

# Rochdale - Langley, Boarshaw, Hollin & Kirkway Group

Windermere Road, Langley, Middleton, Lancashire, M24 4LA

**Inspection date** 1–3 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Access to services by young children and families	Good	Not previously inspected	2
The quality of practice and services	Requires improvement		3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management	Requires improvement		3

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- self-evaluation is not based on sufficient, secure evidence of the impact of the work of the group and its partners and leaders cannot clearly prove what difference the group makes to outcomes for families
- the targets to improve outcomes are not precise enough to help the advisory board and local authority challenge and hold the group leaders to account for the difference the group makes
- systems are not yet fully in place to check the extent to which target groups attend, complete and benefit from activities and services
- the Common Assessment Framework process is not used often enough to ensure early identification of need and trigger a swift response from partners
- not enough adults are accessing courses to help them into work; systems to track the impact of courses for adults and their onward progression are not fully in place or used to plan future services.

### This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- the local authority and centre leaders know the profile of families in the group's reach area well
- almost all families are registered with the centres and the large majority actively participate in centre services; leaders are firmly focussed upon helping as many families as possible, including target families, and know that getting them registered and involved is the first step to this
- take-up of funded nursery education for two-, three- and four-year-olds is very high
- service delivery is shared equally across the well-used centres, with good quality crèche and stay and play provision on site at all centres
- the group helps families to live healthy lives, manage their finances and cope with debt.

### 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 Langley Sure Start Children's Centre, Boarshaw Centre, Hollin Sure Start Children's Centre and Kirkway Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the local authority representative and the nominee, and with representatives from: the senior leadership; the advisory board; local leaders of early years provision cross-sector including the senior practitioners; the data team; midwifery and health visiting team; the European Social Fund; the Citizens Advice Bureau; the parenting team; Skills Training; the Women's Housing Action Group; Riverside; Family support; Early Support; Barnados and the disability champion. Inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, development plan, a sample of case studies, safeguarding procedures and a wide range of relevant documentation.

The inspectors visited sessions at all four children's centre sites and carried out some joint observations, and visited outreach work across the reach area including Turbo Tots at Middleton Arena and a swimming session at Newlands School.

### Inspection team

Linda McLarty	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Margaret Farrow	Her Majesty's Inspector
Emily Wheeldon	Additional Inspector
Tara Street	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre/group

The Rochdale - Langley, Boarshaw, Hollin and Kirkway Group of children's centres operates across four centres approximately two and a half miles apart. Langley, Boarshaw and Kirkway centres are located on the site of Bowlee Park Community Primary School, Boarshaw Community Primary School and St Peter's Roman Catholic Primary School respectively.

There are 3088 children aged from birth to four years living in the reach area. Depending on the ward, children enter school-based early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities between broadly at or well below the levels typically seen for their age.

Early years provision in the area is provided through a mix of childminders, school and non-school based settings. The primary schools and adjacent early years settings were not part of this inspection as they are inspected separately. The reports are available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Governance is provided by the local authority which recently restructured its 17 individually managed centres into seven groups. Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council is also reorganising how it collates data to drive its improvement work, and is merging data into one main system for all children aged 0-19 and their families, though this work is not yet complete.

Langley, Boarshaw, Hollin and Kirkway deliver the full children's centre core offer as one group, managed by an Early Intervention manager, with one advisory board for the group. Langley and Boarshaw are based in communities ranked within the top 30% for deprivation nationally, and Hollin and Kirkway are based in communities in the 70% most deprived areas nationally. The Langley and Hollin areas have benefitted from significant financial and resource investment in the last 10 years, resulting in improved housing, community cohesion and a reduction in crime.

The reach area of the group covers the North Middleton, East Middleton, South Middleton, West Middleton, Castleton and Hopwood Hall wards. The West Middleton ward has some of the highest levels of overall deprivation in Rochdale with a high concentration of lone parent families, and approximately 10% of the population claim Job Seekers' Allowance.

Just over 94% of families in the joint reach area are of White British heritage, with Langley having a slightly higher proportion of black and minority ethnic families.

## What does the centre/group need to do to improve further?

- Work with the local authority and partner agencies to:
  - develop robust systems to gather evidence which measure the difference the centre and their partners are making in improving outcomes for families in the reach area, especially those families most at risk of failing to improve their life chances
  - identify and prioritise areas for improvement and set more precise targets with clear success criteria in order to help the group measure the impact of their work.
- Improve the self-evaluation process so it is based on measurable evidence of the difference that the group and its partners are making; improve the way the group holds its partners to account, and improve the way the local authority challenges and holds the group to account for the take-up and impact of their work, particularly with target families.
- Increase the use of the Common Assessment Framework process to raise the early identification of needs and to trigger the swift response from partner agencies to help and support local families.
- Extend the opportunities for more adults, particularly those from workless homes, to enhance their economic stability by:
  - increasing the promotion of, and participation rates in, adult learning programmes and volunteering opportunities to aid progression into further education and employment
  - further develop procedures to track and measure how well adults make progress when they access courses or programmes, and use the data gathered to help plan future services.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The availability of midwifery and health visitor services in all four centres has greatly helped the group to register almost all children and families, and to actively engage the large majority of families in centre services. This includes the large majority of the families most at risk of discrimination and who may struggle to manage and improve their lives. The group and its partners mutually promote and refer families to each other's services, and users also enthusiastically advertise the activities in the four centres in the group.
- The leaders identified that the take-up of funded places for two-year-olds was too low, and worked intensively with the local authority and partner agencies over the last six months, so that almost all eligible two-year-olds are now in funded nursery places. The numbers of three- and four-year-old children accessing funded nursery education has also increased significantly in the last year, with the very large majority now taking up their entitlement.
- Some partners are better than others in sharing information about the difference they are making to the group's targets. Adult learning providers do not share the information the group leaders need to track adults into volunteering opportunities, further training or employment. This means that leaders cannot prove that they are reaching enough adults, or having enough impact on how well adults acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences which help them towards employment.
- The local authority and the centre group staff have identified that while take-up rates of some universal Stay and Play sessions is very high, the same adults sometimes access many groups and there is a need to ensure that a greater variety of families attend.
- The group provides a rolling programme of parenting courses with a proven track record of helping parents to give their children a good start. There are strong links with partners such as Home-Start, Riverside, the Young Parent Midwife and the Women's Home Action Group to provide support at different levels to meet a wide range of needs. However, the leadership team are at an early stage

of collecting information to demonstrate the numbers of adults being helped, or what proportion of these are from the groups most in need of support.

- The local authority and group leaders have identified that the use of the Common Assessment Framework process across Rochdale and across the group's reach area is too low. They have made it a priority to ensure that use of this process is increased to early identification and trigger swift intervention and support from their partner agencies.

### The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Advisory teachers have worked closely with early years private and voluntary providers including childminders to raise expectations and improve the quality of provision. This, together with the High 5 quality award has increased the proportions of settings, including childminders, judged by Ofsted to be good or better, so that it is now in line with the national average.
- The quality of observation, assessment and planning varies across the group's activities. Sessions such as crèche, Stay and Play, 'Fun with numbers' or the six week summer programme to prepare children for school are highly enjoyable. However, staff do not always measure the impact on children's learning precisely enough, and cannot clearly show whether children at risk of falling behind in their development are making the progress they could. This is particularly important given that the leaders know that many children attend these sessions very regularly.
- Tracking of all children's progress by the private providers shows that the large majority of children are working within age-related expectations, but staff do not identify the specific achievement of children whose families use centre services. The group leaders therefore do not know precisely what difference the group is making to children's achievements, or whether the gap between the most vulnerable children's achievements and those of other children is narrowing.
- The group works closely with partners such as Hopwood Hall, adult learning services and MANTRA, to help families into work, training or employment. Parents report, and records show, that there are a number of opportunities for parents to increase their confidence, manage their finances, decrease debt, improve their basic skills, and help get them into paid work. However, some of the agencies that provide the courses and support, including on a one-to-one basis, could not provide measurable evidence of the difference they are making. Too few users are helped to become volunteers.
- Strong partnerships with health professionals, such as the Oral Health team is helping families to eat more healthily, and settings to provide healthy meals and snacks, with the result that more children now enter school at a healthy weight. The group has significantly reduced the number of teenage pregnancies in its area, and good access to health services in all centres has increased the number of mothers initiating breastfeeding to above the Rochdale average.
- Smoking cessation advice is offered in the centres although nearly a quarter of mothers continue to smoke during pregnancy.
- The centre works well with families who have children on a Child in Need or Child Protection plan. Families receive carefully tailored activities or one-to-one support to help them keep their children safe and develop positive relationships with them. The different recording systems between children's social care and the group sometimes results in delays in reporting and following up concerns.
- The centres provide attractive, safe venues for a large number of contact visits, including between fostered children and their parents and also for consultations around domestic violence and abuse.
- All of the centre premises are well-used, with activities supplemented well by outreach work, although the group could not provide convincing evidence that enough parents actively contribute to the development of activities. Annual surveys show high levels of user satisfaction, but the group leadership and the local authority already recognise that more needs to be done to involve parents and centre users in decision making about services.

**The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

Requires improvement

- The local authority has demonstrated a strong strategic lead in reorganising services and has started to merge the many databases into a system designed to improve information sharing between partners, although it is too early yet to see the impact of these changes.
- The local authority provide detailed information about the families living in the area, which has helped the leaders to meet the authority's challenging and precise targets to increase registration and participation, including of those families at risk of discrimination and under-achievement.
- Self-evaluation is not based upon sufficient measurable evidence of the impact of the group's work, or that of its partner agencies. Improvement targets lack clarity or measurable success criteria. This makes it difficult for the group leaders, local authority and advisory board to hold the group and its partners to account for their impact or progress towards the goals. Service level agreements also contain too few measurable targets against which the organisations can be held to account.
- The advisory board effectively uses the very detailed information it receives about access and participation to challenge the group to increase the engagement of target families. In the period since the reorganisation in April 2013, the group leader has been acting as chair of the advisory board, which compromises how objectively the advisory board can challenge and hold the centre to account for its work. The group leaders are not yet questioning their partners tenaciously enough about their contribution to improving outcomes for local families.
- The authority has made a good start in performance management, providing supervision templates to standardise the process of holding staff to account for how well they contribute to improving outcomes, though this is also limited by the lack of precise targets against which performance can be measured.
- Children most at risk are safeguarded because of close working between centre staff and social work colleagues, underpinned by effective record keeping and supervision of case files. Staff have received training recently to improve case recording, including around the use of the Common Assessment Framework process. However, the new electronic recording system is still embedding and not all partners are able to update the records quickly and accurately. Those experiencing domestic violence and abuse are well supported.
- The very attractive centre buildings are in constant use, supplemented by outreach work across a variety of community venues offering a wide range of services to improve the life-chances of adults across the area. Users receive a consistently warm, personal welcome from receptionists and staff are committed to removing barriers to accessing centre services by making the venues welcoming places where families feel relaxed, not judged.

**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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80423
<b>Local authority</b>	Rochdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	424816
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	3,088
<b>Group manager</b>	Cheryl Boardman
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 653 9526
<b>Email address</b>	cheryl.boardman@rochdale.gov.uk

**This group consists of the following children's centres:**

- Langley Sure Start Children's Centre
- Boarshaw Centre
- Hollin Sure Start Children's Centre
- Kirkway Centre



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