

Norfolk - AfC North (Lot 15)

Corpusty & Holt Area Children's Centre, Charles Road, Holt, NR25 6DA

Inspection dates	10–11 June 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Good	2
		Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		Outstanding	1
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.

- As a result of excellent information sharing with partners and the persistent attitude of staff, almost all families with young children living in the reach area are registered with the group and a large majority regularly access activities and services.
- Centre staff know the families that live in the reach area very well and they are committed to making a discernible difference to the well-being of children and families.
- 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. Regular meetings between professionals help to make sure the right families are getting the right service at the right time.
- Leadership and management are good and there is effective support from the management organisations and local authority. Together they are improving the quality of practice and services.
- The centres makes good use of their premises and buildings within the community to provide a varied range of good quality services and courses.

It is not outstanding because:

- Although the children's centre gathers lots of information about how good services are, it does not periodically pull this information together to measure performance over time.
- Even though there are some good examples of individual pieces of work with schools and early years providers, the group does not provide a means of bringing providers together to share 'good' practice in order to provide consistently good quality provision throughout the reach area.
- The established advisory board does not represent views from the range of organisations working within the community served by the group because their attendance is so low.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Make sure the children's centre group and local authority work together to share effective practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage across the reach area in order to raise achievement for all children.
- Improve the existing evaluation systems by producing and analysing, periodic summative overviews in all aspects of provision and share the best practice widely to further improve services.
- Ensure the membership of the advisory board reflects the services provided by the professional, voluntary and public services in the community served by the group and that attendance improves in order to strengthen its decision-making.

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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with headteachers; senior leaders in the local authority; centre staff; volunteers; representatives from commissioned services, such as health partners, adult learning providers and support services; parents; and the chair of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited activities being delivered by the group during the inspection, including a stay and play session, a music session, and a swimming session.

The inspection covered the three centres represented in the group. These are the Corpusty and Holt, Wells, and Stibbard children's centres.

Inspectors observed the centre's work, undertook joint observations, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including information about the safeguarding of families, evaluations completed by parents, the centre's self-evaluation and its plans for improvement.

Inspection team

Susan Smith Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Winyard

Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter Towner

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Norfolk - AfC North (Lot 15) 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 three centres: Corpusty & Holt, Stibbard and Wells Children's Centres.

Stibbard Children's Centre is situated on the site of All Saints Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School and Wells Children's Centre is situated on Wells-next-the-Sea Primary and Nursery School site. Each centre has early years provision on site but these are operated separately from the Children's centres and are subject to separate inspection arrangements.

Action for Children has been responsible for running the children's centre group since October 2012. The centres are managed by one group service coordinator who started in April 2013. There is one advisory board for the group.

The group delivers services for children and families from all three centres and from community venues, including Holt Library, Holt Youth Project, Walsingham and Corpusty Primary Schools and various village halls and community building throughout the area served by the group. The centre group meets the core purpose by providing early education, health services, family support and adult learning and parenting courses. Most children enter early education with skills that are below the expected level for their age. The centres are open each week day from 9.00am to 5.00pm, for 51 weeks of the year.

There are 1,161 children under five years of age living in the area the centres serve. The Corpusty/Holt, Wells and Stibbard reach areas covers a geographically large part of rural North Norfolk encompassing in excess of 50 villages and three towns. There are areas considered to be more affluent as well as areas of deprivation.

Local employment opportunities tend to be low paid, unskilled and often seasonal resulting in the need to travel significant distances to access higher paid or skilled work.

Over a quarter of children are living in households dependant 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 and small numbers of families with English as an additional language.

Key target groups include: vulnerable families living in poverty, lone parents, pregnant teenagers and young parents, families who are disabled or have additional needs, families where children are at risk of developing an unhealthy weight and those families who are isolated.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families **Outstanding**

- Local health services now share up-to-date live birth data with the centre group. This information has helped leaders and managers to identify any gaps and register more families. As a result, there are only a few families who are not yet registered, and leaders have effective procedures in place to promote the group's services to these families.

- There are excellent systems in place for tracking the involvement of families in centre group services. Concerted action is taken to sustain contact with these families. Any non-attendance is quickly followed up and staff work diligently to ensure the families most in need access the support they require. Many parents describe how much they value the fact that they can always turn to staff at the centre for support at anytime.
- Centre staff know their community very well. Extensive work within the community and with families in their homes ensures that parents are fully supported in accessing services. Staff have a 'Can do' attitude and use appropriate strategies to overcome any potential barriers which may prevent parents from attending. Support is provided with funding and transport to ensure families access the help and professional services they require. As a result, attendance at services and sustained reach to all target families continue to rise and remain high.
- Access to training for adults is excellent. The centre delivers a wide range of structured parenting programmes which have all been well attended. The local authority and adult education providers are working together to formalise the approach to providing maths and English qualifications.
- Positive relationships with key partners have ensured very good access to services, including the delivery of health programmes to mothers before and after the birth of their babies.
- As a result of the centres' efforts, all families who have two-year-old children who are eligible for funded nursery places take up the offer, and most three- and four-year-old children access nursery education.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The quality, range and relevance of both universal and targeted services offered by the centre group are good and the take-up by families most in need is high. However, although the group gathers lots of information about how good services are, it does not periodically pull this information together to measure performance over time.
- Partnerships with all schools, early years providers and childminders in the area are not fully established. Although the children's centre group has contact with all provision in the area 'good' practice is not shared as well as it could be to ensure consistency in the quality of practice across the reach area. As a result in a few schools children achieved well below the national average for a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2013.
- Parents say their understanding of how to nurture their children's well-being and keep them safe has been greatly improved by attending First Aid course. They state they have learnt how to deal with emergencies such as choking and how to recognise childhood illnesses.
- Inspectors were told frequently how important the centres are to their community. Parents unanimously praised the warm welcome and high levels of care, guidance and

support they receive from everyone. The groups' work to help families experiencing personal challenges in their lives move on, is highly valued, and effective.

- Children and families are well-supported during times of transition. A project is underway to ensure that this support continues throughout the summer holiday period for those children that have been identified as requiring additional support. Consequently, children move from the children's centres and other early childhood settings into the school environment with the necessary skills to embrace learning in their new setting.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The group manager leads by example and has ensured that there is a very well motivated staff team. They share her high aspirations because they are fully involved in decision-making and in setting the strategic direction of the centres. They are effective at taking stock of the group's strengths and shortcomings and at taking steps to improve. However, the group's written self-evaluation and the development plan do not always reflect the leaders' clarity and success in driving improvements. The leaders are aware of this shortcoming and are taking appropriate steps to put it right.
- Lines of accountability are clearly defined and understood. The local authority officer carries out robust annual conversation and quarterly monitoring visits based on areas of the service specification, which lead to specific, agreed targets being set. These targets have effectively driven up the number of registered families and the proportion of target groups in contact with the centres.
- Supervision and performance management processes are robust. Staff receive regular one-to-one supervision and annual appraisals are used effectively to monitor performance and develop staff skills. Staff have good opportunities to discuss case work and next steps to ensure that families receive the support they need when they need it most.
- The advisory board have a good understanding of the centres' work and are increasingly holding the leader to account for its progress. However, the level of attendance at meetings is low and the membership is not widely representative of parents and key partners who work in the area.
- Safeguarding arrangements are successfully ensuring the well being of those most in need. The recently introduced protocol between social care and children's centres has been implemented effectively to ensure children who are subject to child protection plans, children in need and looked after children, are all known to the centre group. The centre's staff contributes fully to the use of the Family Support Process to provide effective early help.
- Effective partnerships are carefully nurtured by centre leaders and staff. Resources are used effectively and there is a wide range of good quality provision available to children and families at a range of locations across the area.
- Parents report a high level of satisfaction with the work of the centre group. They are consulted about their needs, and services are designed and developed in response to their requirements. Initiatives are underway to ensure that parents views are fed into the advisory board more effectively.

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.

Group details

Unique reference number	80083
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	444836
Managed by	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,161
Centre leader	Becky Marshall
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01263 712442
Email address	becky.marshall@actionforchildren.org.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 20824 Corpusty and Holt Area Children's Centre
- 23477 Wells-next-the-sea Sure Start Children's Centre
- 22930 Stibbard Children's Centre

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