

Services for children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway

16 April 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 and beyond if they have been looked after.

These inspections 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.

Inspection teams are multi-disciplinary. They 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, and young people? A guide to evaluating services using quality indicators' were used by the team of inspectors in their independent evaluation of the quality of services. We evaluated nine of the quality indicators on the six point scale as set out in the table in Appendix 1.

2. Background

The joint inspection of services for children and young people in the Dumfries and Galloway Community Planning Partnership area took place between January and February 2014. It covered the range of services in the area that have a role in providing services for children, young people and families.

We reviewed a wide range of documents and spoke to those with leadership and management responsibilities. We also talked to large numbers of staff who work directly with children, young people and families and observed some meetings. We reviewed practice through reading records held by services for a sample of 101 of the most vulnerable children and young people. Some children, young people and families also met with us. We are very grateful to everyone who talked to us as part of this inspection.

We also referred to a report of a joint inspection of services to protect children in the Dumfries and Galloway Council area published by HMIE in 2010 to consider what progress had been made in the areas for improvement outlined in that report. This report can be found at www.educationscotland.gov.uk

As the findings in this joint inspection of services for children and young people are based on a sample of children and young people, we 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

The Dumfries and Galloway Community Planning Partnership serves over 148,000 people, spread across the third largest geographical local authority area in Scotland. Families live in small towns or more rural communities. The main population and administrative centre is the town of Dumfries (population 31,630). By 2030, the population of the area is expected to fall by 3% from 2010 figures. Over the same period, the number of children under the age of 16 is also projected to fall by 2%. This is in contrast to Scotland as a whole, where these figures are both set to rise.



The Dumfries and Galloway **Community Planning Partnership** leads and directs community planning and has wide representation from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Partners are simplifying joint planning arrangements with the aim of creating a more efficient and streamlined approach to assist them in fulfilling their remit. This is reflected in the **Single Outcome Agreement** for 2013-2016, which identifies shared outcomes and aims to see work at pace to improve services and shift the focus of delivery towards prevention and early intervention.

Having published their Single Outcome Agreement, the Community Planning Partnership is starting to focus on implementation. A new **integrated children's services plan** is being developed to cover the period 2014-2017. This will play an important part in delivering change and improvement. The **Children's Services Executive Group** leading on services for children are seeking to realise the relevant priorities contained in the Single Outcome Agreement. These include:

- providing a good start in life for all our children
- preparing our young people for adulthood and employment
- ensuring that people and communities will be, and feel, safe and secure.

The Dumfries and Galloway Getting It Right For Every Child Practice Guidance was launched in April 2013. This outlines the shared approach to be adopted by staff across services in the implementation of **Getting it right for every child**. This guidance is intended to help them work together more effectively and to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Community Planning Partnerships bring together organisations in the area to plan services for the public.

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 Integrated Children's Services Plan is for services that work with children, young people and families in Dumfries and Galloway. It sets out shared priorities to improve outcomes for children and young people and what partners plan to do together to achieve these.

The Children's Services Executive Group is a multi-agency group of strategic leaders with responsibility for improving outcomes for children and young people through integrated children's services planning.

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

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

- Early identification of vulnerable pregnant women enabling them to benefit from additional help and support.
- Closing the attainment gap for the lowest achieving children and young people.
- Minimising delays for children who need permanent new families and providing continued support to adoptive families.
- Diverting young people away from offending and anti-social behaviour through engaging them positively in community activities.

5. Areas where action is needed to improve the wellbeing of children, young people and families

- Ensuring that children and young people are protected from abuse and neglect by appropriate and timely action, including the assessment of risks.
- Providing help and support at an early stage more consistently to vulnerable children, young people and families.
- Tackling priority areas of need to improve the life chances of looked after children, young people and care leavers.
- Implementing a quality assurance framework to achieve consistently high standards of practice.
- Strengthening collaborative leadership to plan and direct the delivery of integrated children's services and make measurable improvements in outcomes for children, young people and families.

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

Providing help and support at an early stage

This section considers how well staff recognise that something may be getting in the way of a child or young person's wellbeing, share information appropriately and provide support early to prevent difficulties arising or increasing.

Providing help and support at an early stage is adequate. Health and education staff have acquired a sound understanding of what is expected of them as a **Named Person** and are becoming more confident in this role. Education staff are helpfully building on their expertise in using **staged intervention** to identify a wider group of children and young people with additional support needs. Further training is underway to develop the skills of health staff in convening and chairing meetings as well as planning and evaluating the effectiveness of early intervention.

Overall, progress to embed the 'Getting it right for every child' approach in practice is still at an early stage.

Opportunities to respond to concerns about the wellbeing of children and young people are being missed. Planned observations of children and young people, including interactions between very young children and their parents, are not always used well enough to identify any changes in their wellbeing. Screening of **police child concerns** on a multi-agency basis has not yet been developed. As a result, services are unable to ensure that children and young people experiencing domestic abuse are provided with timely help and support.

The **Named Person** is a member of staff who has responsibility for ensuring that if something is getting in the way of a child or young person's wellbeing, appropriate action is taken. For babies and children in their early years the **Named Person** is the midwife or health visitor. For children of school age the **Named Person** is a teacher.

Staged Intervention is an approach used in schools to ensure that children and young people who need support for learning get the additional help they need.

Staff are not always confident about sharing information when there are lower level concerns about children and young people. This causes delays for some children and young people in getting the help they need. Staff, including those who work primarily with adults, need to be clearer about sharing information when an adult's difficulties have an adverse impact on the wellbeing of children in their care. Staff do not always ensure that they reach a shared understanding of the significance of the information they share and the actions that should follow.

Police child concerns are forms used by police officers when they identify concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person. They record relevant information to share with staff in other services in order to help children and young people get the help they need when they need it.

Information sharing systems are in place however, staff have become overly reliant on sharing information informally. The recording of information shared with other services is inconsistent. As a consequence, when staff share information about their concerns about children, they have no reliable means of knowing what information was shared previously. An inter-agency information sharing protocol is urgently required to enable staff to improve their practice.

Some families benefit from timely help and are successfully engaged in positive relationships with staff. Services are not always sufficiently flexible or do not sustain interventions for long enough to prevent difficulties getting worse. Some families are getting help at an early stage but this is not always well-coordinated or monitored to ensure its effectiveness.

Impact on children and young people

This section is about the extent to which children and young people are able to get the best start in life and the impact of services on their wellbeing. It is about how well children and young people are assisted to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.

Overall, the impact of services on improving the wellbeing of children and young people is adequate. A wide range of services including education, health, leisure and sport is successfully promoting the wellbeing of children and young people across Dumfries and Galloway. However, more vulnerable children and young people are not always assisted to get the best start in life. Some children and young people in need of protection remain at risk for too long. Looked after children and care leavers are not helped to progress sufficiently towards optimal physical and mental wellbeing.

Children and young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to keep themselves safe. Peer education is used imaginatively to communicate important messages about health and wellbeing. For example, in some schools young people staged a play to increase awareness among their peers of internet safety and child sexual exploitation. While some children and young people benefit greatly from successful approaches to promoting personal safety, others miss out. Some vulnerable children and young people do not receive the one-to-one help they need to keep themselves safe. Children and young people at risk of significant harm are not always kept safe by a timely and appropriate response. Homeless young people under 18 years of age are not supported well enough or provided with appropriate and safe accommodation, with many placed in bed and breakfast establishments and hostels.

Children and young people's healthy growth and development is promoted effectively by midwives, health visitors, school nurses and a range of specialist health services. They are actively encouraged to make healthy lifestyle choices. There is a larger than average number of children at risk of obesity who need better co-ordinated help to achieve a healthy weight. Children and young people at risk of the long term effects of neglect would benefit from a comprehensive medical assessment and follow through care to improve their health outcomes. Children and young people affected by parental substance misuse and those misusing substances experience effective specialist help. Children and young people often find it difficult to get appropriate therapeutic services to help them recover from trauma and abuse. Looked after children and care leavers experience inconsistencies in the help they receive to promote healthy growth and development.

Increased participation of families in early years services is improving young children's readiness for school. Children and young people benefit from strenuous efforts by staff to reduce exclusions and keep them in mainstream education. There are positive trends in closing the attainment gap for the lowest achieving children and young people and in positive school leaver destinations. Children's learning and social skills are improving through additional stimulation in the home, strengthened links between home and school and homework clubs. Young people benefit from a wide range of opportunities to broaden their achievements and gain work experience including an increasing number of modern apprenticeships in the public and private sectors. Approaches to help looked after children overcome barriers to becoming successful learners are not well enough matched to their diverse needs. Modern apprenticeships specifically for care leavers would help to improve their chances of achieving positive and sustained school leaver destinations.

Children and young people benefit from trusting relationships with staff in health and education services who get to know them and their parents well. Improvements in the wellbeing of children and young people looked after at home are variable. Some benefit from having a befriender or support from **Aberlour Futures** which supports young people experiencing difficulties that have a detrimental impact on their education. However, many do not get the compensatory emotional support they need. Children and young people are thriving in settled kinship and foster placements where they receive high quality, consistent care from trusted adults. Children needing permanent care have their life chances improved through being secured in alternative families as quickly as possible. Children benefit from helpful support after they have been adopted. Young people living in residential care are often placed too far away from their family, school and local community. Care leavers do not have sufficient housing options in areas where they have established support networks to help them make a success of living independently.

Aberlour Futures operates from bases in Dumfries, Annan and Stranraer and supports young people aged 11- 18 years of age experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties which impact on their education.

Children and young people are experiencing a greatly enhanced quality of life through involvement in sport, cultural and leisure opportunities. Many benefit significantly from extra-curricular activities outside of school hours and from the expansion of walkways and cycle paths.

Children with disabilities are supported well to join in summer play activities and other recreational pursuits. Young people value highly community facilities specifically designed for them such as the **Oasis Youth Centre**. Children and young people who are dependent on public transport experience barriers to their participation in a wider range of activities. Children and young people who are looked after and accommodated away from home are generally encouraged by carers and residential staff to develop their interests, hobbies and talents.

Oasis Youth Centre is run by a team of staff who carry out issue based work with young people. The facilities include a recording and rehearsal studio, dark room, performance area, drama/dance workshop area, café, computer room and meeting rooms.

Primary school aged children are confident that any incidents of bullying in schools will be dealt with effectively by staff. Young people in secondary schools have more mixed views. Children and young people with communication difficulties are helped to make effective use of communication aids. They are listened to carefully by staff who are sensitive to their needs. Young people who attend youth groups have a high level of awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Support groups for young carers help them to share their experiences and prevent them becoming overburdened by their additional responsibilities. Young people living in residential care are visited regularly by independent staff from a voluntary organisation to check on their safety and wellbeing. Many vulnerable children and young people would benefit from greater availability of independent support through **advocacy services**.



Advocacy services for children and young people provide an independent supporter to help them participate in decision-making that affects their lives and to have their views listened to and understood.

Children and young people participate in a wide range of initiatives to protect the environment and tackle inequalities. Young people benefit from widespread opportunities to volunteer which increases their skills and confidence in taking responsibility for themselves and others. Children and young people learn to view the role of police in their community positively through contact with community police officers in school. Young people at risk of involvement in antisocial behaviour experience very effective help from youth justice services enabling them to make better and safer choices. Children and young people living with kinship and foster carers and in residential placements respond positively to appropriate routines and boundaries. Young people with continued health and social care needs require more assistance to successfully manage the transition to using adult services.

Children and young people in rural areas benefit from **My Pod, the Mobile Youth Centre**. Young people with additional support needs are helpfully supported to increase their confidence, make friends and enhance their social skills. All children living with foster carers are placed within the local authority area with the council's own foster carers. They benefit from a service which maintains consistently high standards of care. Children and young people looked after away from home in residential care need placements closer to their community to promote continuity of family and peer relationships and schooling. Looked after children need more individual time spent with them to understand their past through life story work and help them develop a strong sense of identity and self-worth.

My Pod, the Mobile Youth Centre provides a mobile youth service which is designed to take services to and meet the needs of young people living in -rural areas.

Impact on families

This section is about the extent to which family wellbeing is being strengthened and families supported to become resilient and meet their own needs. It also considers parental confidence and the extent to which early intervention has a positive effect on family life.

The extent to which services are strengthening the wellbeing of families is adequate. Many families benefit from a range of community resources which are helping them to meet their own needs including mother and toddler groups, after school activities, library, play and leisure facilities.

Some families benefit from participating in very effective parenting programmes such as **Triple P, Incredible Years** and **Managing Teenage Behaviour**. Parents place a high value on opportunities to participate in these programmes and report that they are better able to manage their children's behaviour and meet their needs as a result. Support for parents who need additional help to develop their parenting skills is variable. Families are not always able to attend these programmes depending on availability and where they live.

Triple P, Incredible Years and Managing Teenage Behaviour are evidence-based parenting programmes recognised for their effectiveness. These help parents to care for and support their children at different stages.

Vulnerable pregnant women are identified early and many benefit from targeted support

to become better prepared to care for their babies. Young first time mothers are supported well by **Parents as First Teachers** which helps to increase their parenting confidence. For more vulnerable families, the quality of services they experience at an early stage is variable. Some families benefit from highly effective and intensive support which helps them cope better. **Aberlour Family Outreach** is a valuable support to children and young people affected by parental substance misuse. This is provided in some areas with plans for further expansion. Some families of children with disabilities are assisted helpfully by the provision of direct payments to purchase their own support services. Other families, including those living in more remote rural areas, often find it more difficult to obtain assistance at times and in places that are suitable. Difficulties for some families escalate while they wait for more appropriate help, sometimes reaching crisis point before they get this.

Parents as First Teachers provides parents with information support and encouragement to help their children develop as well as they can in their early years.

Aberlour Family Outreach supports children affected by parental substance misuse.

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

Planning services and involving children, young people, families and other stakeholders in service development

This section considers the extent to which integrated children's services planning and strategic planning to protect children is improving the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. It also examines the extent to which children, young people, families and other stakeholders are involved in policy, planning and service development.

The extent to which integrated children's services planning and the work of the **Child Protection Committee** is resulting in improvements in the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is weak.

The current integrated children's services plan was developed without a joint assessment of the needs of the child population as a means of identifying priority areas for improvement. The plan brings together some elements from single service plans and would benefit from a greater focus on promoting integrated services. It is limited in terms of content, scope and a shared approach to redirecting resources over time towards prevention and early intervention. The action plan is not focused on measurable outcomes within specified timescales. Reports on the progress of the plan make reference to a number of positive initiatives which are not set out in the plan. A Children's Services Executive Group has very recently been established to take forward the development of a new integrated children's services plan. Members of this group are able to make decisions about resourcing the plan. They recognise some of the shortcomings of the previous plan and are committed to developing more effective approaches to integrating services. The Children's Services Executive Group intends to involve staff in the development of the plan with the aim of achieving more widespread ownership. Partners need to introduce urgently a joint approach to identifying and mitigating risks for vulnerable children and young people.



The Child Protection Committee brings together all the organisations involved in protecting children in the area. Its purpose is to make sure local services work together to protect children from abuse and keep them safe.

The 2010 report on a joint inspection of services to protect children identified the need for the Child Protection Committee to clearly state priorities for action, monitor their implementation and ensure these are progressed well.

However, Child Protection Committee business plans have continued to contain an unrealistic number of actions which are not prioritised or taken forward effectively to improve practice. There is little evidence of effective joint working and a lack of constructive challenge. The development of performance management information about key processes has not been taken forward and **joint self-evaluation** has not been used effectively to secure improvements. There is limited quantitative and qualitative information being collated and analysed from which to report annually to the public and provide assurance that children and young people are protected from abuse and neglect.

Children, young people and families have not yet been involved meaningfully in integrated children's services planning or the work of the Child Protection Committee. The participation of children, young people, families and other stakeholders in policy, planning and service development is adequate. Positive examples of engagement and participation are demonstrated in **Schools for the Future** and the **Early Years Collaborative**. The **Youth Involvement Framework**, developed in partnership with young people, is beginning to strengthen their voices in decision making at a local, regional and national level. Some very effective **Pupil Councils** are having a positive impact on the life of their school and local community. These could be linked more closely to local democratic processes. High profile youth events such as the **Youth Summit Conference** held in August 2013 gathered young people's views successfully. Community Planning Partners recognise they have further work to do to show how young people's views contribute to service improvements.

Joint self-evaluation helps staff to reflect together on the effectiveness of their work. It means taking a close look at what services have done, how well they have done it and the difference they have made to people's wellbeing. It is important because it helps staff identify clearly where they need to make improvements.

Schools for the Future for Dumfries and Galloway is about the development of a campus in Dalbeattie which includes a nursery, primary and secondary school and is supported by the Scottish Government.

Early Years Collaboratives are committed to ensuring that every baby, child, mother and father in Scotland has access to the best possible support available to help children get the best start in life.

Youth Involvement Framework provides a forum for young people to work with elected members to take forward issues and priorities identified by children and young people in their local areas.

Pupil Councils involve children and young people in decision making about improving their school and community.

A Youth Summit Conference brought young people together from across the local authority area to help shape the content of the youth vision and strategy.

The **Listen2Us** initiative is helping a group of looked after young people and care leavers to consult on the experiences and views of looked after children. There has been significant delay in partners setting up a Champions Board for elected members to find out from looked after children what they can do to improve their life chances. The team which works with care leavers does not systematically collate their views to provide evidence of what is working well for them and what needs to improve.

Listen2Us initiative helps young people who are looked after and care leavers to influence the development of services through collating and sharing their views and experiences.

Assessing and responding to risks and needs and planning for individual children and young people

This section examines the quality of assessments of risks and needs in relation to three themes. These are the initial response to concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children; the effectiveness of chronologies of significant events in a child's life and the quality of assessments. It also considers the quality of children's plans and the effectiveness of arrangements to review them.

Assessing and responding to risks and needs is unsatisfactory. Staff take action to secure the safety of most children and young people when they are at risk of significant harm. However, they do not always recognise the seriousness or immediacy of risks to some of the most vulnerable children and young people. As a result, the effectiveness of the initial response to children and young people's safety and wellbeing is inconsistent. **Initial referral discussions** have not been operating effectively to involve health staff alongside police and social workers in jointly assessing and responding to risks. Staff do not always carry out the necessary checks on the suitability of family members when children and young people are placed with them on an emergency basis.

Initial Referral Discussions involve staff from health, police and social work in sharing information and planning an appropriate and timely response to child protection concerns.

Staff have received guidance to assist them in compiling chronologies of significant events in a child's life. However, they seldom make use of these as a tool to identify emerging patterns of risk or escalating concerns. Instead, each new concern tends to be viewed in isolation. This means that some children and young people remain in situations which place them at risk for too long.

Staff, managers and independent chairs of case conferences show a limited appreciation of how rapidly levels of risk to children and young people's safety and wellbeing can change. The impact of exposure to repeated incidents of domestic abuse, poor parenting and neglect are not examined carefully enough, and, as a result, the associated risks can be underestimated. There are lengthy delays in completing comprehensive assessments of risks and needs. The quality of assessments of risks and needs is highly variable. While there are notable examples of individual staff carrying out assessments of risks and needs of an acceptable standard or better in some cases, this level of competence is not widespread.

Planning for individual children and young people is adequate. Nearly all children and young people identified as needing additional help and support have a plan to improve aspects of their wellbeing. Education staff involve children, young people and parents well in constructing outcome focused individualised education plans which are easy for them to understand. Their skills could be utilised to help draw up plans to improve children and young people's wellbeing more widely. Overall, the quality of plans is too variable.

The child's plan is not developed through joint working, or, in partnership with children, young people and parents. Plans are often too vague to allow progress for the child or young person to be measured at specified intervals. Too much weight is often placed on parents' stated intention to change rather than evidence of actual improvement in the child's circumstances. When children's names are removed from the **Child Protection Register**, intensive involvement is frequently withdrawn too soon to be sure that improvements are sustained.

The 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.

Child Protection Register is a register of the names of children, including unborn babies, who are known to be at risk of abuse and harm and are the subject of a Child Protection Plan.

The way staff go about making plans is stronger in practice than is reflected in their records. For example, staff are involved in a wide range of activities to promote children and young people's wellbeing but these are not detailed or coordinated through the child's plan.

A range of meetings to review the circumstances of individual children and young people, such as **core group meetings**, review child protection case conferences and review meetings for children looked after away from home take place regularly within agreed timescales. These are chaired by staff who are independent. More could be done to strengthen the way in which they ensure outstanding actions are seen through to completion and acceptable standards of practice are maintained. Children, young people and parents would benefit from being involved more routinely in reviewing the help they receive.

Core Group Meetings involve identified members of staff coming together regularly with the child or young person, their parents and carers to make sure that the Child Protection Plan is working well to keep the child or young person safe and meet their needs.

Foster carers are supported effectively to develop their skills in improving the wellbeing of children and young people in their care and to report on the progress children and young people are making. Effective management of **permanency planning** ensures that children and young people who need new families are identified early and are secured in their future placements as quickly as possible. There are positive examples of children and young people benefiting from contact arrangements to help them maintain relationships with brothers and sisters who live elsewhere. There is room to improve the plans to ensure continuity of schooling and transitions into positive school leaver destinations for children and young people who are looked after away from home.

Permanency Planning describes the procedures carried out by staff to secure children and young people in placements with kinship carers, foster carers and adoptive parents.

Other important ways in which services are working together to meet the needs of children, young people and families

This section considers aspects of involving children, young people and families; specifically seeking and recording the views of children and young people and their participation in key processes. It also examines the effectiveness of quality assurance in setting and reviewing standards, establishing systems and processes and achieving consistency.

Most children and young people enjoy regular and helpful opportunities to speak with staff about their circumstances. Staff listen to them and take their views seriously. However, the recording of these views is variable. Children living in residential units and a few children whose names are on the Child Protection Register benefit from independent supporters from **Barnardo's Hear4U** who advocate effectively on their behalf. This is helping them to participate more meaningfully in meetings and decision making about their lives. Children and young people in foster and kinship care and those looked after at home would also benefit from this service. Overall, staff need to pay more attention to explaining decisions, and the reasons for them, to children and young people. Frequent changes of social worker, in some cases, make it difficult for looked after children and young people to build trusting relationships. Some children and young people whose names are on the Child Protection Register or who are looked after would benefit from more regular one-to-one contact with their social worker.

There are insufficient systems and processes in place at all levels to support rigorous quality assurance in the delivery of key processes. **Children's Reporters** have to request additional information frequently due to the poor quality of many of reports. The findings of case file audits and two recent significant case reviews have repeatedly identified variable standards of practice as a priority area for improvement.

Barnardo's Hear4U provides independent supporters known as advocacy workers for children and young people aged under 18 years who are looked after and accommodated in residential placements and for those whose names are on the Child Protection Register.

Children's Reporters decide when children and young people need to go to a Children's Hearing because they may be in need of compulsory measures of supervision.

However, this has not resulted in effective action to address these deficiencies. Staff are unclear what standard of work is expected of them when working together on complex high risk cases.

8. How good is the leadership and direction to improve services and achieve better outcomes for children and families?

Leadership and direction

This section is about the extent to which collaborative leadership is improving outcomes for children, young people and families. It comments on the effectiveness of the shared vision, values and aims, leadership and direction and leadership of people. It also examines how well leaders are driving forward improvement and change.

A renewed vision for achieving positive outcomes for children by ensuring they get the right help at the right time was created in 2013 as part of the Single Outcome Agreement. Realising this vision will be dependent on developing a much stronger child centred ethos by Community Planning Partners. More visible and collaborative leadership is needed to promote partnership working and create the cultural change necessary to deliver the shared aim of a locality model of integrated children's services. Staff, children, young people and families have not been involved sufficiently in the development of the vision for services for children. The long standing issue of equality of access to services for children across the area remains a challenge and has not yet been tackled effectively.

There are a few notable examples where individual managers are successfully driving up standards and achieving continuous improvement. However, greater shared accountability and responsibility for improving outcomes for children and young people is now needed. Some areas requiring improvement have remained the same over a prolonged period while others have deteriorated further. A report of a joint inspection of services to protect children set out a number of agreed areas for improvement. These included the need to ensure children and families get help and support early enough to prevent difficulties arising or increasing; improve outcomes by ensuring staff provide a good quality of service more consistently across the area; and the need to ensure that planned improvements result in better outcomes for children and families. Very limited progress has been made in these areas. Performance in assessing risks and responding to children in need of protection has declined.

Partners tend to focus on the changes required within their individual services rather than delivering improved outcomes for children and young people through collaborative working. They meet to report on what they are doing in their individual services but do

not work together effectively to achieve shared priorities. Effective partnership working based on trusting relationships and a preparedness to challenge each other constructively is at an early stage of development. This has been a barrier to the successful implementation of the Getting it right for every child approach. Partners now recognise that they do not have sufficient performance management information from which to assure themselves that at risk children and young people are protected. They have not made it their business to know enough about the quality of services for children in need of protection and looked after children and care leavers.

Many staff on the ground are working well together and making a positive difference to the lives of children, young people and families. They need more support through regular and challenging supervision to develop their practice. Multi-agency practitioner forums would benefit from improvement in order to provide staff with regular opportunities to reflect on their practice. Leaders and managers need to place a greater emphasis on tackling variable standards of practice and challenging poorer practices. Partners need to work more closely together to resolve staffing shortages and jointly plan and develop the workforce to deliver children's services. There is a need to strengthen the professional leadership of children and families social work services. Action is being taken to recruit senior posts to a newly approved structure in an effort to address this.

Leadership of improvement and change is weak. Partners recognise the need to challenge each other more effectively based on more meaningful performance management information. They need to do more to deliver continuous improvement through leading and co-ordinating joint self-evaluation. The implementation of good practice from elsewhere is hampered as the changes necessary are not always seen through to completion. The Chief Executive of the NHS helpfully commissioned independent consultants to review child protection arrangements within health services which has led to some important changes in practice. However, the CPC on behalf of Chief Officers, did not seek independent expert advice when faced with a highly concerning pattern of non-accidental injuries to very young children. Partners now need to seek support and challenge from nationally recognised experts to carry out the necessary actions to effect urgent change and improvement.

9. Key performance outcomes

Improving the wellbeing of children and young people

This section considers improvements in outcomes Community Planning Partners have achieved in relation to three themes. These are improving trends through prevention and early intervention; improvements in outcomes for children and young people and improvements in the life chances of vulnerable children and young people.

In summary, performance in improving outcomes for children and young people is weak. The Community Planning Partnership is committed to improving better outcomes for all children and reducing inequalities in the life chances of vulnerable children and young people. There are encouraging trends in aspects of children and young people's health and wellbeing, closing outcome gaps in educational attainment and positive destinations for young people leaving school. Diversionary activities and engagement of young people in positive citizenship is resulting in improved trends in anti-social and offending behaviour. However, partners are unable to demonstrate the extent to which the wellbeing of children and young people has improved through prevention and early intervention. The Child Protection Committee gathers a wide range of information about children and young people at risk. This data is not analysed in a meaningful way to allow partners to demonstrate improved performance. As corporate parents, partners are currently unable to fulfil their responsibilities by showing the extent to which they have improved the life chances of looked after children, young people and care leavers. Community Planning Partners recognise the need to take appropriate steps to work together to focus on identifying and developing shared outcome indicators and stretching targets that will support them to jointly measure improving trends over time.

10. Conclusion and areas of improvement

Based on the findings of this joint inspection, inspectors are not confident that all children and young people are receiving timely and effective help to keep them safe. Community Planning Partners should, as a matter of urgency, work together to ensure that children and young people are protected and their needs met.

Partners must ensure that they deliver on important aspects of services for children where the pace of change has been unacceptably slow. They should implement effective strategies to provide help and support to children, young people and families at an early stage and to fulfil their corporate parenting responsibilities. Community Planning Partners should ensure that:

- children and young people are protected from abuse and neglect by appropriate and timely actions, including the assessment of risks
- vulnerable children, young people and families get the help they need at an early stage
- priority areas of need are tackled successfully to improve the life chances of looked after children, young people and care leavers
- consistently high standards of work are achieved through the implementation of an effective quality assurance framework
- stronger collaborative leadership to plan and direct the delivery of integrated children's services results in measurable improvements in outcomes for children, young people and families.

10. What happens next?

The Care Inspectorate will ask the Dumfries and Galloway 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 will revisit the Dumfries and Galloway Community Planning Partnership area within six months to report on progress in relation to the areas for improvement identified.

Emma McWilliam
Inspection Lead
April 2014

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.

How well are the lives of children and young people improving?	
Providing help and support at an early stage	Adequate
Impact on children and young people	Adequate
Impact on families	Adequate
How well are services working together to improve the lives of children, young people and families?	
Planning and improving services	Weak
Participation of children, young people, families and other stakeholders	Adequate
Assessing and responding to risks and needs	Unsatisfactory
Planning for individual children	Adequate
How good is the leadership and direction of services for children and young people?	
Leadership of improvement and change	Weak
Improving the wellbeing of children and young people	Weak

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

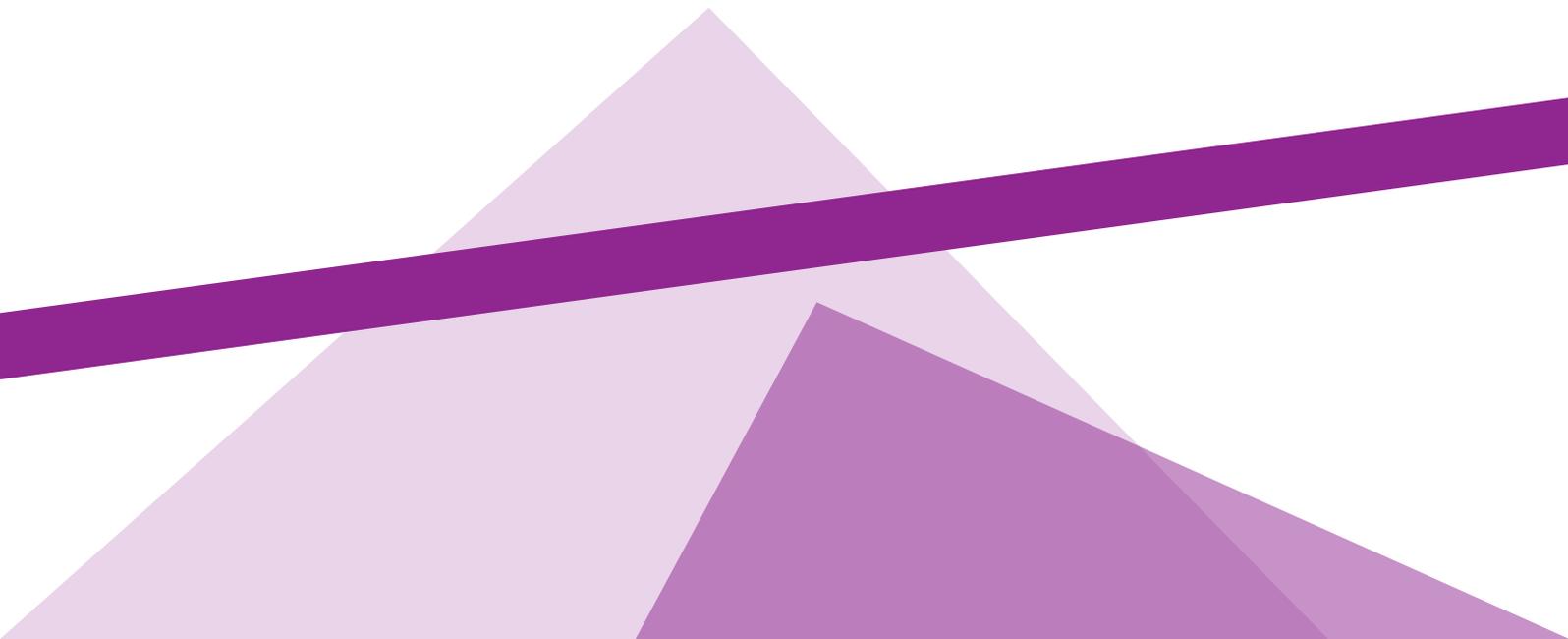
Excellent	outstanding, sector leading
Very good	major strengths
Good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
Adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak	important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

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