



2018-2020

# Children Looked After Placements: Sufficiency Statement and Action Plan

Ensuring children get the best start in life

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# 1. Introduction

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This Sufficiency Statement sets out the approach of Torbay Council and its partners to meeting needs of Children Looked After and children for whom an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has been issued and whose needs cannot be met without an out of authority residential placement.

This document does not repeat the expectations or requirements from national statutory guidance or the Council's Children and Young People Plan but aims to contribute to the objective of the latter:

**To ensure all of our children and young people are safe, happy and healthy in order that they can reach their full potential.**

To deliver the objective of the Children and Young People's Plan, there are four inter-connected priorities:

- Children get the best start in life.
- The impact on children and families from key risks including domestic abuse, alcohol/substance misuse and all forms of child exploitation is reduced.
- Education outcomes for all children and young people are improved and the gap between vulnerable learners and their peers is closed.
- Young people are healthy, make positive choices and influence their own future.

Wherever possible the actions identified in this Statement draw upon recognised good practice from the national commissioning support programme as well as other local authority areas. This includes input from Hampshire County Council Children's Services who were appointed by the Department for Education as our improvement partner under a statutory direction issued in May 2016. This Statement has been developed with due regard to relevant legislation, guidance and other local policies and strategies including:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and Quality Standards
- Sufficiency Statutory Guidance 2010
- Torbay Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2018/20
- Emerging Torbay Children and Young People Plan 2018/23

The Action Plan to support the Statement is attached at Appendix 1.

## 2. Duty of Sufficiency and Key Aims

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Securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of Children and Young People Looked After is an integral element in improving outcomes for this vulnerable group. It is best achieved through a shared vision for commissioning delivery and monitoring of services for Children Looked After across all partner agencies.

Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to take steps that secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for Children Looked After in their area (the “Sufficiency Duty”). Securing sufficient accommodation requires a whole system approach across the local authority and its partners working through the Children’s Strategic Steering Group.

This Statement sets out the ambitions of Torbay Council and its partners in respect of sufficiency which are based upon best practice and statutory guidance. The Council aims to secure sufficiency which can evidence:

- All children are placed in the local authority area, except where this is not consistent with their needs and welfare. Services are situated across the local authority area to reflect the geographical distribution of need.
- All children with adoption recommendations are placed with an adoptive family within 12 months of that recommendation.
- There is a diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children’s needs, including children and young people who are already looked after, as well as those at risk of care or custody.
- Local partners, including housing, work together to secure a range of provision to meet the needs of those who become looked after at the age of 16 and 17, and support the continuity of accommodation beyond the age of 18.
- Services are available in adequate quantity to respond to children and young people, including predicted demand for a range of needs and emergencies.
- In addition to meeting relevant National Minimum Standards, services are of high enough quality to secure the specific outcomes identified in the care planning process for children and young people.
- Placement providers (including private, voluntary and public sector providers) are linked into the wider network of services and work with these services to offer appropriate support to deliver identified outcomes for children looked after.
- Universal services know when a child or young person is looked after and have good links with the range of targeted and specialist services which support them, including placement providers.
- There are mechanisms in place to ensure that professionals involved in placement decisions have sufficient knowledge and information about the supply and quality of placements and availability of all specialist, targeted and universal support services within the local authority area.
- The local authority and its partners collaborate with neighbouring authorities and partnerships to plan the market for services for children looked after and commission in regional or sub-regional arrangements.

### 3. The Torbay Context

Torbay has generally had higher levels of social care activity than other localities with around 1,200 children in need of social care support at any one time. As at 31 March 2018 this included 324 Children Looked After, 146 children subject to a Child Protection Plan and 606 Children in Need.

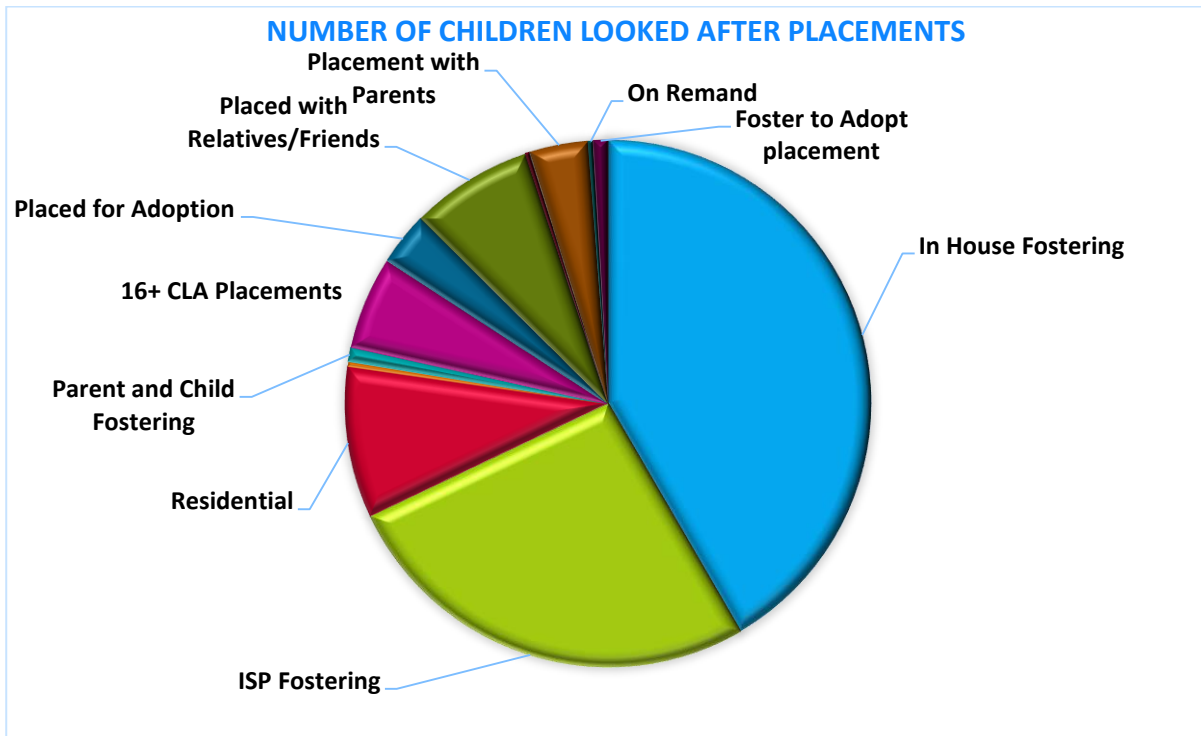
Torbay is located on the South Devon coastline and comprises of the three distinct communities of Torquay, Brixham and Paignton. It has a population of just over 133,000 and comprises areas of significant material wealth alongside areas of deprivation. The primary causal factors for social care engagement are domestic abuse, substance misuse and parents with poor mental health or learning needs.

Torbay's population of Children Looked After grew significantly in 2010/11 in response to Ofsted's judgement that services were inadequate with a precautionary "low risk/high cost" approach taken towards children at the edge of care compounded by weaknesses in permanence planning. A key element within the improvement journey now underway has been to develop a more robust approach towards permanence which will over time contribute to bringing the numbers of Children Looked After in line with statistical comparators whilst improving outcomes for children and young people.

As at May 2018 the distribution of placements for children looked after was:

Placement Types	Number of Children Looked After Placements	%
In House Fostering	139	42%
Independent Sector Provider Fostering	88	26%
Residential	31	9%
Parent and Child Residential	1	0%
Parent and Child Fostering	3	1%
16+ LAC Placements	19	6%
Placed for Adoption	11	3%
Placed with Relatives/Friends	25	8%
Hospital	1	0%
Placement with Parents	12	4%
On Remand	1	0%
Foster to Adopt placement	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figures as at May 2018



Up to November 2017, the numbers of children looked after were potentially on track to stay at or around 280. However, this has changed during December 2017 and January 2018 with the numbers starting to become looked after having overtaken those leaving. This recent and significant change has resulted in a substantial rise in the total number of children looked after as at March 2018. This trend has been repeated nationally. So far this year, over half of the authorities with which Torbay Council shares in-year data are reporting a rise in the numbers of Children Looked After.

Torbay’s relatively high number of children looked after is largely the product of previous decision making especially during the period 2012-14. Like many authorities, Torbay’s headline figure is belied by relatively high numbers of children ceasing and starting to be looked after. For example, Torbay has the 10th highest care application rate of all authorities in the country. The top 20 in this list includes six other authorities that make up Torbay’s comparator group, which indicates that Torbay is not essentially an outlier for the relative numbers of children becoming looked after.

As at April 2018, 26% of children looked after were placed more than 20 miles from their home address which is above regional and national comparators. This will be an area of focus within our action plan and reflects a lack of local capacity, particularly for children with more complex needs.

Other indicators that suggest Torbay’s use of care is not essentially that of an outlier or particularly unusual are:

- Compared to similar authorities, Torbay has a similar profile for the legal status of children becoming looked after i.e. the use of voluntary arrangements verses court orders. This is a positive indicator as it shows Torbay is line with other authorities over the use of care.
- Children under 5 make up a bigger proportion of those becoming looked after compared to other similar authorities. In 2017/2018, 55% of those starting to become looked after in Torbay were under 5 compared to 44% amongst comparable authorities. Although different from other authorities Torbay’s

profile is indicative of prompt action to ensure that children are safeguarded at the earliest point which may then avoid the need for later and lengthier engagement the child's life.

- The number of children adopted is above that seen in 2016/2017. Whilst the average amount of time taken to place children has increased this reflects the additional time required to place children with greater needs.
- More children are returning home after a period of being looked after. In previous years the proportion of Torbay children returning home had fallen below that seen in similar authorities. This is no longer the case.
- More children looked after are now being placed under Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) than before. Torbay completed more SGOs in 2017/2018 than in 2016/17. In previous years Torbay was below benchmarks for the proportion of children ceasing to be looked after under these arrangements. This will no longer be the case.
- The number of children on protection plans is starting to come down as is the number of children subject to a referral. The number of children on protection plans is now just above the comparator group averages and probably reflects where it would expect to be, given the profile of the community it serves.

This Sufficiency Statement links with the wider service improvement programme now under way within Children's Services and in particular the refreshed Permanence and Early Help Strategies. The former seeks to address a culture which has previously favoured placement stability and long term fostering over other permanence options, compounded by a lack of challenge to this approach by the Independent Reviewing Officers. The impact of this cultural change is beginning to become evident in the greater use of connected persons orders, foster to adopt and reunification. Alongside this, the refreshed Early Help Strategy is engendering a more effective approach towards managing risk before cases escalate to the higher intensity part of the system.

## 4. Performance and Outcomes for Children Looked After

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Outcomes and performance for our children looked after are a key element within the performance management and quality assurance arrangements that have been established over the past two years as part of our improvement journey. Our aim is to ensure that all key performance metrics are incorporated and reported within PARIS but this remains a work in progress.

As indicated earlier in this Statement, Torbay continues to have a large CLA population in comparison with other similar local authorities. A key element within our improvement journey has been to focus on our permanence planning with the aim of bringing our population levels safely in line with comparators whilst acting, at all times, in the best interests of the child. This is beginning to evidence impact through increases in adoption, foster to adopt, and special guardianship.

Our outcomes and performance for children looked after are set out in greater detail within our monthly performance reporting which is considered by all tiers of management as the driver, alongside casefile auditing, for service improvement. Key headlines are:

- Educational outcomes at all key stages are at or above comparators although it is acknowledged that outcomes at Key Stage 4 require improvement.
- During 2017/2018 Torbay delivered 20 adoptions and has completed six foster to adopt placements since the last inspection, with a further five being progressed currently.
- Children Looked After reviews are being completed on time in around 95% of cases.
- The completion rate of Health Assessments and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires are at 89% and 60.5%, respectively. Immunisation rates are at 77%<sup>1</sup> and dental check-ups are at 78%.
- Long term placement stability is currently at 61% which is just below national comparators.
- 10% of our Children Looked After are in residential placements which is below national and statistical comparators
- 18% of Children Looked After are placed more than 50 miles away from their home address.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: 903 Return



## 5. Future Opportunities and Challenges

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After a period of relative stability in which the population of Children Looked After was around 280, the final four months of 2017/2018 saw a significant growth in the numbers of children becoming looked after. This growth has been subject to detailed review and also formed a key line of enquiry for the most recent Ofsted monitoring visit which took place in February 2018. Both have evidenced that thresholds are being correctly applied although it was identified that some cases had been delayed due to drift and delay following the decision to issue proceedings. This has been addressed by deploying legal resource upstream into the department and establishing a legal gateway meeting. A revised Public Law Outline (PLO) tracker has also been established to ensure there is no recurrence of drift and delay.

Our analysis of the factors impacting on future demand and sufficiency of placements following the above exercise is summarised below:

- The significant spike in Child Protection Plans (CPP) during 2017/2018 was a key factor driving the growth of Children Looked After (CLA) cases in the second half of 2017. Around two thirds of the growth was via this route. CPP numbers have now reduced and have been stable for some months at a significantly lower level which is more in line with statistical comparators. Whilst it is inevitable that a proportion of Child Protection cases will progress to CLA case, this will be a less significant factor over the coming year.
- Torbay continues to have a high level of cases in PLO (around 30 in April 2018) and it is likely that a high proportion of these will result in the children becoming looked after.
- Whilst progress has been made in relation to domestic abuse, further work is needed to ensure that adult services for substance misuse, mental health, and PAUSE are in place as these are the most significant factors compromising parental capacity.
- Our work on permanence planning is increasing the range of options available to young people to ensure that exits from care are timely and child-centred.
- Recent changes to housing guidance require that, from 1 May 2018, any 16 or 17 year old in accommodation for 24 hours will result in an automatic Section 20 whilst their longer term needs are assessed. It is likely that a proportion of these children will become accommodated.
- There continues to be a need for placement options for older children displaying difficult behaviours and complex needs. Work is progressing with providers and with the Youth Trust/Play Torbay around support interventions to avoid familial breakdown.
- Initial discussions have commenced with Devon around additional residential capacity in the South West to reduce the proportion of children placed out of Borough.

Taken together, our planning assumptions are that the population of children looked after is not likely to reduce during 2018/2019 and that the most likely outcome is a marginal increase of 3-5% in comparison to the start point of 1 April 2018.

## 6. Early Help and Targeted Support for Children and Families

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One of Ofsted's key findings in its January 2016 report was that multi-agency thresholds were not understood and consistently applied across partners who in turn were unclear as to their roles in intervening with families at the earliest opportunity. Working with its partners in the Local Safeguarding Children Board, Torbay Council has revised the Early Help Strategy and Thresholds which were approved in June 2017. A revised Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) referral form has been introduced followed by a single front door referral pathway.

The overall aim has been to ensure that there is clarity around thresholds and the support available to families. The Early Help Strategy provides for community-based support for families when they need it in order to prevent the escalation of concerns thereby preventing families from feeling that they are not able to cope. Many of these families have children with additional needs, and we will strengthen the offer available to them. We will continue to work with partner agencies and families to embed the understanding of the Early Help and Targeted Help offer through the use of training and information leaflets.

We will build on existing Supporting (Troubled) Families investment in educational outreach, locating staff within target schools and funding assertive outreach for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.

A 0-19 family support framework is being developed, bringing Children's Centres, health visitors and school nurses and early help services together alongside a re-designed young peoples' pathway to ensure that the right services are available to match need at the right time.

The Council is working alongside the Clinical Commissioning Group to specify and commission a broad set of health-orientated services that will support children with Special Educational Needs, ensuring that additional needs are met and that Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are undertaken in partnership.

In addition we will continue to work with Play Torbay and the Torbay Youth Trust to engage children and young people through youth, recreational, cultural and arts activities.

These actions will create a unified service to provide a joined-up, whole-family service to those who are most in need, but who do not meet the threshold for statutory social care. The aim is to slow down the volume of children coming into care and provide a step-up/ step down service to prevent a revolving door into statutory services.

The main benefit to families with children aged 0-19 years will be the ability to access interventions through one point of contact which would consider the needs of the family as a whole and seek to co-ordinate all needs through a Targeted Help Co-ordinator.

## 7. Managing Risk for Children on the Edge of Care

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In order to improve outcomes for children, to respond to increasing demand and especially to address the revolving door for social work interventions, Torbay Council is creating clear pathways to ensure the right resources are provided according to the level of risk and vulnerability presented by a family. This will enable robust plans with targeted support to provide evidence based interventions at a measured intensity when the family need it most.

New pathways for on-going sustainable support using existing community services will increase family resilience, enabling them to resolve their own problems. This will incorporate a Signs of Safety approach to ensure families are able to take responsibility for their own problem solving.

The Council has re-aligned its Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS) alongside the Safeguarding and Supporting Families Service to better resource the care plans for children and families at the pre-proceedings stage. This will provide intensive, evidenced-based interventions for families at the edge of care, working to robustly improve their ability to care and safeguard both in the short and longer term. This team will also be able to respond to emerging crises to stabilise situations pending assessment and care planning, but is embedded within the core social work teams.

Many of the children within statutory services have experienced trauma and emotional distress. We recognise that the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service locally will assess these children as falling below their threshold of support, and we are therefore investing in a small team to work within Children's Services, able to provide consultation and intervention to support across the Child's Journey, co-locating and working with social workers and other children's practitioners to strengthen resilience and provide stability for children at home and in placements.

Our developments involve a stronger focus on the family and environmental risk and on protective factors for the child. Our Supporting (Troubled) Families service is undertaking live tracking against the Children in Need/Child Protection gateway and will allocate eligible families within its programme, providing oversight and an investment in additional IFSS capacity, in educational outreach and in support into work to support family change.

With a pressure on parent and child assessment work, we are reviewing the current offer and capacity of our family assessment centre (the ARC). It is our intention to strengthen this service, to align it more closely with the MASH and Single Assessment Service and to develop a more assertive, responsive assessment team able to provide the right level of professional assessment pre-birth and when the baby is born, primarily within the community where both support and risks are more visible.

## 8. Foster Placements

Torbay has traditionally developed its foster care capacity through a mixed economy of in-house carers and independent fostering agencies procured under the Peninsula Framework and spot purchased when necessary.

There are differences in the pricing structures between in-house and independent fostering agencies leading to higher costs for independent agencies, especially for children with less complex needs and sibling groups. The lack of available placements both locally and nationally has created difficulties in achieving good permanence planning for children, and requires a multi-layered strategy to resolve.

As part of our improvement work we have been engaging with our in-house foster carers more directly. This has led to a more open dialogue and a better appreciation on both sides of how fostering can contribute to better outcomes for children and young people.

We had seen an increase in the in-house fostering resource which was then maintained, but has more recently been reducing. A re-focused marketing campaign was undertaken with a branding refresh, and work with the foster care group was undertaken to regain their confidence; this work has led to a more positive market response as Torbay Council has been recognised as valuing and supporting its carers. The fostering vacancy rate has now reduced to around 8%.

The Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding and Head of Service – Specialist Services are now meeting with our foster carers on a regular basis to ensure an open and ongoing dialogue on the role of in-house fostering within effective permanence and sufficiency planning.

The table below evidences the positive impact of this work particularly with the increasing proportion of children in an in-house fostering placement.

Placement Types	No. CLA placements as at 31/12/17	%	No. CLA placements as at 30/04/2018	%
In House Fostering	138	47%	129	40%
ISP Fostering	69	24%	93	29%
Residential	30	10%	30	9%
P & C Residential	0	0%	1	0%
P & C Fostering	3	1%	2	1%
16+ LAC Placements	13	4%	18	6%
Placed for Adoption	8	3%	11	3%
Placed with Relatives/Friends	19	7%	23	7%
Placed with Parents	9	3%	12	4%
Foster to Adopt placement	3	1%	12	4%
On Remand			1	0%
Hospital			1	0%
<b>Total Children Looked After</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>100%</b>

Moving forward, the Council will retain a focus on the importance of securing the right placement, offering the best chance of stability for children in care whilst ensuring good outcomes and best value for money.

For in-house fostering, Torbay will continue to maximise the use of in-house services and will run a number of recruitment drives in 2018-2019 with a particular focus on recruiting for:

- teenagers requiring respite or requiring re-unification;
- teenagers requiring stable support moving through to` staying put;
- step-down from residential
- support through childhood 0-18
- emergency and assessment
- family focused shared care

Throughout the year there will be regular information events held to ensure anyone considering fostering at any time can access more information, whether they have already made an enquiry directly to the Council or not.

Research nationally and locally indicates that the most significant factor which encourages and maintains foster carers is the level of effective support offered to them by the fostering agency. We plan to review current resources over the next 12 months to develop a wellbeing team which will include a co-located Children and Adolescent Mental Health practitioner, therapists and support staff offering therapeutic training and support to all carers. Therefore, overarching the generic information events, there will be focused marketing campaigns highlighting the wrap-around support available to carers.

Through collaboration with the other authorities across the peninsula, Torbay is currently re-commissioning for child and family provision to develop a framework of provider organisations who are aware of the likely volume and levels of need required.

## 9. Adoption

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Over recent years the Government has had a focus and agenda for practice improvement and avoidance of drift and delay in adoption. Year-on-year, Torbay Council's Adoption Service has been increasing its collaborative work with our regional neighbours and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies based locally including Families for Children.

As a small unitary authority, it has been advantageous for us to link with and share resources with other Local Authority adoption agencies. This creates efficiency and ensures services to adopters and their families are accessible. There has been significant work undertaken to align practice and develop good practice expectations across the regional group. Torbay Council has continued to be an active member of Adopt South West alongside Plymouth City Council, Devon County Council and Somerset County Council.

It has been agreed to create an Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency as a local authority led model. This will see the pooling of resources, knowledge and expertise of four services. This means we can take the best way of working in each area of practice and standardise this across the Agency. This will provide improvements as well as consistency to the adopter experience. Devon County Council will act as a single authority host for the region from October 2018. The Regional Adoption Agency will have a governance and steering group to oversee the project.

Torbay Council continues to receive a steady number of enquiries from adopters. Increased marketing provides adopter choice with enquiries made through Adopt South West not always resulting in assessment in Torbay. Torbay Council has maintained its own dedicated website alongside its link to Adopt South West. The joint working approach does, however, mean it has been more efficient to fund larger campaigns.

Since March 2015 there has been a decline in numbers of adopters progressing through the process to approval in Torbay. Whilst enquiries about becoming an adopter have remained consistent in the last two years the conversion number to approval of adopters has not increased. Geographically, the fact that Torbay is a small unitary authority does adversely affect the number of adopters coming through. The collaboration with Adopt South West affords Torbay marketing through this arena although we continue to undertake specific marketing and recruitment work as well. Despite these efforts we have not seen an increase in our conversion rate. A review of the Recruitment Strategy for the coming year will consider alternative strategies. Further, it is anticipated that the Regional Adoption Agency will be of benefit to Torbay in respect of the efficiency of recruitment and approval of adopters.

The early profiling meetings within Adopt South West enables the opportunity for matches with geographically local adopters which improves outcomes for families/children as support is available across the region with established relationships between adoption agencies.

The national trend over the last two years has seen a reduction in Placement Orders being made in court for an adoption plan. In Torbay we have continued to see steady numbers of referrals to the Agency Decision Maker for new children's plans for adoption – 13 in 2015/2016 and 17 in 2016/2017. However, those plans for adoption have not always been agreed by the Court and therefore a Placement Order has not been granted

Torbay's Adoption Service has seen a continued improvement timeliness of the placement of children for adoption and the approval of adopters year-on-year since April 2015. This improvement has been brought about by the early and focused family finding activity within the Service.

## 10. Commissioned Residential Accommodation

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In January 2017 there were 33 children in residential placements with external providers from the private and not-for-profit sectors. Some of the placements include specialist education provision for those who have been excluded from mainstream schools, who have specific learning requirements, or who have a statement of Special Education Needs.

An independent assessment by People Too found that the use of residential provision was sometimes led by lack of alternative provision rather than the level of presenting need of the child. We have increased the capacity of our Contracts and Placements Team to ensure they are able to drive placement practice proactively, and commission more effectively. We will also put in place clear monitoring processes through a Tracker meeting with cross over to the Permanency Planning process. These processes will ensure case planning does not drift, and that where children placed in residential accommodation are able to step down to family based care or an alternative community based provision, that this is planned for and resourced.

We monitor performance and activity to provide an accurate and regular demand forecast for residential care. The Contracts and Placements Team use performance information to prioritise our commissioning workstreams and to develop provider relationships within the existing frameworks. Through a thorough review of individual placement contracts, we will also capture the additional services and resources that our children in care are receiving, and ensure that we commission these according to best value rather than availability.

In recognition that in-house fostering and residential provision will not be sufficient to meet all placement requirements for children in Torbay, a framework contract is currently being established in collaboration with peninsula authorities in the South West to provide flexible additional capacity. Providers on the framework have more business surety and an ongoing relationship with the four Local Authorities which encourages them to support the profile of demand for each Authority and as a group. The framework reflects the commissioning standards in national contracts. It ensures high quality provision including the requirement for all establishments on the framework to have, and to maintain, an Ofsted rating of 'Good' or 'Outstanding' and to undertake enhanced DBS checks for anyone involved in service delivery.

Where notification is received of a change in Ofsted rating of an establishment to 'Poor' or 'Requires Improvement' a thorough risk assessment will be carried out for those children already in a placement to ascertain the viability of the placement continuing. In addition, a visit, led by the Social Work Team Manager, will be undertaken. Appropriate move-on will be managed should the establishment be found to not meet the requirements of individuals, or the risks associated with the placement cannot be managed. It is a priority for the Council to maintain the stability of placements where possible, but without compromising the high standards that are required of establishments delivering the services.

The Contracts and Placements Team will ensure that all placements will be made through a single point. The Team will formalise the placement process, embedded within our case management system to enable child based information that is simply audited. A central team will provide brokerage and also contribute to the commissioning and procurement functions around placement and stability services in order to drive quality and best value more efficiently, and to allow social workers to focus on care planning rather than transactional detail. The views of children will be reflected through meeting with the Children in Care Council twice per year and assimilating the views of children through reviews and complaints via their Independent Reviewing Officers.

## 11. Post 16 and Leaving Care

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The requirements of the Staying Put agenda have a specific effect on foster and supported accommodation placements, and it is essential that providers and local authorities work together to ensure that, wherever appropriate, children and young people 'Stay Put' in placements beyond their eighteenth birthday. It is recognised that there will be challenges for providers and the local authority in achieving this, as it will inevitably impact upon the availability of foster and supported accommodation placements.

Changes through the Homeless Reduction Act, coming into force April 2018, bring challenges through the Housing route initially as those threatened with homelessness receive a duty of support earlier and for longer, and will be offered a minimum of a six month assured tenancy. We will work with our Housing Options Team to develop a joint strategic approach to meeting youth homelessness which will otherwise impact significantly on sufficiency for 16-25 year olds.

Welfare policy changes through the introduction of Universal Credit and the removal of entitlement to housing costs for 18-21 year olds may lead to more 16-17 year olds requesting assessment under the Southwark ruling.

The Council will also consider the changes introduced by Section 3 of the Children & Social Work Act 2017 which introduces a new duty on local authorities to provide Personal Advisor support to all care leavers up to age 25, irrespective of whether they are engaged in education or training. Currently accommodation needs for those aged 16 and over are met through joint commissioning of services to prevent Youth Homelessness, and through additional offers to Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant Care Leavers.

There are three commissioned providers for supported accommodation which young people can access via the Housing Options Team or Children's Services, namely Supported Accommodation, The Foyer and Westward Housing Young Parents.

In addition to provision of accommodation, young people are offered Floating support via the commissioned housing providers, Youth Homelessness Prevention work, and a Single Assessment in line with the Southwark Judgement as a result of an integrated prevention and accommodation offer.

These services ensure that we are focusing on re-unification with family where possible, and that we have a good quality understanding of the needs of this group.

For Relevant, Eligible and Former Relevant Care Leavers there are additional offers to ensure that they have a successful transition to independence. These are in the form of:

- **Tenancy deposit scheme:** For young people aged 18+ who need access to funds to secure privately rented accommodation. This offer is subject to young people demonstrating an ability to live independently through the completion of a tenancy support programme.
- **Staying Put:** In response to the Children and Families Act 2014, Children's Services enable young people to remain living with their former foster carers under a supported lodgings arrangement. This arrangement is called 'Staying Put'. Young people can Stay Put with their foster carers up to the age of 21, or until the end of full time education. Half of the under 18 fostering rate is applied. Housing benefit payments are additionally available, and young people are expected to pay a small "top up"



fee. In March 2017 there were 11 young people in Staying Put arrangements from Torbay. Young People are also able to “Stay Put” in their supported lodgings where appropriate.

- **Accommodation support for young people in further education:** Former Relevant Young People in full time further accommodation are offered support to maintain accommodation until the completion of a full time course or the academic year of their 25th birthday. This is in the form of a £100 weekly allowance.

Alongside the offer of accommodation, joint work between housing, commissioning and children’s services through the Youth Homelessness Prevention Panel aims to ensure that prevention is a focus of work with young people, so that crisis accommodation (in the form of Bed and Breakfast) is not used. For Children Looked After, tracking of placements and the Permanence Panel are used to ensure that young people have a clear plan for permanence post 18. These processes ensure that the Local Authority is able to control costs in relation to young people who have not moved on from residential placements, or where the costs associated with accommodation should be held by Adult Services or the NHS post 18 as a result of complex needs.

Within the post 16 offer there is a need to address the lack of availability of short term accommodation (including crisis beds) and accommodation for young people with chaotic and complex lives.

In relation to accommodation for Relevant, Eligible and Former Relevant Young People, the Council will map the future needs of young people within the Staying Put programme and those making applications to university. This will ensure that the Council has a clear forecast of future needs.

The contracting arrangements for the Staying Put scheme will be reviewed to ensure value for money.

## Appendix 1 – Action Plan 2018-2020

	Actions	Service Lead	Targets	Deadline
<b>Early Help and Targeted Support for Children and Families</b>				
1	Continue to develop our Early Help and Targeted Help offer with families and TSCB partner agencies including a directory of services and regular oversight of take-up and outcomes for families.	Head of Early Help and Youth Offending	<p>Programme of training in place for partners</p> <p>Service Directory for Early Help and Targeted Help Interventions in place</p> <p>Oversight of take-up and outcomes in place via TSCB and Children’s Strategic Group</p>	March 2019
2	Develop a sustainable model for the TESS service to ensure schools have access to specialist advice at the earliest stage in engaging a family.	Head of Early Help and Youth Offending/ Assistant Director - Education	Services in place and working to STF outcomes framework	September 2018

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Service Lead</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
3	Establish a new Family Support Service for families with children aged 0-19 years (or up to 25 for young adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities)	Head of Early Help and Youth Offending/ Assistant Director - Safeguarding	Re-commissioning of a young person's pathway  Re-commissioning of Children's Centres, Health Visiting and school nurses	April 2019
<b>Managing Risk for Children on the Edge of Care</b>				
4	Continue to develop our therapeutic service to ensure social work teams have access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) practitioners co-located within Children's Services.	Commissioning Manager/ Assistant Director - Safeguarding	CAMHS staff co-located and working with children across the safeguarding services.	Service commenced January 2018  Progress to be monitored on a quarterly basis
5	Develop a sustainable model which builds on the Supporting (Troubled) Families resource to maximise our Early Help offer and effectiveness.	Head of Early Help and Youth Offending	Increased capacity within team and evidence of work within STF framework	April 2019
6	Re-design and affirm the work of the Assessment Resource Centre (ARC) to increase capacity for community based parent and child assessments.	Head of Service – Quality Assurance	Increased capacity within team and new specification aimed at community assessments	April 2019

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Service Lead</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
7	Work with Play Torbay and Torbay Youth Trust to develop the On the Edge intervention to engage children and young people at risk of foster care placement breakdown or familial breakdown.	Assistant Director – Safeguarding/ Play Torbay and Torbay Youth Trust	Intervention in place for up to six young people on a pilot basis initially	July 2018
<b>Foster Placements</b>				
8	Continue to maximise the use of in-house services at levels 1 and 2 and establish a comprehensive support and training programme to recruit and retain in-house carers and to increase in-house placements for 12+ age group at these levels.	Head of Specialist Services	Regular programme of recruitment campaigns generating around 10 additional foster carers with a focus on capacity for children aged 12+	March 2019 (annual programme)
9	Establish resource to review Permanency Plans and explore greater use of Connected Persons Orders (CPOs) and Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs).	Head of Specialist Services	Review of permanency and progression as appropriate to CPOs and SGOs.	March 2019
10	Hold regular information events to ensure anyone considering fostering can access the appropriate information	Head of Specialist Services	Prospective foster carers can access more information whether they have made an enquiry direct to the Council or not	March 2019

	Actions	Service Lead	Targets	Deadline
<b>Adoption</b>				
11	Continue to put plans in place to establish the Regional Adoption Agency with Devon County Council, Somerset County Council and Plymouth City Council and three Voluntary Adoption Agencies, and to manage any reconfiguration of the service as a result of this.	Head of Specialist Services/ Assistant Director - Safeguarding	Regional Adoption Agency in place	October 2018
12	Review the Adoption Service Recruitment Strategy to identify alternative strategies for increasing the conversion rate of adopter enquiries to adopter approvals.	Head of Specialist Services	Revised Recruitment Strategy in place.	September 2018
13	Continue work to improve our timescales for children and adopters in the service in line with national targets by continuing to have early and focused family finding activity	Head of Specialist Services	Placements for adoption and approval of adopters made within national targets	March 2020
<b>Commissioned Residential Accommodation</b>				
14	Continue to develop our robust tracking system to ensure that the decisions around permanence are actioned in a timely manner and in the child's best interests.	Assistant Director – Safeguarding and appropriate Heads of Service	Tracker meeting operational and holding date planning	March 2020
15	Continue to work closely with accommodation providers to ensure the best possible placement matches, to reduce the risk of placement breakdown which is a particular risk with complex cases and to ensure the very best outcomes for children. To be supported by a regular programme of placement monitoring visits for quality assurance purposes.	Commissioning Manager	All placements end in a planned way. Placements achieved for all searches.	March 2019
16	Work with the South West Peninsula Framework to ensure the needs of children in Torbay are met on specific areas of need.	Commissioning Manager	Frameworks are in place to meet need.	March 2019

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Service Lead</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
17	Ensure we obtain children's feedback on the quality of commissioned placements through the implementation of a children's feedback form which has benefited from the input of our children in care and care leavers.	Commissioning Manager	Use of feedback and of the view of children via IRO and CICC	September 2018
18	Work with Devon County Council to explore the potential for additional residential capacity within the county on a shared basis in terms of both places and ongoing risk.	Assistant Director – Safeguarding	Development of additional local residential capacity providing for good quality care for children looked after	September 2020
<b>Post 16 and Leaving Care</b>				
19	Work with Housing Options team to develop a 16-25 homelessness prevention strategy and commissioning plan to meet the needs of those with more complex needs and crisis.	Commissioning Manager	Plan in place to mitigate risk of homelessness.	June 2018
20	Ongoing work to track young people, ensuring that discussions about permanence include post 18 transitions, and that young people at risk are offered a robust preventative service.	Head of Early Help and Youth Offending	All care leavers have clear Pathway Plan in place or high quality which clearly evidences that their views and wishes have been heard.	September 2018
21	Consider the implications of the new duty under Section 3 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to provide Personal Advisor support to all care leavers up to the age of 25	Head of Early Help and Youth Offending	Appropriate resources in place to meet the statutory duty	June 2018 for initial operating solution
22	Continue to develop our arrangements to ensure that young people Staying Put and those in full time education are receiving effective support.	Head of Specialist Services	Numbers of care leavers Staying Put and accessing further education are increasing.	March 2019

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Service Lead</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
23	Ensuring value for money where the Staying Put arrangement is with an Independent Foster Agency	Commissioning Manager	Review of all IPAs and attendance at placement planning meetings.	March 2019
24	Develop specialist short term accommodation for young people with chaotic and complex lives.	Commissioning Manager	Appropriate capacity in place to deal with crisis for children with complex multiple needs	January 2019