

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER

OFSTED INSPECTIONS OF NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE CHILDREN'S CENTRES

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1. To inform the Cabinet Member of the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of Manor Farm Children's Centre which took place over two days on 2 and 3 May 2012.
- 1.2. A full copy of the reports are available in Group offices

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 All Children's Centres are subject to inspections carried out by OfSTED over a five yearly cycle. Inspections began in the summer of 2010. The *Framework for Children's Centre Inspection* details what inspectors will look at during their visit. Inspections check that centres:

- know their community and the sorts of services, activities and courses families living there need
- offer those services, or give families advice and support on where they can access them
- do all they can to help families use those services they need most, especially the families that might find it hard to do so
- make sure that no groups of the community have been overlooked
- have partnerships with health services, Jobcentre Plus, childcare providers and any other key services that join up to provide the support families need.

Manor Farm is a phase two children's centre based on the Priory Lane Junior School site in the Scunthorpe South Locality.

- 2.2 The Inspection was carried out in line with revised inspection guidance issued by Ofsted in September 2011. Manor Farm was the ninth children's centre to be inspected in North Lincolnshire and the fifth since the restructure of Children's Services in September 2011. The full report is now available on the Ofsted website.

Ofsted provides judgments against a set of inspection criteria using one of four grades:

- **Outstanding:** this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality.
- **Good:** this aspect of the provision is strong
- **Satisfactory:** this aspect of the provision is sound
- **Inadequate:** this aspect of the service provision is not good enough

Overall Effectiveness: The 'Overall Effectiveness' of Manor Farm Children's Centre was judged to be Good.

Capacity for Sustained Improvement: Manor Farm was judged to have Good 'Capacity for Sustained Improvement'.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:

3.1 Ofsted's main judgments are underpinned by individual findings, each rated on the same scale as above. Inspectors can make requirements or recommendations. A requirement is a mandatory action; a recommendation is a suggestion to improve current practice.

3.2 Manor Farm Children's Centre:

The following summary is taken directly from the report: Manor Farm Children's Centre staff have developed good knowledge of local children and families who live in their compact reach area. Provision is good. Services, activities and opportunities are well targeted to meet the needs of those who most need their help. The centre has engaged with a large majority of local children and families from their target groups. As a result, their work with individual families with circumstances that make them vulnerable is good. Some families who live outside of the reach area choose to come to Manor Farm as they state that they prefer attending a smaller, quieter setting where the staff provide a big welcome.

Manor Farm is an inclusive centre which has a high regard for diversity. Staff address any inequalities well. Outreach work is a real strength of the centre. Good partnerships are in place which promotes integrated working well. As a consequence, the centre is well known in the area and users demonstrate high levels of satisfaction. Many users described services as simply 'brilliant'. Typical comments from parents regarding the centre workers include, 'staff are fantastic, friendly and easy to get on with' and 'amazingly helpful, nothing is too much trouble for them'.

A result of the good leadership and management of the centre is that most outcomes for children and their families are good. Attention to promoting safeguarding is high priority. Good safeguarding arrangements ensure that children are well protected in times of crisis. All parents spoken to said that they feel safe at the centre.

Health outcomes are variable and satisfactory overall. The proportion of mothers smoking during pregnancy remains above the national average. The numbers of mothers initiating breastfeeding has greatly increased but data suggest that the proportion of mothers who sustain breastfeeding is below national expectations. Despite several strategies in place to encourage healthier lifestyles, the number of children entering school obese is also above national average.

Families thoroughly enjoy the activities offered by the centre, especially the opportunities to play, learn and have fun together. Children are encouraged to develop their speech and language and so enable them to start school well prepared. Partnerships with schools are good and procedures to aid children's transition to their next stage of learning are well established and continually improving.

Users of the centre are encouraged to develop positive relationships and families are regularly involved in decision-making. The re-structure of the local authority and changes in the centre staff and their partners have resulted in a loss of momentum in the previously well-established advisory board and parent forum meetings.

The local authority and centre leaders are enthusiastic about striving for excellence. They use local knowledge and data well to measure the impact of the centre's work and identify areas they need to improve further. The centre has good capacity to sustain improvement.

Judgments to support the main finding that the overall effectiveness of Manor Farm Children's Centre is Good:

How Good are Outcomes for Families?	Good
How Good is the Provision?	Good
How Effective are the Leadership and Management?	Good
Capacity for Sustained Improvement?	Good

3.3 Recommendations from the Ofsted report:

There were two recommendations for further improvement;

1) Improve health outcomes by working with partners to:

- increase the percentage of women sustaining breastfeeding
- reduce the number of children in reception year who are obese
- decrease the percentage of mothers who smoke in pregnancy.

2) Re-establish the advisory board and elect an independent chairperson so that members of the board act as a critical

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 An action plan to address the above issues is already being drawn up. Conversations are on-going with Health partners regarding improved health outcomes and actions are being taken to re-establish the Advisory Board and to identify an Independent Chair.

4.2 The Cabinet Member may wish to write to the Children's Centre manager regarding the outcomes of their inspection.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 None

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 – CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

6.1 Each Centre completes a Self Evaluation document and a Business Plan on an annual basis. This is underpinned by an Annual Conversation with the Local Authority and through discussion with the Advisory Board.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 An important part of the inspection was the dialogue between the inspectors and service users. The Inspectors wrote:

Many users described services as simply 'brilliant'. Typical comments from parents regarding the centre workers include, 'staff are fantastic, friendly and easy to get on with' and 'amazingly helpful, nothing is too much trouble for them'.

Parents are confident to express their views and they treat each other with great respect and develop positive relationships. One remarked that her child was, 'not judged, but welcomed', and her child was 'helped to develop social skills and an awareness of difference.'

In a crisis the support provided for parents is swift and staff ensure they act in the best interest of the whole family. Typical comments from parents were, 'It is really good to be able to offload problems here' and 'I am able to open up and speak about things'.

A mother said 'I now give my children fruit instead of crisps'. However, the number of children who are obese in schools remains an on-going issue.

A parent commented, 'I have made a huge step forward. I now encourage my children to share, have good manners and we now take it in turns to speak.'

In the summary report for centre users, Ofsted wrote "All of you that we spoke to were very positive about the centre. You told us that you find the staff friendly, very helpful and welcoming. You particularly enjoy the weekly baby weighing clinic which runs at the same time as the 'Stay and Play'. We understand some of you enjoy 'Baby Massage.' You were extremely positive about the benefits of using massage and some of you said it even helped your babies sleep and also their colic problems.

The centre leadership team is fully committed to helping you to provide your children with the best possible start to life. They ensure good safeguard systems are in place for you. Partnerships with other agencies are good and together they provide a range of opportunities for you to develop your parenting skills or specific knowledge which can enable you to gain employment."

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the Cabinet Member:

- notes the positive comments made by Ofsted, particularly in relation to the high quality work done with parents and young children
- continues to support improvements at Manor Farm Children's Centre
- writes to the Children Centre manager and make suitable comment on the inspection report.

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: The Framework for Children Centre Inspection. Ofsted. September 2011.