

Inspection report for Orton Children's Centre (formerly Sure Start Orton)

Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	367851
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Smith HMI

Centre governance	The Local authority
Centre leader	Deborah Hunt
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	n/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Braybrook Nursery EY290260

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.

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 Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, representatives from health services, partnership agencies; the staff team; nursery staff and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Orton Children's Centre is a phase one centre which was designated in April 2005. It is based in the Jigsaw Centre, in the Orton Malborne township of Peterborough. The centre has developed from a Sure Start local programme and is in an area which is in the 30% of most deprived in the country. The centre provides the full range of core offer services.

Governance is through the local authority. There is a newly formed advisory board. Childcare provision is provided by Braybrook Nursery which has 34 places and is on the site of Braybrook Primary School, close to the children's centre. There is also provision registered on an adjacent site building for children accessing three-year-old and four-year-old funding. The centre provides crèche facilities for parents and carers attending activities, training and respite for vulnerable families.

The centre's reach area falls broadly into two wards in Peterborough: Orton Waterville and Orton Longueville. The local population is mostly White British families with much smaller, but growing, percentages of other minority ethnic groups. The proportion of households with dependent children aged 0-4 living in households dependant on workless benefits is higher than the Peterborough average. Children's skills and development on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage has typically been low, particularly in regards to their communication and language development.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Orton Children's Centre provides a caring and safe environment for all families and children who use it. Staff relationships with users of the centre are good and there is a cheerful and welcoming atmosphere throughout. Adults attending the centre appreciate the services it provides and state that these have a positive impact on their lives. One said the centre, 'is wonderful' and another expressed the view shared by many who spoke to inspectors, 'I don't know where I'd be without the children's centre, especially the family support workers.'

The local authority is in a period of change and is considering the future governance arrangements for the centre. This has resulted in transition management arrangements being put into place which have stabilised the centre after a period of rapid managerial changes. However, the newly-formed leadership team have not established themselves fully into their new roles and provided clear direction for the centre. It is a testament to the staff dedication to their work that despite having to operate within a climate of constant change and budget cuts, they have continued to work successfully together to meet the needs of the centre users.

Self-evaluation is reasonably accurate. However, the centre has yet to develop effective mechanisms for tracking the involvement and achievement of different groups of centre users and children so that it can measure precisely the impact its services have on outcomes.

The centre provides a sufficient range of universal and targeted services which have high attendance levels. However, some services are provided for historical reasons rather than to meet the needs of the families in the reach area specifically. The centre recognises that it does not ensure all potential users are reached, particularly teenage parents, so that the centre can have an even greater impact on the outcomes for users.

The centre has developed positive partnerships with a range of other agencies which ensure effective working practices, such as information sharing, safeguarding procedures and signposting to each other's services. The centre works hard to

develop links with all relevant partners and plans are in place for developing closer working partnerships with the local primary schools in the area.

The care, guidance and support provided are a key strength. The family support team is extremely effective at supporting families in times of crisis and difficulty. Inspectors met several parents who reported very positively on the support they had received. This is captured by one parent who said: 'I know there is always someone who cares when I need it'. Users are confident that issues they seek help with are taken seriously and dealt with sensitively. The centre's approach to safeguarding, safe recruitment and child protection is robust and meets statutory requirements.

Outcomes for users are satisfactory and improving. Many users are responding well to healthy cooking courses, opportunities for exercise locally and trips. Families are improving their understanding of keeping themselves and their families safe by preventing accidents at home through attending first aid courses. Those using the centre thoroughly enjoy and are very appreciative of the range of services on offer. Children are making good progress in their communication and language skills as a result of the work of the designated speech and language therapist. Her role is changing from primarily preventative to a case-holding therapist. This will be delivered from the centre, ensuring that families can have access to professional support for their children. Programmes such as 'every child a talker' (ECAT) and the 'Teddy Bear Kit' which is an effective diagnostic tool, help practitioners to identify children with speech and language delay. This enables practitioners to seek and provide support when it is most needed to effectively promote children's language development.

There is satisfactory provision and signposting to relevant training and education for adults which supports the ability of users to seek employment and improve their basic skills. Some users are gaining a recognised qualification, which builds their confidence and self-esteem.

Taking into account the satisfactory outcomes and provision, the centre's effectiveness is satisfactory. This, together with the proven commitment to continuous development, indicates that the centre has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Embed the new management structure and ensure that the centre's action plan contains sharp and measurable targets based upon the identified needs within the centre reach area, the take up of services and the impact of those services on outcomes for children and their families.
- Engage with groups in the community who do not currently access the centre's activities, particularly teenage parents.

- Extend monitoring and evaluation systems by focusing in more depth upon tracking the involvement and achievement of different groups of centre users and children.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Outcomes for users are satisfactory. The centre has limited statistical evidence to demonstrate precisely the long-term impact of the services offered. Practitioners at the centre work effectively together to promote positive outcomes for users. Families benefit from sessions such as 'Jigsaw cooks', 'Dance and movement and 'Baby massage' that promote healthy living.

Universal Health Services, such as antenatal blood clinics and health visitor clinics operate out of the centre so that mothers-to-be and mothers of young babies are introduced to the children's centre at a very early stage in family life. Snacks of fruit and vegetables are provided throughout the centre to promote healthy eating. Activities such as swimming sessions are available for families with young children and children with additional needs and/or disabilities to promote physical activity, and have proved popular. Data shows there is a good proportion of mothers' starting breastfeeding but the proportion greatly reduces at six weeks after the birth. The centre provides a place for the parent and carer's of children with hearing impairment to meet with their children. This provides social opportunities and allows informal support networks to develop, which reduces the feelings of isolation. There is not yet sufficient focus on how to support users in sexual health issues.

Outcomes for staying safe are satisfactory. User express that they feel safe at the centre and the staff give parents advice on health and safety in the home and outdoors. Access to the centre and to rooms is controlled. Risk assessments are carried out as appropriate. The centre, in collaboration with partner agencies, is effective in identifying and responding to the needs of vulnerable children and their families. Good use is made of the Common Assessment Framework for recording and coordinating support programmes. Staff effectively build trust with families. The family support workers case files illustrate how effective the support is in helping parents to become more confident and successful in managing their family lives. The centre is supporting families with children on the child protection register and children in need.

Children behave well and all at the centre show a high level of respect for one another. Parents and carers say that their children enjoy all of the activities. Drop-in sessions give children and mothers opportunities to socialise. The centre has identified that it does not currently pay sufficient attention to transitions procedures to ensure that children are well prepared for their move to pre-school and school.

Users say they really enjoy the early education programmes they have attended. They say they have helped them to understand why it is important to interact with their children. Some users benefit from opportunities to gain qualifications in a range

of courses for example, first aid, literacy and numeracy skills and English as an additional language. The centre recognises that there remains scope to increase adult involvement in training and education. Individual parents are signposted to the Jobcentre Plus services for employment and to the Citizens Advice Bureau for help with accommodation, benefit entitlement and debt management. Both these agencies run regular drop-in sessions at the children centre, although the current attendance of the Jobcentre Plus services has not been as regular as it has been in the past.

Users express a high level of satisfaction with the centre through the annual satisfaction survey. A parents' forum has been re-launched in the last few months and has yet to be fully established. In addition, the advisory body has also been recently re-introduced but already parents from the parent's group are attending these meetings. Although, some parents told inspectors they were not aware of the parents forum and its role. They stated they were happy to speak to any staff member directly about any issues relating to the centre and were confident that their option would be valued and acted upon.

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	3
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	3
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

The linked day-care provider and many of the activities offered by the centre promotes purposeful learning for all children who attend. The crèche gives parents valuable time for themselves. The centre provides many drop-in sessions and activities which support parents and carers. For example, 'The Extra-ordinaries' provides support and advice for parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. 'Bushbabies' is another drop-in session which provides messy play and resources for pre-school children. Parents/carers find this extremely helpful because the children can experience lots of creative activities like messy play, which are not easy to implement in the home.

Staff actively celebrate the achievements of children and parents. Users receive a certificate for every course they attend and an event is held annually to celebrate the success of individuals attending programmes. This supports users to develop their self-esteem and feel proud of their achievements.

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to young children, parents and other users of the centre is a strong feature. The initial assessment of need for families referred to the centre for support ensures that resources are used effectively. Good relationships have been established with a wide range of key partners including health and children’s social care. These ensure that families receive a coordinated approach to meeting their needs. Staff use their knowledge of the services available to best support the families and accompanied initial visits to groups are offered where appropriate.

Centre staff are sensitive to the needs of families and users state that the family support workers often ‘go the extra mile’ to support them effectively in times of crisis. A range of information leaflets are available to parents and cover a variety of topics. These help parents and carers meet the physical, emotional and nutritional needs of their children. However, limited information is available on where to get support for sexual health issues.

The satisfactory range of services supports users’ emotional as well as physical wellbeing. Staff know its users well through local knowledge and day-to-day contact rather than through information supported by data and analysis. The inclusive approach and welcoming environment ensure that once users attend the centre, they go on to engage with many different services. There are some examples of effective outreach work, including events and activities held at locations within the local community. Working with families in their home is an established strategy which is appropriately and effectively used by many of the staff linked to the centre. The centre is developing systems to review the range of services that it offers to ensure that services are meeting the needs of all groups of users especially those who are currently under represented.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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	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?

3

The centre has seen changes to the management and staffing structure in recent months. Individuals are now embedding their new roles and responsibilities. It is already clear that leaders and managers work well as a team and have reinforced the effective links with users and other agencies. A newly-formed advisory group is in the early stages of development, having held three meetings recently and defined the terms of reference.

In general, the partnerships with other services deliver a cohesive provision. Links with health are effective to delivery the expected range of services. The centre has historically fostered good working relationships with a suitable range of organisations which provide services on behalf of the centre, such as The Orminston Trust, Family Care, Cross Keys Homes and Portage. Some relationships have been adversely affected due to the previous management structure at the centre, such as the stopping of multi-agencies meetings which were greatly valued by all. This is something that all parties recognise and they have already started to work together to rectify the situation, for example, by re-introducing wider team meetings.

Equality and diversity are satisfactorily promoted. Staff try hard to remove barriers for all users to the activities and services on offer; for example, by providing crèche facilities and English language courses to those users who speak English as an additional language so that they can support their children's learning and engage fully in the centre's activities. The management team is aware that, currently, teenage parents are not targeted effectively for support. In addition, they recognise that without a more robust use of data, the centre cannot be certain it is meeting the needs of those groups most in need. Therefore, value for money is satisfactory.

Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Child protection processes and recruitment checks are sound. Health and safety checks and risk assessments are appropriately carried out. Outreach services are becoming increasingly effective at engaging those users who are hard to reach; this ensures that some families who are vulnerable due to their circumstances access relevant services. However, due to budget cuts, the centre is currently considering the future of its outreach work which may result in a number of activities offered at venues other than the centre being stopped.

Parents and carers told the inspectors how much they value the centre and are appreciative of the benefits it has given their families. Many parents and carers commented on the amount of friends and social and emotional support they receive from attending the centre regularly and this has enhanced their confidence as parents; 'It has brought the community together' was a parental view heard several times by the inspectors. The centre provides opportunities for users to volunteer within the centre and some users lead groups, which increases the opportunities for them to gain confidence and boost self-esteem. However, the centre does not offer

an accredited volunteer programme.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	3
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	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
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	3

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

The inspectors looked at the inspection report for Braybrook Nursery which was last inspected in May 2010. The overall effectiveness of the setting was good with many outstanding features.

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

We inspected The Orton Children's Centre on 18–19 May 2011. During this time we talked with parents, staff, partners and members of the local authority linked to the children's centre. We also observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall, with some good features.

Those of you we spoke to told us that you enjoy using the centre and that it has made a positive difference to your lives. You also told us that you find staff at the centre very friendly and welcoming. All centre staff are good at guiding you and referring you and your children to other activities and services they think you would also benefit from and enjoy. Many of you shared with inspectors how you value the relationships you have built with the family support workers and the difference they had help you make to your lives and the lives of your children.

The centre currently offers a sufficient range of services and activities for families in the area, which are led by skilled and dedicated professionals. In order to develop the centre further we have asked the staff to look more closely at who is using the services and what they are achieving. We want the centre to secure a better understanding of the impact the services and activities it provides have on the users of the centre. We have asked the centre to engage groups that are not currently using the centre such as teenage parents.

You told us that you think that the centre is a safe place for parents and carers and their children. Inspectors agree with this view and think that staff work hard to ensure the health and safety of all who use the centre. Safeguarding children is given appropriate attention.

The staff also help you to support your children's learning and development at home by providing services which encourage you to engage in play with your children from a very early age at sessions such as 'Baby Playtime' and 'Totally Tots'. Many of you shared with the inspectors how important the staff support you through the early education programme. This helps you to understand how to interact with your children to promote their development.

Some of you are involved in the recently re-launched parents forum and have made some suggestions on activities you want. Some of you are members of the advisory board so that you can be directly involved in decision-making, governance and evaluating the work of the centre. Inspectors are aware that the centre has gone through a period of rapid managerial changes and the local authority is considering the future governance arrangements for the centre. It is a testimony to the staff team that throughout this period they have maintained a sound service to the users. We have asked the centre to embed the new management structure and ensure that the centre's action plan contains sharp and measurable targets based upon the identified needs within the centre reach area, the take-up of services and the impact of those services on outcomes for children and their families. We want the advisory

body to provide challenge to the centre to ensure that it is offering sound quality and effective service to all families in its reach area.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honesty and openness helped us immensely during the inspection. We are very grateful for your help and we wish each of you every success for the future.

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