

Rochdale – Belfield, Littleborough and Heybrook Children's Centre Group

Samson Street, Belfield, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL16 2XW

Inspection dates	30 April–1 May 2015
Previous inspection date	29 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
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:

- *Although most families are registered and access to services is improving, not enough families from workless households, fathers and lone parents regularly attend.*
- *The specific nature of the differing needs of those families identified as most in need of support across the locality have not been fully identified.*
- *Recording in some case files is not always maintained to a high standard. Systems are not streamlined enough and it is unclear why certain services have been selected as the most appropriate to help families.*
- *Tracking of children and priority families is in its infancy. Consequently, the centres cannot reliably measure whether they are successfully helping families to improve their well-being and life chances.*
- *While health partners share information about all new births, they do not provide up-to-date or precise enough information to the centres in order for them to develop healthy life styles for families.*

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- *Governance arrangements are effective. Advisory board members have a good understanding of the data and provide effective challenge. Since the last inspection, swift and effective action has been taken to improve the quality of services across all centres.*
- *There has been a significant increase in the take-up of the free entitlement to early education for two-year-olds. The innovative idea to supply families with a 'Golden Ticket' appealed to families and captured their imagination.*
- *Families have access to good quality courses and activities in pleasant and welcoming surroundings.*

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- *Improve access to services by:*
 - *increasing the proportion of families living in workless households, fathers and lone parents currently accessing services*
 - *targeting the specific needs of families such as, those from workless households in the Littleborough area.*
- *Improve the quality and impact of services by:*
 - *undertaking a quality audit of case files and ensure that these are maintained to a high standard, and provide a clear and detailed account of the work of the centres and partners*
 - *strengthening the current tracking systems so that leaders can check on the progress that children and adults make.*
- *Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:*
 - *obtaining more regular and up-to-date information from health partners across the full range of health initiatives.*

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 Belfield Children’s Centre, Heybrook and Hamer Children’s Centre and Littleborough Children’s Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with senior management, representatives of the local authority, chair of the advisory board, parents and a range of partners.

The inspectors visited all three children’s centres and other community venues.

They observed the centres’ work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Kathryn Gethin, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Philip David Ellwand

Additional Inspector

Barbara Wearing

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Rochdale-Belfield, Littleborough, Heybrook and Hamer Children’s Centre Group provides services from three children’s centre buildings, schools and outreach venues in the area. Belfield Children’s Centre is on the site of Belfield Community School. Heybrook Children’s Centre is situated in the grounds of Heybrook Primary School and Hamer Children’s Centre is situated in the grounds of Hamer and Springside Primary Schools. Littleborough Children’s Centre is on the site of Littleborough Community Primary School. The schools are subject to separate inspection arrangements and their reports can be found at: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Governance of the group is provided by Rochdale Borough Council, in conjunction with a separate advisory board. The children’s centre group delivers or signposts families to a range of services which include: family support, health services, family play sessions, adult learning and parenting services. The centres have identified: children living in workless households, lone parents, and fathers as most in need of their support.

In total, approximately 2,763 children under five years of age live in the area, with a significant number living in one of the areas ranked 10% to 30% most deprived in the country. There are approximately 288 lone parent families and 775 children living in workless households. Most children and families living in the area are from minority ethnic groups and approximately 49% are White British. Most children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities below those typical for their age.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Families most in need of support have been identified as fathers, families in workless households and lone parents. As yet, the centres are not managing to engage with the large majority of these. Although there has been a steady increase in the proportion of families using the centres on a regular basis, in the more affluent Littleborough area fewer families from workless households are accessing services.
- There has been a concerted drive to increase the registration of families across the centres. Special events to raise awareness of the centres, such as weekend family fun days, are promoted through all centres and outreach venues. As a result, most families are now registered with the centres.
- Families who are expecting children have good access to services. Ante-natal clinics are based at three of the four centres and clinics are very well attended. The ‘pink slip’ system used by midwives to inform the centres of recent live births works well and enables the centres to know when families are not engaging with services, so contact can be made.
- Good links are in place with social care, and managers from the First Response team are linked to each centre. The centres are informed of all referrals where a child is under five years of age to establish if the family is currently accessing any type of service. The centres are also used well for contact sessions and foster care support.
- Parents are regularly consulted when changes in access to any service are identified. Following a decrease in the attendance of families in the Hamer Children’s Centre, information from parents was sought, and the opening times changed to accommodate parents’ wishes. More families now use the centre.
- The majority of eligible two-year olds take up a funded place with local providers. An imaginative strategy to issue all families with eligible children a ‘Golden Ticket’ along with the standard letter has been highly successful. This and the follow-up of families not taking up the offer has resulted in a significant increase in the proportion of children accessing places.

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

- Systems for recording case notes are disjointed as children centre workers, family support workers and social care keep records in different ways and formats. Not enough information is recorded to identify how the needs of families have been addressed following a request for services or when files are closed.
- Systems to track children’s and adults’ progress and measure the effectiveness of the centres’ work are not fully embedded. Therefore, the centres are unable to analyse fully the impact of their services on reducing inequalities and improving families’ lives.
- Centre staff help adult learners identify their skills and ambitions with a good initial assessment. This has enabled them to progress on to courses leading to a qualification and employment. Many centre users describe to inspectors how the good support for independent living has improved the lives of their families.
- Early years sessions and groups delivered at the children’s centres are of high quality. They are delivered by skilled and enthusiastic staff, who share their knowledge and expertise with parents to enable them to continue to support their children’s learning at home. Parents report positively on the wide range of relevant services and support they receive from the children’s centres and the positive impact these have.
- Excellent relationships are in place with the four on-site schools and the private, voluntary and independent sector. Information on the progress of children is shared to support children’s learning and development and close any gaps in readiness for school.
- Commissioned services support the work of the centres effectively. Children with disabilities are supported well and many families have improved their economic well-being by receiving good information and support when dealing with debt, benefit claims, training and employment advice.
- Parents, children and staff develop secure and respectful relationships. A typical remark is ‘you are treated as an individual and they remember every adult and every child and are always welcoming’. This creates an environment in which parents are confident in seeking support and advice from staff and where children and families have fun as they play and learn together.
- A small but successful volunteer programme is in place. Three volunteers are currently facilitating weekly sessions within the centres and others have gained employment as teaching assistants and centre workers.

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

- Not enough current information is shared by health partners. This includes: smoking during pregnancy; breastfeeding rates; obesity; immunisation levels and emergency hospital admissions. As a consequence, the centres cannot set precise targets for these areas or measure if any inequalities are being reduced.
- Since the last inspection, swift and effective action has been taken by the local authority to support all centres. The local authority scrutinises data on a regular basis and closely monitors performance. Current targets are broad and focus on increasing the proportion of families identified as most in need of support accessing services across the area.
- The advisory board meets regularly and key partners are well represented. The chair has an excellent understanding of the needs within the community and is well placed to drive improvement. Parents are represented on the board and as users of the centres, give regular feedback and link effectively with the newly formed Parents’ Forum. Partners speak positively about the difference made through the new improved data format and shared understanding of issues.
- Staff value supervision and feel well supported. Additional training to support middle managers has been successful and well received. Staff are excited by the changes and have risen to the challenge. It is a testament to the centre manager that staff have felt supported through a difficult period.
- Safeguarding training is up to date and induction for new staff is thorough. Strong links with social

care and representation at meetings ensure that staff are able to support children known to social care as a looked-after child, child in need or subject to a child protection plan. The number of children subject to a child protection plan has fallen significantly. Registration forms and early assessment forms are under review, following feedback received from families.

- Good quality resources are evident throughout the three centres and all the centres are used well by partners, including midwifery, health visitors and the Citizens’ Advice Bureau. Money has been spent well on additional training for managers and the advisory board. This has reinforced their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Recordable postcards and photograph albums are now in place to support those families with English as an additional language.
- Parents regularly contribute to the development of services through the advisory board, parent forum, evaluations and feedback sheets. Comments are noted and acted upon.

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	80420
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	455022
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2763
Centre leader	Rachael El Weshahi
Date of previous inspection	29 July 2014
Telephone number	01706 356634
Email address	rachael.elweshahi@rochdale.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children’s centres:

- 20256 Belfield Children’s Centre
- 21832 Littleborough Children’s Centre
- 21468 Heybrook and Hamer Children’s Centre

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