

# Conewood Street Children's Centre

14 Conewood Street, London N5 1DL

<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 July 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not previously inspected

<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		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 children or parents, particularly those from workless households, regularly engage with the centre, which reduces the impact of the services the centre offers.
- The local authority and centre have not worked closely enough to develop a shared understanding of how to use data to monitor the engagement of priority groups. As a result, self-evaluation and action planning are not sharp enough.
- The centre is not doing enough to promote the uptake of parenting courses and adult learning programmes to ensure that a greater number of unemployed adults in the area gain skills and qualifications to help improve their chances of employment.
- The centre is not able to fully demonstrate the difference that its services for adults make because tracking systems to capture progress in adult learning are not sufficiently well developed.
- Case files do not always record the outcomes of discussions in supervision meetings, and management oversight of some cases is not regular enough.

### This centre has the following strengths:

- Discussions with parents show that the centre provides good quality, well-coordinated support and guidance. Parents who use the centre hold it in high regard.
- Health outcomes are good with a high proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies and strong participation in health-related courses by Somali families.
- Children in the area achieve well because staff are skilful in using evidence to close gaps in learning.
- The cluster advisory board and the management committee have been increasingly effective in providing good support and challenge to the centre. The pace of improvement is now rapid.
- There is good provision for local childminders and for children with speech and language difficulties.

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

- Increase further the engagement of target groups, in particular those from workless households, by finding out why more do not use the centre. Use this information to refine services so that they meet the needs of this priority group more precisely.
- Work closely with the local authority to strengthen self-evaluation and action planning, by reaching a shared understanding of how to use data to monitor regularly how well all priority groups are engaging with the centre.
- Promote further the uptake of parenting courses and adult learning programmes, especially for those from workless homes, so that a higher proportion develops their employability skills, by building stronger links with local adult education providers.
- Develop detailed tracking systems that capture progress in adult learning to demonstrate the longer-term impact of the centre's work.
- Improve the quality of case files by ensuring that the outcomes of the discussions in all supervision meetings are fully documented and there is regular management oversight of all cases.

### 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.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, centre staff, the local authority's strategic lead for early years, representatives from a range of extended services including health, parents and representatives from the management committee and advisory board.

The inspectors visited Birchwood Hall, one of the sites where regular Stay and Play sessions are held for local families, including those from the centre's priority groups. Inspectors observed the centre's work, for example the Bumps to Eight Months group, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. This included the centre's self-evaluation form, the centre development plan and data, safeguarding policies and procedures, including case files on target families, and some quality assurance documentation.

### Inspection team

Nasim Butt, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Tara Street

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

This is a stand-alone centre, managed by a voluntary organisation on behalf of the local authority since 2009. Islington's 16 children's centres are organised as clusters, with two or three centres in each cluster. Conewood works in collaboration with its sister children's centre Ambler, which is the other centre in the Highbury cluster. This arrangement allows a range of services to be offered which include health and parenting programmes, family play sessions, adult learning and family support.

As a registered charity, the centre is run by a management committee of parents who meet six times a year. There is also an advisory board: a forum where parents and professionals from the cluster can advise the leadership team on a strategic level.

There is on-site childcare provision in the form of a 54-place day nursery that provides an inclusive service of combined care and education for children aged from six months to five years. This provision is managed by the same voluntary organisation that runs the children's centre but is inspected under separate arrangements. The inspection report can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

There are approximately 601 children aged under five years in the area served by the centre, which is very diverse. The large majority of families in the area are of Black and minority ethnic heritage; a significant minority is White British. It is an area with a high number of wealthy families, as well as significant deprivation, and includes a few areas that come within the category of the 20% most deprived in England. Around 16% of children under five years old live in families that have no adult in work. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are broadly in line with those typical for their age.

The main target groups assessed as being in most need of centre services are lone parents, Black and minority ethnic families (in particular, Bengali, Somali and Turkish families), children living in workless households or low income families, and fathers.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- A push to increase registrations has led to around 89% of children from priority groups being registered. However, the centre and local authority have not reached a shared understanding of how to use data to regularly monitor how well priority groups are engaging with the centre. As a result, the centre is not able to demonstrate the full impact of its work.
- Although registrations for all groups have increased over time, longer-term meaningful contact with the centre is still not high enough for some priority groups, for example those from workless households.
- The centre's information shows that there has been a marked reduction in the number of families attending its Stay and Play sessions held several times a week at the centre and other venues. Although a range of work-related courses is available for parents, not enough adults from workless households have accessed these. As a result, their specific needs are not being fully met.
- The centre has been successful in engaging many Turkish and Somali families as a result of assessing their needs carefully and arranging appropriate provision. For example, parenting skills courses for Turkish families and health-related courses, such as the Somali Family Kitchen, have been effective in encouraging these families to attend regularly.
- Information sharing between health partners has a positive impact on providing coordinated early support for children and families, particularly through the First 21 Months programme and through antenatal and child health clinics. This ensures that the centre knows about expectant mothers and most new births within the area.

- The small number of families who are identified as in need of support and referred to the centre for one-to-one help engage well with family support workers and partner agencies. Typical comments from parents include, 'The centre has helped to build my confidence.' 'I've grown alongside my son.' 'Staff are amazing, like one of the family.'
- Most eligible two-year-olds take up their entitlement to free early education, as the centre has been active in supporting families to do so. Similarly, most three- and four-year-olds also take up their places, with the vast majority in good settings.

### The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Although there is an appropriate range of parenting courses and adult learning programmes on offer, they are not promoted well enough through the building of stronger links with local adult education providers. As a result, uptake is low, especially by adults in workless households in the more deprived parts of the area.
- There are several examples of how parents have progressed significantly in their education and training and gone into employment. However, tracking systems to capture progress in adult learning are not well developed. Therefore, the centre is unable to demonstrate the full impact of its work over a longer period of time.
- At six to eight weeks, 75% of babies are still being breastfed, well above the national average. However, a slightly higher-than-average number of young children are obese. In response, the centre works well with its health partners to develop families' understanding of healthy lifestyles. For example, the well-attended Somali Family Kitchen has improved families' understanding about the healthier cooking of cultural foods.
- The planning of sessions and evaluations of how well they have gone and what could be improved are generally of good quality. Centre staff track children's progress, including that of children with additional needs and speech and language delays, during targeted groups such as Chatterpillars. They use the information effectively to plan what the children need to learn next. This has contributed to a significant rise in the number of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception year, which is now above the national average.
- Due to the useful guidance from staff, the knowledge and understanding that parents are gaining help their children learn through play increasingly well. However, in Stay and Play sessions observed during the inspection, staff did not always fully involve parents in how their child is progressing. Nevertheless, parents are confident in talking about what their child can do, and what they need to move on to next.
- The centre has a successful volunteering programme that helps some parents to develop their employability skills. Volunteers' skills and aspirations are matched well to placements and some volunteers go on to further training and employment.
- Well-planned sessions for local childminders ensure they receive the information, advice and guidance they need to improve their effectiveness. Activities such as Maths for under 2s are underpinned by the objective of closing identified gaps in the learning and development of boys and girls.

### The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority and the centre have produced conflicting sets of data about the engagement of priority groups. This results in some confusion about how much contact different groups have had with the centre over time. As a consequence, self-evaluation and action planning are not as effective as they could be.
- Family support workers are highly valued by families for the support they provide. Parents say, 'They make us feel at ease and build our confidence.' 'I can talk to them about anything and they do not rush me.' However, case files do not all record the outcomes of discussions in supervision

meetings, although there are clear details of the positive impact of the centre's work in helping families get back on track. There is not enough management oversight on a regular basis of some families.

- The advisory board includes strong representation from professional partners and parents, which include both the Chair and Vice Chair. Both the board and management committee are highly supportive of the work of the centre, and records show improvements over time in the effectiveness of the challenge provided.
- The centre works well in partnership with Ambler, its 'sister' centre in the Highbury cluster, ensuring that resources are maximised to avoid duplication of effort. Staff are appropriately qualified and have good access to training and informal support from managers. The centre successfully promotes equality of opportunity through, for instance, the provision of high-quality bilingual support for families who speak English as an additional language, and a Saturday Stay and Play session for fathers who cannot attend sessions during the working week.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Staff are safely recruited and vetted. At the time of inspection, the centre was not involved in supporting any children identified as children in need, looked after children or those who are subject to a child protection plan. Evidence seen from some recent case work from social care shows that when family support staff do provide support for these families it is of good quality.
- Families hold the centre in high regard and frequently recommend it to others. They feel fully involved in the development of centre services through the regular evaluations of provision they attend and the good numbers present at cluster advisory board meetings. They see the centre as an important community resource as they and their children always receive a very warm welcome. One summed this up in the comment, 'I am patient and calmer; I see things differently now.'

**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 details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20806
<b>Local authority</b>	Islington
<b>Inspection number</b>	464901
<b>Managed by</b>	The Conewood Street Children's Centre Voluntary Organisation on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	601
<b>Centre leader</b>	Dorothy Shepherd
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7527 4440
<b>Email address</b>	Dorothy.shepherd@islington.gov.uk

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