

Inspection report for Cornerstone Children's Centre

Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	386940
Inspection dates	30–31 May 2012
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Centre leader	Siobhan Hier
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

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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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, leaders, members of the advisory board, and staff. They met with representatives from Sure Start and a number of partner agencies. They observed the centre's work, including groups at the centre and at the centre's 'hub' location. They also looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the planning and evaluation of services, development and delivery planning, and minutes of meetings.

Information about the centre

Cornerstone Children's Centre is a phase 2 centre that was designated in 2007. It is situated within a community centre. It is closely linked with its 'hub' centre, Tarner Children's Centre, and most staff of Cornerstone Children's Centre are based here.

Services offered by the centre include a range of health provision and adult education. There is a variety of early years provision in the centre's catchment area: Amigos is one of these and is located on the same site as the children's centre; Tarnerland Nursery School is located nearby and the majority of centre children in receipt of two-year-old funding attend this setting. The local authority oversees the governance of the centre. Health services are integrated in the local authority through a section 75 agreement. The local authority manages and delivers centre services through this arrangement.

The area served by the centre is made of up a wide variety of housing that ranges from houses of multiple occupancy to areas of relative affluence. Many families move in and out of the area and mobility is above levels usually found nationally. There are several pockets of significant deprivation within the centre's catchment, of which one is in the lowest 20% found nationally and one in the lowest 30%. The centre has identified 2.4% of families living in the area are in receipt of workless benefits, and

18% of children live in poverty. Most families are of White British origin. A few have minority ethnic backgrounds, of whom almost all are of mixed heritage. Most children living in the centre’s catchment area enter early years provision with levels of development that are broadly in line with those found nationally.

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 families

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Cornerstone Children’s Centre provides outstanding services for families living in the local area. Management by health services is highly effective and provides comprehensive knowledge of all families with children under the age of five who live in the centre’s catchment area. The centre has rigorous processes of initial assessment which are consistently applied so that those families in need of additional support and services are quickly identified. As a result, centre leaders and staff know exactly where to target their services to support those families most in need of support.

Superb outreach services provided in the home, at the centre and ‘hub’ centre are accurately matched to family needs by frequent evaluation and assessment that fully involve parents. Families are given practical assistance to travel to services at the ‘hub’ if needed. The centre works seamlessly with an exceptionally large number of partner agencies to provide an extensive breadth of provision. Consequently, target groups and those most in need enjoy sustained engagement with centre services that are tailored to their needs. This results in outstanding outcomes in most areas.

Leaders, staff and partners share a clear sense of purpose to support and empower those most in need. They are dedicated to continuous improvement of services delivered to families. Systems of evaluation and development planning are very well coordinated in a quarterly cycle that includes rigorous analysis of data and user feedback. Services have been altered to meet the changing needs of families, such as the introduction of a targeted ‘Cornerstone Tots’ group to meet the particular needs of a group of children and their parents. Exemplary systems of performance management provide a high quality workforce that is highly effective in meeting the

needs of families, especially those who are initially reluctant to engage with services. As a result, the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

The centre can demonstrate strong outcomes for families' economic well-being, especially for those target families engaged in training and development. Excellent links with partner organisations, such as Community Learning, have led to sustained engagement of 11 parents on the Moving On course, learning basic skills to prepare them for further learning. The Brighton Unemployed Centre and Family Information Services enable adults to access training, support to manage home finances, and practical essentials of food and clothing when needed. The centre has evidence of how many have moved on to employment following volunteering and training with the centre. However, leaders do not have a sufficiently clear summative view of this progression to employment to facilitate rigorous monitoring to build further on these successes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Enhance systems used to demonstrate the success of adults' improvement in their economic well-being by collating and analysing robust information of how many move on to employment as a result of using centre services and use this information to improve outcomes further.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Overall, families enjoy outstanding outcomes as a result of using centre services. All services engage exceptionally well with target groups and those most in need. Front-line services are delivered or managed by health visitors. A very high emphasis on improving the health of children and adults is incorporated into all groups and services, such as the Bilingual Family Group and the Protective Behaviours group. The very large majority of families are engaged with appropriate health services, and universal services at the centre, such as the Healthy Child Clinic, are very well attended. This expert focus on health leads to exemplary outcomes in many aspects of health. Levels of child obesity are well below those typically found nationally and locally as a result of well-targeted education about weaning, diet and exercise, as well as the exceptional proportion of babies that are breastfed. The proportion of women who sustain breastfeeding was 33% above the national average in the most recent quarter. All new mothers are assessed for signs of postnatal depression when their child is six weeks old. This enables staff to provide early intervention. Measurement of progress indicates many women make very significant improvement as a result of this intervention.

Parents feel they and their children are exceptionally safe at the centre. They report they trust staff implicitly and never feel they are being 'judged' by staff. Adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable develop exceptionally strong understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe through individual

and group support. For example, parents attending the Protective Behaviours group understand how negative adult behaviour can have an impact on how children behave. One parent gave the views of many saying of the group, 'I have gained an understanding about my child's behaviour and realise why they are behaving in that way, not just being naughty.' Exemplary and enabling support for domestic abuse and substance misuse leads to very good improvement in family safety and overall well-being.

Looked after children and those on child protection plans have extremely good outcomes as a result of exemplary assessment and planned intervention that are frequently evaluated so continuing to keep children safe and moving towards positive outcomes. Use of the Common Assessment Framework is well established and rigorously quality assured. Staff are highly competent in use of this process so that children are properly protected and their well-being is frequently monitored.

Children in the reach area make outstanding progress from variable starting points so that their levels of achievement exceed national and local expectations at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Any difference in levels of achievement between groups is narrowing rapidly as a result of accurately targeted action: in 2011 the gap between the lowest 20% and the rest was over 5% better than national levels. The number of children referred for speech and language is the lowest in the local area as a result of excellent early intervention by speech and language support. Disabled children and those with special education needs do equally well. The centre has very good liaison with the Sea View Child Development Centre and many children attending the centre move successfully into a mainstream school. Adults enjoy their learning at the centre, and learn a wide range of skills from understanding healthy eating in the Happy Eater course to developing a very good understanding of skilful parenting by attendance at parenting courses. Parents, including those most in need, greatly improve their understanding of safe and positive parenting which significantly enhances their family life.

The centre plays a very significant part in the local community as a result of superb partnership working with the long-established community centre. Centre leaders are extremely respectful of existing services, and work collaboratively to provide a cohesive programme of groups that serve the local community very well. Families are active partners in governance at every level of the centre. Parents on the advisory board and parents' forum (the Parents' Voice) ensure that user views are heard. As a result, parents frequently influence provision and make decisions on what will best meet their needs. Staff are extremely supportive of this, and adults have initiated and lead groups, such as Big Wednesday, and are in the final stages of planning to deliver a group for fathers which will replace a previously popular partner-run group.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<p>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>1</p>
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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 children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

1

The exemplary assessment of each family's needs provides a comprehensive framework from which staff plan and implement services to meet individual needs. This happens for every family when a child is born, or when a family moves into the catchment area with children aged under five years. When health visitors identify a family in need of more support, further detailed assessment is made, using the Common Assessment Framework when appropriate. All target groups engage very well with centre services as a result of staff having accurate information of where members of each group are located. Successful engagement is sustained because of friendly and highly effective outreach by health visitors and early years visitors. In particular, early years visitors are exceptionally skilled at successfully engaging those adults most difficult to reach. They do this through sensitive, yet tenacious, contact to provide a very high level of personalised support, which encourages vulnerable adults to understand the benefits of accessing services. Staff are very accessible to adults and prioritise enabling parents to improve their own well-being and circumstances. Many parents appreciate their dedication and feel extremely well supported, especially in times of crisis. A parent comment is a typical illustration of this, 'Staff take every single person as important and they know everyone's name.'

Learning and development for children and adults are of outstanding quality. Groups and individual engagement with families are of very high quality and all target groups are actively engaged. It is thoughtfully planned and takes prior learning into account so learners continue to move forward. Achievement is celebrated by praise, evaluation of progress, certificates and presentation events. Provision is enhanced by partnerships which provide an exceptional range of information and guidance for all parents, especially those most in need of help. For example, the Early Childhood Project gives all access to a wealth of resources and information. It covers an extensive range of topics from a toilet-training advisory, Potty Pack, to information on moving to England or managing bereavement. The overwhelming majority of provision for children in receipt of two-year-old funded places is of good or outstanding quality. This is rigorously monitored by managers and overseen by the city early years teacher to ensure high standards are maintained.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Safeguarding arrangements are of the highest quality. Rigorous health and safety procedures provide safe premises for parents and their children. Recruitment procedures for all adults working at the centre, including volunteers, are extremely rigorous to ensure appropriate checks are made before work commences. Procedures to protect children are exceptionally robust. All staff are properly trained and safeguarding is given high regard in all services and groups. Parents develop an excellent understanding of the importance of protecting their children through parenting support, and education that is delivered in groups or in the home on an individual basis if needed. Exemplary working with all relevant agencies promotes the best outcomes. Health staff work very closely with social care colleagues and early years staff to provide well coordinated provision that acts rapidly when required to protect children. Subsequent monitoring and support are methodically planned and implemented to give vulnerable children and their families safe and positive outcomes.

High attention to individual needs enables all families to improve their overall well-being, regardless of background or ethnicity. Adults and children who have disabilities have their needs met very well. Leaders analyse data to check that all groups are fully involved in services and none is disadvantaged through lack of engagement. Those families with minority ethnic backgrounds benefit from an exceptional range of services delivered by the centre and its partner agencies. Translation and support for families who are learning English are provided by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service. Services such as the speech and language team use dual language information so all parents may develop a good understanding of what their child needs. Families of differing ethnic heritage and economic or social background integrate well in sessions. This is supplemented by provision dedicated to meet the needs of individual groups. For example, the Dad's Group is popular with fathers who appreciate time with their children in a safe and enjoyable environment. The Bilingual Family Group allows those from minority ethnic groups to share one another's cultures through sharing company and learning each other's traditional songs. This group has great success in enabling social interaction and adults are extremely happy to have met other parents who have the same language or ethnic heritage.

Outstanding governance underpins exemplary service provision because it prioritises the overall health, well-being and development of those families who are most in need. Local needs analysis is wholly robust because health services have contact with every family that might benefit from centre services. The organisation of leadership structure and processes is extremely clear and processes are well established and highly effective. The senior management team works collaboratively to deliver a comprehensive range of excellent services. The advisory board is highly effective in its role and parents and a large number of partners are fully involved. Minutes of meetings show rigorous discussion and scrutiny of data so all make informed decisions on evaluation and development so resources are allocated wisely. The centre provides outstanding value for money.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	1

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

The early years setting located in the community centre, Amigos, was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2011 and gained a good outcome overall. Tarnerland Nursery School was last inspected in November 2010 and gained an outstanding overall judgement.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Cornerstone Children's Centre on 30 and 31 May 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your centre when they visited recently, and for speaking with us about how the centre meets your needs and those of your families. We saw some of the groups that you and your children attend and were very impressed at how well presented they are. Many of you told us how the centre makes a very positive difference to the lives of you and your families. We agree. Health visitors and early years visitors take time to get to know you and your families very well so they can provide services you need, such as health education on weaning or help with understanding your child's behaviour.

The centre provides an exceptional range of high quality services at the centre, and at its 'hub' site at Turner Children's Centre. This helps you and your families improve your overall health, learning and sense of community. You readily help shape services by being part of the advisory board, or the Parents' Voice group, or by completing some of the many evaluations and surveys done by the centre.

Safety is given very high priority by all staff. Many of you told us you trust staff and feel you and your children are safe when using centre services. We found the centre employs the very best practice to protect you and your families. You are also helped to improve your own skills and understanding of how to be safe, through learning first aid, having home safety equipment provided, and being able to seek help if you feel worried or in danger.

In the centre, it is not just the staff who work there that make a positive difference. There is also an exceptional range of other agencies who work very well with centre staff so you can benefit from the services you need. Staff go out of their way to link up with other services and there is a service for almost all needs you and your families might have.

Many of you learn at the centre, whether it is on the Moving On course or on a parenting or behaviour course. Lots of you act as volunteers and make a very good contribution to the running of the centre. Managers of the centre told us that quite a few adults move into employment as a result of the training and volunteer work they do at the centre. We have asked the centre managers to keep a good record of this information so they know exactly how many move into a job as a result of coming to the centre. This will help them support more of you when you are ready to look for work.

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