

# Norfolk - AfC Broadland North (Lots 18 and 19)

School Road, Drayton, Norwich, NR8 6EP

## Inspection date

4–6 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:		
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This children's centre group is good.

- A large majority of local children and families are registered with the centre group and are using health, education and support services.
- The group works closely with partners in health and children's social care to make sure that families that need extra help are identified and supported well. Regular meetings between professionals help to make sure the right families receive the support they need in a timely manner.
- Effective management through a period of uncertainty has resulted in a happy staff team who are highly committed and keen to share best practice. As a result the group is improving at a fast pace.
- Good quality early years sessions are delivered from both sites and in outreach work.
- Highly effective parenting courses and individualised support help parents improve their parenting skills and family life.
- Parents value the support of staff. Family support work is based on good quality assessment and there are powerful examples of how this support has changed lives for the better.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough parents engage in adult learning programmes or volunteering to extend their employability skills.
- The development plan lacks some measurable targets and data from the local authority is not used well enough to check that strategies for improvement are successful.
- Not enough parents are involved in shaping services through the advisory boards.

## Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are Aylsham, Reepham, Hellesdon, and Drayton and Taverham.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers from the local authority and Action for Children, centre leaders, partner agencies including health and social care, parents, family support staff, and representatives of the advisory board. The children's centre manager and a representation from Action for Children and the local authority strategic leads attended team meetings.

The inspectors visited the centres' two sites and other venues within the community. They observed several sessions taking place, including one jointly with the centre manager.

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

## Inspection team

Susan Smith Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Deavon Baker-Oxley	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mary Dudley	Additional inspector
Anthony Mundy	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

Norfolk - AfC Central is a group of children's centres in Norfolk run by the charity Action for Children on behalf of the local authority. The group is made up of four centres: Aylsham, Reepham, Hellesdon, and Drayton and Taverham all are phase three centres. Action for Children has been responsible for running the children's centre group since October 2012. Services are provided at each of the centres and at community venues, including village halls, local schools, pre-schools and toddler groups.

The centres are open each week day from 9.00am to 5.00pm, for 51 weeks of the year. Lot 18 (Drayton and Taverham Children's Centre and Hellesdon Children's Centre) are based in Drayton in one building and Lot 19 (Aylsham Children's Centre and Reepham Children's Centre) are based in Cawston in one building. There are two advisory boards one for lot 18 and one for lot 19. The children's centre group offers a range of services to meet its core purpose. There are no linked registered early years providers.

There are 2810 children under five years of age living in the area the centres serve. This includes rural and urban areas. Around 12% of children are living in households dependent on workless benefits. Transport links are limited and can be a barrier to accessing services. Most of the population is White British with a smaller percentage of families from minority ethnic groups. Pockets of deprivation have been highlighted by the centre with services targeted for those areas, although typically the area is seen as affluent. The centre group has identified target groups which include rural communities where there are social or very low cost housing and poor transport links. Children enter early years provision with level of skills, knowledge and ability typically above that for their age.

### What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the impact of leadership and management by;
  - sharpening the analysis of data even further to identify more precisely the needs within the community and measure the impact of the centre groups' work for these target groups
  - making sure that the development plan contains measurable targets against which progress can be measured
  - increasing the number of parent members on the advisory boards.
- Extend the opportunities for more adults to enhance their economic stability by;
  - increasing the promotion of, and participation rates in adult learning programmes and opportunities for volunteering at the children's centres
  - routinely gaining information from adult learning providers to enable the group to track the progress of individual learners.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- The centre has significantly increased the number of families it is in contact with in the last year including those who are most vulnerable and families living in areas with poor transport links. The centre has deployed effective strategies such as health visitors undertaking registration on new birth visits, carrying out outreach sessions at early year's settings and public events which have resulted in boosting registrations.
- The take-up of funded early education is good. Most three- and four-year-olds access early

education and the centres are working hard to ensure that those who are eligible for two-year-old funding receive their entitlement. As a result the numbers accessing the two-year-old funding have increased significantly.

- A wide range of strategies including phone calls and newsletters keep families aware of the services on offer and provide a good range of information on all aspects of safety, care and education.
- Centre staff support families very well at home and at a wide range of venues within the community. Families with babies and toddlers make frequent use of centre services. The Baby Clinic, for example, provides mothers with easy access to high quality information and advice.
- Good use of outreach work enables those families living in outlying villages where there are poor transport links to benefit from services. Centre staff offer significant support to other community groups and to early years provision and childminders. Staff also seek information from relevant schools to identify further areas of need for their local families.
- The centre is informed about new birth data enabling managers to plan and amend the services offered. The overwhelming majority of teenage mothers regularly use services offered.

#### **The quality of practice and services**

**Good**

- The wide range of well-planned, good quality universal and targeted services offered by the group results in increasing participation rates and families' improved well-being. Sessions such as 'Stay and Play', 'Messy Monkeys' and 'Forest Friends' are well attended. In addition, parents have good opportunities to be involved in the planning of activities and value the opportunity to meet other parents and make lasting friendships.
- Parents receive good support to help them improve their parenting skills through programmes which are tailored to meet individual needs. Parents gain increased confidence and develop effective strategies to help them manage their children's behaviour.
- Very strong partnerships with a range of partners contribute to the positive difference the centre makes on the lives of families. Staff provide or signpost parents to a very good range of relevant activities and services which meet their needs.
- The range of opportunities for developing employability skills is underdeveloped. The group identifies that in parts of the cluster (Hellesdon) 27.2% of the population aged over 16 have no qualifications. However, it does not currently support enough parents to access opportunities to improve their literacy and numeracy skills or raise their aspirations. Those parents that do take part in training do not always have their progress monitored and are not always actively supported to progress to further training. This has been identified as a priority area for development and plans are already being implemented to address this.
- Adult learning services are not aligned closely with volunteering opportunities. The group informs parents of volunteering opportunities in the area but does not currently have an active volunteering programme of its own.
- The group works effectively to raise parents' knowledge of safety issues and how to keep their children safe. Through successful partnership working with the road safety officer, new parents are helped to understand the importance of car-seat safety.

## **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

**Good**

- Rapid improvement has been achieved by the group over the last year. This is due to the motivation of the leadership team and the dedication of the staff who have embraced change positively. Good systems are being embedded to bring consistency to children's centre provision across the group and to better support the accurate checking of the difference services are making to the lives of families.
- Lines of accountability are clearly defined and understood. The local authority and senior management team have worked closely together during the transition to a children's centre group. The local authority checks the effectiveness of the group through an annual review. Development plans are focused well on areas which will make the biggest difference to families but targets for improvement are not easily measurable so that staff and partners understand the contribution they can make to the success of the group.
- The quality of information about the groups' performance has improved. The local authority has set clear generic targets and provides data relating to the needs of the community the group of centres serve. However, some information is not interpreted well enough to give centres a clear picture of how successful they are. Recently the group has used this data to carry out a secure and accurate analysis which is being refined further to identify the very precise needs of targeted children and families.
- Resources are used well. Families have access to well planned facilities in the children's centre buildings and at various premises throughout the locality. Staff are used effectively across the four centres to support families and to deliver good quality services.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and well implemented. Staff undertake regular training to understand what they must do should they have a concern about a child's welfare and the effective use of Common Assessment Framework. A linked social worker provides support and guidance to centre staff to meet the needs of families effectively. An information sharing protocol with social care is now in place to ensure all families in most need of support, including those on the child protection register, are known to the centres. Consequently, the centres can engage with these families swiftly and appropriately.
- Parents regularly share their views of the sessions and activities with staff. Comprehensive termly evaluation are carried out on all activities and full consideration is given to the views of users. However, not enough parents are involved in the local advisory boards.
- Staff are well qualified; opportunities for continuous professional development are encouraged and staff feel well-supported and highly valued. Senior leaders regularly monitor the quality of the group's activities delivered by their own staff and commissioned services, encouraging an ethos of reflective practice.

**What inspection judgements mean**

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

**Children's Centre/Children's Centre Group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80104
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	430101
<b>Managed by</b>	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2810
<b>Centre leader</b>	Lisa Nicholson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01603 864338
<b>Email address</b>	Lisa.Nicholson@actionforchildren.org.uk

**This group consists of the following children's centres:**

- 20156 Aylsham Children's Centre
- 20982 Drayton and Taverham Sure Start Children's Centre
- 21446 Hellesdon Children's Centre
- 22492 Reepham Children's Centre

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