

## Services for children and young people in East Dunbartonshire

13 January 2014

Report of a joint inspection

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## 1. Introduction

**At the request of Scottish Ministers, the Care Inspectorate is leading joint inspections of services for children and young people across Scotland. When we say children and young people in this report we mean people under the age of 18 years or up to 21 years if they have been looked after.**

These inspections will look at the difference services are making to the lives of children, young people and families. They take account of the full range of work within a community planning partnership area including services provided by health visitors, school nurses, teachers, doctors, social workers, police officers, and the voluntary sector.

The inspection teams are made up of inspectors from the Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland.

A draft framework of quality indicators was published by the Care Inspectorate in October 2012. The indicators in 'How well are we improving the lives of children, young people and families? A guide to evaluating services for children and young people using quality indicators' were used by the team of inspectors in their independent evaluation of the quality of services. We have covered all of the quality indicators in this report and reached evaluations for nine of them which are set out in the table in Appendix 1.

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## 2. Background

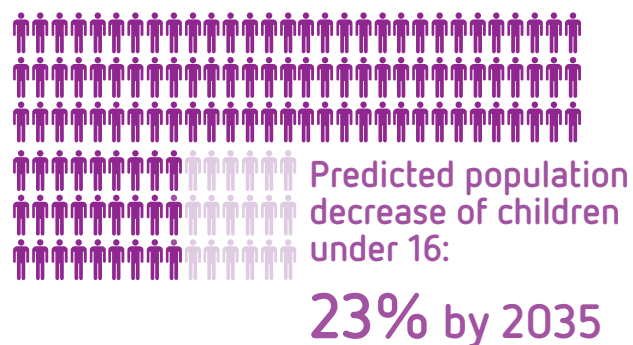
The joint inspection of services for children and young people in the East Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership area took place over three weeks between June 2013 and September 2013. It covered the range of services in the area that had a role in providing services to benefit children, young people and families.

Inspectors reviewed documents and spoke to staff with leadership and management responsibilities. They talked to staff who work directly with children, young people and families and observed some meetings. Inspectors reviewed practice through reading a sample of records held by services who work with children and young people. Some of these children, young people and families met with and talked to inspectors. Inspectors are very grateful to all of the people who talked to us as part of this inspection.

As the findings in this joint inspection are based on a sample of children and young people, inspectors cannot assure the quality of service received by every single child in the area.

## 3. The Community Planning Partnership area and the context for services for children and young people

East Dunbartonshire has a population of 105,880. The number of children under 16 years is decreasing while the population of older people is increasing. The number of births is falling and between 2010 and 2035 the number of children under 16 years is projected to reduce by 23%. This clearly impacts on the context to which services are delivered. East Dunbartonshire, with the exception of a few areas of disadvantage, is fairly affluent and enjoys higher levels of employment than the Scottish average.



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The **Community Planning Partnership** in East Dunbartonshire includes representatives from the Council, Community Health Partnership, East Dunbartonshire Voluntary Action, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Job Centre Plus, Scottish Enterprise, British Waterways Board, Community Councils' Liaison Committee, Dunbartonshire Chamber of Commerce and New College Lanarkshire. The **Single Outcome Agreement** sets out a clear and shared vision for the communities of East Dunbartonshire. It includes priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people, reducing inequalities and places a strong emphasis on early intervention and prevention.

The **Delivering for Children and Young People Partnership** is responsible for delivering the vision for children, young people and families. It has a business plan for 2012 to 2015 which describes what partners will do to improve services for children and young people. The business plan includes the work of the Child Protection Committee and the commitment to put in place a **Getting it right for every child** approach. The actions set out in the business plan link closely with the Single Outcome Agreement.

The Community Planning Partnership leads community planning. This is a process which helps public agencies to work together with the community to plan and deliver better services to make a difference to people's lives.

A Single Outcome Agreement is an agreement between the Scottish Government and community planning partnerships which sets out how they will work towards improving outcomes for Scotland's people in a way that reflects local circumstances and priorities.

The Delivering for Children and Young People Partnership is a high level multi-agency group which meets six times a year. It is responsible for ensuring that all children and young people in East Dunbartonshire are safe, healthy and ready to learn.

Getting it right for every child is the Scottish Government's approach to making sure that all children and young people get the help they need when they need it. For more information, search "GIRFEC" online.

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## 4. Particular strengths that are making a difference to children, young people and families

- Very widely available and highly effective services to support parents.
- High quality early years services and schools to support children and young people in their learning and educational achievement.
- The strong, proactive approach to involving individual children in important decisions about their lives.
- Highly committed and motivated staff who are having a very positive impact on the lives of children, young people and families.

## 5. Examples of good practice

### **KLC 629 Project**

KLC 629 is a Saturday night project for young people which aims to increase participation in youth, sport and leisure activities and encourage healthy lifestyles. Around 150 young people aged 8-17 years attend regularly and there has been a notable reduction in the number of incidents of anti-social behaviour and alcohol misuse at weekends.

### **Triple P Positive Parenting Programme**

Widely available parenting programmes are benefiting large numbers of parents. Large numbers of staff working in early years, education, health and social work services are trained to provide these programmes. These are flexible enough to allow parents to choose how they want to take part and some receive individual sessions within their own home. There is a high rate of completion and parents report greater confidence in their parenting and increased resilience to manage difficult experiences.

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## 6. How well are the lives of children and young people improving?

Staff recognise those children, young people and families who need help. Staff intervene early to provide the advice and guidance they need to help them overcome their difficulties quickly. Staff provide flexible support and assistance to help children, young people and families to build on their own strengths and resilience. Information sharing protocols are useful in guiding staff to share relevant information and provide children, young people and families with the help they need. Multi-agency screening groups consider the circumstances of children, young people and families affected by domestic abuse, youth offending and vulnerable pregnancies. This is helping to make sure that suitable help and support is available as quickly as possible. Families benefit from widely available support such as **Triple P** and **Seasons for Growth**. Staff build close and helpful relationships with children, young people and families and pay particular attention to those families who may have difficulty accepting help.

Overall, children and young people are kept safe within their communities. Staff work together to provide helpful programmes to assist children and young people acquire skills to keep themselves safe in a wide range of circumstances. This includes advice and assistance to make safe choices in relation to sexual health, using the internet and road safety. Children are confident that they have a trusted adult in whom they can confide and seek support. Young people with a caring responsibility have access to a valuable support network they can call upon 24/7 in case of emergencies. Children and young people looked after away from home are safe, nurtured and cared for. They enjoy trusting relationships with staff and report that they can speak openly about their worries.

**Triple P is a Positive Parenting Programme which helps parents to acquire the skills they need to be confident parents and to manage their children's behaviour, prevent problems and build strong, healthy relationships.**

**Seasons for Growth is peer education programme for children over 6 years, young people and adults to help them manage grief and loss to build resilience.**

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Children's health is showing notable signs of improvement. Healthy lifestyles and wellbeing are promoted very effectively through the **Baby Friendly Initiative**, **Bounce Back** and **Cool in School**.

Increasing numbers of children are receiving immunisations and dental health is improving. Early years and residential services are encouraging children and families to adopt healthy lifestyles through outdoor play, oral hygiene, healthy eating and positive sleep patterns. There is scope to improve the routine assessment of health needs for all children and young people who are looked after. Children and young people who need help with their emotional wellbeing and mental health benefit positively from a range of services in their schools and communities.

High quality learning experiences are supporting the achievement of children and young people of all ages. Young children are entering primary school better prepared for learning. Educational attainment is characterised by high performance at all levels. High numbers of young people are progressing beyond school into **positive destinations** and the number entering higher education is well above the national average. Vulnerable young people who require additional and individualised support are benefitting from specific programmes to meet their needs. For example, the Prince's Trust XL programme helps develop skills for work and life. The need for additional support for children with autism spectrum disorder has led to the establishment of specialist facilities in a number of secondary and primary schools.

Baby Friendly Initiative is a national approach to improve breastfeeding rates by providing help and advice to parents and encouraging organisations to become baby friendly.

Bounce Back is a positive education programme that supports adults and children to develop a stronger sense of wellbeing and to be more resilient, confident and successful.

Cool in School is a programme for developing emotional literacy and positive social behaviour. It helps children and young people cope positively with everyday situations, show sensitivity and respect.

A positive destination for young people leaving school means that they go on to education at college or university, a job, or further training for a job.



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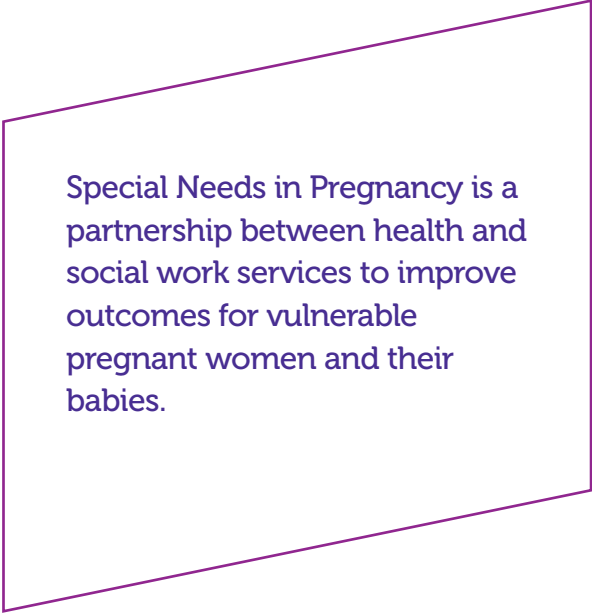
Achievements in extra-curricular activity such as sports and arts are promoted strongly and many young people accomplish national recognition in these areas. Primary school children with a caring responsibility receive valuable help and support. There is scope to improve the support available for young people in secondary schools who have a caring role.

Overall, children and young people benefit from stable and very nurturing experiences when they live with kinship carers, foster carers and in residential homes. However, some children and young people may experience uncertainty when plans for their future are not made permanent quickly enough.

Children and young people enjoy a wide range of opportunities to be physically active and involved within their communities. The numbers of young people achieving awards through Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and outdoor sports and activities are growing. This is building strength and confidence in young people and helping them to be better prepared for the challenges of adulthood.

Children and young people are encouraged to be involved in a wide range of youth participation groups such as pupil councils, eco committees, community safety campaigns and fair trade groups. They are helped to express their views in relation to school, environment and society issues. Children and young people feel listened to and valued. This is further reinforced when staff take action to address the matters they raise. Children and young people have a strong sense of responsibility and feel involved in decisions. Vulnerable children and young people would benefit from increased opportunities to be consulted and involved in participation groups. This would provide enhanced opportunities to express their views on matters pertinent to them, such as children's rights.

Many parents feel valued and able to build trusting relationships with staff. **The Special Needs in Pregnancy** Service is helping pregnant women to be prepared for the birth of their babies and to give them the best start in life. Parenting programmes and the assistance of family support services are helping parents and carers to become skilled and confident parents. Families are stronger due to the help they receive. Children and young people with a disability or additional support needs benefit from high quality support including respite care and summer schools.



**Special Needs in Pregnancy is a partnership between health and social work services to improve outcomes for vulnerable pregnant women and their babies.**

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The Community Planning Partnership is highly committed to involving communities in planning and developing services. Developments around **The Place** in Hillhead is a positive example of this. Partners have worked closely with representatives of the community to redesign local services. This has successfully improved community involvement but it is too early to assess the full impact of this approach. Across the area, vibrant community groups and high levels of volunteering are providing positive opportunities for young people.

**The Place is an approach to integrating services at a local level to meet needs. It aims to provide new solutions to regenerate more disadvantaged communities.**

## **7. How well are services working together to improve the lives of children, young people and families?**

The planning framework for improving services for children and young people has a clear focus on 'Getting it right for every child'. Partners are very committed to working together to implement and embed this approach. However, there are too many plans and it is difficult to see clear links between them and to the Single Outcome Agreement. The planning framework for integrated services for children is too complex and would benefit from a more streamlined approach.

There is a positive culture of encouraging meaningful participation of children young people and families. Individual services have well-established processes to support the effective communication and consultation with children, young people and families. There is scope to develop a joint approach across services for children and young people to inform policy, planning and service development.

The Delivering for Children and Young People Partnership brings together relevant senior managers. Partners work well together and have a productive focus on implementing 'Getting it right for every child'. Partners are at a very early stage in considering how they can share resources to become more effective and efficient to achieve best value and further improve in how they deliver services for children and young people.

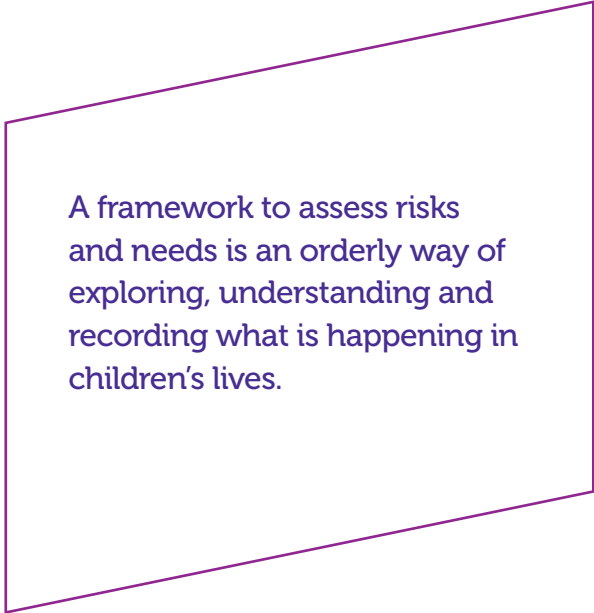
The arrangements for the quality assurance of practices to protect children and young people are very effective. The results of this work are used well to embed changes and to lead to improvement. Overall, services have sound quality assurance systems, policies and procedures. A more joint approach to the development and review of policies and procedures that apply across services would be beneficial to further embedding 'Getting it right for every child'.

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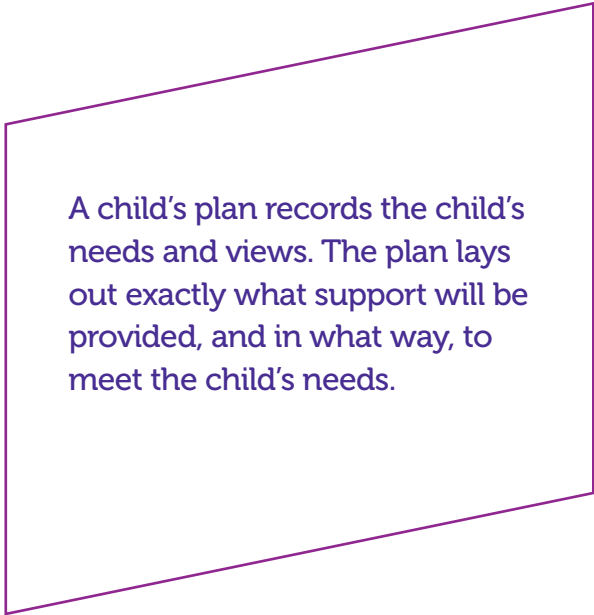
Staff respond quickly and effectively to concerns that a child may be at risk of abuse or neglect. They use legal measures well to keep children and young people safe and provide suitable accommodation when they are no longer able to remain at home. Lead professionals compile useful chronologies and are beginning to use these effectively when working with families to show risks and point out what needs to change. **Assessments of risks and needs** show important strengths, however, the quality is variable. Staff across services contribute to assessments but often social workers undertake the role of the lead professional. There is a need to extend the lead professional role beyond that of social work to ensure a more integrated approach is adopted. There is scope to develop a more integrated approach to assessments.

**Child's plans** are prepared for all children and young people who need assistance from a number of different services. The majority of these plans are effective in setting out how a child or young person's needs will be met. However, many children and young people have more than one plan which say different things. Overall, the quality of plans is variable and there is scope to make them clearer about what outcomes are to be achieved, the actions needed and timescales for achieving these outcomes. Child's plans are reviewed regularly and take account of changes in circumstances. Plans to make sure children have a permanent place to live are not always clear enough and take too long to achieve.

Services have established new systems to monitor and track this and there are positive signs of early progress.



A framework to assess risks and needs is an orderly way of exploring, understanding and recording what is happening in children's lives.



A child's plan records the child's needs and views. The plan lays out exactly what support will be provided, and in what way, to meet the child's needs.


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Overall staff listen carefully to the wishes of children, young people and families and take these into account when making decisions. They are highly effective in helping families to understand what is expected of them and to participate in key processes. Some families benefit from independent support through **advocacy**. This could be offered more routinely to all children, young people and families who may benefit from this.

Overall, the “Getting it right for every child” approach is helping staff to do their job effectively.

Staff across services have a shared understanding of the importance of working together to make a greater impact on the lives of children, young people and families.

Frequent, high quality training is building confidence and increasing knowledge and skills. Staff are positive about the contribution they make to families. They take pride in what they do and value the support of each other. Almost all staff can demonstrate ‘Getting it right for every child’ has improved their work.



**Advocacy is independent support to help children, young people or their parents express their views and be heard when important decisions are being made.**

## **8. How well do services lead and improve the quality of work to achieve better outcomes for children and families?**

The Community Planning Partnership has promoted a shared vision for children and young people in East Dunbartonshire. This is reflected in the Single Outcome Agreement. The vision is being driven by the Delivering for Children and Young People Partnership and the commitment to achieving this is shared by staff at different levels across services. Although partners are working together to drive this vision forward, success is dependent on the lead and direction within the local authority. A more collaborative approach would improve shared ownership and accountability for strategic direction and for achieving the high aspirations services have set out for children and young people. There is a strong commitment to improving outcomes through corporate parenting and this is continuing to develop over time.

Leadership of people is positive and joint working is promoted well. Committed and motivated staff have a sound understanding of each other’s roles and responsibilities. Staff could now be involved more fully in service planning and development. Highly

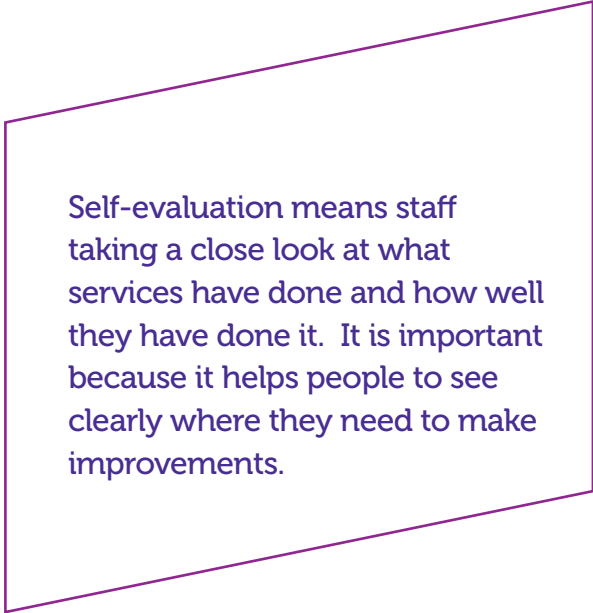
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effective programmes are increasing leadership capacity within some services and there is scope to deliver these jointly across the partnership.

A shared commitment to learn and improve underpins approaches to **self-evaluation**. There are very positive examples of self-evaluation which is leading to improvement and the sharing of good practice. Partners have very recently embarked on joint self-evaluation across services for children and young people which is building a shared understanding of priorities for improvement. Together partners need to introduce a systematic approach to joint self-evaluation and use this to increase the pace at which areas for improvement are taken forward.

Overall, the wellbeing of children and young people in East Dunbartonshire is improving over time.

Partners continue to perform very well in achieving very positive outcomes in educational attainment, positive destinations on leaving school and in children's health. There is scope to improve performance in reducing outcome gaps for some vulnerable children and young people, particularly those who are looked after or who have previously been looked after. This includes reducing the numbers of exclusions from school and making sure health needs are identified and met. The Single Outcome Agreement sets out intentions to sustain and improve upon positive trends. Actions are being taken forward to address areas for improvement



**Self-evaluation means staff taking a close look at what services have done and how well they have done it. It is important because it helps people to see clearly where they need to make improvements.**

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## 9. Conclusion and areas for improvement

Services work very well together in partnership to make a difference to the lives of children, young people and families. Sound leadership and a clear, shared vision with a focus on early intervention and prevention is ensuring that vulnerable children and young people get help and support at the earliest opportunity. Staff have a common understanding of Getting it right for every child and this approach is promoting strong teamwork. Together, partners are making a positive difference in local communities and making notable improvements in the wellbeing of children, young people and families.

Steady improvements are sustained against performance indicators and partners are beginning to gather better information to evidence the difference these are having on outcomes for individual children and young people. Leaders are committed to building on their approach to joint self evaluation to help improvement.

Inspectors are confident that services will be able to make the necessary improvements in the light of inspection findings. In doing so the East Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership and the Delivering for Children and Young People Partnership should take account of the need to:

- continue to improve the processes for assessing and planning to meet the needs of individual children and young people
- implement systematic approaches to jointly evaluate performance across services for children and young people
- provide strong collaborative leadership to improve the planning framework and increase the pace of change across services for children and young people.

## 10. What happens next?

The Care Inspectorate will ask the East Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership to publish a joint action plan detailing how it intends to make any improvements identified as a result of the inspection.

The Care Inspectorate and other bodies taking part in this inspection will continue to offer support for improvement through their linking arrangements.

**Clare Wilson**  
**Inspection Lead**  
**January 2014**

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## Appendix 1: Indicators of quality

Quality indicators help services and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved. In this inspection we used a draft framework of quality indicators that was published by the Care Inspectorate in October 2012. 'How well are we improving the lives of children, young people and families? A guide to evaluating services for children and young people using quality indicators'. This document is available on the Care Inspectorate website.

Here are the evaluations for nine of the quality indicators.

Providing help and support at an early stage	<b>Good</b>
Impact on children and young people	<b>Very good</b>
Impact on families	<b>Very good</b>
Assessing and responding to risks and needs	<b>Good</b>
Planning for individual children	<b>Good</b>
Planning and improving services	<b>Adequate</b>
Participation of children, young people, families and other stakeholders	<b>Good</b>
Leadership of improvement and change	<b>Good</b>
Improving the wellbeing of children and young people	<b>Good</b>

This report uses the following word scale to make clear the judgements made by inspectors.

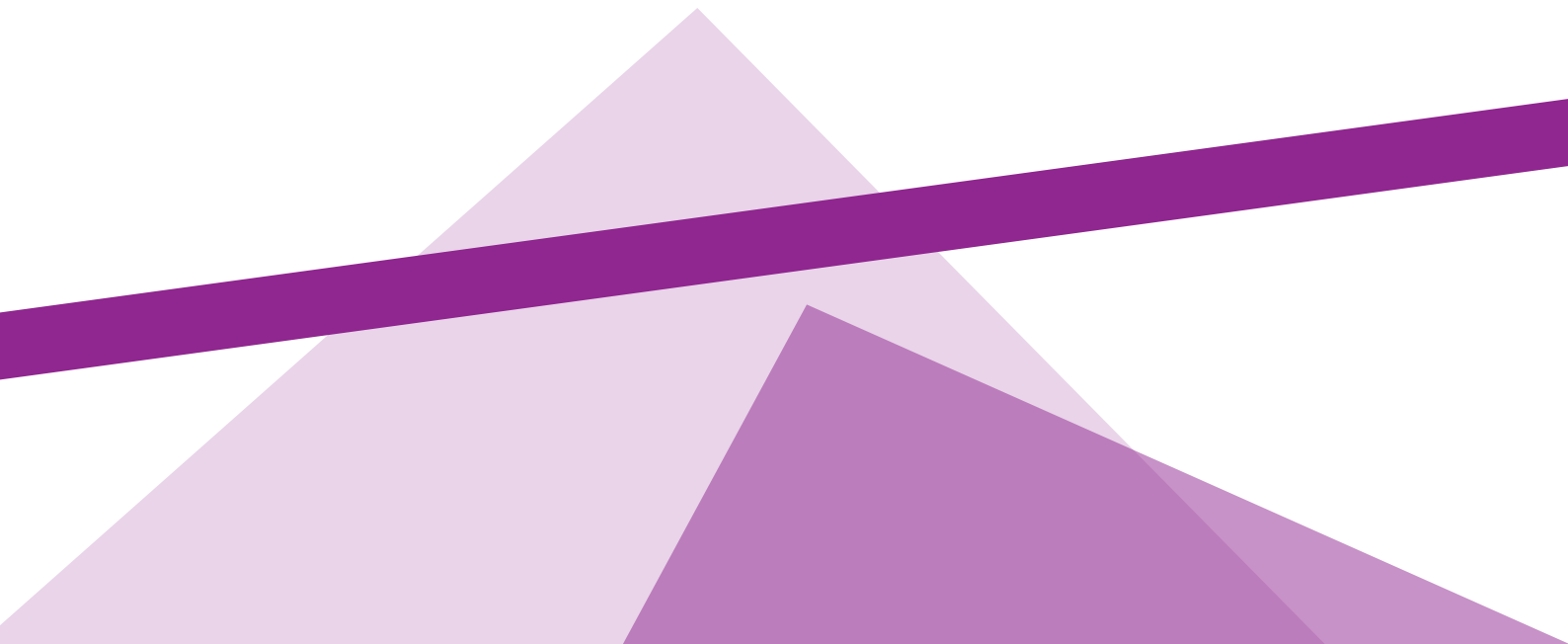
<b>Excellent</b>	outstanding, sector leading
<b>Very good</b>	major strengths
<b>Good</b>	important strengths with some areas for improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
<b>Weak</b>	important weaknesses
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	major weaknesses

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