

Inspection report for Newport Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	407016
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2013
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Newport School URN: 103048
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	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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361

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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 staff and senior leaders, parents and members of the advisory board. They met with a range of partners, observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Newport Children's Centre opened in February 2009. It is a phase two centre located in Grove Green, in the borough of Waltham Forest, London. The centre has undergone significant changes. It has recently merged and works in partnership with the Riverley Children's Centre in a cluster model. The centres share a joint timetable which is distributed across both reach areas. There are also joint commissioning arrangements for external services. The full core offer is provided through a range of supporting services including health support, adult courses and workshops. The centre is co-located with Newport School, which is subject to a separate inspection.

The community the centre serves is socially, economically and culturally diverse. Families living in the reach area come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds; the largest group of families, at 29%, are of Asian heritage. The next largest group are of White British heritage at 15%, with the remainder comprising families from Black and other minority ethnic heritages, White Other, Somali, Turkish, Black Caribbean and Black African heritage. A recent neighbourhood survey revealed that there are at least 65 languages spoken in the reach area. The most common languages spoken by primary-aged children are English, Punjabi, Polish and Urdu.

The area has a mixture of types of housing, with some privately owned. A large proportion of homes are privately rented and a high number of families live in social housing. There is significant overcrowding for families who typically live in traditional terraced houses that have been converted into one bedroom flats. Currently 1080

children under the age of five years live in the centre's reach area, of which 94% are registered with the centre. The centre reaches 72% of workless families. The large majority of children enter early years provision with a range of skills and knowledge below expectation, particularly in communication, language, literacy and personal, social and emotional development.

The local authority is responsible for governance of the centre, which has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents. The advisory board is responsible for both centres in the cluster. The centre is also supported by a centre improvement partner who is a consultant working on behalf of the local authority.

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

Newport Children's Centre is a good centre, with some outstanding aspects. The safety of families and staff is of paramount importance; robust policies and outstanding practice ensure the safety of all centre users. Safeguarding practice is exemplary and permeates every activity. For example, safety in the home is promoted at every opportunity, with innovative methods used to provide families in need with safety equipment. Rigorous supervision of actions taken to support vulnerable families ensures that all families receive swift, effective inter-agency support. The centre makes a significant difference to improving the lives of local families who use it, thereby demonstrating its good overall effectiveness.

Outcomes for families and services provided by the centre are good. A very large majority of families from the reach area are registered with the centre. Proactive outreach workers diligently run a wide range of activities in the community, thereby ensuring that families, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are given precisely the support they need, especially at times of crisis. Parents from different target groups are unanimous in their praise for the work of staff at the centre; one mother said, 'If it wasn't for the centre, I probably wouldn't be here, I was at breaking point.' Although the centre runs a number of interesting and appropriate activities at the centre and outreach venues, more adults could

undertake further education or training, or receive support linked to obtaining employment. The centre recognises this and has good plans to work more closely with colleagues from adult education and Jobcentre Plus to remedy the situation.

Leadership and management are good overall but governance and accountability are outstanding because from the moment a visitor enters this busy, well-run children's centre, they are greeted by friendly, conscientious staff who are skilled in meeting the needs of existing and new families. The local authority, through the use of the highly effective centre improvement partner, clearly supports the centre to achieve its goals. Advisory board members are knowledgeable and passionate about the work of the centre. The centre also exemplifies high-quality practice in safeguarding and equality and diversity.

Self-evaluation processes are robust and are used well to identify priorities and plan future provision, which explains why the centre has good capacity for sustained improvement. However, the centre is unclear about the impact it has on some target groups, such as lone parents and children from workless households. A lack of data at a reach level hampers the centre's ability to evaluate its effectiveness objectively. This also restricts centre staff from focusing activities on specific target groups. Some information, for example health or employment related data, is not used effectively by the centre due to difficulties in obtaining this information from Jobcentre Plus or health partners.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Prioritise the work with partners in adult education and employment focused organisations to increase the opportunities for adults who are ready to undertake further education or training, or who are looking for employment.
- Press on with plans to work with the local authority, Jobcentre Plus and health partners, to improve the quality and use of reach area data to enable the centre to improve the outcomes for target groups by equipping it to make informed decisions about activities run by the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre's good day-to-day partnership working with health professionals results in a good impact on community health. Centre staff are highly effective in engaging with families to promote healthy lifestyles. Breastfeeding at six to eight weeks is high at 70%, and is significantly higher than the England average at 47%. A range of activities improve families' understanding of the importance of a healthy diet. Many parents are gaining confidence when cooking and are using new ideas to ensure their families are benefiting from a healthy diet. Due to effective interventions, obesity levels in Reception-age children are reducing strongly and are down to 9.3%.

Staff's knowledge of protocols and procedures when working with social care is

excellent. Following significant recent changes to the centre, senior managers undertook a complete and comprehensive review of all existing cases. This activity, coupled with extremely close supervision of staff, has been highly effective in ensuring that centre support for the most vulnerable families is timely and effective. The multi-agency approach adopted by the centre ensures the very best possible support for children, including those subject to a child protection plan or those who are looked after by the local authority. Parents and children are kept extremely safe by the centre through the rigorous reinforcement of health and safety. As one mother put it, 'We know we are safe here, we just know it.'

Good transition arrangements ensure most children are well prepared for their next stage of learning. Centre staff are aware of the need for careful assessment and planning when working with families. A wide variety of activities ensure children develop their speech and language effectively. As one parent said, 'My child has come on leaps and bounds since attending the centre.' The percentage of children gaining at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales with at least six points in each of the scales for personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy has risen significantly from 46.6% in 2009/10 to 63.1% in 2011/12, whilst the percentage gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest has reduced significantly from 53.4% in 2009/10 to 26.9% in 2011/12.

Families develop strong relationships within the centre and show respect and concern for others. There are good opportunities for families to make a positive contribution to the running of the centre. For example, parents suggested running a group specifically for families of Polish heritage, which has consequently been introduced and is extremely well attended and very popular with families. Children behave well and learn to share and take turns. Adults regularly express their views about the centre through post-activity evaluations and the active parents' forum. Parents are very effectively involved in the work of the advisory board and support and challenge the centre well.

Outcomes linked to improving families' economic and social well-being are good. The centre runs many interesting and relevant programmes such as 'English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for Beginners' and 'First Aid'. Feedback from parents is positive, and there are many individual success stories as a result of the good work done by the centre to enhance adults' future economic well-being. Although adults access good quality learning and there are opportunities that improve their skills, the centre recognises that it needs to work more closely with colleagues from adult education and also Jobcentre Plus to provide greater opportunities for adults looking to develop their economic stability and independence.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
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The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
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	2
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	2

How good is the provision?

2

Services, activities and opportunities for families are good, with a very large majority within the reach area accessing centre activities. The centre is located in an excellent position within the community, making it very accessible for families as it is located virtually in the centre of the reach area immediately adjacent to one of the most deprived housing estates. Registrations have increased significantly year on year since the centre became operational in 2009 and are now high at 94%. All families receive careful and sensitive assessment of their needs by staff at the first point of contact. Parents have confidence when discussing issues with centre staff. As one parent put it, 'Centre staff are so good, they have always helped me.'

The learning and development opportunities provided for children are well planned and, as a result, they make good progress. The centre is full of brightly coloured works of art produced enthusiastically by children. Staff have high expectations of all families, who flourish as a result. Activities are well organised, with all staff clearly committed to helping families succeed. Participation rates and attendance levels on all courses are good. The centre's outreach workers are very effective in working with specific groups such as teenage mothers and minority ethnic communities. Although there is no specific fathers' group, men are encouraged to participate in all activities and do so in increasing numbers. Currently, the centre is contacting every father individually to find out what services interest them as it considers further activities with fathers in mind. One particularly influential father is an active member of the parents' forum. Achievement is always celebrated, with many photographs on view which show successful learners receiving their certificates from various people such as the local headteacher.

Families receive very good support in times of crisis as staff are confident when dealing with the complex needs of families and work well with a variety of partners to support families in most need. Information recorded on Common Assessment Framework (CAF) documentation is particularly detailed and helpful as a result of very careful supervision by the senior manager team. From the moment a person first enters the centre, discreet assessment of the needs of every individual takes place. Staff confidently give advice and guidance to families. Appropriate referral to other agencies ensures that users receive the best of advice, although the display

and provision of information, advice and guidance relating to opportunities for adults to improve themselves through training, further education or employment could be improved. This could be achieved through the provision of appropriately written advice sheets, clearer signposting to qualified advisors and generally ensuring this aspect of provision gained a higher profile in centre activities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The management team provide high-quality professional supervision for all staff in this good centre, which has some outstanding aspects and good overall effectiveness. All associated with the centre are crystal clear about the aims and priorities for the centre. The centre head and her senior management team provide inspirational leadership through a number of strategies. All staff are well qualified and actively encouraged to develop themselves in areas that interest them and which benefit the centre. The senior management team, along with the advisory board, are passionate in their efforts to improve life chances for families within the local community and have proven to be highly effective in refocusing the work of the centre during an extremely turbulent 12-month period. The centre improvement partner provides exceptionally accurate feedback on the centre's performance, which enables the leadership team to plan well for the future.

The centre provides good value for money insofar that it allows for valuable resources to be available within the centre. Innovative strategies to obtain funding enable projects to take place for the benefit of families, for example trips to the seaside, which are particularly valued by families. Self-evaluation is good, with virtually all strengths and areas for improvement being identified by the centre prior to inspection, thereby demonstrating the centre's good capacity to improve. However, the centre does not always collate and use data at a reach level so it is difficult to measure the impact of activities specifically in the reach area. The local authority is aware of this and is working hard at a strategic level to forge closer relationships with partners working in the area so that reach level data are readily available.

The centre has a wonderfully warm and friendly environment. Equality of opportunity is excellent, with services meeting the needs of all very well, including disabled children and adults and those with special educational needs. Good partnership working with professional workers as well as the voluntary sector ensures the centre

is always busy and help is on hand for most users. The centre is proactive in seeking the views of its service users and there are many examples of programme changes as a result of consultation with users.

Safeguarding is outstanding. Staff are vigilant about safety and take prompt action to minimise any potential risks in activities. All legal requirements in relation to safeguarding are adhered to. Leaders ensure the safe recruitment of staff and robust checks are made on all adults working in or with the centre. Families who are most in need receive exceptional support during their time of crisis through the very effective use of the Common Assessment Framework and the close partnership working of agencies involved.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	2
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	2

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

The recent inspection findings at Newport School URN: 103048 were used to inform this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Newport Children's Centre on 6–7 March 2013. We judged the centre as good. Some aspects are outstanding.

As part of the inspection, we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults, including parents, staff, and partnership representatives. We were pleased to speak to some of you about the centre's work and to listen to your views. We really enjoyed talking to you at the centre and in the various activity sessions you were engaged in. You expressed your views very clearly and we appreciated you telling us how things really are.

The inclusion of all children and families is excellent and the centre is a pleasure to visit. We found that safeguarding and equality and diversity are outstanding at the centre. All of you, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have equal access to the activities and services on offer. Staff are vigilant about safety and take prompt action to minimise any potential risks in activities. All legal requirements in relation to safeguarding are adhered to. Leaders ensure the safe recruitment of staff and robust checks are made on all adults working in or with the centre.

Outcomes are good and the centre is working well with health partners to improve your health and that of your families. We were pleased to see that obesity rates for children entering Reception Year have reduced year on year and are now around national averages. The centre offers a range of good support to encourage new mums to breastfeed so that their babies have the best start in life. So we are pleased that an increasing number of you are breastfeeding your babies and rates for sustained breastfeeding at 6–8 weeks are high.

Staff are effective at helping you to increase your knowledge about how your children learn through the many play activities and parenting sessions on offer. We noted how much both you and your children enjoy learning and were pleased that the centre always celebrates your success. The skills children have when they enter school are improving year on year. The centre is very effective in closing the gap between the 20% lowest achieving children and the rest.

The provision of services at the centre is good and the centre is outstanding at keeping families safe and makes excellent use of risk assessments and ensures all activities are safe for you and your children. All of you told us how safe you feel at the centre; as one mother told us, 'The centre has a safe, friendly environment.' Families who are most in need receive very good support during their time of crisis through the close partnership working of agencies involved.

It was good to hear how you have benefited from coming to the centre, increased your confidence and become involved in the many worthwhile activities available to you. However, we have asked the centre to work more closely with partners in adult

education and also Jobcentre Plus so that better advice and more opportunities are available for those of you who want to improve yourselves or look for employment.

We judged that the centre has an outstanding leadership team with excellent governance and accountability. Centre staff work very hard to make the centre as good as it can be. They have innovative ideas to improve what they do so that more families can benefit from its activities. However, they are hampered in this effort by the fact that they do not have up-to-date information about all the different groups in the area. We have therefore asked the local authority to provide the centre with accurate, relevant and up-to-date local information, by working more closely at a strategic level with partners such as Jobcentre Plus and health partners. This will help the centre to work out how well it is meeting the needs of particular target groups, such as lone parents and those families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to share your views with us. We can see why the staff enjoy working with you so much and wish you every success in the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.