

# Inspection report for Sure Start North West Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	384138
Inspection dates	16–17 August 2011
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Centre governance	Nottingham City Council
Centre leader	Claire Turnbull
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	My Start Nursery EY279828 Little Stars Day Nursery EY230699

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 the senior leadership team, representatives from Action for Children, Nottingham City Council, the advisory board, partner agencies, frontline workers, parents and carers.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Sure Start North West Children's Centre is a phase one centre. The centre covers a number of wards in North West Nottingham. The children's centre is one of three within the Aspley ward which is included within the top 10% most deprived wards in the country. It was designated in 2003 and was developed from a Sure Start local programme. It is located in a purpose-built building and accommodates multi-agency teams who work in partnership to deliver the full core offer. Day-care provision is delivered at My Start Nursery which is located in Minver Crescent. Provision for nursery education funded places and the pilot scheme for two-year-olds is made on site.

The service manager, who was appointed in December 2010, is responsible for the management of all three children's centres. The strategic management of the centre is the responsibility of Action for Children which is commissioned by Nottingham City Council to provide the children's centre service. Support and guidance are provided by a local advisory group which consists of a range of professional partners, community representatives and staff.

Over half of the children under five years live in households that are dependent on workless benefits. Ninety one percent of local families are of White British heritage. The predominant minority ethnic group is Black or Black British with a growing

number of Asian and Eastern European families. Most children enter childcare and early education with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than that expected for their age.

## 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**

**2**

## Main findings

North West Children's Centre is making a good contribution to improving outcomes for its users. Management, staff and partner agencies work exceptionally well together and show high levels of commitment in order to meet the needs of users and their families. 'You are not judged;' 'Staff are so friendly;' 'I really enjoy it here,' are typical of the comments made by users. The outstanding care, guidance and support provided by the centre are empowering families to deal with extremely challenging circumstances and to improve significantly their life chances.

Partnership working is a key strength of this centre. Outstanding relationships have been established with a range of partner agencies and community forums. Many are located on the centre site and provide a 'one stop shop' for families. The centre has been successful in registering a high proportion of families with young children in the reach area. Recruitment of local people to the staff team and their close working relationship with Broxtowe Partnership Trust are improving the centre's contact with some hard-to-reach families and young parents.

Very effective relationships with health practitioners ensure the centre knows and engages with pregnant teenagers. This relationship with health services supports the centre in its delivery of a range of programmes to improve the health of all users and their families. However, despite concerted efforts, the uptake of breastfeeding is low and levels of childhood obesity are high.

Managers and staff within the centre are exceptionally creative in the way that they use resources. They signpost users to every service that they consider will improve their lives. They embrace new initiatives, are involved in research projects and have taken part in many pilot schemes. Users access a great deal of information as they walk around the centre. Leaflets and good-quality displays give advice, guidance and

contact details of the range of agencies who offer support.

There is a strong commitment to inclusion and an exceptional range of equipment and activities. As a result, children, parents and carers with additional needs are very well supported. Cultural, religious and ethnic diversity is recognised and celebrated. There is a strong sense of pride and community cohesion and an atmosphere of mutual respect. The well-established and very effective volunteer programme is giving users the opportunity to give something back to the community.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is given exceptionally high priority. Protection through prevention is central to all the work that is undertaken. A multi-agency locality allocation panel for the most vulnerable cases creates a 'team around the child' approach. This, combined with strong leadership and effective quality-assurance systems by Action for Children, ensures outstanding levels of protection.

Senior leaders are enthusiastic and are determined to make a difference. They are valued and respected by the staff who they lead and manage well. Support and challenge are provided by the local authority. The advisory board, which is still developing, also provides support and challenge through its multi-agency membership. Parents and carers share their views of the activities and services delivered in so many ways; these views are taken seriously by the centre. The centre is also re-establishing its parents' forum. However, this is in its early days and not all parents and carers have a clear understanding of its remit. Nor are they involved in the advisory board which limits their ability to contribute to the governance of the centre. Despite this, as a result of the centre's very effective partnerships, the commitment of managers and staff, and the high quality of its work and resources, there is good capacity for improvement.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve users' contribution to the governance of the centre by ensuring they are clear about the role and purpose of the parents' forum and the advisory board and by increasing their participation in both.
- Identify and implement strategies to improve breastfeeding rates and to reduce obesity.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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Emotional health of users and their families is given very good attention by staff and partner agencies. Activities such as 'Baby Massage', 'Weigh and Play' and 'Bumps to Babies' are significantly enhancing the emotional and physical relationship between parent and child. Swift action by multi-agency teams for families who experience or

are at risk of domestic violence ensures that children remain safe and adults receive appropriate support.

Parenting programmes help parents and carers to have a better understanding of their children's needs. One parent, for example, said 'I know it has helped me to manage my children's behaviour better.' Teenage pregnancy rates in the area are high. However, initiatives such as the 'C Card Scheme', which includes sexual health advice, is having a very positive impact by supporting, advising and allowing young people to make informed choices.

Parents and carers accessing the cooking club, weaning sessions and the 'Fun with Food' activities comment upon how their children will now try different and healthier foods. They also comment on how useful the 'Cooking on a Budget' sessions have been in helping them to see that providing a healthy diet does not have to be expensive. Despite the implementation of a range of strategies, which are having some impact, obesity levels in the area remain high. Increasing breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates has been and continues to be a challenge for the centre and its partners who implement a range of strategies in an effort to overcome the barriers to improvement. Consistent messages, advice and support are given, and case studies evidence the benefits reported by mothers who have been successful in breastfeeding. However, rates remain low in the reach area. Immunisation rates are in line with national averages.

The centre is effective in ensuring that parents, carers and children keep themselves safe and free from harm. This is demonstrated by a wide range of preventative measures and advice. Staff model safe practices well and the centre is a very safe and welcoming place because of the vigilance of all adults and the completion of comprehensive risk assessments of all areas and activities. The centre makes an outstanding contribution to the protection of vulnerable families and children with child protection plans. The needs of the child are paramount to all work that is undertaken. Case files evidence that, wherever possible, children are included in planning and decision making. The Common Assessment Framework is used very effectively within the centre. This ensures that families are given the support and help that they need to prevent situations from reaching crisis point.

There are many activities where parents, carers and children play, have fun and learn together. Two of the comments made by parents and carers were: 'I really enjoy playing with my child now,' and 'We laugh a lot.' Case studies and photographs demonstrate that, in activities such as 'Weigh and Play' and 'Play and Sing' sessions at Strelley Library, children enjoy the learning opportunities. In the 'Fun with Food' holiday activity, adults, children and babies were engrossed in cooking and play activities. The range of good-quality information and advice on all aspects of child development is helping parents and carers understand how they can help their children.

Targeted interventions such as the 'Every Child a Talker' project are producing improved outcomes in relation to communication, language and literacy, and

personal, social and emotional development. Transition arrangements are good and consistently managed in collaboration with the local schools. Parents and carers are actively involved in their children's next steps as they move from nursery to school, and their feedback indicates high levels of satisfaction with the arrangements. Data show that children make good progress from their low starting points and, as a result, the achievement gap is closing between the lowest 20% and others.

Parents and carers make their views known. For example, they complete customer satisfaction surveys, and they give feedback to staff and others involved with their families on a regular basis. They say how they like the 'Thinking Tree'. They praised managers and staff for always listening to them. One parent said, 'They all listen.' Another said, 'You get to know if your suggestion has been agreed.' They consider they have a voice within the centre and that their requests for services would be met wherever possible. A few know about the reformed parents' forum, but they are unclear as to its role and purpose. Minutes from the advisory board meetings show that the views of parents and carers are shared with board members. However, parents and carers do not attend advisory board meetings. As a result, there is little opportunity for them to be involved in key decision making.

Parents, carers and young adults undertake a wide range of courses, including National Vocational Qualifications. They say that their confidence had developed and that they feel proud of their achievements. Family learning, volunteering and involvement in the enterprising employment initiatives delivered by the children's centre and its partners are providing adults with important skills on which to build in the future. Adults are given advice and support and helped with form-filling by staff from Jobcentre Plus, Credit Union, Family Information Service and the in-house Family Advice Session. Ensuring they receive their benefits is one small step towards independence and improved economic well-being.

*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>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>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>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?

2
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The care, guidance and support given by the children's centre and its partner agencies are outstanding as a result of the extremely safe and nurturing environment they have created. There is a collective commitment across all agencies to deliver a holistic provision in order to bring about improvements in the well-being of all who use the centre. As one partner identified, 'Provision is seamless, we are all involved in this children's centre.' There is a real understanding of the impact that poverty has on children's well-being.

A range of partners, including health visitors and midwives, the youth and play work manager, the children's centre teacher and the children's centre's own staff and managers are accommodated in the centre. This creates an environment where skills, knowledge and information can be quickly shared. This has enabled the centre to create a 'team around the child' approach. All members make a valuable contribution, including the centre's well-informed administrative staff. They provide a warm welcome and have been described by their colleagues as 'the backbone of the centre'. Discussions with users and case studies show the high levels of support offered to families in times of crisis.

Assessment of need is built upon strong relationships and a good knowledge of the area and the families within it. Local people with the relevant skills and knowledge and who know the area well are employed in various roles within the centre. Their knowledge, combined with the good-quality data provided by the local authority, ensures those with greatest need receive personalised, targeted support.

The Common Assessment Framework is embedded, and exceptionally strong relationships with partner agencies make certain that assessments of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are robust. Effective systematic recording of all contact with children and adults provides an evidence base of all involvement and of the impact services are having. Outreach work to support children and their families is well thought out and matches needs well. Families who find it difficult to access the centre are supported in their own home. There is a strong sense of empowerment. One parent identified that staff help but do not take over.

There are many opportunities for adults to be involved in purposeful learning and development. Family learning activities develop users' confidence and are often the first step before users move onto more formal learning and development experiences. All training has been made available as result of the centre's effective work with Jobcentre Plus and a range of training and development providers. The 'Future Jobs Fund' scheme enabled the centre to recruit, train and support young people. Some are now employed in the centre, others have gained employment elsewhere or have moved into further training. A very strong and successful volunteer programme has resulted in many users developing confidence and the skills needed to return to work. Many of the employment opportunities and schemes are pilots but, as one comes to an end, the centre quickly identifies another.

*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>2</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**

Leadership and management are consistently good at all levels. Recent changes at children's centre manager level have been implemented very effectively, resulting in a seamless transition for children, families and staff. Senior leaders have a clear vision and a strong determination to ensure that the centre is effective in improving the life chances of families within its reach area. They lead a committed and knowledgeable staff team who make a valuable contribution to the effectiveness of the centre. Staff morale is high and everyone involved works together to improve outcomes. Governance arrangements between Action for Children and Nottingham City Council are understood by all. Centre managers are held accountable through regular meetings with the advisory board and the local authority, and through the annual conversation. Self-evaluation is accurate. The service improvement plan identifies priorities and the actions the centre needs to take to meet them. The centre knows its strengths and areas for development well.

Inclusion is well embedded throughout the centre's work. Staff are effective in ensuring that all children, parents and carers, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have the same access to the range of experiences on offer. The information displayed promotes equality and diversity, and translation services are available if needed. The centre is fully accessible for people with disabilities and offers a well-equipped and resourced provision for children with additional needs.

Safeguarding arrangements are extremely robust. The centre adheres to safer recruitment practices. Criminal Records Bureau checks are complete and all staff working with children are deemed suitable. The centre exceeds the requirement in relation to the designated safeguarding lead training. Early intervention, preventative work and excellent partnership working are key elements to the success of the children's centre's outstanding safeguarding arrangements. A multi-agency locality panel (MALT), made up of team managers from children's centres, the MALT / Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) coordinator and representatives from social care, is responsible for the allocation of referred cases for targeted work. This prevents case overload for individual centres and workers. It also provides a



forum for sharing good practice and for raising concerns. Action for Children has implemented effective quality assurance systems through case file audits. This gives them a management overview and ensures consistency in reporting and recording.

There is a strong commitment to ensuring the sustainability of the children's centre and all of its services. On occasion, this has forced the centre managers to make difficult decisions as they ensure that services are not duplicated. The centre works very effectively with other children's centres and with a wide range of service providers both within the area and city-wide to make best use of every available space. In addition, resources are used extremely effectively and very creatively. Consequently, the centre provides excellent value for money.

*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>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>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>2</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>2</b>

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

The most recent inspection of My Start Nursery which is linked to Sure Start North West Children's Centre took place in December 2009. All judgements made in relation to outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage were good.

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 Sure Start North West Children's Centre on 16 and 17 August 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

As part of the inspection, we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation and talked with a range of children, users of the centre, staff, community representatives and partnership workers. We also read some of the things you have written about the centre when you have been on courses or attended activities with your children.

We were very impressed with the outstanding care, guidance and support you receive. Managers and staff work incredibly hard with an excellent range of partners to provide a 'team around the child' approach which supports the improvements you are trying to make to your lives. It also works hard to reach out to families from a wide range of backgrounds to make sure they are included in the services and activities. Staff give good levels of support to many families who are vulnerable and need help.

We heard from you how enjoyable the activities and trips provided by the centre are. You also told us how the holiday activities help you to keep your children occupied during the school holidays. Centre staff work closely with you to improve your health and that of your families. We know that you particularly enjoy the cooking club, the weaning sessions and the 'Fun with Food'. In order to improve the health of your families even more, we have asked the centre to support more families in reducing the levels of obesity among young children. In addition, we have asked them to encourage and support more new mothers to breastfeed their babies.

Centre leaders provide many opportunities for you to tell them what you think about the services provided. Through initial assessments, you are involved in deciding what activities and services the centre needs to provide you with. We know that you make your views known through surveys, discussion and via the 'Thinking Tree'. We also heard that some of you are involved in the reformed parents' forum. However, we do not think that you are fully informed of the role of the forum and the reason why it is important. We also think that more of you should be involved in the governance and decision making. We have, therefore, asked the centre managers to consider ways in which this can happen.

The centre is making a positive difference to children's well-being and learning. It is particularly making a significant difference in helping children to experience a safe start to childhood. Children have good opportunities to develop their play and

learning within the centre and this is helping them to prepare for their next steps into nursery through the 'Ready for Nursery' group. They make good progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Those of you who volunteer get good support and gain valuable skills that will be useful to you in the future. Many of you are making use of opportunities to improve your education and work experience so that your future prospects of employment are improved. We were impressed with the number of schemes that are available and the work that has been happening with Jobcentre Plus.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre and we wish you and your families the 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).