



**Torbay Education
Safeguarding Service**
Because every child matters



Schools Forum - 30th November 2017

Torbay Education Safeguarding Service (TESS) Progress Report

1. Purpose of report.

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview and summary of progress and developments to the Schools Forum since the last report produced in February 2017. Previous reports have tended to consist of my reporting of TESS activity with little or no contribution from those who TESS are delivering services to. This year I have tried to capture the views of Children's Services and Schools – this has led to a slightly longer report, however, it would seem important to understand the impact of TESS particularly as we enter the last academic year of guaranteed funding. The following paragraphs capture the views and impact of each service area.

2. Children's Services – MASH and Targeted/Early Help

2.1 MASH

"MASH continue to value the presence, input and perspectives TESS can bring to the multi-agency team, to ensure even better communication and information sharing between Children Services and Education. TESS has been valuable in seeking children's views and in obtaining an immediate snapshot of how that child presents emotionally, physically and behaviourally that day. TESS can explore concerns with schools prior to making contact with MASH, and in working towards a better understanding of both Children Services and school processes. In certain cases, joint working with TESS has ensured the right outcome for children and families to materialise more promptly. TESS are an integral part of the MASH's functioning and in determining a more accurate identification of thresholds. Without TESS, this would place significant additional pressure on schools. "
Claire Davies, Screening Manager Multi Agency Screening Hub.

2.2 Early /Targeted Help

"TESS play a significant role in the Torbay Early Help Targeted Help offer. Since Early Help was launched in 2015 TESS have contributed to the panel each week and supported countless TAFs' led by schools. Attendance at Panel became slightly less regular when there was only one member of staff (Sarah James), although there was still close co-ordination, case discussions and a very good professional relationship where support and challenge was always visible between myself as the former Early Help Co-ordinator and Sarah as the TESS Senior Practitioner. Since the increased capacity of TESS in spring 2017 there has been 100% attendance at Panel and supporting schools to complete assessments, co-ordinating TAF's and providing support to Lead Professionals where

required. Since the Easter Term TESS now scrutinise the panel list and identify schools, inviting representatives and gathering information when schools are unable to attend in person. TESS encourage schools to obtain the views of the child/young person if not already gathered for the purposes of completing the Targeted Help assessment and have delivered workshops to schools in the use of tools such as the Three Houses for this purpose. TESS staff played a significant part in the re launch of Early Help in Torbay in July 2017 by contributing to the design of the assessment form, the design of leaflets and the communication strategy. The partnership between targeted help as the level 3 offer from CS and TESS is a solid one, and assists in delivering both good quality Early Help support for families at level 2 from our partners and Targeted Help support for families at level 3 to Torbay families. TESS have also been a good advocate for both education and children services during the re-launch and have supported education meetings to ensure that education had their voice and could discuss their ideas and concerns freely. TESS have also supported with ensuring I am able to attend DSL meetings and advise of information that schools require to allow me to distribute or develop these to ensure our relationship with education is strengthened to replicate the relationship targeted help have with TESS. TESS are an integral part in supporting targeted help in ensuring it is successful and able to meet the needs of the families in Torbay.”

Kerrie Ford, Family Intervention Team Manager and Targeted Help Co-ordinator.

3. SCHOOLS

Previous reports have noted the quantity of contacts with schools which peaked at 326 in January 2017. These figures lacked any qualitative analysis, so I felt it might be useful to explore where TESS has had an impact. Appendix A represents a breakdown of the returns from the 26 schools completing the questionnaires. One additional school did not have time to complete the questionnaire but did respond stating that they valued the service.

It is pleasing to know that in terms of the timeliness of TESS responding to queries, and the usefulness of discussing queries with TESS that the majority of answers scored 9-10. It is also of interest to note that Ofsted take note of the exchanges with TESS when inspecting schools. In addition, it is encouraging to know that the DSL forums and newsletter are well received as a great deal of thought goes into these. However, in framing my questionnaire I was mindful of the fact that when coming into post my impression was that relationships between schools and Children’s Services could be “tense”. I fully understood the reasons for this and was hopeful that TESS could play a part in improving understanding of the perspectives of the agencies. Both in terms of the knowledge of Social Care thresholds and relationships and communications with Children’s Services schools are currently reporting scores in the majority of over 8. Given the importance of working together, this response is extremely positive.

Whilst I have kept the reporting anonymous I am aware that some schools have been slow to take up the services of TESS yet the questionnaires were returned by some of these that have only recently begun to trust us and have confidence in our knowledge and skills. We have been here for 3 years – sometimes that is how long it takes to build up that trust and I believe our persistence and commitment has paid off. I think this comment summed up this position: *“TESS has given practical, pragmatic advice which is relevant to the context of working in a school. They also do what they say they will do! Their knowledge and support*

has been of great value to the school's efforts to safeguard children. The fact that they have been available to support parents on safeguarding plans in the school holidays has also been a great help, and I know for a fact that outcomes for families have improved as a result of this support... I did not make enough use of TESS when the service was first introduced, because it took time to realise that they are actually doing what they say they will and not just talking about it..."

4. Future steps and comments from schools

Our funding is only guaranteed until August 2018 and there was a resounding message from the returned questionnaires that schools would like us to continue. Those that have taken up the opportunity of supervision or advice workshops have found these extremely useful and others would welcome the opportunity of training. It was not possible to include all of the comments from the questionnaires in the appendix, however, I thought it worth including a few of the feelings expressed by DSL's:

"Being DSL can be quite a lonely job and can put you in quite a vulnerable position at times. The expertise and advice of TESS has given me more confidence to persist in following up issues and dealing with the inevitable difficulties that result from being persistent."

"Before TESS I felt quite isolated within the bleak world of safeguarding. They have always supported us with many aspects of safeguarding in our school and have improved our knowledge, skills and confidence in making correct decisions and taking the most effective course of action. We very much hope that TESS will continue beyond the agreed funding even if it means paying in to the service."

"The knowledge that they are so easy to contact and respond quickly to any query I have is very reassuring and essential in my role".

"The supervision I have on a regular basis with Sarah is amazing and I feel supported and listened to."

"The clarity of vision from TESS is always reassuring. I turn to TESS for advice and guidance, particularly as we make so few referrals."

"This service is effective. TESS are our 'sounding board' for discussions and support which is needed as schools are so busy."

"We had to prove to HMI we called you for advice and our record of conversations was deemed good practice"

"They have always backed us with challenging decisions when necessary and have helped us to escalate when appropriate. Similarly if they have felt that threshold is not met they would be quick to tell us and give an alternative option"

Sarah James
Education Senior Practitioner.
September 21st 2017