

Inspection report for Sure Start Teignmouth Children's Centre

Local authority	Devon County Council
Inspection number	383728
Inspection dates	November 2011
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Centre leader	Timothy Collins
Date of previous inspection	This is the centre's first inspection
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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.

Report published: November 2011



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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 held meetings with the centre's management team, representatives from Action for Children, the local authority, partnership agencies, members of staff and families using the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its development plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre and the wider community.

Information about the centre

Sure Start Teignmouth Children's Centre is a phase one children's centre which has developed from a Sure Start Local Programme. It is run by Action for Children on behalf of the local authority. The centre was designated in January 2005 and offers a range of services which include health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes and outreach services. Services are provided at the children's centre as well as in venues in the community.

The centre operates as part of a cluster of seven children's centres in the Teignbridge district. Staff work across two children's centres: Teignmouth and Dawlish. The centre's reach area covers Teignmouth, Bishopsteignton, Shaldon, Stokeinteignhead and Ideford. It is in an area which is not identified as deprived overall, although there are some pockets of deprivation where families are either dependant on workless benefits or low incomes. The population is mostly White British, with a small percentage of other ethnic groups, some of whom speak English as an additional language. There is also a small population from the Traveller community. Children's levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are low, particularly in communication, language and literacy development

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Sure Start Teignmouth Children's Centre provides good services which effectively promote positive outcomes for local families. The centre is clearly at the heart of its community; staff work extremely hard to ensure they take services to where they are needed and to bring the community together. Leaders, managers and staff regularly engage with those who live in the locality to ensure that services meet local need. Parents have excellent opportunities to contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre and are well represented on the advisory board. It is clear that staff listen to the views of families and the wider community when developing services. Staff and families treat each other with utmost respect and consideration. The extremely strong community ethos of the centre has been very successful at promoting the cohesion of the local community.

Many families make an excellent contribution to their community. They express their desire to 'give something back' and do so through a well-organised volunteer programme. Users have formed 'Friends of Sure Start (FOSS)' and raise funds to provide further services and activities for local families. They have had great success in arranging 'Play Days' and have secured significant funding to deliver 'Snazzy Maracas', a music project delivered to preschool providers in the local area. Users express great pride in the difference they make.

The care, guidance and support of families are outstanding, particularly in times of crisis. There is an extremely caring ethos throughout the centre and staff provide families with very good levels of information, advice and practical guidance. Effective partnership working with outside agencies means that staff are able to provide services which meet a range of complex needs. Particularly good attention is given to the emotional good health of families. Staff fully recognise the need for parents to be emotionally strong in order that they are able to provide suitably for their children. One user summed up the impact the centre had on her life by describing it as being her 'lifeline' when she had been at her lowest, stating 'I really love the new me!' She expressed how proud she now is to hold her head up high and how her daughter wanted her to tell the staff, 'Thank you for bringing my mum back!' Staff and management show high levels of commitment and work extremely well

together. They have a good understanding of the quality of the services they offer and show good capacity to improve further. Self-evaluation is accurate and informs the priorities set out in the service delivery plan and in the centre's strategy for engagement with hard-to-reach groups. There are clear, measurable targets set by the local authority to drive improvement, although other targets are less measurable. The format of the documents is such that progress and success are not easy to track as evidence is not recorded centrally. Centre staff have had success in the implementation of their engagement strategy with the majority of groups in their community. However, whilst they are working with individual families from the small percentage of minority ethnic groups and the Traveller community, staff recognise they have yet to be successful in widening the participation from these particular groups.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Refine action plans further in order that they include a range of measurable targets and provide a suitable format to better monitor on-going progress and success.
- Implement strategies to further improve the participation of minority ethnic groups and the Traveller community.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Parents are developing a good understanding of how to improve the health of their families. They learn how to cook balanced meals on a budget and, together with their children, grow vegetables in the centre's garden. Families are becoming more active together as they access opportunities provided by the centre to go swimming at a local hotel. The 'Walk This Way' initiative, developed alongside the Primary Care Trust and a local sports centre, has also encouraged more families to become more active.

The rates of breastfeeding across the reach area are above national averages. The effective promotion of breastfeeding contributes to this positive picture. Mothers express their appreciation of the support they have been given, both on a one-to-one basis and through the 'Bosom Buddies' group, which offers them professional advice as well as peer support.

Parents and children's emotional well-being is given extremely good attention. Particular attention is given to mothers who may be suffering from post-natal depression, through the provision of counselling services and an art therapy group. 'Mums the word' is run by mothers who have already benefitted from art therapy and wish to continue accessing the support from their peers as well as receiving input from relevant professionals to support their continued emotional well-being.

Parents' understanding of how to keep their child safe is developing well. Staff work in partnership with the fire service to provide parents with opportunities to evaluate the safety of their homes and they provide suitable home-safety equipment such as

stair gates. The centre's outdoor learning environment provides children with opportunities to take risks under close supervision, developing their understanding of how to themselves keep safe. Safeguarding of children is effectively promoted and staff work well with those families who are subject to a child protection plan, in order to improve outcomes.

Children and parents enjoy playing and learning together. Parents develop the home learning environment by replicating ideas learnt in groups. They learn how to support their child's language and communication skills due to the good attention paid by staff on promoting this particular area of development. Staff provide relevant activities and groups, such as sessions on 'Story Sacks' and embedding the 'Every Child A Talker' language promotion scheme within the groups they offer. In particular, the 'Step-by-Step' group for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities inspires and empowers parents to follow through ideas they have learnt in order to enhance their child's development.

Families are supported to improve their economic position, particularly in times of crisis such as when facing eviction; staff help parents with applications to access benefits and grants, enabling them to remain living in their homes. Many parents have been successful in securing employment due to the support staff have given them in completing job applications and developing interview skills. Several users have undertaken the journey from user to volunteer to securing employment within the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
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	2

How good is the provision?

2

Staff have a good understanding of the needs of the community. They make good use of data provided by the local authority as well as their comprehensive local knowledge to build a picture of local need; leaders use this knowledge well in order to shape and develop their services. Staff know their families well. They make good

use of Action for Children's 'E-Aspire' model and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to conduct comprehensive assessments which identify the needs of families who receive targeted support. These assessments identify relevant services and the outcomes towards which the family are working. Staff regularly review assessments with the families to ensure that services provided remain suitable.

Overall, the centre staff are reaching a good percentage of most target groups in their area and provide a good range of services to meet need. Staff have successfully engaged young parents, fathers, children and parents with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who live in areas of deprivation, although they recognise that they have had less success with some groups. Services are well attended and some, such as drop-in groups, are oversubscribed.

Families engage in a range of relevant training courses and sessions. These provide them with information to support them in making improved choices in their lives, such as learning about healthy eating and how to communicate with their young children. Families are developing relevant core skills well, as the centre has a strong partnership with the local family learning centre which offers courses such as literacy, numeracy and information technology. These are tailored to meet individual needs, such as supporting those with dyslexia. The centre is able to clearly evidence strong success in raising parents' aspirations. For example, some parents have shared the skills they have gained by delivering training courses, such as 'Feed a family for a Fiver', or by supporting other users to develop their information technology skills. Families' achievements are celebrated. On completion of courses, they are presented with certificates by the mayor and their success is reported in the local press. Art work completed by families is valued and attractively displayed around the centre.

Parents report that a key strength of this children's centre is the fact that all staff take time to listen and support them whenever they need this. They report that 'they are always there when you need them'. Staff effectively empower parents, the majority of whom report that they have significantly increased levels of confidence due to their contact with the centre.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre is run by a committed senior management team who have a clear vision for the centre. They are clear about their individual roles and responsibilities and work extremely well with the whole staff team to provide good levels of service, particularly to those who need it the most. Clear governance and line management arrangements are in place. Leaders and managers are well supported by both Action for Children and the centre's partnership board. Effective systems ensure staff receive professional supervision and are supported in their work with individual families. This extends to staff who are sited at the centre but not directly employed, such as the learning community's Parent Support Advisor.

All staff continually evaluate the effectiveness of the services they offer. They have a good understand of what they do well and where they need to make further improvements. They fully engage families in this process so they can effectively evaluate how well services meet the needs of users. Staff act upon parents' feedback as appropriate, for example by changing the frequency and/or time of when they offer groups. Centre staff demonstrate an ethos of user participation at all levels. Families are fully engaged in developing services themselves such as the 'Mums the word' group, the development of FOSS and by taking responsibility for the delivery of the 'Active Tots' group when budget restrictions threatened its closure.

The centre provides good value for money. Recent significant budget reductions have forced the centre to consider the services they deliver. Working with partners across the Teignbridge area, leaders ensure that they target service delivery at those who need services the most through the 'Integrated Support for Families Trial Group'. Strong partnerships mean that service delivery has been effectively prioritised and leaders look for creative ways to ensure services continue despite budget restrictions.

The inclusive ethos of the centre is felt across many of the centres activities. Specific groups have been successful in engaging those who may be hard to reach, such as young parents and fathers. The staff's good understanding of how and when to implement the CAF process has resulted in early interventions for some children. In the most significant cases, this had led to appropriate support being given to families in order that they remain living together. Good support is provided for children who have additional needs through the provision of the 'Step-by-Step' group. Staff also provide good support for parents who themselves have additional needs.

Staff at all levels are very confident and knowledgeable about safeguarding issues due to good levels of training provided. Very comprehensive procedures are in place to support staff with safeguarding issues. Staff work closely with children's services in order that those children who may be at risk of abuse are well protected. They make timely referrals of concerns to the local authority, and effectively monitor those subject to child protection plans. Robust recruitment procedures ensure that those who work with children and their families are vetted, including volunteers.

The centre values highly its strong links with a range of other agencies, with whom they work closely to meet the needs of users and their families. All partners work towards common aims and are clear about the contribution they make. As a result, services are integrated and cohesive. This is particularly true of those services which are sited in the centre, such as health and education.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
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	2

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

Not applicable

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sure Start Teignmouth Children's Centre on 3 and 4 November 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We found that both staff and managers provide you with a good service. They understand how they can help to make a difference to the lives of many of you and

your children. They show a very strong commitment to improving the lives of all of you and they work well together to do so. Staff have developed some very strong partnerships with other professionals and organisations, and the care, guidance and support they give you is outstanding. You told us that staff are always there to listen to you when you need them most. Particularly when you are facing crises in your lives, staff offer you practical help and emotional support to help you to make positive changes. They understand that helping you to be emotionally strong will support you as parents.

We noticed that you make a strong contribution to the running of the centre and the services it offers. You are well represented on the partnership board and are given regular opportunities to present your views and thoughts. Many of you make an excellent contribution to your community through your work as volunteers and through the Friends of Sure Start (FOSS) fundraising efforts. Staff also work hard to develop a strong community spirit within your local area and are rightly proud of the central role the children's centre plays in your community. Staff have worked hard to engage with families who live in your community. They have had good success but recognise that more needs to be done to ensure all groups participate equally.

Leaders and managers of the centre have a good understanding of what steps they need to take to improve their services even further and they are determined to make your lives the best they can be. Staff implement suitable plans in order that staff can improve services still further. However, we have asked managers to make sure that they plan services in a way that will help them to better monitor whether or not they are being successful.

We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak with us and were willing to share your thoughts about the centre.

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