

Calderdale - Central Halifax Children's Centres Group 1

Lightowler Road, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX1 5NB

Inspection date 9–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:		
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group is good.

- Leadership, including governance, is good. Everyone involved in the delivery of services reflects on their practice and implements improvements which are highly considered and very effective.
- The group of centres is a focal point of the community and staff have successfully reached the large majority of those families in most need.
- Staff know the local community very well and provide an extremely welcoming environment where all families feel at ease. They listen to families and accurately tailor good quality support to the needs of individual families.
- There are many examples where adults have developed their self-confidence and have gained qualifications which have enabled them to find employment. For some, this has been within a children's centre where they act as excellent role models and inspire other members of the community to achieve more in their lives.
- Staff at the linked day care are highly motivated and skilled. They provide very good support for disabled children and those with special educational needs, effectively identifying early when individual children may need extra support in their learning, especially with regard to their speech and language development. They link well with a range of professionals so that appropriate support can be put in place.
- Strong, effective partnership working with health visitors, midwives and other agencies ensures help and support for children and their families are timely and effective.

It is not outstanding because:

- Partnership working with some schools in the area is not as well established as with other agencies, and schools are not regularly attending the advisory board meetings.
- Not all evaluation and tracking systems are equally highly effective in measuring impact for services.

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 Jubilee Children's Centre, Sunshine Children's Centre and Little Stars Children's Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leaders in the local authority and Halifax Opportunities Trust (HOT), health, social care and education professionals, outreach workers, early years practitioner, volunteers and representatives from the advisory board and parents.

The inspectors visited a range of activities across the three centres. A joint visit was undertaken with the group manager who also, along with the area manager and local authority representative, attended all team meetings.

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

Inspection team

Sue Smith	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Susan Crawford	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael White	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Calderdale - Central Halifax Children's Centres- Group 1 is a group of children's centres in Halifax run by the charity Halifax Opportunities Trust (HOT) on behalf of the local authority. The group is made up of three centres: Jubilee Children's Centre, a phase one centre, and Sunshine and Little Stars Children's Centres, phase two centres. The Area Family Support and Outreach team and the midwifery team are based at the Jubilee Children's Centre. The area early years team are based at Little Stars Children's Centre. The area manager is seconded to HOT and is jointly line managed by the local authority and the trust.

The group shares an advisory board with a neighbouring group of children's centres, Central Halifax Group 2. It includes providers, delivery partners, voluntary sector organisations and members of the local community and families. The children's centre group offers a range of services to meet its core purpose. Services are provided at each of the centres and at outreach venues. The centres are open each weekday from 9am to 5pm, for 51 weeks of the year.

Jubilee Children's Centre shares a site with a day care provider with the same name, which is operated by the local authority. Sunshine Children's Centre is on the same site as Mount Pellon Academy Infants and Junior school. Both are subject to different inspection arrangements. Reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>.

The group of centres serves an area which has some high levels of deprivation and approximately 25% of children are living in households dependant on workless benefits. It is geographically compact and densely populated. There are 1,730 children under five-years-of-age living in the area that the centres serve. The majority of families are of Pakistani origin with growing percentages of other ethnic groups, with an increasing number of Eastern European families. To meet the diverse community needs, the centre team consists of staff of Polish, Czechoslovakian and Pakistani origin. Children's skills when they enter early years provision vary across the area, with communication and language being the weakest aspect.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all evaluation and tracking systems are equally highly effective in measuring impact.
- Extend the good partnership working with some schools to all schools in the reach area and encourage their regular attendance at advisory board meetings.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centres work hard to contact any families that do not regularly use their services. Every six months staff contact each of these families either by telephone or by door knocking to find out what more they can do for them. This has successfully encouraged these families to use the centres' services again.
- Staff work well with a range of agencies to understand the needs of young children and families who live locally. Many staff themselves live within the communities served by the centres and this gives people confidence to attend the centres and use their services.
- The very large majority of lone parents, teenage parents and fathers are registered with the centres, with the large majority of lone parents and teenage parents benefiting from using services.
- Only a minority of fathers are regularly engaged with services and this remains a priority for further improvement. Hard work to address this issue is already having a positive impact. Fathers who have attended events are enthusiastic and the centres have a clear development plan for 2013-14 to broaden the activities available.

- The take-up rates by three- and four-year-old-children to their entitlement to free early education are good because of effective information supplied by the centre. A considerable number of two-year-old children benefit from early years education because the centre works well with local providers.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The views expressed by parents reflect the good care, guidance and support provided by the centre: 'We love coming here, they are a life saver. The staff are so approachable and friendly, and they look after our children really well.'
- Children's language and literacy skills are improving steadily, supported by a speech therapist through groups such as 'Chatty Monkeys'. The centre commissions services such as 'Counselling for Children' that provide good support for children dealing with bereavement, separation and divorce, which helps to raise children's self-esteem.
- Some health outcomes are improving as they are given high priority. For example, oral health is being tackled well and, as a result, there has been a decrease in tooth decay.
- Early years providers and some of the primary schools work effectively together to support children when they move into school. Even so, this is not consistent across all primary schools.
- Staff use their knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage well to plan good opportunities for children who attend the centres' early years sessions. This is contributing well to closing the gap in the achievement of different groups of children.
- The balance between universal services and targeted services to improve the lives of children and families is good. The quality of activities is consistently good. For example, in the mother-and-toddler-groups, staff help and model good practice, which in turn helps parents to support their children's learning.
- The 'English Speakers of Other Languages' provision is very effective in providing a well-integrated package of language, computing, citizenship and volunteering opportunities. It ensures high success rates and good rates of progression into further education, training or employment. Adults needing specialist support in developing their English and mathematics skills are signposted to the local college or other local providers. Procedures to measure the success and full impact of these links are currently being developed.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Everyone involved in the group is constantly looking for ways to improve the life chances for children and adults in the area. The development of the 'Outback' area at the Jubilee Children's Centre is a good example of how the centre works with the community and other agencies to ensure that ideas come to fruition.
- The local authority supports the group well. It has set clear targets within the service specification and undertakes a visit each year to monitor and measure the effectiveness of the centres' work.
- The HOT delivers services on behalf of the local authority very effectively. HOT are commissioned to operate the children's centres in the group while the local authority directly employs the locality and area manager. This has resulted in a unique and very effective working relationship that meets the needs of the local community very well.
- The well-established advisory board provides effective monitoring of the centres' performance. It understands the data and how well the centres compare. Members know that the centre is closing the life-chance gap for families in most need through the positive impact of its practice and services. The board has a good balance between professional agencies who work in the area and families. Although invited, schools in the area are not regularly attending meetings.
- Resources, including staff deployment, are used well to meet the needs of children and their families. The centre works very well with key partners to make sure that families can access services easily.

- Safeguarding is given high status and the centre works closely with health and social care professionals to maintain a strong focus on reducing the risk of harm to children. *The Common Assessment Framework* is used well to check the individual needs of children and families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Children subject to child-protection plans are well supported by the centre when appropriate.
- The management team uses all available data effectively to reduce inequalities for local families because it understands the needs of the local community.
- Parents' views are gathered effectively and used well to help shape services. Users are supported well to become 'Community Champions' who actively seek parents' views within the community. They, in turn, feed these views to the advisory board, which ensures they play a big part in the centres' decision making about future developments.
- There are some slight variations across the centres in the methods used to evaluate services and activities, which means that not all are highly effective. Plans are in place to standardise evaluation across all the centres.
- The group is increasingly tracking the range of services being accessed by individual users and the progress made by children who attend the linked day care to measure the impact it is making.

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	80205
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	424860
Managed by	Halifax Opportunities Trust (HOT) on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,730
Centre leader	Gaye Colleran
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01422 342552
Email address	gaye.colleran@calderdale.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- URN 21633 Jubilee Children's Centre
- URN 21826 Little Stars Children's Centre at Parkinson Lane
- URN 23008 Sunshine Children's Centre

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