

Knowsley Huyton group

Hilltop Children's Centres, Bedford Close, Huyton, Knowsley, L36 1XH

Inspection date	11–13 June 2014		
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families	Outstanding		1
The quality of practice and services	Good		2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management	Good		2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- The group confidently demonstrates that it maintains very high levels of sustained and regular engagement with most families living in the locality. As a result of the staff's and volunteers' dogged determination and commitment, all young/teenage parents, disabled children and those with special educational needs, and almost all babies under one year routinely engage with the centres.
- The volunteer programme is hugely successful and is helping some parents to make significant leaps in their confidence, skills and learning.
- Highly effective partnerships with key agencies have been developed and are nurtured to secure timely early help and support for children and families.
- All children who are entitled to early education funding are making effective use of their entitlement in good quality early childhood settings. Most early childhood provision in the reach area is good. As a result, most children make good progress in their learning during their time at these settings.
- The leadership team at all levels successfully ensures that all of the children's centres in the group are led consistently well. The shared ambition for the centres by the leaders, governance and management helps to drive continuous improvement, including the quality of practice and services.

It is not outstanding because:

- Quality assurance monitoring systems are not yet embedded sufficiently well. Consequently, leaders cannot be fully confident that all services and activities are delivered to a consistently high standard.
- Some health data are not routinely available to the leaders at a locality level; and some health outcomes are proving difficult to improve quickly enough.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Further the success of the children's centre group and continue to drive improvement by:
 - developing the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of all activities
 - using the information obtained to inform professional practice in all areas of the group's work, including case recording, during supervisions and performance appraisals, and to ensure that the delivery of activities is consistently good.
- Improve health outcomes by:
 - increasing the number of mothers initiating breastfeeding and continuing to breastfeed after six-to-eight weeks
 - reducing the numbers of mothers who smoke during pregnancy
 - ensuring that health partners provide relevant data to help demonstrate improving health outcomes in the locality.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are: Hilltop Sure Start Children's Centre; Jubilee Sure Start Children's Centre; Stockbridge Village (Acorns) Sure Start Children's Centre; New Horizon's Sure Start Children's Centre; The Robins Sure Start Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with: the children's centre group manager; senior leaders from the local authority; education and health; early intervention and family support practitioners; early childhood providers, volunteers; health and social care professionals; adult education and commissioned services; parents and centre users; representatives of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited a range of services offered, including 'Stay and Play', 'Baby Massage', 'Rhyme Time', parenting programmes, 'Chatterbox', 'Baby Sensory Play', 'Little Stars', and healthy lifestyles programme sessions. They attended an allocations' meeting and an adult learning course.

The inspectors visited each of the children's centres. They observed the group's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including case files.

Inspection team

Deborah Udakis, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elaine Clinton	Her Majesty's Inspector
Janet Glover	Additional inspector
Tara Street	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

There are 13 children's centres in Knowsley, organised into four groups. The Huyton Children's Centre group was established in 2011. The group is led, on behalf of the local authority, by a centre group manager. Together with the centre leaders, the centre group manager holds responsibility for the daily management of each centre. Some 3,190 children under five years of age live in the group's reach area. Each of the group's five centres delivers a range of services to meet the core purpose, including family support, early childhood services, adult learning, parenting support, health services, speech and language therapy and family welfare. Governance arrangements for the locality are provided by the local authority and the advisory board.

Registered early years provision is located in each children's centre area. The early childhood setting at Hilltop Children's Centre was inspected at the same time as the centre group. The most recent inspection reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The centres serve a large number of areas of significant disadvantage. Huyton is among the most economically deprived areas of England. It has a small village centre that was supplemented by a significant post-war population boom after the Second World War. Stockbridge Village is an area that has benefitted from local economic and environmental regeneration.

Huyton's overall population is 33,193, of which 3,190 are children aged from birth to five years. Around 26% of children under five years are living in homes dependent on workless benefits. Families live in a mixture of owner-occupier and social landlord housing. The vast majority of families living in the area are White British, with approximately 3.5% families from Black minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few families attending the centres speak English as an additional language.

Services within the group are targeted specifically at teenage parents, low income families, disabled children, families living in the most deprived areas, fathers and male carers and children being supported by social services.

Children's skills and understanding on entry to early years provision are, on average, below typical levels for their age.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Outstanding

- Rigorous and close monitoring, together with highly effective use of the new family contact process, has made a significant impact on the levels of engagement with most families across the area. For instance, 'Stay & Play' and 'Baby Massage' sessions engage most families. The 'Chatterbox' speech and language group attracts all children assessed as in need of additional support.
- Information about individual families is shared effectively between the children's centres and key partners. Consequently, all families with young children in the reach area are known to the group.
- Outreach work is very effective and ensures that families have the individualised help they need, particularly at times of crisis. Parents talk unreservedly of the very effective support they receive at the centres and the positive impact it has on their lives. As one parent commented: 'I cannot speak highly enough of the staff; if it hadn't been for them I would not have known how to help my child.'
- The vibrant centre group provides a good range of high quality information for families in all aspects of care. Displays and posters provided inside and outside of the centres signpost families to a wide range of services and effectively reflect the diverse community in which they live.
- The group provides a wealth of targeted and universal services and activities designed to support families, including lone parents, and to improve the lives and outcomes for children. There are clear and highly effective agreed programmes in place to address issues regarding sleep, communication and language delay, and the specific needs of disabled children and those with special educational needs. Consequently, children access meaningful support to help them to achieve their full potential.
- Strong and highly effective partnerships are nurtured across Huyton. This ensures that all families, including fathers and teenage parents, are offered a wide range of opportunities to access support, advice and guidance on health, well-being, adult education and to improve their employability.
- The excellent volunteer programme is available to all parents. Volunteers are provided with support and opportunities to train and develop skills in a range of posts. One parent said: 'I am so excited as I have now gained real work in a childcare setting because of this volunteering.' Another commented: 'I am now more confident in what I am doing and my family are so proud of me since I completed my Level 2 childcare programme.'
- The centres know, and work with, all families who have children with special educational needs or disabilities. The 'Little Stars' group provides crucial support, advice and guidance for disabled children and those with special educational needs and their families.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Partnerships with local schools and early years providers are very good. The centre group successfully runs a range of language enrichment programmes in local schools and nurseries. Consequently, children living in the area achieve a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, in line with the national picture.
- Targeted sessions to boost children's development, such as 'Ready for Nursery', have a good impact on improving children's skills and school-readiness and most children are well prepared for school.
- Health outcomes are variable. The uptake of immunisation is high and the proportion of Reception-age children who are obese has decreased and is now just above the national average. However, the number of mothers initiating breastfeeding and continuing to breastfeed at six-to-eight weeks is low and shows no sign of significant improvement over time. In addition, the number of mothers who continue to smoke during pregnancy, while reducing, remains of concern across the local authority.
- The centres are involved in the implementation of a positive range of initiatives to improve health outcomes. However, they are hindered in their efforts to demonstrate the impact these are having on health outcomes because some data provided by health partners are not available at a locality level.
- The quality of assessment, case files and support for individual children and their families are good. Since the case audit carried out in December 2013, the recording of views and opinions of children and families in case records has improved. The involvement and impact of other professionals are clear in the case files. However, the impact of the effectiveness of the centres' work is not always

effectively captured.

- There are outstanding opportunities and support for all learners in a wide range of programmes and accredited and non-accredited courses. Consequently, the numbers of families accessing programmes and employability support are high.
- All volunteers, including lone parents, fathers, and teenage parents receive high quality training programmes with regular supervision. Many volunteers have achieved higher level qualifications, including diplomas at Levels 2 and 3 in childcare and some have started Foundation degrees. All volunteers achieve appropriate numeracy and literacy qualifications. This programme is so successful that many services would not be available, if not for the volunteers.
- There is exceptional support provided for families with disabled children and those with special educational needs. The parents value this service highly and see very positive impacts on their own and their children's lives because of the advice, guidance and support gained through the children's centres and their staff.
- Strong and effective partnership-working with community groups and housing ensure that the children's centres are part of all community planning, delivery and activities. Local community leaders see each of the children's centres as a hub for the community and recognise that these are the places to which most vulnerable families will go to seek wider advice, guidance and support.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The effective leadership team has managed the very recent appointment and induction of the children's centre group manager well. This has been underpinned by strong support from the local authority and the advisory board. The new manager is experienced within Knowsley Children's Centres and has already brought fresh challenge and new ideas to the leadership team.
- Leaders at all levels take responsibility for their leadership and governance of the centres very seriously. The advisory board holds the group to account and scrutinises its work effectively. Key partners, stakeholders and parents are well represented on the board. They are enthusiastic and use their good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the group to drive improvement.
- The annual Quality Assurance Board Assessment is used by the local authority to take a rigorous look at the strengths and areas for improvement of the group. The group has tackled areas for improvement identified at the last annual assessment, with good measures of success. For instance, the group has made leaps in the levels of engagement with all families and especially those identified as living with high levels of disadvantage and those potentially vulnerable.
- Well-thought-out performance management systems, such as supervision and appraisals, are helping to drive up the quality of services and provision. Leaders are successful in tackling individual issues of underperformance. However, there are some aspects of quality assurance that are less effective. The quality assurance monitoring that does take place is not yet sufficiently embedded or regular, and is not always well linked to professional development. Consequently, some activities are not consistently good and improvements in practice are not routinely evaluated to assess impact.
- Leaders at all levels make excellent use of available resources and data to target priorities, and engage with most families living in the area.
- The range and levels of qualifications of the staff and leaders employed within the group are impressive. They use their expertise well to support children and families and to improve the lives of those living in Huyton.
- The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) is a well-established collaboration of key agencies. The MASH system demonstrates 'Working Together' at its best. Leaders and key players in the MASH unit, including Family First, provide a wealth of key professionals with significant safeguarding credentials. They are effectively reducing incidents of child harm, and effectively supporting children on child protection plans and the early identification of families in difficulty.
- Reducing the risk of harm to children and all users is deeply embedded in the centres' work and security. Safeguarding procedures are rigorously applied and understood by all who work with children and their families. Staff regularly update their training about child protection matters to

ensure that they maintain their expertise.

- The good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and well established and highly effective partnership-working help to tailor multi-agency support that enables families to improve their lives. The needs of disabled children and those with special educational needs are met extremely well. There is swift intervention for children identified as in need of additional support.
- Rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that staff, including those from partner agencies, are suitable to work with children. Thorough safeguarding procedures are implemented consistently by staff and partner agencies.

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 Group details

Unique reference number	80504
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	444789
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3143
Centre leader	Gerry Allen
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	0151 443 5301
Email address	gerryallen@knowsley.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- Hilltop Sure Start Children's Centre (URN 21511)
- Jubilee Sure Start Children's Centre (URN 21636)
- New Horizons Sure Start Children's Centre (URN 22099)
- Stockbridge Village (Acorns) Sure Start Children's Centre (URN 20037)
- The Robins Sure Start Children's Centre (URN 23251)

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