

# Inspection report for Dodworth and Gilroyd Children's Centre

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Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	420806
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2013
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
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.

**Report Published:** March 2013

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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 additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the area manager who is also the centre manager, local authority representatives, centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners. These included childminders, midwives, health visitors, the breastfeeding link worker, the multi-agency Common Assessment Framework (CAF) coordinator and early years teachers. They visited sites in the reach area to see outreach work in action.

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

## Information about the centre

Dodworth and Gilroyd is a phase two children's centre. It is housed in an extended and refurbished communal meeting building in the Gilroyd area. The centre is fully accessible and comprises a small family room, a large family room, a health promotion room, a general office, an outdoor play area, a kitchen and toilet facilities. There is a small car park. In addition to the main site, there is a small satellite building, a conservatory, attached to Dodworth St John's Primary School. The centre sits within the Dodworth and Old Town Well-being Area which is a mixed area of deprivation and relative affluence. The reach area is split by the M1 motorway which separates Dodworth and Gilroyd from the more central Barnsley area. The centre is situated on a quiet road running through Gilroyd. There is little passing pedestrian traffic. There is an historic divide between the two communities of Dodworth and Gilroyd and they view themselves as two separate areas. Residents in the part of the reach area across the motorway would not typically travel to Dodworth. As a result, the centre works in partnership with Wilthorpe Children's Centre to deliver activities at Barnsley Central Library and works with the community team from Barnsley Football Club. Outreach activities are delivered in two local schools and the local library. The centre delivers Story Sack activities through a local playgroup.

The centre was designated in February 2008. It offers support and integrated services for children and young people from pre-natal to 19 years. The centre runs a range of integrated services including health, support for teenage parents and family support. There was only one family support worker, rather than the usual two, between March and August 2012. There is currently no permanent outreach worker due to secondment, although the centre is receiving some interim support until the new outreach worker is appointed. The centre works in partnership with health visitors, social care, midwives and the Barnsley CAF (Common Assessment Framework) coordinator.

The centre is managed by the local authority, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, to deliver services to meet the government's core purpose for children's centres. The centre has a Service Level Agreement in place. Some specific targets are linked to the trial 'Payment by Results National Measures'. The centre's advisory board serves the three centres west of the M1 motorway – Dodworth & Gilroyd, Penistone and Darton.

The reach area of Dodworth & Gilroyd Children's Centre comprises six Super Output Areas. The centre is located in the area with the highest need. There are 385 children under five years of age living in the reach area. The centre attracts users from a wider area due to close working partnerships with other local children's centres. Some families within the reach of other centres find it more convenient to attend services at Dodworth and Gilroyd. Of the children in the reach, 16.9% live in households dependent on workless benefits. Almost 27% of children live in families who are low paid and are in receipt of Working Tax Credit. Of those families in employment, 13.5% receive the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Almost all families are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. Most children's level of skills on entry to early years provision is below that typically expected for their age, particularly their communication and language skills. There are two primary schools, one special school and one private day nursery within the reach area.

# 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**

**3**

## Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Dodworth and Gilroyd Children's Centre is a satisfactory centre that is improving rapidly. Parents who use it regularly are highly complimentary about the approach of staff and the quality of services on offer, saying, 'All the services are invaluable to our children and have a positive effect on their future'.

The quality of care, guidance and support and the partnership work established and maintained by centre staff are key strengths. Staff and volunteers provide a warm welcome for all users. They make sure that support is always forthcoming for families in times of crisis. Children, including disabled children and those with special educational needs, enjoy good care and support. However, few parents are supported to improve their economic stability by accessing routes back into training or work.

Children and their families know what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. However, although breastfeeding rates are still above the local average, the proportions of mothers who start to breastfeed their babies and also then sustain breastfeeding for six to eight weeks are below the national average and are declining after several years of improvement.

Children learn and develop satisfactorily, although, across the reach area, the achievement gap between the lowest 20% and other children at the end of their Reception Year is not narrowing quickly enough.

The relatively new area manager, who leads this and two other centres, provides the required continuity to move the centre forward with increased urgency. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate and there is a keen focus on the right priorities. For example, the leadership has already identified that data are not used or evaluated well enough to improve outcomes for users. Although there are measurable targets in place, the leadership acknowledges that these are not challenging enough. The centre is not well advertised in all parts of the reach area. Family support workers and outreach staff are knowledgeable and take lead roles in the centre when the area manager is not there. Even though long-term illness and a recent promotion have disrupted staffing, the centre has moved forward at a

faster rate in the last nine months than previously. The centre's accomplishments so far demonstrate its satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

There is appropriate attention to the promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity. Discrimination is not tolerated. Even so, few users from target groups such as lone parents and teenage parents engage in activities and services provided by the centre.

Parents evaluate the activities and courses they attend. However, they do not represent the reach area on the shared advisory board and so do not take part in the decision-making process about how services should evolve. The advisory board is supportive but does not provide sufficient challenge to the leaders about the centre's impact on families in its reach.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the outcomes for children and families by:
  - increasing the initiation rates for breastfeeding and also the proportion of mothers who sustain breastfeeding for at least six to eight weeks after birth
  - narrowing the gap in achievement between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest
  - widening parents' knowledge of, and access to, various routes back into employment and training and so increase their economic stability.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
  - developing the use of data and advertising to engage with more families from target groups and setting more ambitious targets to raise outcomes for users
  - increasing the level of challenge offered to the leadership by the advisory board
  - increasing the number of parents who represent centre users from the reach area on the advisory board.

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

3
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A majority of families in the area engage with appropriate health services and show an increasing understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. They learn about how to provide nutritious snacks and family meals and their children enjoy tasting different foods at the centre. They also experience routines during sessions such as 'Ready Steady Play' that help them get ready for full-time school. The number of mothers and children aged under five taking advantage of free or low-cost vitamins is slowly increasing. The proportion of Reception-age children in the reach area who are obese is well below the national average at 4.5%. Families appreciate the close partnership work between centre staff and health professionals, and parents typically comment, 'I wouldn't keep coming if I wasn't happy'.

Although breastfeeding rates climbed for several years, they have fallen back more recently. The numbers of mothers who start to breastfeed and then sustain breastfeeding at six to

eight weeks after the birth are both below national averages. Breastfeeding supporters are active in the area and a support group is due to re-establish at the centre next month.

Families using the centre say they feel safe and they are clearly relaxed at the centre. Children who are subject to a child protection plan, children in need or those who are looked after by the local authority are closely tracked and their needs effectively met. There are only a small number of CAF processes initiated by staff, partly because of the size of the reach area. Centre staff are fully involved and ensure, with other agencies, that children's individual needs are met. Children generally behave well at centre-led activities and enjoy the time they spend in the well-resourced family rooms and outdoor area. Staff and users enjoy respectful relationships with each other.

Within the reach area the percentage of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is broadly in line with the national average at 63%. However, the achievement gap for the bottom 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile widened to 35.5% in 2012, considerably wider than the national gap of 30.1%. There are generally too few users from target groups represented at activities organised by the centre.

Parents provide regular evaluations of individual activities or courses but few contribute to wider decision making about the centre's development and none represent users' views on the advisory board. The centre is very open to helping parents to become active volunteers and it celebrates successes, such as those who have gone on to study at degree level and who now support other children's centres in the area. The centre also welcomes student placements. Even so, not enough parents are currently helped onto training courses or back into employment.

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>	3
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	3
<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>	3
<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>	3
<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>	3

## How good is the provision?

3

Services such as the 'Having a Baby' programme are popular and parents appreciate the integrated working partnerships established by health professionals. Participants at these sessions commented in their positive evaluations: 'The programme made me look forward to my baby's birth rather than fear it' and 'I am more aware of baby-related issues. Sessions with the midwife and breastfeeding supporter were very helpful'.

Staff provide good quality care, guidance and support which families readily access, saying they regard the centre as a 'comfort blanket'. Parents who seek help are able to track their progress through the various support programmes with the aid of a visually simple recording process which helps them to see the progress they are making, or have made.

Health professionals and outside agencies communicate effectively so that individuals' needs are identified and supported well, particularly those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Increasingly, outreach work is being rolled out across the reach area, although the small number of staff limits this. Support systems for adults' progression into further education or employment are not fully developed.

Local children's centres share their expertise appropriately. Children move seamlessly from one stage of their education to the next because communication is well established.

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>	3
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	3
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	2

## How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood. Governance and accountability arrangements are in place and are having a satisfactory impact on the centre's development. Staff say that they feel well supported in their work and are able to undertake required professional development. They benefit from regular supervisions. Membership of the advisory board includes representatives of a range of health, education and other organisations. Although parents provide regular evaluations about centre services, no parents from this reach area represent the views of local families on the shared advisory board. Members meet regularly to discuss the centre's work and that of another two children's centres served by the same board. Although the advisory board is supportive of the centre and has knowledge of some of the data, it does not challenge the leadership sufficiently about the successful impact of its work.



There are established and effective procedures within the centre to ensure that all staff and volunteers have appropriate checks in line with government and local requirements to safeguard users and staff. All safeguarding requirements are met. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and regular updates. They are familiar with the centre's policies, procedures and expectations. The centre cooperates with other key agencies to minimise the risk of harm to those using the centre. Centre staff are supported effectively by the area CAF coordinator and case studies illustrate how the CAF process is used to keep children safe and to reduce the numbers of children in need. Parents say, 'The staff have been fantastic.'

The centre has had several area managers leading its work over the past four years. Leadership is increasingly effective and roles among the staff continue to develop. Although the use of data is not currently strong enough, the manager has a keen awareness and is already persuaded of the benefits of using data more effectively both to evaluate the success of activities and in the planning of future services. The centre has targets but these are not challenging enough to move improvements forward at a fast enough rate. All outcomes are reviewed quarterly and the centre's action plan identifies key priorities accurately. The centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Staff promote the inclusion of children and their families, including disabled children, the children of disabled parents and also children with special educational needs, in the reach area. There is suitable attention to the promotion of equality and diversity and the tackling of discrimination. The centre's overall performance continues to improve, although too few members from its target groups currently engage with it regularly. There is not a large volume of passing pedestrians close to the centre and centre services are not clearly advertised in all parts of its reach.

Partnership work is a strength. Staff are quick to offer support and guidance to individuals and to help parents find ways to move forward no matter what problems they face. One parent who became a volunteer praised the centre's work, saying, 'It opened up a life-changing set of choices for me'. Childminding services in the reach area are of increasingly good quality. The relatively new 'Having a Baby' programme is a good example of a successful multi-agency approach to parent education.

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>	3
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	3
<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>	3

<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>	3
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	3
<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>	2
<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>	3

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

None.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Dodworth and Gilroyd Children's Centre on 6 and 7 March 2013. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The centre provides a friendly welcome for everyone who accesses its services. All the users we spoke to were firm in their praise for the centre and its staff, who are committed to improving outcomes for local families. It is a safe place to which you are happy to return.

There are varied opportunities for you to take part in purposeful learning activities. The majority of families are registered and engage regularly with the centre, although we found that not enough users from the target groups such as lone parents and teenage parents benefit from centre services. We have asked the centre to focus on ways to increase these numbers further. We looked at the comments and evaluations of the services on offer and these are very positive.

You are increasingly aware of how to live healthy lives and learn more about the benefits of eating nutritious snacks and meals, exercising and developing friendships. The number of mothers choosing to breastfeed is below the national average, although above local figures. We have asked the centre to help more mothers in the reach area to start breastfeeding and to continue breastfeeding their babies beyond six to eight weeks. The well-equipped

outdoor area linked to the larger family room encourages your children to be active. Within the reach the number of children in the Reception Year who are obese is below the national average.

Partnerships are strong between family support workers, outreach staff and a wide range of local organisations, services and schools. As a result, you have access to the services you need and your children are prepared appropriately for the next steps in their education. We have asked the centre to help to make sure that, by the end of Reception Year across the reach area, the gap is narrowing between how well the children who learn more slowly are doing and the progress made by the most successful ones.

We were pleased to see that the centre encourages a regular flow of volunteers and students to work at the centre. Some of you are doing so well in these roles and are learning new life skills yourselves as a result. We have asked the centre to find ways to increase the opportunities available to centre users to engage in training or to go on to find employment and become financially secure.

The centre is improving at a faster rate now that staffing and leadership are more stable. Development plans clearly identify how the centre is to continue to move forward in the coming year. Currently, the targets set to help measure the centre's success are not challenging enough and we have asked centre leaders to improve this, which is something they had already identified to develop.

You are regularly asked to share your views about centre activities and staff always listen to your ideas. We think that the choices you made during the redecoration of the centre are excellent – it all looks very cheery. Although the parents' forum is active, no parent from your reach area sits on the advisory board. We have asked your centre to encourage more of you to become involved with the advisory board. Representatives from a range of different organisations attend the advisory board meetings and they clearly have your best interests at heart. However, we have asked that the advisory board challenges the leadership of the centre sufficiently about the impact the centre has on outcomes for children and families in the reach area.

Thank you to everyone who came to speak to us about the centre and the part it plays in your lives. We appreciate your time and effort.

We wish you all every success in the future.

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