

Lincolnshire - Lincoln North

c/o Lincoln North and Carholme Children's Centre, Welbourn House, Welbourn Gardens, Lincoln, LN2 2DD.

Inspection date 27-28 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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.

- Leaders and staff have successfully increased the registration and engagement of local priority families, such as those with new-born babies and those who are already identified as most in need.
- The quality of most services accessed by families is good, particularly for children with disabilities.
- Leaders and staff are successfully promoting the aspirations of adults within the local reach area, providing good opportunities for adult learning and volunteering.
- Health outcomes for most of the children in the reach area are improving.
- Excellent planning by centre leaders and highly effective monitoring by the local authority and senior managers, provide a good service and ensures that families receive timely and good quality support.
- Leaders and staff are very good at seeking and using feedback from families using the centres' services to improve and plan services that meet the needs of local priority families.

It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough is yet done to encourage fathers and other carers of children from priority families to engage with the services offered by the group of centres.
- Leaders and managers have yet to accurately define and monitor how well engagement is sustained by the different priority families.
- Leaders and staff need to place more emphasis on monitoring children's educational development and provide parents with sufficient guidance to support their children's development more effectively at home.
- Managers' data analysis and use is insufficient to inform the staff and service users of the impact of the centres' work and to identify appropriate, specific, measurable success milestones to help the centre move forward.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children’s centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The two children’s centres that form part of this children’s centre group are Lincoln North and Lincoln St. Giles Children’s Centre.

This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, staff, partners, the senior leadership team and representatives of the advisory board and the local authority. The inspectors visited each of the centres. They observed the centre’s work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Gerard McGrath	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Linda Mclarty	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Jeremy Spencer	Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Lincoln North Children's Centre Group was formed in April 2013 and consists of two, phase one children's centres and a satellite site, to the north of the centre of the city of Lincoln in a largely urban community. They share a centre leader. The group meets its core purpose by offering a range of services which include health services, parenting courses, adult learning and family support.

The children's centre group is managed and governed by the local authority alongside a newly-formed advisory board. Families access services across all three sites. The families living within the reach area are predominantly White British, with small, but increasing, numbers of Eastern European families using the centres, some of whom speak English as an additional language. Unemployment rates are higher than across England as a whole.

Early years provision is provided through a number of early years settings, school nursery classes and childminders across the locality area. Some children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities which are below those expected for their age, especially in communication and language and personal, social and emotional development. The rest typically meet age-related expectations. The primary schools and nearby early years settings were not part of this inspection and are subject to their own inspections. The reports are available on the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the centre's work to improve children's achievement is monitored and recorded more carefully by family support workers in case files, and provide guidance for parents so they can promote their children's learning at home.
- Encourage greater engagement by fathers, families from minority ethnic groups, and other carers of those children from priority families who already attend the centres and ensure that services provided are always of good or better quality.
- Increase the emphasis on the educational development of children in the children's centres' self-evaluation and associated development plans.
- Identify appropriate, measurable success milestones to help monitor the impact of improvement strategies and support a self-critical self-evaluation process.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centres listen and respond well to feedback from families from target groups to ensure services meet community needs. Parents and carers are enthusiastic about the centres and highly value the services offered.
- The registration and engagement of local priority families has improved significantly in the year leading up to inspection and is currently good. However, fathers, minority ethnic families and other carers of those children from priority families are not yet accessing services in as high numbers as some other groups.
- Improved communication with health services and social care services has led to better identification and targeted registration of the most vulnerable children and families. The large majority of priority families have been registering and engaging with the centres since September 2013.
- The proportion of families with children with disabilities using the centres is good. Many families from outside the reach area also use the facilities in Lincoln North as it is one of the two providers of respite services across the city of Lincoln.
- Highly effective joint working and communication across staff, parents and external agencies supports the centres good quality family support and outreach work. Effective systems are used to monitor the registration and attendance of families at services and activities. This ensures that those families most in need, receive the support that they require for as long as they need it.
- Leaders have yet to clearly define what sustained engagement means so that they can accurately measure the impact of the centres over time. Further analysis of non-user groups is required to guide the centres' future work.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The good quality and well-used 'PEEP' programmes have a significant impact on improving the well-being of children and their families. Centre staff are skilled in identifying and promoting the health requirements of children. They successfully guide and support parents in making informed health choices for their children. As a result, parents are more able to improve their children's safety and well-being.
- The breastfeeding support group and lactation clinic successfully encourage and support the majority of mothers to sustain breastfeeding at six to eight weeks, particularly in the Lincoln North centre, where almost two thirds of mothers do so. Cookery classes for adults have helped reduce child obesity rates; immunisation rates are also high. However, smoking rates during pregnancy remain too high.
- Attendance at the centre has an important effect in improving the emotional well-being and mental health of the centre's most vulnerable families; reducing their social isolation and raising their self-confidence. For example, one parent stated that, 'Attending the centre helped us to make new friends quickly when we moved into the area'. Attendance on parenting skills courses helps parents and carers become more confident and understanding about their children's development.
- Promotion of employability and adult learning is very strong. Parents are provided with a broad range of opportunities to access advice and guidance on education and training in order to improve their employability and personal skills development. A good number of adults are working towards accredited functional skills and vocationally-relevant qualifications through the local college of further education.
- The number of parents and carers volunteering is increasing and this leads to significant increase in self-confidence, has raised aspirations for many adults and already resulted in employment for a few.
- Effective observations, assessment and planning of children's learning and development are successfully narrowing the gap between different groups within the priority groups. In the best sessions, skilled staff help children to make good progress in their learning and personal and social development. Sometimes opportunities are missed to write up assessments in case files.

- Staff celebrate participation in sessions very well. However, opportunities are often missed to provide detailed feedback to parents about the intended benefits of each session, so that they can repeat the activities to improve children's specific skills at home. Learning journals are often descriptive rather than evaluative and do not record children's educational development sufficiently.
- Communication with local schools helps centre staff plan programmes that prepare children for school. The majority of children are enthusiastic and prepared for their entry to school and educational achievements of children who use the centre are improving.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leaders and staff fully understand the contribution that the centres make to the lives of their local populations. Staff complete relevant training and routine supervision which ensures that they are well trained and provide good support to vulnerable families.
- Excellent management of change throughout the re-structuring of the children's centre services has been achieved by good leadership and clear communication to parents, carers and staff. Leaders, managers and staff have successfully improved the quality of the services during an extended period of organisational change.
- Performance management of staff and commissioned services is strong and ensures continuing improvement in the timeliness and quality of support provided to families. Case files are carefully monitored, and staff are appropriately challenged if the progress of families is slower than expected or targets are not met.
- Well-managed, useful strategic partnerships are in place with a range of external agencies which prevents the duplication of services. Crucial information about families and services is accurately shared which enables vulnerable families to access the centres and reduces their risk of harm. This includes those in local priority groups such as those children subject to child protection plans, looked after children and those supported through the Common Assessment Framework.
- The local authority supports the newly-reshaped centre advisory board well to provide effective governance and oversight of the new group of centres during regular performance meetings. Members of the advisory board have completed useful training to improve their ability to offer challenge to leaders and managers of the centres.
- The safeguarding and well-being of children are the central focus of the centres. The range of safeguarding policies and processes are sound and regularly reviewed. All staff have relevant checks when they start working in the centres and complete regular training on appropriate topics, including e-safety.
- Parents and carers feel that their opinions are listened to and considered seriously through their representation on the advisory board. Leaders and managers routinely collect parents' views on the centres through surveys, evaluations, parent forums and questionnaires. Some parents act as volunteers within centres, offering a range of support, encouragement and advice, and they promote the centres well within the local area. One parent commented that, 'We all try to make the centres welcoming, so that everyone will feel comfortable'.
- Activities to promote the engagement of fathers and other carers of those children who already attend the centres have been partially successful. A Dad's group runs at the St. Giles Children's Centre, but efforts to start a similar group at the other sites have not succeeded and relatively few fathers regularly engage with the services offered.
- The most recent self-evaluation reports for the centres contain insufficient detail about the educational development of children. The associated quality improvement plans are insufficiently supported by specific, measurable, success milestones to help leaders and managers gauge the impact of improvement strategies.

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.

Select details

Unique reference number	80200
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	430349
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,992
Centre leader	Mark Turner
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01522 529631
Email address	Mark.Turner@Lincolnshire.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- URN: 21793 Lincoln North Children's Centre
- URN: 22893 St. Giles Children's Centre

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