

Inspection report for Seagull's Children's Centre

Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	404496
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Seagulls Nursery EY449161

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the local authority, Great Yarmouth Community Trust, the centre manager, senior staff, outreach works, partner providers, members of the community and parents and carers. They also visited the linked early years provision, Seagulls Nursery.

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

Information about the centre

Seagulls Children's Centre is a phase one centre, which was developed out of the Magdalen & Claydon Sure Start Local Programme, which began in 2002. The centre was designated in September 2005 and the full core offer was confirmed in March 2007. Up until July 2012, the lead partner was Action For Children. As of July 2012, as part of the re-commissioning of Norfolk Children's Centres, Great Yarmouth Community Trust (GYCT), as part of a consortium with East Coast Community Health Care and Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, became the lead partner for Seagulls Children's Centre. It also manages three other Children's Centre, and the management and administration of the four centres is shared, although each has a separate budget and each are subject to separate inspections.

The Family Support Team, which works across the four reach areas, are based at the Seagulls Centre, which was purpose built with Sure Start capital funding, and the majority of services are delivered from this site. The centre is located on the Shrublands site, which has other health and community buildings which the centre utilises to deliver additional services.

The administrative base for the centre is the Priory Centre, a Grade 1 listed building, which was formerly a primary school. Governance of the centre is overseen by the trustee board which is made up of representatives from the local community,

professional agencies and parents. The trust is developing an advisory board to oversee the work of the four children centres.

A total of 819 children under five years live within the area. Approximately 42% of the children in the area are living in households where no-one is working. A very large majority of families within the area served by the centre are of White British heritage. As of January 2013, the Seagulls reach area had the third highest percentage of working age Job Seekers Allowance claimants of all the 52 Children's Centre areas in Norfolk. At 7.4% of all working age adults, this is more than double the average for Norfolk, and almost double the national average.

Most children typically enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities below those expected for their age. The area also has a high percentage of adults with low level or no qualifications.

The centre provides a wide range of supporting services, incorporating outreach and home visiting, health clinics, parenting courses and counselling. Full day-care is provided on site at Seagulls Nursery. This was judged to be good in its last inspection and the full report can be found on Ofsted's website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

Despite the recent challenges of the commissioning and re-structuring, staff remain professional and committed to their jobs. Dedication and enthusiasm from staff is evident. They are eager to bring about further improvement for the benefit of families in the reach area. Staff particularly welcome what they view as more robust professional supervision and improved management systems which have been put in place by the new lead body, Great Yarmouth Community Trust (GYCT).

The centre has made good progress in adapting its provision and extending services over the last six months to better meet local needs. Several new initiatives have been

developed recently and the centre leadership team have a clear, pragmatic vision of where future improvements are required. However, although early signs are positive, these improvements have yet to have an impact. The number of families using the centre, including those from targeted groups, is satisfactory. However, the centre recognises the need to increase registrations and extend engagement so that more families can benefit from its services, especially those with the greatest needs.

The good level and quality of support, advice and guidance and the high priority given to safeguarding are strengths of the centre staff. The centre contributes effectively to adults' personal and parenting skills. Despite some noteworthy individual success stories, not enough parents currently enrol on adult learning courses or training programmes or return to work. Additionally, there are limited opportunities for adults to take up volunteering activities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with good aspects that assist the centre in moving forward rapidly following reorganisation. Action to bring improvement is concerted and effective. Self-evaluation is rooted in an accurate analysis of the centre's strengths and shortcomings, and provides a realistic view of the next steps required. A sensible number of priorities underpin the centre's satisfactory capacity to further improve its effectiveness.

The centre has rightly identified that the mechanisms for collecting, collating and analysing impact data are not sufficiently embedded in its day-to-day practice to fully demonstrate the impact the centre is having on improving outcomes for families. However, case-study evidence already shows some powerful impact on improving the well-being of the most vulnerable families in the community.

Governance of the centre is now good. GYCT has a wealth of experience of successfully operating children centres in the Great Yarmouth area and Seagulls Children's Centre has been full absorbed into their way of operating. The trustees hold regard meetings which users of the centre do attend. Minutes of the meeting indicate that they effectively hold the centre leadership team to account and provide a good level of challenge. Currently, the centre does not have an advisory board. Following a process of consultation with a range of professionals working in the area and centre users the trust intends to introduce one advisory board to cover the four children's centre in the area. This work is seen as a priority.

Due to the design of the premises, the centre faces the dilemma of balancing accessibility for users with the need to ensure the safety of the families using the centre. The centre is exploring ways to provide a more welcoming reception area for families by making adaptations to the current office space that is occupied by the nursery staff and the deployment of children centre staff. Adults and children identify strongly that they feel very safe and secure when attending activities.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The centre should continue to develop the system for monitoring and evaluating the impact of its work by:
 - using data on the area it serves more precisely to increase the identification and engagement of the number of families from target groups that would benefit from its services, particularly those most in need of support
 - devising ways of tracking the longer term impact of the centre's work
 - periodically reviewing services to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of those most in need of support.
- Improve the contribution of centre users to governance and decision-making.
- Press ahead with the plans to upgrade the reception area, enhancing accessibility and security.
- Develop further the economic stability and independence of parents by enabling a greater proportion to engage in adult learning programmes, training and volunteering.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Families engage well with health services because many services are delivered directly from the centre, such as the baby clinic and midwife services. First time parents report they are well prepared for parenthood through attending the 'Bambinos' programme. There is a satisfactory focus on the social and emotional well-being of families and on developing positive relationships between parents and their children. When needed, users access counselling services which are provided through the centre. Children develop positive attitudes towards food by eating healthy snacks and fresh fruit at activities offered by the centre. Breastfeeding is supported through the provision of a baby café. However, at the time of inspection the centre was not in receipt of the most up to date health data on obesity levels, breastfeeding and live births. Therefore, the centre is not able to fully measure the impact of the services it provides.

All staff are attentive and friendly; consequently, children and families feel safe when accessing services. Individual members of staff demonstrate a high level of regard to safety issues. The security of the premises is currently being reviewed to ensure the continuing safety of all families at all times whilst allowing easy access to the premises. Parents who access the centre's activities say it helps them to establish lasting friendships and to feel increasingly confident in their ability to cope with the challenges they face. Vulnerable adults in the community are identified and their

needs are met well. The centre effectively supports children with child protection plans and those who are subject to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process. Staff are fully aware of safeguarding procedures and follow the centre's policies to ensure that all children are safe and protected.

The proportion of children who reach expectations for their age in their personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy skills at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved year-on-year. However, the proportion is still well below the national average. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile had narrowed steadily until 2012 when it widened. The centre has put considerable effort into ensuring that children who are entitled to two-year-old funded places receive this. As a result, these children receive early support to enable them to catch up with their peers in their learning and development.

Children's behaviour in the centre is good and staff are good role models. Parents are respectful and children learn to treat one another with consideration. There are some opportunities for adults to undertake further training. Parents with challenging domestic circumstances or other difficulties enhance their parenting skills by attending tailored courses at the centre or in their own home. However, there is little evidence to show how the centre is helping them to access adult education and gain qualifications to improve their economic stability.

The centre is keen to encourage parents to take ownership of the centre and to support their own community. However, only a few adults using the centre are supported into volunteering roles, or engaged in the governance and strategic decision-making, limiting their otherwise satisfactory contribution to the community and to centre services.

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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
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	3
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	3

How good is the provision?

3

The leadership team is beginning to use data to ensure that the services provided meet the needs of families from target groups. They have rapidly improved the programme of activities they inherited. The range of services and activities are now satisfactory and increasing. User's articulated to inspectors their appreciation of the improved range of activities now available to them; 'we're pretty much catered for, we come here 3 days a week' was typical of comments made to inspectors. A wide range of play and development opportunities which have a strong focus on developing children's communication, language and literacy are now on offer and enables parents to support their children's learning. As one enthusiastic mother said about the newly introduced Bridge to Music group; 'it's made all the difference. People say he is really ahead, very vocal and it is because I sing to him at home since attending this group'. Outreach work is increasingly being targeted to those families most in need of support.

The needs of individual families are assessed well to ensure services are tailored to suit their individual needs. Families, including the most vulnerable, receive good support and guidance which is well-tailored to their needs and makes a big difference to their lives. Comments such as; 'I trusted her straight away, it was such a weight of my shoulders to talk to her', illustrate the strength of the trusting and confident relationships that are increasingly being developed between the staff and users. Good links with local charities enable staff to provide immediate emergency support for families in extreme need by signposting to agencies who can supply food parcels and essential household items. Parents needing childcare are signposted to the popular on-site nursery and other local providers.

The centre has some evidence that users are supported to improve their educational and personal development and to progress to further employment, education and training. It celebrates the achievements of its families appropriately but the centre recognises that raising the aspirations of adults within the community that it serves is an area that it has to continue to work on.

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The new leadership team has worked diligently to establish better systems of working. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate, although some judgements are too positive. The centre has identified sensible priorities for improvement, which are being addressed. Systems of governance and accountability are clear. The centre's work is robustly appraised by Trustees and the local authority. Leaders are aware of the need for more families to be involved and contribute to decision making and plans are well developed to establish an advisory board. The lead body, local authority and the centre leadership team are ensuring that the centre provides satisfactory but rapidly improving value for money. Good day-to-day management and professional supervision ensures the centre runs smoothly and that all staff are supported well.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Suitable checks are made on all adults who have contact with children and vulnerable adults to ensure they are safe to work with families. Staff are trained well and demonstrate good understanding of their responsibilities and steps to follow regarding child protection. Procedures for referring concerns are well established and thorough to ensure children are kept safe. Effective communication with the Children's Services is critical to the timely sharing of information and well-coordinated support.

The centre has an inclusive approach and is committed to promoting equal and diverse opportunities and provides adequate support for families with disabled children and those with special educational needs. The centre is located on the second floor of the building; access is via stairs or the lift. The centre is aware that this is a potential barrier for some users and is exploring ways to make the experience of entering the building more welcoming for families. The centre's hardship fund is used to provide transport to allow access to activities and services, for some users who would otherwise find it difficult to get to the centre. In addition, a crèche is provided for users who need childcare to attend activities and parenting programmes. A successful group for fathers has been established at a nearby centre which is accessed by father in the centres reach area. A new programme of ante natal support for dad's to be is planned to be offered from the centre in the near future.

Parents feel confident to share their views and opinions and they play a developing role in helping shape the centre's services, for example through their survey responses and post-activity evaluations. However, it is recognised that more work is required to find out why some local families are not yet engaging with the centre.

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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3

The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
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	3
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	3

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

Inspectors took into account the inspection report relating to the Seagulls Nursery which was completed in November 2012. This inspection report judged the childcare provision to be good.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Seagull's Children's Centre on 06 - 07 February 2013. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We very much enjoyed our visit to your children's centre and would like to thank all of you who gave your time to speak to us and tell us your experiences of using the centre. Your views have helped inform us of how well the centre is doing and we have mentioned some of your comments in the report.

Despite the recent challenges of the commissioning and re-structuring, staff remain professional and committed to their jobs. The centre has made steady progress in adapting its provision and extending services over the last six months to better meet your needs. Well-focused leadership is enabling the centre to reach an increasing number of families, including those whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable. Outcomes are currently satisfactory overall and improving.

Several new initiatives have been developed recently and the centre manager has a clear, pragmatic vision of where future improvements are required. However, although early signs are positive, these improvements have yet to have an impact, therefore, capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Many of you engage well with health services because services are delivered directly from the centre, such as the baby clinic and midwife services. You told us you enjoy your time at the children's centre. It enables you to spend time with your children, playing and learning together. You told us how this enables you to support your children's learning at home. The centre has put considerable effort into ensuring that children who are entitled to two-year-old funded places receive this. As a result, these children receive early support to enable them to catch up with their peers in their learning and development.

You made it very clear to us how much you appreciate the children's centre and the support you receive from staff. Many of you told us the positive impact the centre has had on your lives, particularly when you may be experiencing difficulties. We found the staff are extremely caring towards you and provide you with the relevant guidance you need.

Procedures for safeguarding children and families are good. Staff are dedicated to providing a secure environment and they work closely with other agencies to obtain the specialist support you need. However, due to the design of the premises, the centre faces the dilemma of balancing accessibility for users with the need to ensure the safety of the families using the centre. We have asked the centre to review the security to the building to ensure users are safe at all times.

The centre is keen to encourage parents to take ownership of the centre and to support their own community. However, too few of you are supported into volunteering roles, or engaged in the governance and strategic decision-making, limiting your contribution to the community and to centre services. We have asked the centre to give you more opportunities to become volunteers and empower you to be more involved in decision making and governance of the centre.

The centre is beginning to collect information about the difference that activities and services make to the community. However, this information is not always analysed well so that the progress of the centre can be judged accurately. In these areas, we have made recommendations for further improvements.

Some of you told us how much you and your children enjoy attending the new range of groups on offer to you and developing new skills. We noted that some of you develop your confidence, self-esteem and emotional well-being. This leads to a few of you undertaking formal training and qualifications and being successful in returning to work. We have asked the centre to provide more opportunities for more of you to attend adult learning and obtain qualifications.

We enjoyed our time at your centre. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honesty and openness helped us immensely during the inspection. We are very grateful for your help and we wish each of you every success for the future.

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