

## TORBAY COUNCIL

Report No: **114/2005**

Title: **Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) Report – Inspection of Children’s Services Torbay Council**

To: Executive on 17th May 2005

---

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To inform the Executive of the outcome of the Inspection into Children’s Services and to publish the findings of the Report and agree the Action Plan set out in Appendix 2 to this Report as the Council’s Formal Response to the Inspection.

### **2. Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 2.1 This Inspection addresses one of the key Council Priorities contained within the Community Plan, namely “Improving Health and Social Care in Torbay”. The Report is also relevant to other Corporate Priorities including “Placing Learning at the Heart of Your Community” and “ Making Torbay a Safer Place”.
- 2.2 This Report also comments on the Council’s ability to fulfil its Statutory Responsibilities towards Looked After Children as Corporate Parents, to ensure effective implementation of the Children Act 2004 within Torbay and how well the Council has responded to the recommendations arising from Lord Laming’s Report into the death of Victoria Climbié. The Report will be an important aid in developing Children’s Services in Torbay.

### **3. Recommendation(s)**

- 3.1 That the findings of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) Report dated January 2005 regarding Children’s Services, as set out in Appendix 1 to this Report, be accepted;
- 3.2 That the Action Plan set out in Appendix 2 to this Report be adopted as the Council’s Formal Response to the Inspection Report;
- 3.3 That the Commission for Social Care Inspection Report and Action Plan be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for further consideration and monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan;
- 3.3 That the financial implications associated with the Report’s Recommendations and their implementation be approved; and
- 3.4 That the short term funding proposals required to meet the costs of implementation in 2005/2006 be approved and that future years funding be considered as part of the budget setting process.

### **4. Reason for Recommendation(s)**

- 4.1 The recommendations made in paragraph 3 will ensure that the Council meets it’s Statutory requirements in relation to the Inspection Report and implement its findings and recommendations.

## 5. Key Risks associated with the Recommendation(s)

- 5.1 Should the Council not implement the Findings and Recommendations outlined within the Report from CSCI this will adversely effect the Council's Star Rating Performance for Children's Social Care and therefore effect the CPA Performance of the Council. It would also miss the opportunity to develop four services to children and young people.
- 5.2 The Report highlights a number of areas that have financial implications. Some of these will be covered by plans to develop services using specific grants such as Safeguarding Children, Choice protects and Change Fund Grant. However implementation of the action plan will also require a significant increase in revenue in a number of areas including;
- Medium term placement strategy to expand options in-house fostering and residential services (£80,000)
  - Extending the capacity of the Family Group Conferencing Service (£62,000)
  - Implementation of Recruitment and Retention Plan (£78,000)
  - Extending the capacity of Independent Reviewing Service (£46,000)
  - Advocacy service for children with a disability (£20,000)
  - Extending complaints service and dedicated file access, Freedom of Information Service (£45,000)
  - Expansion of the Care to Community Service to deliver reduction in unallocated CLA cases (£44,000)
- 5.3 The financial investment required to implement the Inspection Action Plan will;
- Form an invest to save strategy that will reduce the numbers of looked after children in Torbay and reduce the number of placements within the independent sector to achieve a balanced budget within children's social care by March 2007.
  - Ensure Torbay Council meets statutory requirements.
  - Improve service performance to positively contribute towards the Annual Performance Assessment and star rating of children's services.

Likelihood	6	6	12	18	24
	5	5	10	15	20
	4	4	8	12	16X
	3	3	6	9	12
	2	2	4	6	8
	1	1	2	3	4
		1	2	3	4
		Impact			

Low risk
  Intermediate risk
  High risk

The "x" in the above matrix denotes where the author has assessed the level of final risk to fall

## 6. Alternative Options (if any)

- 6.1 The Council has a Statutory duty to consider the Report from the Commission for Social Care Inspection and to publish the Report with its Recommendations. The Action Plan in Appendix 2 of this Report sets out the most appropriate action required to meet the recommendations within the Report.

## **7. Background**

7.1 The Inspection of Torbay's Children's Social Care Service took place between the 10th and 21st January 2005 as part of a National Programme of local Inspections and was carried out by two Inspectors. The Inspection addressed a number of key themes including;

- How well the Council is working towards meeting National Priorities and Strategic Objectives.
- The effectiveness of the Council's delivery of children's services and outcomes for children, users and carers.
- The quality of services provided to users and carers within Torbay.
- Whether access to children's social care services are fair, consistent and inclusive.
- That services are provided efficiently and economically.
- How well services and resources are managed.

7.2 The overall judgement was that Torbay Council are "Serving some people well" with "Promising prospects for improvement". The overall judgement is therefore an improvement from the last Inspection of Children's Service in July 2001 where the Council was judged to be serving some people well with uncertain prospects for improvement.

7.3 This Report summarises some of the key strengths and areas for development highlighted by the Inspectors. Appendix 2 contains the Council's Action Plan in response to the Recommendations made within the Report which the Executive is asked to endorse. The Report also identifies a number of areas that will have implications for the Council's medium term financial plan.

7.4 The Report states that progress since the 2001 Inspection has been slow but that there is evidence of improvement in terms of progress made during the last 3 years. The Report highlights a number of areas including;

- "Effective joint planning and development work through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership had occurred, e.g. Children's Fund and Information Sharing and Assessment (ISA) developments."
- "There was close attention to the Performance Indicators relating to National Objectives for Social Services and general improvements had occurred within a number of these."

7.5 In relation to effectiveness of service delivery and outcomes the Inspectors found;

- "Service users were however generally positive and appreciative of Family Centre and Residential Care staff and services provided. Similarly children and parents very positively regarded the Family Group Conference Service."
- "Services for Care Leavers were judged to be generally comprehensive and effective."

However areas for development included;

- "The number of children Looked After had not significantly reduced over the past 3 years. In-house foster placement choice was limited particularly for young people and sibling groups."
- "There was no Policy or Procedure in relation to the 1991 Private Fostering Regulations. Most staff are unaware of current private fostering arrangements. This was a serious omission and required urgent attention with focused management attention oversight."

7.6 In relation to the quality of services for users and carers the Report noted.

- “We found the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) had provided much continuity and effective quality monitoring for children Looked After. Reviews of children Looked After were 100% on time.”
- “All child protection cases were allocated and timescale for Child Protection Reviews had significantly improved from very poor performance in the period 2003/04.”

Areas for improvement included;

- “The Council had experienced consistent difficulty in the recruitment of qualified staff which had led to 25% children Looked After being allocated to unqualified staff.”
- “There were significant and often considerable delays in meeting initial and core assessment timescales.”
- “We found an insufficient understanding of Child Protection Procedures within a number of teams. Capacity problems at Service Manager level had led to uncertain child protection practice in the Intake Team.”

7.7 With reference to the Council providing fair access to services the Inspectors commented;

- “Positively, 14 young disabled people and parent carers were in receipt of direct payments.”
- “A multi-agency transition policy was in place for young people with a disability although it required continued development.”

Areas for development included;

- Eligibility for services (to disabled children) were not publicised and thresholds for service delivery were set high and required review.”
- “There was also no advocacy service for children and young people with a disability.”

7.8 In relation to cost and efficiency the Report noted;

- “Arrangements for financial accountability were clear. Regular budget monitoring was established with a particular focus on monitoring arrangements for out of authority and independent fostering agency placements.”

However it was also noted that;

- “The budget setting process was unclear and was not properly based on an accurate evaluation of need or priority in the medium term.”

7.9 The final area considered by the Inspection was the management of resources;

- “Councillors had a clear vision of how they wanted to see services for children develop and were well informed. Scrutiny arrangements were in place and working well.”
- “From the Autumn of 2006 PARIS was likely to provide significant enhanced management information capacity as well as the ability to meet forthcoming information support and assessment (ISA) requirements.”
- “A range of Procedures and Policies had been developed and were available to staff on the Intranet. There were plans to update these in line with the new Children Act 2004 Guidance on Regulation.”

Areas for further development will include;

- “File audit and developing a robust quality assurance programme required systematic development.”

- 7.10 The Formal Response to the Report's Recommendations is set out within the Action Plan in Appendix 2. The Executive is asked to take note of this Action Plan and to endorse it. Monitoring of the implementation of the Inspection Action Plan will be undertaken through regular Reports to the Lead Member for Children, Senior Management Review and through the Children's Services Performance Board.
- 7.11 The estimated cost of the proposals to rectify the weaknesses identified by the Inspectorate is £0.375m in a full year. Whilst the Inspectorate has not given a formal indication as to when these changes should be implemented, a clear indication has been given that progress should be made in the current financial year. The council will be re-inspected in late 2006 as part of the Joint Area Review as part of the wider inspection of children's services.
- 7.12 As the report has only recently been released the additional costs arising from the proposals were not identified when the budget for the current year was agreed and therefore there is no provision available. Similarly grants the council is receiving in respect of these services have been reviewed and where possible these are being utilised to meet some of the recommendations, as will be noted in Appendix 2. However the items listed in paragraph 5.2 can not be covered by this source of funding.
- 7.13 At this stage of the financial year it is not anticipated there will be any savings arising to meet these costs, especially given the reductions being implemented recently to meet the original target.
- 7.14 It is estimate that an additional £0.2m will be required in the current year with the full impact of the proposals being felt in 2006/07. The ongoing costs for 2006/07 onwards, if the recommendations are agreed, will need to be dealt with as part of the 2006/07 budget round.
- 7.15 There are no simple solutions though for the current year, nor for future years if the financial outlook does not indicate new resources will be available for the council or resources can be re-directed to meet these costs. The sums required if approved, in the current year would consume virtually the whole of the contingency if this was applied for this purpose. At this stage of the financial year such an allocation seriously expose the council to financial difficulties if it had other difficulties later in the year.
- 7.16 The options have been discussed with the Director of Finance regarding the funding of the proposals during 2005/06, if the recommendations are accepted. Recognising that the recommendation will also form part of an “invest to save” strategy thus reducing the number of children being taken into relatively expensive care, it is proposed that a sum of £0.2m be advanced from the Reserves during 2005/06 and this sum to be repaid over the four following years to make good the Reserves.
- 7.17 As stated above the funding for 2006/07 will be considered as part of the 2006/07 budget round. If the funding for these objectives are not available then compensating reductions will have to be identified from lower priorities to meet these costs, assuming that the council agrees the scheme is of a high priority.

**8. Conclusion**

The overall picture for children's social care is that there have been improvements, but there is still some way to go. However with sufficient investment, continued diligence and integration with other children's services, there is the capacity for continued improvement.

Contact Officer: Margaret Dennison  
Director for Social Inclusion  
Telephone no. 8400

## **IMPLICATIONS, CONSULTATION AND OTHER INFORMATION**

### Part 1

These sections may have been completed by the Report author but must have been agreed by the named officers in the Legal, Finance, Human Resources, Estates and Property and Procurement.

Does the proposal have implications for the following issues? If "Yes" - give details. <i>delete as appropriate</i>		Name of responsible officer
Legal	Yes. The Council has a duty to consider the CSCI report and the recommendations contained within the report.	Lorna Lee
Financial – Revenue	Yes. Set out in the report.	Richard Thorpe
Financial – Capital Plan	No	Richard Thorpe
Human resources	Yes. Recruitment of staff to address vacancies is a critical priority.	Geoff Williams
Property	No	Richard Thorpe
Procurement and Efficiency	Yes. All services will need to review effectiveness in line with efficiency and this may help address the funding gap identified.	Clare Armour

### Part 2

The author of the report must complete these sections.

Could this proposal realistically be achieved in a manner that would more effectively: <i>delete as appropriate</i>		
(i)	promote environmental sustainability?	No
(ii)	reduce crime and disorder?	No
(iii)	promote good community relations?	No
(iv)	promote equality of opportunity on grounds of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief?	No
(v)	reduce (or eliminate) unlawful discrimination (including indirect discrimination)?	No

If the answer to any of the above questions is "Yes" the author must have addressed the relevant issue/s in the main report and have included a full justification and, where appropriate, an impact assessment.

### Part 3

The author of the report must complete this section.

	<i>delete as appropriate</i>	If "Yes", give details
Does the proposal have implications for any other Business Units?	No	

#### Part 4

Is this proposal in accordance with (i.e. not contrary to) the Council's budget or its Policy Framework?	<i>delete as appropriate</i>
	Yes
1.	If "No" - give details of the nature and extent of consultation with stakeholders and the relevant overview and scrutiny body.
2.	If "Yes" - details and outcome of consultation, if appropriate.  Consultation undertaken as part of the Inspection process with service users and key stakeholders.

#### Part 5

Is the proposal a Key Decision?	<i>delete as appropriate</i>	If "Yes" - give Reference Number
	Yes	X11/2005

#### Part 6

##### **Wards**

All

##### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 Report from Commission for Social Care and Inspection (CSCI) – Inspection of Children's Services Torbay Council January 2005
- Appendix 2 Action Plan in response to the Inspection of Torbay Council's Children's Services

##### **Documents available in Members' Room**

None

##### **Background Papers:**

The following documents/files were used to compile this report:

Report from Commission for Social Care and Inspection (CSCI) – Inspection of Children's Services Torbay Council January 2005