

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

Date: 1 March 2021

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Children's Improvement Plan Update

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to provide members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update on the Children's Services Improvement Plan.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

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.

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

1.1 This report details the current position within Torbay's Children's Services. It reflects the work we have been undertaking to tackle the wide array of performance and quality challenges highlighted over a number of years by Ofsted, most recently in:

- their Inspection report of 2018 which found Torbay to be inadequate overall, and
- in their later monitoring visits.

Ofsted's analysis and conclusions have been built upon and added to by work undertaken within the service and supported by its partnerships. The understanding that has crystalized over the period has enabled the service to develop a functional and encompassing improvement plan and a much revised and evidence rich sufficiency strategy. Much of this work has taken place following the arrival of the new management and leadership team and a new Department for Education (DfE) appointed Commissioner who also chairs our Improvement Board with the support of both corporate and political leaders.

This update coincides with a time when the first phase of our improvement journey is coming naturally to a close and the next phase gathers momentum.

Unsurprisingly and commonly in recovering local authorities, we have maintained a major focus on compliance to ensure that children and their families receive services that are at a minimum timely and consistent with statutory and council expectations and requirements. Opportunities to impact upon quality have of course been taken and we shall be building on this encouraging start in the next phase of improvement. This last year has also seen us review and rebuild the platforms and organizational structures necessary to support good management and practice and this has included the commission of a new IT system to replace the existing, inadequate version. By nature of being outdated means that the existing system is not able to fully support the improvement initiatives in which we are engaged and which rely upon quality performance data for assurance purposes. The new system will be operational during the first half of 2021 and is eagerly awaited.

In some places the reconfiguration of our service infrastructure has meant that we have restructured and realigned services to make them (more) fit for purpose and consistent with our improvement priorities. All of this this work has been undertaken within the framework of our service re-design. Elsewhere we have launched innovative new initiatives, for example;

- a Learning Academy which offers a three-year program for newly qualified social workers as well as advanced and skills-based courses for our wider workforce. We anticipate this initiative making a major contribution to our wider and broadly based recruitment and retention strategy;
- an Edge of Care Service to support vulnerable young people in their communities rather than rely on what has become a plethora of unfocused and avoidable use of unsustainably high-cost care resources. This service, though not yet fully operational is already impacting significantly upon entry

to care rates and of the 16 young people who have so far used the service, only one has subsequently needed a residential resource and that was largely determined by the young person's complex and challenging clinical need; and

- a dedicated Exploitation Team to work with children highly vulnerable to sexual and criminal exploitation.

Our improvement planning and the service changes that have been introduced have been welcomed and, in many cases, actively supported by partners, Council leaders, politicians, our workforce and ultimately by our children, young people and families who are central to all that we do. At each stage we have discussed and shared our plans and strategies with our Commissioner, the DfE and with Ofsted and they too have been supportive of the detail and the direction we are taking.

We are encouraged by some significant progress over the last year, some of which is set out in the table below which captures the current position and compares it to our starting point presented at the 2019 Annual Conversation with Ofsted. Despite this progress, there is no complacency and our mood of impatient search for sustained improvement will continue unabated. In particular, and to highlight the breadth and significance of progress in a wide range of areas, we draw attention to:

- the rate of contact completed in 24 hours which has increased to 98.15% from 86.6% despite significantly increased demand upon the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH);
- the increase in the number of Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 days of a strategy discussion from 56.9% to 81.9%;
- the reduction of the number of children subject to a second or further child protection plan from 34.9% to 19.6%, performance which is highly credible at a time when our Child Protection numbers are predictably rising due to our strategy of managing more children safely in their communities;
- the decrease in our current care experienced population from 352 to 326, improvements in our short- and long-term placement stability rates, and major improvements in securing initial health assessments and dental checks while continuing our steady progress and high performance in completing annual health reviews;
- improvement in the proportion of children living with Torbay foster carers (63% from 55.7%), a reduction in the use of residential care (from 42 children to 22) and a significant and welcome reduction in the proportion of children living more than 20 miles from home from 60% to 26.5%;
- improvement in the proportion of care leavers in education, employment and training from 63.2% to 68.1%; and
- significant improvement in the recognition of and response to children vulnerable to sexual exploitation from 47 to 182 reflecting the development and impact of the new and dedicated team.

Area	September 2019	November 2020
Contacts	3869 (YTD)	5307
Contacts within 24hrs	86.6% (YTD)	98.15%
Conversion rate	17.7%	23.4%
Re-Referral rate	24%	23.5%
Children seen within 5 days	72.9%	77.8%
Number of Child in Need	438 (19/20 – 595)	557
Number of Child Protection	218	221
Percentage on a plan for a second or subsequent time	34.9%	19.6%
Visiting (within last 10 days)	68.2% (19/20 data 52% YTD)	70%
Initial Child Protection Conferences within 15 days of Strategy discussion.	56.9%	81.9%
Number of children allocated to workers – Caseloads	Lowest 3 – highest 29 (Average 22)	Between 5 – 28
Number of children who are cared for	352	326
Placement stability	Short term – 15.2% Long Term – 65.6%	Short term – 9.8% Long Term – 61.7%
Visiting	77.6% (YTD) - 55.1% (19/20 YTD)	68.4%
Initial health assessments	47.4%	80%
Annual health assessments	84.1% (August 2019 data)	88.1%
Dental checks	45.8%	85.8%
Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire.	60.8% (53% 19/20 YTD)	56.9%
Foster carer reviews	92% (July 2019 data)	71.7%
Mandatory training – foster carers	91.3%	97.3%
Children placed internally (Foster Care)	129 – 139 (55.7% 19/20 YTD)	63%
Number with connected carers	35	34
Residential	42	22
Child Looked After more than 20 miles away	60%	26.5%
Care Leavers – in touch	100% (82.5% 19/20 YTD)	70.3%
Visited	83.3% (63.9% 19/20 YTD)	40.6%
In suitable accommodation	90% (88.1%. 19/20 YTD)	85.7%
Education Employment and Training	63.2%	68.1%
Child Sexual Exploitation /Child Exploitation	47 (High Risk, 38 Medium Risk)	182 (28 High Risk)
Missing		37
National Referral Mechanism	0	7

2. Options under consideration

2.1 N/A report has been prepared to provide an update.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

3.1 N/A report has been prepared to provide an update.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 N/A report has been prepared to provide an update.

5. Engagement and Consultation

5.1 N/A report has been prepared to provide an update.

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

6.1 N/A report has been prepared to provide an update.

7. Tackling Climate Change

7.1 N/A