

Rochdale – Sandbrook and Castleton Group

Hartley Lane, Kirkholt, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL11 2LR

Inspection date

15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		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 children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The centre does not have access to up-to-date data. This prevents leaders from analysing which families from target groups attend, complete and benefit from activities and services. This means that they cannot ensure that the right families are being encouraged to make use of services and are having their identified needs met.
- The advisory board and the local authority are not sufficiently well-informed to mount robust challenge and hold the group leaders to account for the effectiveness of the work of the children's centre group.
- Too few families from target groups are making use of the universal sessions offered by the centre.
- Too few children reach expected levels of development to ensure that they are well prepared to start school.
- Too few adults are accessing courses to help them progress into work or further training.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- The local authority and centre leaders know both the profile of families and the group's reach area well.
- Almost all families are registered with the group. When they are identified, families receive timely and appropriate support from a good range of professionals including health professionals, debt counsellors and citizens advice.
- A very high number of two-, three- and four-year-old children access their free entitlement to early nursery education.
- The group works extremely closely with partners, particularly health professionals and midwives, to provide a comprehensive service to benefit families. This helps them to improve their health and well-being and to overcome barriers.
- The volunteer programme has successfully raised aspirations for a good number of adults.

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. The centres that form part of this children’s centre group are Sandbrook Sure Start Children’s Centre and Castleton Children’s Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the local authority representative and the nominee, and with representatives from: the senior leadership; the advisory board; local leaders of early years provision cross-sector including the senior practitioners; the data team; midwifery and health visiting team; European Social Fund; Community Champion Volunteers; the Citizens Advice Bureau; the Rainbow Trust; the parenting team; Hopwood Hall College; the Women’s Housing Action Group; Family support; Oral health; Early Support and with parents attending the centres. Inspectors looked at the centre’s self-evaluation, development plan, a sample of case studies, safeguarding procedures and a wide range of relevant documentation.

The inspectors visited sessions at both children’s centre sites and carried out joint observations with centre leaders. They observed the centre’s work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Bob Busby	Her Majesty’s Inspector , Lead Inspector
Kathryn Gethin	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Priscilla McGuire	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

The Rochdale – Sandbrook and Castleton Group of children’s centres operates across two centres approximately one mile apart. Sandbrook centre is located on the site of Sandbrook Community Primary School and Castleton centre is located on the site of Castleton Primary School.

There are 1,371 children aged from birth to four years living in the reach area. The majority of children enter school-based early years provision with skill levels that are low for their age. Early years provision in the area is provided through a mix of childminders, school and non-school-based settings. The primary schools and adjacent early years settings are inspected separately. The reports are available at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Governance is provided by the local authority which recently restructured its 17 individually managed centres into seven groups. Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council is also reorganising how it collates data to drive its improvement work, and at the time of inspection was merging data into one main system for all children aged 0-19 and their families.

Sandbrook and Castleton children’s centres are managed by an Early Intervention manager as a group to meet the core purpose of Surestart children’s centres. From April 2013, when Sandbrook and Castleton became a group setting, the opening hours at Castleton Children’s Centre were decreased from 50 hours per week to 20 hours per week. Sandbrook and Castleton are based in communities ranked within the top 30% for deprivation nationally. Recently a strategic decision was taken to change the existing reach areas of all of the children’s centres within the borough. The reach area of the group covers the Balderstone & Kirkholt, Bamford, Castleton and Hopwood Hall wards.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Improve access to services by young children and families by:
 - increasing the number of families accessing universal services within the centre
 - ensuring assessment of need includes information obtained from partners.
- Improve the collection and use of data from all sources in measuring performance and driving improvement, particularly in informing the centre of engagement and participation of target groups and the most vulnerable families.
- Extend the opportunities for more adults to enhance their economic stability by increasing the promotion of, and participation rates in, adult learning programmes and volunteering opportunities to aid progression into further education and employment.
- Work with partners to identify ways of enabling children to reach their expected levels of development
- Ensure systematic monitoring of the impact of all aspects of provision delivered by the group and its partners to:
 - enable group leaders to effectively prioritise resources
 - allow the advisory board and the local authority to hold group leaders to account for the impact the centres have in improving the lives of the most vulnerable families.
- Improve the effectiveness of the advisory board by ensuring that the expertise of all advisory board members is fully utilised in challenging and driving improvement in group performance through:
 - increased attendance at meetings
 - better recording of the professional discussions at meetings.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Partnerships with services are good. These include the on-site day nursery, on-site health visitors and midwives providing ante-natal and post-natal facilities, advisory teacher and commissioned services as well as local primary schools. Effective information sharing has helped the group register the large majority of families. The group and its partners are highly effective in promoting and referring families to each other's services and in sharing information.
- Short-term participation levels by families are good but too few families maintain longer contact with the centre. Although improved, only a minority of fathers engage with the centre despite the centre prioritising fathers as a target group. Overall numbers of participants in sessions at Castleton are low. Too few families are increasing their employability chances as they do not access mathematics and English courses.
- The take-up of funded places for nursery education is good. Almost all eligible two-year-olds are now in funded nursery places. The numbers of three- and four-year-old children accessing funded nursery education has increased slightly in the last year, with the majority now taking up their entitlement.
- Centre staff work very effectively with other agencies to provide good quality family support and outreach work. Services are delivered in the home where necessary, often alongside other professionals. Assessment of need has improved through the re-introduction of home visits. This has aided staff in getting to know the families and children prior to attendance at the crèche or the centre.
- The health and well-being of local families is improving. A successful oral health programme, 'Golden Grin', has been successfully established. Tooth decay within the borough has reduced from 47% to 31%, which exceeds the borough target of 40%. The centre provides good and successful breastfeeding support. The group has increased the number of mothers initiating breastfeeding and the number of mothers breastfeeding after six-to-eight weeks to above the borough average.
- The centre is seen as a 'safe' resource for women suffering from domestic violence. It is used on a frequent basis by partners, including the Women's Housing Action Group, in supporting women. However, creche facilities are not currently used when families suffering from domestic violence are interviewed. Consequently, interviews may have to be curtailed depending on the needs of the child or mothers' reluctance to fully engage in the presence of their children.
- The centre is not sufficiently aware of who it successfully engages with. Target groups reported in the performance-management report are generic and do not identify the main priorities within the area although these have been identified at centre level. Systems are in place to monitor access to, attendance at and participation in services, and files for targeted families show that contact is made if participation levels fall. However, target groups are not well represented in the universal services.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The group offers an appropriate balance of universal and targeted services. Parents who attend parenting programmes receive good support and display good development of parenting skills. They learn how to listen to children better, to manage children's behaviour better and to understand the link between play and learning. The centre offers good, well-resourced provision to help children develop skills. For example, during 'Treasure Baskets', 'Fun with Words' and 'Stay and Play' sessions children have fun, develop creative skills through painting, learn from play, and develop social skills such as sharing and playing with others.
- Strong links with Hopwood Hall Further Education College and local adult learning services have resulted in good, informal adult-learning provision including 'Fun with Words' and 'Family Journey'. The centre offers good opportunities for parents to learn and develop through becoming volunteering champions. Twenty volunteers have become community champions, including breastfeeding mentors, to support the learning and development of families in the centre and within the area. However, the centre recognises that it needs to develop more formal adult-learning

opportunities to increase the employability chances for adults.

- Partnership links with health and social care partners are effective in identifying need and promoting health and well-being. The co-location of health services and midwifery within the centre promotes excellent partnership working and sharing of information, which the centre uses to good effect to improve the lives of vulnerable families. Local breastfeeding rates are improving and are above borough rates. Obesity rates have reduced to below the borough average and national average. Health clinics are well attended.
- The centre provides good support for childminders and other early years provision through centre-based advisory teachers. The 'high five' initiative helps early years settings to improve and a rating system is used effectively to identify where support is most needed. As a result the quality of provision in private, voluntary and independent settings is improving.
- Data show that children living in the reach area make satisfactory progress from their starting points but not enough children reach age-related expectations when starting school. Only 49% achieve 78 points or more at Early Years Foundation Stage which is well below the national average.
- The centre does not have access to sufficient data on the participation rates by target groups and so cannot report on the overall impact of provision in relation to these groups. Centre leaders recognise that more needs to be done to identify and record the impact of centre activities on children and their families, particularly those within target groups.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Partnership working at strategic and local levels is highly effective. Cooperation between partners is good, with effective information sharing between the centre and many of its partners leading to increased registration rates. Leaders ensure there are no barriers to information sharing or access to the services families need.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet legislative requirements. The centre works well with partners to reduce the risk of harm to children. Close working between centre staff and social-work professionals, supported by effective record-keeping and supervision of case files, ensures the most vulnerable children are protected. Appropriately robust policies, procedures and practices are in place and ensure that safeguarding and the welfare of children and vulnerable adults are given high priority. Centre staff have been appropriately trained and many have accessed further training including Child Sex Exploitation training following a recent serious case review in Rochdale.
- There are adequate arrangements for evaluation and improvement of services and activities including those delivered by partners. However, session observations do not always lead to effective actions to improve performance. Parents, children and practitioners all contribute to the evaluation of the centre and the outcomes of evaluation are used to shape service developments and improvement. However, response rates to questionnaires are low.
- Performance management and professional supervision are well established and consistently applied across all aspects of the centre. However, variable practice exists in the completion of case files. Staff have good access to further training and professional development opportunities.
- Financial resources available to the centre are well deployed through highly effective partnership working, integrated service delivery and innovative practice. Resources are used effectively to provide a stimulating environment for most sessions. The group resources are well used but participation rates in some of the sessions at the Castleton centre are low.
- Data and management information is too dated to provide an accurate picture of the recent performance of the centre. Centre managers have sought to use local information to ensure the centre meets the needs of vulnerable families but there is no overall analysis of engagement and impact. The centre has good knowledge of its reach area and is sensitive to the diverse needs of the local community but is not sufficiently knowledgeable about how well needs are being met.
- The local authority and the centre agree and implement appropriate challenging outcome and performance measures based on participation rates within the reach area. Initial targets for participation are monitored and stretched targets are appropriately implemented based on

performance. However, the centre is unable to demonstrate its recent performance against targets or how services lead to sustained and demonstrable improvements for families, especially those in target groups.

- Governance arrangements are not fully effective. The advisory board is not well attended and is not sufficiently informed of centre performance to present robust challenge to the centre's leaders. The local authority is unable to mount sufficient challenge to performance due to data issues. Action plans following the annual conversation are not sufficiently detailed or monitored to determine impact.
- Parents and children are consulted about their needs and any changes to services. Most parents encourage other parents to use the centre's services. However, the parents' forum has now ceased. Parent views are collected through completion of forms available within the centre and this has led to changes to service but centre users are not all sufficiently involved in the design and development of services or in deciding key priorities for the centre. Centre surveys indicate that centre users express a consistently high level of satisfaction with the quality and the ability of services to meet their needs. Response rates to surveys from the local authority are too low to provide meaningful information to allow the centre to prioritise actions to improve services.

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 well-being 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/Children's Centre Group details

Unique reference number	80425
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	424818
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,371
Centre leader	Nicola Carroll
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01706 653677
Email address	nicola.carroll2@rochdale.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 22627 Sandbrook Sure Start Children's Centre
- 20588 Castleton Childrens Centre

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