

Friday, 10 September 2021

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board** will be held on

Monday, 20 September 2021

commencing at **9.30 am**

The meeting will be held in the Meadfoot Room - Town Hall

Members of the Board

Councillor Bye (Chairman)

Councillor Barnby
Councillor Mandy Darling

Councillor Douglas-Dunbar
Councillor Mills (Vice-Chair)

Co-opted Members of the Board

Tatiana Wilson, Church of England Diocesan Representative

Laura Colman, Primary Parent Governor Representative

Together Torbay will thrive

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Governance Support, Town Hall, Castle Circus, Torquay, TQ1 3DR

Email: governance.support@torbay.gov.uk - www.torbay.gov.uk

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
To receive apologies for absence, including notifications of any changes to the membership of the Board.
2. **Minutes** (Pages 4 - 6)
To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 18 August 2021.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
 - a) To receive declarations of non pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda

For reference: Having declared their non pecuniary interest members may remain in the meeting and speak and, vote on the matter in question. A completed disclosure of interests form should be returned to the Clerk before the conclusion of the meeting.
 - b) To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda

For reference: Where a Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest he/she must leave the meeting during consideration of the item. However, the Member may remain in the meeting to make representations, answer questions or give evidence if the public have a right to do so, but having done so the Member must then immediately leave the meeting, may not vote and must not improperly seek to influence the outcome of the matter. A completed disclosure of interests form should be returned to the Clerk before the conclusion of the meeting.

(Please Note: If Members and Officers wish to seek advice on any potential interests they may have, they should contact Governance Support or Legal Services prior to the meeting.)
4. **Urgent Items**
To consider any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent.
5. **Engagement and participation of children and young people and their families - including Torbay Pledge** (To Follow)
 1. To review the current arrangements for engaging with children, young people and their families and how we ensure that their voices are heard strategically and operationally.
 2. To receive an update on the progress of implementing the Torbay Pledge.

(Note: Rachael Williams – Assistant Director of Education, Learning and Skills and Becky Thompson – Head of Regulated Services have been invited for this item.)

6. **Family Friendly Vision** (Pages 7 - 16)
To receive an update on the proposals to create a family friendly vision for Torbay.

7. **Torbay Children's Services - A Review of Leadership, Management and Governance** (Pages 17 - 28)
To receive a report on the outcome of the review of Leadership, Management and Governance and to consider the resulting recommendations.

(Note: Stephen Hart, Independent Chair, Torbay Children's Service Improvement Board has been invited for this item.)

8. **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board Action Tracker** (Page 29)
To receive an update on the implementation of the actions of the Board and consider any further actions required (as set out in the submitted action tracker).

Meeting Attendance

Whilst national Covid-19 restrictions were lifted on 19 July 2021, Torbay Council has taken the decision to continue operating in a Covid-19 secure manner in order to protect staff and visitors entering Council buildings and to help reduce the spread of Covid-19 in Torbay. This includes social distancing and other protective measures (e.g. wearing a face covering (unless exempt), signing in and using hand sanitiser). Our public meetings will continue to operate with social distancing measures in place and as such there are limited numbers that can access our meeting rooms. Also, to help prevent the spread of the virus, anyone attending meetings is asked to take Covid lateral flow test the evening before - if you have a positive test result please follow the Government's guidelines and do not attend the meeting.

If you wish to attend a public meeting please contact us to confirm arrangements for your attendance.

Minutes of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board

18 August 2021

-: Present :-

Councillor Bye (Chairman)

Councillors Barnby, Douglas-Dunbar, Loxton and Howgate

Co-opted Member

Laura Colman, Primary Parent Governor Representative

Non-voting Co-opted Member

Brent Davison, Devon and Cornwall Police

(Also in attendance: Councillors Steve Darling)

14. Apologies

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Liberal Democrat Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillor Howgate instead of Councillor Mandy Darling. Apologies for absence were also received Tatiana Wilson (Co-opted Member) and Mike Cook and Jo Morrell (non-voting Co-opted Members). Councillor Steve Darling represented Councillor Law as Cabinet Member.

15. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 27 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16. Corporate Parenting Strategy

Further to the meeting of the Board held on 27 July 2021 (Minute 10/7/21 refers), Members considered the final draft Corporate Parenting Strategy due to be presented to the Cabinet on 24 August 2021. The Strategy had been updated in light of consultation responses received from the Corporate Parenting Board and Foster Carer Forum. Members noted the main changes to the document since their original consideration and fully supported the proposed tone and content of the Strategy with a partnership approach to achieve the best for our cared for and care experienced young people.

The Director of Children's Services, Nancy Meehan, and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Darling, also provided an update on the work of the Strategic Partnership Child Friendly Sub-Group and the four sub-groups which would be looking at actions to help the Council, local businesses, community, voluntary and statutory agencies work together to make Torbay a Child Friendly place to live, work and play.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. to approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy;
2. to recommend to Full Council that the Corporate Parenting Strategy become a Policy Framework document; and
3. that following engagement with children and young people a further updated Corporate Parenting Strategy be prepared for consideration by Council.

17. Exploitation Update

Katie Buckley, Exploitation Team Manager outlined the submitted presentation which provided an update in respect of criminal and sexual exploitation of children and young people in Torbay, along with the support and action being taken to address this. Members were provided with examples of some of the individuals and groups impacted and how the multi-agency teams worked together to identify and support those affected by exploitation, working with the individuals and their families.

Members noted that there were currently 133 people who were receiving support through the Exploitation Team and raised concern that there may be more individuals who were victims of exploitation who were not known to the Council. It was acknowledged that historically the Council had not known or been able to accurately record details of those who were being exploited but work carried out by the Team over the past 18 months had led to improved systems and working practices being put in place to enable more accurate information to be recorded and acted upon. A new IT system was due to be implemented in November 2021 as part of the new Children's Services Liquid Logic software which would also improve the live access and analysing of information to better meet the needs of these individuals and by the most appropriate agencies.

The Board acknowledged the improvements in the recording of individuals but were concerned about continued support once they turned 18 years old as, unless they were a looked after or care experienced young person, they ceased to be the responsibility of Children's Services and moved to Adult Services.

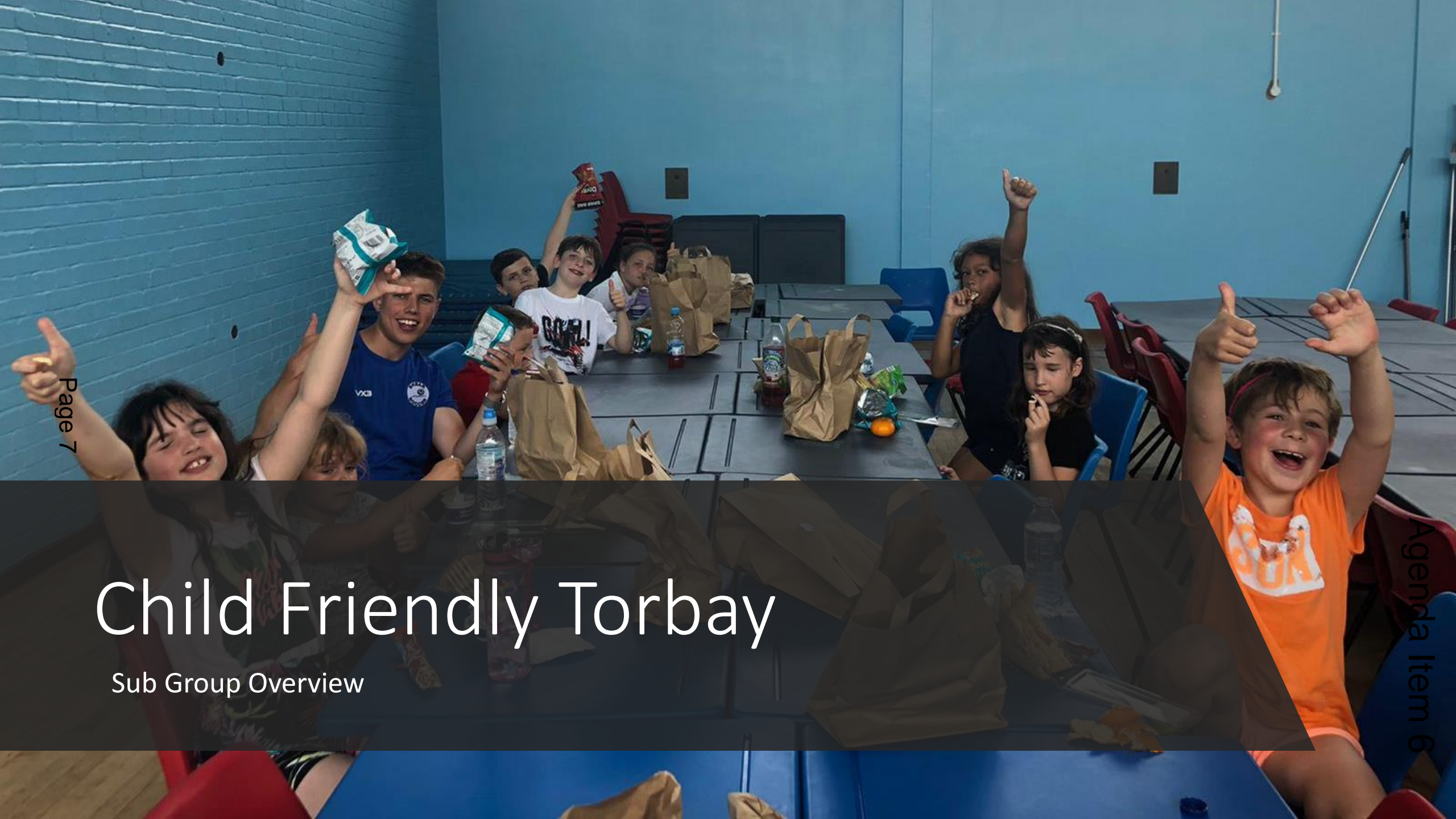
The Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Darling, commended recent training on exploitation software and report writing, which he and Councillor Law attended

and encouraged this to be delivered wider to partner organisations to help them understand the impact of the language used when referring to young people.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. the Board to receive six monthly updates exploitation to include:
 - a. reporting outcomes and challenges arising from the work of the Exploitation Team and multi-agency partnership; and
 - b. hidden impacts of Covid-19 and what action has been taken to address this; and
2. the Democratic Services Team Leader to send a link to all Members to 'It was Hard to Escape' – [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - It was hard to escape - report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/954217/it-was-hard-to-escape-report-2020.pdf).

Chairman



Child Friendly Torbay

Sub Group Overview

Initial Aims and Objectives - a place to start!

Child Friendly Torbay: ‘We want Torbay to be a great place for all of our children and young people to grow up in. We want to work together to deliver this; every contribution counts and we can all play a part in making a difference.’

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Following a survey undertaken in 2018 by Imagine This, children and young people said they wanted:

- More spaces to hang out
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Greater access for ALL
- Safer streets
- Ways to protect our environment



What we want to avoid....



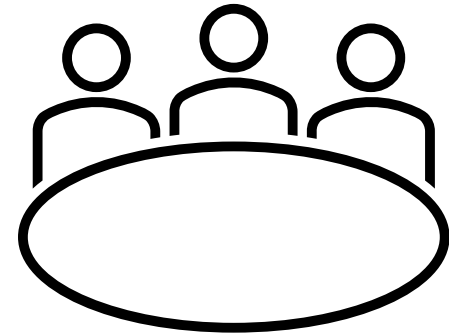
- ✓ We do not want this initiative to come across as patronising – our intention is genuine and the desire to involve and ‘hear’ children and young people is sincere.
- ✓ We do not want this initiative to be overly confusing – there are several elements to the initiative, but there should be clarity in how outcomes are achieved and who is involved within each action/activity. It will be made clear that some elements will be better led by young people, the business community, the local authority, the VCS etc.
- ✓ We do not want this initiative to become a ‘one-man band’ – the Sub-group will act as a representation of all of the lead ‘groups’ involved in the initiative and Task and Finish Groups will be asked to ensure that all participants are actively involved.
- ✓ We do not want this initiative to just become ‘lip-service’ – we want partners or businesses to sign-up because they genuinely want to help and make a difference to the lives of local children and young people.

The Sub Group

Proposed Membership of Sub Group as a minimum:

- Imagine This
- Torbay Together (Chair)
- Council
- Police
- Business Representation

Frequency of meetings to be agreed



Proposed focus:

- Create toolkit and material (from YP designs – or create designs and get sign-off from YP?) for the initiative and for businesses to use
- Lead on and develop the Ambassador programme
- Agree the Comms plan (developed in partnership)
- Oversee Task and Finish group activity
- Raise aspiration! Keep the momentum and the activity/communication positive!

Priorities: Task and Finishing Groups

Each Task and Finish Group will have a project/action plan in place and will report back to the sub-group to report on the progress made, any barriers experienced or opportunities identified.

The action plan will follow a pre-agreed template to ensure all Task and Finish Group actions can be aligned, and all will consider where the activity would benefit from the input or to be led by young people, schools or community groups.

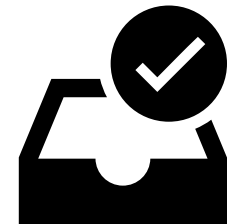
Groups will also be asked to consider where other T&F groups may better placed to lead on particular actions, or where they may need to link in with existing or recognised groups within Torbay to ensure that the Child Friendly Torbay agenda is considered within their remit.

Priority 1 – Child exploitation (Police lead)

Priority 2 – Early Help (Children’s Services lead)

Priority 3 – Where I live (Imagine This rep lead)

Priority 4 – Corporate parenting (Children’s Services lead)



Task and Finish Groups – proposed memberships



Priority 1 – Child exploitation

- Police (Lead)
- Community Safety Partnership
- Business Forum representative
- BID company representative
- Children’s Services representative
- Imagine This representative

Priority 2 – Early Help

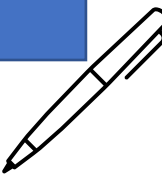
- Children’s Services representative (Lead)
- Imagine This representative
- Community Partnership representative
- Health (midwifery) representative
- Business Forum representative

Priority 3 – Where I live

- Imagine This representative (Lead)
- Planning representative
- Community safety representative
- Climate Change representative
- Public Health representative
- Business Forum representative
- Police representative

Priority 4 – Corporate parenting

- Children’s Services representative (Lead)
- Police representative
- Health representative
- Business Forum representative
- South Devon College representative
- BID company representative



Ideas for the Task and Finish Groups (for further discussion)

- Recruit businesses – raising awareness
- Employment or training opportunities – apprenticeship scheme/reparation opportunities/training days/work experience
- Fundraise for events
- Comms (local business/local authority/Imagine This)
- Fostering recruitment and support for foster families
- Blue light engagement – breaking down barriers
- Green and sustainable future focus? Food? Green spaces?
- Develop safe spaces for young people
- Promote creative play/arts opportunities/play agenda
- Community fun days
- Safeguard young people – raise awareness re: exploitation/local need/Be Kind

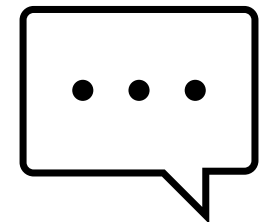


How can children and young people get involved and have ownership? (for further discussion)

Ideally young people will be involved as much as possible throughout the development of the Child Friendly Torbay initiative – Task and Finish Groups may identify specific areas where their expertise would be required.

We have a responsibility to ensure that this is managed effectively and that they are supported throughout their involvement. Some initial thoughts on how this might happen:

- Communicate what they want to see – how can the Bay improve? Develop on the 2018 feedback and on specific elements.
- Design/choose a logo for the initiative
- Take part in meetings – present to business forum? Join the sub group?
- Form YP schemes – child director, youth parliament, youth panel/forum etc.
- Ensure marginalised groups are represented e.g. UASC, SEND, care experienced local children, all ages etc.
- Design community engagement/fun days, local children's awards etc. – And have fun! 😊



Compliment and support work proposed through Local Motion

Abbreviations/Terminology (to be added to)

- UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Care experienced – a young person currently or previously been in care e.g. foster care/residential care/adoption/kinship care etc.
- YOT – Youth Offending Team
- CFT – Child Friendly Torbay
- YP – Young People
- CYP – Children and Young People



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Torbay
naturally inspiring

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TORBAY
BUSINESS
FORUM

TORBAY COUNCIL

Torbay Children's Services

A review of Leadership, Management and Governance

Introduction: This review was commissioned by the Chief Executive as part of her systematic approach to discharging her responsibilities for overseeing progress against the Children's Service Improvement Plan and the associated Sufficiency Strategy. A commitment to being a high performing and self-aware local authority, the report gives a position statement about the 'health' of the service and will serve to inform the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families and the Council about the quality of services available to children and families within Torbay. The review is also consistent with a recommendation set out in the 2018 Ofsted inspection report that states *"The Chief Executive to ensure that leadership, management and governance in Torbay are strong and sharply focused on improving and sustaining outcomes for children, and all recommendations from inspection activity are addressed"*. To achieve a degree of 'out of line management independence' the review has been led by Steve Hart, Independent Chair of Torbay's Improvement Board and Claire Burgess, Torbay's DfE Improvement Advisor.

The review has taken place at different times between the 21st July and 4th August. In anticipation of an imminent inspection, the review has broadly followed the methodology set out by Ofsted in its inspection framework, and has comprised:

- a critique of relevant policy, procedure, and guidance documentation
- a review of preliminary data produced by Liquid Logic
- formal interviews with managers and key staff responsible for key functions relating to the leadership, management or governance of the Children's Service or its partnerships
- an interview with the Principle Social Worker
- interviews with a variety of partners, including the voluntary sector, with significant involvement with Children's Services and a direct or indirect interest in the well-being and safety of children
- interviews with politicians, specifically the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Children and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- focus groups with front line staff to understand the impact of leadership, management and governance upon their day-to-day work and their sense of security about being employees of Torbay.

The findings:

Torbay Children's Services has a recent history characterised by the impact of three inadequate inspection judgements, the most recent two being consecutive. The first of the consecutive judgements resulted in the imposition of a government Direction and the appointment of a DfE Commissioner which ultimately led to the strategic leadership for children's services being provided by Plymouth City Council under the terms of a contractual agreement.

Following the third inadequate inspection, a new Commissioner was appointed, the contract with Plymouth was ended and the leadership of children's services returned to the full control of Torbay Council. More recently, the widely welcomed promotion of the deputy to the role of Chief Executive and securing the permanent appointment of the previously fixed term DCS has underscored the already established forward momentum, focus and stability. There is now a clear and widely understood direction typified by a relentless focus upon improvement that has been underpinned by the well regarded (by Ofsted and DfE) Improvement Plan and Sufficiency Strategy. Actions that were taken early to monitor all aspects of Social Care activity and spend coupled with a radically changed approach to Improvement and Sufficiency Planning quickly enabled the budget to be controlled and the long standing annual overspends to be eradicated with the result that oversight has now returned to levels associated with a business as usual approach and a growing confidence that the management of Children's Services is strong, reliable and trustworthy despite the extraordinary challenges and pressures that have been exerted by the COVID pandemic.

The real commitment to creating a 'Child Friendly Torbay' has gained increasing traction and has provided opportunity for Children's Services, the wider corporate council, the voluntary sector and the business community to be brought together in the Strategic Partnership. It is united in endeavour to connect communities and create societal change that benefits from and contributes to substantial investment in economic regeneration. This drive, "connecting communities to the cranes", reflects the well-defined vision of the Chief Executive and the Council which absolutely sees children at the heart of Torbay's wider development ambitions. It is further supported by the Torbay Quartet which brings together on a regular basis, the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Children, the Chief Executive and DCS to monitor progress and achievements and shape the future direction that is designed to make their vision for Torbay a reality.

The strengthening through recruitment of a stronger senior and middle management team is providing greater levels of reassurance across the system shown by surveys of morale and reduced turnover in the workforce though with still significant ground to cover. It is fully recognized that although progress has been made, next steps will require attention to create a permanent senior leadership team to enable Torbay to confidently progress and to further endorse the growing confidence in the wider workforce and partners that the changes that have been made are to be sustained. It will also serve to assist the already established progress made in relation to recruitment which has seen an increase of 67 permanent posts which is reducing the reliance upon agency social work professionals who had been filling 34.4% of social work posts. This figure is being added to by the arrival of twelve fully qualified social workers from overseas with a further 21 social workers currently in the interview process.

An equal focus on retention is designed to ensure that Torbay becomes and remains a destination of choice for social work professionals. Progress is being made in reducing the previously high turnover rate of 37.8% to 27% in June 2021. 'On the ground' the strategy has been brought to life by:

- the successful launch and rapid progress of the already highly performing social work academy which has successfully supported 16 newly qualified social workers through their initial year and is about to embark on the same exercise with the next intake of 16
- a foundation programme in management for experienced social workers, advanced social work practitioners and team managers. This programme has adopted the restorative practice approach and is essentially skills based and complementary to more theoretically based management programmes offered by universities and equivalent seats of learning
- the introduction of the Aspire Programme, an initiative to develop the next generation of managers from the talent pool of existing staff whose capability has been formally recognized. The taught element of this programme is also being made available to each member of the leadership and senior management team and is being extended to YOT, Education, Early Help and Business Support colleagues.

Focus groups with social workers, including those in their ASYE year, and team managers has shown clear evidence of an encouraging belief that has been

developed among the workforce that attention to staffing issues, supervision (though opportunities exist to strengthen arrangements at senior levels), workloads and professional development is positively impacting upon staff morale and is enabling the growth of a more permanent workforce profile against a backcloth of nationwide and well-established recruitment and retention challenges. It is recognized also that a body of Torbay's interim and agency staff continue to make a positive contribution to the quality of services, and it is right that the time has been reached to embark upon an exercise offering the opportunity for those high performers to convert to permanent posts.

Actions that have been taken to reorganise the previously disjointed distribution of services has provided a structural and functional coherence to the children's social care service. The introduction of Restorative Practice, with workforce involvement and full training, as the preferred social work model has given the children's service a professional identity that has previously been elusive. There is a clear sense among those who have been interviewed that a momentum has been built which has taken the service to a stronger base beyond the immediate recovery stage that always follows the initial implementation of an improvement plan. Arguably they suggest that a platform has been built supported by an extensive range of functional policies and procedures and processes (including panels) and monitoring arrangements that places Torbay within reach of achieving sustainably good or better services. Although there have been high levels of engagement with this drive across the workforce, the very accessible and strong leadership of the DCS with the very evident support of the Chief Executive, key Councillors and by Torbay's Improvement Partner (Leeds City Council) have been instrumental in creating the environment for rapid, positive change. However, there is a realism too that there are still issues to address before practice quality fully catches up with the strategic progress that has been made. These informed views reassuringly reflect the knowledge, analysis, and the increasing maturity of a professional and voluntary sector community that knows itself well. The delay is not unusual in recovering services and it is understood that constant management attention is required to ensure that 'performance and quality gains' match strategic gains in a timely way.

Statutory and Voluntary Sector partners also recognise a stage has been reached when active consideration needs to be given to overlaying the internal focus on improvement that has been widely understood to be essential in the

first phases of recovery, with opportunities to develop and engage with partners in community-based services and cross peninsular and regional initiatives. These developments would be consistent with the ambition to make Torbay a prosperous, child and family friendly local authority area and would mark a significant departure from a perception held by some that Children's Services has been insular and siloed in its functioning which has impacted upon its willingness and ability to build trusting strategic and operational relationships.

Torbay has been acutely aware that to progress it had to take action to address the shortcomings in its IT system. It has invested heavily in replacing the outdated and very inefficient computer system with a Liquid Logic based system. The replacement has been planned over a long period of time and went live following migration on the 14th June. It offers significant capacity advantages but of particular interest is its ability to

- support practice by enabling practitioners and managers to timetable work that is prompted by its 'reminder' capability
- have (largely) intuitive work-flow pathways to ensure work can be ordered logically
- enable practitioners and managers to have contemporary access to child level data, or when required to team or service level data to support other aspects of operational and strategic management
- enable senior leaders and politicians to have 'click of a button' access to performance management information
- generate a range of standard reports and, additionally, bespoke reports with relative ease and within very acceptable time boundaries.

These advantages are welcome and reflect the extensive and diligent planning that informed the commission and system specification. However, as is inevitable following the launch of a new system, there are some teething problems which have to be systematically resolved before its full and positive impact can be realised. At the time of drafting this report, some of the issues were business critical, for example data relating to the numbers of cared for children, and for obvious reasons needed immediate attention.

Aligned with the implementation of the new system are major opportunities to ease some of the day-to-day working pressures on staff by

exploiting to the full the supports to practice and management that the system can offer. However, this requires two things to happen:

1. for the workforce, including managers at all levels, to become technically competent and be able to 'move around' and use the system with ease
2. the workforce, again including managers, to be data literate to enable the information, data and reports provided by the system to be scrutinised, contextualised and understood, generating where necessary, actions to address issues of concern or to capitalise on, or emulate existing good practice so that the end users, the children, can benefit to the full.

Although these needs are understood, at the time of drafting the required bite sized training was not developed to address the issues. Not to do so relatively quickly will introduce a risk to the successful implementation of the system and already this review heard from some who were experiencing more problems than they should in using it, with the resultant impact upon the efficiency and effectiveness of their work.

From a low base, the quality assurance system of Torbay Children's Services has been developed and implemented well providing politicians, leaders and managers with a clear window through which practice and operational management can be observed at close quarters. Of particular importance has been the establishment of Practice Weeks which provide invaluable opportunity for senior and corporate leaders and politicians to engage in a programme of meetings, observations, and discussions to see 'at close hand' the work of those at the front line and to understand the pressures that they face. These exercises are welcomed by all who take part for the invaluable opportunity they present to explore in detail the issues that arise in informed depth.

Recent long-term sickness of the substantive manager and the retirement of her interim replacement, coupled to the pressures exerted by COVID restrictions, impacted upon the volume (though not the quality) of audits undertaken but through close management scrutiny and encouragement a reasonable number have been undertaken (averaging 15 per month as opposed to the target of 25). However, the concerns generated by this 'drop off' in quantitative performance is being offset by a significant development. Creative use of development resources has enabled a

considerable block of time to be bought from a 'good' local authority with a highly regarded quality assurance system. This has enabled Torbay to secure the services of the responsible social work manager who has built upon our achievements hitherto and rationalised and restructured Torbay's approach to enable a more systematic approach to quality assurance, auditing and dip sampling. This will ensure that the lessons that are learned are derived from a sample size that is numerically sufficient to enable confident evidence-based decisions to be formulated. The approach is well considered, comprehensive and systematic and will add quality to an already competent system and, importantly, will help give assurance about the quality of work with individual children, and enable analysis and scrutiny across teams and services. Its thematic and case specific functions will strengthen and will contribute to an improved quality assurance framework.

The interim manager responsible for developing our approach is also currently operating as Torbay's interim Principle Social Worker and in that role, is converting the learning from audit and dip sampling into 'ready for launch' focused actions to improve management and practice. At the time of writing, the precise detail of how this work will be taken forward by the Learning Academy had not been fully resolved but it is anticipated that experienced Advanced Social Work Practitioners will have a crucial role to play. This is a major and fast-moving development that will add significant value to the improvement effort by ensuring that an accurate and up-to-date understanding of practice and management quality will supplement the expanding and contemporary range of quantitative performance data.

This report has indicated above that the new IT system will significantly enhance the capacity and capability of those involved in performance management. Access to contemporary and wide-ranging data that is easily available at individual, team or service level is an invaluable resource. Managers are very positive about the benefits it brings but their optimism needs to be tempered by an acknowledgement that the capability of the system will not be realised without the diligent and systematic oversight by managers. Recent history has shown that the service has wrestled with improving some aspects of longer-term underperformance and although poor quality data has always been cited as the major contributory factor, detailed analysis has shown that management practice has required strengthening and supporting. This work has started with the weekly

scrutiny of performance in those areas identified for improvement and the Improvement Operations Board has the requirement for the presentation of a 'highlight report' on each of these areas at every meeting. This additional layer of detailed scrutiny supplements the regular and established 'performance surgeries' which examine and understand challenges facing teams using child level data to do so. These initiatives have led to understanding of the issues and some significant improvements to be made and close scrutiny will continue until progress is judged to be sufficient, at the required level of quality and sustainable. For example, improved performance highlights include:

- the MASH completed contact rate (at 97% from 86% despite increased demand)
- increase in number of CP conferences within 15 days (80% from 63%)
- a decrease in the numbers of children subject to a second or further CP Plan
- improved performance in pre-proceedings and achievement of statutory timescales
- significant decrease in the cared for population from 352 children to 307, improvements in placement stability and statutory visiting compliance (now 78% from 50%), and an improvement in the proportion of cared for children living with Torbay foster carers (63% from 55.7%)
- significant reduction in the numbers of children living in residential settings (currently 22 children, a reduction from 42 previously) and a similar reduction in the proportion of cared for children living more than 20 miles from home (26.2%)
- major improvements in securing permanency for cared for children
- major improvements in securing health and dental checks and high performance in relation to annual health reviews
- significant improvement in the identification and response to children vulnerable to sexual exploitation (182 from 47).

Partnership work within Torbay has developed over the life of the Improvement Plan and it is noticeable that as the impact of the plan has begun to take hold, the focus on the strength, role and function of partnerships has begun to gain traction. This is well-illustrated by the highly successful impact of the implementation of the improvement priority to reduce Torbay's reliance on high-cost residential care solutions which has

been mirrored by the development of Torbay's Corporate Parenting Board, aided significantly by LGA input, into a body that is developmental, challenging and supportive and able to fulfil its statutory function.

Those involved in Boards have been clear that they have very definitely noted the overdue but welcome strengthened management approach to the extensive range of Torbay Children's Service's challenges which have been supported by the Chief Executive and politicians. They have seen positive improvements over the last 12 months and are confident that the changes that have been made are secure, sustainable and, unlike initiatives over the recent history, unlikely to slip back if individuals leave. Whilst not undermining the strong threads of resilience and professional leadership underpinned by generally good structural links, there is also a realisation that some partnership work is still work in progress reflecting the complexity of the task and the sheer volume of improvement work that has needed to be tackled. For example, it is noted that there is no formal link between the Community Safety Partnership work on domestic abuse and sexually harmful behaviours and the Early help Board, a finding that is surprising given the prevalence of domestic abuse in families accessing early help.

The examples described above provide illustration that while significant progress has been made across the partnership spectrum in Torbay, the time has probably arrived when the Boards need to take stock, reflect on achievements and future direction, and consider what needs to be added or adapted to ensure they are 'fit for purpose' to tackle the next stages of their development. Consideration also needs to be given to whether it is possible to affect some rationalisation of the number of Boards which some felt were duplicative and expensive in terms of time spent on servicing them. This work has begun, for example in the Safeguarding Partnership where the roles of the Independent Scrutineer and the Chair of the Executive are being reconsidered, and now needs to be built upon in the forthcoming months.

The next phase of improvement planning also offers an opportunity to strengthen and build the effectiveness of the Children's Service by developing and consolidating the relationships between social care, schools, early help and public health so that each element of service can unite behind a common purpose on behalf of the children of Torbay. It is

very understandable that against a backcloth of Ofsted judging schools to be good or better, and social care services to be inadequate that the initial focus has been on social care services with the absolute priority to ensure that children are properly protected and safeguarded. This review has found that all parties are convinced that this first priority has been achieved, notwithstanding that there is an absolute realisation that there is no room for complacency. This progress enables the focus to widen, and evidence is re-enforcing the need to focus on wider children's services and their inter-relationships. The recent SEND Peer Review reinforced this view by highlighting the necessity for children and their families to benefit from an understanding about how to access 'joined up' services that worked to prevent the need for escalation. It also endorsed the earlier proposition that further work is required to align the Board structures and inter-dependencies, for example, the Local Education Board and the Health and Well-being Board.

The challenges of engaging some schools in the early help agenda, despite extensive consultation demonstrates the importance of work to align priorities and priority actions within a fully integrated children's service. Similarly, opportunities to build upon the work of the revitalised public health input need to be taken as the council builds its wider agenda to ensure that Torbay becomes a highly desirable location within which children can live, thrive, and develop. However, it is very evident that children and young people are not benefiting from a sufficiency of CAMHs provision which is impacting upon the improvement agenda. For example, only 5 cared for young people are in receipt of direct CAMHs provision, an extraordinarily low figure that determines that an urgent and immediate review is required to establish the required level of resource to meet assessed and established need.

Conclusion:

This report has tracked the very evident progress that has been made in securing the level of improvement needed to lift Torbay out of the necessity for Government intervention. The essential initial focus on protecting children has been relentless and necessary. A strategic and political platform has been constructed that is comprehensive rational and supports good practice and performance management while stimulating recruitment and retention. In addition, performance across the Children's

Service has shown signs of improvement against its improvement objectives and rigorous management processes and improved performance capability are designed to maintain the momentum. Therefore, Children's Services can now move on from the period of crisis management and properly occupy a place where it can continue to grow to become a trusted partner and community leader that can play its full part in enabling Torbay to achieve its wider vision of creating a prosperous, child friendly local authority area.

None of the progress identified in this review could have taken place without the accessible and clear leadership of the DCS supported by the very involved Chief Executive and councillors. It is possible to predict with absolute confidence that the commitment demonstrated by the individuals concerned will continue to the next phase of their continuous improvement journey as Torbay Children's Services embraces the opportunities available to move away from the crisis period. There is no detectable complacency about the challenges that still face the service and it is hoped that the recommendations set out below will assist the granular discussions that will now take place. It is to be noted that the order of the recommendations do not imply their priority but rather they are ordered to follow the evidence contained in the text above.

Recommendations:

1. Take steps to recruit to vacant senior management posts to create a permanent leadership team to lead the Children's Service through its next stage of development and beyond.
2. To continue with the existing initiative to support Recruitment and Retention with a particular additional focus on recruiting suitable existing agency staff to permanent posts.
3. To consider how Children's Services can develop further its work with the voluntary and community sector and its statutory partners and expand its role into peninsular-wide and regional initiatives.
4. Continue to develop staff knowledge, through training where necessary, of the capability and application of Liquid Logic to support their core work.
5. To implement in full at the earliest opportunity the revised Quality Assurance Framework and ensure there are mechanisms in place to

- capture learning from audit activity that can be implemented into practice and management without delay.
6. To complete at the earliest opportunity the work that has begun to review the necessity for, and governance arrangements for the existing Children's Services related board structures.
 7. To commence the work focussing on the development of a fully integrated and functional Children's Service.
 8. To take urgent action to address the sufficiency requirements for a functional CAMHs service in Torbay.

Stephen Hart, Independent Chair, Torbay Children's Service Improvement Board.

Claire Burgess, DFE Improvement Advisor for Torbay Children's Services.

2 August 2021.

Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Board Action Tracker

Date of meeting	Minute No.	Action	Comments
18/8/21	17	1. the Board to receive six monthly updates exploitation to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. reporting outcomes and challenges arising from the work of the Exploitation Team and multi-agency partnership; and b. hidden impacts of Covid-19 and what action has been taken to address this; and 2. the Democratic Services Team Leader to send a link to all Members to ‘It was Hard to Escape’ – The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - It was hard to escape - report (publishing.service.gov.uk) .	<p>Added to work programme.</p> <p>Complete – emailed 20/8/21</p>