

# Inspection report for Townsend Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Bournemouth Borough Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	367492
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Denise Blackwell HMI

<b>Centre governance</b>	Bournemouth Borough Council
<b>Centre leader</b>	Naomi Unwin
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	This is the centre's first inspection
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Townsend Montessori Nursery

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 additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the senior leadership team, parents, health representatives, local authority representatives, front line staff, members of the advisory board and a range of children's centre partners. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Townsend Children's Centre is located in one of the most deprived areas in Bournemouth in relation to income deprivation affecting children, and adults who lack skills and qualifications. It is a phase two centre that opened in January 2008 and is situated in one of the 30% most deprived areas of the country. There are high levels of workless households with a significant proportion of the reach area in receipt of disability living allowance. Mental health issues are significant within the local population.

The majority of the population are of White British heritage with a growing population of Polish families in the area. The centre provides the full core offer with early years provision being provided by Townsend Montessori Nursery and childminders in the area. Children's levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are well below those expected for their age. The centre is one of nine centres in Bournemouth and one of two that are run directly by the local authority. There is an advisory board with professional and parent representation.

## 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**

**1**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**1**

## Main findings

Both parents and professionals agree that this outstanding children's centre has firmly established itself at the heart of the community. 'It is my second home' and 'I don't know where I would be without this centre' are typical comments from parents. There is excellent leadership and outstanding professional support from a dedicated and enthusiastic staff team.

Parents and staff do not underestimate the importance of that first contact with often vulnerable parents, and the centre receptionist and parent volunteer receptionists ensure from the moment you walk into the centre you are greeted by a welcoming smile. There is an air of calm alongside the buzz of children and parents enjoying breakfast or preparing for the activities of the day. One of the centre's significant strengths is its close working partnership with other professionals, especially health colleagues, leading to their well deserved Performance Development Unit (PDU) accreditation. Another is the strong involvement of parents in providing feedback to the centre through parental representation on the advisory board and through other consultation. Parents have gained in confidence from attendance at the centre and are quick to let staff know if something has not worked or where they feel some changes would make things better.

Outcomes are outstanding in almost all areas. Children are making outstanding progress in developing skills that will prepare them for the future. Parents are also involved in training and some have gained qualifications and are looking for, or have gained, employment. However, due to the levels of attendance required by adult education providers, the centre has been unable to provide literacy or numeracy courses this year, though individuals have been supported to attend training courses to meet their specific needs. Parents are improving their independence and their children's well-being and, following changes to adult education requirements that allow courses to be better targeted at meeting the needs of parents at this centre, will have further opportunities to improve their economic well-being.

Safeguarding is given the highest priority at the centre. Systems, policies and procedures, services and partnerships ensure the well-being and safety of users,

exemplify best practice and have led to significant improvements to users' well-being.

Centre staff are highly adaptable and offer flexible provision for families to meet their specific needs. This is based on excellent assessment of individual needs resulting in individually tailored services and support. 'My life would be completely different if I couldn't come to the centre. I have met all my friends here, it gave me life,' was one comment from a parent that is typical of how parents feel about their centre. The centre's excellent local knowledge of parents from ethnic minority groups ensures these families are identified and encouraged to access centre services and activities. The excellent partnerships with local agencies result in extremely well coordinated provision. As a result, best use is made of resources to enable the centre to continue to meet users' needs in challenging times.

Although a protocol is now in place for health to share health information, such as breast-feeding rates and smoking cessation rates, until now the centre has been operating without clear health data that could confirm its impact on health outcomes in the reach area. Although this health data will now be shared, there is still no confirmation that the centre will receive new birth data. As a result, it is much more difficult for the centre to identify all families in its reach area so that they can investigate who is not using centre services and why this is the case. That said, the centre has not sat back on its laurels but has actively sought out local information from centre staff, other professionals in the area and parents to ensure services are targeted at those most in need.

The centre's evaluation of its services informs the priorities set out in the Service Delivery Plan. Agencies regularly evaluate their services. However, these are not collated to clearly evidence what is working and what needs to be changed or improved.

The outstanding outcomes, excellent provision, strong leadership and exceptionally high levels of parent involvement in this centre show the centre has outstanding capacity to improve.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Collate information from service evaluations so that the centre can:
  - clearly identify how users' views are used to inform the overall evaluation of the centre's effectiveness
  - show a clear link between the evaluation of its services and the priorities set out in the Service Delivery Plan.
- NHS Bournemouth and Poole should provide new birth data so that the centre can:
  - gain a greater understanding of the community within the reach area

- identify which families in the reach area are not using centre services and investigate why.
- ensure it is targeting and meeting the needs of those who are vulnerable and hardest to reach.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>1</b>
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The health of users in Townsend's reach area is improving in many ways and the centre is making an outstanding contribution to supporting this. Undernourishment is an issue in the area and users talk enthusiastically and confidently about the support they have had to improve children's diets. This is further supported by the healthy breakfasts users can access every morning and the 'Munch Bunch Lunch Club' monthly gatherings that also have an impact on children's social skills. 'You can always tell children's centre children when you eat out,' said one parent. 'They are the ones who sit nicely at the table and chat to each other calmly while eating their food, while other children are climbing all over the place.'

The excellent Gateway Services and the Solihull Approach to parenting ensure targeted individual support is very effectively supporting attachment and emotional well-being. Multi-agency services are reaching families considered hard to engage, with more than one professional saying how they see families in the centre they never expect to see. Families use and much appreciate the excellent outdoor provision when the centre is closed. This enables those who live in high-rise accommodation to access a safe outdoor environment. As a result, parents are gaining a greater understanding the value of outdoor play and the impact this has on their own and their children's physical and emotional well-being. The 'Mummies Breastfeeding Group' supports mums who are breast-feeding and gives them the confidence and support to continue if feeding gets a bit difficult.

The centre is seen as a place of safety and has been a much needed 'port in a storm' for those whose lives are turbulent or in crisis. Children's behaviour in the centre is excellent and both they and their parents are increasing in confidence and developing skills to help them deal with the difficulties of everyday life. Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) checks are carried out where requested and safety equipment is provided for those who are in need of it. This helps parents to improve their understanding of how to keep their children safe at home. The centre's involvement with children subject to a child protection plan or children in need plan, and their use of and involvement in the Common Assessment Framework, ensure the most vulnerable families, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are listened to, any concerns are acted upon, and coordinated provision is put in place. Users subject to domestic violence are very ably supported, for example through the 'Pattern Changing' course that supports parents who are, or have been, in abusive relationships. Case studies show this has resulted in parents making changes to their lives to benefit both themselves and their children.

Children are making outstanding progress from their starting points. Parents are also making similar progress by developing skills through adult training programmes with some parents gaining qualifications such as childcare qualifications. Users say how much they enjoy their training and parenting sessions. Their impact can be clearly seen in the way in which parents interact with their children and in the strategies they have learned, and still employ, to manage their children’s behaviour and support their development. All users in the centre get on well together and with staff and treat each other with respect.

Users have plenty of opportunities to engage with the centre, challenge them and make decisions. This is achieved through innovative and creative approaches to gaining parents’ views such as ‘the learning tree’ and ‘talk with Tess’ that allows parents to put forward their views in an informal, non-threatening way. There is strong parent representation on the Advisory Board. Many of the parents spoken to said how they had made friends at the centre and felt accepted because no-one was judgmental. ‘Townsend has never been known as a place of success,’ said one professional, ‘but the centre is changing all of that.’ The centre is significant in many users’ lives. Parents are eager and willing volunteers. ‘It’s good to make other mums feel welcome and to give something back,’ is the view of many volunteers.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for 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>1</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>1</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>1</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 and employment</b>	<b>2</b>

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

<b>1</b>
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The well-established and highly successful partnerships that have been formed between the centre and other professionals, especially health visitors, ensure that the assessment of need is robust and extremely well informed. The excellent local knowledge of staff and the involvement of parents at all levels ensure that those who are hardest to reach, and need support the most, do in fact receive it. Case studies show where the centre has been successful in engaging the hard-to-reach. Liaison with statutory services to ensure the appropriate support is excellent. Evidence shows that families often turn to the centre in times of crisis as they are confident that they will be well supported and their well-being is of the highest priority. Parents

can give clear examples of where support from the centre has had a real impact on them and their children. Consequently, users gain great trust in centre staff that enables them to gain confidence and engage successfully in the services offered. Weaknesses in data from health services and elsewhere are very successfully overcome by the excellent local knowledge of centre staff and other professionals working in the reach area.

Crèche provision to support access to courses and activities ensures that those who are isolated or without family support can attend sessions in the centre to promote their own learning and enjoyment, and that of their children. The 'Dads Group' meets regularly and young parents are engaged with the centre through the 'Young Parents Group' with some young parents also attending other activities such as 'Stay and Play' sessions. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well supported through the close working relationship between the centre teacher and the special educational needs team that is based in the former school building next to the centre. 'If it wasn't for the centre, I would never leave the house,' said one parent who had felt isolated before engagement with the centre. The individualised and thoughtful support for these children ensures they can access the full range of activities at the centre and offers a cohesive package of support for parents.

Parents and children's achievements are routinely celebrated in the centre with special breakfasts and lunches provided so that the whole community of users can join in the celebrations. The outstanding quality and coordination of guidance and support for families, and the involvement of agencies such as Enhanced Housing Options, is helping users to overcome barriers to their learning and supports users' efforts to improve outcomes for their children.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>1</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?**

**1**

There are clear links between strategic planning, management and provision. Regular meetings between the centre manager and the local authority ensure everyone is very much aware of the centre's aims and they enable all those responsible to work in an integrated way. There are strong lines of accountability and all staff are clear about their responsibilities. Staff receive excellent day-to-day management and guidance from the centre manager and deputy, and also have



access to effective professional supervision related to their specific roles. There are excellent opportunities for professional development that arise from focused and supportive management arrangements. The monthly meetings and the annual conversation between the centre manager and the local authority ensure that both have a joint understanding of the aims of the centre and the extent to which it is meeting the aims. This results in well-aligned priorities in the Service Delivery Plan that identify both local and national needs. This includes smart actions to enable the centre to achieve the desired outcomes. The Advisory Board initially covered two centres but divided in May 2010 so that the centre now has its own board. However, the board is still in its early days and roles and responsibilities are still embedding. Although some parents understand how planning and provision are linked, and how their views feed into the advisory board, this understanding is not yet well established.

Although clear success criteria and smart targets are not currently included in planning, it is clear from discussions with the centre manager, staff, parents and the local authority that they all have a united view and clear understanding of priorities for the centre. This is based on rigorous monitoring and searching analysis of what is needed and what works in the reach area. Responses from users and case studies are expertly combined to shape services. This guarantees outstanding value for money because services and resources are so accurately targeted to users' needs. Although there is a lack of health data to show impact on national indicators, the centre uses a range of measures very well to demonstrate clearly its success in improving lives.

Partner agencies hold the centre in very high regard. Very effective relationships have been established so that the centre can ensure that services are of very high quality for the users. Partner agencies are enabled to be more effective because of the centre's expertise at breaking down barriers and targeting users. The PDU accreditation process has fostered a culture of self-reflection so that all staff constantly evaluate, monitor and reflect on their work and how it can be improved. The centre is fully aware of the literacy issues in the area and ensures that all users have the opportunity to put forward their views and receive information through one-to-one support where needed.

Safeguarding practice and protocols for making referrals, sharing relevant information and helping families in time of crisis are exemplary. All staff have attended safeguarding training and know what to do if they have any concerns. This ensures that all staff are aware of child protection issues and are well supported by the systems in place. Risk assessments are detailed and consider not only the physical safety of users but risks related to lone working and managing crisis. All required checks have been carried out and the centre is rigorous in its monitoring of access to the centre. This ensures users are safe and can feel confident that their children are being well cared for. Social services rightly see the centre as a place of safety and hold case conferences and children in need meetings at the centre. Clear and bright signage ensures all users are aware of who to go to if they have any safeguarding concerns.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</b>

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

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Townsend Children's Centre on the 23 and 24 March 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

The very strong centre leadership, alongside the work of the dedicated staff, have provided you and your children with a wide range of excellent services that are carefully tailored to meet your particular needs.

Many of you went out of your way to tell us how much you enjoy the activities, and have benefited from the services provided through the centre. Those of you who spoke to us said that your children's centre is a friendly and welcoming place. Many of you think of the centre as your second home and added that you do not know what you would have done without the support provided by the centre.

Those of you who use the centre are now very much better at staying safe and healthy and providing for your families. Many of you are working very hard to improve your skills because of the encouragement of the centre staff. Your children are well catered for through the activities such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Under ones group' to help you to better understand how to support their learning. This, plus the interesting and well organised crèches and play events, means that children settle well into local nurseries and make much better progress than they would if they had not benefited from the centre's services. It was good to see so many fathers and young parents becoming involved in the activities in the centre.

We think that, with the centre's encouragement, many of you now make an excellent contribution to the centre services and the life of the community. It was very pleasing to speak to so many confident adults who take pride in their achievements. These ranged from being more able to deal with children's behaviour to gaining employment. Some of you are very rightly proud of becoming volunteers to enable you to give something back to the centre for all the help and support it has given you. Those of you we spoke to said how much they appreciated that there is always someone to help when you need advice. Many of you who have felt isolated and alone with your problems say you have made friends as a result of the centre's work.

The centre manager and all the centre staff understand your needs extremely well, and those of your children, and they check carefully that they continue to do an excellent job. They show that they are determined to improve the lives of users even more. They have an impressive track record so far, so we have no doubt that the excellent work will continue.

The centre's close working partnership with health visitors, plus your and staff's knowledge of the local community, ensures those most in need of support receive it. However, we have asked the NHS Bournemouth and Poole to consider providing the centre with information about all new births in the area so that they are better able to identify members of the community with young children who are not accessing the centre and investigate why this is the case.

Although the centre evaluates its services and activities outstandingly well, we have asked staff to collate the findings from service evaluations so that they can clearly show what is working and what needs to be changed or improved, and feed this into the Service Delivery Plan.

We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak with us and were willing to share your thoughts and feelings about the centre. We wish all of you and your families the very best for the future.

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