

Calderdale

Area Assessment (Summary version)

Dated 9 December 2009



oneplace

for an independent overview
of local public services

Calderdale at a glance

This independent assessment by six inspectorates sets out how well local public services are tackling the major issues in Calderdale. It says how well they are delivering better results for local people and how likely these are to improve in future. If, and only if, our assessment shows that the following special circumstances are met in relation to a major issue, we use flags to highlight our judgements. We use a green flag to highlight where others can learn from outstanding achievements or improvements or an innovation that has very promising prospects of success. We use a red flag to highlight where we have significant concerns about results and future prospects that are not being tackled adequately. This means that local partners need to do something more or different to improve these prospects.

Green flags - exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from

No green flags have been identified for Calderdale

Red flags - significant concerns, action needed

No red flags have been identified for Calderdale

The local area

Calderdale lies along the valley of the River Calder in West Yorkshire. The main towns are Halifax, Hebden Bridge, Brighouse, Elland and Todmorden. The borough occupies a strategic position between the conurbations of Greater Manchester to the west and Leeds-Bradford to the east; the M62 motorway linking the two forms its southern boundary.

The population of just over 200,000 is projected to grow significantly over the next 20 years. The largest increase will be in older people, with a slight decrease in the teenage population. The ethnic minority population of nine per cent is younger than the Calderdale average.

Calderdale's public services have agreed the following challenges that they need to tackle:

Ensure that people stay in control of their lives and play a full and active role in society

Flourish as a place where every child and young person thrives, is safe and happy

Improve the quality of our environment and promote respect for Calderdale's

heritage

Prosper as a place where people can feel safe and are encouraged to get involved in shaping their future

Reduce the amount of preventable ill-health across the population as a whole

Safeguarding Calderdale's future and fostering economic prosperity for all

Work to ensure that the differences in health, quality of life and economic prosperity between different communities in Calderdale reduce.

The next section tells you how Calderdale's public services are doing in each of their local priority areas.

How is Calderdale doing?

Ensure that people stay in control of their lives and play a full and active role in society

Most people over 65 in Calderdale are satisfied with their home and area. Care services are generally of a good standard, but it is often not clear whether they are improving people's lives. Local public services need to do more to find out whether what they are doing is making a difference to people.

People are helped well to lead independent lives. Community rehabilitation teams helped older people to stay independent and be well enough to no longer need care services. Fewer people than in similar areas receive 'direct payments' - enabling them to take decisions about the care that they receive.

Partners - including the Council, PCT and service providers - work well together to support older people. There is a co-ordinated approach to tackling health and wellbeing. The Council and PCT have joined up to plan and buy residential and nursing care.

Vulnerable adults are generally kept safe. Safeguarding policies, procedures, and practice help to ensure this. People who use services and carers can get involved in decisions about services through a range of boards and groups. There are some examples of users views being taken into account - such as in the design of care plans. But it is often not easy to see whether these groups have actually changed the way that services are delivered.

Flourish as a place where every child and young person thrives, is safe and happy

Children's health is generally good in Calderdale. Fewer children of primary school age are obese than in other areas, but by the time that they leave

primary school levels of obesity have increased significantly. Fewer children are physically active than in similar areas.

Assessments of 'at risk' children are not being completed as quickly as they should be and some of the assessments are not thorough enough. Also, joint investigations involving social workers and the police need to be carried out more effectively. Although the number of care leavers in education, employment or training has risen slightly it remains low compared to other areas.

Most children in Calderdale do well at school. Young children do as well as children of the same age elsewhere. Children at age 11 had been doing better than those in similar areas, but 2009 data shows that performance is now in line with that elsewhere. The performance of white and black pupils is better than average, whilst that of Asian pupils is much lower. Good improvements have been achieved at age 16 by both white and Asian pupils, although black students have done less well.

Fewer teenagers became pregnant in Calderdale. Calderdale's performance in reducing teenage pregnancy was one of the best in England. But, as a result of the economic downturn, progress in reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training has slowed down. Fewer young people entered the youth justice system for the first time, although numbers are slightly higher than that found elsewhere. The number of people under 19 who achieved Level 2 and 3 qualifications continued to improve.

Improve the quality of our environment and promote respect for Calderdale's heritage

People in Calderdale are recycling more, helped by fortnightly waste collections combined with weekly kitchen waste collections. Calderdale's streets are also cleaner and there are plans to improve services further by introducing more local services in neighbourhoods.

Local public services are at an early stage in planning for the effects of climate change and setting realistic targets for the future. The Council is only just starting to develop an environmental management system and to measure the effect that it is having on the wider environment.

Some actions are being taken to reduce traffic congestion - a priority for local people - but the effects are unclear. The West Yorkshire-level target will not reduce journey times for local people at peak times and bus usage is not meeting targets. Recent figures show a reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents. But rates are falling more slowly in Calderdale than in similar areas.

Housing is a problem in parts of Calderdale. Not enough affordable homes - particularly for families - are being built. A lot of houses are relatively old and are also hard to keep warm. This is particularly important as 17 per cent of Calderdale's residents have difficulty in affording enough heating to stay

warm. Prospects for improvement are helped by Calderdale being a 'trailblazer' for new financial, training and employment support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Prosper as a place where people can feel safe and are encouraged to get involved in shaping their future

Crime is reducing, including crimes like burglary and assault which people are most concerned about. This is in part due to good work by public services in integrating offenders back into the community and the introduction of neighbourhood policing. Public confidence in the police has increased.

Fewer people than before see anti-social behaviour (ASB) as a big problem. But there are big differences within the borough. For example, the proportion in Mixenden seeing ASB as a problem has risen from 36 per cent to 46 per cent.

Fewer people in Calderdale than elsewhere feel that people of different backgrounds get on well together. More encouragingly, a relatively high proportion of residents feel that they belong to their immediate neighbourhood. Many groups and networks try to help communities to get on better together. Some of these have only been recently set up. One element of the approach to cohesion is to reduce inequalities, but progress on this has been slow.

Public services do not work as effectively as they could with the voluntary and community sectors (VCS). This is important because these organisations represent and deliver services to many vulnerable people in Calderdale. NHS Calderdale has asked Voluntary Action Calderdale to find out how the public and voluntary sectors can improve how they plan and deliver services.

Public services want to increase the number of people who feel that they can influence decisions in their local area. They plan to improve things through the 'Going Local' programme which will include forums in each of the 17 wards in Calderdale. Plans for locality working are still at an early stage.

Reduce the amount of preventable ill-health across the population as a whole

Depending on your circumstances and where you live, you can expect to live much longer in parts of Calderdale than in others. Public services have set a target to improve life expectancy in those areas where people are dying too early. There are plans in place to improve health, including weight management programmes and better treatment of people suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure.

More mothers than before - just under four in ten - are breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks. This exceeded the local target, but this is still lower than many areas.

More needs to be done to improve rates of breastfeeding - providing infants with a healthy start in life. The number of people quitting smoking has increased for the last two years. Death rates from smoking are higher than average and NHS Calderdale is trying to make sure that it provides the right help to those who most need it.

Despite a lot of work by public services, the number of people participating in regular physical activity in Calderdale is not increasing significantly. £11 million is being invested in new leisure facilities across the Borough - with the new Sowerby Bridge and Brighouse swimming pools due to open in November 2010. These developments offer the potential to encourage more people to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Calderdale is one of nine areas that have successfully competed for a share of £30 million of Government funding for a Healthy Towns Initiative. The Healthy Halifax Programme, will promote healthy eating and physical activity and tackle obesity. It is too soon to see real benefits from this work.

Safeguarding Calderdale's future and fostering economic prosperity for all

Local people and businesses have been supported through the recession by the Council's 'Economic Task Force'. But it is unclear how effective other public bodies have been in joining up to combat the effects of the recession. This is a concern, as Calderdale has been assessed as one of the ten areas in the country that is most vulnerable to the effects of the recession. Calderdale's economy performed well until the recent economic downturn. In part this is due to its heavy reliance on the financial services sector. But the numbers of people claiming benefits has risen sharply.

There are plans to create additional employment and support business growth. These include the Piece Hall leisure and retail development, Broad Street retail and leisure facilities and town centre improvements in Todmorden, Sowerby Bridge and Halifax. These plans provide promising prospects for improving the local economy.

Although skill levels are improving, on average people in Calderdale have low levels of skills and qualifications compared to similar areas. A recent bid to get capital funding for a 'university centre' was unsuccessful. Calderdale College is in the process of approving its higher education strategy. Leeds Metropolitan University has secured funding to develop higher education work with businesses in Calderdale to provide 60 additional places.

Work to ensure that the differences in health, quality of life and economic prosperity between different communities in Calderdale reduce.

Quality of life varies too much depending on where you live in Calderdale. Partners have recognised the need to 'narrow gaps' within Calderdale, but plans need to be brought together better to provide good prospects for improvement.

If you are a young person living in Ovenden, Mixenden or Park, you are much more likely to die before your first birthday, less likely to get good GCSE results or to be in education, employment or training than other young people in Calderdale. People living in the borough's more deprived areas feel much less safe after dark and are much less satisfied with their area as a place to live than those who live in more well-off areas.

Local public services have been working together to better understand the range and extent of inequalities in the borough. They have made progress in narrowing some gaps. But they do not yet have a fully co-ordinated plan to show how individual organisations, and partners working together, will tackle the different issues. It is also unclear how they will assess their progress in tackling these issues.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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