

Title: Update Report – Children’s Services

Wards Affected: All

To: Health and Wellbeing Board **On:** 17 July 2013

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1. Achievements since last meeting

1.1 Children’s Partnership Improvement Plan:

A refocused and restructured has begun. The new plan (called CPIP 5) will focus on 5 main areas that will further embed the improvements made and move the partnership forward.

1. Performance

The early part of 2013/14 has seen many of the positive trends continue with the number of children with a child protection plan continuing to fall. The number of children in care is also starting to decrease.

Assessment timeliness is improving but at a slower rate because of sickness, agency managers moving on and a spike in referral activity. This spike has been corroborated by partners who have also noted similar increases. Permanent managers have started in the initial response team which will aid the short to medium term recovery.

The main performance themes and headlines are:

- Referral rates increased sharply in May which has been noted by other partners.
- Triaging decisions within the hub continue to match and exceed benchmarks for the % of referrals going on to social care despite the recent upturn.
- Re-referral rates continue to demonstrate the positive medium to long term impact of the improvements although, May saw a slight increase related to the spike in referrals for this month.
- The timeliness of assessment was lower in May. This has been caused because of a spike in activity, the move on of agency managers and absence of key staff during this latest period. The lack of consistent management cover has now been addressed with the appointment of 2

permanent IRT managers who took up their posts in late June. This will positively contribute to the short to medium term recovery of assessment timeliness that now must also address the increases in case loads caused by this spike in activity.

- Torbay's relatively high levels of core and initial assessment activity are continuing. More time is needed to assess if the recent spike of assessment activity will be a sustained one.
- The total number of children in need is in line with comparable authorities.
- New CAF's initiated in month have spiked upward in line with the increase in statutory assessment work.
- The timeliness of ICPCs continues to be in line with the best performance nationally and has recovered from the lower performance reported during the later part of 2012/13.
- Although the volume of Section 47 investigations fell last year, Torbay is still completing more than statistical neighbours. The figures so far for 2013/14 indicate that this higher volume is continuing.
- Supervision compliance has improved to 80% in some teams but remains an area for further improvement in the permanence team. This is being addressed with the replacement of an agency manager by a permanent member of staff (in the interim).
- Child protection numbers continue to fall. If this trend continues, Torbay will be on track to match similar authorities in 2013/14.
- The number and proportion of children on plans for more than 18 months has reduced.
- Children in care numbers have decreased to 289.

Average caseload numbers continue to be in line with the expected target apart from the 2 Initial Response Team pods which are responding to a recent spike in the number of referrals meeting the threshold for assessment.

2.1 The five main projects with CPIP 5 are outlined below

- **Project 1** Developing organisational infrastructure, business planning and Quality Assurance. This will address the embedding of a quality assurance culture that feed a new business and service planning approach. It will also address thematic issues such as information sharing.
- **Project 2** Improving Safeguarding and Wellbeing. This project will embed the recommendations made by Ofsted and oversee the development and implementation of a single assessment framework and the ongoing improvement of adoption and fostering provision.
- **Project 3** Budget recovery. This project will monitor and track all the activity that will deliver managed reductions in spend and the completion of the recruitment and retention work started under CPIP 7.
- **Project 4** School Improvement. Focusing on the ongoing role of the Authority in developing and maintaining standards of attainment this project will address the delivery of the changes under the Children and Families bill; the Virtual school; and support to underperforming schools.
- **Project 5** Development and Implementation of a Joint Commissioning strategy. This project will identify opportunities for greater shared commissioning solutions with health and others. It will also include the use

of new funding streams i.e. social finance and will work with voluntary and private sector partners to deliver the Poverty commission's plans.

- 2.2 CPIP 7 has been closed having achieved 81% of all the 100s of actions it was set up to complete. 27 of the 34 work packages within CPIP 7 are also now closed. The remaining 7 work packages from the old programme will transition to CPIP 5.

3. **Monitoring the impact**

- 3.1 The impact of the changes is being monitored and checked in the following ways –

- **Formal reviews** have been set over the coming 6 to 12 months to examine the longer term impact of the changes made by each work package.
- The **report card** continues which will be monitored by both the Children Partnership Improvement Executive and Children Services Management team. The report card will also continue to be developed with the addition of more information relating to early help.
- **Impact checks** on social care practice will also be completed via a dip sample of cases that will also be reported to both the Improvement Executive and the Children's Management team.
- **Case audits** - routine case audits by practice managers and SLT continue.
- **Programme management** - as before, each work package will only be signed off once progress on the stated outcomes has been tested out and assured.

4. **Challenges for the next three months**

- 4.1 The formal protocol establishing the relationship between the HWBB and the LSCB has been reviewed following comments and is attached as an appendix 1. The LSCB has recently entered into the recruitment of a new Chair and this should be completed in the near future. Once appointed, it will be essential that the current LSCB structures are reviewed to prepare it for the ongoing challenges of monitoring and evaluating safeguarding across Torbay.

- 4.2 The appointment of the new Chair of the LSCB, the establishment of the new Lead Member for Children's Services and the appointment of the Executive Director for Operations and Finance to the Local Authority will all contribute to a sustainable future for the governance of safeguarding for children in Torbay. It is proposed to review these arrangements in the Autumn and if satisfied the DfE will remove the Local Authority from intervention. It is important to recognise the valuable contribution made by the previous post-holders of the above positions to the improvement agenda.

5. **Action Required by Partners**

- 5.1 Children's Services is currently facing increasing demands in the numbers and complexity of cases being held within its services. To respond to this

many of those services that have traditionally worked within the early intervention agenda have become focussed on a more targeted approach. This will in time ensure that Children's needs can effectively be met either just before they reach statutory intervention or will receive appropriate statutory intervention to ensure they can be stepped down. However, within this approach a gap has been left behind that needs to be filled with a new approach. This will be led by the Community Hub initiative that is being presented later on the agenda. How agencies work together to support children and families at the earliest opportunity is still the key to successful outcomes. This can only be achieved through a co-ordinated multi-agency approach. The success of this approach is both for the children themselves but also for agencies in the decreasing need for crisis intervention.

Appendix 1: Torbay Safeguarding Children Board (TSCB) paper "Protocol between TSCB and Torbay Health and Wellbeing Board