

# Inspection report for Dawley Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Telford and Wrekin
<b>Inspection number</b>	404535
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 October 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Elaine Murray HMI

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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	None
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Stepping Stones at Captain Webb EY338009

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 centre staff, parents, representatives from professional staff and locality advisory board and the local authority. They observed one session of the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Dawley Children's Centre was designated as a phase two children's centre in May 2007. It is situated next to Captain Webb Primary School. The centre delivers the appropriate core purpose of early learning, health, family support and outreach and links to Jobcentre Plus. It serves 688 children and their families living in the Dawley area in the Lakeside South Hub of Telford and Wrekin.

In April 2012, following local authority restructure, the centre became one of four children's centres known as the Lakeside South Hub. The centres are managed jointly by a group manager who is answerable to the local authority for the running of the centre. Since April 2012, Dawley Children's Centre has operated with new management and a new staff team, which works across Dawley, Sutton Hill, Windmill and Woodside Children's Centres. A locality advisory board serving all four centres has recently been established.

The centre's facility has two meeting rooms. Prior to April 2012 the accommodation was used as office space but has since been converted for use as rooms from which to provide services. The rooms will shortly become operational.

The centre provides outreach services for families in need, and some group activities for parents and children. Activities take place in neighbouring locations, such as Dawley House and the health visiting team is based at Dawley Medical Centre. The

centre works with a range of partners. Nursery education is provided at the privately run Stepping Stones Nursery on the site of Captain Webb Primary School. Children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities below those expected for their age.

The majority of the population in the Dawley reach area is of White British heritage with a small percentage from minority ethnic groups. The most recent figures show that 66% of these children live in families dependent on workless benefits. The centre is within the 30% of most deprived wards in the country.

## 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**

**4**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Despite some positive features, the overall effectiveness of the centre is inadequate. Since the significant local authority restructure in April 2012, the newly established staff and management team have worked tirelessly to develop and establish partnerships, and to ensure that the centre has a core building from which to offer services. They have clear and appropriate plans in place to increase the range of services provided to meet the identified needs of the reach area. However, centre leaders do not have a sufficiently clear idea of the make-up of the reach area, or precise information about the needs of target groups in the area or those accessing services. Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of services are developing but are not sufficiently well established for the centre to be able to demonstrate that it is effectively improving outcomes for children and families. While some of the outcomes for those who use the centre are satisfactory, the centre is not having enough impact on supporting families to develop economic stability through access to training and employment or to contribute to shaping the direction of the centre.

The centre places high priority on safeguarding and has effective procedures in place. Staff are alert to indicators that families may need the additional support which is provided through regular use of the Common Assessment Framework process.

The centre provides a limited number of parent and child services and family support work. Parents are signposted to services at other children's centres and to the local adult learning centre. Parents report that they enjoy the small number of services provided or facilitated by Dawley Children's Centre. At present the centre cannot demonstrate that the provision meets the needs of the reach area as parents' participation in services is not effectively monitored and tracked.

Leaders and managers are very motivated to seek improvement and have a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre. Since reorganisation, the management team have focussed on developing partnership working and this has had a positive impact in increasing the number of families engaged in the centre from 30% to 49.4%. The number of families referred for help and support has also increased. The centre buildings have undergone refurbishment and are now ready for the planned service provision. This demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the local authority and professional partners to establish more effective ways of gathering information and data which are relevant to the centre's reach area and which enable the centre to more effectively identify its target groups.
- Develop more robust systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of service provision on improving outcomes for families and children.
- Implement plans to extend the range of services provided to meet the needs of centre users more effectively.
- Contribute more to the drive to encourage workless adults back into employment by providing and/or facilitating:
  - further training to help adults improve their skills and/or gain further qualifications
  - opportunities for adults to engage in volunteer work to broaden their experience and increase their prospects of employability.
- Engage more parents in decision making and shaping the direction of the centre through involvement in the parents' panel and locality advisory board.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>4</b>
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There is evidence that an increasing number of families are accessing health services through health visitor clinics. The percentage of mothers sustaining breastfeeding has increased from 26% in 2009/10 to 28.2% in 2011/12, although breastfeeding initiation rates show a decrease over this time. The most recent obesity data indicate that levels are in line with averages but there is a lack of current data to confirm the

up-to-date picture and progress over time.

Families learn about healthy eating through attending 'Lets Cook' courses and through health visitor and centre staff advice. Parents report that they feel safe at centre activities. All families receiving family support receive a home-safety check, helping to develop families' understanding of safety in the home. The Common Assessment Framework is used well to support children and families, and there is evidence of improved outcomes for children on child protection plans. Parents report that their parenting skills have improved through advice from centre staff and participation in parenting courses. One parent commented, 'Staff really helped me when I wasn't sure how to deal with my toddler's behaviour.' Support for victims of domestic abuse contributes to a safer home environment for children and families.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores show improvement in recent years, although the gap between the lowest achieving and others has remained static. Children enjoy the 'Playing Together' sessions and parents report this helps them to develop learning with their child at home. The school adjacent to the centre reports that children attending the centre's on-site private nursery provision are well prepared for transition to school.

Outcomes for adult learning are less positive. Although the centre is aware that some adults attend courses, they do not monitor attendance and are unable to demonstrate impact. The centre can point to evidence that a small number of adults have been helped into employment but this is limited and there is currently only one volunteer working at the centre. This means that too few parents are improving their skills, economic stability and independence. Parents are encouraged to express their views and are confident that these are taken into account and used to adapt services. The centre has taken steps to re-establish parental involvement in the parents' panel and have longer term plans for parents to be represented on the locality advisory board. However, parents currently make a limited contribution to decision making and governance of the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>3</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>4</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic</b>	<b>4</b>

<b>stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	
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### **How good is the provision?**

<b>4</b>
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The centre can demonstrate that a minority of some target groups are using services, such as lone parents and fathers. However, the centre does not have an accurate picture of all of its target groups. For example, it is unaware of how many children in workless households are in the reach area or engaged in services.

Outreach by centre staff and closer links with the health visiting team have led to a recent increase in the level of engagement. Participation rates in the 'Playing Together' service has increased and an increasing number of families benefit from family support and health visitor involvement. Otherwise, the centre has limited evidence of the extent to which provision is meeting the needs of the reach area. Extension to the range of provision is imminent and has taken into account needs of those families already engaged with the centre. However, these services have yet to be introduced.

Families feel supported in times of crisis and in some cases this has made a measurable difference to their well-being and outcomes. Some parents have been supported with debt management with positive impact on their financial well-being. The centre works closely with the on-site nursery and links with local childminders to promote children's learning positively. Provisions to help adult learning and development through training, particularly for those who are unemployed, are limited.

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>4</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>

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

<b>3</b>
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The leadership team is dedicated and enthusiastic and has high aspirations for improvement. This vision is shared by the positive and committed staff team. The new management arrangements resulting from the recent local authority restructure are starting to show impact in terms of an increase in families engaged with the centre and the number of families referred for family support.

New governance and accountability arrangements are generally well understood. Clear performance management procedures are in place and areas for improvement

are identified. The newly established locality advisory board has a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre and demonstrates its commitment to support and challenge by requesting clearer data about target groups in order to hold the centre to account more effectively.

The centre lacks sufficient information and data to enable it to accurately identify the target groups within its reach area. It is therefore unable to effectively demonstrate how it is meeting the needs of all target groups in the reach and the extent to which outcomes are improving.

Systems to monitor the quality of the provision or to analyse the impact of provision on outcomes for users are being developed. Services and support provided by the centre is evaluated and at times services are adapted to meet users' needs. The centre is unable to demonstrate that the management of resources has a consistent impact on improving outcomes for families. The centre does not, therefore, provide satisfactory value for money.

Partnership working has a satisfactory impact on improving outcomes for children and families. Partner agencies with whom the centre works, report clear communication and a good level of information sharing, and that this has improved since the restructure. As a result of improved partnership working, the centre is becoming better known and the percentage of families engaged with the centre has increased. Partnerships demonstrate some improvement in outcomes for individual families, and partnership working with the school has had a positive impact on children's learning and development.

The safeguarding of all who use the centre is a priority and, as a result, families report that they feel safe there. Staff are well trained in child protection. Protocols for making referrals and sharing information ensure that children are well protected. Procedures ensure that all staff working at or with the centre have been subject to statutory checks.

The centre strives to promote anti-discriminatory practice by providing a welcoming and inclusive environment. The extent to which equality is promoted is satisfactory. The centre can demonstrate that it has taken positive steps to encourage some target groups, such as lone parents to engage in the centre's work. The centre works appropriately with a small number of children with special needs or disabilities through links with the Disabled Children's Team.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and</b>	<b>4</b>



<b>effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>3</b>

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

None.

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### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Dawley Children's Centre on 3–4 October 2012. We judged the centre as inadequate overall.

Thank you to those of you who came to speak to inspectors. We enjoyed talking to you and found your comments very helpful. You told us that you enjoy attending the 'Playing Together' group, and that staff help you with parenting advice and ways to help develop your children's learning at home. You told us that you were pleased that the centre would, in the near future, have services provided at the Dawley base. We found that although some of you are encouraged to attend services at other local centres and in the community, the centre does not keep a close track of the services families attend and so does not have a clear idea whether they are meeting your needs.

We found that the new staff and managers are very keen to improve the centre and plan to provide more services shortly. In recent months they have encouraged more families to come to services and to receive support for their families. We found that managers did not know enough about who lives in the reach area, and how far different groups are benefiting from the services. We have asked them to obtain and make more use of the data and other information so that they know more about who lives in the area and can make sure the services are meeting everyone's needs.

You told us that you feel safe at the services you attend. Safeguarding children and families is a high priority for the centre. We could see that the staff are doing a good job in keeping your families safe and protected. They provide support to some of you who are going through hard times and needing some extra help.

You told us that you are encouraged to feedback your views on the services provided and that your ideas are taken into account. For example, when you requested an outdoor play space at the parent and toddler group, this was arranged. However, we found that you do not, at the moment, contribute to decision making about the centre or participate in the advisory board. We have asked the centre to provide more opportunities for you to have a bigger say in how the centre is run.

We also found that while a small number of you have attended training courses and been helped into employment, this is limited. We also found that there are few opportunities for you to act as volunteers to gain work experience. We have asked the centre to make improvements in this area.

Thank you for speaking with us and best wishes for the future.

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