

# Inspection report for Sandbrook Sure Start Children's Centre

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Local authority	Rochdale
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY338453 Sandbrook Children's Centre Nursery EY337039 Sandbrook Children's Centre Creche

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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 one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, centre staff, the headteacher of Sandbrook Community Primary School, parents and carers, key partners and two local authority officers linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at sessions in operation at the centre. They also looked at a range of documentation including the centre's development plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

## Information about the centre

Sandbrook Children's Centre is a phase one centre which was established in 2006 and is co-located on the site of Sandbrook Community Primary School. There are approximately 980 children under five years of age living in the area. Sandbrook Children's Centre is located in one of the most deprived areas of England. The centre's reach area encompasses the Kirkholt, Balderstone, Milkstone and Deeplish Wards. Virtually all of the reach population live within the top 15% of the most deprived areas in England with one Super Output Area ranking within the top 1% of the most deprived areas nationally. The majority of the population are of White British heritage. There is a large transient population in the local area, with a number of families emigrating from Eastern Europe. The social issues affecting the area are high crime rates and anti social behaviour. Violent crime in the area tends to relate to domestic violence or drug and alcohol abuse.

Family support, early years advice education and childcare are offered at Sandbrook Children's Centre. Crèche 'n' Co Ltd provides full day care provision onsite and there is a crèche which is managed by the centre. Early years activity is also provided by private and voluntary early years organisations and childminders in the local area. When joining the early years provision, the majority of children have social and physical development skills

below those expected for their age. The reach area is characterised by local authority and private rented housing.

The centre operates a variety of groups and activities on site and at different designated sites across the community. Currently, 81% families with children under five years of age in the reach area are registered with the centre. Of these, 56% are engaged with the centre and using its services. The centre is governed by the local authority with an advisory board that has professional and parent representation.

## Inspection judgements

**Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

### Overall effectiveness

**The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Sandbrook Children's Centre provides a satisfactory service for the needs of children and families in its reach area. Parents told inspectors they appreciate the warm welcome they receive. 'It's a great atmosphere here, it's such a fun place to be' were just some of the typical comments. Staff are particularly effective at ensuring children who are at risk receive relevant and timely support. However, while there are clear priorities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children explicitly stated in the centre's safeguarding policy, including specific roles and responsibilities, not all partners who work in the centre are completely clear on the lines of accountability and reporting procedures.

Outcomes for users overall are satisfactory. However, there are some services offered that have resulted in good outcomes for children and adult learning, development and achievement. For instance, the 'Total Place' programme has been instrumental in bringing together a wide range of agencies, professionals and parents to ensure that all children are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential. A consequence of this concerted effort is that children's profile scores at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving year-on-year. In addition to this, parents are learning about the importance of play in the early years and are gaining the skills they need to help their children learn in the home environment. A small number of adults have taken this further and are now gaining recognised qualifications in early years.

Equality of opportunity for users is satisfactory overall. The centre can demonstrate the impact of services and activities upon the well-being of users that are engaging with its services. This is particularly the case for young parents, and the wide range of services and activities that support children and carers with special educational needs/and or disabilities. The centre has recognised a growing population of Eastern European families moving into the area. They know that language is a barrier for some of these families and have translated some information to notify them of the centres' activities. However, this practice is not consistently applied. For example, the centre knows that domestic violence and drug and alcohol are major issues in the area yet all the information and signposting in the centre are in English. As a consequence, some adults in these communities may not know where to turn for support in times of crisis.

The local authority took the decision to put the leadership of two children's centres under the management of Sandbrook. The centre was already struggling to engage more users, and address some of the key health and social issues in the area when this decision was made. As a consequence, user engagement has remained in the mid 50% bracket for the past two years. Some issues have improved, such as the number of mothers' sustaining breastfeeding, the reduction in the number of teenage pregnancies, improvement in dental hygiene, and the skills and knowledge of children entering school. However, the centre still has major challenges to overcome that include reducing the high levels of domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse in the area. The centre manager has implemented strategies to ensure that more families engage with the centre and the centre's development plan reflects this. However, while knowing that there are many transient families that come into the area, centre leaders are unsure how large this community is or how long they are likely to remain in the area. Potentially this means that some families may not be engaging in the range of services provided by the centre.

Governance is satisfactory. Attendance by some key partners on the advisory board is variable and the centre's development plan does not cover the main health issues the staff and partners need to address. As a consequence the board does not always have the required information it needs to make important decisions or to monitor the work of the centre. A parent forum meets on a regular basis and includes representatives from most groups in the reach area. However, the forum is yet to have a greater influence on shaping services.

The centre has some very successful partnerships such as Homestart, Barnados and the health teams that work in the centre. However, some partner agencies, such as Jobcentre Plus, are not providing the centre with evaluations of the impact their work has achieved. This makes it difficult for staff to evaluate all aspects of the centre's work accurately. While there is more to be done, the success the centre has had so far demonstrates that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should:
  - ensure that targets are focused on improving outcomes, with particular regard to reducing the levels of domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse in the area
  - ensure that all partners and agencies working at the centre understand and implement the centre’s safeguarding procedure
  - encourage Jobcentre Plus to provide more information regarding the impact of its work upon parents in the centre’s reach area
  - ensure that the advisory board receive all relevant information, particularly from health partners, so that they can support the centre in making informed decisions regarding the priorities and initiatives
  - ensure that the centre is given the information that it needs to enable staff to assess and meet the needs of the transient families in the area.
  
- The children’s centre should:
  - ensure that the families that do not speak English as their first language, or have poor literacy skills are able to access and understand printed information in the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>3</b>
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The centre is particularly successful at improving the personal, social and emotional well-being of users. Parents and carers, such as those who have required intensive support, speak highly of the care they have received. As one parent commented, ‘This place has been a lifeline for me.’ Another said, ‘If we have a problem we know we can always talk to the staff, it’s like being part of a big family coming here.’

Activities such as ‘Winter Warmers’ where families learn how to cook a warm healthy dinner before going on an autumn stroll and ‘Cook and Taste’ where users learn about healthy diets, are helping some parents and carers to adopt increasingly healthy lifestyles. Historically, some families are reluctant to wean their child off a bottle or feed their child less fatty, sugary foods. The centre is working hard to address these issues and has noted some changes in cultural behaviours but know that more work needs to be done to ensure that all children enter school at a healthy weight. Physical development is supported well. Children get lots of fresh air and they thoroughly enjoy climbing and building in the outdoor play area. Adults take advantage of the free swimming sessions at the local baths and the free keep fit group in Kirkholt. Because of the consistent support they receive, mothers quickly grow confident with breastfeeding and data indicates that this is generally sustained well through the early months of a baby’s life. Baby massage sessions are popular, providing a good opportunity for mothers to bond with their baby. Activities to help parents and carers understand the long term psychological damage that occurs to young children who are

exposed to violence in the home, or the adverse effects of watching their carers suffer from drug and alcohol misuse, are not as prevalent in the activity programme.

Parents and carers are helped to develop their awareness of possible dangers. Safety routines are well understood and are diligently applied by all staff. When cooking, children are taught how to use utensils safely and outdoor play focuses strongly on safe practices. Children in Kirkholt are helped to understand road safety when they become 'Junior Community Police Officers', where they work alongside local police officers speaking to adults who park their cars in places that could pose a hazard to children.

Children make good progress in developing basic skills in 'Stay and Play' sessions, where they learn and play and have fun with their parents and carers. Parents and carers make a satisfactory contribution to the life of the community. Through the active parent forum, parents and carers are able to make suggestions. For example, the timing of some activities, such as 'Stay and Play' and the new 'Make and Do' session, operate after school so that working parents can attend activities with their children. Although some parents and carers have ideas about how they think the centre could shape its services, there is no formal system for the parent representative on the advisory board to make these views known.

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>3</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?**

<b>3</b>
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The centre has a small number of detailed case studies which show how well some individual families have made progress in their personal and social development. The centre works closely with Citizens Advice Bureau who offer an advocacy and advice service. This successful partnership ensures families are able to access the benefits to which they are entitled to. However, the centre is not yet tracking this service to ensure that the additional money families receive is actually being used to help children out of poverty.

Assessment procedures are used well to identify the registered parents and carers needs, to target support and to improve their outcomes. Until recently, a lack of reach specific data

has made it difficult for leaders to test how well the provision is having an impact on outcomes for its users. This has made it difficult to fine-tune provision to need, particularly with the transient families, but this is improving as the centre gathers more data and local agencies such as housing are sharing local information with the centre. Family support workers are particularly successful at encouraging families, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, to access the services that they need to ensure their safety and well-being. Support offered to these families is then effectively tailored to meet differing need.

Although the range of services is increasing, participation rates at the centres activities are variable. The governing body, staff and parents forum are aware of this and are beginning to tackle it. For example, the local schools give the centre's activity timetable to every child in the school. The local GP and health clinics have notice boards that tell residents about the services available at the centre and members of the parent forum stand in school playgrounds speaking to parents and carers they know who are not accessing services. The centre works closely with Kirkholt Residents Drop In Centre who work hard to introduce local residents to the variety of the activities run by the centre. This concerted effort is now starting to contribute to the steady increase in active registrations.

The sessions observed by inspectors had a clear focus, were purposeful and enjoyed by parents, carers and their children. Staff promote children's learning through the activities and there is good evidence of improved outcomes during the sessions, particularly in communication and language. The centre provides a satisfactory level of care, guidance and support for users. There is improving partnership with health services, including the health visitors and community midwife services providing antenatal and post-natal care at the centre.

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>3</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>3</b>



## How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The centre leaders are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their provision. They have many complex and troubled families in the area and high levels of deprivation to address; with this comes a wide array of social and health issues that are embedded in the community. Many recent developments are at an early stage and leaders and managers are just starting to evaluate the impact of their work systematically to know exactly how much difference they are making to lives within the community. However, some of the projects are starting to show that cultural attitudes are changing as more parents and carers are taking a real interest in their child's early education, with more young mothers breastfeeding and stopping smoking during pregnancy. Feedback from families indicates a high level of satisfaction and has, in some cases, influenced change and improvements to services that reflect the changing needs of the local community. This shows that centre is providing satisfactory value for money.

Partnerships continue to develop well with effective collaboration between the centre and most partners. The work with the social work teams and Homestart is particularly effective. Together they provide a real 'team around the child' approach to ensure that the most vulnerable children and families are protected and cared for. Safeguarding procedures to protect adults and children in the reach area whose circumstances make them vulnerable are satisfactory. The centre has clear policies in place that are followed by all staff and most partners. While all partners spoken to said that they would report any concerns to the relevant agency, there remains some confusion as to who would take the lead role should a referral be required. Leaders and managers promote equality of opportunity and diversity well in all the activities provided. However, they do not ensure that all groups in the reach area whose circumstances make them vulnerable, such as the Eastern European community and transient families, are always targeted for support and given clear information where help can be sought in times of crisis.

Operational management is satisfactory and financial resources are carefully managed. Governance is supportive and accountability arrangements satisfactory. The advisory board acts as a critical friend to the centre and actively questions the centre manager on the relatively low engagement of users, however, it is not as effective in challenging the centre to remove some health and social barriers. There are regular performance management arrangements and supervision in place for staff who feel valued and able to develop their own professional expertise through ongoing training opportunities.

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 in setting ambitious targets which secures 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>3</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>

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

The Ofsted report for Sandbrook Children's Centre Nursery (day care) that took place in May 2010 has been considered as part of this inspection.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Sandbrook Children's Centre on 23-24 November 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We met a variety of users during the inspection and they are all strong supporters of the centre and its work. Our thanks go to everyone who shared their views. These helped us to appreciate how important the centre is to so many of you.

Those of you that we spoke to told us about the very caring staff. You clearly appreciate the guidance and support on offer and you gave examples of how the centre has helped to change lives for the better. It was really encouraging to hear that many of you feel less isolated in the community and have been able to socialise more by attending courses at the centre. We were particularly impressed by how much the centre has done to raise the knowledge and skills for children in your area as they enter their first year in school. This is a tremendous achievement and one which we are sure you are equally proud of. Some of you told us that you are learning new skills yourself, such as basic first aid, child development and language and literacy. We know that some of you are keen to build on the

skills and gain recognised qualifications that will help you to find employment and improve your families' economic stability. We were also pleased that so many of you are being helped to train as volunteers to work in the community. You told us that you are keen to help other families to engage with the centre so that they can feel as supported as you do.

We have said that some elements of the centre's work needs to improve. We have asked the local authority to ensure that everyone that works in the setting understands the centre's safeguarding procedures and that there is more involvement of health partners on the centres advisory board. We have also asked the local authority to put plans in place to show how the centre and its key partners can help to reduce the levels of domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse that affects some families in your area. We have also asked the local authority to help the centre identify the transient families that tend to stay in the area for short periods of time. While there are many good partners working with the centre, we found that Jobcentre Plus do not always work together to share information and help the centre prioritise where further help is needed. We have asked the centre to make sure that families who do not speak English are helped to understand how the centre can support them and ensure that they know the centre is a place they can go to in times of crisis. The reason that we have asked the centre to address these issues is that once these are in place the centre will be in a stronger position to see how well they are doing to meet all of your needs.

Thank you to everyone we met for your input into the inspection. We are very grateful and wish you every success in the future.

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