Oldham – Royton, Shaw & Crompton Children’s Centre Group

High Street, Shaw, Oldham, Lancashire, OL2 8RF

**Inspection dates**

**Previous inspection date**

Not previously inspected

18–19 February 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall effectiveness</th>
<th>This inspection:</th>
<th>Previous inspection:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to services by young children and families</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Not previously inspected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of practice and services</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2</td>
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**Summary of key findings for children and families**

**This children’s centre group is good.**

- The very large majority of the group’s users who are identified as most in need of support engage regularly in group activities to improve their life chances.
- The very large majority of two-, three- and four-year-olds take up their entitlement to free early years education. As such, inequalities are reducing for children as gaps in achievement are closing rapidly.
- Close partnership-working with a wide range of other agencies to support children and families most in need across the reach is very effective. Regular student placements support innovative practices.
- Leaders, governors and managers are highly effective. They know the reach very well and all are ambitious for the group. Challenge from the local authority is strong and expectations from The Children’s Society are high. Therefore, the quality of practice and services is good. There is no complacency and services continue to improve.
- Partnership work is exemplary. Leaders and staff are highly respected by professionals from other agencies because of their conscientious and knowledgeable approach.
- Relationships in all areas of the group’s work are of the highest quality. Families always feel welcome and able to improve their general well-being and health and increase their life chances.
- The quality of care, guidance and support is commendable. Users are unanimous in their praise for both centres in the group. Safeguarding has the highest priority.
- Parents and volunteers make a huge contribution to the work of the centre. They are treated as equal partners in governance and their voices are never ignored.
It is not outstanding because:

- Too few children and families from workless households and lone parents engage with the group.
- Not enough mothers initiate and then sustain breastfeeding beyond six to eight weeks.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Increase the engagement of users from workless households and lone parents.
- In partnership with health colleagues, increase the numbers of mothers who initiate and also continue to breastfeed their babies until at least six to eight weeks.

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 Royton Children’s Centre and Shaw and Crompton Children’s Centre.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the district lead for the group, along with the programme manager for The Children’s Society, the local authority, family engagement workers, the Chair of the District Advisory Board and eight other members, including three parent members. They also met with volunteers, representatives from health, education, social care and other early years partners.

The inspectors visited both centres, observed a ‘Stay And Play’ session in the park and spoke to some partner agencies on the telephone.

They observed the centres’ work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. This included the group’s self-evaluation, development plans, safeguarding documentation, policies and procedures and a sample of case files.

Inspection team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jane Hughes, Lead inspector</th>
<th>Additional inspector</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Drake</td>
<td>Additional inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip David Ellwand</td>
<td>Additional inspector</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Full report

Information about the group

Oldham-Royton, Shaw and Crompton’s Children’s Centre group operates across two centres; Royton Children’s Centre and Shaw and Crompton Children’s Centre. The centres are located approximately one mile apart. The staff team covers both centres, led by a group leader known as the district lead. The group offers a range of services which include: health services, family support, ‘Stay And Play’ sessions, baby groups and support for children most in need. Oldham Council commissions The Children’s Society to run both centres in the group. The group shares a district advisory board.

The staff team comprises four family engagement workers who work across both centres. The team works with targeted families and young children.

The group’s reach has a mixed demographic with pockets of affluence and deprivation. Of the 27 super output areas, four are within the 30% most deprived areas in the country. Most residents in the reach area are of White British heritage.

Royton was designated in 2008. It is situated in a separate building in an area of mixed socio-economic circumstances on the edge of Royton. There are 1127 children under five years living in the Royton reach area. Of these, 18.6% live in workless households.

Shaw and Crompton Children’s Centre was also designated in 2008. It operates from a purpose-built building in the heart of the community. The centre serves an area of mixed socio-economic circumstances. There are 1193 children under five years in the reach, of whom 24.7% live in workless households.

The group has identified those most in need of its services and support as being: children in greatest need; children eligible for free two-year-old childcare places; minority ethnic families; teenage parents and expectant teenage parents.

The majority of childcare provision is through local childminders and early years providers. Children from the reach generally enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities which are below those typical for their age. The primary schools and early years settings in the locality were not part of this inspection, as they are inspected separately. These reports are available on the Ofsted website at http://www.gov.uk/ofsted.
Inspection report: Oldham – Royton, Shaw & Crompton children’s centre

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families: Good

- The very large majority of families most in need of support and those who are expecting children are registered with the group and engage in activities. This means that children in greatest need, children eligible for free two-year-old childcare places, minority ethnic families, teenage parents and expectant teenage parents have regular access to high quality provision and support. Even so, too few children and families in workless households and lone parents engage with the group.
- The group has a key focus on ensuring that parents of eligible two-year-olds take up their child’s entitlement to a free place in a local early years setting. There are sufficient places in settings judged to be ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ for all local two-year-old children. The great efforts of the past year to increase the uptake of those who are entitled to free early education have been highly successful. More than 90% of two-year-olds access these places. All three- and four-year-olds accessed early education in the summer term 2014.
- Each centre in the group now receives live birth data for their reach. This is helping staff to target their work more precisely and to focus on those families in most need of support, or who may be less likely to seek help automatically.
- Midwife clinics operate in both centres in the group on a regular basis. This helps pregnant women and those who have recently given birth to gain easier access to health care. It also introduces them to other services that the centre offers.
- Free places on ‘Baby Massage’ courses for those most in need provide access to support at an early stage in their baby’s life. At the same time, it ensures that staff across the group can maintain contact with these parents in an unthreatening environment.
- One male carer summed up parents’ views of the group by telling inspectors, ‘I love this place.’ Another appreciative user stated, ‘It’s an invaluable place. If we won the lottery, this is the first place we’d give some money.’

The quality of practice and services: Good

- Both centres in the group provide welcoming and informative environments. Staff are supportive and helpful and there is a multitude of relevant literature and displays for parents from which they learn. They typically say, ‘It’s a safe zone. You can say anything, especially if you are finding things hard.’
- Staff are effective in training other early years professionals. Their direct intervention to help improve the quality of early years settings within the reach means the group plays a pivotal role in contributing to improvement. This is particularly the case for children with special educational needs.
- There is strong support for childminders so that they develop their knowledge and skills. Support and guidance are provided for any early years setting judged to ‘require improvement’.
- The ‘early help panel’ is an effective tool for ensuring that those children and families with specific needs are assessed carefully and supported swiftly. This includes having access to specialist services. Staff are prepared to challenge partners when they have any concerns about particular users. This ensures that need and support are matched very well.
- Outcomes are monitored well and feedback from participants is gathered. This shows gains in confidence for parents alongside an improved understanding, for instance, of the needs of their babies. Parents attending ‘Baby Massage’ sessions are able to explain how their confidence has built over the weeks and how they are now familiar with the process of massage. They are also able to record the difference this has made to bonding and relationships with their child.
- The highly focused work of the advisor for children with additional needs means that their requirements are assessed at an early stage, leading to extra specialised support when appropriate and good work to help with transition into school.
- Levels of immunisations are well above national rates. The success rates for those attending smoking cessation sessions is higher in this area than for the rest of Oldham. Obesity levels for
children of Reception age are below the national average. There is a good range of health-related activities. However, rates of initial and of sustained breastfeeding at six to eight weeks are too low.

- The overall proportion of children across the reach who achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception Year is above national figures. Over two years, there have been impressive improvements in children’s skill levels when they join Reception Year. In 2014, there was a large increase in the proportion of children entitled to free school meals who achieved a good level of development. Inequalities are reducing as a result.

- Early years professionals work side by side with group staff to create a network of support, advice and training for schools and early years settings. Staff find these very useful and appreciate the difference it has made for children across the reach.

- Group staff work closely alongside partners from adult learning. This helps to provide a good range of learning opportunities with good levels of engagement for those centre users who are targeted. Good partnership-working with local initiatives to boost local employment prepares adults successfully for work.

- The effective programme for volunteers adds ideas and resources to the group’s work and promotes the skills and future employability of volunteers. Training and supervision are thorough. Many volunteers themselves have benefited from the support of the group in difficult times and are passionate about sharing their successes with others.

- Student placements provide new initiatives. For instance, one student set up a pilot project to explore the need for and then established a thriving group of foster parents. All students on placements engage in a project to enhance the group’s range of activities or to reach into local issues.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

- Leaders, governance and management are very effective. The local authority is hugely ambitious for the group’s future success. Representatives from the commissioned body, The Children’s Society, the wide range of partners who work with the group along with parent representatives attend all the advisory board meetings. Close monitoring of the performance of the group by its leader, the local authority and the advisory board enables leaders, managers and governors to check on performance accurately and to identify key strengths and areas for development and training.

- Governors take no information at face value. They constantly discuss and question what the group’s data tell them in relation to its performance, the quality of provision, and how well inequalities are reduced and life chances improved. This helps them to ensure that the group delivers the best possible value for money.

- Self-evaluation is detailed and supported well by data. Staff supervision is regular and there are good opportunities for professional development and regular training.

- Parents play an important part in the life of the group. A thriving parents’ forum meets monthly and contributes routinely to decision-making. Information is shared with the advisory board, where parent representatives are actively welcomed and their views listened to and acted upon.

- Staff provide high quality support to families through the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process. The well-established procedures ensure that children in need, those on child protection plans and looked-after children receive all the advice, support and guidance they require to ensure that their life chances improve.

- Safeguarding takes the highest priority. Documentation is detailed and recorded carefully. Safer recruitment procedures are observed rigorously and staff are vetted with care. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and their knowledge is updated regularly.

- Professional supervisions of staff take place with appropriate regularity. The quality and effectiveness of the work of staff are checked regularly. Staff welcome these regular discussions of ongoing aspects of their work.

- Partner agencies confirm that they have absolute faith in the group’s work. They can rely completely on staff to fulfil any commitments they are asked to make on behalf of group users. One user
stated, 'I thought my life had ended, but my life changed when I came to the centre as a volunteer.’

■ Resources are high quality, both inside and outdoors. Finances are managed very well to ensure that families’ needs and local priorities are met effectively. For instance, money is provided for parents in crisis to buy milk and nappies. The parents’ forum ensures that once parents have completed the ‘One Pot Wonders’ cookery course, each participant is given a slow cooker to use at home to maintain good eating habits once they go back to work.
# What inspection judgements mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Judgement</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and, as a result, inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children’s wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>Requires improvement</td>
<td>Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>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.</td>
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Children’s centre group details

| Unique reference number | 80300 |
| Local authority         | Oldham |
| Inspection number       | 454057 |
| Managed by              | The Children’s Society on behalf of the local authority |

| Approximate number of children under five in the reach area | 2286 |
| Centre leader        | Tracey Coatman |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number     | 0161 770 5314 |
| Email address        | tracey.coatman@childrenssociety.org.uk |

This group consists of the following children’s centres:

- 22575 Royton Children’s Centre
- 80300 Shaw and Crompton Children’s Centre
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