

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Board

Date: 12 September 2018

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Ofsted Re-inspection

When does the decision need to be implemented? N/A

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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.

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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

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/torbay>

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.

Conclusion

This briefing is to note the outcome of the re-inspection and that immediate recommendations are being acted upon. That key meetings are planned to agree the framework for continued improvement that will ensure a revised improvement plan is agreed for submission in late November.