

Local authority early years team of the year



'Vision and rigour now underpin the work of the Birth to Five Service'
Andy Breckon,
director, school improvement service and assistant director, children's services

Criterion

Open to any local authority team working to provide or support early years and childcare services

Winner Birth to Five Service, Lincolnshire County Council

Run by the CfBT Education Trust since 2006, the early years team is the recipient of numerous accolades. It was graded outstanding for the Every Child A Talker initiative and received an outstanding rating in 2010-11 from National Strategies for all elements in the national quality standards for local authorities in early years.

The assessor for ECAT says she came away wishing that she could 'bottle some of your energy and commitment, and spread it around everywhere. It was heartening to see not only the impressive high-quality provision and the reflective approach, which is prioritising early language, but also the consultants' inventive and thorough work and the strong strategic support for ECAT'.

The 60-strong staff – early years consultants, children's centre teachers, workforce development officers and operational support officers – support 320 settings across the county and 260 settings in schools and nursery schools.

Jane Harrison, director of Red Hen Children's Day Nursery in Louth, says, 'Birth to

Five provides a wide service that settings would struggle without.'

Judges described the team's work as 'an outstanding example of an integrated service that is supporting improvements in the quality of provision across the country'.

Children's centre teachers provide support to Lincolnshire's 36 children's centres, delivering parenting programmes and hands-on support to providers in children's centre out-reach areas.

The service has also been key to raising Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores.

The team has provided extensive training on the EYFS to ensure practitioners have a real understanding of how to assess children's development through observations based largely on child-initiated activities.

This has led to narrowing the gap between the lowest attaining 20 per cent of children and their peers, with outcomes rising by 11 per cent for all children in communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development.