

Calderdale – North and East Children's Centre Group

[c/0 Kevin Pearce Children's Centre, Ovenden Road, Halifax HX3 5RQ

Inspection date	5–7 February		
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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.

- Local families, including those from target groups, make good use of the centres. The number of families registering and using groups and activities is increasing each year. The centres place great value upon what parents say, including through the advisory boards and the area partnership board.
- Links between the children's centres and other services and organisations, including schools, are well thought-out. Many families are safer and healthier, children more ready for school, and parents more skilled and able to access work opportunities because of the children's centres.
- Children who are disabled or have special educational needs make good progress through attending the centres, and their development is tracked very clearly.
- There is good safeguarding of children and parents at the centres because leaders keep a very close check on how well staff are helping families, and provide excellent support to help staff develop.
- Leaders at all levels in the centre group work together successfully. They have a clear, shared sense of what they are doing to improve the lives of local families and why. Skilful support from the area partnership board and advisory boards ensures that the work of the centre group keeps getting better.
- Due to good leadership across the centres, staff expertise is used well and morale is high.

It is not outstanding because:

- The local authority does not inform the centre group about which local young children are already being supported by social care. This means that the centres cannot be certain if they are working with all young children that may need support.
- Some parents begin adult learning courses through the centres but do not complete their studies.
- Some centre planning is not detailed enough to show the intended impact of activities upon children and their families.
- Some checks of activities by centre leaders do not focus enough upon the learning that is taking place for children and parents.

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 Ash Green Children’s Centre, Creations Community Children’s Centre, Illingworth Children’s Centre, Kevin Pearce Children’s Centre and Ovenden Innovations Children’s Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with staff, leaders, partners, and representatives of the advisory boards, North Halifax Partnership board, and the local authority. The inspectors visited all five centres and a satellite site in Northowram and Shelf. They observed the centres’ work, observed a meeting of the local Early Intervention Panel, spoke informally with parents and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan	Her Majesty’s Inspector, Lead Inspector
Jonathan Brown	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Mary Dudley	Additional Inspector
Jane Hughes	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre group

Calderdale - North and East Halifax Children's Centre Group consists of five children's centres, that share one overall children's centre leader and one area partnership board. Each centre has its own local advisory board and parents' forum. The local authority has commissioned management to be through North Halifax Partnership Ltd, a not-for-profit company.

Centres provide a range of family support services, play and learning activities, adult learning and health promotion activities, and they signpost families to other relevant services. Children in the local area start early education with a range of skills that are below those expected. The centre group serves 2,890 children under five years of age living within 43 super output areas in Illingworth, Mixenden, Ovenden, Northowram and Shelf, and parts of Warley. Of these areas, 23 super output areas are ranked in the top 30% of the poorest areas in the country. The proportion of young children who live in households where no one is working is 38.6%. Data demonstrate that the population is mostly White British with a small number of children and families from a range of minority ethnic groups. The centre group has identified target groups which include children living in workless households, lone parents and young parents.

Ovenden Innovations Children's Centre is a phase one centre designated in October 2004. It shares a site with an early years setting of the same name, and with Dean Field Primary School. Ash Green Children's Centre is a phase one centre designated in October 2004. It operates early years provision and activities from three sites based around Ash Green Community Primary School in the Mixenden area of Calderdale. Parts of Ovenden and Mixenden were a fifth wave Sure Start Local Programme. Illingworth Children's Centre is a phase two centre, designated in February 2008. It is next to Whitehill Community Academy. Kevin Pearce Children's Centre is a phase two centre designated in February 2008. The centre provides additional services in the Northowram and Shelf area. Creations Community Children's Centre is a phase two centre designated in March 2008. It is on the site of Ling Bob Primary school, in the Pellon area of Halifax. The centre includes a registered early years setting. None of the linked schools or early years settings were part of this inspection. Their reports are available at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

- The local authority should establish a procedure to share more information with children's centres about every young child who is in need, in care or subject to a child protection plan.
- Provide greater support to parents so that all of those who begin adult learning courses complete their studies.
- Improve leadership, governance and management by:
 - ensuring that all centre planning shows clearly the intended impact of activities upon outcomes for children and their families
 - ensuring that all checks of activities by centre leaders focus fully upon the learning that is taking place for children and parents.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centres have good links with other services and agencies, such as through the local Early Intervention Panel. This helps centres to find a good number of families who may need additional help, including through referrals from health visitors, and from social care. However, the centre group is not certain whether it is reaching all young children who may need support. This is because leaders are not given enough information by the local authority about which local young children are in care, in need, or subject to a child protection plan.
- Centre leaders make good use of available data, staff knowledge of the local area and links to partner organisations when planning services. In addition, noticeboards are used well throughout the community to advertise the centres. As a result, the majority of local young children use the services and the proportions are improving year-on-year.
- Target groups of families are chosen carefully by the centres and in full consultation with local advisory boards and the area partnership board. Leaders track the participation of target groups in detail. Data indicate that high numbers of lone parents, those living in workless households and young parents are registered and using the centres. Families who, without the support of the centre group, might choose not to use the centres, do so because as one parent said, ‘Centres are bringing a sense of belonging back to this community’.
- Centre staff support families very well at home and at a wide range of premises as necessary. Pregnant mothers, and families with babies and toddlers make frequent use of centre services. The well-baby drop-in clinic, for example, provides mothers with easy access to high quality information and advice. Where families do not engage with services for four months, each family is followed up thoroughly. This leads to renewed engagement for those in greatest need. Evidence indicates that this use of services is then sustained up to twelve months afterwards.
- Arrangements for two-year old children to take up their free early education places in the locality are good. Parents are signposted to local provision and all three- and four-year olds take up their free places.
- Many families using the centres told inspectors that they feel valued and listened to. They feel that the centres are genuinely interested in their views. Parents can identify where their suggestions have helped to make services better. As a result, attendance by families at activities is good and parents express high levels of satisfaction with what the centre group provides.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Those parents that need help to improve their chances of employment are supported well through clear information, advice and guidance. Parents who become volunteers benefit from good quality recruitment, support and training and progress successfully in a variety of placements. A multi-agency team of professionals employ a wide variety of methods to engage parents in training. Those adults who complete adult and family learning courses make good progress from their starting points. However, a minority of adults do not complete the courses that they attend.
- All groups and activities are planned carefully around local needs and full use is made of partnerships with a wide range of organisations including schools to help improve life chances and reduce inequalities. This ensures that the centres provide a wide range of services to meet the needs of specific groups of parents and children, as well as those open to all families. As a consequence, there is much praise from parents about the impact of the centre upon their family becoming safer. Typical comments from parents include, ‘The centre has transformed my life – I was in a very dark place before’.
- The quality of services provided by the centre group is good. Parents report learning about the benefits of healthy living through centre activities such as the ‘Buddy Bears’ group. These activities and the work of breastfeeding peer supporters is leading to a rising trend in women starting to breastfeed their babies and a rising trend in sustaining this over time. The proportion of children who are overweight or obese has declined and is better than the national average across the centre group.

- Children make good progress at centre groups and at the registered early years settings directly provided by the centres. This is because of the high quality of what is provided. Centres have very clear tracking of the good progress made by disabled children and children who have special educational needs. Support for these children is coordinated well.
- Childminders, early years provision and schools benefit from linking to the centres. There are also close links with early years quality improvement staff from Calderdale local authority. Consequently, the large majority of local registered early years provision is good or better. In addition, outcomes for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage show year-on-year improvement and the gap in achievement for the lowest 20% is gradually closing.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Centre leaders have a clear and shared vision of what they are striving to achieve for local children and families. Led ably by the centre group manager, they have an accurate understanding of the overall strengths of their work as a centre group and where improvements are needed. Leaders challenge and support one another and their staff teams frequently and professionally. All staff have good access to training and development opportunities that improve their work. Consequently, staff expertise is used well, morale is high and services are good and improving.
- Some checks of activities by centre leaders do not focus enough upon the learning that is taking place for children and parents. In addition, some centre planning is not detailed enough to show the intended outcomes for children and their families.
- Each centre within the group is resourced well and good use is made of all premises by local families. Leaders across the five children’s centres collaborate very closely when planning, delivering and evaluating services. Hence, resources are used competently to tackle local priorities and meet the needs of targeted children and families. As one parent said, ‘Out there, you don’t realise that there are people that can help you, unless you step on it. The centres do help, they find out, make links and find what is there for you’.
- The safeguarding of children and parents using the centres is first-rate. This is because staff are supported very well through regular supervision sessions and checks on the quality of their work with families. Staff write clear chronologies of events in their case files and, as a result, leaders take a full overview of the support being provided. Children in need, in care or subject to a child protection plan, when known to the centre, are assessed fully and appropriately through good links with other services. As a consequence, outcomes for these children are good.
- Clear policies and procedures for safeguarding are in place. The vetting and recruitment of staff meets requirements. There is excellent access to training and team discussions to ensure that staff know how to support families and protect adults and children from harm. Consequently, staff use the Common Assessment Framework well. They have a good understanding of a wide range of safeguarding issues, including the thresholds for making appropriate referrals to social care.
- The governance oversight through individual advisory boards and one overall area partnership board works well and is helping the centre group to improve. Members know what is happening in the centres and ask challenging questions of centre leaders. They understand data and look closely at the performance of the centre group. Both governance structures are strengthened by the role of local people and the genuine value given to contributions from parents as well as the contribution of the parent forums.
- Members of the advisory boards and the area partnership board have a clear view of centre priorities and where improvement is needed. They have regular access to training, so understand their role in supporting and challenging the centres. Members recognise that staff are led and managed well and know how staff performance is managed. They know that the centres make good provision to meet the needs of local families. They share the ambition of centre leaders to improve the lives of local families even further.
- Monitoring by the local authority is frequent and thorough, with challenge given to leaders about outcomes, and the engagement of those in greatest need. The centre group benefits from this

careful oversight, for example in improving the engagement of the small number of families in the area from minority ethnic groups.

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	80178
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	430088
Managed by	North Halifax Partnership on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2890
Centre leader	Jill Webb
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01422 252209
Email address	Jill.webb@calderdale.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- URN 20116, Ash Green Children's Centre
- URN 20860, Creations Community Children's Centre
- URN 21604, Illingworth Children's Centre
- URN 21657, Kevin Pearce Children's Centre
- URN 22285, Ovenden Innovations Children's Centre

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