



Levenshulme Sure Start Children's Centre

Levenshulme SSSC, Broom Avenue Children's Centre, 1 Broom Avenue, Levenshulme, M19 2UK

Inspection date		16–17 January 2014	
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The centre does not always track and check the difference it is making for those adults and children who access groups, activities, education and training opportunities, particularly for its identified target families.
- Not all schools work in partnership with the centre to look at effective ways in which they can help ensure that all children are well-prepared for school.
- The centre does not always provide sufficient support and information to adults that are seeking work, or to the families that require help with debt management and welfare advice.
- The centre staff do not receive the detailed information that they need from health partners. As a result, staff are not in a position to make contact with all families once their child has been born, or direct its resources appropriately to improve health outcomes.
- The centre's leaders and those responsible for governing the centre do not sufficiently evaluate the centre's performance or set clear targets for improvement. As a result, the centre's self-evaluation document and development plan lack precision and ideas for future development.
- The local authority and some partners provide suitable data to the centre. However, staff do not use this information appropriately to gather a clear picture of how well their work is improving the lives of local families, or to help shape the centre's services and inform its future direction.
- The quality of case-recording following home visits is not always consistent.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The new head of centre has a good understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development and has already taken positive steps to bring about improvement.
- Staff are committed to ensuring that newcomers, as well as the more established communities, feel welcome and valued at the centre.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with members of the centre's advisory board, representatives from the local authority and parents. The inspectors visited activities that took place at the centre.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, such as the centre's evaluation of its effectiveness and its development planning.

Inspection team

Janet Stacey, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Philip Ellwand	Additional Inspector
Sarah Drake	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Levenshulme Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre situated in the Levenshulme area of Manchester. It was established in 2008 under phase 2 of the children's centre development programme. The head of centre is responsible for managing two children's centres. Outreach and family support services are operated by 'Big Life'. The local authority is responsible for governance of the centre, supported by an advisory board.

The centre offers a range of services which includes family support, health services, parenting, volunteering and adult education. Linked childcare provision is provided by private and voluntary early years organisations in the local area. These provisions are subject to separate inspection arrangements and are available on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. Data show that a majority of children in the reach area enters early years provision with a range of experiences and skills below those typical for their age. The families living within the reach area are predominantly of White British heritage. An increasing number of South Asian and Eastern European families some of whom speak English as an additional language is using the centre.

There are approximately 1145 children under five years of age living in the reach area. The centre serves a mix of affluent and disadvantaged areas, some of these being within the 30% most deprived communities in the country. The centre's key target families are children on child protection plans, children in need, hardest to reach two-year-olds and ethnic minority families. Families face a range of challenges, such as poor housing conditions, pockets of domestic violence, substance misuse, and women feeling isolated. Unemployment rates are generally lower than in most areas of Manchester but the number of families relying on benefit support is increasing.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve access to services by:
 - analysing and tracking those accessing services so that the centre can better capture the impact of the centre's work to improve outcomes, particularly for target families.
- Improve the quality and impact of practice and services by:
 - developing links with all local schools in the area to ensure continuity in children's learning and support school-readiness
 - improving accessibility to information in relation to debt management, employability opportunities and welfare benefits
 - ensuring that health partners share regular data and information so that leaders can build a more accurate picture of the needs of families living the area.
- Improve the governance and accountability of the centre by:
 - improving self-evaluation and setting smarter targets so that the centre can better evidence the impact of the whole range of work that it undertakes
 - further analysing the data provided through the local authority and key partners to evaluate the impact of activities and plan services more effectively
 - monitoring the quality of case files to capture consistently observations of children present during home visits.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Most families are registered with the centre and a large majority of families engages with the centre's services. Outreach work is effective in supporting families, including those in target groups, and those expecting children to access early childhood services. However, the centre has yet to put clear systems in place to track the impact of their attendance across all the activities that the centre offers.
- Centre staff help families who are eligible to take up their free entitlement to good quality early years places. Consequently, a large majority of eligible two-year-olds is accessing funded places in the local area and most three- and four-year-olds are in nursery education. However, the centre does not yet work closely with all the schools that these children attend. This results in them not knowing how much of a difference the centre is making to the lives of these children.
- Centre staff receive notification of live births. However, there is an inconsistent approach from health partners to informing centre staff of those parents who have agreed to be contacted. As a result, centre staff find it difficult to identify new families to ensure that they can access the services that they may need.
- Most assessments at two years are completed with health partners at the centre and outcomes are shared. As a result, swift services are put in place if an additional need is identified and these families access the right specialist support swiftly.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- There are good opportunities for adults to take part in family and adult learning. Many families that are new to the area and wish to learn English as an additional language are supported well. The centre works well in partnership with a range of providers to extend these opportunities. Parents report how this is helping them to integrate better into the community, consequently improving their life chances and reducing inequalities. However, the centre has been less successful in helping those that are looking for work or need help to manage and understand their finances.
- The centre generally provides a good balance of universal and targeted services. Staff are good role models for parents and offer a friendly, professional environment where families feel welcomed. They provide good quality care, guidance and support that helps some parents overcome difficulties. The planning for most activities ensures that they have clear aims and objectives. However, evaluation of these services is not consistent or used sufficiently to help staff improve the services.
- The number of parents volunteering is increasing and this leads to significant increase in self-confidence and raising aspirations for these adults. The centre has noted that these opportunities have resulted in employment for a few members of the community.
- The centre is well-equipped with a range of good-quality resources to support children's learning. Crèche facilities help adults to attend courses, safe in the knowledge that their children are being cared for well. Parents value the centre's services and consider that it has made a difference to their lives. This was typified by a parent that said, "The course made a huge difference to my family's life, built confidence, shared skills and removed anxieties. It's the best thing I've ever done".
- Health outcomes are varied. For example, due to support from the centre, a high proportion of mothers successfully sustain breastfeeding. In addition, the promotion of oral and dental health is ensuring that families register with a dentist. However, the centre lacks regular data from health partners on other health outcomes. These include obesity rates, the number of women smoking during pregnancy and immunisation uptake. Consequently, the centre is not in as good a position as it could be to demonstrate that all health services are making a difference. These outcomes include improving children's well-being and giving them the healthy start in life that they need.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority is supportive of the centre staff and leaders. However, it is not setting the centre clear challenges to improve practice to ensure that all of the resources are being used effectively to meet the needs of users.
- Self-evaluation does not guide the work of the centre as much as is needed. This is because data are not being used effectively to evaluate what difference is being made to how the centre is engaging local families and helping to improve their lives.
- The new head of centre has undertaken an astute assessment of the centre's strengths and areas for development. She understands how performance management is used to enhance the centre's services and is fully committed to closing the gap and improving outcomes for children and families. She has put stronger systems in place to firm up the links between 'Big Life' and the centre. However, most of her initiatives are new and have yet to show the impact of what she is setting out to achieve.
- Safeguarding children is well-managed. The needs of children subject to child protection plans and children in need are met with staff using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and a clear referral system. Training for safeguarding is up to date and statutory checks have been carried out. However, not all staff make observations during home visits that they have seen the children present and noted their well-being. All staff have regular supervision meetings, and aspects of their work that may require improvement is addressed.
- Parents are well-represented on the centre's advisory board. They state that they feel able to make suggestions about the way the centre is run and these have led to some changes in the ways services are delivered.

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 details

Unique reference number	21774
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	430200
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1145
Centre leader	Mrs Joan Todd
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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