

Inspection report for Brigg Children's Centre

Local authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	410362
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2013
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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 senior managers, centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including health, education and children's social care professionals. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's development plans, evaluations, key policies and the centre's equality and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Brigg Children's Centre is a phase two, purpose-built centre situated close to the centre of Brigg, North Lincolnshire and was designated in February 2008. It offers a range of services to promote the full core purpose which includes child health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education, family outreach services and crèche facilities. The centre delivers services across the wards of Brigg and Wolds, Broughton and Appleby, and Ridge, many of which have areas within them that are regarded as having some of the highest levels of deprivation in England. The staff team is based at Brigg Children's Centre; staff also offer services from Kirton in Lindsey Children's Centre and provide outreach support to families across the geographical area.

There are 1,336 children aged under five years in the reach area with 63% accessing services in the centre. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding mental health, isolation, transport issues, domestic violence, substance misuse and low levels of literacy and numeracy. The vast majority of families living in the area are from White British backgrounds with smaller percentages of other ethnic groups, such as Polish and Thai, some of whom speak English as an additional language. There is also a traveller community situated within Brigg. Housing is mostly social or private rental with some larger areas of high affluence and privately owned housing. Levels of unemployment are low with

9.8% of children living in households dependent upon workless benefits and many of the existing jobs are low paid. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are in line with those expected for their age. The centre has clear links to the ten local infant and primary schools.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority, in conjunction with an advisory board that includes providers, delivery partners, members of the local community and users that attend the centre.

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

Brigg Children's Centre meets the needs of families well and provides a good service. The centre manager's clear vision and the sense of purpose of all those involved with its governance, are driving the centre forward effectively. A majority of families living in the reach area make effective use of the centre's good provision to improve their lives. Strong leadership and management, good partnership working and effective outreach services lead to good outcomes for all target groups, including those with circumstances that may make them vulnerable. As a result, the centre has a good capacity for sustained improvement. 'The staff are friendly, trustworthy and supportive, they are always there to lend a listening ear' is a typical view expressed by parents.

A key strength of the centre is that it listens well to the voice of the community and makes good use of available information to ensure that it provides services to meet local needs. In particular, the centre's impact on children's learning and development has contributed well to narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving children and their peers by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Data show that the number of children in Reception Year who are obese and the breastfeeding and immunisation rates are positive. However, although the centre's impact on the outcomes for families is good, the centre's access to regular local health data to monitor the full impact of its work and to plan future developments is sometimes limited. The local authority is aware of this and is working with health partners to improve this aspect of the centre's work.

Through good outreach support from early help practitioners, families with circumstances that make them vulnerable receive timely intervention and support. This has had a particularly positive impact where there are domestic violence and isolation concerns. The centre has responded well to the different needs of the large reach area by establishing key activities such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Behaviour Management Drop-in' sessions in different venues in response to parental requests and by helping with transport needs. This is particularly evident in the work the centre has done over the last two years to take services out to the traveller community. The provision of good quality crèche facilities and other childcare provision enable parents to take advantage of the wide range of parenting and other courses on offer. This has a positive impact on the economic well-being of many groups of users, helping them into training, employment or volunteering activities. However, during centre activities, some opportunities to build parents' understanding of how they can help with their children's learning are missed.

The centre is inclusive and promotes equality and diversity well. For example, groups, such as the 'Autism Parents Support Meeting' and 'Under 25s Young Parents' Group' are organised specifically to meet parents' and families' needs. Parents all say they feel very welcome in the friendly environment of the centre. As a result, users of the centre benefit from the good advice and support they receive. However, although fathers are welcome at all services and a 'Family Play Session' is available on Saturday mornings, numbers attending are still low. A good commitment to safeguarding by all staff ensures that children and their families are safe. Parents receive good support, training and resources for keeping their families safe.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Extend work with the local authority and health partners to ensure the centre has access to ongoing timely, accurate and precise data for the reach area in order to measure its effectiveness fully and plan future developments.
- Develop further opportunities in centre activities that build on parents' confidence and understanding of how they can help with their children's learning.
- Increase the involvement of fathers by engaging further with those not accessing the centre's activities.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre works in close partnership with health services and promotes outcomes well. The many activities aimed at encouraging good eating and exercise habits have had a positive effect. For example, the centre promotes a 'Cheque Book Scheme' offering vouchers for physical exercise activities to families and levels of obesity for children aged five in the reach

area are below those found nationally, at 8.6%. General family health issues are tackled well. For instance, through the role of centre support workers, leaflets are delivered to individual families and information provided at well-attended 'Well Baby Clinics'. In addition, rates of breastfeeding initiation at 68% and sustaining at six-to-eight weeks at 37.7% are positive in relation to North Lincolnshire. The centre is not complacent and is continuing to work to improve these figures through its Babes peer support workers who provide 'mum-to-mum' support in baby clinics and through a referral system. However, the centre is sometimes inhibited in ensuring that it is having a maximum impact because access to ongoing and up-to-date health data to measure its effectiveness fully and plan future improvements is sometimes limited. The local authority is aware of this and has already made significant improvements in the range of health information provided to the centre. As a result, health outcomes are good overall.

The many courses to support children's early learning and development make a good contribution to the children's enjoyment and achievement. 'Wiggle and Giggle', 'Stay and Play' and the 'Homework Club' give adults good levels of skills and understanding of the value of play. Parents who receive one-to-one support and home visits are given a wide range of guidance in how they can promote their children's development. However, some opportunities to develop other parents' confidence and understanding of how they can help with their children's learning in centre activities are less well embedded. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data show that the achievement of children is good overall. For example, 63.8% of children gain at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile with at least six points in each of the scales for personal, social and emotional development, and communication and language, compared to the national average of 64%. In addition, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is now the same as the national average at 30.1%. Consequently, children are well prepared for their future learning. Sessions delivered out in the community also provide very valuable personal and social support for adults in often quite isolated circumstances to build relationships and friendships. 'It's nice to know I am not alone and that the support is available when I need it' is typical of the views expressed.

Families trust staff and most are confident to seek help, which is often provided on an individual basis. The centre makes good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes, when appropriate, to establish levels of need. The centre works closely with a range of agencies to ensure effective provision is made. Families with circumstances that make them vulnerable, including those subject to a child protection plan and looked after children, are well supported by the centre through home visits, one-to-one help and through other partnerships. All users of the centre develop a good understanding of how to keep their children safe through staff modelling good practice. Parents are supported in minimising risks to children in their homes, through useful advice and guidance and the provision of low-cost safety equipment if this is required. As a result, parents are more self-assured and confident in how to keep their children safe.

The majority of adults are helped to access training and employment information and personal development courses. For example, parents attend literacy and numeracy courses, specific courses for promoting parenting skills, the 'Artlandish Creative Back to Work

Programme' or they make use of the free public internet access. Parents are encouraged to volunteer at the centre and within the local community. Over the last year, there have been 48 volunteers; five have gone on to set up their own playgroup, one to support an existing parent and toddler group and one has moved on to study at Lincoln University. In addition, there has also been recent interest shown by four members of the traveller community and two fathers. This is effectively increasing their self-esteem and confidence and helping to secure their economic stability. Most parents make good use of the frequent opportunities to give their views on the events they attend. There is also a well-attended parents' forum. As a result, a growing number of parents have good opportunities to contribute to decision making and governance of the centre.

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
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
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

Managers and staff at the centre know their families well. Centre staff also work very closely with other partner agencies, for example the diversity service, health professionals, children's social care, speech and language therapists, housing associations and third sector organisations. Information gleaned from home visits, working with families in particular activities, and from the good and improving data supplied by the local authority, provides the centre with a good knowledge of the needs of most target groups. These needs are increasingly being met through targeted events as well as through universal provision. As a result the care, guidance and support offered to families in the reach area are good. The centre's effective efforts to seek the views of families also contribute strongly. For example, the 'Antenatal Workshop' session was recently altered to be delivered on rotating days and times, including an evening session for parents who work, due to high demand from parents.

Available accommodation is used flexibly to support a wide range of activities both in the centre and out in the community. Families are appreciative and make good use of the community notice board and clothes swapping and food bank scheme. Children have access

to good quality crèche facilities while their parents enjoy specific programmes for promoting their parenting skills. The centre has strong links with 10 local infant and primary schools and understands the benefits of working together to support children's smooth transition into the next step in their education. The centre is focused on providing services for families with the greatest need and is successful in working with its target groups, such as the local traveller community, workless families, lone and teenage parents and those experiencing mental health issues and domestic violence. Participation by target groups is good overall; however, although some fathers attend sessions and express their enjoyment of the support they receive, overall engagement is low. Managers recognise the need to develop further strategies to increase fathers' involvement and are in the process of planning a 'Dads and Male Carers Event'.

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 centre manager is relentless in driving forward the quality of all aspects of the work of the centre. She brings a strong knowledge and understanding of the community's needs and is well respected. She is well supported by staff and early help practitioners who share a common sense of purpose. There is a good commitment to training and professional development at all levels. The advisory board, which is representative of the partners and centre community, provides a wide range of support and guidance. As a result, governance and accountability arrangements are effective. Self-evaluation is accurate and development plans set out clear, ambitious actions aimed at key priority areas. The centre has identified the need for more precise ongoing health data for the reach area to ensure targets are as sharply focused as possible. The manager consults widely to ensure the centre uses its resources efficiently and outcomes are good overall. Consequently, the centre provides good value for money.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All members of staff demonstrate a good commitment to inclusion and to tackling any discrimination, particularly for the local traveller community, disabled children and those with special educational needs. Staff help to provide transport or target their resources to ensure all users have good access to the centre's provision. The promotion of a positive view of diversity is well established in childcare activities and evident in the displays.

Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and include the vetting of staff, volunteers and others who have unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults. All statutory

requirements are met. Child protection procedures are thorough and the centre's records of Disclosure and Barring Service checks reflect good practice. Early intervention arrangements are good, exemplifying the positive partnerships with a wide range of agencies and services. All staff are well trained in aspects of safeguarding, including the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and paediatric first aid.

User engagement is good and parents express high levels of satisfaction with the centre. The centre consistently seeks the voice of parents and children through regular questionnaires and surveys. A good percentage of all target groups within the reach area, including disabled adults, engage with the centre's services thanks to the skill, enthusiasm and commitment of staff and managers.

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 secures 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	2
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	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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Brigg Children's Centre on 7–8 March 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

We enjoyed speaking to you, and hearing of the difference the centre has made to you and your families. We recognised how welcoming the centre is, and how all staff respond to your needs. We heard of the wide range of ways that the centre uses to help you and your family be healthy, such as outdoor play, cookery sessions, and ideas for healthy food and snacks.

You told us you feel safe when using the centre, and we judged the centre to have good procedures to keep you and your children safe and secure at all times. You told us how useful the training sessions on safety have been and how they have helped give you confidence to let your children become more independent.

It is clear that the centre staff, managers and the partner organisations are trusted and provide good support that makes a difference to many families' lives. Many of you told us how much you and your children enjoyed 'Stay and Play' sessions and the 'Wiggle and Giggle' group. These activities are of good quality and support your children's learning and development, especially in helping them be more ready for school. However, some opportunities during sessions in the centre to extend your understanding about how you can help with your children's learning are missed and we have asked the centre to look at this.

There are very good links with experts that can help in a wide range of issues, and the centre has been successful in getting them involved when families need additional support or advice.

You told us that many of you are involved in regular activities such as the 'Under 25s Young Parents' Group' and 'Family Play Session' on Saturdays, and attend many good courses to help you develop your skills as a parent. You all expressed high levels of satisfaction with the centre. Fathers are not always well represented so we have asked the centre to look more closely at ways staff can encourage more fathers to be interested in using the centre, so that they too can benefit from the good quality services on offer.

We heard of the outreach support many families receive if they are in a crisis, and of the consistently good standard of help and advice for families, including lone and teenage parents. We heard that staff are quick to help you when you have emotional difficulties and need extra support. You also told us that attending the activities the centre runs has helped you meet new people and overcome feelings of isolation. As one parent said, reflecting the views of several of you, 'I understand my child's needs more, and I am more aware of his well-being and safety.'

We found that the centre staff and managers are committed to improving the work they do and welcome the ideas and feedback from people using the centre. Many of you have made good suggestions, and have let the manager, the parents' forum or the advisory board know your ideas and opinions. This is very important and your views often lead to further improvements. Several of you have also been able to give time as volunteers and learned new skills in the process. You have taken a number of training courses including English, maths, first aid and sewing classes.

We judged the centre to be well led and managed and in a good position to continue to build on its many strengths. However, the centre is not always provided with some of the ongoing local health data that it needs to plan its improvements and we have recommended that the centre improves this.

Thank you for telling us about your experiences of the centre, and may we wish you and your families every success in the future.

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