

# Inspection report for Lyndon Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Solihull
<b>Inspection number</b>	383776
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 May 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Keith Brown

<b>Centre leader</b>	Alice Bath
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Ulverley School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not applicable

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

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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

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 children's centre manager and staff, parents, senior managers from Barnardo's, the family support worker from Ulverley Primary School, the manager of Ulverley Fun Factory and representatives from health services, partner organisations and local authority services.

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

## Information about the centre

Lyndon Children's Centre was established as a phase two children's centre in 2007 in a self-contained wing in the same building as Ulverley Primary School on the west side of Solihull. In 2008, a satellite centre opened 1.2 miles away and services are provided from both sites for children under five years of age and their families. Crèche facilities are provided to support users' access to services, where needed. The centre does not provide early years childcare, but offers advice and guidance to parents and carers on the day-care and childminding facilities available in the local community.

From 1 April 2012, the local authority has commissioned Barnardo's to have strategic management of the centre. At the same time, the reach area approximately doubled in size and the number of children served increased from 748 to 1479, living in 844 families. The reach area now covers Elmdon ward as well as the original Lyndon ward. The reach area covers a range of levels of deprivation from 10% to 30% of the most deprived areas nationally. Currently, around 75% of families in the reach

area are registered with the centre and attend regularly. The large majority of families in the reach area are of White British heritage. The change in the reach area has resulted in an increase of families from minority ethnic backgrounds from 11% to 23% overall, mainly of Indian and Pakistani heritages. Seventy four children have a disability, and 177 children have parents with a disability. A high proportion of families live in social housing.

The rate of unemployment is high and 12.8% of workless families are dependant on state benefits. The proportion of teenage mothers and lone parents are above average in the most disadvantaged super output areas.

The skills, knowledge and abilities of many children on entry to early years' provision are below those expected for their age. Rates of higher education in the reach area are low.

## 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

Lyndon Children's Centre provides good quality services for children and families. A typical parental comment was, 'My family have gained so much by attending this centre.' Good leadership, management and teamwork are leading to cohesive provision and good outcomes for families. Strong partnerships are having a positive impact across the five outcome areas. Information is shared well between partners and there is good signposting to each other's services. The centre uses data effectively to identify the needs of vulnerable and target families.

The inclusion of all families and children is central to the vision of the centre and is promoted well in every aspect of its work. The centre has a good understanding of its key target groups and engages well with the majority of families living in deprived areas. The centre is aware of the challenges resulting from the large increase in the size of its reach area from 1 April 2012, particularly in ensuring that it identifies and caters for the needs of all the minority ethnic groups. The centre leader quickly identified the need to provide an English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) course. A well-attended ESOL programme is underway.

Babies and children, including disabled children, benefit from a wide range of activities which foster their learning well. Planning around the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective and they quickly become inquisitive, independent learners in the attractive, well-resourced environment. Outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and steadily improving. At present, the centre is not fully involving parents in their children's learning journeys so that they can follow how they are progressing and praise their successes. Transition arrangements are well managed and children get off to a flying start when they move on to primary school.

The centre gives safeguarding a high priority: clear policies, procedures and staff training contribute to the good safety and protection of families and children. Care, guidance and support are excellent for an increasing number of families from target groups. There is a strong focus on supporting parents to develop good parenting skills. Families improve their health and well-being, and health outcomes are good. Obesity rates of children are low and below national averages. Breastfeeding rates are high and above the national average. Case studies and data collected demonstrate that families are improving their economic well-being. Several parents have undertaken family learning, first aid, information and communication technology and parenting courses at the centre. They say that they use their learning to adopt healthier lifestyles for their families.

The centre demonstrates a good capacity for improvement. Self-evaluation and staff performance management are effective. Outcomes are good and improving because the centre constantly monitors the quality and impact of services and identifies how it can improve them. However, ways of collecting parents' views could be extended, in order to shape service provision better. Barnardo's has put in place high quality governance and accountability arrangements. The centre provides good value for money. It uses its resources effectively and provides good quality of provision, leading to good outcomes for families.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Draw up and implement suitable plans to successfully address the needs of the full range of minority ethnic groups served by the centre and include in these:
  - realistic measurable indicators for each service area
  - clear timescales
  - arrangements for monitoring and evaluation, including details of how the governing body will check on the progress of developments and the quality of outcomes.
  
- Extend the engagement of parents in the work of the centre by:
  - involving them in the use of learning journeys to enable parents to track the progress and celebrate the achievement of their children
  - providing more ways of capturing parents' views to help shape the services provided.

## How good are outcomes for families?

The centre provides a welcoming and safe environment. Users feel safe when attending activities, and respond well by adhering to the centre's expectations. Children obviously feel secure and get to know staff so that they interact well with them. All staff have had thorough training in safety practice and policy. Case study evidence shows good improvements in the outcomes for adults and vulnerable children, including those on child protection plans or subject to the Common Assessment Framework processes. During home visits, staff help parents to improve home safety for children.

The centre promotes health and well-being well through its range of activities and effective partnerships with health services. Crèche facilities and outreach workers enable partners to work effectively to meet families' needs. The centre is having a positive impact on increasing the number of new mothers starting breastfeeding and continuing it after six weeks. Lone parents and teenage mothers are developing a good understanding of how to promote their own good health at the healthy lifestyle sessions. Parents said that the recent 'Healthy Tots' sessions had helped them to understand more about their children's physical development and how to improve food shopping habits.

Through a wide range of play and development opportunities, parents are learning how to support their children's learning. The centre appreciates the need for parents to become more involved in their children's learning journeys, so that they can regularly check their children's progress and celebrate their successes. The proportion of children who attain the levels expected for their age in their skills, knowledge and understanding by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has steadily improved in recent years. The centre is successfully narrowing the attainment gap between the lowest-attaining children and others at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Tracking of children who have attended the centre's services shows that their achievements are higher when measured at age five than those who have not. Children are making good progress in most areas of learning and developing a good range of skills to prepare them for primary school education. One lone parent said: 'My child was helped to get used to the primary school and started there without any problems.'

Adult learning courses and referral for employment advice are helping to improve the economic well-being of some families. Case studies indicate good individual support and training leading to employment. They show that jobless families, lone parents and teenage mothers have improved their parenting skills and progressed well in their personal and social development.

Volunteers make a good contribution to the centre and the community by supporting activities and helping to run sessions. This helps the sustainability of the centre. Parents and children of different social, economic and minority ethnic backgrounds treat each other with respect. They make a positive contribution to the development of the centre. The centre is aware of the need to widen the range of ways it uses to

listen to and collect the feedback from families to shape and develop its services, for example a 'You Said, We Did' board and a suggestions box. As members of the advisory board, parents make a good contribution to the centre's strategic decision making.

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

### **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre's good knowledge and understanding of the community, drawing upon effective partnership arrangements, lead to the delivery of good quality provision. However the centre has not yet assessed and analysed the needs of the increased numbers of families from minority ethnic groups in the new reach area. The centre's buildings are well equipped to provide activities for families. The centre makes good use of outreach venues to extend its capacity to deliver services and support target groups. The majority of families with children under the age of four living in areas of most need engage well with services at the centre. Accurate use of data makes it possible for the centre to demonstrate the positive impact of its services on target groups, such as lone parents, teenage mothers, families in crisis and those experiencing mental health problems and domestic violence. The centre is improving the well-being, life chances and personal development of parents and children.

The centre promotes and celebrates learning effectively for children and adults. Sessions are well prepared and are of a high quality. Staff have a good understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They model good parenting in activities and use every opportunity to promote children's and adults' learning. One single mother noted that she 'had become much more confident' at reading stories to her daughter. Parents also spoke about their increased confidence in playing with their children, managing their behaviour and developing their speech.

The centre provides outstanding care, guidance and support for families. It is highly

successful in supporting families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Parents particularly value home visits and individually tailored support and one teenage mother said 'the centre has made a massive difference to my life.' Support for families who have experienced domestic violence is excellent. Parents receive well-focused advice and guidance on how to access housing benefits, health services and childcare provision. Good partnership working with Jobcentre Plus and education providers has successfully enabled jobless families to move into training and employment.

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>1</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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The centre manager's leadership is good. She sets high expectations and clear direction for the centre's development. Teamwork is strong. The new governance and accountability arrangements from 1 April 2012 are clear and understood. The local authority and Barnardo's have a good strategic overview of the work of the centre. The support and challenge from the advisory board plays a significant role in the continuous improvement of the centre.

The centre's team of staff demonstrates a clear vision of inclusion and commitment to the success of the centre. The centre is aware of the urgent need to develop action plans, incorporating timescales and monitoring arrangements, to meet the needs of the increased number of families of minority ethnic heritage in the new reach area. The centre's staff and partners share high expectations and ambitions. One partner noted: 'We have really good communications with the centre and everyone works together.' Professionals from a range of agencies make an effective commitment to partnership working and to improving the life chances of children and families, which results in good and improving outcomes.

The centre promotes equal opportunities well for all families and children, including those with disabilities, in every aspect of its provision. It ensures that their diverse needs are well supported and barriers to access are removed. For example, staff have delivered services at the weekends and during the evenings to ensure that working parents can attend. Outcomes for families are good because the centre effectively monitors the quality, range and impact of service provision within its ambitious development plan and identifies how it can improve them. The resources at the centre are managed efficiently to meet the needs of families, leading to good outcomes. Families using the centre express high satisfaction and state that provision



and support are good and make a strong contribution to their families' well-being.

The centre gives the safeguarding of children a high priority. It is effective in ensuring children and families stay safe through close attention to child protection processes and robust vetting and recruitment procedures. The 'team around the family' approach makes sure that an appropriate range of professionals work together well to ensure that children are safeguarded and protected.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</b>

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

Inspectors took account of the report for Ulverley Primary School, which was inspected in 2009 and judged to be satisfactory. In addition, the inspectors took account of the findings of the current inspection of Ulverley Primary School and the views of the school's family support worker.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Lyndon Children's Centre on 23–24 May 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

To help us make our judgements, we observed activities at the main Lyndon Children's Centre and at the Chapel Fields satellite centre. We also looked at documentation and spoke with many parents, professionals and service providers. Thank you to those who came to speak to us. You helped us to understand that the services provided by the centre are of a good quality.

The centre manager and staff show obvious commitment and enthusiasm and have a good understanding of the needs of families in the area. They value you and your families highly. We know that your views are asked for and we are aware that some services have been modified and new ideas introduced, as a result of your feedback. We have asked the centre to look at new ways of seeking your thoughts on the activities provided, so that they meet your needs even better. From 1 April 2012, the centre has been providing services for a much larger number of families, including an increased number from minority ethnic groups. So, we have also asked the centre to ensure it plans and implements suitable strategies to address the needs of all of the minority ethnic groups it serves.

We found the children's centre to be very welcoming, calm and friendly. Some of the activities are delivered by the children's centre and others by other providers and supported by centre staff. This arrangement is typical of some of the good partnership working inspectors found during the inspection. We were impressed by the large numbers of families who visit the centre and take part in a wide range of activities on a regular basis. Community, health, social care and education agencies work well together to make things better for you and to help you improve your lives.

The centre puts a big emphasis on encouraging you and your children to learn new skills and this is helping you to develop in confidence. Children obviously enjoy the activities provided by the centre. They are making good progress in their learning and are well prepared for starting school. We have asked the centre to make sure that it involves parents more in their children's learning journeys, so that they can check their children's progress regularly and celebrate their success.

You said that the care, guidance and support provided by the centre is outstanding and we agree. You told us that in times of crisis you can always depend on the centre. Staff listen, take your views into account and help you to find solutions. You said the centre was making a real difference to you. We could see that you receive good quality information in relation to your children's health and well-being. Many of you told us how good it is to have early years professionals, midwives and health visitors working from the centre and helping you when you have any concerns about your children's development. We saw that for some of you, your contact with the centre has led you to further training and qualifications, volunteer work and employment.

Thank you to everyone who took time to meet or speak with us or provided information for us. We are very grateful for your involvement in the inspection and wish you every success for the future.

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