

Oldham – Failsworth and Hollinwood

St Chad's Centre, Lime Green Parade, Limehurst, Oldham, Lancashire, OL8 3HH

Inspection dates	7-8 May 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 centre group has been very successful, particularly in the last six months, at increasing the number of families who are registered. The large majority of those who are most in need of support access services and make good use of the services on offer.
- Young children enjoy the well-planned activities such as, 'Play and Weigh' and 'Baby Matters' that help them to move on in their learning and personal development. The centre group's strong and purposeful links with early years partners help children prepare confidently for school.
- Highly committed centre staff work closely with a range of partners, including social care professionals to provide a good level of individual care, guidance and support to families both in the centre and through outreach work.
- Good leadership, management and governance enable the centre group to clearly focus on priority developments. Well-targeted development planning, underpinned by a thorough process of ongoing review, and robust local authority monitoring, mean that the centre group has a good capacity to sustain future improvement.

It is not outstanding because:

- The centre group has not yet succeeded in reducing the number of children who are obese in Reception Year or in encouraging more mothers to stop smoking during pregnancy or to breastfeed their babies.
- There are not enough opportunities for adults to access courses which help to improve their long-term employability, for those that do attend their progress is not tracked carefully enough.
- The data used to monitor the registration and engagement of some target groups is not accurate and health partners do not always share information on a regular basis to enable the centre group to more effectively measure the full impact of its work.

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

- Together with partners, develop further strategies to:
 - increase the number of mothers who breastfeed their babies
 - increase the number of mothers who give up smoking during pregnancy and reduce the number of children in Reception Year who are obese, particularly in the Hollinwood area.
- Extend opportunities for more adults, particularly those not working, to enhance their economic stability by:
 - increasing the participation rates in adult-learning and accredited programmes and developing further procedures to track and measure how well adults make progress.
- Improve further the way data is used by the local authority and centre leaders to measure the impact of the centre group's work and to drive further improvements by:
 - improving further the monitoring of some target groups registration and engagement levels by making more effective and accurate use of reach population data
 - working with health colleagues to ensure that information is shared on a regular basis so that the centre group can more effectively monitor the impact of their work.

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; Failsworth Children's Centre and Hollinwood Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre district lead, Action for Children operational director and children's services manager, family plus team leaders, senior leadership team and officers from the local authority. They also held meetings with centre staff, parents, members of the district advisory board and a number of partners, including health, education and children's social care professionals.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions held during the inspection including, 'Play and Weigh', 'Baby Bistro', 'Mucky Pups', a childminder group and the two-year-old entitlement clinic. They also involved the children's centre district lead and children's services manager in all team meetings.

They observed the centre group's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, such as the centre group's self-evaluation, development plan, a sample of case studies, parent evaluations, key policies and the centre group's equality and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Tara Street, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Cathryn Parry

Additional Inspector

Daniel Grant

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Oldham - Failsworth and Hollinwood Children's Centre group formed as a group in April 2013. It consists of two previously stand-alone children's centres that have merged and share services, including staff, and one overall manager. The group meets its core purpose by offering a range of services which include child health services, family play sessions, parenting courses, adult learning, family support and two sensory rooms. These services are delivered to families from the children's centre buildings, community venues in the area and through outreach home visits.

There are approximately 2,064 children aged nought to five years in the reach area, of which 66.2% live in the 0-30% most deprived areas in the country. The target groups identified by the centre group are: lone parents, low income households, pregnant teenagers and teenage parents, children with additional educational needs, fathers and those families identified as in greatest need. At 93%, the very large majority of families within the area served by the centre group are White British with the remaining 7% made up of mainly Bangladeshi and Pakistani families in the Hollinwood area. Housing is mostly social or private rental in the Hollinwood area with some very small areas of affluence and privately owned housing which are mainly in the Failsworth area. Levels of unemployment are high, with 32.8% of children living in households dependent upon workless benefits.

Most children enter early years provision with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. There are links to the 12 local primary schools and the centre's childcare provision is delivered by Sure Steps Nursery. These are subject to separate inspection arrangements and the reports are available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Governance of the centre has been provided by Action for Children on behalf of Oldham Local Authority since April 2012, in conjunction with a district advisory board that includes providers, delivery partners, members of the local community and users that attend the centre.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- There have been significant improvements in recent months in the number of families who have registered with the centre and who are benefiting from its services. At 78.59%, the large majority of families living in the reach area are engaged. This includes those expecting children, families identified as in greatest need of support, pregnant teenagers, lone parents, fathers and those on low incomes.
- Families benefit from a good balance of targeted support and access to universal services being offered by the centre group and its partners. Home visits, particularly in the Hollinwood area, are aimed at reducing inequalities for families and form part of the centre groups effective outreach work.
- Staff work hard to ensure that the centres' are warm and welcoming to families. This means that those less likely to engage feel comfortable coming to the centres to access services and activities. Typical comments from parents include: 'Staff are really approachable, I can ask questions and nothing is too much for them' and 'I feel really comfortable and safe, I have picked up some new ideas and safety tips'.
- Effective joint working with most professionals enables the centre group to provide good packages of individualised support and services for families, thereby successfully improving their health, social and economic welfare. For example, close links with speech and language therapists and the early years additional needs advisors mean that children with complex needs benefit from expert early

help.

- At 96%, the very large majority of three- and four-year-olds and 100% of eligible two-year-olds are accessing their funded early education place in the range of good and better early years provision in the area. This is due to the concerted effort of centre staff to encourage and support families to take up their place through initiatives, such as the Action for Children 'Two Year Entitlement Clinic' checks.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The quality, range and relevance of both universal and targeted services offered by the centre group are good and the take-up by families most in need is high.
- Committed staff provide good support, care and guidance in the home to assist families who are most in need and who find accessing the centre's difficult. This is effectively improving the well-being and lives of families. The centre group works successfully with young parents to enhance their confidence and parenting skills, thereby helping to reduce any inequalities.
- Health outcomes are variable despite staff's hard work. The uptake of immunisation is high and staff offer good quality advice to those who wish to stop smoking. As a result, the number of mothers smoking during pregnancy has reduced over the last year but in the Hollinwood area this is still above the local and national average.
- The proportion of Reception-age children who are obese in the Failsworth area has reduced and is in line with the national average. However, there has been a rise in the Hollinwood area which now stands at 15.5%. The number of mothers choosing to breastfeed at six-to-eight weeks has improved over the last four years from 18% to 27% but this is still below those found locally and nationally. In addition, health partners do not provide the centre group with regular updated information to enable them to more effectively monitor and measure the impact of their work.
- Partnerships with all schools and in particular early years providers and childminders in the area are good. Together, they share 'good' practice, access training and have high aspirations for improving the lives of children and their families. Observations, assessment and tracking of children show improved outcomes for all those who use the centre group's services, including the groups identified target groups. Children respond well to the well-qualified and experienced staff who are good role models. As a result, they develop positive behaviour as well as their independence so they are more ready for school.
- There are too few adult education and training opportunities to help parents to improve their employability skills, which limits their progress towards paid work and their ability to support their children's learning. The systems to track adults' participation and progress towards learning and employment, particularly when signposted to other adult learning or employability services, do not provide clear evidence of the centre group's impact on increasing economic well-being.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre group has made significant improvements in the last six months, particularly in its monitoring of children and families access to services. As a result, the centre group has effectively increased the number of families registering and engaging in centre activities. This improvement has been effectively driven by the robust partnership, intervention and continuous challenge provided by the local authority.
- The centre has clear systems for checking on its performance and setting priorities for future improvement. Self-review procedures include staff and the district advisory board in looking critically at what works best and why. Monitoring by local authority officers is very robust and accurate and they, together with the centre district lead and Action for Children managers, are supporting the centre towards still better effectiveness.
- Data provided by the local authority about some target groups, such as teenage parents, low income families and children with additional needs is not always accurately measured against the

area population. As a result, it does not always give a sufficiently clear picture of the full impact of the centre's work on local families.

- The district advisory board contains a wide range of committed professional partners and local community representatives. They receive a good range of information about the centre group's work and, as a result, are successful in challenging and holding the centre group to account.
- Performance management and professional supervision of staff are well established. Staff have good opportunities to undertake relevant training and development. This has a positive effect on staff knowledge and how well they meet the needs of families. The sharing of expertise and services with partner agencies also helps to ensure that resources are well allocated and used effectively to meet families' needs.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are thorough and the Common Assessment Framework is used appropriately in order to reduce levels of risk. The centre group, in collaboration with colleagues in social care and family plus workers, provides good support for looked after children, their carers and children who have been identified as being in need or who are subject to a child protection plan. The Action for Children Early Help Panel is particularly effective in ensuring families are safe and remain protected.
- Parents report a high level of satisfaction with the work of the centre group. They are consulted about their needs, and services are designed and developed in response to their requirements. Initiatives are underway to re-invigorate the parent's forum and there are some promising signs of even more parents committing to fund raising and organising activities.

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	80121
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	442813
Managed by	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2064
Centre leader	Moira Parrott
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0161 770 8398
Email address	moira.parrott@actionforchildren.org.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 21126 Failsworth Children's Centre
- 21530 Hollinwood Children's Centre

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