

Inspection report for Newton Heath children's centre

Local authority	Manchester City Council
Inspection number	361102
Inspection dates	8-9 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Liam Trippier HMI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Ian Tideswell
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Brighter Beginnings Day Nursery, Newton Heath, Manchester
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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 two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Early Years Inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, members of the governing body, a range of providers, the headteacher from one of the local primary schools, parents, users and the local authority officers linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at sessions in operation in the children's centre and in nearby locations. They also looked at a range of documentation including the centre's action plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the centre's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of self-evaluation upon provision and outcomes
- the impact of users' views upon the development of services
- the effectiveness of partnerships upon outcomes
- the effectiveness of the local authority's support and challenge for the centre.

Inspection judgements

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

Information about the centre

Newton Heath Children's centre has been working towards providing the full core offer for children's centres in areas with the highest deprivation since 2006. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding unemployment, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, crime and low levels of literacy and numeracy. The predominant cultural group is White British. The centre has a

manager and there are clear links with the local authority for monitoring and supervision of the provision. Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with an advisory board made up of staff, providers and users that attend the children's centre.

There is a range of health, social care, family support and education services operating from the centre with associated professionals and centre staff. There are clear links to the local primary schools. Jobcentre Plus drop-in services have recently been affected by staffing issues within that service so the children's centre signposts people as appropriate.

Childcare is provided through regular crèche and Adult and Toddler sessions held at the centre and in its associated buildings. Brighter Beginnings Day Nursery is also located in the centre and a separate report for this provision can be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk

Overall effectiveness

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Newton Heath children's centre provides a secure and safe environment for all its users many of whom appreciate the hard work of staff to improve their family lives. A typical view is, 'The staff are lovely, they really help the children'. They report that they are treated well at the centre and with the 'utmost respect'. Inspectors observed parents and children getting along well with each other and demonstrating respect and understanding of everyone's different circumstances. Families, including those who are often hard to reach, use the centre regularly.

The strengths of the centre are in the good leadership and management provided by all the leadership team and in the good quality care and attention provided for users by all staff. Appropriate policies are up to date following a recent review. Safeguarding and equality procedures are good. Users' views are regularly sought and sometimes these are used effectively to inform course and service plans. The local authority and advisory board support and challenge the centre effectively to improve its performance. The centre has rightly identified that to improve outcomes and provision further, its action planning and self-evaluation should be more precise.

Outcomes for users and the centre's provision are satisfactory overall with some good features. Young children make good progress in their learning and development and users feel very safe in the centre. Ante-natal work provided by the midwifery team is highly effective and attendance rates at these sessions are very high. The children's centre works very hard to address any shortfalls in partnership work through signposting families to the appropriate service, particularly in health and Jobcentre Plus provision, where outcomes for users are more variable. The impact of the centre's work upon health and adult education and/or employment outcomes is currently limited as not all providers work towards clear and common goals or provide good quality feedback to the centre on their effectiveness.

Adult education provision is improving and outcomes are showing signs of early impact, but participation and attendance rates on some courses are too variable. However, early information and data from the first comprehensive family learning course shows good outcomes for users and maintained attendance rates. Currently, the centre does not offer a wide enough range of courses for adults and at times the good quality learning environment at the centre appears under-utilised.

Within the last year the centre has doubled its reach and it now has contact with the majority of children in local families. The centre is rightly placed to deliver its core offer and referrals to a range of services are effective. Action to improve areas of weakness, gaps in provision and outcomes for users has been focussed and recently it has been increasingly effective although there are still some gaps in the centre's provision. The overall performance of the centre has improved and the impact for users is more evident than in the past particularly for the safety of users and for children in their learning and development. The management team has strengthened due to several good quality appointments and adequate plans are based on

appropriate priorities linked to local need. Management systems are clearly in place but require time to embed and impact more clearly on all outcomes. Consequently, the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory overall but improving.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop partnerships further by:
 - making explicit, common goals to be achieved by all services
 - developing all partnerships so that they are more involved through the development of the best possible range of integrated services
 - ensuring regular feedback from all partners on their effectiveness.
- Improve action planning and self-evaluation so that it has greater impact by:
 - ensuring that targets set are specific and measurable and focused on improving outcomes
 - regularly and systematically reviewing the impact of work done using comparative information and data.
- Ensure adult learning opportunities meet the needs and interests of more of the centre's families and take full advantage of the good facilities available.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Users report that the centre keeps them safe. Good relationships between them and centre staff ensure any safety concerns or issues are addressed quickly and appropriately. Case study evidence demonstrates good 'joined up thinking' to ensure users' home lives are safer. For example, centre staff make sure children and users are safe, protected and referred quickly to the most appropriate support through the effective Early Intervention Team. The welfare of all families is a priority for all the centre staff and procedures are well established to make sure all users' needs are met fully.

Behaviour in all settings is good. The centre staff effectively promote a sense of belonging and respect and lead by example. As a result, users enjoy their time spent at the centre and more are becoming involved in running groups, such as breastfeeding support. They contribute to the running of the centre through their course evaluations and contributions through the parents' forum.

Children are increasingly well prepared for mainstream school and nursery education due to the good-quality child care provision throughout the centre. Children thoroughly enjoy activities that are both adult led and child initiated. Outcomes at

the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage for children who accessed child care at the centre are closer to those found typically for children of this age when compared to other local establishments' scores. The 'attainment gap' has recently started to narrow for the children served by the centre.

Some adult users report that following courses and projects they are motivated to attend further study to improve their life chances. One user said, 'The Outreach Worker always makes sure we know about courses coming up.' New family learning courses to improve users' literacy and numeracy skills are also showing promising results and the centre staff realise that they must continue to build upon this. Case study evidence shows that for several individuals successful routes to employment have been sought by the centre. However, achievement and economic well being outcomes for all adults are not clearly documented and they are more variable than for children because attendance rates on some courses fluctuate or fall over time. Not enough courses are offered at the children's centre to precisely meet the educational and training needs of adults in the community currently.

Users report that some health providers such as midwifery are very effective and meet their needs well. They provide useful information and signpost families to appropriate support services. However, not all health services are as effective at the centre. For example, there have not been any courses to develop users' understanding of the importance of healthy eating since September 2009 despite above average levels of obesity and success rates for smoking classes are lower than local and national averages. Inspectors considered a range of data sets for the centre but some outcomes data are not particularly pertinent to the centre's locality.

>These are the grades for the outcomes for users<

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
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	3

How good is the provision?

3

Assessment of children's needs in the different child care settings at the centre ensures activities are interesting and relevant to their lives. All child care activities observed were of good quality with purposeful learning observed. For example,

children were able to practise their early writing skills through a child-initiated card making activity supported sensitively by adults working in the Adult and Toddler group at the Beehive Centre. The hard working children's centre teacher has made effective and positive links to the local primary schools and nurseries. Children centre staff work closely with social care professionals to ensure referrals to the appropriate professionals for assessments and support are fast and effective.

The work of the centre's effective outreach worker and Early Intervention Team have resulted in more users being referred to services quickly or assessed by relevant professionals and linked to courses and training to meet their needs. However, the longer term impact of adult learning is not fully evident at this stage as not enough adults can be seen and referred for training and development opportunities. Some of the successful referrals are through the Worksolutions programme and the new family learning initiative.

The quality of care for users and their children at the centre is good. Families report that their lives have improved because of some of the tailored courses offered. For example, centre users who attended the Webster Stratton Behaviour Programme noted improved relationships, behaviour and awareness of home safety in their evaluations. At the centre, good quality information is provided to families to improve outcomes. A wide range of literature and personalised help and support from centre staff is always available.

> These are the grades for the quality of provision <

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leaders and managers have recently gained a clear view of the provision and know where improvements should be made. This is reflected in their understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses of the centre. Staff are supervised professionally by the centre manager to improve their practice through appropriate training and development opportunities. Staff are held to account regularly for their work and governors have developed new systems to support and challenge the leaders to improve outcomes further for all users. The effectiveness of these recently introduced systems is becoming increasingly evident but the full impact is not clear across all outcomes presently. Safeguarding procedures are effective and rightly regarded as everyone's responsibility. Users report high levels of satisfaction and

increasing engagement with the centre. Managers have recently ensured the development of the centre is more appropriately matched to local need. For example, the creation of a new assessment unit at the Hallam Road site is designed to speed up referral times for children identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities and is due to open imminently. Also, the number of sessions for Adult and Toddler groups has increased due to demand and a new partnership with the Palatine Contraception and Sexual Health Service is now appropriately placed to offer good quality advice and support to young people.

The centre's development plan adequately addresses the needs of the area based upon national and local priorities. However, plans are not particularly precise and the centre does not currently review all of its provision sufficiently. Targets set are challenging but the centre has only very recently started to review these against local and national data sets. Some partners use evidence from course feedback and attendance rates to judge their success but this information is not routinely shared with centre staff by all services which limits the quality of partnerships and future plans.

Equality and diversity are promoted successfully because services engage users from different groups in the area. The centre is particularly successful at actively involving fathers in their children's lives. Children with special educational needs are integrated fully into the centre's provision and consequently the provision is inclusive.

>These are the grades for leadership and management<

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	3
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	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	3
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

The Ofsted reports for schools and child care in the locality were taken into account in the provision and outcomes judgements. The overall effectiveness of all establishments was at least satisfactory.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Newton Heath Children's centre on 8-9 June 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The children's centre provides an adequate and improving range of services that are helping families to improve their lives. Users' told inspectors that their families were supported effectively by the children's centre staff and indicate high levels of satisfaction following training, courses or access to services. The centre can sometimes demonstrate clearly how work done has improved families lives. The number of families the centre reaches has doubled in the last year and the centre is now well placed to reach more in the future.

The centre is developing its work with a range of partners and providers such as social care, health services and education. Children are supported well and they get a good start in life through the good quality child care provision. Adult education and access to training is limited currently particularly when attendance rates on courses fluctuate or fall. However, recent projects such as the Webster Stratton Behaviour Programme and family learning courses are showing signs of good impact upon outcomes for users. Some providers gather information regarding their effectiveness from users taking courses. This information is not always readily shared with centre staff and this limits the development of future provision.

The variety of services offered is devised to meet local needs. The ante-natal sessions are very well attended and appreciated by those who come to the centre to see the nurses. Older members of the community enjoy the keep fit classes and use the centre's café regularly. The Adult and Toddler groups are very well attended and parents report that their children are more prepared for Nursery class because of this provision. Centre leaders and managers recognise they need to improve how they plan, monitor and evaluate courses or training offered.

The inspectors have made the following recommendations to help improve the centre:

- Develop partnerships further by:
 - making explicit, common goals to be achieved by all services
 - developing all partnerships so that they are more involved through the development of the best possible range of integrated services
 - ensuring regular feedback from all partners on their effectiveness.

- Improve action planning and self-evaluation so that it has greater impact by:
 - ensuring that targets set are specific and measurable and focused on improving outcomes
 - regularly and systematically reviewing the impact of work done using comparative information and data.

- Ensure adult learning opportunities meet the needs and interests of more of the centre's families and take full advantage of the good facilities available.

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