

# Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council

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**Inspection dates** 18 – 29 January 2010

**Reporting inspector** Robert Hackeson HMI

**Age group:** All

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## About this inspection

1. The purpose of the inspection is to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services in the local area towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. The inspection team consisted of four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), one Additional Inspector and one inspector from the Care Quality Commission. The inspection was carried out under the Children Act 2004.
2. The evidence evaluated by inspectors included:
  - discussions with children and young people receiving services, frontline managers, senior officers including the Director of Children's Services and the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, elected members and a range of community representatives;
  - analysing and evaluating reports from a variety of sources including a review of the Children and Young People's Plan, performance data, information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision and the evaluations of three serious case reviews undertaken by Ofsted in accordance with 'Working Together To Safeguard Children', 2006;
  - a review of 22 case files for children and young people with a range of need. This provided a view of services provided over time and the quality of reporting, recording and decision making undertaken;
  - the outcomes of the most recent annual unannounced inspection of local authority contact, assessment and referral centres undertaken in July 2009.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

3. All inspection judgements are made using the following four point scale.

Outstanding (Grade 1)	A service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good (Grade 2)	A service that exceeds minimum requirements
Adequate (Grade 3)	A service that only meets minimum requirements
Inadequate (Grade 4)	A service that does not meet minimum requirements

## Service information

4. Calderdale is situated in West Yorkshire, between Manchester and Leeds with the adjacent M62 providing good road links across the region. Calderdale is one of the smaller metropolitan districts in terms of population (201,841: 2008 mid-year estimate) but one of the larger in terms of size: the district covers an area of 363 sq km, stretching 28 km from east to west and 20 km north to south. The district has a mixed urban and rural character with areas of outstanding landscape beauty, a variety of urban centres and a rich heritage in architecture and public buildings. Over 80% of the district is rural in character. Population density is around half of the West Yorkshire average and almost half of all residents live in Halifax. The borough was created in 1974, bringing together the towns of Brighouse, Elland, Halifax, Hebden Bridge, Sowerby Bridge and Todmorden, as well as the surrounding villages of the South Pennine uplands.

5. There are an estimated 45,500 children and young people in Calderdale representing 22.5% of the overall population. Approximately 85% of children and young people are White British. While two thirds of children and young people from black or minority ethnic groups are Pakistani, smaller numbers of Eastern Europeans, Gypsy Roma, and asylum seekers are also represented.

6. Using the Analysis of 2007 Indices of Deprivation, the scale and distribution of education, training and skills related deprivation are unchanged since the 2004 indices, with 14 Lower Level Super Output Areas (LSOAs) being within the most deprived 10% nationally. The proportion of children in income deprived households has reduced slightly since 2004. The highest levels of multiple deprivation are concentrated in west and north Halifax.

7. A number of strategic partnerships exist in Calderdale including the Calderdale Children's Trust Board and the Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board. The Children's Trust Board representation includes members of the Children and Young People's Services Directorate Leadership Team, Lead Member for Children's Services, Learning and Skills Council, representatives from third sector organisations, Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust, NHS Calderdale Primary Care Trust, Community Safety (West Yorkshire Police), Local Safeguarding Children Board, primary and secondary headteacher representatives, Pennine Housing and West Yorkshire Fire Service. Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board is independently chaired and brings together the main organisations working with children, young people and families in Calderdale to deliver safeguarding services.

8. Children's care services are delivered through three locality assessment and safeguarding teams, a disabled children's team, two initial response teams, three looked after children teams, three residential units and one short break residential unit, emergency duty team, adoption team, fostering team and a looked after and adopted children's health team. As at 31 December 2009 there were 264 looked after children.

9. The local authority directly provides 189 approved foster care placements and commissions 37 placements from independent fostering agencies, as at 31 March 2009. The local authority or independent fostering agency provides 26 placements for short breaks or respite (including Family Link placements) for disabled and non-disabled children as at 31 March 2009.

10. There are 16 children's centres in Calderdale, including eight Phase I and eight Phase II centres. Phase III will see further development and expansion of children's centre services. Central Halifax has the highest number of children's centres with a total of six, followed by five in Halifax North and East, three in Lower Valley and two in the Upper Valley service area.

11. Calderdale has 84 infant, junior or primary schools, 14 secondary schools, one special secondary school and two special primary schools with 34,576 children and young people on roll as shown by the October 2009 School Census. In addition, there is one pupil referral unit in Calderdale which provides 72 places for pupils aged 10 to 16.

12. Commissioning and planning of national health services are carried out by the Primary Care Trust. Acute hospital services are provided by Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust with the main site being at the Calderdale Royal Hospital. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are commissioned by NHS Calderdale and provided by the Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust with the Early Intervention in Psychosis service for people aged 14-35 being commissioned from the South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

## The inspection outcomes: Safeguarding services

### Overall effectiveness

### Grade 4 (Inadequate)

13. The overall effectiveness of services in Calderdale to ensure that children and young people are safe is inadequate. While there are many areas of adequate practice and some good practice across partner agencies such as health, education and the voluntary sector, serious deficiencies in the social care field work teams inhibit safe practice.

14. Senior management in the local authority has been ineffective in ensuring that quality assurance and performance management arrangements in the fieldwork teams secure safe practice. Management support for staff to ensure compliance with policies, procedures and guidance is inconsistent and line managers do not provide sufficiently robust scrutiny of, or challenge to, the quality of child protection and children in need assessments and plans.

15. The local authority is aware of its strengths and weaknesses, but the pace of change in response to the audits it has commissioned and to the findings of the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in July 2009 has been slow.

16. Following a recent, externally commissioned diagnostic report on the state of the local authority's social work teams, the Director of Children's Services has taken swift action to tackle some very serious concerns, for example all children with a child protection plan are now allocated to a qualified social worker. However, at the time of this inspection there was clear evidence of poor practice and its consequences on safeguarding outcomes for children.

### Capacity for improvement

### Grade 3 (Adequate)

17. The local authority now faces a considerable challenge in changing the culture and practice within some areas of children's social care to ensure safeguarding services are delivered securely. This is fully understood by senior officers and elected members with responsibility for children's services.

18. A culture of openness and willingness to accept external challenge has emerged led by the chief executive. The recently appointed Director of Children's Services has received his full support in drawing up a recovery plan to respond to the recent diagnostic report, previous audits and the findings of this inspection. This includes a significant shift of resources from other parts of the directorate to support the fieldwork teams and corporate support to the directorate to give advice on, for example, information and communication technology, performance management, and business process re-engineering. The local authority has established an improvement board with appropriate membership from local partners and others from outside the area to provide relevant expertise. This work, which was underway before the current

inspection began, demonstrates that the local authority understands the problems and is now taking the remedial action required with the right level of urgency.

19. There is a track record of improvement across the wider safeguarding agenda under the leadership of the Children's Trust and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. For example, there is a strong culture of safeguarding and child protection among health agencies supported by effective supervision and audits of practice.

## **Areas for improvement**

20. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for safeguarding children and young people in Calderdale, the local authority and its partners should take the following action:

### **Immediately:**

- Introduce robust quality assurance systems to ensure social workers and team managers consistently follow guidance, policies and procedures.
- Arrange for regular reporting to elected members, the Children's Trust, and Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board on the quality of case work by social care teams and partner agencies.
- Risk assess and process all unallocated work in the initial response team.
- Ensure the initial response team provides a responsive service to children and families and partner agencies by maintaining a consistent threshold for intervention and completing good quality and timely assessments.
- Ensure children with child protection plans are visited and seen at least in line with the minimum standard of frequency.
- Ensure that child protection core group meetings are convened with sufficient frequency to facilitate joint working to deliver the child or young person's protection plan in a timely manner.

### **Within three months:**

- Improve the integrated children's system (ICS) so that it is fit for purpose to facilitate inputting and reading by staff, to produce copies of assessments and plans that are suitable to share with service users, and management information that enables operational managers to track progress of case work.



- Ensure the independent reviewing service is effective in providing robust and systematic challenge to practitioners and in reporting on aspects of the service requiring intervention.
- Review all child protection cases where a plan has been in place for more than 12 months to establish if the plan is still appropriate.

## Outcomes for children and young people

### **The effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people are safe. Grade 4 (Inadequate)**

21. The effectiveness of services in Calderdale to ensure that children and young people are safe is inadequate because of significant weaknesses in child protection arrangements. Wider safeguarding arrangements in universal services and social care settings are generally adequate or better. Recent Ofsted inspections of schools and regulated social care have judged safeguarding arrangements to be good in most cases.

22. Safeguarding in Calderdale is undermined by significant weaknesses in the social care fieldwork teams. Despite a clear understanding in the local authority of the weaknesses in the initial response team (IRT) at the time of the unannounced inspection of July 2009, there is little evidence of improvement since then. This inspection revealed examples of poor case work practice, failures to respond to child protection, drift in the implementation of plans, children being left at risk of significant harm over many years, and unallocated work. Some children have spent too many years of their childhood in unacceptable situations; the quality of their childhood has not been good enough and their life chances have significantly deteriorated due to the lack of earlier intervention.

23. In a random sample of ten case files where children were the subject of a child protection plan, four were referred to senior management by inspectors because of the lack of identification of risk factors or lack of response. In addition, during the inspection of the IRT, two further cases were identified as having grounds for concern and were raised with senior managers. Senior managers agreed with the weaknesses identified in all the cases referred to them and took appropriate action to deal with these specific cases. However, it is of significant concern that the local authority had previously been unaware of the concerns identified and this demonstrates the lack of an effective performance management framework, regular file auditing or practice scrutiny, and a resulting lack of compliance.

24. There has been adequate uptake of the common assessment framework (CAF) in Calderdale with over 1,200 having been completed since 2006. On average 20-25 new CAFs are completed each month and comparative information indicates this is in line with the average for local authorities in the region. There has been good take-up by health professionals and by schools, and a multi-agency specialist team is working to promote the use of CAF across

the full range of partner agencies. Surveys conducted demonstrate that this approach is appreciated by those families involved, and there are many examples from individual case studies which show positive impact. However, no overall evaluation of the outcomes of CAF has been undertaken to date.

25. Families benefit from a wide range of locality-based early intervention and family support services provided by a wide spectrum of agencies, including those in the voluntary and community sector. For example, parents who are supported by Sure Start and Family First workers in the Innovations Children's Centre area were full of praise for the workers who are helping to build their self-esteem and support their children's development. These services are improving outcomes for children and families.

26. The partnership has identified domestic violence as a significant issue in the area with a sizeable proportion of victims and perpetrators being under the age of 18. Good joint working arrangements are in place to safeguard children and young people living in families where domestic violence is an issue. Multi-agency services including the pregnancy liaison assessment group and the newly established Eden Team which provides support and refuge for people fleeing domestic violence are having a positive impact. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) includes, as one of its priorities, a reduction in the number of children and young people who are affected by violence in the home, but targets have not been determined nor baseline information gathered. A serious failing was discovered during this inspection in the way that the local authority processes information received from the police about domestic abuse incidents in cases already allocated to social workers. Immediate action has been taken to rectify this.

27. There is effective work to reduce teenage conceptions, with a 30% reduction in under 18 conception rates from the baseline. A robust teenage pregnancy strategy is in place, which includes sex education support for young parents to enable them to make informed choices about future pregnancies, while the 'No Worries' multi-agency project delivers health information and advice to young people in some schools. The strategy promotes safeguarding of children and young people and is a key priority in the CYPP. All agencies have shown continued commitment in achieving success.

28. The CYPP has a priority for improving safety for children and young people in and around their local areas and plans are in place to improve matters. Action to reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents has been good and effective. In the year 2008 to 2009 there were no such incidents.

29. The Local Safeguarding Children Board has led on work to identify and protect children at risk of sexual exploitation and there is a good multi-agency approach to the issue. The appointment of the specialist child sexual exploitation co-ordinator and the development of a strategy have increased the

number of children identified and protected through 'team around the child' conferences and care plans.

**The effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people feel safe. Grade 3 (Adequate)**

30. Surveys undertaken indicate that most children and young people feel safe and know where to access help and advice if they need it. Children and young people who spoke to inspectors indicated that they feel very safe in and around Calderdale. They said that they have been made well aware of safety in the home, road safety, and risks to their safety through drugs, sexual exploitation and alcohol abuse. They commented they were well trained in e-safety and the risks posed by the internet. Some expressed concerns about street lighting and thought more use of CCTV cameras would improve safety. The local authority and partners take account of the views of young people on a wide range of safeguarding issues. A recent example is a challenging presentation by young gay and lesbian people to the local authority scrutiny panel which raised awareness of the particular risks and difficulties faced by this group.

**The quality of provision Grade 4 (Inadequate)**

31. Service responsiveness is inadequate. Thresholds for access to services for children in need are not consistently applied by the children's social care service and are not understood or shared by partners. Access to the initial response team is difficult; partners report particular difficulties in making contact and that they do not always receive a clear response about the outcome of their referral or contact. Referrals, including some with child protection concerns, are not always promptly responded to and there are significant delays for some children. At the time of the inspection, 35 cases in IRT were unallocated and awaiting assessment, some dating back three months to October 2009.

32. The management of complaints is poor. Complaints are not dealt with promptly and outcomes are not systematically used to inform development of the service. The number of complaints about child protection conferences is reported to be low, but the Local Safeguarding Children Board has not received an annual report on complaints as required to enable them to monitor and improve the service. Allegations against staff are managed effectively by the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has delivered awareness-raising training, advice and assistance.

33. Assessment and direct work with children and families are inadequate. The number of initial assessments undertaken is very low with Calderdale having one of the lowest rates of initial assessments of all local authorities in England. These are generally of poor quality and in the year to 31 March 2009 only 53% of initial assessments were completed within statutory timescales compared with an England average of 72%. Data for the first three-quarters of 2009/2010 indicate that performance on this measure has declined. The number of core assessments undertaken is also much lower than in similar local

authorities. In the year to 31 March 2009, only 54% were completed within the timescale compared with an England average of 78%. The quality of core assessments is inconsistent. Many of the assessments seen by inspectors fail to take into account previous events, knowledge of concerns, long term familial resistance, and other risk factors. The views of children and their families are frequently absent from records. Core assessments completed by the children with disability service are of a better quality. However, there is a backlog of cases awaiting assessment with the result that core assessments are routinely completed outside the statutory timescale. While the assessments remain uncompleted, there is the potential that these children and their families are not receiving the services they need.

34. The case files sampled by inspectors revealed that some cases of children with child protection plans had been unallocated for varying periods of time. These were dealt with by the duty officer but there was little evidence of regular monitoring or of work with the family to progress the child protection plan. Visits to see the child and core group meetings did not meet the minimum frequency requirements set by the service.

35. Case planning, reviewing and recording are inadequate. The quality of child protection plans is generally poor. They do not contain the outcomes to be achieved and are insufficiently clear as to the actions to be taken. There is little evidence that they are rigorously monitored by the core group. The child protection plan produced by the electronic recording system is not conducive to effective case planning and is in a format which is unsuitable to share with families. It is not evident from the records that child protection plans and minutes from child protection meetings are given to parents or carers or that reports are fully shared with them prior to meetings. Child protection reviews vary in quality, some clearly identifying risk and capturing the views of children and their carers, but others focusing on process rather than actions that inform the child protection plan. The quality assurance role of independent reviewing officers (IROs) is not well developed. Almost all reviews are held within the required timescale but the production and distribution of minutes take too long to contribute effectively to the management of the case.

36. Case recording is a serious weakness, partly due to the electronic recording system but also resulting from a lack of compliance with recording standards. Inspectors saw several examples of recording being backdated during the inspection. These events, some of which occurred many months ago, included home visits, supervision notes and assessments. The individual records of children are largely indistinguishable from those of their siblings. Information is copied across all files and some children do not receive sufficient attention. There is no evidence that managers regularly scrutinise records to assure the quality and timeliness of recording.

## **Leadership and management**                      **Grade 4 (Inadequate)**

37. The leadership and management of safeguarding services for children and young people are inadequate overall. Ambition and prioritisation are adequate. The CYPP 2008-11 identifies safeguarding as a key priority and contains priorities which are appropriate and address the majority of issues where development would be likely to improve outcomes for young people. Priorities have been refreshed for 2009-10 and have been based on an accurate audit of local need.

38. Evaluation including performance management, quality assurance and workforce development are inadequate. The local authority has a good understanding of many of the weaknesses in its fieldwork service derived from a number of external and internal audits undertaken during the past year. Despite this, there has been little progress towards improvement. At the time of the unannounced inspection in July 2009, the local authority was aware of deficiencies in its IRT and had an improvement plan in place, but there is little evidence of any sustained improvement resulting. The Director of Children's Services, who was appointed in August 2009, commissioned a diagnostic review of the fieldwork service which has aided further understanding of the extent and range of the weaknesses. There is an increasing understanding at corporate and elected member level of the problems faced and a clear determination to make improvements.

39. The role of the scrutiny panel is adequate. The panel is well chaired by a suitably experienced elected member. However, the experience of co-opted members is weighted towards education rather than children's social care, which is a weakness. The Children's Trust has successfully engaged partners from the statutory and voluntary sector in joint strategic planning for the area. The Local Safeguarding Children Board provides adequate leadership. The membership does not include representatives from the voluntary and community sector or schools. Performance management is a key weakness and means the Local Safeguarding Children Board cannot demonstrate its impact on safeguarding. However, the lessons learned from three serious case reviews have been implemented effectively and have helped partner agencies to engage in the wider safeguarding agenda.

40. Performance management systems in the social care service are inadequate. There is no robust quality assurance framework and there is a lack of compliance with procedures and instructions. The local authority recognises that the electronic recording system currently does not meet the functional requirements of children's service core business. It does not produce the right management information to support operational staff in their day to day role or to enable more senior managers to have an oversight of performance. Information about the number of children with a child protection plan is inaccurate. Some children, whose child protection plan is no longer in place, continue to appear on the report of cases with current plans. At the time of the inspection the local authority identified that this has applied in five cases. The

computer system does not support effective case recording and currently has a serious detrimental impact on the ability of social workers and managers to deliver their work to the right standard. The local authority acknowledges that performance management in children's services is an area of significant weakness and is already taking robust action to improve the position drawing on corporate and external advice and support.

41. The local authority has a supervision policy for staff in children's services, but compliance is not consistent. Supervision is not used systematically to monitor social work practice and record keeping, although some practitioners say that it is becoming more structured and challenging. Access to informal supervision is good and social workers feel supported by their managers. There are some well qualified and skilful practitioners and managers in the service, but some fieldwork staff and team managers are insufficiently skilled to deliver the service. The service's recent assimilation process has helped to identify where skills need to be improved. Health partner agencies have effective arrangements for staff supervision and good performance management systems.

42. A robust workforce development strategy has provided improved intelligence on the workforce profile and a clear analysis of learning needs. There is now a comprehensive range of training available designed to equip staff with the skills needed in children's services now and into the future. Agencies work closely with the Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure that staff receive safeguarding training relevant to their role. Recent safeguarding training provided to staff in schools has contributed to good outcomes for safeguarding in school inspections. All health staff interviewed reported good access to a range of safeguarding and child protection training from both internal safeguarding units and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Safe recruiting is in place and the local authority human resources systems are now consistent across all children's services.

43. User engagement is adequate overall. There is evidence of regular consultation with a wide range of users of services including the Disabled Youth Forum; Gay and Lesbian Youth in Calderdale; Voice4U and the Parents and Carers Council. Reports of consultations show detailed appraisals of users' views. Parents from the Parents and Carers Council report significant improvements in consultation and in their involvement in service developments, with services changing as a result.

44. There is good strategic partnership working led by the Children's Trust and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. There are many examples of strong multi-agency partnership working to help families in times of need, often co-ordinated through one of the children's centres. Good partnerships with local health services have enabled parents to attend ante-natal clinics, baby massage sessions and counselling services in children's centres. However, there are examples where a lack of co-operation by agencies with the social work teams, or poor co-ordination of services have failed to respond to children's needs in a

timely way. A recent reconfiguration of CAMHS is leading to improved access and service delivery. Waiting times have reduced to around eight weeks for tier 2 and tier 3 interventions and partners report more flexible access and improved communication. For example, one hour consultations with the CAMHS team, either at a meeting or by telephone, enable practitioners to receive expert advice quickly.

45. Outcomes for, and leadership on, equality and diversity are good. The local authority has achieved the Level 3 Local Government Equalities Standard, and 'narrowing the gap' is a key priority in the CYPP. Equality impact assessments are embedded across services and detailed action plans are in place to improve areas identified for further focus. Senior managers and elected members receive regular progress reports. Inspection fieldwork identified many examples of good initiatives and projects across the partnership which are making a difference to individual children and groups. These include the StepUP Calderdale event, consultation with black and minority ethnic parents of children with disabilities, and consultation with Gay and Lesbian Youth in Calderdale. The children's health unit at the Acute Trust is taking part in the 'Big Word' project to support a comprehensive language and interpreter service. Good work has been done to promote community cohesion, including work with schools and young people to tackle the potential dangers of extremism.

46. The achievement of value for money is inadequate as the overall effectiveness of the safeguarding service is inadequate. The procurement of a new ICS system which ten months after its introduction does not yet meet some basic requirements of the users, represents poor value for money. Commissioning arrangements through the Children's Trust are adequate. Aligned budgets for certain agreed priorities are delivering improving outcomes for children and young people, for example, in substance misuse services. However, some commissioning arrangements are under-developed, such as work with partners across the region to achieve better procurement and wider choice. There are examples where services demonstrate good value for money, for example, children's centres work alongside partners from a range of agencies to provide extra support to vulnerable families through times of difficulty.

## The inspection outcomes: services for looked after children

### Overall effectiveness

**Grade 3 (Adequate)**

47. The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children is adequate. Effective partnerships and joint working arrangements support outcomes which are at least adequate; health and education outcomes for looked after children are good compared with other local authorities. Elected members and senior managers are determined to improve these outcomes and to narrow the gap between this group and the wider population of children and young people.

48. Regulated social care services for looked after children are at least adequate and good partnership working is contributing to improved outcomes for these children. The main weaknesses in services are poor compliance in the social care service, for example the poor quality of planning, reviewing and recording, and poor performance management across the local authority's children's services. Self-evaluation of progress is realistic.

### Capacity for improvement

**Grade 3 (Adequate)**

49. Capacity for improvement is adequate. Health outcomes for looked after children are good and improving and education outcomes are good. The local authority and partners are putting in place improved performance management systems which will enable them to track progress better particularly in relation to the education of looked after children. The Director of Children's Services has drawn up a good outline recovery plan to respond to the recent diagnostic report, and other audits, and the findings of this inspection. The local authority has established an improvement board with membership from local partners and others from outside the area to provide relevant expertise.

### Areas for improvement

50. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for looked after children and care leavers in Calderdale, the local authority and its partners should take the following action:

#### **Immediately:**

- Ensure all looked after children have an allocated qualified social worker and that transfers between teams are seamless and do not result in cases becoming unallocated.
- Introduce robust quality assurance systems to improve the quality of practice, supervision and recording.
- Ensure all care plans accurately record risk and protective factors.



- Develop the corporate parenting role within the local authority, particularly among elected members, and with partners in the Children's Trust.

#### **Within three months:**

- Improve the consistency of the quality of core assessments of looked after children.
- Ensure the independent reviewing service is effective in providing robust and systematic challenge to practitioners and in reporting on aspects of the service requiring intervention.
- Improve the quality of reporting on the progress of looked after children to the Children's Trust and the corporate parenting panel to ensure that the impact of services on all five every child matters outcomes is thoroughly considered by leaders and senior officers.

### **Outcomes for children and young people**

51. Services to promote good health among looked after children are good and are continuing to improve. Improved outcomes have been achieved by collaborative inter-agency work and positive engagement with children and young people. The looked after children health team with a designated doctor, designated nurse and named nurse ensures that immunisations and good quality health and dental assessments are nearly all completed within statutory timescales. The latest figures show over 90% of initial health assessments have been completed within the 28-day timescale. There are sometimes delays in receiving referrals from the social work teams leading in turn to delays in completing the initial health assessments. These delays are usually due to the looked after child not being allocated to a social worker. All looked after children who have had either an initial or annual health assessment, have health plans in place. The quality of health assessments is regularly audited by the health team to ensure all assessments meet statutory requirements.

52. Looked after children receive good support for emotional and mental health needs from the Looked After and Adopted Children's Health Team (LAACH). There is no waiting list for access to this service. Transition into adult services is recognised as an area for improvement and work is ongoing to address this. The LAACH team provides good training and individual support to foster carers to help meet the health needs of children in their placements. Foster carers report very positively on the accessibility and responsiveness of the team. There are good examples of interventions with looked after children with complex health needs. Good evaluation ensures that services are clear as to what is working well and what needs to improve. For example, the completion of health assessments for out of authority placements has been recognised as a gap in the service and actions are now in place to tackle this.

53. Children and young people in care are adequately safeguarded overall. All of the most recent inspections of the local authority's four children's homes and its fostering and adoption services judge safeguarding arrangements to be good. There is effective training and support to ensure that those who care for looked after children can safeguard them. Effective engagement of families in children's centres and the development of an outreach team have increased support to families where children are at risk of entering the care system.

54. The survey of looked after children by the National Children's Rights Director found that looked after children reported positively on feeling safe. Most reported having more than one person they would go to if they were being harmed. However, views from some young people who spoke to inspectors are that frequent changes of social workers reduce their confidence to share their concerns with them. In addition, some children told inspectors they did not see their social worker often. Nearly all looked after children currently have an allocated qualified social worker. However, transfers between three teams contribute to changes of social worker and can result in a case becoming unallocated for a while; this makes it more difficult for children and families to form a good working relationship with the social worker. All looked after children and care leavers who spoke to inspectors commented positively that they feel safe.

55. The quality of care plans is variable. While some seen by inspectors are clear and thorough, others lack detail or have important information missing. Decision making in care planning is not always clear. This problem is compounded by the poor quality of record keeping. There is good multi-agency involvement in looked after children's reviews, which are generally held within the statutory timescales, but the quality of reviews is inconsistent. Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) do not provide sufficient challenge. IROs do not always have the time to meet the young person before their review and some children consider they are not listened to and find the meetings daunting. Joint protocols to identify and track children and young people who go missing from care are adequate. There are examples of good work to promote placement stability, such as careful matching of foster carers and adopters to meet the needs of children and young people. However, for some groups placement choice is limited and has led to the use of unsuitable placements.

56. The impact of services on enabling looked after children and young people to enjoy and achieve is good. Strong partnership working between schools and particularly the looked after children education service (LACE), is making a positive difference to educational outcomes. Although the trend of improvement in looked after children's educational attainment dipped in English at Key Stage 2 and in the proportion of 16 year olds attaining five or more GCSEs in 2009, outcomes still remain higher than the local and national averages for similar groups of young people. Looked after children and care leavers spoke positively about the support provided to them by LACE and schools also highly regard the challenge and support provided. The comment of one headteacher summed up the views of many: 'LACE is a shining light, a beacon'.

57. School improvement partners' work with schools has been refined to ensure regular, rigorous challenge, discussion and monitoring of the progress of individual looked after children. However, this is a recent focus on looked after children as a discrete group.

58. Until recently, management information systems have been insufficient to enable the Children's Trust, elected members, or the departmental leadership team to have regular and strategic oversight of the progress and achievements of the 'whole school' of looked after children or to evaluate the full impact of partnership working. LACE and school improvement partners have now developed a more joined up approach. They regularly share information in order to measure progress from children's entry into school and from the time they enter the care system. This approach will enable managers to evaluate the impact of the partnership's work on looked after children's progress and achievements, and use the information to provide more timely interventions when children are at risk of under-achieving.

59. Inspectors agree with the service's self-evaluation that there have been significant weaknesses in the use and quality of personal education plans. Although plans have generally been reviewed regularly, they have not always been used to drive improvements through the setting of clear targets that are based on pupils' prior learning or to challenge them to improve further. New procedures are in place that add rigour and value to the process, but it is too early to see the impact of this work.

60. Good targeted actions across the partnership are helping to ensure that looked after children attend school regularly and are in appropriate placements. LACE work rigorously to ensure children attend schools that meet their needs and that they experience successful transitions. One young person who spoke to inspectors said: 'LACE take you to a school to see whether the school is right for you not whether you are right for the school.' As a result of good partnership working with schools, attendance rates are generally higher than for similar children and young people nationally; fixed term exclusion rates are low and permanent exclusions virtually non-existent. There have been no exclusions of looked after children from school during the past 12 months.

61. Opportunities for looked after children and young people to make a positive contribution are adequate. There is evidence of a variety of ways that the views of looked after children have been sought. The Children in Care Council is well established and used as an effective forum to seek views. There have been a number of consultations with specific groups of looked after children, for example, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Although commendable in terms of seeking their views, it is not always clear from evaluations what happens as a result. All children have access to an independent advocacy service, and those spoken to during the inspection indicated that there was always someone to whom they could turn to in times of need. However, some looked after children said the extent to which their views are listened to and acted upon is variable. Some older looked after young

people spoke strongly about the stigmatisation of being referred to as looked after children.

62. Good partnership working with LACE, leisure, integrated youth, library and voluntary sector, and extended schools services have successfully widened the participation of looked after children in out of school educational, leisure and cultural events. This is also the case for looked after children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A Parents and Carers Council representative commented positively on the increased number of opportunities for children to take part in activities during the summer, at evenings and weekends. There is evidence of some effective joint working with the youth offending team and partners to reduce criminal and inappropriate behaviours through targeted activities and programmes, including their participation in restorative justice.

63. The impact of partnership working to support and improve care leavers economic well-being is adequate. The proportion of care leavers in education, training and employment is improving and in 2009 is higher than that found for comparable authorities and nationally. The independently contracted Pathways scheme provides good support to enable care leavers who access the service to achieve independence and support them to reach their full potential. However, insufficient capacity within the service means that not all care leavers can access this support. Care leavers who talked to inspectors spoke powerfully about how they valued the encouragement, support and advice provided by their key workers. They also spoke highly of the work of the Connexions worker in helping them into education, employment and training, including inspiring some of them to go to university. They said they felt well supported in their transition to independent living accommodation and wished that others could benefit from the support they had received. Overall, there is an adequate range of housing provision for care leavers, including supported lodgings, private tenancies and local authority housing.

64. Transitions into adult services for young people leaving care with a special educational need and/or disability are now adequate. Transitions are improving through more timely and effective working between adult services, the children with disability team, Parents and Carers Council, LACE and young people themselves. For example, following consultation with three young people with special educational needs, services worked together to provide a purpose-built house to support their transition into independence.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 3 (Adequate)**

65. Service responsiveness is adequate. Family support services and the outreach team work effectively to prevent the need for children to become looked after. There is a good service to provide advocacy for young people who are unhappy with aspects of their care. Most looked after children and care leavers are aware of how to complain and they are supported by the children's rights worker who visits children in placements outside the borough and makes

contact with all children newly admitted to care. The service provides appropriate resources to ensure that unaccompanied asylum children are supported to raise their concerns.

66. Assessment and direct work with children are adequate. The quality of assessments is variable. Some assessments seen by inspectors collect and analyse information fully and provide a clear summary of the child's needs. In other cases, the views of children and families are not always adequately recorded and some looked after children have not received a core assessment. Managers confirm that there is now a clear expectation for a core assessment to be done in all cases where a child may become looked after. There is good partnership working by social workers, carers, and other agencies to meet children's needs. For example, LAACH provides excellent counselling and support to some children leading to better emotional well being and more stable placements. The adoption service has recognised that there are gaps in the quality of direct work with children, particularly life story work, and plans are now in place to appoint specific workers to complete all outstanding work.

67. Arrangements for planning, case review and recording are inadequate. There are inconsistencies in the quality of care plans and placement agreements with some providing only basic information for carers. Decision making is evident on most files seen, although the quality is limited. For example, supervision notes are very brief. Care plans for children are not all regularly updated so it is not always clear what the current plan is. Pathway plans for children leaving care are clearly written. Performance management information indicates that almost all reviews take place within required timescales. However, the record of the review cannot always be found on the child's file and where records exist, these are not sufficiently detailed. The local authority's template is not routinely used to record reviews. In some cases children's views are not clearly recorded. The challenge to planning and support to children by the IROs is not evidenced.

68. There is clear evidence from what children said to the inspectors and their contribution through the review booklet that they are engaged in their reviews and they value the consistency of the independent reviewing officer in contrast to the many changes of social worker. However, reviewing officers do not always have the time to meet with the child before their review.

69. Looked after children social care paper files are generally untidy and dual use of electronic and paper systems is confusing, making it difficult to gain a clear picture of the background of children and plans for their future.

70. Recording practice is better in the looked after children's team than in the other teams inspected, with evidence of better management oversight. Good examples were seen of up to date records with clear analysis supporting decision making.

**Leadership and management****Grade 3 (Adequate)**

71. Leadership and management of services for looked after children are adequate. Partners are committed to working together to improve outcomes for them and there have been some notable successes. For example, the attainment of looked after young children at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. The priorities and ambitions for looked after children are adequately expressed as part of the narrowing the gap priority within the Children and Young People's Plan, but are mainly limited to the key performance targets at Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4 and for care leavers at the age of 19. This does not reflect the wealth of partnership working across the area which is making a positive difference to young people's lives. Nevertheless, achievements of looked after children are celebrated through a high profile annual celebration event that is attended by councillors and senior officers of the authority.

72. Performance management, quality assurance and evaluation arrangements for looked after children are inadequate overall with insufficient attention at strategic or managerial levels to monitoring and evaluating the impact of services on outcomes for children and young people. There has been a lack of systematic quality assurance and auditing procedures to improve practice within children's social care and, as a result, poor practice is not always identified or tackled and good practice is not shared or built upon.

73. The local authority has been slow to develop the corporate parenting role. The current corporate parenting support group is not sufficiently well developed to hold the Children's Trust to account for the outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. A multi-agency looked after panel has recently been developed. Its terms of reference include the aim to make a positive difference to the lives and outcomes of looked after children and care leavers. However, it does not identify how the group will achieve their aims or how they will be accountable to the Children's Trust.

74. Although looked after children's attainment at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 is reported annually, the Children's Trust and corporate parent support group do not receive regular reports on the achievements and progress of all looked after children from their early years of education or entry into the care system. This is because until recently there have been limited mechanisms to gather such information. Consequently, senior leaders have been unable to evaluate fully the impact of actions taken by the partnership on the achievements and progress, as well as the attainment of looked after children. Recent developments in the performance management frameworks and reporting mechanisms are now providing a much more robust approach, but it is too early to see the impact.

75. At service level, there are examples of good self-evaluation. For example, LACE has a very accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses including detailed analysis of looked after children's performance in 2009. This has provided a good focus for improvement and plans have been developed and

implemented to tackle all areas of weakness. However, again it is too early to measure the impact.

76. Aspects of workforce development are good. Foster carers value their training and development and say it supports them and young people to maintain stability of placements. Good training is provided to potential adopters with good management oversight of both services to identify any gaps and this is valued. Schools also value the advice, training, challenge and support provided to designated teachers of looked after children.

77. User engagement is adequate. There are regular meetings and groups for looked after children to make their views known, for example, through the children in care council and for young people in residential accommodation whose views are sought through regular house meetings. Children and young people who spoke to inspectors, however, had mixed views about the extent to which they were consulted and the impact their views had on outcomes. They indicated that they all have their views sought during the twice yearly statutory review process. Some also said their views are sought in respect of foster carers' annual reviews, with some evidence of changes made to services as a result. For example, as a consequence of seeking looked after children's views, the library has been developed to make it much more useful to parents, carers and children. Despite regular requests, some children reported difficulty in obtaining laptops to support their education and leisure; social workers also reported this as a concern.

78. Partnerships are good, with good examples of multi-agency frontline working to improve outcomes for looked after children. Strong partnership working between the looked after children's social work team, looked after children's education service, fostering and adoption services, and looked after children's health teams results in the effective co-ordination of services to looked after children and improved outcomes for them. There is also good inter-agency partnership working across the West Yorkshire authorities to help meet children's social, emotional, education and leisure needs. Evidence from Ofsted regulatory inspections of the fostering service and the children's homes indicates strong partnerships with a range of agencies. For example, in children's homes, young people have access to external support networks, including support from counselling, youth, drug and alcohol advisory services. This is further supported by social and cultural networks which are aimed at making sure that young people's diverse needs are met.

79. The promotion of equality and diversity for looked after children is good. The ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious background of children and young people is taken into account and their needs are generally well met. Interpreters are used appropriately and children and families report they are treated with dignity. There is good joint working with a neighbouring authority to develop services for children from black and minority ethnic communities. In addition, work has taken place to enable children from different backgrounds living together in residential units to understand each others' culture. Good

action is taken to meet the individual needs of looked after children who may have a special educational need and/or disability. For example, local authority contributions to the cost of major adaptations to carers' homes have enabled them to continue to care for children with complex needs and disabilities. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who spoke to inspectors explained with conviction how much they valued the individual support and guidance from individual frontline workers.

80. Value for money is adequate. Although the proportion of looked after children placed out of the area is higher than that found nationally, it is decreasing steadily, with a well argued rationale to ensure successful placement stability for those children who are happy in their existing placements. Looked after children's educational outcomes are at least in line and often better than that found for similar children nationally. Senior managers of the local authority are aware that more needs to be done in terms of the use of resources and in measuring the impact of those resources. The Children's Trust has yet to make effective use of personal educational allowances for looked after children. Some funding has been deployed for small scale projects but the Trust has yet to utilise this funding in the spirit of statutory guidance provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. For example, they have yet to establish local eligibility criteria to enable the funding to be well targeted for those in most need.

81. Well-established systems and partnerships are in place to identify and support the return of children who go missing from care. Effective arrangements are in place to monitor external care placements and an officer appointed into LACE monitors the impact of provision for looked after children placed in out of area maintained and independent special schools. Safeguarding of looked after children in the local authority's fostering, adoption and residential services are all judged as good. Management oversight and monitoring of children placed outside of the local authority contribute to their safeguarding.



## Record of main findings: Calderdale

<b>Safeguarding services</b>	
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Capacity for improvement	Adequate
<b>Outcomes for children and young people</b>	
Children and young people are safe: effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people are safe	Inadequate
Children and young people feel safe: effectiveness of services in helping to ensure that children and young people feel safe	Adequate
<b>Quality of provision</b>	
Service responsiveness including complaints	Inadequate
Assessment and direct work with children and families	Inadequate
Case planning, review and recording	Inadequate
<b>Leadership and management</b>	
Ambition and prioritisation	Adequate
Evaluation, including performance management, quality assurance and workforce development	Inadequate
User engagement	Adequate
Partnerships	Adequate
Equality and diversity	Good
Value for money	Inadequate

<b>Services for looked after children</b>	
Overall effectiveness	Adequate
Capacity for improvement	Adequate
<b>Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers</b>	
Being healthy	Good
Staying safe	Adequate
Enjoying and achieving	Good
Making a positive contribution	Adequate
Economic well-being	Adequate
<b>Quality of provision</b>	
Service responsiveness	Adequate
Assessment and direct work with children	Adequate
Case planning, review and recording	Inadequate
<b>Leadership and management</b>	
Ambition and prioritisation	Adequate
Evaluation, including performance management, quality assurance and workforce development	Inadequate
User engagement	Adequate
Partnerships	Good
Equality and diversity	Good
Value for money	Adequate