

**Meeting: Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

**Wards Affected: All**

**Report Title: Adoption (including Care Leavers) Update**

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## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide an update to the Children and Young Peoples Board in relation to Adoption and Care Leavers.

## **2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits**

- 2.1 We want Torbay and its residents to thrive.

We want Torbay to be a place where we have turned the tide on poverty and tackled inequalities; where our children and older people will have high aspirations and where there are quality jobs, good pay and affordable housing for our residents.

We want Torbay to be the premier resort in the UK, with a vibrant arts and cultural offer for our residents and visitors to enjoy; where our built and natural environment is celebrated and where we play our part in addressing the climate change emergency.

The proposals in this report help us to deliver this ambition by supporting the Council's responsibilities as corporate parents;

## **3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision**

- (i) That members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board note the contents of the report and the progress made.

# Supporting Information

## 1. Introduction

This report has been prepared to provide members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update on Adoption and Care Leavers.

### Adoption:

1.1 The current position in relation to adoption in Torbay is as follows:

Year	Number of Adoption Orders	Average time between entering care and moving in with family	
16/17	16	17/18	411
17/18	20	18/19	386
18/19	11	19/20	421
19/20	26	20/21	689
Average time between court authority to place and decide on the match (annual figure)		Percentage of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (annual figure)	
17/18	166	17/18	60%
18/19	91	18/19	72.7%
19/20	165	19/20	53.8%
20/21	322	20/21	36.36%

1.2 The impact of this is as follows:

- Adoption is now considered for all children, and we currently have a number of children above the age of five for whom adoption is the care plan.
- Covid-19 severely impacted on our care proceedings with 21 children's final hearings delayed from April and May 2020. Of these a number of children have since been made subject to placement orders.
- Our adoption data evidences a decline in performance against timescales for adoption which is a matter of some concern and a focus for improvement.
- The South West Adoption (the RAA) is subject to a peer review & we are waiting the final report to determine our local priority actions.
- We are also undertaking our own internal review to understand the declining performance in this area.

1.3 Our next steps & plans to improve practice in this area are as follows:

- Develop more robust means of tracking and monitoring permanence and the completion of later life letters;
- Permanence will be considered at the earliest stage;
- Review of the quality, timeliness and commissioning of life story books; and
- Continue to build partnership links with Adopt South West to ensure that permanence is achieved for children at the earliest possible stage.
- SGO – a significant focus as an option within permanency planning.

## Leaving Care:

1.4 The current position in relation to care leavers in Torbay is as follows:

	<b>September 2019 (date of last annual conversation)</b>	<b>November 2020 (SEF Information)</b>	<b>December 2020</b>
<b>Care Leavers – in Touch</b>	82.5%	70.3%	71.2%
<b>Visited (Face to Face)</b>	63.9%	40.6%	49.6%
<b>Suitable Accommodation</b>	88.1%	85.7%	89.6%
<b>EET</b>	63.2%	68.1%	70.0%

1.5 The impact of this is as follows:

- We have recognised that the current Care Leaving Service requires transformation to maximise its effectiveness for young people.
- The adoption of restorative principles will support us in working with young people to improve their experiences.
- In the meantime we have updated our offer, taking account of young peoples' experiences while we consider its future direction.
- The Leaving Care Team has strengthened its links with our exploitation team and regular safety planning meetings are held.
- We have built strong links to the Child Exploitation Missing Operational Group and use the exploitation tool to risk-assess our young people.

1.6 Our next steps are as follows:

- We are committed to enabling young people to remain in education and will continue discussions with South Devon College to enable a broader educational offer for care leavers.
- Consideration of extension of the Virtual School up to 21 years.
- Work has started to improve our joint protocol with housing colleagues which will involve revising our commissioning activities. This work has actively involved the views and experiences of young people who have been central to the discussions.
- Our ambition is to match young peoples' needs to better quality and more suitable accommodation.
- We are finalising the arrangements with Torbay Youth Trust in setting up monthly drop-ins from January 2021.
- We will be utilizing the recently commissioned 'Bright Spots' survey to support our redesign.

## **2. Options under consideration**

2.1 N/A

## **3. Financial Opportunities and Implications**

3.1 N/A

## **4. Legal Implications**

4.1 N/A

## **5. Engagement and Consultation**

5.1 At this time this report has been prepared to provide members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update on the Adoption and Care Leavers Services. Should any proposed changes to these services be identified in the next phases of development ('Next Steps' as identified above) the relevant engagement/consultation will be undertaken with service users and key stakeholders.

## **6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services**

6.1 N/A

## **7. Tackling Climate Change**

7.1 N/A

## **8. Associated Risks**

8.1 At this time this report has been prepared to provide members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update on the Adoption and Care Leavers Services. Should any risks be identified in the next phases of development the relevant engagement/consultation will be undertaken with service users and key stakeholders.

## **9. Equality Impacts**

9.1 Not applicable at this time as this report has been prepared to provide an update on existing services - Should any proposed changes to these services be identified in the next phases of development ('Next Steps' as identified above) the relevant EIA(s) will be undertaken at that time if required