



Tuesday 18 October 2011

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of **Overview and Scrutiny Board** will be held on

Wednesday, 26 October 2011

commencing at **5.30 pm**

The meeting will be held in the Meadfoot Room, Town Hall, Castle Circus,
Torquay, TQ1 3DR

Members of the Committee

Councillor Thomas (J) (Chairman)

Councillor Bent
Councillor Brooksbank
Councillor Butt
Councillor Darling

Councillor Kingscote
Councillor Parrott
Councillor Pentney
Councillor Pountney

Co-opted Members of the Board

Leon Butler
Penny Burnside, Diocese of Exeter

Our vision is for a cleaner, safer, prosperous Bay

For information relating to this meeting or to request a copy in another format or language please contact:

James Dearling, Town Hall, Castle Circus, Torquay, TQ1 3DR
01803 207035

Email: scrutiny@torbay.gov.uk

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
To receive apologies for absence, including notifications of any changes to the membership of the Committee.

2. **Minutes** (Pages 1 - 6)
To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 21 September 2011.

3. **Declarations of Interest**
 - (a) To receive declarations of personal interests in respect of items on this agenda.

For reference: Having declared their personal interest members and officers may remain in the meeting and speak (and, in the case of Members, vote on the matter in question). If the Member's interest only arises because they have been appointed to an outside body by the Council (or if the interest is as a member of another public body) then the interest need only be declared if the Member wishes to speak and/or vote on the matter. A completed disclosure of interests form should be returned to the Clerk before the conclusion of the meeting.

 - (b) To receive declarations of personal prejudicial interests in respect of items on this agenda.

For reference: A Member with a personal interest also has a prejudicial interest in that matter if a member of the public (with knowledge of the relevant facts) would reasonably regard the interest as so significant that it is likely to influence their judgement of the public interest. Where a Member has a personal prejudicial 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 Democratic Services or Legal Services prior to the meeting.)

4. **Urgent Items**
To consider any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent.

5. **Children's Partnership Improvement Plan** (Pages 7 - 20)
To consider Children's Safeguarding within Torbay.

6. **Councillor's Call for Action – Levels and appropriateness of methylphenidate (including Ritalin) prescribed for children and young people in Torbay** (Pages 21 - 24)
To consider the above Councillor Call for Action, with a view to

determining whether to request the preparation of a full report on the matter for submission to a future meeting of the Committee.

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Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Wednesday, 21 September 2011

-: Present :-

Councillor Thomas (J) (Chairman)

Councillors Addis, Barnby, Bent, Darling, Kingscote, Parrott, Pentney and Stringer

(Also in attendance: Councillors Thomas (D), Davies, Tyerman, Pritchard, Excell and Cowell)

279 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings of the Board held on 28 July 2011 and 9 August 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

280 Productivity Improvement Programme (PIP) - RIO (Revenue Income Optimisation)

The Board considered a report providing information on the Revenue Income Optimisation (RIO) project, including how each of the business cases would be progressed. The Business Change Manager indicated to the Board that the final draft of each business case could be provided to Overview and Scrutiny if requested. The Executive Lead Member for Governance advised the Board that the RIO business cases were not finalised or decided and were subject to consultation.

In response to questions, the Board was advised that the proposals within each business case had originated from officers within the relevant area and that wider consultation was necessary for some proposals. The Board was informed that total consultancy costs for three pieces of work, including the RIO project, were approximately £425,000 and that savings identified totalled £18 million over five years. With specific reference to the RIO project, the Board was advised that a target of £3 million of new or increased income had been identified over the next three years. The Board was advised that a yearly breakdown of the £3 million figure could be provided to members.

In reply to questions, the Board was informed that a bed tax had not been considered, that schools might be charged for support for individual children, and that the current proposal to charge for pre-application planning advice would not apply to householders but might be extended in future.

Members questioned the practicality of enforcing charges for damage by cars to the highway and grass verges. In response, the meeting was advised that charges would apply to residents that had made informal access to their own property.

Members suggested a fall in income from the ending of wedding bookings at Oldway Mansion should be recognised and that a non-returnable bookings charge be introduced. In reply to questions concerning a reduction in wedding bookings income, the Board was advised of a reduction in availability of the Spanish Barn, Torre Abbey, Torquay.

Members asked for details of the consultation process for each business case and clarification of the consultation strategy. The Board was advised that the consultation strategy and details of the process were available from the Consultation Research Manager.

(Note: Prior to consideration of the item in Minute 280, Councillor Barnby declared a personal interest as a regular supporter and temporary worker of Torquay United Football Club.)

(Note: Prior to consideration of the item in Minute 280, Councillor Parrott declared a personal interest as a supporter of Torquay United Football Club.)

(Note: Prior to consideration of the item in Minute 280, Councillor Pentney declared a personal interest due to her granddaughter receiving support from Children's Services.)

(Note: Prior to consideration of the item in Minute 280, Councillor Stringer declared a personal interest as a shareholder in Torquay United Football Club.)

281 Torbay Swimming Strategy 2011 - 2026

The Board considered a report detailing the draft Torbay Swimming Strategy for the period 2011-2026. Members were advised that Council support for swimming pools within the Bay had been on an ad hoc basis and that a more strategic approach was required. The Board was advised that the draft strategy was currently a facilities swimming strategy and that swimming as a whole merited more inclusion. The Board was informed the final draft strategy would be subject to consultation and would be considered by full Council in December 2011.

The Board was advised that provision of community swimming facilities within Torbay was greater than many other local authority areas. Members requested benchmarking information for Torbay against other local authorities and were advised that funding had been provided to benchmark costs per swim against other councils. In response to questions, the Board was informed that information relating to subsidies for Torbay Leisure Centre and for the Riviera Centre would be provided.

Replying to questions, the Executive Head, Residents and Visitors Services, indicated that Plymouth was the regional swimming facility funded by Sport England and Torbay was designated a local facility. The Board was advised that the swimming strategy needed to address barriers to a wider take-up of swimming in the Bay. Members were advised that the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) was helping to improve timetabling in Torbay pools.

Members questioned the progress of preparing the draft strategy and the lack of consultation with users. The Board was informed that once drafted a core document would be consulted upon.

Resolved: that the Mayor, the Executive Lead Member for Safer Communities and Transport, and the Executive Lead Member for Tourism and the Environment ensure:

- (i) that full consultation with users occur in relation to Torbay's Swimming Strategy, 2011-2026;
- (ii) that the strategy is owned by the community; and
- (iii) that the strategy include proposals for increasing usage of swimming facilities in the Bay.

(**Note:** Prior to consideration of the item in Minute 281, Councillor Addis declared a personal interest as a non-voting Board member of Swim Torbay.)

282 Affordable Housing Scrutiny Review – position statement

The Board considered a position statement monitoring the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Scrutiny Review that were agreed by the Mayor. The Board were advised that the Affordable Housing Review Action Plan was agreed by the Mayor in February 2011.

The Board was informed that the Housing Core Strategy document was due to be published by 24 October 2011 for consultation. The Board was informed that the consultation period would be a minimum of six weeks.

In response to questions, the Executive Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Housing, and Energy indicated that a Devon-wide strategy on affordable housing would be brought to full Council within the next four or five months.

Members questioned how to encourage tenants to downsize and were advised that incentives such as assistance with removal costs had been used. In response to questions, the Affordable Housing Co-ordinator agreed to contact all within current housing stock to ascertain those with an interest in downsizing. With reference to maintaining stable communities, Board members discussed the adverse affects of downsizing.

The Board questioned the measures available to ensure private sector landlords meet their responsibilities, including the Torbay Landlord Accreditation Scheme. Members suggested that the current economic climate afforded an ideal time to

address private sector landlord issues. The Board was advised that there were a range of incentive-based measures to work with private sector landlords. Members suggested legal enforcement measures might be appropriate and used more often than currently. Members were advised that Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) had become easier to establish following central government action and that the economic and social costs, including anti-social behaviour, were due to a small number of families in a few localities.

282.1 Exclusion of press and public

The Board considered whether the transaction of business was likely to involve disclosure of exempt information and the possible need to exclude the public from the meeting for the remaining items on the agenda.

Resolved: that the press and public be formally excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the remaining three items involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information concerned.

283 Revenue Income Optimisation Project (RIO) - Implementation Proposed Business Case for Beach Hut Development

Members were advised that proposals concerning beach hut development had originally been due for consideration by full Council on 29 September 2011 and were now re-scheduled for the October 2011 meeting of full Council.

Resolved: that the implementation of the proposed business case for beach hut development not be considered by the Board at this time.

284 Delivering Regeneration Through Joint Ventures - Update to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Board considered an update report on the above matter. Members discussed progress and questioned the Chief Executive Officer, Torbay Economic Development Company, and the Deputy Mayor.

The Chief Executive Officer, Torbay Economic Development Company, agreed to provide further information to Board members, including information relating to officer costs.

Resolved: that the Deputy Mayor convey to the Mayor the views of the Board on this matter.

285 Office Rationalisation Project (ORP) Implementation Plan

The Board considered a report outlining the implementation plan for the Council's Office Rationalisation Project (ORP). The Executive Lead Member for Business

Planning, Governance, and Member Development summarised the ORP to the Board.

With reference to the Council's Policy Development Groups, Board members questioned the decision-making powers of such meetings.

Board members questioned aspects of the implementation plan, including agile working, staff reductions, contingency planning, timescales, and delays in implementation.

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Title: **Children's Partnership Improvement Plan**

Wards Affected: **All wards**

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Board** On: **26 October 2011**

Contact Officer: **Richard Williams**

☎ Telephone: **01803 208401**

✉ E.mail: **Richard.Williams @torbay.gov.uk**

1 Key points and Summary

1.1 The level and character of the demand for Children's Social Care in Torbay is both significant and complex.

1.2 The quality of both front line management and delivery of safeguarding has been criticised in recent inspections, but recent spot checks by Ofsted and peer reviews have identified that capacity to deliver changes has improved and progress is now being made to address previous deficiencies in performance.

1.3 There is still a considerable distance to travel but a new approach to the improvement journey will provide the comprehensive, inclusive and disciplined approach that is required to ensure progress is continued and is sustainable for the long term. Changes are already in place that is delivering new arrangements across all partners including a new functional structure for social work, thresholds and intensive family intervention arrangements.

2 Introduction

2.1 Over the last 3 years there has been a real term increase in the numbers of vulnerable children and families coming to the attention of Children Services and its partners. Increasing numbers of these families are also presenting with multiple and significant levels of need. This has been noted by local research (Research and Practice - Dec 2010), case analysis and by independent peer reviewers.

2.2 Over the last 3 years the level and type of demand has been significantly influenced by:

- Deprivation and poverty. Across Torbay 23.7% children are in poverty compared to 22.4% nationally. In 4 wards the number of children in poverty is above 30%.
- Nationally reported tragedies i.e. 'baby Peter'. Research by the Association of

Directors of Children Services (2010) confirmed that majority of authorities reported increases in referrals following the national press coverage of this incident in autumn 2009.

- Local developments such as the recent complex sex abuse investigation and serious case reviews. This has further heightened professional and public awareness of safeguarding issues and thereby increasing the numbers of CYP being referred to social care.

2.3 The nature and level of demand has led to an increase in the number of families requiring a response from Children Services which can be seen in the following facts:

- 1200 referrals for every 10,000 Children and Young People (CYP) in Torbay (2010/11). Torbay Children's Services received 3031 referrals last year compared to 904 in (2008/9).
 - An increase in the number of children with Child Protection Plans (CPP) from 98 in (2008/9) to 220 in (2010/11). The current number is 249 (14/11/11)
 - An increase in the number of children needing to be looked after from 182 in (2008/9) to in 220 (2010/11). The current number is 249 (14/11/11)
- (SEE appendix 1 for detailed information)

2.4 The character and complexity of the work in the system and also coming through the front door is more representative of a London Borough. This has led to the need to protect increasing numbers of children. Despite criticisms, external reviews have not found any significant or systematic evidence of children being on protection plans without good cause. The nature of the work being referred has also directly led to more children becoming looked after. Torbay is inline with the national positions interms of both the age profile and legal profile of children in the care system. An analysis on 21 recent entrants into care identified the following issues:

- Over 80% had previously had a child protection plan of which over half had been for neglect and a third for emotional abuse
- Deprivation is a key factor
- Over 2/3rds come from families where parental substance/alcohol misuse and domestic violence was an issue

2.5 Most authorities have also seen increases in the above although Torbay has experienced higher levels of referrals, has more children on child protection plans and has more children in care. This should be seen in the context of the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted that relate to:

- Managerial oversight and case planning, including the recording of management decision-making
- Staff supervision that was not sufficiently regular, clearly documented, or providing appropriate professional challenge.
- The inconsistent application of thresholds that resulted in a response to child protection that did not meet statutory guidance

2.6 As indicated Torbay's safeguarding practice is identified as requiring significant improvement. This culminated in the issuing of an improvement notice by the DFE following the inadequate rating given by Ofsted in September 2010 (see background papers). A further spot check in July 2011 identified that Torbay was still at the start of the improvement journey (AKA Deep Dive). The Deep Dive did identify some green shoots and specifically stated that Torbay's capacity to achieve the improvements needed was **adequate and improving**.

- 2.7 This prompted a review of the existing improvement arrangements and a new plan has been developed that is taking a more comprehensive, inclusive and disciplined approach (see executive summary: Children's Partnership Improvement Plan (CPIP) Appendix 3).

3 Action

3.1 All the information referred to in this report is within the scope of the new improvement plan (CPIP). In line with best practice and national recommendations, the new improvement journey will consider the process measures covered above alongside those that relate to the quality and impact of practice. The plan has been developed and will be delivered to reflect priorities required of all front line practice/ partners that is comprehensive, inclusive and disciplined.

Comprehensive

3.2 In a change from the previous plan the CPIP will address the actions and issues identified in

- All of Torbay's published and completed Serious Case Reviews
- The previous Safeguarding Improvement Plan,
- The Deep Dive and Outcomes UK report recommendations
- Torbay Safeguarding Children's Board (TSCB) business plan
- TSCB subgroup plans

3.3 The new plan also recognises that the safeguarding improvements required can not just focus on fixing child protection. For the changes to be both sustainable and significant the whole system needs to improve if safeguarding is to improve. This is why the new plan is based on the delivery of an integrated service delivery model that brings partners together and makes the process of receiving help clearer and more effective for CYP and parents. This includes schools as key partners (which has recently been bolstered by the reinstatement of the duty to cooperate).

3.4 The new plan will address the underlying causes by looking at the bigger picture and the need for improvements all levels of need from the earliest signs of need to the acute and complex where risks are higher by

- Working with the community to help build social capital
- Increasing the effectiveness of practice by applying the learning from serious case reviews so that more people are helped at the very earliest point.
- Increasing the capacity to find solutions other than care for children in families with complex needs.
- Reunifying CYP from care (where appropriate) and also improve the way long term care is used

Inclusive

3.5 The profile of the previous plan was limited and it had no clear way of evidencing the impact of the changes. The whole process was also conducted with little reference to CYP, parents or staff. The CPIP has learnt from the previous plan and has CYP at its heart. The governing board overseeing the plan has already role modelled a more inclusive approach by using the outcomes of listening event with CYP, Parents and Staff to help set the overall objectives for the plan (see Appendix 3).

- 3.6 An infrastructure has been developed to ensure that CYP and parents assess the impact of all the work carried out during the programme. The improvement board will only sign off a task as being completed once a positive impact has been noted by the relevant stakeholders. Where the desired impact has not met expectations then consideration will be given to review what has been done and the potential need to choose another approach.
- 3.7 CYP and families have already been influential in shaping the new plan. This includes the supporting the call from parents to have a greater role in advocating and advising other families who are subject to child protection plans. CYP also strongly highlighted the need for greater consistency of (social) workers, improving the demeanour of staff and living up to commitments. This has also been explicitly built into the plan.

Disciplined

- 3.8 The new improvement plan has learnt from the previous plan which was not strong in the way it set, resourced and monitored the tasks in the plan. The CPIP will increase the partnerships' capacity to deliver improvements needed by changing how the improvement journey is governed and managed. The CPIP will achieve this by switching the focus away from monitoring detail to the management of a programme with work streams and projects with clear deliverables.
- 3.9 The CPIP will also be better resourced. A programme team has already been established which draws on staff with a range of backgrounds and expertise from across the council. This team will provide expert advice and help to project managers who will be clear about the scope, outcomes, impact, risks, issues and timescales they are expected to deliver.
- 3.10 For the change process to be fully implemented and sustained for the future the initial phase will be a two year programme. There are a number of priorities that are already being developed and are detailed below but this is a long term and fundamental change in the delivery of all Children's Services.

4 Early progress

- 4.1 Torbay's response to the referrals is improving (see Appendix 2 commentaries on initial and core assessments) i.e. 10 days for the completion of an initial assessment and 35 for core assessments. For example the percentage of initial assessments completed in 10 days during September 2011 was **66.5%** and **73.1%** for core assessments. The historical comparative data shows the ground that still needs to be made up (Figure 5 and 6 Appendix 1) if these improvements are to be sustained.
- 4.2 A new functional structure for social work teams will be put in place by December 2011. The new structure will further increase social work capacity, reduce case loads, and enable social workers to receive increased levels of management and supervision. Business support process are also begin reviewed that will make the systems and support available to social work fit for purpose.
- 4.3 Following the agreement for additional funding Torbay's capacity to deliver intensive family interventions is being increased. An experienced project manager has been appointed to lead the development of the council's arrangements and new personnel

are in the process of being recruited. The opportunity is also being taken to review and enhance the models of practice. This will be finalised in the next 3 months.

4.4 Following the successful development and initial launch of Torbay's thresholds called the 'Childs Journey' a further range of promotion events is planned to coincide with national safeguarding week (W/S 22nd November). The next phase of promotion will offer professionals the chance to meet key personnel and receive clear information on the processes by which decisions are made and what they as referrers can expect in terms of standards for responding to referrals.

4.5 Ofsted conducted an unannounced inspection on the 11 and 12 of October. The final results will be published on the 9th November.

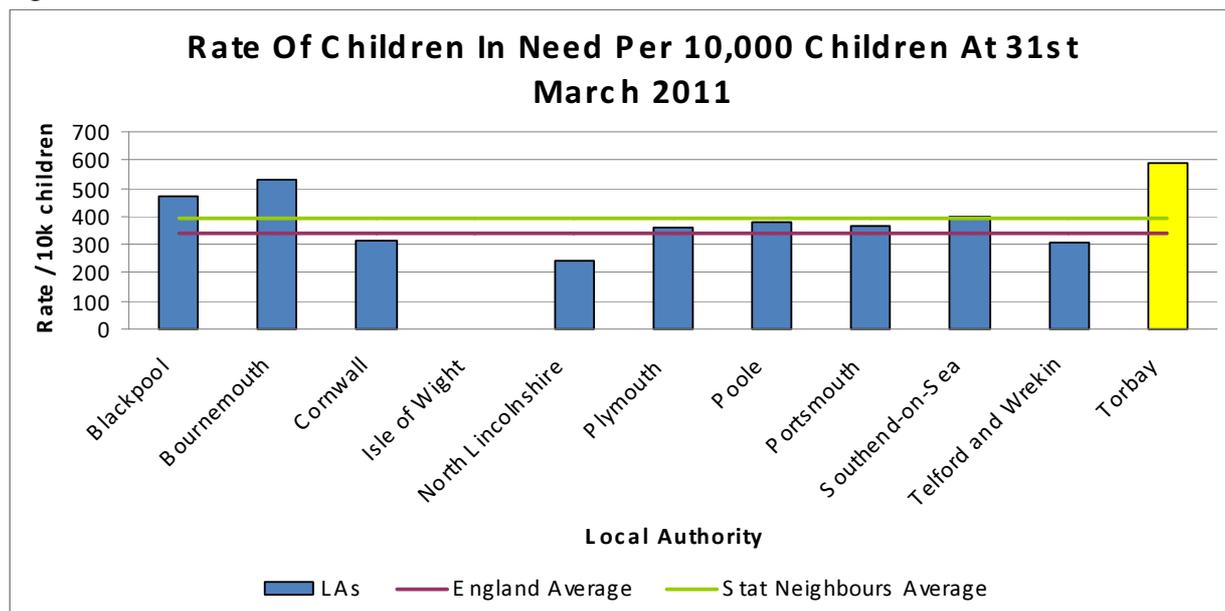
Richard Williams – Acting Director of Children's Services

Russell Knight – Group Manager Children's Services

Appendices

Appendix 1

Figure 1



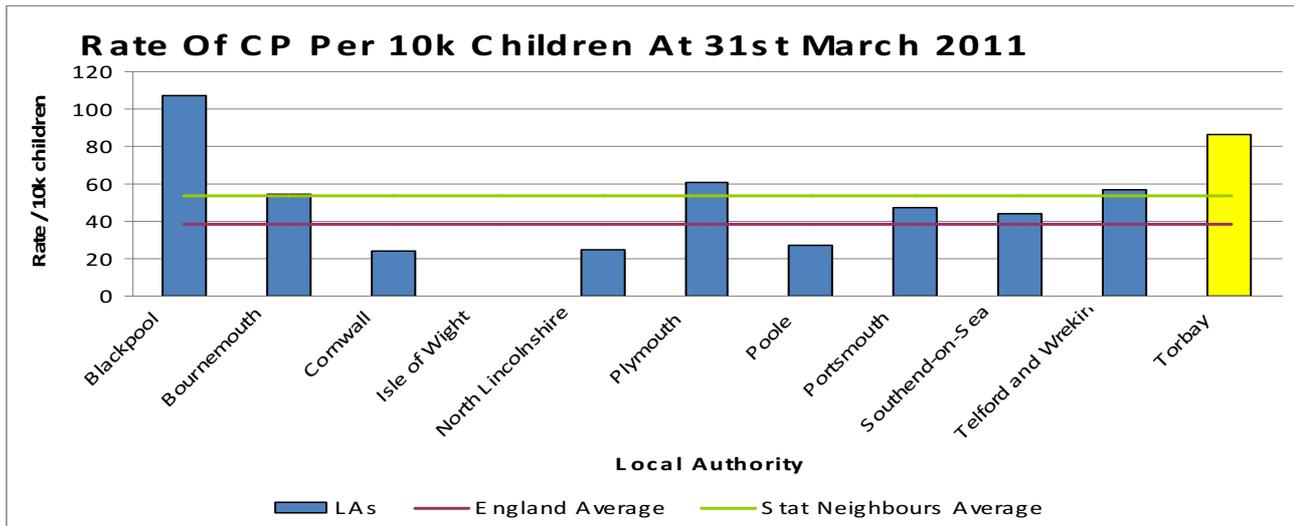
Source: DFE 2009-10 and 2010-11 Children in Need census

Figure 2

	Referrals during 2010/11	Population 0-18
ENGLAND⁵	612,600	11,045,400
Blackpool	3,337	29,200
Bournemouth	1,266	29,600
Cornwall	5,530	103,900
Isle of Wight	1,579	26,300
North Lincolnshire	2,481	34,100
Plymouth	3,193	49,800
Poole	1,174	28,400
Portsmouth	2,990	38,500
Southend-on-Sea	1,950	35,500
Telford and Wrekin	1,311	37,700
Torbay	3,031	25,400

Source: DFE 2009-10 and 2010-11 Children in Need census

Figure 3



Source: DFE CPR3 2010/11

Figure 4 Rate per 10K Population 0 -18+ Torbay

	Rate per 10
March 2009	70.3
March 2010	69
March 2011	76
August 2011	98.5

Statistical Neighbour average

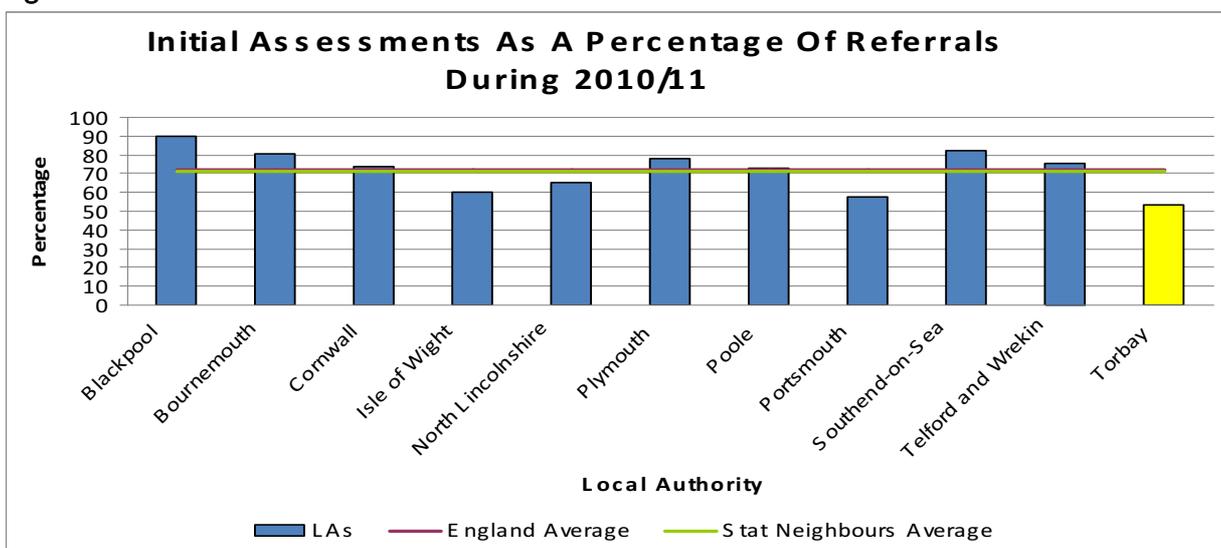
	Rate per 10
March 2010	71

England average

	Rate per 10
March 2010	58

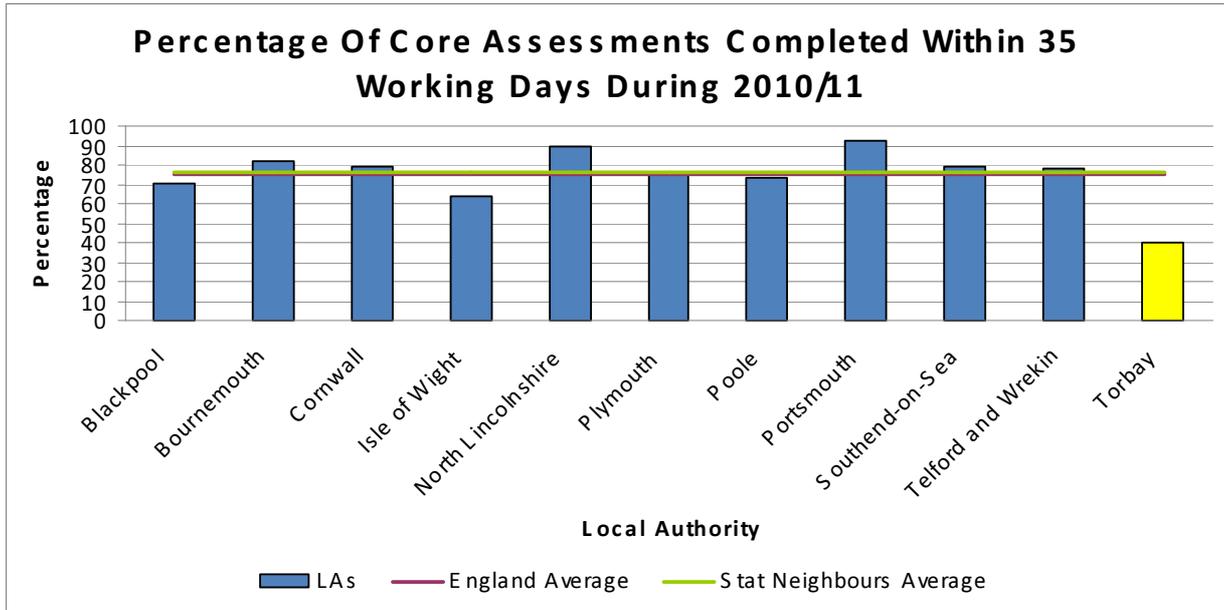
Source DFE

Figure 5



Source: DFE CPR3 2010/11

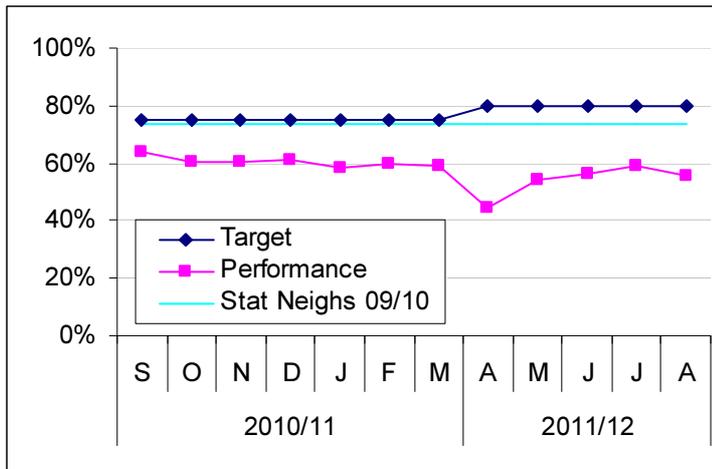
Figure 6



Source: DFE CPR3 2010/11

06 - Ensuring the safety of our most vulnerable children and adults

% of initial assessments for Childrens Social Care within 10 working days (NI059)



Current Status: Well Below Target
 Since last period: Improved
 Target: 80.0%
 Latest Performance: 57.7%
In-month 66.5%
 Responsible Officer: John Skinner

It's best to be high

The number of initial assessments completed between 1 April and 31 March, within ten working days of referral, as a percentage of the number of initial assessments completed in the period. An 'initial assessment' is defined as a brief assessment of any child who has been referred to social services with a request that services be provided.

For the year ending 31st March 2011, 59.3% of initial assessments were completed within 10 working days. Performance to the end of August was 55.5% (397/715) and this increased to 57.7% for September (511/886). This is a significantly higher number of initial assessments completed at this time than in previous years. An average of 460 initial assessments were completed per year from 2005 to 2010. The 2010/11 number was almost 1100 and we are at 886 at the half way point in the 2011/12 year.

The in month performance for June was 58.1% (132/227) which increased to 66.7% (86/129) for July but decreased to 40.3% (52/129) for August. This increased to 66.5% in September (113/170). The 2010/11 England average was 79.6% and statistical neighbour average was 83%.

The number of referrals in the last 12 months was 58.7% more than the previous 12 months. There were 61.0% more initial assessments, 230.1% more core assessments, 65.9% more CP plans, 57.2% more ICPCs, 29.1% more strategy discussions and 26.6% more children becoming looked after.

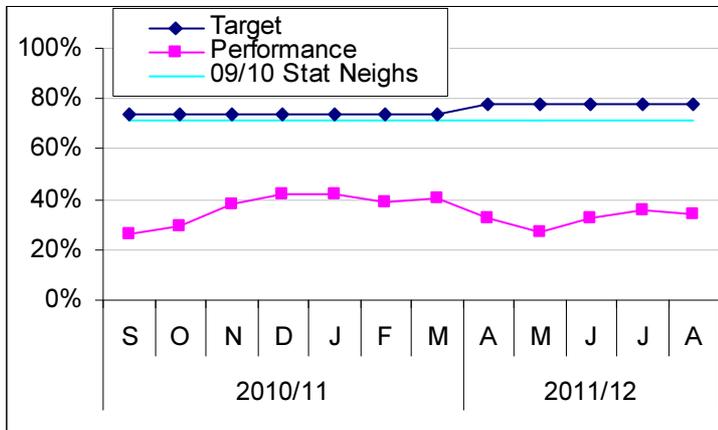
Performance against the improvement notice must be 80% for the period 1st April to 30th September 2011. This was not met however the in-month performance has increased to 71% whilst at the same time the backlog of assessments has been significantly reduced to a more manageable number. This is reflected in the decrease in caseloads to a more manageable number across children's specialist services teams.

The target will form part of the CPIP, including proposed actions and deadlines.

CUSTOMER

06 - Ensuring the safety of our most vulnerable children and adults

% of core assessments for children's social care carried out within 35 working days (NI060)



Current Status:	Well Below Target
Since last period:	Improved
Target	78%
Latest Performance:	39.8%
	In-month
	73.1%
Responsible Officer:	John Skinner

It's best to be high

The percentage of core assessments that were completed within 35 working days of their commencement. Following an initial assessment where a child has been identified as being in need of services and more information is required to determine this need a core assessment is requested. A 'core assessment' is defined as an in-depth assessment which addresses the central or most important aspects of the child's needs.

In the year ending 31st March 2011, 40.4% of core assessments were completed within 35 working days. The percentage at the end of July was 35.9% (103 out of 287). This decreased to 34.2% in August (138/403) but increased to 39.8% in September (188/472).

It must be recognised that 470 core assessments were completed in this six month period. The average number completed per year from 2005 to 2010 was 200. This increased to 450 in 2010/11 and we are at 470 already half way through the 2011/12 year. This shows the huge amount of work which has gone in to assessing children and young people potentially at risk to make sure they were safe.

In-month performance

During August, 35 out of 116 (30.2%) were completed on time. This increased hugely to 73.1% on time for September (46/97). The England average was 75.1% and statistical neighbour average was 76%.

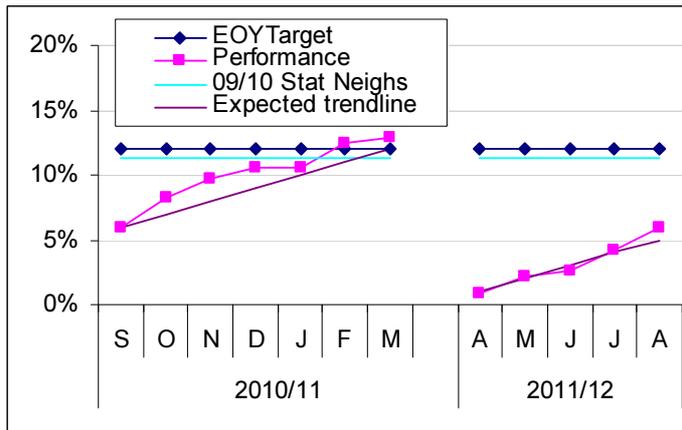
The number of referrals in the last 12 months was 58.7% more than the previous 12 months. There were 61.0% more initial assessments, 230.1% more core assessments, 65.9% more CP plans, 57.2% more ICPCs, 29.1% more strategy discussions and 26.6% more children becoming looked after.

The improvement notice required 78% of core assessment to be completed on time between 1 April and 30 September 2011. The target will form part of the CPIP's proposed actions and deadlines.

CUSTOMER

06 - Ensuring the safety of our most vulnerable children and adults

Stability of placements of looked after children: number of moves (NI062)



Current Status: On Target

Since last period: N/a

Current Target 5.0%

Latest Performance: 6.0 %

Responsible Officer: John Skinner

It's best to be low

The percentage of children looked after at 31st March with three or more placements during the year.

At the end of September, 17 of 245 (2.6%) children looked after had 3 or more placements since 1st April. This rose to 4.2% in July (10 of 239). The England average was 10.9% and the statistical neighbours' average was 11.5% for 2009/10.

Current performance could go above the 2011/12 target of 12%. It must be noted that the number of referrals in the last 12 months was 58.7% more than the previous 12 months and 26.6% more children became looked after, requiring additional services, assessments and reviews. At the end of September there were 245 children looked after (a rate of 96 per 10,000 under 18 population). This is the first time the number has decreased month on month for a considerable time – over 250 in August.

The England rate at 31st March 2011 was 59 and the statistical neighbour rate was 73. At the time, Torbay was at 76 per 10,000.

Children's Services has also taken action to address the increased demand for placements by improving recruitment services for in-house foster carers and working with regional colleagues to improve the quality and cost of independent foster carers.

Executive Summary

Context

Ofsted’s ‘announced’ inspection in September 2010 confirmed the need for improvement in safeguarding that had previously been highlighted in their ‘unannounced’ inspection 3 months earlier. Many of the themes identified by Ofsted in 2010 resonated with the findings of local Serious Case Reviews and an earlier peer review in April 2009 (Outcomes UK). In Torbay the 4 key areas to improve are the quality of core (assessment) skills; the quality of practice management; the quality of planning; and the application of appropriate and clear policies/process.

The new approach

On reviewing the previous safeguarding improvement plan it was clear that a new approach was needed. The new approach will positively role model the changes looked for by being more comprehensive, inclusive and disciplined than before. The experience from other Authorities in intervention has shown that there are no quick fixes, change on the scale needed in Torbay will take time and so a 2 year time frame has been adopted.

Delivering better outcomes for children and young people are at the centre of this improvement journey. The new approach recognises this through the role that CYP and Families will have in:

- identifying areas for action (already started)
- testing impact
- taking a role in service design and delivery

CYP and families have already been engaged in the process of shaping the new plan and defining some of the outcomes required. This includes the supporting of parents to have a greater role in advocating and advising others and providing greater consistency of social workers, improving the approach and demeanour of staff and living up to commitments. Nothing in the plan will be signed off as complete without positive feedback from CYP, Parents or Staff.

Key objectives

The key objectives to be improved by the plan were drawn up from a listening event in September 2011 with CYP, Parents and Staff is:

- Keeping CYP safe by improving the skill and knowledge of professionals in assessment and management of risk
- Being clearer with CYP and families about what will happen, what the expectations are and sticking to commitments
- Keeping troubled families together where possible and reunifying children from care
- Increasing the number, consistency and time for face to face contact with professionals
- Insuring CYP have access to reliable well trained and consistent advocates
- Improving the impact and effectiveness of professionals at all levels of need (through CPD, standards and Evidenced Informed Practice)
- Improving the time and quality of the response to the first call/referral for help

What the plan covers

Building on the conclusions of the Deep Dive and a review of the previous safeguarding improvement plan the new plan takes into account the activities and actions arising from:-

- Ofsted’s recommendations following the Inspection September 2010
- 5 Serious Case Reviews

○ Torbay Safeguarding Children's Board business plan and subgroup plans
All the actions connected to these major plans have been synthesized into 8 projects covering

- PROJECT 1 – Management Development –
Improving the quality of decision making, case allocation, supervision and renewing the appraisal system
- PROJECT 2 – Remodeling Social Work structure
Further increases to social work capacity, a new functional structure, clarity on role and responsibilities, recruitment and retention, reasserting performance management system
- PROJECT 3 – Improve Assessment and Case Planning
Raising assessment skills and techniques, promoting clear practice standards, improving the commissioning of specialist placements and revising the operation of Children in Need plans
- PROJECT 4 – Renewing thresholds and referral processes
Developing a shared appreciation of thresholds, revisiting professional awareness and knowledge of domestic violence, alcohol and substance misuse, redesigning how issues are addressed outside the are managed and out of hours provision
- PROJECT 5 – Improve the Quality and Management of Child Protection
Reasserting best practice, clarifying standards and processes and systems
- PROJECT 6 – Development of Governance
Establishing a common method and mechanism for Case Q&A, developing section 75 arrangements, promotion and raising awareness of TSCB
- PROJECT 7 – Improving integrated frontline practice across all services
Reviewing learning entitlement and raising core skills and knowledge, increasing mobile, community budgets and flexible working capabilities
- PROJECT 8 – Involving the community and using knowledge and skills
Developing local intelligence about missed opportunities, building up social capital, pursuing new provider models, reducing benefit reliance

We know when we've got there because

(Compared to a baseline of September 2010)

- There will be less reliance on statutory interventions i.e. care.
 - More families will be receiving help alternatives to care i.e. intensive solution focused support
 - The average length of time in care will have reduced.
 - The numbers of CYP targeted for reunification will have increased.
- The consistency and morale of staff will have improved – vacancies and turnover will be minimised.
- The timeliness of and quality of assessments will be consistently better.
- External reviews will confirm that safeguarding is good and capacity to improve is also good.
- The frequency and quality of supervision is good and will consistently address both tasks and professional development.
- The level of training take up for front line practitioners including the voluntary sector is improved.
- Communities will have more capacity and capability in providing responses to very early help.
- Those raising concerns will receive a higher quality and more effective response – as confirmed by feedback from referrers and via timeliness of assessments.
- Social worker and professionals generally will have more manageable caseloads – following national best practice guidelines.

Documents available in members' rooms

Ofsted Unannounced Inspection July 2010
Ofsted Announced Inspection September 2010
Deep Dive – extract on the recommendations

Background Papers:

The following documents/files were used to compile this report:

Deep Dive report July 2011

Ofsted's reports July 2010 and September 2010

Children's Partnership Improvement Plan Project Initiation Document Oct 2011

ADCS report on Children Services Dec 2010



James Dearling Esq
Overview & Scrutiny
Town Hall
Torquay

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Your ref:

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Date: 12 October 2011

Dear

Councillor's Call for Action – Levels and appropriateness of methylphenidate (including Ritalin) prescribed for children and young people in Torbay

There is a research proven link between socio-economic group and incidences of ADHD diagnosis and the prescribing of methylphenidate (including Ritalin) for children and young people. The British Psychological Society has condemned this 'medicalisation of natural and normal responses', stating that poverty and unemployment are among the biggest causes in such cases. This link is acknowledged by, among others, the Torbay Care Trust (TCT).

Torbay has high levels of unemployment, a low wage economy, and high levels of benefits dependency. This deprivation is particularly the case in my ward and two others in the Bay. For that reason, I asked the TCT to provide me with figures showing the prevalence of Ritalin prescription in Torbay in the hope that the national correlation between social struggles and Ritalin was not prevalent here.

I have been seeking this information since March. I have done so through exchanges of email with the TCT, and through Freedom of Information requests (FOI). Although the TCT revealed that there has been a nine per cent increase in methylphenidate prescriptions in the Bay between 2008 and 2010, they have failed to provide the base figures for that increase. The TCT claimed, in response to my FOI requests that they do not separate children and young people (under 18) data from adult data.

Given my lack of success in getting information from the TCT, I wrote a column for the Herald Express. Among other responses to that article, I received an email from a qualified educational psychologist, working in the Bay who referred to being 'shocked' at the levels of prescriptions for Ritalin compared to London, and that the vast majority of cases involve children from very 'challenging' backgrounds. The psychologist also referred to the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance indicating that children should be offered alternatives to medication in the first instance, but that this may not be happening as regularly as it should in Torbay.

I have since asked to be allowed to address the Torbay Safeguarding Children Board but have been denied that opportunity.

Following almost eight months of personal effort, I now ask for my Board colleagues' support in calling for the information listed in the appendix to this letter (together with any additional information that they may think appropriate), and that this be done on behalf of the children and young people of the Bay.

Julien Parrott
Councillor for Ellacombe Ward, Torbay

Appendix to Councillor's Call for Action – Levels and appropriateness of methylphenidate (including Ritalin) prescribed for children and young people in Torbay

Request a report from Torbay Care Trust to include:

- Available information on methylphenidate (e.g., Ritalin) use in Torbay;
- The numbers of children and young people (i.e., 0-18 year olds) on Ritalin-type medication in Torbay, in particular 0-5 year olds;
- Detail of the increase in Ritalin-type prescriptions within Torbay for the last 10 years and an explanation for the increase;
- Comparative and contextual information for the above, e.g., comparative prescription rates between Torbay and other areas;
- Details of alternatives to medication offered in the first instance to children, including the local protocol for Ritalin-type medication; and
- Incidences of misuse by adults of Ritalin-type medication prescribed for children with ADHD as a recreational drug.

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