

Hurdsfield Children's Centre

Hulley Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK20 2LW

Inspection dates	9–10 December 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Not enough of the families, that are most in need of support, use the centre's services.
- Children attending some activities at the centre not do have sufficient opportunities to learn in playful, active, creative ways across all areas of learning.
- A cycle of effective planning for, and observation and assessment of children attending all of the centre's activities has yet to be implemented. As a result, the centre is not able to track children's progress and demonstrate that the gap between the skills and abilities of disadvantaged children and others is closing.
- Too few parents participate in adult learning, training and volunteering and the centre does not do enough to monitor and track the impact of these courses have.
- Information provided by the local authority does not enable centre leaders, and those in governance, to monitor the centre's performance. As a result, it is difficult for leaders to identify precisely those families in most need of support. Leaders do not know how well the centre is doing and the difference that it makes to families.

It has the following strengths:

- The centre has established strong and effective partnerships with local health teams. This has contributed to a large majority of families registering at the centre.
- Robust partnership working delivers effective support to enable people who have experienced domestic abuse, and those that have inflicted domestic abuse, to make informed choices about their futures and improve their quality of life.
- The protection of children is at the heart of the centre's work. Good assessment of need undertaken by a wide range of professionals quickly identifies children at most risk. Close partnership with Hurdsfield Family Centre and children's social care in particular, ensures good levels of support for children most at risk, by improving their stability and safety within the home.
- The newly appointed family service manager quickly assessed the strengths and weaknesses in provision and demonstrates a good capacity to secure continued improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase access to services by a wider range of the population within the reach area and, in particular, by the families that need intervention and support.
- Improve the quality and practice of services by:
 - further developing the centre's evaluation and tracking systems to consistently capture the impact of the centre's work to improve outcomes particularly for children and families that need the most support
 - improving the quality of early years provision
 - developing effective planning and observation systems to track children's progress and readiness for school, and narrow the gap in achievement between children whose circumstance make them disadvantaged and others children
 - identifying those adults who would benefit from further learning and ensuring that their needs are met by careful planning and consultation with providers of adult learning.
- Strengthen leadership, governance and management by:
 - improving the collation and analysis of population data in order to identify more precisely all families that need targeted support and intervention
 - ensuring that local authority data is accurate and presented in a useful and meaningful way in order to enable it, in addition to the advisory board, to challenge the centre's performance more rigorously.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. It was carried out at the same time as the inspection of Ash Grove Children's Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from a range of other agencies. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, representatives from the local authority and parents. The inspectors visited activities that took place at the centre and at Ash Grove Children's Centre.

They observed the centre's work, looked at a range of relevant documentation and undertook one joint observation of an activity with the centre manager.

Inspection team

Janet Stacey, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Gillian Bishop

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jean Webb

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Hurdsfield Children's Centre is situated in the grounds of Hurdsfield Primary School. The centre is a stand-alone centre. However, in 2013 it formed a collaboration with Ash Grove Children's Centre and Broken Cross Children's Centre. The local authority is responsible for governance of the centre, supported by an advisory board that represents the collaboration. The centre has recently appointed a new manager.

The centre offers a range of services which includes family activities, family support and parenting programmes. Health services are offered at the centre. Linked childcare provision is provided by private and voluntary early years organisations in the local area. These provisions are subject to separate inspection arrangements and reports of their quality are available on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Local schools report that in general children in the reach area enter early years provision with a range of experiences and skills typical for their age. However, children living on the Hurdsfield Estate and those living in the AstraZeneca ward start school with skills below those typical for their age.

There are approximately 1,338 children under five years of age living in the reach area. The predominant families living in the area are of White British heritage. The area as a whole is fairly affluent. However, children living in Hurdsfield Estate and the AstraZeneca ward are considered to live in the most deprived areas in Macclesfield; within this area 1.19% of children live in workless households. The centre has identified children living in households where there are maternal mental health and domestic abuse issues, those subject to a child protection plan, children in need and disabled children, as those that need the most support.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Although this is a relatively affluent area, there are a few locations where there is greater need. The number of families that live in these areas who access services, while increasing, is too low.
- The centre has established a good partnership with health services. Ante-natal and post-natal clinics operate at the centre. Despite the lack of live-birth data, health teams are effective in enabling the centre to ensure that most of the families with young children, and those expecting children, in the area are registered with the centre.
- While some services and partnerships are good, such as those to support children living in households where there are post-natal depression issues and disabled children, staff do not systematically monitor the attendance at activities or track the impact of these services. As a result, the centre is not in as strong a position as it could be to demonstrate that these services are helping to improve the lives and well-being of these children.
- Children and families in greatest need who have contact with the centre, particularly those subject to a child protection plan and children identified as in need, are quickly referred to specialist early help. This includes specific projects like 'Gateway' and 'Cheshire without Abuse', which provide highly effective support to families affected by domestic violence.
- Opportunities are good for parents who are eligible to receive funding for their two-year-old children to attend early education. A large majority of two-year-olds take up free places. Almost all children aged three and four take up their free entitlement to early education in good or better quality early years settings.

The quality of practice and services**Requires improvement**

- The centre offers a generally well-balanced service which is open to all, and also activities specifically for the families identified as most in need of help. Successful partnerships ensure that families support the centre's services extremely well. Speech and language services work alongside the centre staff to offer good support to disabled children and those with an additional need. Sessions such as 'Small Talk' 'Big Talk' and 'You Make a Difference' help to support children to communicate their feelings and views. 'He is putting more words together and getting more confident at communicating in both actions and words', typifies the benefits that families receive by attending these sessions.
- Peaks and Plains Housing Association and the Citizens Advice Bureau offer good support and advice to help families improve their understanding of money management. In addition, they provide an additional level of support for families in times of crisis, such as re-housing and benefit advice.
- Swift support is available for those children at most risk, particularly children subject to a child protection plan and children in need. Cheshire East Consultation Service, known as ChECS, monitors all referrals and ensures that the right levels of support, and staff with appropriate skills, are allocated to these families. In addition, the staff at Hurdsfield Family Centre offer good support and advice to the centre staff. These strong partnerships ensure that these children are living in happier households and are at less risk of harm.
- Mothers with post-natal depression are quickly identified through good partnerships with health professionals. Once identified, they are provided with a good range of support such as one-to-one baby massage sessions in the home and in the centre. Support groups, such as SMILE, are helping these adults to improve their self-esteem, confidence and develop stronger bonds with their children.
- The provision of early education offered by the voluntary and private providers in the area is high quality. However, this is not emulated within some of the centre's own services. For example, the crèche provision, while offering a caring environment, fails to offer stimulating opportunities for the children attending to explore, be active, and think creatively.
- The centre has yet to establish planning procedures that focus on how its services will help all children to learn. In addition, observations of children at play are not yet embedded. As these two vital components are missing, the centre is not yet in a position to be able to track the progress that children are making and help them to be ready for school, or to close fast enough the attainment gap between children living in the most disadvantaged areas and others.
- Health outcomes are variable but generally good. For example, the proportion of mothers who breastfeed at six-to-eight weeks after birth is well above the national average. Obesity and overweight rates of children in their Reception Year are slightly above the national average. The number of women smoking during pregnancy is in line with national averages. However, the centre does not routinely receive the localised data that it needs to ensure that these figures are as good for children living in the most disadvantaged areas, or the families that they have identified as most in need of support.
- The centre ensures that parents have access to a suitable range of adult learning courses, information about job vacancies and vocational training. However, staff do not track adults to monitor their attendance or their level of progress. Consequently, staff are not yet in a position to know which adults need additional support to continue learning, or to track the impact of the centre's work.

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

- The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management requires improvement because they are not yet ensuring that the centre's services are making a difference to enough local families. The centre is not being provided with sufficient accurate data, particularly, data linked to the families that it has identified as most in need of support and data relating to the more disadvantaged areas. This weakens the ability of the shared advisory board and the local authority to offer an effective challenge regarding the centre's on-going performance, particularly regarding the level of take-up of services and the improvements being made for the families that access services.
- The systems to evaluate practice and track progress are inconsistent and do not always capture the impact of what each session or activity has to offer. As a result, the centre is not yet in a secure position to show that its resources are being used effectively to improve life-chances for all the families that live in the area.
- Leaders and staff are fully committed to improving the life-chances of and reducing inequalities for the children that live in the area. Provisions such as a free crèche and transport fees are helping those users that would not be in a position to access services, to take part in activities. Good use is made of community venues in the rural areas and one-to-one work in families' homes ensure that any barriers to engagement are removed.
- The recently appointed family services manager has established an improved programme of supervision to set goals, give constructive feedback and monitor the centre's performance. Staff are passionate about their work and have access to a very good range of training opportunities to support their continuous professional development.
- Parents feel free to give their views through the parent representatives on the advisory board and during parent forum meetings. The voice of the child and the adult was captured and listened to during Children's Rights Month, which resulted in the families creating a 'Rights Tree' that sits proudly in the centre.
- Safeguarding children is firmly at the forefront of the centre's work. Effective referral processes between partners and the centre ensure that the right support is provided swiftly to families, including those whose problems have been assessed using the Common Assessment Framework process, those subject to a child protection plan, looked after children and those identified as in need.

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.

Centre details

Unique reference number	21592
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	455086
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,338
Centre leader	Tracy Collins
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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