

# Inspection report for South Heaton Children's Centre

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Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	384097
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	319190 Heaton Community Centre

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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents, centre staff and representatives from professional partnerships, the management board and the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

South Heaton Children's Centre is situated in Heaton, a suburb of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It operates from Heaton Community Centre and was designated in February 2008 as a phase two children's centre. The centre is one of four in the Newcastle East cluster with integrated management arrangements. While remaining as separately designated centres, South Heaton Children's Centre is intrinsically linked with Ouseburn Children's Centre due to the similarities in their area profiles. Staff plan, review and deliver services for both centres. Services are delivered to the community from both children's centres and other community venues through outreach work.

South Heaton Children's Centre serves an area of established neighbourhoods increasingly used for student accommodation and to accommodate a transient population. There are significant numbers of people living in social housing often experiencing uncertain employment. There are approximately 574 children under the age of five living in the centre's reach area. Of these, 30% live in the 30% most disadvantaged areas with the remaining living in the 70% least disadvantaged areas. The proportion of children deemed to be living in poverty is 29% and the proportion of children attending school in the area who are known to be entitled to free school meals, at 24%, is above the national average. There are approximately 140 lone parents in receipt of benefits. On average, 16% of families benefit from the childcare element of working tax credit.

Some children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and abilities that are generally below those expected for their age. One hundred per cent of three- and four-

year-olds are accessing their early education entitlement. The majority of local families are of White British heritage, although an increasing proportion, approximately 28.4%, are from minority ethnic communities. Eleven per cent of the centre's community are of Asian origin with a number of these families having lived in the area for several generations. There are also a small number of African families and an increasing number of Chinese, Polish and Russian families. For some of these families English is an additional language.

The centre is managed on behalf of the local authority by Barnardo's, a voluntary sector organisation. The centre has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, parents and partner professionals.

## 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**

<b>2</b>
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

<b>2</b>
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## Main findings

South Heaton Children's Centre is a good centre overall with some outstanding features. The senior leadership team and centre staff are passionate about the centre's work, value their 'exceptional' centre leader and morale is high. The centre leader and staff have successfully established exceptional partnership working arrangements with a wide range of professionals ensuring services are extremely well integrated and cohesive. In addition, information is shared appropriately and swiftly between partners. This ensures the correct support and intervention are provided to very effectively safeguard and meet the needs of families, particularly those deemed the most vulnerable and those in most need of support and intervention. All staff and partners give the highest priority to safeguarding all children and families, are proactive and collaborate effectively with other agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children. In addition, the safety and well-being of families are significantly enhanced by the robust and consistent implementation of effective policies, procedures and practice.

Overall, provision is accurately matched to the needs of families and enables them to achieve good outcomes. However, the rate of obesity has increased and the importance and promotion of healthy eating is not consistent throughout the community centre. Children and adults make good progress in developing their skills and enjoy their time at the centre. As a result, participation rates for most groups, including those identified by the centre as

most in need of intervention and support, are good and users reflect the diverse community the centre serves.

The centre's leadership and management team evaluates the centre's effectiveness and is aware of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. However, the centre is not regularly evaluating and monitoring the impact centre services and activities are having on the outcomes of all families in the long term and using this information to shape services and better demonstrate performance. In addition, although the centre has correctly identified their target groups, these are not clearly linked to the key priorities in the action plan to ensure the centre can fully demonstrate its performance. The centre has good capacity to improve further based on what it has accomplished so far and the strong focus of leaders and managers.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Refine the quality of self-evaluation so that improvement planning is more focused by:
  - regularly evaluating and monitoring the impact that the centre's services and activities are having on the outcomes of families in the long term and using this information to shape services and better demonstrate performance
  - specifying the target groups linked to key priority areas in the action plan.
- Reduce obesity in the community by:
  - devising effective strategies to promote healthy eating among the centre's users and within all venues used to deliver centre services
  - monitoring the impact of such strategies on the outcomes for families.

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

<b>2</b>
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A large majority of families in the area are engaged well with a wide range of appropriate health services. The number of mothers who are breastfeeding at six to eight weeks is above the national average and continues to increase. The success of this can be contributed to the good support from the peer breastfeeding group. As one user stated: 'I was going to give up breastfeeding as it was so demanding, but when I went to the support group I was encouraged to keep going'. Teenage parents and parents-to-be are supported well and good relationships are established through accompanied antenatal visits. Healthy eating is promoted throughout the registered settings and children enjoy the fresh fruit and breadsticks provided. However, the obesity rate for children in this area is above the national average and not all the public areas in the setting promote the importance of healthy eating. The high attendance at the popular music and movement sessions demonstrates how parents have embraced a more active healthy lifestyle for themselves and their children.

The highly effective multi-agency team ensures referrals are assessed speedily and the appropriate service identified. This early intervention has led to a positive impact on outcomes for children, including those subject to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process, looked-after children and those subject to a child protection plan. A robust tracking system for all referrals prevents the situation from reaching a crisis point. The use of sign language and pictures offers an alternative means for those who find difficulty communicating. Families learn to keep themselves safe as they develop an understanding of dangers within the home and take advantage of the home safety equipment offered. The number of accidental injuries to children has reduced. The success of the emphasis on community cohesion has led to families saying how safe and welcome they feel in the centre.

Children make good progress from their starting points and are achieving well. All three- and four-year-old children and the most vulnerable two-year-olds in the centre reach area access the free nursery education entitlement across a range of provision. The vast majority of parents say that their children are well prepared for school. The play and learn group is very well attended and parents say how much they enjoy the sessions. They are particularly appreciative of how welcome they are made to feel and say that they could, 'never miss this group', and that the activities are, 'fab'. Parents are well supported and the sterling work carried out by the family support workers and other professional enables parents to develop their skills and subsequently build their confidence and reduce isolation.

Parents make a very positive contribution to the centre through their friendly, welcoming behaviour and respect for one another. They feel valued, say they, 'have a voice', and regularly complete feedback sheets after sessions which demonstrate a high level of satisfaction. The centre actively seeks ways to consult more widely with parents. Several parents also took part in the city-wide consultation on the strategic 0-12 planning for the city. An increasing number of parents are becoming involved in volunteering projects across the city and improving their own life skills.

Economic stability and independence are actively encouraged. Parents are consulted regarding their aspirations and goals and how centre services can help them achieve these. The training and employment drop-in and information kiosk are popular as parents seek to improve their economic circumstances. Case studies demonstrate that, as a result of participation in courses and activities, parents have made good progress in developing skills which they are using to find opportunities for work and, as a consequence, become less reliant on benefits. Some teenage parents have been able to successfully return to education. Astute thinking by the centre has encouraged adults, who are interested in working with children, progress towards appropriate accredited courses. This will fill a future need for qualified childcare staff as additional provision will be required to meet the increased demand for funded places for two-year-olds.

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>
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<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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Early intervention is fundamental to the success of the centre and excellent links with the health service provide an immediate opportunity to make contact with new parents. The highly effective multi-agency work avoids any unnecessary duplication of services and centre staff are skilled at advising other services so the engagement with families is as effective as possible. The centre has been particularly successful in engaging with and improving outcomes for families from the most deprived areas. The centre offers continued support and frequently provides a 'hand-holding' service where staff will accompany any user who feels they need this extra support. The sensitive and relentless drive by the outreach team has been fundamental in supporting families.

The centre provides a good range of services linked to specific need. For example, specialist workers are employed to support teenage parents and specific groups. The teen mums group and innovative culture exchange group where families learn about a variety of celebrations have proved invaluable. The boys' development programme is having a positive impact on their readiness for school. Local pre-school providers and childminders are well supported in improving the quality of their provision as a result of advice and guidance from the centre staff. The centre celebrates achievement well and helps to raise aspirations. Certificates are presented and celebration events held on a regular basis.

Care, guidance and support are good as the centre provides a safe haven for families who have grown in confidence and share their concerns with staff. For example, 'The course changed my outlook and gave me back control of my life,' and, 'It made me realise what was happening was wrong', are typical comments expressed by some parents who have experienced domestic violence. Well-planned systems ensure a swift response for families at times of crisis ensuring they are supported and case studies demonstrate the wealth of emotional and practical advice and guidance provided. Parents who speak English as an additional language receive good support from bilingual staff and volunteers to ensure effective communications, thus promoting their safety and well-being.

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>
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<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?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre plays a significant role in the life of the community and is successfully promoting tolerance and understanding of different minority ethnic groups. The inclusion of all families is promoted very effectively and the centre has truly established itself at the heart of the community.

Staff are extremely well engaged with the prevention strategy, locality working and the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes. In addition, exceptionally strong multi-agency working is established with all partners. This significantly enhances the swift support and early intervention the most vulnerable children and families receive and helps prevent situations reaching crisis point.

Safer recruitment procedures are stringently followed and all relevant checks are made to ensure that all staff are suitable and safe to work with children. All staff receive high-quality child protection training and are extremely confident in their role of safeguarding children. Risks are thoroughly assessed and minimised ensuring the environment is extremely safe.

Clear lines of accountability are in place to ensure leaders and managers at all levels are fully informed and hold the centre to account. Very good quality professional supervision and management arrangements ensure the performance of staff is monitored effectively and their safety, well-being and professional development assured. Staff are effectively deployed to their strengths and the centre leader delegates responsibilities well. Staff work exceptionally well together as a team, support one another professionally and feel valued. They state the centre leader is so, 'inspirational' that she is, 'someone who you want to go the extra mile for'.

Centre leaders, staff and partners continuously reflect on their practice and provision to consider how they can achieve even better outcomes for children and their families. The views of the users and their evaluations of services and activities are regularly sought and used to shape services. However, systems for monitoring the impact of service on the outcomes for all families in the long term are not yet fully developed. Some families using the centre are systematically and routinely engaged in the governance of the centre through the partnership group and as members of 'Parents' Voice'. Information sharing between partners and the centre is exemplary which has resulted in a vast collective knowledge of the issues and needs of the community. The centre utilises resources across the area, including partner services and organisations very well to ensure good value for money. This greatly enhances the well-being and outcomes for families.



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 secures 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>1</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>1</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**

Not applicable

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the South Heaton centre on 23 and 24 May 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. Like you we found your children's centre to be welcoming and friendly. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to improving the outcomes for your families. Your centre has successfully established extremely strong partnerships with a wide range of professionals and services which has had a significant impact on the well-being and outcomes for your families. They regularly

share information and make sure they work very well together to provide your families with all the support they need as quickly as possible.

You are accessing a good range of health services and the good health of your families is improving as a result. However, there are areas within the setting where healthy eating is not promoted as well as it could be and we have asked the centre to look at how this can be improved. You and your children are extremely safe when using the centre and staff are swift to intervene early with any safeguarding concerns to ensure children are safe and families are fully supported. Your centre has helped you make your homes and community safer and the different groups in your community get along well together.

Provision to help your children learn and develop is good. You are developing your parenting skills and as a result are helping to enable your children to make good progress in their learning.

You and your child are supported well during their transition to school which ensures they arrive ready to learn. You have access to good opportunities to develop your employability skills, embark on training and find suitable employment.

Your centre knows the needs of your community well. Staff work very effectively with other professionals and actively seek your views to ensure the services they provide meet the needs of your families. Your centre has been successful in engaging the majority of families from your community to access the centre and services, particularly those identified as most vulnerable or in most need of support. As a result, your feedback shows that the majority of you are satisfied with the services your children's centre provides and attendance is generally good. Your centre provides your families with good care, guidance and support, particularly when you are facing times of crisis. You expressed unanimously that you feel well supported, and that the centre was like 'a second home' as some of you told us.

Your centre strives to be better and is always looking for ways to improve to ensure it is having the biggest impact on improving outcomes for you and your families. Your centre has clear plans for improvement in place. We have asked your centre to regularly measure the impact of their services and activities on the outcomes of all families in the long term. Your children's centre has a good capacity to improve further the outcomes for families living in your community and to continue to narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest. It does so with great determination and dedication. We wish you all the very 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).