the services they need. For example, those parents linking with outreach workers receive prioritised access to the relevant centre activities.
- Data about levels of access and participation are not used sufficiently enough as a basis for planning and evaluation. For example, leaders look at how many individuals from each area access services each month, but they are unclear how this compares against how many people live in those areas and what other target groups they are from. This means that centres are unsure how many people from known target groups, such as the Jewish community, are using the services. This is made more challenging because the centre cluster does not have clear strategies for increasing the engagement of those who are reluctant to use centre services. Leaders do not set clear targets to increase engagement and improve outcomes for target groups.
- The centre cluster is struggling to establish its role within the community. Centres have not understood that a key step to improving access is the extent to which families are able to contribute to decisions about what is provided, such as through the advisory board. The cluster board has no parent involvement and a parent forum is not fully established. This lack of engagement is a concern because increasing parent involvement in governance was a recommendation during the January 2011 inspection of Coronation Road Children's Centre and it has not improved sufficiently enough since.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Many of the groups and programmes run by cluster staff or by partners are planned carefully and provide a good service for those attending, including teenage parents and children with special needs. However, only a minority of families from other target groups are engaging with the cluster and improving their lives as a result. This has limited the overall impact of the centres upon improving all local children's school readiness or health and well-being.
- The cluster provides an appropriate range of services relevant to the needs of families and works closely with a number of partners to plan and provide appropriate support to improve parenting and child development. The service commissions other good quality programmes for adults from the local authority adult education service and other organisations. These include mathematics and English, first aid, food hygiene and cookery.
- Good crèche arrangements facilitate the attendance of adults on training programmes across the three sites. The group's crèche workers attend each centre as required and interact well with the children. They keep good records of each child's development over the period they are attending, which they use well to talk with parents about children. They make good use of the resources including the outdoor areas. All groups for children including the crèche arrangements are effectively promoting readiness for school.
- The cluster and its partners provide appropriate care, guidance and support to service users working in partnership or through referral. The support for those with particular needs, such as the 30 families

involved in a health-led pilot programme to support complex family issues is good. The group programmes complement and enable the specialist health visitor's work. Places on relevant programmes are kept open for these families. However, patchy feedback from adult education providers, following referral by signposting from the children's centre group, does not help leaders to track the progress of adults' learning.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Inadequate

- While staff have good morale and say that they are supported well, leaders are trying to do too much. This has not been sufficiently recognised by the local authority. As a result, crucial time and effort has been wasted and leaders are experiencing high levels of anxiety.
- Self-evaluation is inadequate and does not guide the work of the centre as much as is needed. This is because insufficient data is being used to evaluate what difference is being made to how the centre is engaging local families and making a difference to their lives. There is sometimes confusion between outputs and outcomes in records of self-evaluation and insufficient attention given to the characteristics of the reach area in plans and evaluation.
- There is good information sharing from social care about local children subject to a child protection plan. However, there is not good evidence that these children's lives are improving well enough. In one of the three centres within the cluster the number of such children is the highest in the local authority. Case tracking by the centres is variable but has improved recently due to increased local authority support. Leaders are aware that their recent work about safeguarding has ensured that policies, procedures and training meet minimum requirements.
- Evidence about the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is mixed. When used to support families, staff use CAFs well. At Stepping Stones Children's Centre, the number of CAFs initiated by staff has improved and is the highest in Bury whereas recent data shows a clear decline in the past two years at High Meadow Children's Centre. Reasons for this difference are unclear.
- Not enough advisory board meetings have taken place to ensure that members understand their roles, review evidence and can ask the difficult questions.
- The use of resources to meet local priorities has improved recently. It is too soon to see the impact of this in rates of breastfeeding, obesity and school readiness. However, staff say that the clustering of the three centres is beneficial because they work together and support one another more. This is confirmed by partners who regard the services as far less overlapping and find it easier to work together with relevant staff.
- The quality of the annual discussion with leaders about priorities led by the local authority is not good enough to challenge the centres and establish clear, focused priorities. The action plans written by the local authority following the previous inspections of two of the centres have not been good enough to create sufficient improvement in the planning and delivery of services. Consequently, the challenge and support has not led to rapid improvement.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's Centre Group details

Unique reference number	80082
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	423326
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2305
Centre leader	Jo-Anne Taylor
Date of previous inspection	no previous cluster inspection
Telephone number	0161 253 7465
Email address	j.m.taylor@bury.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- URN 20823 Coronation Road Children's Centre
- URN 22284 High Meadow Children's Centre
- URN 22928 Stepping Stones Children's Centre

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

(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.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

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 St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

