

# Inspection report for Wellington Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	404524
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 October 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Penny Mathers

<b>Centre leader</b>	Penny Bragg
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Bouncy Bear Childcare (URN) EY341257

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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and staff, senior leaders of the school, representatives from the local authority and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner agencies, such as the health services, parents and carers and other users of the centre.

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

## Information about the centre

Wellington Children's Centre was established in May 2007. It delivers a range of services to meet the core purpose. These include early intervention and support for families, a dads' group, childminders' drop-in, advice on housing and benefits, stay and play sessions and services such as job club, maternity care, health clinics, breastfeeding support groups and early years education.

The centre serves Wellington, Rockwell Green and surrounding villages, where there are in the region of 933 children aged 0–4 years. The centre is to the north of Wellington town, and has an independent childcare provider on site that offers 32 day care places. The children's centre is situated in the centre of its reach area and next to Beech Grove Primary School. The local authority manages the centre and there is an advisory board made up of local agencies and parents. It is part of a cluster of three children's centres, including Wiveliscombe and Bishops Lydeard.

Wellington is a small market town in rural Somerset situated in the Taunton Deane district, close to the border of Devon. Wellington has affluent areas, mainly on the southern side of the town, with pockets of deprivation to the north and east of the town, where there is a considerable proportion of social housing. Twenty per cent of children under sixteen live in households claiming out of work benefits. Sixteen per

cent of families have low incomes, which is higher than the average for Somerset but below national averages.

The area served by the children's centre is made up predominantly of White British families. Small but increasing numbers of families from Eastern Europe have recently moved into the reach area. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years education are slightly below those expected for their age. The children's centre offers its services from Wellington and from a community room at the Rockwell Green Primary School. It also provides a range of outreach services at several community venues.

## 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

Wellington Children's Centre provides a good and improving quality of provision. It is an exceptionally safe, welcoming and friendly centre and a central part of the community it serves. All families were extremely positive about the staff and the services they offer. Typical parents' comments include: 'The centre has been a lifeline' and 'I would have been lost without them, they really go the extra mile'. Sixty five per cent of families living in the reach area are registered with the centre. They value and enjoy the wide range of activities. The outcomes for families are good overall and families and children say they feel exceptionally safe and very well supported at the centre.

Safeguarding practice is outstanding, including the procedures for checking the suitability of staff. Health and safety procedures are very well promoted and all staff receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training. Children are well supervised, and highly effective procedures and practices safeguard the welfare of all those attending the centre and its activities. The centre engages fully with the local early intervention strategy and works closely with others to improve safeguarding practice, for example by auditing family files. All staff are very confident and clear about their safeguarding responsibilities and what to do if they have any child protection concerns.

Leadership is clear, reflective and sensitive to the needs of families, staff, and partners. The good leadership and management are key factors in the continuous improvement of the services being offered. The centre is very well organised, and staff work well as a team. The advisory board provides a very clear vision, has developed positive commitment among its members and produces improved outcomes for families in the area. Data is used well to identify the needs of families, although detailed data is not always available for the Wellington area. However, the local authority is working to improve this and there are plans to identify the needs of the recently increasing numbers of Eastern European families.

Partnerships are excellent and bring positive benefits to families in the area. For example, multi-agency work is highly effective at identifying families in need and information is shared appropriately to provide smooth and prompt support for families in times of crisis. The centre has an inclusive ethos and provides a warm welcome for all.

Self-evaluation is comprehensive and takes into account the views of families, children, staff and partner agencies. Staff know the reach area very well and their knowledge of target groups is improving. Priorities for development are accurately identified and actions plans are monitored regularly. Staff care passionately about the service they provide and are very responsive to suggestions for improvement. Very strong teamwork across the area, together with solid leadership and a stable staff group, ensures the provision is improving well. Staff always reflect on their practice carefully and work hard to ensure every opportunity is maximised to deliver improved outcomes for families, demonstrating a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve outcomes further for all target groups by:
  - working with the local authority to improve the collection of data and analysis of different groups in the reach area so that action plans are more sharply focused on their specific needs
  - monitoring the impact of services more rigorously and refining services in the light of this to meet families' specific needs even more closely.

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

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes are not outstanding because data collection and analysis are not yet sophisticated enough to demonstrate fully the impact of the centre's services on improving the lives of specific target groups.

Health outcomes for families, including target groups, are improving. The majority of families engage well with health services. Breastfeeding rates are improving steadily, with the majority (51%) of mothers breastfeeding six to eight weeks after birth and

37% continuing at three months. Steady progress is being made in reducing obesity rates so that they are now below national rates. Families improve their knowledge of health and safety issues and many take part in energetic activities such as 'Wacky Wednesday' walks. Strong links with the sports centre have resulted in access to swimming lessons for families who would otherwise not be able to afford them. Families attend paediatric first aid sessions and the young parents group learn about healthy eating through cooking lessons. Families value the one-to-one health support and clinics, including a continence clinic and baby massage and weighing sessions.

Families feel very safe and secure when attending any activities organised by the centre. They know how to keep their children safe. For example, families know not to access their mobile phones at the centre and children are taught how to do risk assessments through the use of visits to the park, using cameras to record the potential risks. Support and signposting for domestic violence are good, with incidents reducing. Parents improve their parenting skills, and incidents of harm to children are reducing, particular those in families most need of intervention and support. Outcomes for children subject to child protection plans and for those subject to the Common Assessment Framework process are improving and their progress is very effectively monitored.

Children enjoy coming to the centre and make good progress from their starting points. The focus on developing early communication skills has contributed well to narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% at the end of the Early Years Foundation stage and the rest. Opportunities for children and parents to play and learn together are good, with many activities planned to promote learning, for example Forest School. The support provided by the centre ensures that children make a smooth transition to school.

The centre is very much at the heart of the community and promotes tolerance and understanding. Staff provide excellent role models and everyone treats one another with respect. Children behave well, learning how to take turns and share whilst developing confidence and resilience. Good opportunities are available through opening up the playground areas between the centre, the nursery, and the school for children to mix together and get to know the staff. Children and their parents develop positive relationships and readily express their views. Families routinely attend the advisory board and contribute to the evaluation of the group sessions.

The knowledge and good relationships staff have with a wide range of agencies enable them to refer families to specialists who can offer good support and guidance on training, employment, benefits and housing. An increasing number of families take up these opportunities and gain valuable employability skills, including improved literacy and numeracy, and often progress into employment or volunteering. For example, one mother learnt how to cook and then put together a cookbook.

*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>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>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?**

**2**

Outreach services are very effective in meeting the needs of the community. Sixty-five per cent of children below the age of five are registered and participation rates are increasing significantly. The centre understands the reach area well and has identified its target groups. A full needs analysis is undertaken before starting any new activities, although the content of the activities is not always focused closely enough on the needs of those in target groups. Excellent partnership working ensures families receive prompt services in a seamless way. Staff know their families well and how to support and promote the best outcomes. Clear procedures are in place to assess the needs of children and families. Children are tracked well through regular healthy child meetings. Parents are involved well in planning their support programmes and they value the way support is individually tailored.

The wide range of services, activities and opportunities for families is good. All services, including outreach, are of a high quality. Learning is made fun and takes place in a friendly and relaxed environment. Aspirations are raised well, especially those of lone parents. Individuals improve their educational and personal development and many progress to further education, employment or training. Families learn quickly, develop good skills in playing and learning with their children and gain in confidence and self-esteem.

Good quality information is readily available and provided in a timely manner to families. The centre has excellent displays, for example a poster display and leaflets to support giving up smoking. Staff are skilled at knowing whom to signpost families to for further specialist help. Outreach help on a one-to-one basis is particularly effective. Families value the time staff take to ensure they have all the support they need. For example, the centre provided help with furniture for a family moving into the area. Support in cases of domestic violence has been very good and ensures children are safeguarded during changes in their lives. Good support is given to parents in making referrals to numerous support agencies including Citizens Advice. Parents have access to free local telephone calls as well as the use of computers

*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>2</b>

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

**2**

Governance is good and accountability arrangements clear. Strong links between the advisory board and the day-to-day management ensure the provision is well monitored, with advisory board members often visiting the centre on a weekly basis. The advisory board is well run, has very good attendance and meets every three months. Members value the opportunity for networking that is used well to make timely referrals to appropriate agencies. Professional supervision and management arrangements are consistently good, lead to improved performance and promote reflective practice. Self-evaluation involves families and partners well in setting priorities. The identified priorities for improvement are accurate and targets are appropriately set. Good tracking of performance leads to improvements; for example, registrations and contacts are increasing well and staff are inspired to sustain the drive for improvement. The need for further data at a reach area level has been recognised and the local authority is working on this. Data analysis is regularly undertaken but is not sufficiently refined or always available to plan activities that meet the needs of every target group. This also limits, to a certain extent, managers' ability to measure the longer-term impact of the services provided.

Resources are well managed to ensure good value for money. The main centre is very convivial but relatively small in size, but staff are creative in securing outreach facilities in the right place to meet the needs of the community and expand the provision. A large majority of the children in the area are registered at the centre and resources are used well to increase the numbers. Staff knowledge is good and skills are deployed effectively. Multi-agency working is used well to ensure families have sufficient support.

Respect for diversity is promoted well. The centre is very welcoming to all and recently put up notices in different languages. The centre has recognised the need for further training for staff to enhance their understanding of the needs of minority groups that are new to the area. Staff make every effort to engage families from target groups. For example, families with disabled children are guided to the services, including a sensory room at another centre. The needs of fathers are considered and activities take place at weekends. The achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers is narrowing and the centre has identified where further improvements can be made. Good arrangements are made for families in rural areas to attend outreach sessions and there is good access to a



translation service. Children's centre staff are able to work with a number of families where other agencies have not been able to engage them.

Arrangements for safeguarding families are excellent. Staff vetting procedures are thorough, recording is good and safeguarding records are audited on a very regular basis. Parents and staff sign to say they have read and understood the safeguarding policies. Risk assessments are excellent and take place for each activity, event or outing. Staff have excellent understanding of protocols and practice for making referrals and sharing information between agencies. The centre manager is actively involved in child protection network meetings that are used well to review practice and make improvements, for example better recording and a new social networking policy.

An excellent range of partnerships and services has been established to provide a well-integrated service. The centre is extremely active in seeking opportunities to work with others to improve outcomes for families. Health visitors and midwives are regular visitors and work in a very integrated way so that families receive a seamless service from ante-natal through to 'bump to babe' and parentcraft classes, as well as the wide range of other support services. The excellent relationships between school and the centre mean the transition to school is seamless.

A high percentage of families are pleased with the services the centre provides. Parent representation on the advisory board is good. Parents feel they are listened to and have a say in the services offered. The centre routinely seeks the views of users, staff and partners to bring about continuous improvements. The centre provides good value for money.

*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>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>
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## **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 Wellington Children's Centre on 18–19 October 2012. We judged the centre as good overall. Thank you for contributing to this inspection. Those of you we spoke to and the examples of your evaluations we looked at gave us very valuable information about the work of the centre and its impact.

During our visit, we looked at your centre's business plan and the evaluation of its work. We spoke to a wide range of agencies that work with the centre, as well as staff, members of the advisory board, school staff and representatives from the local authority and health service. We visited activities, including 'Twinkles' and one to one family support sessions, and we spoke to many families using the centre.

It was very helpful to have your views and hear how positive you feel about your centre and especially the way you value the support from the staff. The following comments sum up the views of many we spoke to: 'It is brilliant here, they listen to you and I trust them' and 'They have given me my dignity back.' Those of you we met told us how important the centre was in giving you opportunities to make friends and learn about childcare as well as develop confidence and skills.

We judged that the centre provides good care, guidance and support for families, especially at times of crisis. It is an exceptionally welcoming and friendly centre. Staff are well qualified and work hard to help you and your children live healthily. More mothers are now breastfeeding and know how to promote the health of their families.

The outcomes for families are good. Many families enjoy the activities and grow in confidence and self-esteem. A wide range of services meet the needs of families well. Schools, children's services and health professionals are confident in referring families to the centre in the knowledge that the help they receive will be very effective.

Staff are active in seeking your views of the services and use these views to improve further. They have developed excellent relationships with the schools, childminders, and those from a range of other agencies, including health workers, employment and training organisations and the local sports centre. These contacts are contributing well to providing you with a good range of easily accessible services.

The centre is well led and sensitive to your needs. Staff and leaders have a clear vision and are very committed to making further improvements. A good business plan is driving improvement. Staff know the reach area very well and their knowledge of target groups is improving. However, there is always room for improvement and we have asked staff to further improve the way data on the area are collected and used to improve services for specific groups in your area.

You have told us you feel very safe at the centre and we agree staff promote safeguarding exceptionally well. Management of safeguarding practice is also exceptional. Excellent records are maintained and regularly updated. Children are well supervised and there are highly effective procedures and practices in place to safeguard the welfare of all attending the centre and its activities.

Strong teamwork, together with good leadership and a stable staff group who share a strong commitment to the Wellington community, mean the centre is in a good position to continue to improve.

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