

24 September 2012**Agenda Item: 5****REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER, EARLY YEARS AND EARLY
INTERVENTION SERVICE****OFSTED INSPECTIONS OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides information about the Ofsted inspection framework for children's centres and an update on Nottinghamshire children's centres performance against the national picture.

Information and Advice

2. Ofsted began inspections of children's centres in May 2010 following the publication of its initial inspection framework in April of the same year.
3. The purpose of each children's centre inspection is to provide an independent external evaluation of its effectiveness and what it should do to improve, based upon a range of evidence including that from partner organisations, parents and prospective parents who use the centre and its services, and first-hand observation.
4. The resultant inspection report provides a written summary of the outcomes achieved by a centre for young children and their families, and makes judgements on the quality of the centre's provision (especially the impact of integrated services on children and their families), the effectiveness of leadership and management and the centre's capacity to improve.
5. All judgements are made using a four-point grading scale:
 - grade 1: Outstanding
 - grade 2: Good
 - grade: 3 Satisfactory
 - grade: 4 Inadequate
6. The inspection of a children's centre promotes improvement by:
 - setting expectations: the criteria and descriptors set out in the inspection framework illustrate the standards of performance and effectiveness expected of each centre
 - increasing the children's centre's capacity for improvement by identifying areas where further development is needed

- recommending priorities for future action by the local authority to improve the centre and checking subsequent progress at the next inspection
 - complementing the performance management carried out by the council, by providing an external and independent view of the centre's performance.
7. It is expected that all children's centres will be inspected every five years, unless they are judged inadequate or there are safeguarding concerns, and that most, if not all, will have been inspected at least once by 2015.
 8. As children's centres are open all year round, inspections can take place at any point in the year. Where it is possible to carry out inspections at the same time as inspections of schools or registered childcare then inspections will take place at times when all of the provision is open.
 9. Formal feedback is provided at the end of the inspection and the formal report is published on the Ofsted website within 15 working days of the end of the inspection. It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that an action plan is prepared in response to the recommendations of the report no more than two months after the date the report was received.

Performance to date.

10. Nationally, there were 1,238 children's centres inspected between April 2010 and March 2012. Of the 1,238 inspected, 70% were judged as good or outstanding for overall effectiveness and almost all (99%) were judged to be at least satisfactory. Twenty seven children's centres were judged Inadequate. Nottinghamshire have had none judged as Inadequate.
11. Children's centres inspected in Nottinghamshire have exceeded the national average. Of the 58 children's centres located across the County, 24 have been inspected during this time. Of those inspected, 79% were judged as good or outstanding for overall effectiveness and **all** were judged to be at least satisfactory. Table 1 overleaf provides summary details.
12. In summary the key strengths for those centres inspected thus far include:
 - Good knowledge of local need
 - Effective safeguarding practice and good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)
 - Strong partnership working, through joint planning and delivery of services
 - Inclusive practice, ensuring all children can reach their potential
 - Excellent transition work with schools to ensure children are ready to learn
 - Volunteering opportunities available to parents that support their own learning and development.
13. Common themes have also emerged in respect of areas for further development, including the need to increase reach and registration of vulnerable children and families. Improvement targets for each centre have been agreed and form the basis of a new performance management framework for children's centres.
14. In addition, the Council is one of 13 local authorities participating in an initiative led by the National College for Children's Services Leadership to trial a mentoring/coaching

programme for children's centre leaders in order to improve services. The Children Centre System Leaders pilot is based on the existing Local Leaders of Education (LLE) programme which allows successful school heads to work alongside other heads to build leadership capacity and drive sustainable improvement. The overall aim of the pilot is to test out the transferability of the LLE programme to children's centres and potentially the broader early years sector. Four Nottinghamshire children's centre leaders from centres that have been judged to be Outstanding by Ofsted were selected to participate and are currently trialling a coaching model, the findings from which will be available in January next year.

Table 1: Nottinghamshire Children's Centres – summary Ofsted Inspection Grades 2010-12

District	Provider	Centre	Date of Inspection	Overall Effective-ness	Capacity for sustained improvement	Safeguarding	& Equality Diversity
Ashfield	Notts County Health Partnership (NCHP)	Sutton Central	Oct 2010	2	2	1	2
		Rural Families	Feb 2011	2	2	1	2
		Summer House	Mar 2011	1	1	1	2
		Kirkby East	Mar 2011	1	1	1	1
		Market Place	Aug 2011	2	2	2	2
		Butler's Hill & Broomhill	Sep 2011	1	1	1	1
		Huthwaite	Sep 2011	2	2	1	2
Bassetlaw	North Notts College (NCC)	North Leverton	Oct 2010	3	3	3	3
		Hallcroft	Jul 2011	3	3	3	3
		Prospect Kilton	Jul 2011	2	2	2	2
Broxtowe	NCHP	Eastwood	Nov 2010	3	3	1	2
		Stapleford	Sep 2011	3	3	3	3
Gedling	NCHP	Stanhope	Jun 2011	2	2	1	2
		Arnbrook	Mar 2012	2	2	2	2
Mansfield	NCC	Mansfield Woodhouse	Jun 2010	2	2	2	2
		Oak Tree	Jun 2011	1	1	1	1
		Warsop	Nov 2011	2	2	2	2
		Bellamy	Mar 2012	2	2	1	1
	Family Action	Ladybrook	Nov 2010	2	2	2	2
		Pleasley Hill	Jan 2012	2	2	1	2
Newark & Sherwood	NCC	Sherwood East	Nov 2010	3	3	3	3
		Hawtonville	May 2011	1	1	1	1
		Sherwood West	Feb 2012	2	2	2	1
Rushcliffe	NCC	Abbey & Lady Bay	Jun 2011	3	3	3	3

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

16. The performance of the children's centres inspected so far demonstrates the quality of provision available to children and families across the County, and highlights areas for development to ensure continuous improvement for children and families.

Equalities Implications

17. 79% of Nottinghamshire children's centres inspected have been graded good for Equalities and Diversity. A common theme highlighted across all those children centres inspected was the good knowledge they have of the communities they serve, ensuring that services respond to local needs and aspirations. Centres were able to evidence their commitment to inclusion and community cohesion, whilst targeting vulnerable children and families through effective outreach work.

Safeguarding of Children Implications

18. The inspection reports highlight that safeguarding practice is at least satisfactory in all those centres inspected, with 79% having good or outstanding practice and policies in place. Inspectors reported evidence of effective multi-agency partnership arrangements and use of CAF processes. Detailed case studies provided evidence too of the impact of safeguarding practice through early interventions.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the report be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

19. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (NDR 10/09/12)

20. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

Ofsted Official Statistics Release, June 2012

Ofsted Inspection framework for Children's Centres, Evaluation and Grade descriptors, September 2011

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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