

# Inspection report for Eastbury Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
<b>Inspection number</b>	404398
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 October 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Davies HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Victoria Henderson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	Eastbury Children's Centre Blake Avenue Barking IG11 9SQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8724 1950
<b>Fax number</b>	None
<b>Email address</b>	victoria.henderson@lbbd.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	None
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	EY379060 Eastbury Children's Centre Nursery (London Early Years Foundation)

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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and staff, parents, representatives of the Children's Centre Community Forum (advisory body), health professionals and representatives of partner agencies and the local authority. The inspectors held informal talks with children and parents throughout the inspection.

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

## Information about the centre

Eastbury Children's Centre is located in a residential area one mile from Barking town centre. The centre is directly accountable to the local authority. A Children's Centre Community Forum, which includes parent representatives, acts as an advisory board. The centre was designated in 2008 as a phase two centre. A 53-place childcare setting is provided on the same site by the London Early Years Foundation (LEYF). The centre meets its core purposes in partnership with two other centres locally and delivers services from the main site, in two schools and in other community venues. The centre manager is supported by 6.1 full-time equivalent staff and by seven part-time workers directly employed by other agencies, including a health visitor, Job Centre Plus and benefits advisors. The local authority is taking part in a pilot of the payment by results scheme.

The Eastbury ward served is among the 30% most deprived in the country. The majority of families live in privately rented or social housing and the mobility of the population is high. One in three children moves into or leaves the area before the age of five. A rising proportion of children (now 35%) live in households receiving workless or low income benefits. The proportion of families from minority ethnic backgrounds (49%) is high and rising rapidly. Among groups in the area, the largest

are families of African (24.6%), Pakistani (5.6%) and Bangladeshi origin (5.1%). More than 40 languages are spoken among the centre’s users. Most children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age.

## 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**

**1**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**1**

## Main findings

Eastbury Children’s Centre plays an outstanding part in enabling families to take up services that help them to make improvements in their children’s health, well-being and development. The local authority provides excellent and sophisticated data to the centre so that the centre accurately knows how effective its work is. Highly ambitious strategies to reach the families most in need and improve life chances in the area are translated into specific plans for innovative services and are continually evaluated. Against this exacting management, the care and personal attention given by the centre and its partners to each individual are complementary strengths. The centre is a hub of expertise that families turn to in everyday matters and in a crisis.

The centre’s relentless drive for inclusion encourages a very large majority of families in the area to participate. Partnerships established through the leadership of the local authority share aims and priorities well so that they naturally promote the centre’s services. Health visitor baby clinics at the main premises are an ideal shop-window for the centre to introduce the wide range of family learning and support that is on offer. The health of families using the centre is good and improving rapidly as parents increase their knowledge of how to keep healthy.

Rigorous systems are in place for safeguarding, child protection and health and safety in the centre and wider community so that families feel protected and valued. Skilled social workers among the centre’s staff ensure that the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and child protection plans are focused effectively.

Emotional health is consistently well supported through excellent nurturing relationships between all staff, including those in the daycare setting, and families. Speech and language support is built in to the carefully balanced, adaptable

programme. As a result, children become sociable, confident communicators and are keen to learn. Parents become confident in their own skills to guide their children.

Parents and children have an exceptional range of opportunities to play and learn together. In well-planned messy play sessions, families enjoy the indoor and outdoor environment immensely and their learning continues freely. Understanding of needs in the area has led the centre to develop stay-and-play activities in schools. Because of the centre's lead children's attainment in the area is improving rapidly; the gap between the 20% lowest performing and their peers is closing much faster than the national average and children are settling more quickly into school.

Highly effective partnerships with a range of agencies improve the financial well-being of many families. The 'work club' provides parents with the skills they need to enter the workplace. Some parents give back their time as volunteers which both adds to the centre's resources and builds their personal skills. However, there are few taking up roles in the centre at present. Staff seek the views of parents and these are routinely carried forward into planning. Representation of parents on the Children's Centre Community Forum has limited impact on the key decisions affecting the centre. Being a representative is a remote idea for most families and the momentum of representation falls away as families move on.

Excellent leadership and management at all levels inspire staff to pursue outstanding outcomes for families using the centre. Value for money is outstanding because of the efficiency achieved in locality working. Exceptionally precise self-evaluation combined with enduring partnerships mean that this already excellent centre has outstanding capacity to continue improving.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work with all partner organisations to ensure that families in the area have more influence and increase their direct involvement in advising the centre, ensuring that their voice is represented consistently and strongly over time, by:
  - implementing strategies to raise awareness among families of how to get involved
  - ensuring that the Children's Centre Community Forum and Parents' Forum plan forward for continuity to account for families leaving and coming into the area.

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

<b>1</b>
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Support for transition into motherhood is seamless. Midwifery, health visiting and family support services planning together enables health professionals to target their support to parents and children in poor health. Breastfeeding is supported through a vigorous 'Love Mums' poster campaign and the percentage of mothers from all

backgrounds continuing to eight weeks has risen sharply in two years to 55%. Families are showing a preference for healthy eating in 'Little Chefs' courses and have asked for more in the school holidays. The design of courses takes cultural food preferences into account. Healthy snacks and physical activities are intertwined in all activities. Obesity rates are steady at about the national average. Parents see health and development support as seamless within the centre and access to specialists such as psychologists is immediate. Take-up of child health checks and immunisations has improved to excellent levels and community nurse and health visitor clinics are full.

The centre's outstanding safeguarding arrangements result in children and their families being exceptionally well protected and achieving excellent outcomes. Parents make measurable improvement in their ability to protect their children through 'Strengthening families' courses and completion rates are almost 100%. Home safety awareness is built into all home visits and further one-to-one targeted support is available. Relationships are strong and procedures for referring families at risk are robust and sensitive. Families seek help with confidence. Problems concerning children's behaviour and domestic violence are dealt with sensitively. The centre leads the way in implementing the CAF locally and its highly effective work has significant impact on reducing the number of formal child protection plans and the length of time children are on such plans.

Children respond to the excellent teaching and guidance and the well-planned activities seen at all stages of the structured play and communication pathway from baby massage through 'play with a story' to 'little rhyme makers'. The precise measures used show that children make very rapid progress when they attend groups regularly. The impact of outreach on children being ready for school is outstanding, as settling-in times drop from six weeks to two for children who have attended the centre, including children who speak English as an additional language. Although the 0 to 4-year-old population has risen by 45% in a year the percentage of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has risen impressively from 52% to 65%. The centre and schools in the area are closing the gap in children's attainment outstandingly well, and more rapidly than in the country as a whole, from very wide gaps two years ago; there was a 10% decrease at one linked school and 12% decrease by July 2012.

Parents treat each other with respect and build a sense of belonging. Benefits and financial advice are doing a lot to improve parents' emotional well-being and enable them to plan forward. The 'Work Club' has great success with parents who are ready to embark on courses. The uptake of basic English as a second language and basic skills classes is high. The great majority of parents go on to further levels while continuing informal craft and cookery classes with basic skills elements at venues of their choice around the area. Volunteers make very good headway in building their curriculum vitae and being ready for work.

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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</b>

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

<b>1</b>
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The adaptable programme is highly tailored to support groups' and individuals' needs. The sudden growth in the number of four-year-olds in the area met with immediate response, as the centre shifted resources to provide more 'play with a story' and 'little rhyme makers' provision appropriate to that age. The range of activities to promote children's development is broad and flexible but retains the outstanding elements of excellent teaching and specialist input from speech therapists. The positive effect on children's progress from the play and communication service's 'graduated core services' cannot be underestimated as this approach is having excellent impact. Partnerships with wider services in the local authority area, with health visitors, midwives, local primary schools and private and voluntary sector organisations ensure that the needs of the area are always known and responded to effectively. For example, children with no Early Years Foundation Stage experience were identified and additional play and communication sessions were put on.

Exceptional partnership work with other children's centres within the locality ensures that information about changes in family needs, community safety and safeguarding trends is robustly shared so that the programme continues to reach increasing numbers among targeted groups in the community. Information about individual needs is shared sensitively at the local level and with the multi-agency leadership team. Outreach services are targeted to those most in need of support. Payment by results is a really sharp tool that identifies and reflects parents' increased confidence and skills. Parents' achievements are widely celebrated so that others are encouraged to take part.

Excellent guidance and support are integral to all the centre's activities. Within services, staff are skilled at choosing activities with parents so that everyone enjoys

their learning and achieves well. The range of individual and group work is finely balanced to ensure that support is always available. As one parent said 'there's nothing they don't know about children'. Parents are supported individually in making choices about childcare and schools for their children. Crèches and day care for targeted two-year-olds support parents into economic stability or further to training or work. The good quality childcare on site is appreciated by working parents. Financial and benefits advice and health information are promptly available and support families well. Centre users' level of satisfaction with the expertise on hand is outstandingly high. Advisors visit individuals with additional needs at home to ensure access.

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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</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?**

**1**

Leadership and management of the centre at all levels are excellent. Supervision is of high quality and regular. Monitoring processes support and motivate the staff and ensure high quality. Reporting procedures for accountability arrangements are clear because they fit into a wider Barking and Dagenham model and are well established. Individual services link coherently to the local authority's strategic plans. Strategic plans link to services and individual plans coherently, engendering a clear sense of purpose that brings out exemplary practice.

The high quality programme has outstanding impact on families' lives and has been maintained throughout the realignment of children's centre services in the past year. Existing good self-evaluation processes now have an additional layer of challenge from the trial of payment by results and this is further improving outcomes for children and their parents. Impressive rigour of analysis supports the centre's focus on clear and shared priorities. As a result of the tracking that is possible, plans take exceptionally good account of culture, economic and social deprivation and achievement.

Safeguarding is at the top of all staff's and volunteers' agenda. Day-to-day management of systems to ensure safety and safeguarding is thorough and supports the excellent outcomes for vulnerable families. Safe recruitment and visitor monitoring are robust. Staff are very well trained in child protection procedures and have additional skills in safeguarding disabled children from a nearby special school for whom the centre is a place of safety.



Financial management is sound and well supported by the local authority's systems. Outstanding value for money is achieved through partnerships, excellent deployment of staff, for example to stay-and-play sessions in schools, and maximising the use of premises and outreach venues. This flexibility is a strength and is central to the centre's ability to narrow the achievement gap for disadvantaged families. Equalities are promoted through the environment as it is welcoming to groups such as fathers and a wide range of images reflect the communities around the centre. The inclusion of the most disadvantaged groups in the area is reflected in the high reach figures and the outstanding outcomes of families. The significant strengths in partnerships ensure sustainability of the centre's success.

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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>1</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>1</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>1</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**

Inspectors took into account the inspection of the linked early years provision, EY379060 Eastbury Children's Centre Nursery (London Early Years Foundation), which was inspected in June 2009 and was judged good. A copy of the inspection report is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) .

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Eastbury Children's Centre on 10 and 11 October 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you very much for helping us and sharing your courses and play sessions with us. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about the exciting work of the centre.

Eastbury Children's Centre gives outstanding support to help you take up services to improve your children's health, well-being and learning and improve your own learning and your family's financial situation.

People from all groups in the community, fathers, mothers, younger and older, speaking English or not, all get a warm welcome and are included. Parents told us that they enjoy meeting people from different backgrounds.

Children become sociable and confident talkers. They are keen to learn and children in the area have been progressing in the early years much more quickly lately because of play and communication sessions, from baby massage to 'Little Rhyme Makers', and this is excellent news. Children who attend the centre or nursery regularly settle in really well at school. If your child needs extra help, for example because of speech delay, the centre always finds it.

The programme of play and learning sessions is excellent and the centre makes one-to-one advice available to be sure of helping as many families as possible. It always makes sure that people get to know about the centre.

Parents taking parenting courses or learning alongside their children told us how confident they have become.

You get excellent individual help from 'Work club' when you are looking for work. The majority of you take up some learning and you succeed in good numbers.

The centre works extremely closely with family health workers, like midwives and health visitors, and has very good links to speech therapists, social workers, the Jobcentre Plus, DABD-money advisors, schools and other people who you may want to contact for advice. We are really pleased that there is such great expertise on hand and you find it helpful.

The centre also works closely with other centres and with managers in the Barking and Dagenham council to be sure of having a very good understanding of who lives

in the area and what services they might need. Centres and the borough work together very well, using detailed data that help them plan what to do next and find out if they are on the right track.

The centre has excellent systems for keeping you safe from harm in the centre and the community. Staff make sure that there is always someone to help in any family emergency.

If things go wrong for a family the centre works very hard to find the right help and see the family through any rough patch as quickly as possible. The safety of children is always a top priority.

The centre is always interested in your views about courses and activities. The centre helps you if you want to volunteer. Parent representatives on the advisory board are important but at present there are not always enough of you coming forward to fill gaps and help the centre to take ideas forward. We have asked the centre to find ways to help more people to volunteer and to make sure that parents' views are always strongly represented on the advisory board.

Because of excellent leadership and management at all levels and staff always giving their best and because there are excellent partnerships with other organisations, the centre has outstanding capacity to go on improving.

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