

## **Update on the Ofsted Annual Conversation**

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**Date prepared:** 21.04.2022  
**Meeting:** Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board  
**Date of meeting:** 03.05.2022

### **1. Purpose**

1. To provide an update on the Ofsted Annual Conversation that took place on 28.2.2022. This part of the Inspecting Local Authorities Children's Services Framework (ILACS) is voluntary, but it plays an important role in supporting Ofsted's understanding of the Local Authorities self-evaluation of their services.
2. The meeting can be about solely Children's Social Care (CSC) or part of a broader meeting covering education and early years.
3. The meeting should cover a number of areas and in particular:
  1. the content of the self-evaluation – what leaders know about practice and outcomes, and the evidence that supports this
  2. the impact of the self-evaluation – what leaders are doing to address weaknesses in practice and maintain or improve good practice, including evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of their actions
  3. actions taken in response to previous inspections
  4. the Local Authority's current financial, political and professional practice context
  5. the broader issues that affect delivery of children's social care services, for example schools and early years provision
  6. the possible scope of a focused visit
  7. the approximate timing of the next self-evaluation and annual engagement meeting
1. The meeting between Torbay Children's Services and regional representatives from Ofsted took place in February 2022 and was prior to the recent ILACS inspection. The outcome of the Annual Conversation identified positive improvement by Torbay on its journey to deliver improved services for children.

## **8. Summary of Key Actions**

1. The meeting between Torbay representatives and Ofsted regional representatives was a broader meeting and covered both CSC and early years and education.
2. The meeting was a positive one with a consensus that Torbay, from the self-evaluation presented and the discussion, was continuing to improve services to children.
3. The data presented also evidenced an improving picture and one that was viewed positively by Ofsted.

## **9. Milestones**

1. The process following the Annual Conversation, is that Ofsted will write to the DCS within a month of the meeting. The letter is not a published letter and does not contain any judgements about practice. The letter will set out the following:
  1. the date of the meeting and who attended
  2. a factual summary of the agenda items discussed
  3. the possible scope of a future focused visit
  4. the approximate timing of the following year's self-evaluation and annual engagement meeting
  5. any next steps

## **6. Key Issues**

1. The meeting was positive and identified that despite the pressures of the pandemic, we had been able to keep a focus on the most vulnerable children.
2. We had strengthened our governance and scrutiny arrangements and our partner arrangements were more mature both strategically and operationally.
3. We were reducing our cared for numbers, our children subject to child protection and had reduced the number of children in residential establishments.
4. We were continuing to reduce our use of agency and staff turnover which supported a more consistent response to our children.
5. Acknowledging our significant challenges within SEND we were pleased that the early years provision was identified as a strength.
6. We have enough early year placements for children who require one, however, acknowledge reduced capacity within childminding places.
7. We acknowledge the number of young people not in education or training

(NEET) had reduced but in respect of our care experience who are NEET this had risen and was not yet at pre-pandemic levels.

8. We had been successful in a bid for £45 000 to enable young people aged 16 or over to complete work experience with Great Western Railway.

## **7. Key Risks**

1. If the self-evaluation had identified weaknesses in practice but the local authority had credible plans to take clear, appropriate and effective action in response, Ofsted would treat this as effective leadership. However, it could, if the plans are not felt to be robust, trigger an inspection or focused visit. If this was the position the Ofsted regional representatives would highlight these issues with the Local Authority at the annual engagement meeting.