

# Greengate SureStart Children's Centre

Greengate Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA14 1BG

<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 June 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	16–17 June 2010

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
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 is a good centre.

- The strong leadership provided by local managers from Action from Children has been vital in securing the continuous improvement and quality of provision in the centre and the impact that this has on family's lives
- Families, staff and professional partners all recognise the centre's importance as a hub for the local community which provides 'a lifeline' for families who find themselves in challenging circumstances.
- The approachability and helpfulness of the skilled staff team, together with very effective partnerships with other agencies, have been pivotal in ensuring that the large majority of families are able to access the good quality provision offered by the centre.
- The centre is particularly successful at providing support for teenage and young parents and for families with children with additional needs.
- There is good support for those adults and children who have experienced domestic violence including counselling and courses that effectively build resilience and restore confidence.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The learning of children in the early years has not been fully maximised. At the end of the early years children lag behind their peers nationally in language and communication, literacy and number skills. Girls slipped further behind in 2014. A lack of precision in the analysis of data and the planning and checking of childrens learning in centre activities contribute to this.
- The work of the advisory board has waned and together with the local authority they do not always provide the amount of challenge needed to move the effectiveness of the centre from good to outstanding.
- Health data is not always up-to-date and this makes it hard for the centre to accurately measure the impact of its work.

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

- Enhance the centre's impact on the development of children's skills particularly their speech and language, their literacy skills, their use of number and the skills of girls by:
  - improving the fine analysis of data so that services can be better targeted to areas of need
  - making sure that there is a clear indication of what children are expected to learn from planned activities
  - robustly tracking and evaluating learning so the next steps in learning are planned more effectively to meet children's individual needs.
- Maximise the impact of leadership and management including governance by:
  - developing the annual conversation so that there is greater emphasis on the areas most pertinent to swift improvement and setting demanding targets designed to move the centre's effectiveness from good to outstanding
  - recruiting a chair person for the advisory board, ensuring it meets more regularly and making certain that there is a relentless focus on challenging targets relating to outcomes for children and their families who live in the area served by the Greengate Centre
  - working with partners in health to ensure that there is good quality and timely data that can be used to set challenging targets and to measure the impact of the centre's work.

### 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.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the acting leader of the centre. They also spoke to other staff who work in the centre, and local managers from Action for Children and the local authority as well as members of the advisory board. Conversations took place with staff from partner agencies including health professionals and social care. Inspectors also spoke head teachers and other educational professionals. Discussions with parents took place at different times during the inspection.

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

### Inspection team

Susan Walsh, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Philip David Ellwand

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Greengate Sure Start Children's Centre provides services to children, young people and their families living in the central ward of Barrow in Furness. The centre offers early childhood services, including family support and health services, as well as aspects of adult education and works closely with other local children's centres to extend its offer.

The day-to-day management and provision of service delivery is the responsibility of Action for Children as part of a contract recently awarded by Cumbria County Council. The contract was previously for provision for children and young people aged 0-19 but this has been revised to include provision for children aged 0-12 and early help. This has led to staff roles changing. A joint advisory board oversees the work of this and other local children's centres. During the inspection, the centre manager was absent and the centre was being led by an acting manager who had only just been appointed.

A significant number of families live in relatively disadvantaged circumstances. Of the children in the areas served by the centre about half are living in poverty and about one third live in households where no one is working. The vast majority of families are of White British heritage.

Most children in the area enter the Early Years with skills that are well below those that are typical for their age.

The target groups identified by the children's centre as most in need of support include: children in need and children on the child protection register, children living in low income households, young parents and children with additional needs.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- Most children and families are registered and have access to the services offered by the centre. Registration and engagement rates have risen substantially over the last few years.
- The centre has made itself highly visible in the local community and families feel extremely comfortable accessing services. Those expecting children make full use of the services and continue to do so as their children grow older describing the centre as being like 'a massive family'.
- Strategies to engage those families who would be less likely to participate have been highly successful. The majority of teenage parents and families of children with additional needs, for example, benefit from specific services offered by the centre that are carefully tailored to their needs, like wise children in need and children on the child protection register.
- The centre has well developed systems that result in family's needs being quickly identified. The allocation of support is carefully thought out so that support is carefully matched to each family's requirements.
- Information sharing between the centre and its partners is generally very well established and effective. It ensures that those families that are in the most need of support are identified and that services are designed with their needs in mind. However, opportunities to plan services for young children that are exceptionally well targeted to addressing weaknesses in children's skills are sometimes missed because data is not always analysed in sufficient depth. All of the two-year-old children who are eligible take up their entitlement to free early education. Staff have actively identified those children who would benefit from this offer and supported their families in making applications. The work of the centre has been pivotal in ensuring that all children in low income families are able to take full advantage of all the services offered by the centre and its partner agencies.

**The quality of practice and services****Good**

- There is very good range of relevant targeted services and appropriate services which are open to all. The centre is essential in improving children's general well-being and the lives of families. High quality individual support is provided for families which improves life chances and reduces inequalities. Families stated; 'Staff do not judge you, they are on your side'. Support covers a huge range of issues including housing, managing money, support for those who struggle with drug or alcohol abuse and parenting courses that are easily accessed by all who would benefit from them. In particular, the centre offers excellent support for young parents that starts early in the pregnancy.
- The centre is especially good at providing support for those who have suffered from or witnessed domestic violence. This includes the Domestic Violence Recovery Toolkit for adults and also courses for children who witness domestic violence. A range of courses designed to improve resilience, confidence and raise self-esteem successfully encourage adults to take advantage of opportunities offered within the local community.
- There is very good support for vulnerable adult learners who may lack confidence. Carefully planned courses empower those involved and encourage greater independence. 'The big surprise was discovering new friends, real friends, being able to support and encourage each other' was a comment from one parent. Opportunities to build on these courses are extensive and include opportunities to volunteer.
- Many families take advantage of the high quality support for children with additional needs. Activities such as 'Construction club' and 'Playmax' are highly valued by parents because their children can feel comfortable in a stress free environment where they can be themselves.
- The centre staff are well aware of the significant health inequalities that exist in the area and are striving to improve outcomes for families. Activities such as 'Cook and Eat on a budget of £5' are helping families to improve their diet.
- Although breastfeeding rates are low, the centre has not rested on its laurels. An extensive network of breastfeeding support has been developed that includes the valuable presence of volunteer peer supporters and centre staff on maternity wards and a breastfeeding café in the centre. There is plentiful anecdotal evidence that indicates that breastfeeding rates are improving but the lack of timely data from health partners makes it difficult for the centre to accurately measure the impact of this good work.
- Access to two year old funding is starting to have an impact on children's skills when they start school but skills at the end of the early years remain stubbornly below average, particularly their skills in communication and language, literacy and number. An emphasis on the way boys learn has resulted to some improvements, for example, to boys' writing but the gap in outcomes for girls in the local area has widened compared to outcomes for girls nationally.
- Leaders are aware that the emphasis on the development of young children's skills had slipped but this is being rectified. When children attend activities, such as 'Toddler Time', parents report improvements in their children's social skills. However, activities are not always planned with clear learning outcomes in mind. The tracking of children's learning is at an early stage of development and evaluations are not always used effectively to plan the next steps for children. Support from the local authority is being developed to address this.

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

- Leaders and managers have worked successfully in partnership with the dedicated staff to provide a good quality service for local families. In particular, local managers from Action for Children have a thorough understanding of local requirements and use the data that is available together with information from professional partners to ensure that resources are used effectively to meet the needs of families. New contractual agreements between Action for Children and the local authority mean that there is now a greater emphasis on meeting the needs of children under the age of five.

- The monitoring of services by the local authority has recently improved. Nevertheless, the annual conversation does not always have sufficient focus on the areas that are most important to the centre's continued improvement. Robust targets for improvement that will move the centre from good to outstanding are not always set. A lack of up-to-date information about health outcomes in the local area hampers the setting of health targets and makes it more problematic for the centre to effectively measure the impact of its work.
- Despite recent uncertainties concerning staff roles and the absence of the centre manager staff have continued to work very successfully as a team. Systems for performance management and the continuous professional development of staff are effective. Performance management is being further improved and the target setting systems overhauled.
- The impact of the advisory board has recently waned. Currently the advisory board lacks a chairperson and has not met for some time. In the past, it has been well attended by a range of partners and challenging questions have sometimes been asked about data, work to close inequalities and staff performance. That said, there was not always sufficient emphasis on the work of this particular centre during the board's meetings.
- The centre takes careful note of parents and children's comments and uses this to plan and refine activities and support.
- Responsibilities relating to safeguarding are taken very seriously. Policies and procedures are thorough and the early help procedure is used appropriately in order to identify how a family can be best supported. The centre is closely involved in the support of children living in the area who are subject to a child protection plan or have been identified as being in need. It provides a safe place for contact between parents and looked after children and provides good support for carers.

**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 details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	21310
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	464704
<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>	760
<b>Centre leader</b>	David Morrison
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16-17 June 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01229 820049
<b>Email address</b>	dave.morrison@actionforchildren.co.uk

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