

# Inspection report for Denton and Westerhope Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	365775
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Jean Webb

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Alma Shield
Date of previous inspection	Not Previously Inspected
Centre address	Hillhead Road West Denton Newcastle Upon Tyne NE5 1DN
Telephone number	0191 277 2033
Fax number	0191 277 2030
Email address	alma.shield@newcastle.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY319337 West Denton Association Playgroup EY319215 West Denton Association Crèche

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and staff, local authority representatives, members from key agencies, a headteacher from a local primary school, commissioned providers and users. They observed a number of sessions/activities. They considered a wide range of evaluation materials and analysis of data, and a range of relevant documentation, such as policies, risk assessments and safeguarding materials.

## Information about the centre

Sure Start Denton and Westerhope Children's Centre is based on two sites and also uses a local church hall in Denton. Denton site is a purpose built children's centre with a playgroup renting space within the building. It is located on a school site with nursery provision. Westerhope site is based in an existing community association building. Day care provision is available at Westerhope Village Nursery which also serves Denton. The church hall in Denton also houses a community project – Denton Young People's Project. The Denton and Westerthorpe Children's Centre was designated in January 2008 and fully operational in October 2008. It is a phase 2 centre and offers all elements of the core offer.

Denton has pockets of severe deprivation within the highest 10% based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Westerhope is less disadvantaged, but still has areas of moderately severe deprivation. Teenage pregnancy rates are high within the Denton ward and are much higher than the national rate. In the Westerhope ward the rate is lower than the national rate. The majority of families are White British. In Denton, 17% of families are eligible for the childcare element of working tax credit and 18% in Westerhope. The number of children in the nought to four age group,

who are in families dependent on workless benefits, is estimated at 200 in Denton and 50 in Westerhope.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with a partnership board and includes providers, members of the local community and users that attend the children's centre.

### 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**

2
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2
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### Main findings

Denton and Westerhope centre ensures good provision for its users and meets the needs of the community it serves well. Some users report how the support received has had a positive impact on their life and helped them to make changes for the better. More could be offered to parents and carers of children with disabilities and to encourage more dads to attend. There are instances when more could be done to ensure disadvantaged families have the same opportunity to be included in the three summer holiday trips, as they can miss out signing up for trips if not attending the centre.

Managers have a clear vision for high quality provision and outcomes. Outreach workers excel in the care and guidance given to families in greater need, making this guidance personalised to meet their individual needs. Staff know the families with whom they work, exceptionally well, which enables them to accurately identify needs. The centre staff have provided excellent support for mothers who are isolated, low in mood and for those who have suffered domestic violence. The integrated work with other agencies is outstanding, ensuring that the specific needs of the centre users are well met..

Relationships in the centre are good, with mutual respect for all users. Safeguarding procedures are extremely robust and effective, and are enhanced by excellent risk assessment procedures, up-to-date training and the very strong links with other services to develop parents' and carers' knowledge.

All services are carefully monitored, with feedback being requested and analysed in a way that enables it to be used to identify and plan future changes and

enhancements to provision? Evaluation is completed well but some partners do not fully appreciate their role in self-evaluation and would benefit from more support. The centre has good knowledge, through consultation, of how all users and other agencies are involved in the governance of the centre and how its work has impacted on services and outcomes. Data are used well and there is a third year of information which enables centre staff to show more accurately the trends for achievement. However, the use of this data could be improved further to show the impact of training, job and health advice for adults.

Children, parents and carers make good progress by accessing services and training offered. In Denton, children's achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved. In both areas, the attainment gap between the lowest performing children and highest performing children has reduced considerably. There is good provision and signposting to relevant training and education to improve the ability of users to seek employment and to improve their personal skills. There are some examples of users who have taken up further training and education and made profound differences to their lives.

Managers are committed to delivering a high quality service and communicate their expectations to staff well. Staff work enthusiastically and make sure that provision and outcomes are good. Together with the good quality of leadership and management, this indicates that the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the attendance of those hardest to engage by:
  - working more effectively with health partners and the most disadvantaged in order to engage and support their attendance at the centre
  - offering a wider range of opening times to dads
  - offering more resources for parents and carers of children with disabilities.
  
- Improve the collection and use of data to measure the impact of adult learning, information and advice for improving their economic well being by:
  - using data from Jobcentre Plus to measure the impact of a vacancy search tool
  - following up the impact of smoking cessation information and advice.
  
- Fully embed the evaluation process by:
  - supporting partners to understand how they contribute to self-evaluations
  - setting measurable and time bound targets as part of the action plan
  - ensuring that there is parent representation from Denton and Westerhope on the Sure Start Outer West Partnership.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2

There is a good range of courses and activities at the centre that promote healthy living. The outcomes for children are improving, as well as parents' and carers' understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. The courses and activities provided include, dance, physical activity, cookery, breastfeeding and weaning support. A weekly baby clinic is well attended by carers, including dads. Immunisation rates have increased. Obesity levels have decreased in the Westerhope area. The mental health of parents and carers and the emotional well-being of children have improved greatly with support in the community. The families most in need of help with healthy lifestyles are the most difficult to engage with and the centre needs to continue to try and ensure that these families are engaged. The centre signposts parents for smoking cessation courses but does not know the impact of this and needs to use the data available to evaluate the impact of information and advice.

The children's centre is a very safe environment and users feel very safe and protected at all times. This extends to the home environment, where potential hazards and welfare issues are identified extremely well and then appropriate actions and support given. Parents report that the behaviour of their children has greatly improved due to attendance at courses, such as the 'Incredible Years'. Resources, including books specifically designed for children and parents about safety in the home, are given to families in most need. Courses in baby and child emergency life saving have been planned. There has been a reduction in the emergency hospital admissions in the Denton area where the degree of deprivation is greater. An excellent programme designed specifically for those subject to domestic violence is having an enormous impact on parents and carers to ensure that their children are removed from potentially dangerous environments.

Children greatly enjoy their learning and achieve well, both in the daily playgroup which has extended its provision to meet the demand, and in other activities, such as sing and sign for the very young. Parents thoroughly enjoy sessions and encourage others to come along. 'It's brilliant and I highly recommend it', is a typical comment. Observed sessions showed parents and children having great fun and enjoying their learning together at courses, such as 'big cook, little cook' and there is also a weekly baby social meeting. 'Learned a lot and made new friends' is a typical comment. Childminders offer a good service and all have been trained to be part of 'every child a talker'. There has been an increase in the number of children achieving well across the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Denton area and also an improvement in the achievement of lower ability children across both areas. Links with local schools aids the transition for children. There are individual speech and language therapy sessions provided to the harder-to-reach families.

There are ample opportunities for children to make choices and their likes and dislikes are well recorded through, for example, drawing pictures. Children behave well. Activities are well attended and the centre staff show great respect for users. An imaginative range of methods are used to collect feedback from parents and

carers and this information is used well to make appropriate changes and to introduce new activities. There is good use of volunteers, particularly for breast feeding support for new mums.

There has been an increase in the uptake of childcare. Parents are signposted well to training and development opportunities and there are many examples where these have been taken up. Lone parents are helped to find and secure work if this is their preferred choice. Some volunteers are running their own activities and one of them has progressed to paid employment in this role. An electronic access point for a job vacancy search has been situated in the Denton Centre by Jobcentre Plus and this is well used by parents and carers, but the data regarding its use is not available for 2010 to show its impact.

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children and parents is excellent. The standard assessment tool for the purpose of identifying need is extremely well embedded. Children's centre staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of individual users. Staff have all been trained in the use of the mental well-being assessment. Parents are very well informed in the stages of their children's development, and this helps them to identify their children's needs better and how to stimulate their development. These assessments are used exceptionally well by the centre staff to set individual targets for children's development.

Activities are of a good quality and very well attended. Sessions encourage and enlighten parents about the Early Years Foundation Stage and give them confidence to ask questions about how to support and promote their children's development. Transport is made available to enable users to utilise activities and resources at other centres. Crèche facilities are made available for all those who require it. More resources are required for children with disabilities. However, plans are in place for sensory equipment and links with a nearby specialist centre for those children who

require that additional support.

The needs of the community are well understood and the activities and services are planned well to meet their needs. For those parents unwilling to come to the centre activities are offered in a community venue nearer to their homes, which has resulted in the attendance of some of the younger mums. There are summer and half-term activities which are very well subscribed but these fill up very quickly and harder to reach families are sometimes missing out. A toy library service has been set up to serve the community and it is extremely well used. Dads would like more evening and weekend activities to be provided.

There is very good quality information and advice for parents. The quality of the care, guidance and support is exceptional. It is personalised extremely well and is coordinated with all the appropriate support staff to fully meet the individual needs of users. The sensitivity, enthusiasm and well-coordinated approach of staff enables the support to be of an extremely high quality. For example, one user commented 'Would still have been on medication without their support'. The freedom programme has been particularly effective in helping to break the cycle of domestic violence.

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

The local authority ensures that each centre is fully accountable for its performance and the effectiveness of its partnerships. The manager liaises with all partners to provide good and effective use of the accommodation. More is to be done to ensure that there is parent representation on the Sure Start Area Partnership. There are parents' forums in each area of which Denton and Westerhope are part of the outer west area of Newcastle.

Strategic and operational management are integrated very well. Senior staff are highly motivated and their high expectations effectively communicated to all staff. Staff are highly committed to their role. Communication between all staff and relevant partners is excellent and has a very positive impact on families in the community. The management systems are clear and day-to-day management responsibilities are very well understood. The performance management data required to show progress in the outcomes and quality of provision, are also

described very clearly by management and they are being collected and managed extremely effectively.

All safeguarding arrangements are very robust, ensuring that Criminal Records Bureau checks and training are regularly updated. There are excellent risk assessment processes in place. Staff's knowledge of first-aid, safeguarding and accident prevention, ensures the safety of children at all times. Inter-agency work enables leaders to deal very effectively with the consequences of domestic violence or child protection issues.

Inclusion is at the heart of the centre's work and diversity is warmly embraced. Users show mutual respect, understanding and friendship. Around 75% of those receiving support from outreach workers are in the most disadvantaged areas. Every effort is made to ensure that all users can access the centre easily. Data is being used to show the groups that are achieving less well, and this has resulted in more activities provided to target parents with boys and summer born children. Teenage mums are contacted at the time of their 12 week scan to try to engage them as early as possible. There is a dedicated worker for engaging dads, but not enough is done to ensure that they can attend at their preferred times.

Partnership work is excellent. All agencies support each other very effectively and enthusiastically and good relationships enable leaders to provide very effective services. All users contribute to decision making and to the further development of services. Home visits, parents' and carers' forums and agency representation at meetings allow the views of all to shape the range of provision. The self-evaluation process has been recently updated to ensure a full review of all aspects of provision, but some partners are not supported enough so that they can play a full role in the evaluation process. Targets are based on ongoing detailed analysis of a wide range of information to ensure that the centre provides good services for its users and good value for money.

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable</b>	<b>2</b>



<b>adults</b>	
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Denton and Westerhope Children's Centre on Wednesday 12 and Thursday 13 January 2011. We judged the centre to be good.

During our visit, we observed a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with a number of you and the professionals who work with you. We found the Denton Children's Centre to be a very busy and very welcoming environment. Everyone was friendly and willing to share their experiences with us and told us that these were overwhelmingly positive. Many of you told us that you would not have continued with breast feeding nor had the confidence to try new things without the sessions you attended and the very good information and advice available. You told us that your experiences at the centre have meant you have a better understanding of children's development and feel better able to encourage positive behaviour and healthy lifestyles in your children. You feel very safe and are very confident about the safety of your children. You feel comfortable to voice your opinions to other parents and staff.

We observed sessions where both you and your children have a great deal of fun, as well as helping you to learn new things. You really like 'big cook, little cook' and think that the weaning and baby massage sessions are great. The baby social sessions provide a good way of getting to know others and make friends. There is a good range of activities that meet your needs well and you are helped to access services at other centres by making you aware of them or helping with transport to them. Dads would like the opportunity to attend the centre more often and would do so if opening times were extended. Some families miss out on the trips because they are very quickly filled as a result of the high demand by parents and carers. Parents of children with disabilities would like more specialist services.

We found that the centre is excellent in helping you at times in your lives when you most need it; action is taken quickly and different people and organisations work very well as a team to support both you, your family and your children. Centre staff are excellent at identifying your individual needs and those of your children and then following through the progress you make. The staff have a high level of expertise. Family support and outreach workers provide you with excellent services in your homes when you are unable to access them at the centre. Some of you told us how the work of the centre has helped you to achieve educationally and enhanced your personal and social development. The centre does not always know how well the advice and guidance for adults is working. Some of you have become volunteers and made a valuable contribution to and impact on breast feeding support. We heard of many examples where programmes such as the 'Freedom Programme' have changed lives.

The people in charge of running the centre are doing a good job. The managers have worked hard to make sure that everything the children's centre does for you will make a difference to the area in which you live. They work enthusiastically and set high standards to ensure good outcomes.

The centre asks for your feedback on the services and what you would like it to provide and takes these suggestions on board to make improvements. They completed a summary of what you said and also what they have done in response to your comments. The centre makes sure it is listening to other partners and achieves the targets agreed by the partnership board. At the moment, there are no parents represented on the partnership board, although there are parent forums that feed in their views.

The centre also looks very carefully at data they gain from other sources to find out the needs of the community it serves, such as the achievements of your children in their early years at school and the levels of obesity in young children in your area. The evidence they receive is taken very effectively into account when arranging activities and liaising with agencies, to ensure that the needs of all are met and that resources, both financial and the accommodation, are used efficiently. The centre works exceptionally well with a number of different agencies to coordinate services and support, to provide you with a seamless service.

We have asked the manager of the children's centre, her senior staff and the local authority to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things to do are:

- Improve engagement of all the hardest to reach families and groups.
- Improve the way they collect data about the impact of adult learning and advice and guidance.
- Ensure that everyone is fully involved in the evaluation of services.

Thank you very much for your welcome and openness with inspectors. We are very grateful to you and wish you every success in the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).