

# Inspection report for Peacehaven Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	384047
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 November 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not applicable

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

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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, outreach workers, front line staff, health professionals, a social worker, representatives of the local authority and the local advisory group, parents and partner agencies. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Peacehaven Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in August 2006. The purpose-built centre is situated very close to the Children and Family Health Centre. It serves Peacehaven as well as surrounding coastal communities. In addition to services provided from the centre, many operate within the community at local venues and at neighbouring children's centres. It is one of six centres in the Lewes district of East Sussex which are led and managed by the area coordinator. Governance arrangements are provided by the local authority. A local advisory group oversees the work of the six centres.

The centre works in partnership with a number of agencies to provide a range of services including family health, family support, ante-natal and maternity care, family learning, adult education and speech and language support. Of the 1,072 children aged under five years living in the area, 80% are registered at the centre. Children live in homes which are either social housing, rented or privately owned and a very small minority are from Traveller communities. There is also a category B prison within the local area. One in 10 families live in communities that are located in the 30% most deprived areas seen nationally. Around 19% of families are receiving Working Tax Credit.

Most families in the reach area are of White British heritage. A few are from minority ethnic backgrounds and some speak English as an additional language. Children’s skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are typically below the levels 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

Peacehaven Children’s Centre is a good and well managed centre. Children and parents enjoy attending and find it very welcoming. Families are well supported so that outcomes are mostly good and improving. The centre provides excellent care, guidance and support for families, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Outreach work is outstanding and is carefully directed at families in most need of assistance. One parent, praising the quality of support, summed up the views of many saying, ‘It completely turned my life around.’ Parents from different backgrounds say the centre has helped them and their children to make new friends and overcome social isolation.

Excellent safeguarding practice is threaded through every aspect of the centre’s work. Highly effective support and guidance ensure that parents develop excellent understanding of how to keep their families safe. Extremely effective working relationships between partners such as centre staff, health, and social professionals, are reflected in the reducing number of children subject to child protection plans. One parent said the help provided to her family was, ‘A lifeline and stopped problems before they became too bad.’

Good quality courses encourage families to lead healthy lifestyles, provide nutritious meals and engage in regular outdoor exercise. As a consequence, obesity levels have substantially fallen and are now below national and county averages. Breastfeeding rates are improving and are in line with county averages. The children with whom the centre engages achieve better outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage than their peers.

The volunteer programme for helping families to access services is developing well. However, this is less effective for the most disadvantaged area because fewer volunteers live there so there are still a number of families who have yet to engage fully. Courses lead to greater employability. Access to caring occupations, such as child care, has improved significantly. However, the number of families undertaking wider training and accessing a range of jobs has not improved as much.

Staff take full account of parents' views expressed through the parents' forum when planning provision. However, parents' involvement in the local advisory group or in the governance of the centre is less consistent.

Leadership and management of the centre at all levels are strong. Support and challenge by the local authority is very effective in helping the centre to bring about improvement. The centre is very inclusive and committed to providing equality and tackling discrimination. Available resources are used well to ensure the on-going effectiveness of the centre.. Consequently, the centre has a good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Further increase the centre's reach into the most deprived area, widen families' participation in activities and increase the number of volunteers who live within the community.
- Extend the involvement of parents in making decisions about the centre by encouraging more to be consistently represented in the governance arrangements.
- Jointly develop a programme of opportunities with partners to enhance parents' employability based on the precisely identified needs of the area.

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

<b>2</b>
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At 6% and reducing, obesity rates across the reach area are lower than for East Sussex and below the national average. Parents take on board excellent advice on how to improve children's health through practical courses which include nutrition, and creating healthy lunch boxes. Staff from pre-schools and Reception classes report that lunch boxes for those children who have engaged with the children's centre now contain more healthy food. Practical courses enable parents to help their children to enjoy physical activity from an early age. The very close partnership between health professionals and centre staff ensure parents are able to access expert advice on improving physical and mental health. Groups such as baby

massage help strengthen family bonds.

Breastfeeding rates are improving. However, although in line with county averages they are a little below national averages. The centre recently piloted a system where trained professionals gave extended support for new mothers. This was successful and, consequently, this approach is being introduced in children's centres throughout the county. The very large majority of families engage with health services and this is shown by the good immunisation rates.

Outcomes for keeping children safe are outstanding. Safety and paediatric first aid courses enable many parents to gain a qualification and to know how to prevent and deal with accidents. As a result, the number of emergency admissions to hospitals in Peacehaven is below national figures. Parents comment that staff's modelling of good behaviour management on courses and in their own homes has led to much improvement in the way they manage their children. One parent commented, 'I was surprised what I was doing wrong as a parent. It is great to try techniques that actually work!'

Excellent relationships exist between staff and families of all backgrounds. Consequently, parents confidently turn to the centre when difficulties such as domestic violence arise. Parents complete structured parenting courses or they are supported by one-to-one parenting in their own homes. This enables them to quickly gain strategies for dealing with problems. There are excellent outcomes for children supported by the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Formal child protection cases end quickly due to exceptional support from family outreach workers, teamwork between the different agencies and strengthened parenting.

Children enjoy attending the centre and develop confidence. They learn to share, take turns and take care of toys. The strong focus on developing children's speech results in their good progress in communication and language. In 2012, 56% of children achieved at least 78+ scale points across the Early Years Foundation Stage assessments, including in personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy. This is just below the national average but marks good achievement from below average starting points. For example, the centre focuses on strengthening boys' communication skills and data show those who attended the centre did better than those who did not. The gap between the 20% lowest achieving children and the rest is closing over time.

Parents improve their skills by learning alongside their children. Courses such as 'Sign Time' for babies, 'Bringing Books to Life' and 'Toddler Time' enable parents to understand how to provide enriching experiences for developing children's language and purposeful play. Centre activities engage the involvement of fathers well.

The centre has helped parents to develop confidence and to raise their aspirations. Records show that families have made good progress in their personal development, basic skills and in attaining qualifications, for example in first aid and child development. Volunteers now work alongside professionals in delivering some

activities, for example the crèche. The centre has been successful in helping families move towards accessing employment, particularly in assisting with child care. However, the centre recognises the need to promote extended opportunities for training and employment across a broader range of occupations. Lone parents describe how the centre had helped them to access benefits, to pursue housing issues or resolve debt concerns.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>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?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre has a good understanding of the reach area and the families accessing and attending services. It works tirelessly to offer support to families who may be hard to reach and is generally successful with this. Nevertheless, there is a small minority of families who the centre does not manage to engage, especially from the most deprived area. The centre has rightly identified the need to enlist more volunteers from this area to help break down barriers so that even more families feel confident about engaging with the centre.

Staff work very effectively with partners such as midwives, health visitors, social workers and early years settings to provide linked support to families. The specialist midwife and outreach worker support teenage mothers and these young parents are engaging well in centre activities. One parent said the centre's services are, 'Absolutely great, helped me with everything.' Provision is adjusted according to local needs. For example, the centre enlists the help of different interpreters in order to meet the changing needs of the small proportion of children who speak English as an additional language. Excellent personal support for families helps to improve the mental health, emotional resilience and well-being of parents and children. This is reflected in the outstanding safe outcomes.

A strength of the centre is the way it works with neighbouring centres and those further afield to develop and signpost provision, thus ensuring that a wide range of

family needs is met. Staff's different expertise is used to promote provision across all the centres in the Lewes area, for example for speech therapy.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework is firmly embedded across the provision. Children learn in a stimulating, calm environment, strongly focused on communication and language, personal and social, and physical development. Children thrive in the crèche because staff know each child well and skilfully help them to settle. Children learn to explore toys and equipment using their senses and enjoy expressing their feelings. Parenting courses, for example when families create 'Treasure Baskets', enable parents to learn to use inexpensive, readily available resources to evoke children's curiosity and enrich language development. Parents greatly appreciate the centre's 'language checker' for judging children's communication development and tips for enriching their language progression at home.

The centre supports children's transition to school well. There are good links with local schools and nurseries. Prior to starting school, the centre runs a course for parents to help them to best prepare their child for school. The centre is building the trust of the Travelling community, who stay for a short while. A family play day for parents and their children was recently set up, well attended and held at an accessible site for the Travellers.

The centre signposts services, for example for enabling parents to develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills. Disabled children and their families, or those with previously undiagnosed medical problems, are appropriately directed to health professionals. Case studies show agencies work together very effectively to ensure tailor-made support and that staff are willing to develop their skills to promote this. For example, some staff received training for helping families 'left behind' when a parent is in prison. Good networking between different organisations, including charities, enables funds for home equipment and transport costs to be met.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>

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

**2**

The centre is strongly led and managed by the area coordinator. She is ably supported by a well-trained team which shares her ambition for improving the life chances of every child. Management systems are robust and staff are clear about



their roles. The governance arrangements provided by the local authority are good with very clear lines of accountability. Data collated by the local authority are very thorough and used particularly effectively to provide challenge and support and to set demanding yet realistic targets for the centre. There are good systems for evaluating and improving all services. This is a major reason why children’s health and education outcomes are improving.

Safety and security are paramount. Safe recruitment and staff training are tightly monitored and the exemplary practice of staff ensures the total safeguarding of all families who engage with the centre. Strong partnerships run through the centre’s activities and are integral to the high-quality work, for example in early intervention for safeguarding and for children in need. Staffing arrangements, procedures for referral and the vigilance of all partners ensure families in most need receive prompt additional support and preventative services.

The centre’s inclusive ethos promotes a strong sense of community and harmony and ensures there is no discrimination. Access to the centre facilities is good and effective levels of support are provided for individual disabled users. Parents are very pleased with the centre’s provision and how it has helped their families.

Regular professional development ensures staff are very well trained. The sharing of expertise across the six centres, led by the area coordinator, widens the pool of available expertise to the Peacehaven Children’s Centre. This helps to promote good outcomes for families and ensures good value for money.

Parents, through the well-established parents’ forum, contribute to the centre’s priorities for improvement. However, their involvement in governance arrangements or the local advisory group is irregular. This prevents them taking a more active part in helping to steer the centre’s strategic direction. The local advisory group provides good levels of challenge. It comprises professionals with a wide range of expertise, providing the potential for parents to access a wide range of occupations. The centre has yet to fully capitalise on this and gain a fuller understanding of the needs of local employers.

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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>2</b>

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

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Peacehaven Children’s Centre on 13 and 14 November 2012. We judged the centre to be good overall. Many thanks to those of you who met with us during the inspection, or who spoke to us on the telephone. We are very grateful for your help with the inspection and we were interested to hear your views.

We found that the centre offers you a good range of activities and services and you told us that staff are very approachable and helpful, especially in supporting you if you have problems. We found they do an excellent job in working with other agencies in helping you to overcome difficulties and to get your life back on track.

Your centre works exceptionally well with other agencies to keep your families extremely safe. You told us how safe you and your children feel at the centre and we saw the excellent systems in place to protect your families. You told us how much you enjoyed the safety and paediatric first aid courses and how these have helped you to prevent accidents and know what to do should they occur.

Staff and partners give you very good advice on how to live healthy lifestyles and you told us how useful the courses on healthy eating are and how much you enjoy the outdoor activities. Children really enjoy the crèche and staff are skilled at helping them to develop their speech and language.

Children who attend sessions at the centre transfer confidently and develop skills more successfully when they start school than those who do not.

It is important that as many as possible attend the centre but we have noted that some families do not take advantage of all the centre has to offer. We have asked centre managers to encourage more parents to become volunteers and to encourage other parents to register so the centre can support a greater number of families.

The centre has good partnerships with other centres, pre-schools, health and other services for children which means that more services are available to you than could be provided by the centre alone. You told us that staff are very helpful in advising you how to improve your skills and in improving your qualifications. We agree and have asked the centre to provide even more opportunities and advice about training and employment for those of you who need it.

Staff run the centre well and create a welcoming environment. Some of you take part in the parents' forum and this helps the centre to understand your views. However, we have asked the centre to encourage more of you to become involved in helping with the centre's decisions by becoming members of the local advisory group and involved in the governance arrangements.

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