

Inspection report for Torpoint Youth and Children's Centre

Local authority	Cornwall
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Centre leader	Sarah Trubody
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors visited a range of provision at the centre. They held meetings with the manager and staff from the centre, members of the advisory board and partners including health, education and children's social care professionals. Inspectors held meetings with users of a range of services and with senior managers from the local authority responsible for services in the locality. Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a wide range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Torpoint Youth and Children's Centre provides a community hub for services for children and young people aged nought to 19. There is an outreach facility based in the village of Millbrook. The children's centre was designated as part of the phase two development, serving an area judged to be within the 70% most disadvantaged in the country. The socio-economic background of the reach area is mixed. The urban area in Torpoint displays some high levels of deprivation. For example, in one ward within the reach area a quarter of the adult population is in receipt of benefits, about 10% higher than the local authority average. In the Local Index of Child Well-being, five of the eight measures indicate disadvantage within the highest 20% for the country. Surrounding this urban area there are a number of quite isolated villages with a relative lack of infrastructure and transport links. The village of Millbrook has the highest social housing list in the area. Within the reach area as a whole, the proportion of out-of-work families with a lone parent in receipt of benefits and children living in benefit-dependent households are both above the local authority average.

Most families in the reach area are of White British heritage. Torpoint is the location for HMS Raleigh, a large base for training Royal Navy personnel, and consequently there are a significant number of service families within the reach area. The close proximity to Plymouth across the River Tamar, and in particular the Royal Naval Dockyard in Devonport, has a strong economic and social influence on the reach area.

The centre opened in purpose-built accommodation in 2008 and shares facilities with the youth service. The centre is based on a campus which includes a junior school and a secondary community college.

The centre has an advisory board which was formed in September 2010, representing the range of partners that work in the centre, users and parents and carers. Formal monitoring and evaluation is through the local authority locality structure. There is also a well-established parents' forum with an active membership.

Data from the centre indicate that children's levels of achievement on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage provision within the reach area are broadly average.

The manager also leads another children's centre in the area, based at the nearby town of Saltash. She has been the manager at Torpoint Youth and Children's Centre since it opened.

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

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Torpoint Youth and Children's Centre provides good support to children and families in its reach area. Some aspects of provision, outcomes and elements of leadership and management are outstanding. Partnerships with a range of agencies are excellent overall and particularly effective with health services. Recent joint work with the Naval Personal and Family Service has resulted in some improved provision within the reach area but this is at an early stage of development.

The overall high level of service is the result of the drive and ambition of the centre

manager and staff, the outstanding assessment based on local knowledge of needs in the reach area, backed up by accurate data, together with the centre's excellent engagement with users and the wider community. This leads to the development of a cohesive and integrated approach in order to meet the needs of the community. The impact of this is quite clear in the reach area where the centre is located; there is less evidence of such effective and sustained support for the community around the outreach facility in Millbrook.

Staff display very high morale and an excellent commitment to improve and adapt provision for families in the reach area. The local authority provides an effective range of data on outcomes and the centre leadership uses this well to measure success and plan improvements. Development plans show that data, both quantitative and qualitative, are used effectively, together with local knowledge gathered through the parents' forum and the advisory board. However, this latter group has yet to develop a strategic role in supporting future developments at the centre.

A further outstanding feature is the skilled support the centre provides for parents and carers and children to improve their ability to make appropriate choices and decisions. A highly effective example of this is the support for mothers and children who have been subject to domestic abuse through the Recovery Toolkit programme. One user noted: 'It really helps knowing that I'm not alone in my situation and that there are others who feel the same. I have regained my self-confidence and ability to stand up for myself which I lost.'

The engagement of users in the work of the centre is excellent. The centre has an important role at the heart of the Torpoint community and, with the youth service, provides cohesive support for children and young people aged from nought to 19. Links with young people have enabled specialist services to be established, tailored to specific needs. For example, advice is available on sexual health from a trained adviser at the centre for young people aged 16 to 25. There is a young mums' group and, as a result of users' requests, a group for single parents has been established. The impact of this work can be seen in the reduction in the incidence of pregnancy among teenagers in the area.

The partnership with the health service is particularly effective because the community midwives are based at the centre with dedicated specialist facilities. Staff at the centre are responsible for the administration of the midwives' diaries, and regular meetings with family support workers and health visitors mean that cohesive support is available to families. As a result, the outcomes for families in developing healthy lifestyles and addressing welfare concerns are outstanding. Taken as a whole, provision for users to develop work and life skills is good. The partnership with Jobcentre Plus is firmly established, with regular surgeries taking place. Safeguarding procedures developed by the centre are good and include swift, effective and developing systems to ensure high quality links to social care data and support. Issues of equality are dealt with well, firmly based on the needs of the local community.

Given the successful outcomes, the centre's overall effectiveness is good and improving well. This, together with staff commitment and drive, highly effective user engagement, excellent partnerships and accurate self-evaluation focused on improvement, indicates that the centre has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the role of the advisory board so that it plays a full part in the strategic planning for the centre.
- Improve the provision at the outreach working at the Millbrook centre so that it is of the same high quality as at the centre.
- Further develop the partnership with the Naval Personal and Family Service to ensure cohesive provision across the reach area.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The centre plays a highly effective role in the provision of health-related courses and activities. Much of this provision involves high quality partnership work with health professionals. Midwives use the pre-Common Assessment Framework procedure effectively to signal any concerns and health visitors and family support workers meet regularly to plan cohesive support programmes. Many activities are based on health issues through, for example, the Wobblers sessions to support parents and the WILD young mums' group. This latter group has opportunities to learn about healthy eating and one member said she had tried the recipes at home because they used 'home-made healthy stuff'. Healthy eating is also promoted through the Little Gardeners' group. One parent said: 'As a result of gardening with my child we have been active in the garden at home, we have grown beans and next summer are hoping to buy patio plants.'

The Oasis group, which supports the families of children with disabilities, is well received. One participant observed: 'It is a good group, child friendly and convenient. It works well having a mix of people with younger and older children.' Another user was particularly pleased that the centre staff thought about the needs of the children in the group and planned specific activities for individuals. She said: 'The staff thought about my daughter and her special needs and planned good activities for her but they didn't treat her differently.'

As a result of high quality health support, 2010 data for the reach area show a reduction in the proportion of children judged as being obese on entry to Reception classes from 9.7% to 8%; the reduction for those judged overweight was from 14.8% to 13%. The proportion of mothers who sustain breastfeeding for at least six weeks is higher than the local authority average. This last outcome reflects the

impact of peer group support programmes based at the centre. Support from the Brook sexual health service has helped to reduce the percentage of teenage pregnancies in the reach area from 14.7% in 2009 to 6.7% last year.

Safeguarding procedures for children using the centre are effective. Staff are trained to use the Common Assessment Framework to ensure issues are recorded and shared appropriately. Assessment and recording procedures are clear and understood by partners. There is extensive training for staff on safeguarding, particularly for vulnerable children.

Data from the local authority indicate that the learning levels achieved by children in the reach area have improved significantly and in 2010 were above the local authority average by the time they enter Year 1. Overall, data show that the progress children make in a range of indicators of learning is good and improving. The gap with the national average for achievement is closing.

Users' contribution to decision making through the parents' forum is outstanding. The centre offers a range of support to parents and carers and children in order to develop life skills, economic stability and independence. As a result of support a significant proportion of users have gained employment skills, qualifications and opportunities to undertake volunteer roles within the community. A strong feature is the support for childminders through links with pre-school settings and schools together with personal support and development.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, and their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

2

The centre is highly effective in assessing and reviewing users' health, welfare and support needs, with data showing that the majority of children within the reach area have benefited from planned provision in some form. Clear procedures for sharing information and a very secure understanding of families within the reach area result in carefully planned and flexible support being available. This is well supported by

the quality of data on outcomes and provision from the local authority. Users are appreciative of this flexible range of support which is responsive to needs. As one parent attending a parenting programme said: 'I really enjoy making friends, the friendly advice and ideas for my child. The centre staff are a very warm bunch of people.'

Discussions with users and written evaluations from them show that they thoroughly enjoy the learning provision and have a wide range of opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Activities are firmly based on needs and interests and these include first-aid courses with a focus on small children and a range of parenting and health-related courses. Further developments planned include linked work with the Naval Personal and Family Service to increase provision with a focus on support for mothers with post-natal depression. Overall, the impact of provision at the outreach facility at Millbrook is not as clear as at the centre itself. There are, however, plans in place to develop provision further at this facility.

A good and developing range of care, guidance and support is offered by the centre. The centre is welcoming and bright with a range of information displayed and shared with users by centre staff. The staff are knowledgeable about the range of services available and skilled in signposting users to appropriate agencies, supporting them further at meetings and interviews if appropriate. The local authority's Family Information Service has a clear presence in the centre and representatives visit regularly to support and guide users. The highly effective partnership with health professionals means that there is a great deal of advice and support for families, including 'drop-in' support. A regular cycle of meetings with childminders covers a range of issues to develop their understanding of regulations and improve their skills.

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Formal governance at the centre is good. The local authority has a rigorous system of support and challenge based on the centre's performance management cycle, using the annual conversation as the focus. The advisory board was established in September and represents a wide range of partners, including parents and users. Centre staff have worked hard to establish this group as part of the decision-making structure, and meetings have been used to develop an understanding of the work of the centre through the self-evaluation process. This has been effective in promoting a good general understanding of the work of the centre among advisory board

members, but this group has yet to establish itself fully in supporting strategic direction. An outstanding feature is the engagement of parents and users through the well-established parents' forum. As a result, courses and support are very well tuned to needs and consequently satisfaction rates by users are high.

The inclusion of all children and families is at the heart of the work of the centre. Positive images, resources and tailored programmes highlight the centre's determination to support groups who may be subject to discrimination. For example, the Oasis group supports parents and carers of children with disabilities and is highly regarded. There is a dads' group which meets regularly at weekends, and members of minority ethnic groups told inspectors how the centre has supported their needs. The centre's safeguarding, vetting and recruiting procedures are effective, leading to good quality early intervention and multi-agency cooperation. This is particularly effective in supporting victims of domestic violence.

The centre manager is totally committed to the development of services and benefits from the support of a highly motivated team. Staff have been effective in developing the multi-agency partnership approach adopted by the centre. In this they have shown the highest expectations and considerable drive, developing good use of the centre to meet the wide age-range of users accessing its services. Overall, resources of all kinds are used and managed effectively. Self-evaluation is comprehensive, accurate and used effectively by the centre to develop detailed development plans.

Overall, the good outcomes and improving provision, backed by the high quality leadership, partnership working and engagement mean that the centre provides good value for money.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the	1

integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	
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	1

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

No other information used.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Torpoint Youth and Children’s Centre on 30 and 31 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. Some aspects are outstanding.

Your children’s centre provides a good and improving range of services that are helping families and children in and around Torpoint. During the inspection, some of you told us how you had benefited from the support provided by the centre and how you appreciated the work of the staff. An example of this highly effective work is the access you have to midwifery services and healthcare support. Links between centre staff and health professionals are really good in providing families with a range of ‘joined-up’ support that meets their particular needs. Users of services told inspectors that this had helped them and their families.

Excellent aspects of the centre include the programmes for healthcare, support to develop parenting skills and work with vulnerable groups to help them develop positive relationships and improve decision-making strategies. Other outstanding elements are the engagement with users to develop services and the partnerships with other agencies and groups. When families find themselves in difficulty or even in crisis, the centre is able to help them well by providing information and support, including for general and welfare benefits. The leadership by the manager is highly effective and has been instrumental in developing provision and improving outcomes since the centre opened.

The centre works in an effective way to ensure the safety of children and there are good links with social services. The centre itself is a very safe environment for users and their children. Staff use their local knowledge in a highly effective way to develop support to meet specific needs. They are welcoming and committed to

improvement and the good quality of relationships was mentioned by parents and users who spoke to inspectors. Your views are used effectively to develop provision and users told inspectors about improvements to activities following consultation. An example of this was the development of the Single Parents of Torpoint (SPOT) group.

Although outcomes for parents and carers and users are good overall, some aspects could be developed further. The advisory board is new and developing well but does not yet play a sufficiently strategic role in developing the centre's provision. The provision of services at the outreach centre in Millbrook does not lead to such positive outcomes as at the centre but there are plans to improve provision. Finally, the centre should continue to work in partnership with the Naval Personal and Family Service to develop provision across the reach area.

As part of the report inspectors have made the following specific recommendations to help improve provision at the centre.

- Develop the role of the advisory board so that it plays a full part in the strategic planning for the centre.
- Improve the outreach working at the Millbrook centre so that it is of the same high quality as at the centre.
- Further develop the partnership with the Naval Personal and Family Service to ensure cohesive provision across the reach area.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful and we wish you every success for the future.

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