

# Inspection report for Newbold Children's Centre

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Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	361106
Inspection dates	7-8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Steve Isherwood HMI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Alison Smith
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	NA
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Newbold Children's Centre Nursery

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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. 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 representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Newbold is a single site centre and has developed from a Sure Start Local Programme. It became a designated children's centre in 2006. The area served by the centre is economically and socially disadvantaged being ranked as in the top 5% of the most deprived areas in the country. The number of families 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 years who are living in households where no-one is working.

The centre provides the full core offer and a wide range of supporting services, incorporating a crèche, drop-in health support, adult courses and workshops. In addition, the centre delivers outreach services at different venues within the community. These include the neighbouring primary school and a local traveller's site.

The centre has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents.

The centre's full day care provision is provided by Creche-N-Co Ltd, a privately run company. It was last inspected in 2006 and will be subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted. Most children enter early education with a range of skills much lower than 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

‘All staff from the receptionist to carers are very welcoming, they can’t do enough for you’. ‘The centre has made a massive difference to my life’. ‘The really good emotional support has been a ‘godsend’. These comments expressed by some parents and echoed overwhelmingly by others help to explain why Newbold is a good and rapidly improving centre. Some of its features are outstanding. Outcomes for users are good and improving. They are particularly strong in keeping users safe and protected and in promoting their health and well-being. This is because of excellent partnership working which ensures that services are very well integrated and cohesive. Relationships between agencies are highly productive and there is effective transfer of information between key partners. Provision is adapted well to serve the needs of all members of the community, including those most vulnerable and is impacting positively on their lives. In addition, the centre works effectively to keep users engaged and increasing numbers of parents are taking advantage of the extensive range of opportunities to improve their parenting, vocational and academic skills successfully. Staff and other adults consistently give the highest priority to safeguarding all children and their families and the quality of care guidance and support to users provided by the centre is excellent.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and where the centre could improve. For example, they are well aware that further work could be done to reach all families in the area served by the centre, including those who may be reluctant to engage. Whilst the centre evaluates the quality of provision regularly and uses the information to determine its priorities, plans for improving the centre are not sufficiently focused on the impact of the centre’s work on outcomes for users and do not consistently measure success. Some of the evidence, although useful, is anecdotal and is not yet reliable enough to enable leaders to judge whether some activities are as effective as they could be. Furthermore, the centre’s systems for recording its own self-evaluation are too cumbersome and do not consistently

demonstrate the impact the centre is having on making a difference to the lives of its users.

Considering that outcomes are improving strongly, together with its other strengths, including highly effective partnership working, the centre has good capacity to improve further.

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

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase users involvement by:
  - identifying and engaging further with families in the community who are not accessing the centre's activities
- Improve action planning and self-evaluation by:
  - ensuring that targets are specific and measurable and focused on improving outcomes
  - developing self-evaluation procedures that focus more clearly on the impact the centre is having on making a difference.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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Across all of the five areas, outcomes are improving strongly. This is because the centre provides an extensive range of activities which are developed extremely well in partnership with other agencies and professionals. The strong integration of this work, based on a thorough analysis of the needs of all users is central to the centre's success. As a result, outcomes for promoting healthy lifestyles and well-being are excellent. Parents and children are benefiting greatly from the services provided and are developing an excellent awareness of adopting healthy lifestyles. 'I enjoyed the healthy food and cooking course. I will try now to think more carefully about planning healthy meals for my children, it's far too easy to pick up junk food'. 'The lifestyle course has made me more aware of what to eat and what not to eat'. 'I am keeping fit during pregnancy to make sure I have a healthy, happy child', were typical comments from parents.

The centre places a great deal of importance on personalising services to match the particular needs of users. For example, the maternal support group and crèche workers go out of their way to support new mothers and nutritional advice on how food can change moods is given to mothers with post-natal depression. Effective individualised care support programmes are in place for children with autism and cerebral palsy, whilst the work of the speech and language team supports young children to develop their talking skills. Health trainers give individual advice to parents on diet, exercise and weight and excellent support is given to teenage parents. As a consequence of all this support, there are clear signs that the centre's work is paying great dividends. For example, obesity levels for children in Reception

are reducing, there are declining levels of tooth decay in young children attending the centre, higher numbers of teenage mother's are breastfeeding and are accessing training, and young children in the nursery and crèche are eating more healthily.

The centre is very effective in ensuring that parents and children keep themselves safe and free from harm. This is demonstrated by a wide range of preventative measures and advice including the distribution of fire safety items such as smoke alarms, a loan scheme for safety equipment in the home and an increasing number of parents requesting home visits for safety advice. As a result, accidents in the home for young children have been reduced and there are fewer reported incidents requiring medical treatment. As one parent commented, 'I now know that to prevent a fire spreading we should close all doors'. Staff model safe practices well and the centre is a safe and welcoming place to be.

The centre has forged strong and effective links with the early years setting. Children make good progress in their learning as activities are well chosen and stimulating. There are increasing opportunities for parents and children to play and learn together and a range of good information and advice is given to parents on all aspects of child development. Staff are very aware of the next steps in learning for every child and record these well in individual learning journals. However, senior leaders are not complacent and recognise that the next challenge is to look more closely at the Early Years Foundation Stage profile outcomes and gaps in attainment for children aged five who have attended the centre.

The centre provides many opportunities for users to make a positive contribution. Parents are encouraged to understand children's behaviour with increasing numbers of families accessing behaviour management training. Children develop strong relationships within the centre and show respect, care and concern for others. Community cohesion is strong. There are a range of opportunities for parents to express their views. These include a 'wish tree' and regular evaluations of activities and courses. Parents are effectively involved in decision making and show initiative by their involvement in the active parents' forum and by their participation in the governance of the centre.

Support provided by staff helps to promote economic stability; for example, by users accessing local training courses, securing benefits and gaining qualifications to return to work. As one parent said, 'I have found all the information given very useful and when I'm ready to go back into employment, I know what people to inform and what benefits I would be entitled to'.

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	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in	2

their personal and social development	
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 provides a wide range of additional services and meets its core offer well. Assessment is increasingly used effectively by staff to determine the needs of children, parents and users. The centre demonstrates a good knowledge of local families and the community and strives to ensure that services successfully meet the needs of users. The Common Assessment Framework is well embedded and exceptionally strong partnerships with other agencies ensure that assessments of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are robust. There are clear programmes in place to promote the health and social well-being of users, including a strong emphasis on providing emotional support to boost their confidence and raise their self-esteem.

Opportunities for purposeful learning are promoted well and activities are of good quality. A particular strength of the centre is the way in which staff raise the aspirations of users by encouraging them to build on their achievements and by regularly celebrating their success with certificates and praise.

The centre provides a good range of appropriate services including an after-school club, a crèche, on-site nursery provision and child-care. Good support is provided to parents who feel isolated in the community. For example, bilingual support and help with English has meant that parents speaking another language or who have arrived in the area recently from another county can access the centre more easily and make friends. As one parent commented, 'the centre has helped me to speak English. The centre is like my house now; I come here and know everybody'.

The quality of care for children and parents is exceptionally good. This is because support and advice is personalised to individual needs, is flexible and adapts to changing circumstances. In addition, high quality information and sign-posting is provided on a range of topics including smoking cessation, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual health, adult training and breastfeeding. For families in crisis, such as suffering from post-natal depression, services are flexible and life changing and have a significant impact on improving the lives of users. 'The centre really welcomed me when I had post-natal depression. They helped me and supported me throughout', was a typical comment.

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 opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
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
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'Everybody pulls together here. Sometimes you forget who's in what team'. This comment from a member of staff encapsulates the high quality of partnerships and the impressive way that staff work together to improve outcomes for users. Relationships are excellent. Staff are passionate about the centre and its community. Senior leaders set the tone, communicate high expectations and are determined to ensure that the centre is effective in improving the life chances of all users. The inclusion of all children and families is the heartbeat of the centre's work. In essence, this means that staff are effective in ensuring that all children and parents, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, achieve equally well and have the same access to a wholesome range of experiences.

Staff have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and where further improvements can be made. Self-evaluation is largely accurate so the centre's priorities for improvement are fitting. For example, senior leaders are well aware that work to identify and fully engage all families, particularly those hard to reach, could go further. With support from the local authority in seeking out ways of collecting new data, the centre is working hard to establish procedures to measure the success of its provision on outcomes. However, at present, action plans are not specific enough and lack a sharp focus on measuring success. In addition, the centre's self-evaluation procedures are too lengthy and descriptive and are not sufficiently well focused on the outcomes for users or set against local and national targets. Senior leaders are correct in identifying this as an area for further improvement.

The centre has high quality arrangements for safeguarding all users. The vetting of staff is secure and relevant training is up to date. All staff are very aware of key policies and are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that users may encounter. Robust procedures and protocols for sharing information, together with high quality partnership working, ensure that children and families at risk and in need are prioritised. Childcare providers and workers have access to training and support and demonstrate an excellent understanding of the correct procedures to follow. Parents and users of the services spoke with confidence that their children are very well protected.



Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. There are clear links between strategic planning and service provision. Members of the advisory board are well represented and bring a wide range of experience to their work. As a group they are well informed and are aware of the need to develop their confidence in holding the centre to account for its performance.

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

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## Summary for centre users

As you know we inspected Newbold children's centre on 7-8 July. We were pleased to speak to so many of you about the centre's work and to hear about how you see things. We really enjoyed chatting to you around the centre and in the parents' room. You expressed your views very clearly and we appreciated your straight talking in telling us how things really are. This is what we found out.

Firstly and most importantly, we are pleased to tell you that the centre provides good support to you and your families. The centre does some things extremely well, such as the way everybody works together to make things better for you and the way you are encouraged to keep safe and lead healthy lifestyles. You told us that you and your children are very well cared for and supported and we could see this with our own eyes. We were encouraged to hear that more of you are coming to the centre, making new friends and getting involved. You told us that the staff are like your friends and that you have complete and utter trust in them to look after your children. You told us also that all the activities are just what you need and are often fun. We could see this for ourselves when we heard about some of you designing your own tee-shirts and how much you enjoyed going cycling and having a go at boxing. We know that many of you have learnt a huge amount about nutrition and cooking healthy meals through your attendance at the 'Food Explorers' course and by getting involved with the 'Healthy Tuesday' group.

We were delighted to see that the centre is making a real difference to improving your lives and to hear how much more confident you feel as parents. It was very encouraging to learn from you how the centre has helped you to cope when some of you were experiencing post-natal depression or when your children were ill. We think it's really great that so many of you feel less isolated in the community by simply popping into the centre and getting involved. We were also very pleased to hear that some of you have been helped really well to get back into employment and find jobs.

The staff work very hard to make the centre as good as it can be. To help them we have suggested they try even harder to get more families involved, particularly those that are hard to reach. We have also asked if they could look more closely at how they plan and measure whether the activities they provide are making a difference to you. By achieving this they will then be in a stronger position to demonstrate how well they are doing. You can help by telling the staff the activities you need and what helps you and your children to learn.

Thank you once again. We can see why the staff love working with you every day.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector

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