

# Inspection report for Sunbeam Children's Centre

Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	362579
Inspection dates	4-5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Pepper HMI

Centre governance	Wakefield local authority
Centre leader	Sharon Calvert
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	St Georges Ltd; Childcare @ Sunbeam EY271027 and Childcare@ St Georges 503017

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

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff and senior managers, chair of the advisory board, health professionals, local community partners, user groups and parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Sunbeam Children's Centre provides the full core offer of services to children and families. It was developed from a former Sure Start local programme and designated a Phase 1 centre in 2005. The purpose built centre is situated in the Lupset area of Wakefield. It operates from a single site, delivering services at the Ashiana Women's Centre and Lawefield and Snapethorpe Infant and Junior schools.

Most families are White British, with a small South Asian community who are mainly from Pakistan and Bangladesh. More recently there has been an influx of Eastern European families. The centre serves an area of well above average social disadvantage with high obesity rates. Worklessness and the proportion of families on benefits are high. Most children enter early education with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than that expected for their age.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through various groups which the centre runs and through the private providers to which it is closely linked. St Georges provides Childcare @ Sunbeam on site, offering 24 places to children aged two to five years during term time. Alternatively, they offer 70 places at nearby Childcare@ St Georges for children who are under eight years. Both private childcare facilities are subject to their own inspections. These inspection reports can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centre is open from 8.30am until 5pm, five days a week, 51 weeks of the year and it signposts users to a range of specialised services. The centre is governed by the local authority and has an established advisory board.

## 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
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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

Much of what the centre provides is of good quality. Overall outcomes for users are satisfactory. This is because it is too early to judge the impact of some changes which have been recently introduced. Attention to safety is good. Parents and carers say they feel safe and they see the centre as a very welcoming place. The care, guidance and support families receive are also strengths of the centre. Parents and carers say ‘they go the extra mile here’.

Strategies to assess and effectively meet the needs of children in particularly vulnerable situations are good. Trusting relationships have been formed with those families with whom the centre has worked directly and early intervention work has made a big difference to improving some lives. ‘This is a fantastic place’ was the view of some users of the centre. Not all families use the centre with the same regularity, although they may have contact with partners. Work to engage them, particularly children with additional needs, is on-going.

The new manager, senior leadership team and the dedicated centre workers have developed strong partnerships with other agencies. A concerted effort to improve weaker partners has led to some good results. Equality and evaluation of services are embedded well and continually developing. Parents and carers are encouraged to join the parents’ forum so they can shape and challenge the range of services provided. Systems to capture and use children’s views are at an early stage.

Service delivery was given high priority throughout a period of significant change at the centre. At this time data inputting was affected, which meant the centre could not clearly demonstrate the impact it had on the outcomes for children and families across the whole reach area. This weakness was quickly addressed by the new

manager who knows it is important to have reliable information to target and measure the impact of its work. This demonstrates good capacity to improve. Targets are in place but these do not all sufficiently measure how well outcomes are improving as a result of the centre's work.

Job vacancies are routinely advertised at the centre where practical support in applying for jobs is available. Adult education is mostly delivered through signposting parents and carers to suitable courses at other venues. Current strategies are not effective in guiding more parents and carers back into paid employment in order to break the entrenched worklessness in the area.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve routes which lead to paid employment by strengthening the links with Jobcentre Plus. In addition, develop strategies which enable close monitoring of users' participation and retention rates on training courses to which they are signposted.
- Work with the local authority to improve data:
  - to ensure the centre has information on live births in the reach area so they can identify any children or families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable
  - inputting and planning documentation to ensure that the centre can track precisely the progress made towards clear targets with measurable success criteria.
- Further improve how children's views can be used to shape the services and develop the range of provision.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>3</b>
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Users develop a good understanding of how to keep their children safe. Relevant statistics shows a decrease in accidental injuries reported, which may be due to the positive impact of the centre's home safety schemes. Although the safe garden programme has ceased, some families now have a safer garden environment.

Healthy outcomes are variable but showing some signs of improvement. For example, the uptake of breastfeeding is low, although some parents are beginning to understand the benefits of breastfeeding rather than bottle feeding. As a consequence, this aspect of health is starting to show a slight increase.

Obesity continues to be an issue though data shows a slight reduction in some areas. Regular opportunities are provided to benefit from gentle exercise through walking with the Sunbeam Strollers and the centre runs cooking courses. Users look forward

to these social occasions when healthy, low cost meals are cooked and served. Older children learn how to pack a healthy lunch box at the popular holiday play scheme. Adults can attend keep-fit classes which run at St George's or Lawfield Infant and Junior School nearby.

The Parents Plus group and positive parenting courses help parents learn new ways to manage their children's behaviour. A typical parental comment was 'I've turned negatives into positives'. Children protected by child well-being orders enjoy and achieve at the centre, which promotes children's and families' emotional well-being. There is good evidence of improved outcomes for children on child protection plans. The dads' group, which meets regularly, reported improved relationships with their children.

A parent whose child was on the two year pilot described it as 'absolutely fantastic'. It can also lead to identification of siblings who may need early intervention. On entry to school, children are mostly below national averages but relevant figures now clearly show a slow narrowing of the gap given children's starting points.

The centre is regularly used at the weekend by a group which supports children with Down's Syndrome. A few children who attend the centre have additional needs. The centre recognises that more children with special educational needs and/or disabilities could benefit from using the facilities they offer. The manager has recently liaised with the area special educational needs coordinator and those delivering portage to promote more use of the centre by these potential users.

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</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>2</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>3</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>3</b>

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

**3**

The centre provides a warm welcome and high quality displays are both attractive and informative. Parents and carers attending are informed about a range of courses

including smoking cessation and sex education. Participation rates of groups are very variable. The baby clinic, antenatal and midwife drop-in sessions are often complemented by story and singing sessions which are enjoyed by families. A midwife runs Little Angels which promotes the benefits of breastfeeding to mothers and mothers-to-be. A speech and language therapist is assigned to the centre; she assesses children in their own homes and signposts families to services. Health visitors now actively encourage families to register with the centre which may increase the numbers of users attending over time.

Assessment of the needs of all those who use the centre is extremely robust due to good partnership working. Parents say 'I love the place, everyone is so friendly'. Many parents of young children at Stay and Play started off using the baby massage sessions. Parents know they can turn to the centre in times of crisis and that they will be helped with childcare, mental health issues and any practical problems, such as debt management. Parents comment 'the centre has taught me to look at everything positively, to look at what I can do, not what I can't'.

The South Asian female community is very well supported at the Ashiana Women's Centre which is culturally sensitive to their specific needs and provides them with good bilingual support. In addition, they are supported with citizenship issues and they can attend 'English for speakers of other languages' courses. Due to changes in the context of the minority ethnic groups, the exclusive purpose of this centre is being reviewed in order to promote community cohesion. Some families are more difficult to engage and the centre is exploring ways to further establish its role in the community.

Special events arranged during the holidays or in the evenings are extremely popular and meet the needs of the local community and children of all ages. The recent Halloween party was a huge success. Due to good links with other services, the centre signposts families to support elsewhere, which prevents the duplication of services and resources. However, systems to monitor attendance and the impact of other provision are not effective enough.

Although some childminders use the centre, the previous support group for them ceased sometime ago. However, firm plans are in place to restart this group. The inviting sensory room provides a stimulating and relaxing environment for all and is often used for supervised contact sessions.

Home visits are targeted in the most deprived areas to ensure that families, whose circumstance may make them vulnerable, learn about what support is available. Several parents said 'this place stopped me from being postnatal again'. Other parents stated that in the past there were more activities held at the centre and that there were very few groups for older children. Staff resources have a significant impact on the frequency and delivery of some sessions.

The centre provides crèche facilities for children; this means they are cared for by familiar adults who parents know and trust. This enables more parents to have the

confidence to leave their children in order to develop their own skills. However, there is limited evidence of celebration of adult achievements and progress towards employment.

Specific health practitioners and centre workers have worked together to engage and support teenage parents. A few parents have trained to become volunteers at the centre and this has led to paid employment for some. The quality of courses offered elsewhere to which adults are signposted is monitored and the centre is aware of any problems that may arise. Participation and retention rates are not tracked precisely enough in order to ensure that routes enabling parents to gain employment are much more successful.

The Family Enjoying Everything Together programme empowers parents to be more confident to approach teachers and it helps to prepare children for entry into school by developing future skills.

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**2**

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. Professional supervision is a strong feature of the centre. Recommended good safeguarding practice is adopted across all areas of work. Induction of the new manager has been extremely effective. The enthusiastic manager has started to identify priorities, an understanding of the strengths of the service and where further improvement can be made. For instance, input from Jobcentre Plus has been minimal due to a lack of physical presence, but this has now been resolved. Where the centre has targeted action, such as attendance of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities there has been some improvement. The local authority and management are aware of where there are gaps in the data.

The centre takes an active role in developing partnerships and these increased resources are generally used well to improve outcomes. The make up of the advisory board includes a range of partners, although they acknowledge health representation is not strong enough. The independent chair is a parent and the parents reflect and

represent the locality.

The manager is keen to develop the parent forum which had ceased and her first priority was to restart this group. Responses to ideas parents have made via the suggestion box have been swift which shows a willingness to take into account users' views. The centre routinely evaluates the services it provides, although evaluations seen are mostly celebratory with minimal suggestions for improvement. Equality and diversity are promoted and the centre actively tackles any discrimination. Basic evaluation sheets which request users' views using facial expressions enable the majority, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, to express their level of satisfaction. No evaluations were observed from children, although their input has been sought on the development of the outdoor area in the private day-care unit.

The centre does not receive live birth information so it is reliant on health professionals signposting families to the centre if they are not already known. This means that some families can miss out on accessing services. The centre has a high percentage of common assessment framework referrals. Integrated work with health professionals ensures that families receive the specific support they need. A community general practitioner and staff nurses related to the health visiting team regularly run clinics at the centre. Appointment-only clinics are well attended, but less popular than the drop-in sessions.

<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>3</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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</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>2</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</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>range of provision</b>	
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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sunbeam centre on the 4 and 5 November. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

This is a well-established centre which provides a very safe place where families receive good quality care, guidance and support. The attractive centre is a place where parents know they will receive a warm and friendly welcome. Midwives, health visitors, nurses, childcare and parent support workers use their professional experience, knowledge and resources well to meet your specific needs. They assess any difficult situations and they know what support to provide in a crisis. They have built good relationships with families they have worked closely with. We have asked the local authority to tell the centre when a baby is born so that no families are missed who would benefit from the support and advice available to them.

Home safety schemes ensure you get practical support such as safety equipment to reduce accidents. Singing and story telling sessions develop your understanding of the importance of sharing books and singing rhymes with your children to develop their speaking and listening skills.

You told us that the positive parenting programmes have developed your confidence and self-esteem and taught you better ways of managing your children's behaviour. It was a pleasure to hear how well some of you are able to confidently manage your children's challenging behaviour in such a positive way.

You also said you enjoy the social meetings at the Stay and Play groups, which increase your understanding of the importance of play and how young children learn and develop. All who have joined the baby massage groups were upbeat about the benefits of using massage to improve relationships with their baby. Some even reported improvement with baby's colic problems or sleep patterns. We have asked the centre to provide more detailed information to show how their work is improving outcomes for you.

We know that some mothers are successfully breastfeeding their babies and we hope that more of you will be interested in doing this. Many of you have enjoyed the Creative Confident Cooking course where you have learnt how to cook quick, healthy and affordable meals and increased your use of fresh ingredients. The inspectors thoroughly enjoyed the meal you prepared for them. We saw that some of you like to keep fit by joining the Sunbeam Strollers walking group.

You told us that the family events, which run in the holidays and the evenings, are extremely popular and help develop a real community spirit. The Sunshine Library provides an ideal opportunity to borrow and enjoy books, toys and story sacks. The teacher at the centre has formed very good relationships with the local schools to ensure that any gaps in children's skills are acted upon and the Family Enjoying Everything Together programme is providing a very helpful way to prepare your children for school.

A few of you have trained to be volunteers and have been successful in completing courses which have led to work. The centre plans to improve the support of Jobcentre Plus and we have asked them to check your attendance on training courses so that they provide the best support they can to help you move into paid employment.

We know the centre is hoping that more of you will be interested in sharing your ideas and views and we hope you will be interested in joining the parents' forum. We have also asked the centre to consider how they find out about what children want.

We would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak to us. We are very grateful for your help 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).