

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject:	Torbay Children's Services Update
Committee:	Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	19 September 2018
Cabinet Member:	Councillor McDonald (Cabinet Member of Children and Young People) Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet for Education, Skills and Transformation)
CMT Member:	Alison Botham (Director of Children's Services)
Author:	Alison Botham, Director Children's Services
Contact details	Tel: 01752 307311 email: Alison.botham@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref:	Torbay Children's Services update
Key Decision:	No
Part:	I

Purpose of the report:

This report provides an update on the outcome of the Torbay Ofsted Re-inspection published in August 2018.

Corporate Plan

This is an update in relation to Torbay's Children's Services, and as such does not relate specifically to Plymouth's Corporate Plan.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

No Financial implications for Plymouth.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:

- Risk Management the briefing itself how the outcome will be managed in Torbay with no current direct implications for Plymouth.
-

Equality and Diversity

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Published work / information:

List (and include a hyper link) to published work / information used to prepare the report
Link to the Torbay Ofsted re-inspection report published 24th August 2018

https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/torbay/071_Torbay_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20childrens%20services.pdf

Background papers:

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off: None as information only re another authority.

Fin		Leg		Mon Off		HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member Alison Botham Director of Children's Services													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? For info only will be briefed before scrutiny.													

Re-inspection

The inspection was undertaken between 11 June and 5 July 2018 by a team of six inspectors. The inspectors focussed on reviewing direct work with children in need of help and protection; children looked after; adoption performance, and the experiences and progress of care leavers. They interviewed staff from Torbay Council and a number of partner agencies, including Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, Devon and Cornwall Police, Devon and Cornwall Probation Service, and the voluntary and community sector. Inspectors also interviewed elected members from Torbay Council as well as children, young people, carers and family members.

Inspectors concluded that overall, Torbay's children's services remains inadequate.

1 Children who need help and protection	Inadequate
2 Children looked after and achieving permanence	Requires improvement
2.1 Adoption performance	Good
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Requires improvement
3 Leadership, management and governance	Inadequate

In the 2016 Single Inspection report the findings had been that children's services were inadequate.

1 Children who need help and protection	Inadequate
2 Children looked after and achieving permanence	Requires improvement
2.1 Adoption performance	Requires Improvement
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Requires improvement
3 Leadership, management and governance	Inadequate

As a result of the 2016 judgement Torbay Council has been under the direction of the Secretary of State and a commissioner from Hampshire County Council appointed by the Department for Education. The focus of the commissioner was to advise on the fundamental structures and leadership that needs to be in place to enable Torbay to make and sustain improvement. As a result of the commissioner's review and recommendations, Torbay and Plymouth Councils entered into a contractual arrangement with a joint Director of Children's Services. The arrangement was established in April this year and the joint Director of Children's Services, Alison Botham, took responsibility for Torbay on Friday 6 July 2018.

Re-inspection 2018 Key Findings

link to the report. – see above.

Overall the pace of change means that not enough improvement has been made since 2015, and there are some areas showing serious weakness. These include:

- There has been significant delay and drift for some children, particularly those in need of protection.
- Timeliness remains a weakness in relation to assessment work and visits to children
- Management oversight and supervision remain weak.
- 16/17 year old young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have not always been responded to appropriately.
- Frequent changes of social worker combined with the complexity of work impacts negatively on the quality of practice particularly for children in need of help and protection.
- Until recently there have been delays in effective decision making where legal action is required.

- Arrangements in the fostering service mean that reviews of carers are not up to date for 50% of carers; however the inspectors found no evidence that this had impacted on the care of children placed.

Significant improvements in some areas were recognised by the inspectors and these include:

- Early help demonstrates strong focused work
- Decisions making in the MASH has improved and thresholds are appropriate and consistently applied
- In the disabled children's team.
- Placement stability is good for most children in care.
- Adoption has improved from Requires Improvement in 2015 to Good.
- Care leavers value the support from their personal advisers, the service is in touch with all care leavers, and most live in suitable accommodation.
- In the emergency duty team that mean that there are robust responses to immediate safeguarding concerns.
- Corporate parenting has strengthened, the board is energetic and advocates strongly for children and young people.
- Governance arrangements are clear with strong links between the chief executive, lead member and DCS. Lines of accountability are well established.

There are sixteen recommendations with three of them identified as needing immediate actions. Work has already begun to address these three recommendations.

Improvement Plan, governance and the role of Ofsted.

In continuing to build on all the hard work that has been done to achieve the improvements to date the focus will be on stabilising the leadership team, recruitment and retention, and achieving consistent and sustainable change at pace.

A meeting is scheduled in early October with the Department for Education, the Children's Commissioner to agree the intervention arrangements and how to support the joint arrangements with Plymouth. This will ensure the right framework is in place for the improvement plan to increase the pace and consistency of change and achieve sustainable improvement.

The governance arrangements to oversee the revised improvement plan will also be considered so that these are established before the plan is agreed and submitted to the DfE and Ofsted at the end of November.

A meeting is also in place for early October with Ofsted, including one of the inspectors on the team that undertook the re-inspection that will consider the outcome of the re-inspection and consider the monitoring arrangements and re-inspection schedule.