

Inspection report for The Chai Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	361082
Inspection dates	23-24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Steve Isherwood HMI

Centre governance	Advisory Board
Centre leaders	Luanne Galawan and Ann Crichton
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Hurtley Street, Burnley BB10 1BY
Telephone number	01282 657395
Fax number	01282 421190
Email address	luanne.galawan@eastlancspct.nhs.uk

Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Little Acorns Community Nursery

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2010



Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with members of the advisory board, parents and service users and a representative from the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The Chai Centre is a combined children's centre and healthy living centre located in the Daneshouse and Stoneyholme area of Burnley. The centre has developed from a Sure Start Local Programme and was opened in 2004. It was designated as a phase 1 children's centre in 2006. The area served by the centre is economically and socially disadvantaged being ranked as in the top 13% of the most deprived areas in the country. A high proportion of families are from the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities with a smaller number from White British heritage backgrounds. The number of children attending schools in the area who are known to be entitled to free school meals is above average as is the proportion of children aged under-four who are living in households where no one is working.

The centre provides the full core offer and provides a wide range of supporting health services, incorporating a café, steam room and gymnasium. The centre is one of four local children's centres governed by an advisory board and operates as a cluster with a combined management structure.

The centre's full day-care provision is provided by the Little Acorns Community Nursery which is housed within the same building. Little Acorns was last inspected in January 2006. Most children enter early education with a much lower range of skills than that expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

Under the present leadership, the centre has come a long way in a short period of time and according to many people, is unrecognisable from what it was like when many users seemed reluctant to use its services in the past. Inspectors agree with the centre's evaluation that it now provides good support for children and families in the area and is increasingly effective and popular. Some of its features are outstanding. Services for users are improving and the centre meets its core offer well. This is because the work of the centre is spearheaded by very good leadership from senior leaders who have worked extremely hard to get the centre to this point. With the good support of colleagues they have successfully ensured that services are well integrated and deliver cohesive provision for users which impacts positively on their lives. As one parent commented, 'the centre has turned my life around'. This is achieved by excellent partnership working which ensures that services are adapted well to the needs of all members of the community, including the most vulnerable. Relationships between agencies are highly productive and there is effective transfer of information between key partners. As a result, outcomes are good and improving across the board, particularly in health. The centre works effectively to keep users engaged and an ever increasing number of parents are taking advantage of the extensive range of opportunities to improve their parenting, vocational and academic skills successfully.

The centre is a very safe environment in which to work and provides high levels of care support and advice to parents and children on a wide range of issues. Quality assurance and risk assessment systems for safeguarding are very well established and are routinely informed by the views of service users.

Whilst senior leaders evaluate the quality of provision regularly and have a clear vision for improving the centre, plans for improvement are not sufficiently focused on the impact of the centre's work on outcomes for users. Some of the evidence collated is anecdotal and is not reliable enough yet to enable leaders to judge

whether some activities and programmes are as effective as they could be. In addition, the centre's procedures for self-evaluation are too descriptive and do not as yet consistently demonstrate how services are making a difference.

Nevertheless, given the centre's good track record of improvement and along with its other strengths, its capacity to improve further is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve action planning and self-evaluation further by:
 - ensuring that targets are specific and measurable and focused on improving outcomes
 - developing self-evaluation procedures which focus more clearly on the impact the centre is having on making a difference.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for parents and families are good and improving. This is because of the strong commitment of the centre to providing a wide range of activities which are developed very well in partnership with other agencies and service users themselves. A real strength of the centre is the way in which it promotes high quality healthy outcomes for children and their families. Parents report that they are benefiting extremely well from the extensive range of advice and opportunities that the centre provides. These include: breastfeeding and weaning, emotional health, smoking cessation, substance misuse, food and fitness, teenage health and speech and language. A particular success has been the presence of a female doctor on-site. This has encouraged more women to engage with the centre as well as contributing to improvements in their health and well-being. In addition, children and their parents are encouraged to keep fit with regular exercise at the weekly 'Tatty Bumpkins' session, which is greatly enjoyed by all families.

A significant factor in improving outcomes for users is the universal home visiting programme. This provides integrated personalised support for families with children aged 0-5 years with ten visits planned in the first two years of life for every child in the area. Staff are proactive and no stone is left unturned to get to know each and every family in the locality, including those who are hard to reach. Effective support is also given to parents of children with additional needs. The centre regularly acts as a focal point for families in similar circumstances so that parents can share their experiences and support one another.

Parents have good opportunities to learn about keeping their children safe and are

well supported through the work of the 'family learning opportunities and well-being group'. Parents and children are developing a good understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves safe. As a result, accidents in the home for young children have been reduced and there are less reported incidents that have required hospital treatment. Staff model safe practices well and the centre is a safe and welcoming place to be.

The centre places great importance in raising the awareness and understanding of families dealing with domestic violence and abuse. Good links with the women's refuge association drop in sessions arranged by the 'SafeNet' project and support and advice through 'The Freedom Project' are just some of the ways in which the centre has responded to the needs of its community and for those in crisis. As one parent commented, 'The centre has given me confidence and has made me a much stronger person'.

There are effective links between the centre and the Early Years Foundation Stage setting. Children make good progress from their very low starting points in developing their skills for the future and gain access to a range of learning resources in a safe and supportive environment. Senior leaders are not complacent and recognise that one of the next challenges is look more closely at the Early Years Foundation Stage profile outcomes and gaps in attainment for children at age 5.

Family play sessions are proving effective in supporting parents to play with their children in the home. Through feedback and positive evaluations from a range of families, including those hard to reach, it is clear that the vast majority of users greatly enjoy their engagement with the centre. 'I know how to play with my child at home now,' was a typical comment.

The centre provides good opportunities for children to make a positive contribution. Parents have initiated activities for themselves and have helped to organise a 'Diversity Day'. More of them are getting involved and playing an active role in service delivery and design. Their parenting skills are improving with support and guidance. Senior leaders recognise that one of the next steps is to establish a more structured forum for parents and to increase their engagement in the governance of the centre.

Support provided by staff helps to promote economic stability, for example in securing benefits, accessing local training courses and child care and in supporting parents into volunteering opportunities with the centre.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2

The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre is meeting its core offer well and provides a wide range of additional services. Staff are proactive. They know the community well and work very closely with families. Individual action plans are developed with families which are then reviewed and adapted as necessary. Services cater well for the broad and diverse range of users. The common assessment framework is well-embedded and centre staff are fully involved in multi-agency working. There are strong partnerships in place with the voluntary sector to support training and employment needs. There are clear programmes in place to promote healthy lifestyles and well-being with careful attention given to the different starting points of users. As a result, participation rates are increasing. For example, a project using the 'Child Development Grant' has increased users engagement with 81 additional families now accessing the centre's services.

Opportunities for formal and informal learning are regularly promoted through home visits to local families. Good support and advice is given to parents who may feel isolated. For example, bilingual support has meant that parents speaking another language have felt confident to access the centre more easily.

The centre provides a good range of childhood services including a crèche, on-site nursery provision and partnerships for outreach support with a local nursery school. The provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. This is because of early intervention and effective links with other agencies including the speech and language service.

The quality of care for young children and parents is excellent. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that all users, including the most vulnerable are very well cared for and supported. Information about smoking, drugs and alcohol is widely promoted and highly visible. For families in crisis suffering from post-natal depression for example, services have been flexible and life changing and have led to very positive changes in parent behaviour and well-being.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and	2

opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. There are clear links between the strategic planning and service provision. Moral is good. Teamwork is strong and staff are forward thinking and reflective in their work. Over the past few years there have been significant improvements to the centre's work. This is because of the drive and commitment of senior leaders to continuous improvement. Together, they set the tone, communicate high expectations to staff and are determined to see that the centre is effective in improving the life chances of all users. They are very well supported by an equally committed team of staff and workers who share their vision and sense of purpose. As a consequence the centre's commitment to equality of opportunity is strong and the inclusion of all children and their families is at the heart of the centre's work. For example, staff work diligently to remove barriers for all users to the activities and services on offer by varying the times and venues of courses and providing crèche facilities. Partnership working is very strong and exceptionally well integrated which ensures that user involvement is firmly established. There are excellent links between the centre, the local authority, other agencies and local children's centres.

The centre has excellent safeguarding procedures. Staff are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that users may encounter. All required checks, systems and procedures are in place to safeguard the users' well-being. Members of the advisory board bring a wealth of experience to their work and play an effective role in shaping the centre's direction. They are well informed and are confident to act where necessary to support improvements or to question proposals.

The centre is working hard to establish procedures to measure the success of its provision on outcomes. However at present, action plans are too cumbersome and not consistently focused on the outcome for users or set against local and national targets. In addition, the centre's self-evaluation procedures are too descriptive and not succinct enough. Senior leaders and the local authority are correct in identifying this as an area for further improvement.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2

The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

As you know, we inspected the Chai Children's Centre on 23-24 June. We spoke to many of you about the centre's work. We really enjoyed chatting to you in meetings, around the centre and in the café. We learnt a great deal. You expressed your views very clearly and they were very helpful to us. As I told some of you I would do, I am writing to you all to say what we found out about the centre.

Firstly and most importantly, we are pleased to tell you that the centre provides good support to you and your families. We were pleased to see that many of you recognise this and are using the services that the centre provides. We were delighted to hear your positive views about how much you enjoy the activities and how helpful and supportive the staff are.

The centre does some things extremely well. For example, the way it helps you to lead healthy lifestyles, the way it works with others to help you and the very good quality of care, support and advice you receive. You told us how much you appreciate the fact that the centre staff go out of their way to get to know you and visit you in your homes. We can see that the centre does all it can to get you involved and staff work really hard to ensure that all the activities are exactly what you need. It is clear to us that they know local families and the wider community very well and we can see how the centre is making a positive difference to your lives.

Everyone we spoke to told us how much the centre had helped you and your families, especially when some of you felt that there was no else in the community to listen to you. We were delighted to hear that some of you now feel more confident as parents to support your children at home and that the centre has had a huge impact on improving how you feel about yourselves. It was really encouraging to hear that many of you feel less isolated in the community and have made lots of new friends by simply popping into the centre on a regular basis.

The staff work really hard to make the centre as good as it can be. To help them we have suggested that they look more closely at how they plan and measure whether the activities they provide are making a difference to you. By doing this they will then be in a stronger position to see how well they are doing. You can help by telling the staff the activities you need and what helps you and your child to learn.

Thank you once again. I really enjoyed eating lunch in the café. The chicken tikka was delicious.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.