

# Inspection report for Woodbank with Elton Children's Centre

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Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	383572
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2011
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY250635 Woodbank Oscars

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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.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, headteachers, staff from the linked primary school, parents, members of the advisory board and school governing body and representatives from the local authority and partner agencies, including representatives from the health service and adult learning.

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

## Information about the centre

Woodbank Children's Centre is a phase two centre situated in the Elton ward of Bury West and was opened in September 2008. It became fully operational and was designated in January 2009.

The centre is purpose built and housed in a single storey building. It shares its site with Woodbank Primary School and a maintained nursery. Some services are delivered at a 'satellite' venue at Elton Primary School. Childcare is provided by five private nurseries and a pre-school setting. It offers universal and targeted services.

Bury is made up of 120 super output areas with eight being in the reach area for the centre. The area served by the centre is socially and economically diverse with areas of relative affluence and pockets of deprivation. The majority of families are of White British heritage. Recent figures indicate that about 3.3% of the Elton Ward claim workless benefits. The number of children living in workless households is low compared with the rest of Bury. Obesity rates are lower than the national rate and slightly above the rates for the rest of

Bury. Sustained breastfeeding rates are higher than the rest of Bury but lower than the rates for England. In some parts of the reach area, children's starting point on entry to early education is lower than that expected for their age but in less deprived parts of the reach area, it is significantly higher.

The head of centre is based at Woodbank Primary School. A sub-committee of the governing body fulfils the function of the advisory board along with other representatives.

## 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 families**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Woodbank Children's Centre is satisfactory. Some outcomes are good and the quality of provision is also good although the centre's ability to demonstrate the impact of this provision across all the outcomes is still developing. The centre has experienced changes in staffing during the last year and is in a period of transition in relation to its structure, staffing and governance arrangements. However, this has not impeded the motivation of staff or diminished their morale; they remain enthusiastic and passionate about their work.

Leaders and managers work satisfactorily together and have a good understanding of the key characteristics of the reach area; they also have a shared understanding of the priorities for the centre and have judged, with reasonable accuracy, its strengths and weaknesses. The data provided by the local authority are detailed and effective in helping the centre identify the key features of its reach area and plan provision to meet needs. However, a rigorous process of self-evaluation and performance management is not yet in place to inform development planning and drive improvement, this makes the centre's capacity for sustained improvement as satisfactory. Systems to hold the centre accountable are in place but lines of accountability are not always well understood by staff.

One of the centre's key strengths is its ability to provide and promote good quality health services. Woodbank Children's Centre makes a significant and recognised contribution to improving the health of its local community. Data show that obesity rates are falling in the reach area and are below national averages. The centre actively promotes healthy eating

and makes healthy food accessible through its 'fruit and veg' scheme and also through cookery sessions, when staff help parents acquire the skills to cook healthy meals. 'It was fab. I learnt new recipes and exciting ways to cook', was the comment from one parent who attended a cookery session.

The way the centre engages with a wide range of partners and works with them to achieve positive outcomes for families is another one of its key strengths. Partners speak highly of the centre and share its commitment to improving the lives of families. Staff from partner agencies contribute well to the provision of services and activities. Service level agreements and other less formal written agreements are in place to secure the services of all partners.

Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory with vetting and checking carried out as appropriate. Early intervention and strategies to protect children from harm are effective. However, procedures to safeguard adults vulnerable due to their circumstances are not as well promoted as those for children, also the monitoring of training in this aspect of safeguarding is not rigorous enough. Equality and diversity are satisfactorily promoted and requirements are adequately met. The centre has put activities in place such as a 'dad's group', which meets fortnightly, to encourage more men to use the centre. Data analysis is also used to monitor the take-up of activities and registrations by the growing but small number of minority ethnic families in the area. The centre is starting to use data analysis to monitor the impact of its equality and diversity policies.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

The local authority and the governing body to:

- support the centre in implementing rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems that provide accurate information about the impact and quality of all provision
- implement and monitor training for all staff in safeguarding of adults who are vulnerable due to their circumstances
- ensure clear lines of accountability are in place and understood by all staff
- make rigorous use of performance management systems to improve outcomes across all areas and to enable the local authority and the advisory board to support, challenge and hold the centre to account.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>3</b>
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Through the activities and services it provides, Woodbank Children's Centre makes an effective contribution to the health of the local community. Clinics provided in conjunction with health visitors such as the 'well baby clinic' and 'baby massage' are well attended.

Parents comment positively and about the benefits they receive as a result of their increased understanding of how they and their children can live healthier lives. Schemes such as the 'fruit and veg' scheme are very popular and promote healthy eating. The scheme enables parents to order and buy small bags of fruits and vegetables at low prices directly from the centre. Partnership working with the health services is good and data and local knowledge are used well to respond to health needs within the community. 'I pledge to eat more healthily and to eat less chocolate' was the written 'pledge' made by one parent, which demonstrates the responsibility taken by parents to improve their own health, as a result of their learning.

Children are safe and protected at the centre and risk assessments for activities and rooms are detailed. The promotion of safety to families has been effective in helping families make their homes safe. The environment within the centre is safe and parents' understanding of safeguarding is promoted through their participation in parenting programmes but also through the advice and guidance they receive from staff and the other professionals who visit the centre. Evidence from partners and from centre staff demonstrates the effectiveness of the centre in using the Common Assessment Framework as part of its safeguarding strategy. There is some evidence of improved outcomes for children on child protection plans. Although there is awareness by staff of procedures to follow to safeguard vulnerable adults, this area of the centre's work is not as developed as the safeguarding of children.

Children make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage and the transition of children to nursery and the local school is good. The opportunities offered by the centre for parents to play and learn together are effective in helping parents develop good relationships with their children and support their children's learning and development. Parents comment positively on the impact of their learning about parenting. Parents also make good progress in their personal and social development. Some parents have participated in adult learning programmes and progressed from achieving Level 1 numeracy qualifications to studying for Level 2 qualifications. Others have progressed from receiving support at home to gaining the confidence to participate in activities at the centre.

The centre is well established in the community and families express their views satisfactorily. Children demonstrate positive behaviour at the centre and partners confirm the centre's role in breaking down barriers and promoting community cohesion between the different social groups that are represented within the reach area. A 'Parent's Voice' group has been established to provide a structured forum for parents to express their views but at the time of inspection, the group had only met once. Greater involvement of parents and carers at governance level and in decision making has been recognised by the centre as an area for further development. Plans are in place to increase on the representation of parents and carers in the advisory board.

Children make good progress in developing skills for the future, for example developing their independence. There are also improvements in outcomes for parents who participate in adult learning or other training opportunities at the centre. Information and guidance for parents about childcare, benefits and employment options are satisfactory. There are

satisfactory links with Jobcentre Plus and regular promotion of employment vacancies. Although some parents participate in education, there is limited evidence about the progression of parents from education or training into employment.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target 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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, 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, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.</b>	<b>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

The centre and its partners know their community well. They have risen well to the challenge of reaching the vulnerable families who live within an area that on the surface does not appear deprived. Partnership work is therefore used effectively to identify and respond to the needs of the most vulnerable families who live within a socially mixed community. Information about community needs is shared well during meetings attended by centre staff, local police and staff from the local social housing agency. Outreach work is also successful in assessing needs at an individual level. The outreach worker is skilled at using a multi-agency approach to provide the intervention that is needed to support families.

Participation rates are good and the impact of services on all outcomes is at least satisfactory and in some aspects good. Opportunities for learning and development at the centre are good. Children are well prepared for school and parents are given good opportunities to develop their personal skills. The advisory teacher from the primary school works well with staff at the centre to develop good quality learning opportunities for children. An innovative resource known as 'BOO' (Bags of Opportunity), has been developed by the advisory teacher and the centre, to help parents prepare their children for the transition to school. 'BOO bags' are used very effectively to help parents support their children. Each bag contains items such as books, scissors, paper and other materials that are relevant to learning in school and also linked to themes covered in sessions at the centre.

Learning is actively promoted for all families and provision effectively matched to need. Achievement is well celebrated and a 'WOW wall' at the centre recognises the achievement

of parents who have achieved certificates or in other ways made good progress in their development. 'All About Me' books are used well by crèche workers to monitor, track and celebrate the progress of children.

'The centre has had a massive impact – staff helped me with childcare when I was left alone', was the comment from one parent which was typical of many. The quality of care, guidance and support given to families is good. Evidence and personal testimonies from partners and families demonstrate the centre's effectiveness in providing help and care at the right time and often when families are experiencing crisis and feeling distressed. Joint home visits between the outreach worker and others such as health visitors are instrumental in providing a well-integrated package of care, support and guidance to families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**3**

The centre is in a period of transition and due to uncertainties about funding and potential changes in the governance structure; key members of staff are in temporary 'acting' roles rather than permanent roles. The centre coordinator and centre staff are nevertheless highly committed to improving the life chances of families and demonstrate high levels of professionalism. Governance and accountability arrangements are satisfactorily understood but lines of accountability between staff, the advisory board, governors and the local authority are not sufficiently transparent. The advisory board has good representation from partners such as schools but there is limited involvement of parents on the board. The centre recognises the need to increase the representation of parents and carers on the board and to involve more of them in decision making. The priorities of the centre are informed by strategic planning at local authority level and by the regular provision of data.

Performance management is satisfactory and quarterly reports are used adequately by local authority managers to monitor the centre's performance against key outcomes. Centre staff have an adequate knowledge of the centre's strengths and weaknesses and the process of development planning incorporates specific actions to address weaknesses. However, a complete and rigorous cycle of self-evaluation, which takes into account data and evidence for all outcomes has yet to be established. Targets are in place for some areas of the centre's activities but more challenging targets to secure improvements are not yet in place.

The management of resources and value for money are satisfactory. The centre has a small staff team but the resources of partners from health and other services are used effectively to provide services and activities. Most of the services are delivered at the Woodbank Centre but staff are exploring options to deliver more services at the 'satellite' Elton Centre.



Centre staff and their partners understand the social mix of their local community and satisfactorily promote equality for all their users and the wider community. The narrowing of the achievement gap between the lowest achieving groups of children and the others is satisfactory. Although most families within the reach area are of White British heritage, the centre constantly monitors registration and attendance rates and is making a concerted effort to engage with the small number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds within its reach area. The inclusion of disabled children and those with additional needs and their families is satisfactorily promoted.

Statutory requirements for safeguarding are satisfactorily met. Vetting and checking arrangements are compatible with requirements. Information sharing between the centre and its partners is used effectively to identify vulnerable families and to intervene early to prevent problems from escalating. Safeguarding training of staff is satisfactory overall; however, detailed procedures and regular training to ensure staff have a good understanding of how to safeguard vulnerable adults is still developing.

Centre staff work very well with partners from the private, statutory and other sectors. Partners share the centre's passion to improve outcomes for vulnerable families. Services offered by partners help to increase the range of opportunities that the centre can offer to enable families improve their lives and enjoy activities at the centre. Partners such as the local schools and the health services bring a high level of expertise and experience to the centre. This contributes to the good quality services such as health clinics and the early years learning that the centre offers. When crises arise in families, the response from the centre and its partners is swift and effective in preventing problems from escalating. User engagement is satisfactory and the extent to which families views are sought and used to develop provision is adequate. Outreach work is also effective in engaging new families and identifying needs. Activities and services offered at the centre are regularly evaluated by families, and children are also invited to contribute their views.

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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use of ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.</b>	<b>3</b>
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## **Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection**

Concurrent inspection of Woodbank Primary School

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Woodbank with Elton Children's Centre on 22 and 23 September 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

During the inspection, we tried to observe as many activities as we could and also talked to some of you and looked at what you had written in your evaluations.

The management of the centre is satisfactory and arrangements for governance are also satisfactory. We know that there have been changes in staffing over the last year and also some changes in the way the centre operates. It is too soon for some of the changes that have been introduced to make a difference but we believe that the centre has the ability to make improvements.

Those of you we spoke to, told us how much you enjoy attending the centre and how your children also enjoy activities at the centre. We know that keeping your family healthy is important to you and we feel that one of the strengths of the centre is its ability to help you learn how you can keep your families healthy. We also like the different approaches the staff at the centre use to help you learn how to support your children's learning and help them prepare for the big move to school. We think this is another one of the key strengths of the centre.

During our visit, we met some of the professionals who visit the centre and help with clinics or help to put on some of the activities such as 'Kids Rock'. The partnership arrangement the centre has with various organisations is good. This is something else we recognised as a strength of the centre – the good links it has with organisations and companies. From our discussions with you and also with professionals, we know that the staff really care about you and your families and this is something we recognise as another positive feature of your centre.

Staff are constantly looking at ways to improve the centre and we know they ask you for your views. However, we think this is an aspect of the centre's work that could be better. This is why we have asked the centre, the local authority and the governing body to try and monitor what happens at the centre more closely and to particularly monitor the training of staff in safeguarding of vulnerable adults. We know that the safety of children is a real priority for the centre but we want to be sure that the safety of adults who are vulnerable is also seen as a priority. We also want the staff to make sure the arrangements for governing and managing the centre are clear and understood by everyone involved with the centre's work.

Many thanks for taking the time you took to talk to us during the inspection. We wish you and your families all 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).