

# News release

18 November 2010

## City Children's Centre Celebrates Success

It's top marks for Sunderland this week as the city's first Children's Centre to be visited by Ofsted inspectors is judged to offer good to outstanding levels of service to families in the area.

The results of the Ofsted inspection of Thorney Close Children's Centre, officially published this week, found the centre to be good overall, with some outstanding aspects.

The recognition comes as a landmark award for the city as Thorney Close Children's Centre is the first of Sunderland's 17 Children's Centres to be Ofsted inspected.

The centre was inspected on a range of areas including the quality of services, the outcomes for families using the centre and its overall management. Inspectors commented that 'the leadership team is exceptionally strong' and that those working across the Centre were 'passionate about children and families and determined to make a difference'. Particular praise was given to the centre's Bosom Buddies breastfeeding mentoring scheme, which was described as 'an unqualified success'.

The report also noted that the centre is working very hard to give parents 'exactly what (they) feel (they) need in the West of Sunderland' and described the team at the centre as being 'very good' at listening to parents. Inspectors noted that more than one parent explained how they had failed to get help elsewhere, but found the Centre marvellous'.

Tracy Hassan, Area Coordinator for the West area including Thorney Close Children's Centre, said: "I'm absolutely delighted with the results of the report. Everyone at the centre works very hard to ensure that every family coming through the door experiences the best children's centres have to offer, however it is brilliant to have everyone's efforts officially recognised in this way.

“For our, and the city’s, first inspection I think we’ve done exceptionally well, however everyone at Thorney Close is now ready to start working towards delivering ‘outstanding’ services across the board.”

Councillor Pat Smith, Portfolio Holder for Children and Learning City within Sunderland City Council, added: “This is such a fantastic achievement for Thorney Close having been rated so highly. Ofsted rigorously inspect every aspect of the service and this report is glowing with praise for the excellent work taking place in the centre for the benefit of families living in the Thorney Close area.

“This has set a high precedent for other centres across Sunderland and I look forward to even more tremendous reports rolling in.”

Ofsted inspections of the country’s Sure Start Children’s Centres began earlier this summer after the Government approved the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 last November.

The inspections aim to check that each centre is making good arrangements for families with young children by looking at whether they know their community and what services families living there need. Ofsted inspects whether centres offer those services, give families advice and support on how they can use them, do what they can to help families use those services and ensure that no group within the community is overlooked. The inspections will also focus on the centre’s partnerships with health partners, Jobcentre Plus, childcare providers and other key services that help support families’ need.

Sunderland Children’s Centres are designed for children aged from birth to five years, offering support to parents and preparing children on an ‘early learning’ journey. They bring together free play activities, health services, early education, childcare, parenting support, and help for parents looking to find work or training – helping to ensure that every child has the best start in life.