



# Joint area review

Calderdale Children's Services Authority Area

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**Better  
education  
and care**

## Review of services for children and young people

Adult Learning Inspectorate  
Audit Commission  
Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)  
Healthcare Commission  
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate  
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary  
HM Inspectorate of Court Administration  
HM Inspectorate of Prisons  
HM Inspectorate of Probation  
Ofsted

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## Introduction

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of 12 inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission, HM Inspectorate of Probation, Adult Learning Inspectorate and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the inspection of children's services*.
2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and its findings are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report. Evidence was also drawn from the Enhanced Youth Inspection and the inspection of the youth offending team (YOT).
3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in the Calderdale area and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well being. Joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being.
4. The review evaluates the collective contribution made to each outcome for children and young people by relevant services in the area. It also judges the contributions made by the council's services overall and, specifically, its education and children's social care services. Particular attention is given to joint action by local services on behalf of those groups of children and young people who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. Two such groups are covered in detail: children and young people who are looked after by the council, and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
5. The review took place in two stages consisting in total of three weeks over a six-week period. The first stage reviewed all existing evidence, including:
  - self-assessment undertaken by local public service providers
  - a survey of children and young people
  - performance data
  - the findings of the contemporaneous inspection of the youth service and of the YOT
  - planning documents
  - information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision

- briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.

6. The second stage comprised of inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in one neighbourhood in north Halifax. It also included gathering evidence on ten key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. Evidence was gathered via discussions with elected members of the local authority and their equivalents in other public agencies, officers from these agencies, service users, and community representatives.

7. The inspectors wish to thank those who contributed to the review, and in particular those who were responsible for the complex task of organising the fieldwork programme.

## Context

8. Calderdale is a metropolitan borough situated in West Yorkshire, between Manchester and Leeds, with the adjacent M62 providing good road links across the region. The population is 193,200 people (2003 mid-year estimate). Over 80 per cent of the district is rural in character, with over half of its residents living in Halifax, the principal town. Calderdale has a relatively static population, of whom 7 per cent are from a minority ethnic background – the majority of these being of Pakistani/Kashmiri origin and living mainly in the central area of Halifax. The age profile of this minority population is young, with 37 per cent being under 16 years of age (compared to 21 per cent of the white population). Small, but significant minority ethnic populations also live in Elland and Todmorden.

9. Average weekly earnings in Calderdale in 2003 were the highest in West Yorkshire, although still six per cent below the national average. Increasingly, the workforce is more mobile, with 31 per cent of residents working outside of the district and 38 per cent of jobs in Calderdale being filled by residents of other areas. Unemployment, at 2.4 per cent, is below the regional and national rates (both 2.8 per cent). However, this masks local variations in some wards where the level of unemployment is as high. For example, in Mixenden and Illingworth wards in north Halifax the council estimates the rate to be 3.4 per cent, and in the Town and Park wards in central Halifax the rate is 5.0 per cent. Unemployment within the minority ethnic population is much higher than within the white population.

10. Calderdale is relatively prosperous when compared to other metropolitan boroughs but has significant areas of deprivation. Calderdale is ranked in the lowest third of authorities in the indices of deprivation. Parts of central and north Halifax are considered to be amongst the most deprived areas in the country. These areas are characterised by incomes below the national average, low levels of employment, and below average education attainment and skills levels. The

proportion of children currently living in over-crowded conditions substantially exceeds the national average, as does the number living in households without central heating.

11. Children and young people in Calderdale are served by a multi-agency Children and Young People's Management Group (CYPMG), which is responsible for strategic and organisational planning under the Pathfinder Children's Trust arrangements and is the main driver for the change for children agenda. Members include the council, the one local primary care trust (PCT), the Calderdale and Huddersfield Acute Trust, the police and probation service, Connexions, the Learning and Skills Council and voluntary organisations. The CYPMG is a member of the family of partnership. A representative of the CYPMG sits on the Calderdale Forward Board. The CYPMG has recently published its *Children and young people's plan for 2005–08* that sets out the ambitions and key priorities for improving outcomes for children in Calderdale.

12. Calderdale metropolitan borough council provides services for children and families through its health and social care and schools and children's services directorates. The local authority is working with the Learning and Skills Council, Calderdale college, training providers and schools to implement the 14–19 strategy. Children's Trust status was awarded in September 2003.

13. Since December 2004 the council has been in the process of establishing structural options for integrated children's services, and in April 2005 appointed a director of children's services (designate) to lead the change agenda. Transfer of the legal functions of the director of social services and the chief education officer will take place in December 2005. Plans to implement the new structure have been in place for some time. A shadow senior management team has been in place since September 2004. The new structure will be implemented in early 2006 and will begin with the establishment of a senior management team in January 2006. A lead member with portfolio responsibility for children and young people has been appointed and a Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel is also in place.

## Summary report

### Outcomes for children and young people

14. Outcomes for children and young people in Calderdale are generally adequate. Most children are healthy. From the evidence gathered, safeguarding arrangements are good for children who have a child protection plan but there are unreasonable delays in assessing some children when concerns are raised about them. Educational attainment is good and the majority of children and young people achieve well. Across the authority those from minority ethnic backgrounds, however, do not do as well as the general population. Some target work has been done in schools to improve attainment levels for these children to bring them in line with national averages for the ethnic group. Although a range of activities is provided to engage and consult with children and young people,

their role in decision making is limited. They do not yet have sufficient influence in helping to monitor, plan or deliver the services they receive, and their views are not systematically sought about the quality of these services. Some young people are able to achieve economic well-being but a significant number do not achieve to their full potential after the age of 16. These young people are not prepared well for working life and are less likely to continue in education, employment or training.

## Impact of local services

### Being healthy

**15. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good.** Within Calderdale there is good support for parents and carers to keep their children healthy. Breastfeeding rates are better than the national average and the proportion of mothers starting to breastfeed is the highest in West Yorkshire. Immunisation programmes are effective. Health education programmes are in place to cover a wide range of issues. A significant amount of work is still required, however, to meet national targets for teenage conception. Oral health and access to dentists is also a significant public health issue, and a strategy is being developed to address this. Generally there is good access to general practitioner (GP) practices, local hospitals, and the child and adolescent mental health services. Looked after children are well catered for. The small numbers of children who are placed outside the local area do not always achieve such positive health outcomes. Services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally in place, although supporting children for the move from paediatric care to adult health services requires further development.

### Staying safe

**16. The overall contribution of services to keeping children and young people safe is adequate.** From the evidence available to us, the vast majority of children are safe from harm and the work of the multi-agencies contributes strongly in this area. The number of looked after children is increasing, but the number placed with independent providers outside of the borough's boundaries is decreasing. Not all looked after children are allocated to a qualified social worker. However, arrangements for children on the child protection register are sound and locality based teams are improving the quality of inter-agency working. Adoption plans are dealt with within good timescales. The work of the council, however, in caring for those at risk of harm has serious shortcomings, particularly in how new referrals are responded to. Some frontline staff dealing with the most vulnerable children have not attended child protection training. The inter-agency child protection procedures are not up to date. These issues were not identified as areas of concern in the self-assessment.

## Enjoying and achieving

### 17. **The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people enjoy their education and recreation and achieve well is good.**

Early childcare is good and there is targeted work to make sure that services are inclusive and meet the identified needs of young children. This has been done through an integrated approach that brings together Sure Start local programmes, neighbourhood nurseries, children's centres and the extended schools programme. The majority of children and young people are achieving well, but some told us that they would like some more support. Education achievement for primary-aged children is better than that found elsewhere in the country. At secondary level, attainment is more in line with national averages but better than similar authorities. Some children from Pakistani/ Kashmiri backgrounds achieve less well than others in Calderdale. However, some targeted work in schools is helping to close this attainment gap. Exclusion rates are low and attendance is very good. Attainment levels for looked after children are generally good. No looked after children have been excluded from school for several years. The vast majority of children with learning disabilities are educated within mainstream school, but the cost of those placed out of area is too high. The support for children excluded from school is satisfactory.

## Making a positive contribution

18. **The overall contribution of services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.** Support to help children and young people in developing socially and emotionally is adequate, and the local authority, partner agencies and external providers are improving opportunities for the involvement of children and young people, parents and carers in local service activities. The work with looked after children is effective and well focused on improving their involvement in those areas that most affect their lives. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also well catered for within schools, and the relatively new disabled youth forum is impressive. Behaviour in schools is good and children are encouraged to be active members of the school community. The combined work to reduce anti-social behaviour throughout the area is good. The council has a Public Service Agreement target for increasing young people's participation. There is a range of processes and structures to get the views of young people on service quality. Some early work targeted at involving children and young people in a greater range of decision-making activities has yet to include follow-up action plans and strategies for their increased involvement. The local youth parliament is not yet fully effective.

## Achieving economic well-being

19. **The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate.** Many young people are increasingly well supported to achieve economic well-being, but a significant minority do not reach their full potential after the age of 16. Childcare is generally good and its availability is improving, particularly in the more



disadvantaged areas. Strategies to improve parent's literacy and numeracy levels are being implemented to help improve their employment prospects. Adult and community learning are also focusing on developing skills that will promote employment. The Connexions service provides young people with clear and objective advice and information, but too many follow programmes that are not best suited to their individual needs. The overall achievements of young people at 16+ have recently improved but are below average. The local authority and its partners have been slow in taking action to develop a coherent strategy on equality of access to provision, although rapid progress is now being made. A 14–19 strategy based on local consortia of schools, the local college and work-based learning providers has been established, but there is much to be done if its intent to improve outcomes for young people is to be realised.

## Service management

20. **The management of services for children and young people in Calderdale is adequate.** Partnership working in Calderdale is strong, and ambition for children and young people is high. Future priorities have been set based on an analysis of need and targets, agreed across partners where appropriate. Slow progress has been made in quantifying some areas of need, and this has resulted in some priorities not fully reflecting the diversity within Calderdale. Capacity to deliver is mixed, with shortages of some key staff and services. Demand on the budget for out-of-district placements continues to grow, and strategies to address this are still in development. Senior managers provide good leadership and elected members are fully engaged with the change for children programme. Performance management is good at directorate level, with some weaknesses at unit and team level. This reflects the stage of development of the system, which has been improving year on year. The local area's self-assessment was, on the whole, generally accurate although it did not identify the weaknesses in the procedures for children newly identified as being at risk. Young people are consulted in a variety of ways, and work is now underway to ensure they get feedback on their views and the opportunity to be involved in planning services for the future. The capacity for local services to improve further the outcomes for children and young people is good.

21. The council knows itself well and is keen to demonstrate its ambitions and plans for improving outcomes. The self-assessment submitted by the council and its partners was generally accurate and provided a comprehensive overview of what it was like to be a child or young person in Calderdale. There was, however, a lack of self-criticism in some areas and some weaknesses highlighted in this report were not identified in the self-assessment or drawn to the notice of the review team during fieldwork. More emphasis could have been given to the impact of services on outcomes in some areas.

## Grades

Grades awarded:

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

	Local services overall	Council services	Health Services
Being healthy	3		
Staying safe	2		
Enjoying and achieving	3		
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		3	
The social care services for children		2	
The health service for children			3

## Recommendations

### For immediate action

22. In order to improve outcomes in relation to children's welfare and safety, the council should:

- draw up and implement an action plan to address the shortfalls in the operation of the social care initial response team to ensure that children about whom there are concerns are seen and assessed within expected

timescales. This should include a review of cases closed over the past months and the use of consent letters;

- implement outstanding action plans from both serious case reviews.

### **For action over the next six months**

23. The area Child Protection Committee/Local Safeguarding Board should ensure that staff have access to up to date child protection procedures that reflect current national guidance, and in particular recommendations from the Bichard inquiry and key sections relating to children with disabilities.

24. The PCT should agree an effective commissioning strategy for children and young people's in-patient mental health services.

25. The Calderdale and Huddersfield Acute Trust should ensure that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are prepared and supported for the move from paediatric care to adult health services.

26. The council should allocate cases of looked after children to qualified social workers within three months and make updated reports to senior managers and members on a regular basis.

27. The council, the local Learning and Skills Council, and providers of education and training should establish clear 14–19 progression pathways across the borough and improve access to work-based learning opportunities.

28. The children and young people's service, supported by corporate HR, should maintain a sustained focus on workforce strategy and planning, particularly around issues of recruitment and retention in those areas where there are difficulties.

29. In order to improve the quality of services provided to some of the most vulnerable children and young people, the council and its partners should:

- fully implement the common assessment framework
- develop and implement a prevention strategy.

30. In planning for future delivery of the *Every Child Matters* agenda, the council should:

- bring together development work in progress on a number of different but interlinked strategies into a coherent framework that results in improved commissioning of services for young people and their families
- review the forward plan and resources available to the children and young people's service scrutiny committee to ensure continued effectiveness in the face of a mounting workload.

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31. In order to improve services for children from minority ethnic backgrounds, the council should accelerate the completion of work on needs assessment for children's social care, and redesign services where necessary, involving young people in the process.

**For action in the longer term**

32. The council should improve the effectiveness of performance management systems at team and unit level and introduce rigorous systems of quality assurance and audit, particularly within the initial response team and the youth service.

33. The council and the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) should improve capacity to manage and challenge performance through more effective analysis of data, providing information that is fit for the needs of the recipients.

34. The council and its partners should establish quality assurance procedures for determining and monitoring the appropriateness of 14–19 provision, the objectivity and appropriateness of advice and guidance and the quality of outcomes for young people.

35. The council and its partners should improve the involvement of children and young people in evaluation, monitoring and planning activities at a strategic level.

36. The council and its partners should consult more effectively with the disability youth forum to ensure they play a full part in decision making processes.

## Main report

### Outcomes for children and young people

37. Children and young people are generally healthy. The majority of children and young people who responded to the review questionnaire stated that they felt healthy. Most health indicators support this view. There are, however, variations across the area in relation to some of the indicators, such as low birth weight and infant mortality, which are relatively high among the Pakistani/Kashmiri communities. Smoking reduction programmes are being well targeted and have resulted in some reduction in the numbers of pregnant women who smoke. There is good support in tackling substance misuse among young people. Drug overdose or poisoning is lower than the national average. The teenage pregnancy rate is, however, high for 16–18 year olds and is above the national average. The under 16 rate is among the lowest in the region. Strategies are beginning to have some positive impact but there is still much to do to reduce the overall numbers. Oral health is poor for children under 5 years old. The health of looked after children is supported well but is less effective for those cared for outside of the area.

38. **Children and young people are generally safe**, but children for whom general welfare concerns are identified and who are referred to social care are not adequately supported. Most children feel safe in schools but some remain worried about bullying in school and in their local area. A high proportion of children who are seriously injured or killed as a result of road traffic accidents are killed or seriously injured near their homes. There is good inter-agency action to support children and families who suffer domestic violence. Supporting young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation is a priority for the council and its partners.

39. Children at risk of harm are not having their cases dealt with in a timely manner. In the social care initial response team, there have been unacceptable delays in responding to referrals. Some children are not being seen before cases have been closed. Systems for monitoring the prioritisation of work, recording of decisions and quality assurance are inadequate. Inter-agency child protection procedures are out of date and lessons from a recent serious case review have not been used to influence practice.

40. The number of children on the child protection register is low. These children are well supported through good inter-agency planning and review. All child protection cases are allocated to a qualified social worker and are well supported through effective inter-agency planning and review. There is good performance in relation to adoption. However, a significant number of cases for looked after children are not allocated due to the staff vacancies. Short-term arrangements have been put in place to support these children but these are not adequate in the medium to long term.

**41. The majority of children enjoy their education and achieve well.**

Early childcare is good and there is targeted work to make sure that services are inclusive and meet the identified needs of young children. This approach has been supported by the Sure Start centres and, more recently, extended schools. Education achievement for primary-aged pupils is better than that found elsewhere in the country. At secondary level, attainment is more in line with national averages but better than similar authorities. Children from Pakistani and Kashmiri backgrounds achieve less well than others in Calderdale. However, some targeted work in schools is helping to close this attainment gap and progress is in line with other authorities. Exclusion rates are low and attendance is good.

42. Attainment levels for looked after children are generally good. No looked after children have been excluded from school for several years. The vast majority of children with learning disabilities are educated within mainstream school but the cost of those placed out of area is too high.

**43. Children and young people make an adequate contribution to their communities.**

Although there is some well targeted work to gather the views of children and young people, there is little evidence of effective feedback on the outcomes of such consultation or the impact it has had on the quality of service planning and delivery. Some young people are frustrated by this and feel that their views are not taken seriously by adults. Schools provide mentoring opportunities and support to young people who experience difficulties. There are secure systems to address racism, and young people feel able to report such incidents. Some young people would like more opportunities to meet with different ethnic groups across the borough to improve communication and understanding between them.

44. There is effective joint working to reduce the rates at which children and young people re-offend. The impact of this is that the rate of re-offending is falling at a faster rate than the national picture. This has had a beneficial impact, particularly on looked after young people and those most at risk.

45. There is a high rate of participation by looked after young people in annual reviews and there is good access to advocacy services. A recently formed disability youth forum is providing increased opportunities for disabled young people to discuss service provision that most affect their lives. However, disabled young people are not represented in other forums, and many feel that they are not well included in decision-making and do not have equal access to all of the services available.

**46. Some young people are able to achieve economic well-being, but most do not reach their full potential.**

Too many young people follow education and training programmes that are not suited to their needs and many drop out of courses early. There is a shortage of work-based training and education to employment provision. The proportion of young people aged 16 and over not in education, employment or training is higher than the national

average but lower than found in the region. Vulnerable groups are well supported but there are gaps in provision for young people with complex needs, particularly when they reach the age of 19.

47. Good partnership working between schools, Calderdale college and children's services, such as Sure Start and the Children's Fund, are helping regeneration programmes in north and west-central Halifax and are increasing employment opportunities. There is a good focus on family learning, and some parents are getting effective support to develop their skills to make them more employable.

48. The achievements of young people who are looked after at age 16 are above the national average. There are good progression rates to post-16 education, training and employment. Leaving care support is good, and a higher than average number of looked after young people go into higher education.

## The impact of local public services

### Being healthy

49. **The combined work of all agencies in securing the health of children and young people is good.** Most children and young people (95 per cent) feel healthy but some in areas of deprivation do not. In response, the local authority and health organisations have introduced a framework to ensure that support for the local population is appropriately planned, and that consequently all health needs and inequalities are addressed. Although this initiative is in the early stages of development and its impact not yet measurable, it reflects well on the area's drive to improve health outcomes for all.

50. Parents and carers receive good support to keep their children healthy. There is a good range of support services available, targeted at areas where health indicators are not strong. Sure Start and Children's Centres have been established and are particularly responsive to the needs of parents, carers and young children and are very much appreciated by families. Breastfeeding rates are better than the national average. Calderdale has been awarded the Baby Friendly Initiative. The pre-school child health promotion programme and the assessment framework delivered by health visitors ensures the health needs of children and young people are identified quickly and assessed accurately. Take up rates for immunisation programmes for the area as a whole are in line with, or above, national averages. This is not the case in the most deprived areas of the borough where take up rates are below the national average.

51. Children and young people benefit from a range of multi-agency initiatives aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles. Reducing teenage pregnancy is a priority, as the teenage conception rate for 16–18 year olds is higher than the national average. While the local strategy and its associated delivery plans are being progressed, it was judged to be showing promising prospects for improvement by the government office.

52. The incidence of drug overdose or poisoning is lower than the national average, and considerable success has been achieved by the substance misuse service, which has won national recognition for its work with young people. Youth workers provide good intensive support to address substance misuse and sexual health issues. There is commitment and support for the healthy schools scheme, with 43 per cent of schools achieving level 3, which is higher than the national average. There is good participation in sport. School nursing is providing a good support service to children and young people and is appreciated by headteachers.

53. Most indicators of physical health are broadly in line with national averages. Oral health and access to dentists, however, remain significant public health issues and are a concern to parents. There are high levels of tooth decay, particularly in 5 year-olds, although the picture is better for 12 to 14 year-olds, with rates being closer to the national average. In recognition of this, the Calderdale Primary Care NHS Trust is developing an oral health strategy. There is good access for children and young people to accident and emergency (A&E) facilities, in-patient and day case services and GP practices. The A&E service based in Halifax does not have a registered children's nurse, but there is a children's nurse within A&E services in Huddersfield and a nurse consultant, both of whom work across sites. A training programme is in place to increase the numbers of staff who meet national competencies for nursing children in A&E services.

54. Access to speech and language therapy is good and a home programme is being developed. The rate of low birth weight babies and infant mortality is above the national average but not significantly so. Health outcomes for babies are significantly poorer in the most deprived wards.

55. Children and young people have good access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Waiting lists have reduced for access to specialist services. This has been achieved by the stringent application of referral criteria, with inappropriate referrals being signposted to other agencies. This work has been undertaken by members of a specialist CAMHS team and senior primary mental health workers. The service has good and effective links with the youth offending team and the drugs and alcohol action team. However, commissioning in-patient services is an area for development.

56. The health needs of looked after children are addressed effectively through the multi-disciplinary looked after children's team, which includes a designated doctor and nurse and a dedicated CAMHS worker for looked after children. Considerable progress has been made in achieving the target for ensuring that all looked after children receive regular health screening and dental and optical checks. All health visitors and school nurses are trained to carry out health reviews, and strategies are being developed to improve health assessments for those children who are externally placed and for areas of low uptake. Looked after children and young people placed out of area are less likely to have health assessments completed. There is a gap in properly preparing and supporting



children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to move from paediatric care to adult health services.

## Staying safe

57. **The overall contribution of services to keeping children and young people safe is adequate.** The work of the council, however, in protecting those at risk of harm has serious shortcomings, particularly in how new referrals are responded to. Parents and carers receive good advice from a range of agencies on how to keep children safe. Particular advice is given to parents and carers of disabled children on safe handling and moving. Multi-agency procedures on sexual exploitation have been revised and a co-ordinator is being appointed to improve agencies' understanding and response to this problem and ensure young people are better supported.

58. There is a safe environment for most children and young people. All schools and children's homes are proactive in tackling bullying. Despite this, some children are still worried about being bullied, both at school and in their local area. The number of children killed or seriously injured is low compared with the national average. However, most of these incidents occur when children are out playing close to their homes and there is no targeted multi-agency approach to dealing with this issue. There are sound procedures in place to ensure that children are safely discharged from hospital.

59. There is a range of statutory and voluntary agencies providing valuable preventative services across Calderdale. However, these services have not yet been developed in the context of an overarching preventative strategy for children and young people across all age ranges. This has left some children and families without appropriate support. The Craigie Lea family support service funds places for vulnerable children in private day care provision where statutory provision is not available, and is appreciated by families living in more rural areas. The rural nature of some communities makes it difficult for some young children and young people to access all available services.

60. Children and young people at risk of harm, or where there are concerns about their welfare, are not always identified and supported early enough. The criteria used for instigating intervention by social services are not well understood by all agencies. There is duplication of efforts in the way that agencies conduct assessments, and joint assessments are not being undertaken as often as they should be. This, along with the lack of a preventative strategy backed up by clear pathways to supporting families in need, may have led to some families being referred to social care as a means of accessing support services, which is not always appropriate. Plans to introduce the new assessment framework should go some way in reducing duplication and ensuring that families receive help when appropriate. The percentage of referrals of children in need leading to initial assessments is significantly lower than in similar authorities, indicating that thresholds are too high – this results in child protection cases being responded to well but welfare concerns not being given

sufficient attention. There are serious shortcomings in the work of the initial response team. There are no systems in place to monitor the progress of cases held by this team. In a number of cases, information held on the electronic system does not match the paper records. The process of sending out consent letters prior to initial assessments being done has led to unacceptable delays in children being seen and concerns about them being assessed. There is evidence on some closed case files that cases had been closed before children had been seen and assessed as being safe. Senior managers have accepted these shortcomings and new systems are being put in place, which will be monitored to ensure assessments are sound and timely and that services are put in place to meet children's needs.

61. Once children and young people are identified as in need of protection and placed on the child protection register, they receive an effective multi-agency service that is well focused on improving outcomes. All cases on the child protection register are reviewed within the required timescales. The percentage of children whose names are re-registered on the child protection register is low and is in line with similar areas. The family support/child protection social work teams are organised on a locality basis, which has improved inter-agency working. All children on the child protection register are allocated to qualified social workers. Case records are up to date and reflect effective inter-agency working and good engagement with parents. Child protection concerns relating to children with disabilities are investigated jointly by the disabled children's team and the initial response team, ensuring consistency.

62. Multi-agency protection panel arrangements to protect the public are sound. Staff across all agencies receive regular supervision and are well supported by their line managers. A range of child protection training is available, but not all GPs and youth workers have attended.

63. The ACPC has good representation from agencies and has taken positive steps to improve practice. There is, however, little analysis of management information and there is a particular lack of data regarding minority ethnic children on the child protection register to inform and improve practice. Plans are progressing to establish a safeguarding board. Two serious case reviews were properly and thoroughly undertaken. However, in one case the practice issues identified have yet to be addressed. Inter-agency child protection policy and procedures are not up to date, and key sections, such as guidance on disabled children and the Bichard recommendations, are missing.

64. While the number of looked after children is lower than in similar areas, there has been a marked increase in the last year. More children are now being placed in independent provision, both within and outside of the borough, despite an overall increase in the number of foster carers. There is no clear strategy in place to address this. Care planning and reviews of looked after children are adequate. The proportion of children in family placements and stability of placements is good. However, there are difficulties in recruiting carers from minority ethnic communities and trans-racial placements are comparatively high.

Adoption performance is good, both in terms of the numbers placed and the speed of decision-making. Due to staffing difficulties, around 30 looked after children (12 per cent) are not allocated to qualified social workers. Arrangements for overseeing these cases are in place and statutory visits continue, but nevertheless these arrangements are not secure in the medium to long term.

## Enjoying and achieving

### **65. The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people enjoy their education and recreation and achieve well is good.**

The majority of children and young people enjoy and attend school. They are able to take part in a good range of activities in local areas and schools. Most feel that they are achieving well, but some young people with particular needs feel that they do not receive enough support and that their views are not listened to. Early education and childcare is good, and the majority of children make good progress towards their early learning goals. Parents and carers receive comprehensive information on the range of childcare and nursery provision available, and the authority consults with them well to ensure that the provision meets local needs. There are sufficient funded places available for three and four year-olds, and effective monitoring and training to ensure that providers are well supported in maintaining high standards.

66. Education, social care and health collaborate effectively, with some particularly effective work seen in early years in north Halifax. Key workers co-ordinate services for individual children, which means that parents have just one point of contact. Assessments of children with learning difficulties are made early, and support is provided by multi-disciplinary teams that liaise effectively with nurseries and schools. This continuity of care prepares children well for starting school. Good planning with Sure Start has supported the development of children's centres, and effective collaboration is developing with private and voluntary providers.

67. Achievement is better than national averages up to the age of 11, and is in line by the age of 14. Achievement at 16 is in line with national averages and better than in similar authorities. The authority's work with under-performing groups, especially those of Pakistani/Kashmiri heritage, is bringing about improved standards but there is, as yet, insufficient collaboration across the range of education services to support the development of a more effective inclusive practice for these groups. The education effectiveness service provides very effective support to schools, the vast majority of which provide a good standard of education. The partnership with headteachers is strong, and link work between officers and schools very effective. The service knows its schools well, and where targeted support has been provided, pupils' standards have improved. Overall standards have improved over the last four years at a faster rate than is found nationally.

68. The majority of schools are in a good state of repair. There are few surplus school places and nearly all parents receive their first choice of primary and

secondary school. Effective multi-agency work and targeted support, through the behaviour improvement project, has improved attendance and reduced overall rates of exclusions. Exclusions are low and there have been no permanent exclusions from either primary or special schools. The attendance of looked after children is good and none have been excluded in the last four years.

69. The support for children and young people who are excluded from school is satisfactory. Around one-third of children and young people out of school receive less than the required full-time provision. The quality of education and support at the pupil referral unit is good, but the reintegration rate is low and the number who are out of school for longer than one year is higher than found nationally.

70. There is some good provision but no strategic approach to the development of recreational and leisure opportunities for children and young people across Calderdale, especially for those with physical and learning disabilities. A number of young people feel that there has been too little consultation with them and that there is not enough to do in their area. Although there is some subsidised travel, cost and distance are still significant barriers for families in some areas.

71. There is effective support for the education of looked after children, and improving their achievement at 16 – through challenging targets – is a priority for the authority. There are good numbers of looked after young people in education, employment and training, and 92 per cent have personal education plans.

72. The vast majority of children and young people with statements of special educational need are educated in mainstream schools, but a strategic approach to greater inclusion is only just developing. Children and young people have their needs identified early and their provision reviewed regularly. However, although other services are invited to reviews, inter-agency work is under-developed, in particular joint approach to assessments leading to duplication of efforts. In addition, there is no key worker to co-ordinate the different service contributions and some parents and carers are confused by this.

73. The local authority recognises that the cost of out-of-area placements for young people with special needs is too high, and has prioritised the development of local provision for those with challenging behaviour. It is not clear, however, how this will fit with the provision in existing units. Although there is a phased approach to planning, developing strategies in social care relating to looked after children are not well linked with education to ensure that account will be taken of both care and education needs.

## **Making a positive contribution**

74. **The overall contribution of services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good, with some key areas for improvement.** Improving the involvement of children and young people in activities and outcomes that most affect their lives is a high priority for the council and its partners. Processes and structures that have already been put in

place are mostly clear and well targeted. However, many of the initiatives are at an early stage of implementation and development and the impact on local services is not yet realised.

75. There is adequate provision to support the social and emotional development of young people. Schools, early years settings and some out-of-school clubs are providing a varied range of opportunities that are well supported by children and young people, parents and carers. Schools provide sound mentoring opportunities for their pupils, and support structures for those who are experiencing difficulties, either with their learning or behaviour, are also sound. Sure Start and Children's Centres are making a positive contribution to the provision for children and young people.

76. The quality of support for children and young people at key transition points in their lives is adequate overall. Provision for vulnerable groups is secure. Work with looked after children is effective and well focused on areas of identified need. Most of those at risk of social and education isolation are also well catered for and receive specialist support in schools from specialist providers.

77. The combined work by the area to reduce anti-social behaviour is good, and is making a difference in a number of important areas. The rates of recidivism have decreased much faster than is found nationally. The early intervention programme and arrest referral scheme are also targeted well at those at greatest risk of offending, and work between different partner agencies is effective, as seen in the joint working between the police and youth offending team in residential centres for looked after children. The local area has secure systems to address racism.

78. The authority is achieving a good level of participation from looked after children for reviews. Advocacy, in the event of complaints and representations, is effectively commissioned through a voluntary provider. The management of the service is effective.

79. There are some sound strategies in place to engage more children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities in activities that directly influence their lives. The disabled youth forum is relatively new but very effective in providing a voice for disabled young people. The forum, which comprises a small number of disabled young people from across Calderdale, meets weekly to discuss those issues that most affect their lives. The quality of discussion is impressive, as are the personal qualities shown by these young people, but the extent to which they feel they influence decision-makers is a cause of frustration for the majority of the group. The statement by one young person that 'we want equal access to everything' represents not only the stage that this group is at but gives direction to the way forward for the area and underpins the disabled children and young people's strategy.

80. Increasing the participation of children and young people in decision-making activities is a major priority in the children and young people's plan. The

local authority is currently providing a good range of opportunities to develop this aspect across the borough. For example, questionnaires and focus groups are providing very useful information from children and young people about the quality of local services available. However, this work has yet to include follow-up action plans and strategies for greater involvement of children and young people in the monitoring, planning and management of some of the services that affect them most. This is particularly so at a strategic level in education, health and social care. There are other opportunities for young people to express their views about local service provision but some, such as the youth parliament, is not yet working as effectively as it should.

81. Nevertheless, a significant number of young people interviewed during the inspection expressed frustration at the lack of genuine discussion, consultation and action taking place as a result of the local authority seeking their views. Too often, they report, their views are not taken seriously or they do not receive feedback of what happens or changes as a result of consultation with them.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

82. **The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate.** There is a satisfactory range of strategies to improve the economic well-being of children and families, particularly in disadvantaged areas. The authority generally knows its strengths and weaknesses in this area and this is reflected in its self-assessment. However, too much emphasis is placed on activity to bring about improvement and too little on clarifying the causes of weaknesses, particularly where a range of providers and services contribute to outcomes for young people.

83. Collaboration with local Sure Start programmes is helping to meet targets for childminding places overall. The local authority supports providers well to improve the quality of childcare provision. Information about childcare provision is readily available and parents are encouraged to take up family credits. Some childminders have also been specifically trained to care for disabled children. The number of schools offering out-of-school childcare provision and breakfast clubs is increasing. Family learning is promoted well to raise adult literacy and numeracy levels to improve parents' employability.

84. Despite improving performance at key stage 4, as well as progression rates that reflect national averages and improving GCE/AVCE point scores, overall, post-16 achievements, including work-based learning across the area, are below average. The local authority and its partners have been slow in taking concerted action to improve 14–19 provision and outcomes across the area for all young people. The range of programmes at foundation and intermediate level at the local college has been improved as has education to employment provision generally, but there remains a shortage of work-based training and related provision. The local authority and the local Learning and Skills Council have analysed the 14–19 education and training needs of the area well, and a strategy based on collaboration between schools, the local college and work-based

training providers is at an early stage of implementation. The strategy, to be implemented through three local consortia, is supported by all providers and builds on previous examples of collaboration. Although individual institutions have quality assurance procedures, the local authority and its partners have not established a robust quality assurance system within which the consortia can operate to bring about improvement across the range of provision and support services for the 14–19 age group. There are no clear progression pathways for 14–19 provision that ensures equality of access to programmes that meet the needs of all young people.

85. The council works well in collaboration with the Connexions service and other partners. The proportion of 16 year-olds not in education, employment or training is higher than the national average but lower than found regionally. Support is targeted well to vulnerable groups. Protocols for co-ordinating support across different agencies, and for sharing information, are being established. The Connexions personal advisers provide impartial advice and guidance to all young people, but too many young people follow programmes for which they are not best suited and, therefore, achieve only modest outcomes. There is insufficient monitoring of progression pathways at ages 16, 17 and 18 to support the development of the curriculum, and insufficient analysis of the overall effectiveness of careers education, advice and guidance across individual consortia in the area as a whole. Newly established consortia of schools and other providers do not yet have agreed procedures for ensuring that all young people are informed about the full range of opportunities offered through collaborative working. The consortia have still to develop joint prospectuses and common application procedures to support transition.

86. The authority emphasises the role of education and training in improving employment and community regeneration, although clear links with the 14–19 strategy have not been established. Regeneration programmes are increasing employment opportunities in general, but coherent planning of 14–19 education and training to help young people take advantage of emerging job opportunities is at an early stage. Adult and community learning have been restructured and funds are being targeted effectively on areas of need, focusing on capacity building within communities. Regeneration activities involve key stakeholders as well as schools, Calderdale college and children's groups such as Sure Start and the Children's Fund. Family learning is focused on skills development and there are good examples of residents developing small business enterprises as a result of the community learning experiences provided.

87. Pennine Housing is making good progress towards achieving the government's decent homes standard, although there is much more yet to be done in the private housing sector, particularly in the Pakistani/Kashmiri communities. The local authority is directing its resources to the most vulnerable groups and is piloting initiatives, such as a landlord accreditation scheme, to address poor property conditions. The average length of stay in bed and breakfast and hostels for families that include dependent children, or a pregnant woman, has reduced and compares favourably with the national average. The

authority is constructing additional accommodation to avoid the use of such facilities. New, appropriately designed accommodation has been provided for families with disabled children. Additional accommodation is being developed for vulnerable young people in partnership with Pennine Housing, and supported tenancies are being purchased through the youth justice board for accommodating young offenders. The provision for teenage parents, who may need supervised or semi-independent housing, has been improved. Partners are beginning to identify the infrastructure and other changes required to improve recreational opportunities and the quality of life for young people when developing housing schemes.

88. Although the local authority is committed to education inclusion, it and its partners have not developed a coherent strategy for addressing the broad and varying needs of young people 14–19 and for improving their outcomes. Children and young people with a statement of special educational need have clear transition plans prepared through a multi-agency approach, but transition planning for other pupils with additional needs is variable in quality across schools. Connexions personal advisers work effectively with special schools, the pupil referral unit, and other agencies involved with vulnerable young people such as the youth offending team. However, there is insufficient provision to meet the range of post-16 education and training needs locally. There are specific gaps in provision for young people with more complex needs, and for young people who are over 19 years of age, many of whom access provision outside of the area, mainly in neighbouring Huddersfield. Key partners and providers have, however, started to review the effectiveness of post-16 provision for young people with learning difficulties and to consult more widely with young people and their parents about the strategy for the future.

89. The looked after children's education service and Connexions service provide good support for looked after children. Achievements at age 16 are above the national average, and progression rates to post-16 education, training or employment are high. Education and training programmes have been developed in response to their particular needs. Transition planning is effective and different services work together well to provide integrated support. Procedures for referral to the leaving care team have been strengthened and pathway plans are linked to childcare reviews and to financial support packages. The proportion of these young people who progress to higher education is higher than found nationally.

## **Service management**

90. **The management of services for children and young people in Calderdale is adequate.** Partnership working on ambition for children and young people is good. Prioritisation is adequate. Capacity to deliver services at present is adequate, with shortages of some key staff and services a limiting factor. Senior managers provide good leadership and elected members are fully engaged with the change for children programme. Performance management is adequate overall, with some weaknesses at unit and team level but better at



director level. The capacity for local services to improve further in the future is good.

91. The contribution of partnership work on ambition is good. Partnership working is well established and an area of strength. Calderdale is a Pathfinder Children's Trust, with its governance formalised through the CYPMG. This is the strategic and organisational vehicle by which the partners discharge their responsibility to co-operate under the Children Act 2004. Partners work well at this strategic level, with good working relationships established at operational level, between Sure Start, health visitors, the youth service, schools, the youth offending team and others. However, many services for looked after children stop at the district boundary, including the looked after children education service and health services. Children placed out of district are known to have poorer health and education outcomes than their peers. Calderdale's partnership arrangements with other councils, agencies and primary care trusts are not sufficiently developed to ensure it fulfils its corporate parenting role.

92. Partners have collaborated effectively to produce the Calderdale ambition statement for children and young people, *Every Calderdale Child Matters*. Local people, including children, carers and parents were widely consulted. This provides a very good foundation from which the draft children and young people's plan has been developed. The statement is aspirational, with recognition that not everything will be achieved for every young person. Future priorities have therefore been identified within the overall ambition, agreed with partners and common targets set for many areas.

93. The current approach to prioritisation is adequate. Data on children and young people has been analysed, compared to similar authorities and national data, and linked to the five outcome areas. Further work is being undertaken, which will be informed by learning from the Ovenden Initiative, the neighbourhood management pathfinder, on how to better understand what works in areas with diverse communities. Ovenden is at a very early stage, however, and partners have not articulated clearly their current strategic response to meeting the needs of complex and diverse communities, many of which have been settled in Calderdale for a long time. The priorities have been written in the absence of the inter-agency prevention strategy identified by the council last year as part of its approach to reducing the numbers of looked after children. The looked after children strategy is not currently aligned with the draft children and young people's plan. Taken together, this means current priorities do not reflect some key challenges for the council and its partners.

94. Overall, there is adequate capacity to deliver current services. Senior management capacity and political leadership is good. The children's services director designate will take up responsibility in December 2005 and the top team will be in place by January 2006. There are good arrangements in place up to this transition, with the CYPMG providing the strategic leadership. There are also strong transitional arrangements within the council through the work of the *Every Child Matters* core and reference groups. Members are well informed and

knowledgeable about the *Every Child Matters* agenda, there is a strong lead member for children and young people, and scrutiny is generally operating effectively in this area. The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel has a rapidly increasing workload, however, and there is no dedicated officer support; there is a risk that with the current arrangements the panel will become overloaded, reducing its effectiveness.

95. There are some pressure points that detract from this largely positive picture, creating an adverse impact for children and young people. These include social work vacancies (leading to unallocated looked after children's cases), retention issues within the educational psychology, foster carer shortages and access to dentists. The council's strategic approach to human resources is not yet in place, and workforce planning is underdeveloped. There have been delays in introducing the common assessment framework, meaning there is still duplication between agencies and a lack of clear pathways for children and families to family support and early prevention services.

96. Within its overall responsibilities, the council has given a very high priority to children and young people and this is reflected in the budget and medium-term financial strategy. The council funds its education service at 5 per cent more than the amount allocated to it by central government (formula-spending share or FSS). This is up from 2 per cent more last year. Children's personal social services are funded at 13 per cent more than FSS, up from 3 per cent last year. Children's services have had several successful bids for growth whilst being protected from cuts, but overall this is only achieving incremental shifts of resource to priority areas. Resources are not yet aligned to actions within the draft children and young people's plan.

97. Much of the budget growth in children's services has gone into funding increased numbers of out-of-district placements. These are high cost and are recognised as a drain on resources. A review in November 2004 identified the need for a commissioning strategy, a placement strategy and an inter-agency prevention strategy as part of the solution but these have not been finalised yet.

98. Financial management processes are solid despite the overspending on out-of-district placements. Careful monitoring has meant no surprises and members have been kept informed. The council has committed to further growth for the new children's services directorate, but expects a balanced budget by the end of the year. Overall spending on children's social services and education is generally at or lower than comparator groups, but spending on youth services, special educational needs, spend for children with statements and weekly costs of children looked after are all high. Children's services have less priority for funding within the primary care trust's areas of work, although the positive outcome for health demonstrates this is not having a major impact. Capacity of local services to improve further is good, providing the actions and timescales within the draft children and young people's plan are adhered to.

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99. The council's approach to challenging costs is not systematic, and financial and performance management information is not routinely brought together. There is currently limited use of pooled budgets and other jointly commissioned services, and use of the community and voluntary sector is underdeveloped. Taken together with achievement in the five outcome areas, current performance on value for money is adequate.

100. Performance management is adequate overall, with some variability at unit and team level but better at directorate level. The new directorate will use the council's established framework for reporting and monitoring, which has proven to be effective. Lead agencies are responsible for monitoring within the CYPMG. Members are involved both at cabinet level and through the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel. Plans and targets will be reviewed annually for continued fitness and relevance. Appraisal is comprehensive and mostly embedded.

101. There are some areas of significant weakness in performance management. The youth service inspection found that senior managers do not have sufficient amounts of reliable information to enable them to undertake quality assurance activity and improve standards. During the inspection, scrutiny of the work of the initial response team revealed a failure to comply with guidance on managerial oversight of files and the results of case file audits were not reported to senior managers and elected members. Within the ACPC, there was little analysis of the data collected to assist the committee, and consequently much is unused.

102. Calderdale has been active in consulting with young people. However, there is recognition that feedback and involving young people in service planning and design needs to take place. The council is now bringing together all of the strands of current activity into its CY3P project, which has just been presented to scrutiny.

## **Annex: The children and young people's section of the corporate assessment report**

1. Children and young people are generally healthy. Most health indicators are either in line with or above the national average. However, there are variations across the area in relation to some health indicators, such as low birth weight and infant mortality, which are particularly high among the Pakistani and Kashmiri community. Teenage pregnancy rates are high and are above the national average. Strategies are beginning to have some effect but there is still much to do to reduce overall numbers. Oral health is poor for children under five.

2. Most children feel safe in schools, but a small number are worried about bullying in school and in their local area. There is good inter-agency action to support children on the register and families who suffer domestic violence. Young people at risk of sexual exploitation are being safeguarded. There are some concerns that children for whom there are general welfare concerns and children reported to be at risk are not identified and assessed early enough by social care. Systems for monitoring cases, prioritising work, recording of decisions and quality assurance are not firm enough to ensure early identification and assessment. Inter-agency child protection procedures are out of date. All child protection cases are allocated to a qualified social worker and inter-agency work is effective. There is good performance in moving children to adoption. Not all looked after children's cases are allocated; effective temporary measures are in place but are not adequate in the long term.

3. The majority of children enjoy their education and achieve well. Children and young people of Pakistani/Kashmiri heritage achieve less well. However, some targeted work in schools is helping to close this attainment gap, which is now in line with the national average. Attainment levels for looked after children are good. The vast majority of children with learning disabilities are educated within mainstream schools, but the cost of out-of-area placements is too high.

4. There is a good range of opportunities for children and young people to make a positive contribution to their communities. However, there is a lack of effective feedback on the outcomes of such consultations. There is effective joint working to reduce offending and re-offending, which has particularly benefited looked after young people and those most at risk of committing a criminal offence.

5. Many children and young people are able to achieve economic well-being, but some do not reach their full potential. There is a shortage of work-based training and education to employment (E2E) provision. The proportion of young people aged 16 and over not in education, employment or training is higher than the national average. However, Calderdale has the best performance in West Yorkshire and has exceeded recent Connexions targets. Vulnerable groups are well supported, but there are gaps in provision for young people with complex needs, particularly when they reach the age of 19. Regeneration programmes

are focused on family learning, and some parents are getting effective support to develop their skills to make them more employable. The achievements of looked after children at age 16 are above the national average. There are good progression rates to post-16 education, training and employment. A higher than average number of looked after young people go into higher education.