

# Radcliffe Children's Centre Cluster

Coronation Road, Radcliffe, Bury, M26 3RD

<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 June 2014
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	5 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
Access to services by young children and families		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of practice and services		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>

## Summary of key findings for children and families

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

- The local authority provides the group with a lot of information and data. Some of it is unclear and unreliable. The local authority and coordinator do not always understand or use it well enough to help them know what difference they are making. Some of the targets agreed are too vague, making it difficult to measure how well they are being met.
- The local authority systems are set up to monitor effectiveness on a monthly basis and do not help the coordinator to evaluate the difference the cluster is making in the area over time.
- There is a conflict of interest in the coordinator occupying the temporary role of chairperson of the advisory board, therefore holding herself to account for the impact of her cluster's work.
- Too few parents take an active role in decision making about the cluster group's services.
- Not enough is done to promote courses such as literacy and numeracy, or volunteering opportunities, which could lead to improved job prospects.
- Too few young children take up their free entitlement to early years funded places.
- There is no system in place for formal quality assurance of outreach workers' case files.

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

- The coordinator, local authority and advisory board have helped the cluster improve significantly.
- The coordinator has made the centres more attractive to families by extending the range of activities and services delivered. She has improved the quality of activities by developing the staff team and by challenging poor practice.
- There are now systems in place with some local schools to start tracking children's readiness for school, and the advisory board have developed a good understanding of their responsibilities.
- Good sharing of information with health partners ensures that staff register families from pregnancy onwards. The majority of local families now use cluster services, and the large majority of families from target groups stay engaged until their needs are met.

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

- Improve governance, leadership and management by:
  - improving the clarity, accuracy and usefulness of data provided by the local authority so that the centre cluster coordinator and advisory board can more precisely base their self-evaluation of the group's effectiveness on reliable, measurable evidence of impact
  - improving the support given by the local authority to the cluster coordinator to understand and use the data to agree precise targets with measurable success criteria against which the centre cluster coordinator, the local authority and the advisory board can gauge the progress being made toward improvement priorities
  - appointing an independent chairperson to the advisory board to ensure that board members can objectively challenge and hold the cluster group to account for its work
  - continue to increase the numbers of parents, including those from target groups, who are meaningfully involved in decision making about the development of services.
  
- Improve the take-up of funded nursery education places, especially for two-year-olds.
  
- Extend the opportunities for more adults to enhance their economic stability by:
  - increasing the promotion of, and participation rates in, adult learning courses and volunteering opportunities
  - work closely with adult education partners to provide clearer progression routes onto accredited programmes.

Introduce formal quality assurance systems for outreach workers' case files to improve the consistency of recording and facilitate sharing of good practice.

### 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 cluster group are Coronation Road, High Meadows and Stepping Stones.

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

The inspectors held meetings with parents and service users, the local authority, the advisory board, the centre coordinator and partner agencies.

The inspectors visited the three centres.

They observed the centres' work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

### Inspection team

Linda McLarty, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bob Busby	Her Majesty's Inspector
Janet Stacey	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

The Radcliffe Children's Centre Cluster comprises Coronation Road Children's Centre, High Meadows Children's Centre and Stepping Stones Children's Centre. The centres share a joint advisory board and governance is by the local authority. Coronation Road is co-located with Radcliffe Primary School and acts as the hub because it is the largest centre in the group. Also on the Coronation Road site are the Citizens Advice Bureau, Job Centre Plus and a health drop-in service. Coronation Road and High Meadows centres serve communities of relative affluence, ranked within the 70% most deprived in the country. Within the cluster's 21 super output areas, eight are in the top 30% of deprivation and the rest in the more affluent areas. The centres are situated in the areas of most need within their communities.

High Meadow Children's Centre is based on the site of St. John's Church of England Primary School. Stepping Stones Children's Centre is located on the site of Radcliffe Hall Primary School and serves a community within the top 30% most deprived areas nationally. The schools were not part of this inspection and their reports are available on the Ofsted website at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centres have worked together as a cluster since December 2011, an arrangement formalised in April 2013. Following the last inspection in June 2013, a new Children's Centre Cluster Coordinator was appointed and the cluster group has recently employed a Children's Centre Social Worker.

Records from January 2014 identify 2,276 children, aged from birth to four years, living in the reach areas of the three centres. Children enter school-based, early years provision with skills and capabilities below the levels typically seen in children of their age, particularly in communication and language.

The main target groups identified by the cluster are: families living in poverty (described as workless households); families living in the priority super-output areas of greatest need; families with children subject to a child protection plan; asylum-seeking families; teenage parents and families who have experienced domestic abuse.

Across the cluster, the centres serve areas in which the majority of the population is of White British heritage, with Pakistani and Caribbean families making up the most prevalent minority ethnic groups.

Unemployment across the cluster's reach area varies, but averages out at 33% with approximately 18% of families in receipt of benefits. The cluster offers both universal and targeted provision delivered on site, in community venues and through outreach. Services include antenatal and post-natal sessions; birth registrations; early intervention and preventative work; family support; liaison with local schools focused on transition arrangements; support for early years in the private and voluntary sector and adult learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Data examined in detail during the inspection show an impressive increase in the registration and engagement of local families, including those from target groups, since the last inspection. The large majority of local families are now registered with the cluster, as are most of the target families. The majority of both the general population and targeted groups are meaningfully engaged with cluster services.
- Case closure records show that the large majority of target families stay involved with the cluster until their needs are met, for example, children and families supported through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), children in need and those subject to child protection plans.
- The centre works in partnership with Bury adult education to offer specific courses to meet many of the cluster's priorities, particularly to promote healthy lifestyles and adult education. The coordinator and authority acknowledge that take-up of adult learning is too low, especially of courses which help parents from vulnerable families and target groups to acquire the learning, training, qualifications and advice necessary to improve their chances of employment. The cluster was unable to provide information on progression from courses onto accredited further education or employment, but, having met many of the initial targets and recommendations from the last inspection, adult learning is now a priority for the group.
- Good partnership and information exchange with health colleagues enable the staff to contact parents during pregnancy and soon after birth, to encourage them to access cluster services and to promote breastfeeding. Crèche provision by the cluster staff at Ellen Court encourages teenage parents to access services. Touch screens in the centres enable adults to contact Jobcentre Plus, but as yet, staff are not routinely following up this signposting to assess the outcomes.
- In general, priority access to activities and courses is allocated to target families, such as those living in poverty or in the most deprived areas, with fees waived when necessary. Of seven asylum seekers known to the cluster, six are registered and have attended activities, with two attending an English as a second language course.
- Only a minority of eligible two-year-olds access their free places, and take-up of funded places for three-and four-year-old children is below the Bury and national average. To increase the amount of good quality provision available, the cluster is planning to use rooms at High Meadows centre to provide additional places for two-year-olds.

### The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The recently introduced transition into school programme, 'Next Steps To Nursery', is helping to increase parental understanding of what is expected in terms of school readiness. This is supplemented well by useful information and guidance. Early years partners are now working more closely with cluster staff by sharing joint training, improving the consistency of assessment and raising the quality of provision for children, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Groups such as 'Bury Parents Forum' offer effective provision to parents of children with a disability or an additional need. This support encompasses a wide range of life-changing help, advice and support. Groups, such as the 'Complex needs parents' group' deliver good quality advice and guidance and parents who attend are increasingly giving one another useful peer support.
- Inclusion is promoted well as a result of swift access to the support needed to ensure the families have equal access to opportunities, such as places on the cluster's pilot of a national programme to encourage parents to read with their children. This pilot is showing promising early results, and one parent spoken to said proudly, 'I can't believe I've read a book with my child!'
- Projects such as 'I Will if You Will' are encouraging more women and children to take part in physical exercise, and the group has many activities which promote healthy lifestyle choices, including cooking sessions. However, the cluster is not yet able to demonstrate the full impact of these health initiatives, for example, on helping to reduce the numbers of children who enter Reception Year at above a healthy weight. Centre staff are working well with health teams who are confident that the 2014 data will show a significant increase in breastfeeding.
- Case files and records are maintained to a generally high standard, are up to date and reflect the

targeted families' views and wishes and the involvement of other professionals. In most case files, detailed records are maintained on the appearance and behaviour of children when seen at family visits. However, although supervisions of outreach workers are effective and individual cases are thoroughly discussed, there is no formal quality assurance of case files to improve the consistency of recording or facilitate the sharing of good practice.

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

Requires improvement

- Since the appointment of a new coordinator after the last inspection, the effectiveness of the cluster has greatly improved. She is aspirational for the families in the area and prioritises holding the staff team and partners closely to account for their contribution to the cluster's improvement priorities.
- The coordinator inherited a challenging legacy of entrenched inadequacy on multiple fronts which she has tackled tenaciously. She has instigated robust systems to tackle underperformance which have improved the quality of staff practice and enhanced their understanding of accountability. As a result, the quality and impact of provision has improved.
- The coordinator and local authority have rightly evaluated that the cluster requires further improvement in order to become good. They acknowledge that provision for adult learning remains an area for improvement. Having adequately addressed the recommendations from the previous report they have made this a key priority in their latest development plan.
- There is a lack of clarity and understanding within the local authority about some of the data they provide, for example about take-up of two-year-old funded places. The local authority support officers and coordinator do not challenge some inaccurate data provided by the local authority because they are unaware of what the Bury and national averages are, for example, the proportions of children achieving a good level of development, and the extent to which the achievement gap is narrowing and reducing inequalities for children.
- The local authority recognises that it needs to provide consistently accurate data, and help the coordinator understand and use this to drive the improvement programme. The local authority has been checking progress against the targets on a monthly basis since the last inspection but this is made more difficult by some imprecise targets which lack measurable success criteria.
- However, data analysed during the inspection by the coordinator and corroborated by the inspection team provided convincing evidence of significant, verifiable improvement in the last year. The buildings are used more, outreach has improved, and consequently access has increased.
- The advisory board has a much improved understanding of their roles and responsibilities and attributes this to the leadership of the cluster coordinator and the useful information she provides, which enables them to challenge and support the cluster's work. However, the advisory board and the local authority are working towards replacing the coordinator as chairperson because they recognise that this compromises the board's ability to hold the coordinator fully to account.
- Overall, not enough parents, including those from target groups, are meaningfully involved in making decisions about the use and development of the cluster's resources and services.
- The group has good safeguarding policies and procedures and all staff are well trained in safeguarding. The group works well with partners to reduce the risk of harm to the most vulnerable children successfully and has greatly benefited from the appointment of an on-site social worker. Good arrangements are in place to support those experiencing domestic abuse, and the group recently held a well-attended parents' evening on e-safety.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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>	80082
<b>Local authority</b>	Bury
<b>Inspection number</b>	446095
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2276
<b>Centre leader</b>	Paula Cockcroft
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 June 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 253 7465
<b>Email address</b>	

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

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

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