



Robert Goodwill MP
Minister of State for Children and Families

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Gordon Oliver
Mayor, Torbay Council
Town Hall
Torquay
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30 June 2017

Dear Gordon,

I am writing following the report from the Children's Services Commissioner, John Coughlan, on the future of Torbay's children's social care services. John has carried out a very comprehensive review and I am grateful to him for his work.

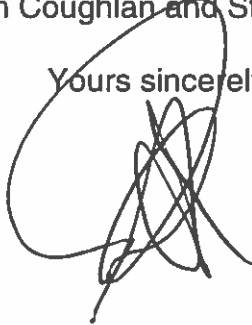
As you know, the starting place for the Commissioner's appointment was Ofsted's inspection of Torbay's children's social care services which found serious and persistent failures. John has been clear for some time that services should not remain under the operational control of the Council and has carried out a thorough analysis of the options for the future delivery of services in Torbay. I am persuaded by John's argument that a partnership with another local authority to run services on Torbay's behalf is the best way to achieve sustainable improvement.

I am encouraged that both Plymouth and Devon developed credible proposals to work with Torbay. At present I am minded to agree with John's recommendation that Plymouth is the most appropriate partner for the reasons set out in his report. I understand that Torbay and Plymouth have already engaged in discussion about how a partnership would work. However, I note that Torbay is also undertaking a wider review of the future of services, due to conclude in July. I will ask John to consider the outcome of that review and, if it materially changes his view about the most appropriate partner, to update me accordingly. You will be aware, though, that services in Torbay have not been good enough for too long and it is imperative that we act at pace to bring about long-term improvement and provide the most vulnerable children and young people in Torbay the services they deserve. I share John's concern that any alternative model that may be proposed by the separate review can only make a material difference to John's recommendation if it is able to achieve a sustainable change in the governance of children's services that can match the pace of the Plymouth proposal.

The Commissioner remains in place under statutory direction, and I expect the Council to continue working with him on the development of the new operating model. I have asked John to provide an update on progress in September.

I am copying this letter to John Coughlan and Steve Parrock.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Robert Goodwill', written over the text 'Yours sincerely,'.

Robert Goodwill MP
Minister of State for Children and Families