



Joint area review of children's services

Rochdale Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

Adult Learning Inspectorate
Audit Commission
Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)
Healthcare Commission
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HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
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Context

1. Rochdale has a population of 206,000 people who mostly reside in four distinct townships: Heywood, Middleton, Pennines and Rochdale. Around 14% of the population are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, with over 11% of Asian heritage, primarily Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Kashmiri. The township of Rochdale itself has a black ethnic minority population of 21%. Rochdale is ranked the 25th most deprived borough out of a total of 150 boroughs. These indices of deprivation are reflected in some significant health and socio-economic inequalities in Rochdale. Despite the hardship this brings, there is a tangible spirit of warmth and generosity in the communities and people of Rochdale. Residents are proud of the town being the birthplace of the Cooperative Society, symbolising a rich and long tradition of community development. A strategic partnership comprises all the main providers of public services for children and young people, including the council social care and education services. The partnership has produced a five year strategic plan called "Excellence for Everyone" which sets out the main priorities for action to improve the outcomes for every child and young person in Rochdale.

Summary Report

Outcomes for children and young people

2. In almost all respects the outcomes for children and young people in Rochdale are below the national average. This reflects the impact of the high indices of deprivation. In general terms children and young people in Rochdale currently are likely to have higher incidence of ill-health, be living in families with lower than average incomes and be less likely to attain educationally than the national average.

3. Equally, there is increasing evidence of an improvement in outcomes for Rochdale children and young people compared to similar areas. As such the outcomes are considered to be satisfactory in most areas.

The impact of local services

4. **Overall local services have a satisfactory impact on the outcomes for children and young people with strengths in important areas.** Effects are most noticeable in the valuable support provided to parents on health issues, the well focused work in raising standards in secondary schools, the varied opportunities available to help young people prepare for working life and the good work to develop young people's contribution to society. Further improvements are necessary to increase the educational attainment of primary aged pupils, ensure better access to primary care and in building a more consistent understanding amongst service providers of their collective and individual responsibilities to safeguard children. As demonstrated by the area's self-assessment, partners are largely aware of the strengths and weaknesses in

provision. Appropriate priorities have been set for improvement. Financial planning and performance management are, however, under-developed. Nevertheless, there are some clear strategies for promoting continuous improvement, including a measured approach towards managing and sustaining change. The capacity for further improvement is good.

Being healthy

5. Services make a satisfactory contribution to keeping children and young people healthy with some notable strengths. Parents are given well focused support and advice to help them adjust to the role of parenthood and about preventative treatment and provision. Childhood immunisation programmes are very effective, resulting in recent falls in infectious diseases. Children and young people have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. There are extensive and successful programmes to reduce smoking, teenage pregnancies and drug misuse amongst young people. Access to general practitioner (GP) services in some areas is difficult and a walk-in centre provides a very useful alternative for many people. Dental decay in children and young people is significantly worse than national averages and access to dentists for treatment is very limited. Despite the dental access centre in Rochdale providing highly valued support, parents still experience delays in getting emergency treatment. There is a range of mental health services, many of which are good. However, waiting times for assessment and treatment to some services are poor, especially for young people aged between 16 and 18 years old. As is the case nationally, there is restricted access to mental health in-patient beds and services sometimes resort to using facilities on the children's ward at Rochdale Infirmary which is unsatisfactory. On other occasions, the only alternative is children being moved to specialist centres outside the area which is equally unsatisfactory. More than one quarter of attendances to accident and emergency is made up of children and young people under the age of 16. Despite this, there is only one registered children's nurse in accident and emergency at Rochdale Infirmary and no clear plans to address the shortfall.

Staying safe

6. Services to keep children safe are satisfactory. A range of agencies work well together to minimise the incidence of child abuse and neglect. Inter-agency arrangements work well when children are identified as needing protection. The number of children on the child protection register in Rochdale is relatively low and compares well with the national average. There has been a steady reduction in the number of children registered and the majority of registrations are first time registrations. Although performance is acceptable, re-registration rates remain significantly higher than the national average. Some children have to wait for the allocation of a new social worker when their name is included on the child protection register. Arrangements in the Health Service to ensure that existing staff have a regular criminal record check should

be strengthened. The monitoring of children's movements and information sharing across agencies is insufficiently robust. These issues weaken the arrangements for protecting children at risk of significant harm. In general, children feel safe in schools but less safe when outside of school, worrying about road traffic accidents, drug users on the streets and racial harassment.

Enjoying and achieving

7. The quality of contribution by local services to helping children and young people enjoy their education and achieve their potential is satisfactory with some notable strengths. The quality of provision in secondary schools and in the early years is mainly good. Primary schools overall are satisfactory. The local authority challenges schools well, and provides timely and focused support for those placed in formal categories of concern. Some progress is also being made to improve the attendance of the most vulnerable children and young people, but attendance at secondary schools remains below the national average. Children enter schools with below average achievement. Although some gains have been made in raising pupils' attainment, especially at Key Stage 4, standards in primary schools are not yet in line with similar areas and the country as a whole. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress but looked after children do not do well enough.

Making a positive contribution

8. Services to help children and young people contribute to society are good overall. Multi-agency partners recognise the richness and diversity brought by children and young people and are committed to involving them and listening to what they have to say. As a consequence, there are a broad range of activities across health, education and social care that allow young people to participate in democratic processes and to learn about citizenship in ways that reflect their interests, talents and desire to be involved. Procedures actively engage traditionally hard-to-reach groups such as traveller communities, looked after children, young carers and children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is also a wide range of effective multi-agency provision to help children and young people to flourish, to assist them through key transitions in their lives and to support families experiencing relationship difficulties. Children and young people generally feel safe, happy and confident in schools and in their communities. Initiatives to develop community cohesion are satisfactory. There is, however, confusion among some young people about what constitutes a racist incident and under-developed monitoring of schools' procedures for combating racism. Approaches to reduce offending by young people are broadly successful.

Achieving economic well-being

9. **The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is satisfactory.** The co-ordination and quality of provision for 14 to 19 year olds are improving rapidly due to productive partnership working at all levels. There is a good range of opportunities to help prepare young people for working life, and a significant improvement in the proportion of young people in education, employment or training. There is not yet, however, access for all 14 to 19 year olds to the full range of provision and there are gaps in the offer of work-based learning. There has also been an increase in the number of 17 year olds leaving their initial choice of post- compulsory provision. Childcare provision is wide-ranging and has expanded much faster than nationally in recent years. A strong regeneration programme and effective housing renewal have improved access to supported housing for young people.

Looked after children

10. **Overall the impact of services contributing to the well-being of children looked after by the council is satisfactory with some notable strengths.** Agencies have raised successfully the profile and priorities of services for looked after children. Services are generally well managed and staff well motivated and supported. Multi-agency arrangements for children looked after are generally strong and the council and its partners have actions planned or in place to improve outcomes. This is reflected in a good range of support services to avoid children and young people having to become looked after and an appropriate balance of residential and foster care placements. Considerable effort is being made to keep looked after children either living in or close to Rochdale but there are still relatively high numbers living outside the area. Improving the educational outcomes for looked after children remains a big challenge particularly for young people in residential care placements. Generally, the council is a responsible corporate parent but a small percentage of children do not have their own qualified social worker to support them. There is a comparatively high proportion of looked after children who live at home with parents or other relative carers some of whom could be better supported in ways other than being looked after by the council.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities

11. **The overall provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory.** There are a number of examples of how individuals' needs are being met well. The quality of care and education for children with learning difficulties and disabilities is improving, supported by close partnerships between education, social care and health. Early intervention for very young children is leading to good clinical provision, improved social care and focussed education support. Where multi-agency working is securely established, improved communication between services and

agencies has led to closely targeted provision and strong partnerships with families. There is a wide range of individual initiatives and projects, many of which are still at an early stage of development and have therefore not yet had time to demonstrate impact for children and young people. Protocols and procedures to support cross-service working are in the early stage of production and the development of common criteria to assess need across all services is in the pilot phase. Common recording systems have yet to be agreed.

Service management

12. **Service management is satisfactory overall with some notable strengths.** Appropriate ambitions and priorities have been set for improving outcomes for children and for closing gaps in performance compared with national averages. To date there have been some notable successes, such as the reduction in teenage conceptions. The council and partnership are particularly good at engaging and consulting with children and young people so that the priorities reflect their needs and desires. Priority has been given to developing common processes across the partnership to improve the sharing of information and the co-ordination of services. The targeting of resources on key priorities is satisfactory, as is overall budget management, although links with service planning are underdeveloped. Performance management is focused on key priorities and is carried out within a corporate framework, though performance management and budget management tend to be parallel but unconnected activities. There are some good examples of action to secure value for money, although the focus on value for money is not always systematic or explicit.

13. The Children, Schools and Families Partnership is well established and the council has restructured to create a directorate to integrate services further. The council provides effective leadership and support to its public service partners. The capacity to improve is good.

14. The unverified 2005 results of Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 along with the star-ratings for the Primary Care Trusts have been made available since the completion of the joint area review fieldwork. These results and ratings show further continuing improvement and strengthen the judgement that the capacity for improvement is good for both the council and the Children, Schools and Families Partnership.

Grades

Grades awarded:

4: outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate

	Local services overall	Council services	Health Services
Being healthy	2		
Staying safe	2		
Enjoying and achieving	2		
Making a positive contribution	3		
Achieving economic well-being	2		
Service management	2		
Capacity to improve	3	3	
Children's services		2	
The education service		2	
The social care services for children		2	
The health service for children			2

Recommendations

For immediate action:

- Ensure that existing staff in the health service have a regular criminal record check.
- Ensure that every child on the child protection register and every child looked after by the council has an allocated social worker.
- Monitor and share information about children and young people not on a school roll and/or accessing health services outside Rochdale more effectively
- Ensure that all agencies understand fully the agreed thresholds for intervention so as to effectively discharge their individual and collective responsibilities in accordance with the duties in the Children Act 2004 to safeguard children and young people and to co-operate.
- Improve the educational outcomes for looked after children by: regularly monitoring their attendance and exclusions; enhancing personal education plans; coordinating more effectively work with primary schools to support early intervention and improved training for foster carers, social workers and care workers on educational issues.

For action over the next six months:

- Ensure that young people between 16 and 18 have access to mental health services suitable to their needs by improving transition arrangements from CAMHS to adult services.
- Increase the number of children's nurses in accident and emergency at Rochdale Infirmary.
- Reduce bullying and harassment by children and young people by improving the level of knowledge and understanding about what constitutes a racist incident and ensuring that all racist incidents in schools are recorded and reported.

For action in the longer term:

- Increase access to mental health services outside of normal working hours.
- Improve services to children and young people with mental health problems who need to stay in hospital by providing better local accessible services staffed by suitably experienced professionals.

- Develop the range of educational provision available for young people aged 14 and over and increase their participation in work based learning.