

# Inspection report for Brockworth Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	386948
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13 – 14 June 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nick Gadfield HMI

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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, the centre manager and staff, staff from partner and commissioned agencies, headteachers and senior representatives from the local authority and the advisory board.

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

## Information about the centre

Brockworth Children's Centre, a phase two centre, opened in April 2007, and has been part of a cluster with Jigsaw Children's Centre since April 2008. It serves the community of Brockworth and surrounding area, which is a mixed rural and urban area on the outskirts of Tewkesbury Borough. Tewkesbury is projected to be the fastest growing district in Gloucestershire between 2007 and 2026, with growth in the working age population and in the number of children and young people.

The centre employs 14 staff, of whom five work as community family workers. The Family Support Team is also based at the centre but works with families across the cluster reach area. Brockworth is open on weekdays from 8.30am to 5.00pm for 49 weeks of the year. The centre offers a range of weekly drop-in sessions for families including healthcare checks, a Bumps, Babies & Beyond Group, a Polish community group and Stay and Play. It provides crèche facilities when parents are attending sessions, but does not offer integrated childcare.

There are currently 586 children, from birth to four-years-old registered with this centre, representing 89% of those in the reach area, of which 68% are recorded as 'seen'. Ninety-three per cent of the population are of White British heritage, and fewer than 4% are from non-white heritage. The reach area includes a recently established community of Eastern European, mainly Polish families. Around 14% of

families in the area are claiming benefits but only 3% are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, affecting about 40 children attending the centre. The proportion of children reaching the expected level of development by the time they start school is six percentage points above the county average. Brockworth is one of two wards in the Tewkesbury District with the highest levels in the county of disability and poor health deprivation, mainly because of high levels of smoking, obesity and poor diet.

## 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

Brockworth is a good children's centre which successfully meets the needs of families in the local area. The centre has been successful in registering nearly 90% of families with young children in its reach area, and around two thirds of the families are users of the centre or its outreach services. It knows its reach community well, particularly the needs of the most vulnerable families and is effective in meeting them.

The centre uses parents' views well to tailor its provision to meet their needs, but more formal arrangements for parents to contribute to governance, for example through the parents' forum, have not always been as successful. The centre focuses well on helping its users to develop good parenting skills and on their children's development. Staff demonstrate good safeguarding practices for parents to see, such as checking on doors, carefully supervising the children when they play outside and talking to them all the time about what they are doing. Opportunities for parents to improve their wider skills that would enable them to move into future employment are less successful.

Children develop good social skills through attending the centre which prepare them well for school. Childcare is provided through a number of independent providers in the locality. Increasing the availability of good quality childcare to respond to the new entitlement for vulnerable two- and three-year-olds is a priority for the centre and the local authority but, despite considerable work by them, the quality of

childcare remains variable.

The centre's work with health professionals is excellent and particularly well coordinated. Sensitive support is given to families with children who have been identified as having additional needs to ensure a smooth transition when they start school.

Safeguarding arrangements are good and supported by appropriate training at the recommended intervals. Staff are confident users of the well coordinated child protection referral routes where necessary. The centre provides a calm, safe and neutral meeting point for parents whose children are in the care of the local authority or live permanently with one parent.

Leadership and management in the centre are good. Performance monitoring by the local authority is robust, and draws on available data to identify trends and determine the centre's priorities. Effective self-evaluation by the centre also accurately identifies its key vulnerable groups. It has consistently improved its engagement with families in its area since it opened, and understands very well the needs of these families. The centre's accurate assessment of needs, its track record of increasingly engaging with families and improving provision mean that the centre has good capacity to make further improvements.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Further develop work with partners to support improvements in the quality of childcare provision so that all children are at their expected level of development when they start school.
- Review the provision available for parents to develop their employability skills and ensure that it is well signposted.
- Find ways to involve parents more effectively in governance and strategic planning.

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

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes for families are good. Children's health, including dental health, is generally good apart from obesity, but here too the centre can show a modest improvement in 2010/2011. Breastfeeding initiation has improved as a result of the very good joint working between the centre and health professionals. Smoking levels during pregnancy are higher than average, but has not had an adverse impact on birth weight or premature births. Teenage conception rates are thought to be below average but the centre relies on its excellent relationship with midwives and health visitors for this information.

Families feel very safe attending the centre. As one parent in the Polish drop-in group said, 'My child loves coming here – he feels like he is at home.' Children practise routines that promote healthy eating and personal hygiene. Facilitated counselling sessions targeted at parents in need significantly improve their ability to cope with family life and protect their children. One parent was prepared to speak about her experience of counselling, telling inspectors, 'I feel like a weight is taken off my shoulders.' The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used appropriately and staff attend multi-agency case conferences and review meetings for the very few children subject to child protection plans to share information. Referrals by family workers have led to improved home safety, for example through fitting childproof locks and safety gates.

Children gain important social skills through the wide variety of Stay and Play activities which help them to settle quickly when they progress to nursery and school. They are confident to use toys and resources without constant adult direction. Children quickly make friends through attending the centre and often retain these friendships into primary school and beyond. By the time they reach Reception class, 85% of children have reached the level expected of them across a wide range of developmental scales, compared with the 79% county average. The gap between those with the lowest level of development and the rest has widened over the previous three years, reflecting an increase in the number of children with additional needs, but those receiving free school meals score five percentage points higher than those who are not eligible.

Parents' views are regularly gathered through questionnaires, a suggestions box and discussion to help plan and improve activities. The Children's Voice project has been successful in raising adults' awareness of the importance of also 'hearing' children's views. Parents using the centre treat each other with respect. Most parents participate in decisions about how activities are organised and develop confidence in discussing improvements with the centre staff. They are represented on the cluster advisory board, where they share valuable local knowledge and experience, but are not yet contributing fully to strategic decisions.

The centre has successfully supported some parents to gain employment, and a good proportion of teenage parents are engaged in education, employment or training. However, the centre is less effective at promoting routes for parents who might seek further training to update their skills as a step towards gaining 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>	<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>2</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>3</b>

### **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre hosts health checks for pregnant mothers and those who have recently given birth, and these sessions are well used to make parents aware of other services offered as well as to alert centre staff to parents in need of support. Sessions such as drop-in sessions aimed at vulnerable users, for example lone or teenage parents, are well attended. The centre has successfully raised parents' awareness of the importance of paediatric first aid and arranged specialist training to meet subsequent demand. Home visiting for those initially most reluctant to attend the centre meets their needs very well.

Staff from the cluster Family Support Team attend outreach sessions to integrate families into the work of the main centre. Centre staff know well the provision available across the locality and guide families to specific provision, for example the Freedoms programme. The centre has been very successful in engaging with families from the recently established Eastern European, mainly Polish, community who welcome the drop-in Stay and Play sessions as a way of meeting other families and their children. As one of the parents said, 'I don't know what I would have done without them. They are a replacement for family.'

Childcare is provided by a number of independent nurseries or childminders in the locality. The quality of this provision varies but the proportion of good settings is lower than average, and the centre is working with its local authority partners to try to improve them. However, the regular and varied Stay and Play sessions at the centre are effective at supporting children to learn and develop and are helping to close the gap in attainment.

Guidance and support for families are good and include help with budgeting, healthy eating on a budget, benefit claims and dealing with debt. The Family Support Team understands well the need to balance the support given to vulnerable families against the risk that too much support can develop dependency. Support for families in times of crisis is excellent. The on-site counselling service is highly valued by its users. The counsellor has developed a clear protocol to ensure smooth referrals of any child protection concerns that may arise. Parenting programmes provide a safe enabling environment where parents feel comfortable in sharing experiences and learning from others.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

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

<b>2</b>
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Leadership and management are good. Line management arrangements are well understood by both centre staff and partner agencies and enable staff to be particularly effective in their roles. Professional supervision of staff is good and regularly exercised. Effective governance is currently provided by the local authority in the interim arrangement following the separation from the neighbouring primary school and the full establishment of cluster governance.

Access to reliable data to set challenging targets is improving, although health data at local level takes more effort to obtain. The centre analyses feedback from parents and partner organisations to identify common concerns or suggestions for improvement and responds appropriately, for example in reviewing the counselling sessions. Self-assessment draws on the same data along with feedback from its families but sections of the self-assessment report are overly descriptive rather than evaluative, making it difficult for staff to see how well the centre is performing.

The centre is well resourced with good quality and easily accessible equipment, including a good range of books promoting health, safety, good parenting, child development and relationships, for parents to borrow. The resources are used well in sessions enabling children to access them without needing to ask for adult help, thus promoting independence.

Good relationships with pre-school providers result in children with specific needs being well supported in transition to school, and extend to sensitive support for their families. In a predominantly White British area, the centre promotes diversity well, particularly through its engagement with the Eastern European families. Relationships between the various community groups are good as a result of the work by the centre.

Safeguarding arrangements are good, underpinned by a well-written, regularly updated policy which includes a good explanation of the warning signs of possible child abuse and how staff should respond. Centre notices display a good range of safeguarding and child protection advice. The centre's record of recruitment checks contains appropriate details and is supplemented by written confirmation from partner agencies that their staff have also been checked. Centre staff and those of

outside agencies provide a well-focused and well-integrated provision aimed at early intervention to protect children.

Partnership working with health professionals is excellent and includes the local GP practice, which hosts well-established monthly case review meetings to discuss child protection cases known to any of the agencies present. These also receive notifications of local accident and emergency attendance involving children, which was an area for improvement in the February 2012 Ofsted local authority safeguarding inspection. The centre's childminder group provides valuable opportunities for sharing good practice and resources and for the minded children to meet other minded children.

*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>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>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**

Around half of the children attending the Brockworth Children's Centre progress to Brockworth Primary School. The recent inspection of this school informed the judgements made in this report. In particular, the finding that children generally arrive at the school's Reception class at the expected stage of development for their age was taken into account in judging the quality of outcomes for children.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Brockworth Children's Centre on 13 and 14 June 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

All the parents we spoke to praised the centre and its staff for the care and support they give you. This is particularly valued by those of you who are isolated from members of your own family or community, and those who are bringing up their first child. The relationships between staff in the centre and the health visitors, midwives and local GPs are particularly good, which means that the centre knows very quickly when a family would benefit from help from its support team. We heard about some instances where the staff have stepped in to support you at moments of real crisis, helping you to talk to staff in other agencies that can help you but that you may never have known about before. We also know that the centre has changed some of its programmes and the timings of its sessions in response to the feedback you give them through surveys and questionnaires. We spoke to some of you who are members of the advisory board, but we think the centre could do more to enable you to take part in making decisions about the centre's work.

We know that the centre looks after your children well when they come to sessions such as Stay and Play or the baby and toddler health clinics. We think the staff are good at explaining how you can keep your children safe at home, and some of you have valued the help given to fit childproof locks on cupboards or drawers and safety gates to stairs or doorways. We were impressed with the level of trust you have in the centre staff that enables you to share your concerns about your children without being worried that they are sitting in judgement, but which also enables them to explain very clearly when they might have to involve other agencies to ensure the best for your children. Everyone we spoke to said they recommended the centre to other parents they knew and some of you have brought friends along for their first contact.

Although the centre does not provide full-time child care, the staff work with independent nurseries and childminders in the area so that they are able to advise you about what is available locally. The centre is also working with the local authority to help to improve the quality and availability of this childcare, but we think it could do more to speed up the improvements. We also think the centre could provide more helpful guidance for those of you who want to improve your employability skills to enable you to enter or return to work when you are ready.

We would like to thank all of you who spared the time to meet us and tell us about your experiences of working with the centre, particularly those of you who came in specially to do so. We wish you and your children the best for the future.

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