

Calderdale - Upper Valley Children's Centre

Todmorden Community College, Burnley Road, Todmorden, West Yorkshire, OL14 7BX

Inspection dates	24–25 June 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

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.

- The large majority of families have good access to the services offered directly at each centre in the group and at venues such as schools within the community.
- Staff routinely and thoroughly analyse data and share information with staff from partner organisations, such as most schools and the health services. As a result, families receive early help and support and services are well matched to families' needs and to local priorities.
- The centres are instrumental in helping children achieve a good level of development by the time they reach school. Data, as well as evidence from parents, also confirm that children are well prepared for school as a result of the centres' work.
- Learning and training opportunities for parents are well promoted. Staff work hard to raise the aspirations of parents with the most needs. This helps them develop the confidence to progress onto further and higher education courses, onto volunteering and in some cases into employment.
- Take-up rates of the entitlement to free early years education places for two-, three- and four-year-olds are excellent.
- The quality of leadership, management and governance is good and ensures the centres' continuous improvement and pursuit of excellence. Managers at all levels are highly competent and focus their energies on improving outcomes for families and increasing the impact of the centre's work.

It is not outstanding because:

- The vast majority of families from the reach area are not yet using the centres or benefiting from services
- Partnerships with some schools in the reach area are still in the early stages and not sufficiently developed to enable the centres to work productively with these schools to support children and their parents

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Increase registration and participation rates by:
 - further developing the group’s existing marketing strategies to include a broader range of methods to promote and advertise the group’s services and activities.
- Build on existing partnership work with schools to include all the schools in the reach area and to ensure all children have access to activities that prepare them for school.

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 Todmorden Children’s Centre and Hebden Vale Children’s Centre.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the area and group managers, staff from the centres, local authority staff, staff representing health, education and employment organisations, members of the advisory board and parents.

The inspectors visited a school that provides services in conjunction with the group.

They observed the centres’ work and observed a range of activities at both centres and also at a school. They looked at a range of relevant documentation including self-evaluation documents, development/improvement plans, data, course/activity evaluations, consultation documents and case files. The views of parents and children as reflected in evaluations and consultation documents were reviewed and taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Priscilla McGuire, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Cathryn Parry	Additional inspector
Sheila Iwaskow	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Todmorden and Hebden Vale Children’s Centres are the two centres that form the Upper Valley Children’s Centre Group in Calderdale, West Yorkshire. They are managed directly by the local authority, which is supported by an advisory board. Todmorden centre was set up in 2006 and Hebden Vale in 2008. From July 2014, the group will be run by a local charity on behalf of the local authority. Childcare is provided as part of the Todmorden centre’s services. This provision is inspected separately. Inspection reports are available at www.ofsted.gov.uk. A group manager directly manages both centres and reports to an area manager.

Services offered across the group directly at the centres and at other venues such as schools, include family support, early years education, parenting training, health services such as clinics, employment support and adult learning. The group’s key target groups are families living in the most deprived parts of the community and families whose lives are affected by mental illnesses.

There are approximately 2,267 children under four years living within the group’s reach area. Most families within the area are of White British heritage. The area is socially diverse with small pockets of affluence. Some parts of the reach area are in rural locations. All areas of deprivation are within the Todmorden area. Families living in Ashenhurst, Longfield and parts of central Todmorden are ranked among the 20% of the most deprived in the country. Around 17% of children live in workless households dependent on workless benefits. Children enter early years education with varying levels of skills at, below or above the levels typically seen in children of their age.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Staff know the large majority of families in the community, including those expecting children and those from their identified target groups. These families have good access to a range of services, activities and information provided by the centres and the partner organisations they work with. However, the centres have yet to register the vast majority of families living in the area.
- Information and data are shared well between the local authority, staff from the centres and the partner organisations they work with such as health services, most schools and social care services. As a result, families with the most needs are identified early and receive help, advice and support in a timely manner.
- Staff routinely collect and scrutinise data about registration, participation and attendance rates but have a good understanding of the limitations of data. This is why they use local ‘intelligence’ alongside data to monitor trends and to identify which families are yet to engage with the centres. They also work productively with partners to ensure families from the centres’ key priority groups have good access to services.
- To ensure families, particularly those with the most needs who do not live close to either centre, have good access to services, some activities are taken out into the communities. For example, sessions such as ‘Bongo Bongos’ are delivered at a local school. As a result of the group’s effective work to use a range of venues within the area to provide services, and when appropriate provide transport for families, potential barriers to access to services are removed and participation rates are continually increasing.
- Take-up rates for funded early education places are excellent. Due to the efforts of the centres to look beyond data and research and identify families with the most needs, all eligible families access places for two-year-olds and most access places for three- and four-year-olds. The quality of education provided for these children is mostly good or better.

The quality of practice and services**Good**

- The quality of services and activities is good and there is an appropriate range of universal services and those which meet the more specific needs of families. Staff are responsive and open to ideas from partner organisations and from parents to improve the quality and availability of services. As a result, attendance rates are good and families are highly satisfied with the centres’ work.
- Effective tracking of children’s progress from their starting points, demonstrate that the centres make a positive contribution to the high proportion of children in the area who achieve a good level of development across the Early Years Foundation Stage profile. As a result of the centres’ work, children and their parents are well prepared for their transition to school. However, work with a few schools in the area is still in its early stages. This limits the extent to which the centres can work collaboratively with those schools to prepare children for school.
- Families with the most needs, benefit well from the good quality parenting support offered by the group through courses and through one-to-one support provided to parents in their homes. Close monitoring of outcomes show that parents improve their parenting techniques as a result of parenting training. Comments from parents such as, ‘It has shown me there is more that I can do to help my children.’ and ‘It has given me helpful tips and information to help my partner and myself.’ confirm the benefits parents receive from courses.
- Through their representation on ‘Early Intervention Panels’ and other work with partners, the group actively promotes safety for families and takes decisive action to ensure risks of harm are reduced for families with the most needs. In addition, staff work collaboratively with partners to identify trends in relation to safety issues. For example, in response to an increasing number of incidents that involved children gaining easy access to medicines in the home, the centres provided lockable medicine cabinets for families.
- By working in partnership with adult learning organisations, the centres provide good quality adult learning and training opportunities for parents. Parents also benefit from the centres’ well structured volunteer programme. Parents who participate in courses such as first aid, child care and food hygiene achieve well. They develop an enthusiasm for learning and with raised aspirations progress into volunteering, employment or onto courses in further or higher education.
- The group works very productively with a range of health professionals, such as midwives and health visitors, to reduce health inequalities. As a result, low obesity rates and high breastfeeding rates are maintained over time. Families also benefit well from health services provided by the group, such as antenatal clinics, and from groups such as the ‘Maternal Mental Health’ group set up to meet the specific needs of one of the centres’ key target groups.

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

- The quality of leadership, governance and management is good. Managers from the group, the local authority and the advisory board are highly competent and share a common purpose and are strongly committed to improving the lives of families.
- Governance through the advisory board is effective in providing both support and challenge to the group. There is good representation from staff from partner organisations on the board as well as from parents. The advisory board routinely monitors the performance of the centres and their impact on the lives of families. The board plays a key role in driving improvement.
- At all levels, managers and leaders have been effective in managing the change from the group being managed directly by the local authority to being managed by a commissioned charity. As a result, staff morale remains high and the change is seen positively as an opportunity rather than a threat.
- Safeguarding is a key priority across the group. Staff have a good understanding of what actions need to be taken to ensure risks of harm are reduced. Using tools such as the Common Assessment Framework, staff work diligently to identify potential problems early and prevent them from escalating. Staff also work well with social care teams to provide good support to family with children subject to child protection plans and children in need. In addition, specialist support is

provided to families whose lives are affected by domestic violence.

- The local authority, which sets measureable improvement targets, closely monitors the performance of the group. Performance is also monitored through the annual review of the centre’s work, through quarterly self-evaluation reports and through regular meetings with staff. Staff performance is also routinely monitored and staff work to agreed objectives. Staff training is planned well to ensure the skills and knowledge of staff are up to date and relevant to the needs of families.
- Resources are managed well across the group to ensure families receive an integrated service and to promote positive outcomes for families. Partners value their close relationship with the centres and talk very highly of the mutual benefits to the community of sharing skills, expertise and other resources with the centres.

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	80378
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	442826
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2667
Centre leader	Julie Ratcliffe
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01706 548140
Email address	julie.ratcliffe@calderdale.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children’s centres:

- 21441 Hebden Vale CC
- 23328 Todmorden CC

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