

9 December 2009

Ms Janet Donaldson
Group Director of Children and Young People's Services
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Northgate House
Northgate
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Dear Ms Donaldson

Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

Children's services rating 2009

Children's services rating	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council perform adequately.

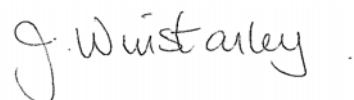
The overall effectiveness of a minority of inspected services, settings and institutions is good or better, with too much that is only satisfactory. The overall effectiveness of childminders is below that found in similar areas and nationally and that of childcare settings is below the rate found nationally. Performance in nursery schools, special schools and the pupil referral unit is above that found in similar areas and nationally. Inspection shows that primary schools are performing just below the level found in similar areas and nationally. The performance of secondary schools and sixth forms is above that found in similar areas but below that found nationally. Judgements for staying safe in inspected services are good or better in the large majority of cases and those for enjoying and achieving are good or better in the very large majority of cases.

The local authority's fostering service is good; there has been no recent inspection of the adoption service. Two of the council's children's homes are satisfactory, one is good and one is outstanding. Two serious case reviews have been carried out of which one was conducted well and one adequately. The council has had a recent unannounced visit of its contact, referral and assessment arrangements which noted two areas for priority action. These relate to addressing a lack of thorough investigation to ensure the safety of children, and to improving the effectiveness of joint investigations involving social workers and the police in relation to child protection concerns.

Performance against the very large majority of indicators is at least in line with similar areas and national figures. For staying safe this is true for the large majority of indicators and figures are particularly good for enjoying and achieving. There are some particular weaknesses in relation to the completion of social care assessments, the lack of a trend of improvement in the educational outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and services for care leavers.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.

Yours sincerely



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA