

Appendix 11a

Joint Statement - Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children Services

PR5220 05/01/2016

The findings of a recent announced inspection by Ofsted of Safeguarding and Looked after Children Services in Torbay have been released today.

The inspection of partnership arrangements was undertaken between 13 October and 5 November 2015 by a team of seven inspectors.

The inspectors looked at a large number of cases of individual children and 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.

The inspection has concluded that safeguarding arrangements for children who need help and protection in Torbay are 'inadequate'.

Due to this result leadership, management and governance have also been graded as 'inadequate'.

Services for looked after children, adoption and care leavers have all been graded as 'requires improvement'.

Joint statement by Torbay Council, Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, Devon and Cornwall Police and Torbay Safeguarding Children Board.

"We accept the Inspector's conclusions in their entirety and do not underestimate how important it is for us to continue our journey so we can make the necessary improvements as quickly as possible. The report does highlight several examples of good practice, but it is not acceptable that our partnership arrangements and services for children in need of help and protection are inadequate.

"Before the Inspectors arrived we were already aware of some of the required improvements that are raised in this report. We had already put together, and were working through, an action plan. The Inspectors have seen and approved this plan and the recommendations in the report will also be included.

"The improvements include: focusing on the delay that our children, young people and families receive from across all children services; increasing the number of permanent staff in key areas; developing staff to improve quality and consistency of service delivery; using admin support to best support social work staff to improve practice and outcomes for children.

"One of the recommendations highlighted is a lack of consistency in senior and management staff across Children's Services. This has already been addressed and the previous Director of Children's Services has stepped back into this role to drive the initial action plan forward.

"We have made a lot of progress and this is recognised in the report, but some of our key areas are not doing as well as they should be and we need to get them back on track. All our services and partner organisations are feeling additional pressures, not just financially, but also through an increase in referrals and cases along with diminishing resources. However, we will all continue to ensure the safeguarding of our children and young people is a priority.

"To ensure this happens we will continually improve; we have reached an agreement with Ofsted and will follow its prescribed package of improvement support. This includes regular audits with feedback and a one week progress inspection within the next year. Alongside this we will also utilise

the support available to us from the Department for Education and the Local Government Association, both of whom will be key players in our improvement journey.

“The report recognises that ‘improvements to the quality of practice are taking place in a number of areas’ and that ‘partnership working is becoming better integrated into services’. The report also highlights that staff, senior managers, and local councillors really want to help children and young people in Torbay and ‘there is sustained financial investment and a clear political commitment to provide a high-quality children’s services’. Together with the intention to integrate services with Torbay and South Devon Foundation Trust, this provides a potential long term and robust solution for children’s services in Torbay.

“We now need to ensure that every agency and organisation in Torbay that have contact with children and young people are taking responsibility to continually improve their outcomes and that our services become outstanding across the board.”

Key actions taken:

- Areas highlighted for improvement have already been identified and an action plan has been implemented.
- Progress is being made through the SWIFT (Social Work Innovation Fund Torbay) project to fully integrate social care with our health and social care partners - Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust.
- Policies and strategies are in place, including clear expectations of key elements of good practice, and these are being filtered down to staff.
- An enhanced dashboard of data and information is being developed. This will help to monitor and check the progress of our children and young people throughout our services.
- Plans have been put in place to ensure continuity of staff at managerial level in all organisations. This includes:
 - Recruitment of Director of People to commence in January. This role will focus specifically on the improvement of Children’s Services.
 - Discussions are taking place to recruit a Director of Children’s Safeguarding, which will be funded by SWIFT, and will aim to improve the link between the council and Health social care.
 - Newly appointed Torbay Safeguarding Children Board Independent Chair.
- The newly formed leadership team within the council’s Children’s Services is introducing a culture of challenge, improvement and of continuous learning.
- Information has been collected on the delay our families, children and young people have been experiencing to help track the improvements made in this area.
- A pilot utilising business support staff (admin) to reduce the delay families have experienced has proved successful.
- Continue with the robust workforce strategy that is already in place to improve capacity, quality and reducing the reliance of agency staffing.

A link to the Ofsted report - [Children's Services](#)

Questions and answers to announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

1. How long have services been inadequate?

In February 2013 the last Ofsted report recognised that we were improving and graded us as adequate. We continued with our improvement plans, updating as required and looked at different and cost effective ways to deliver our services, but over the past year we lost focus due to change at senior management level. This was recognised and action was taken to refocus and work towards ensuring that all of our services are providing the best outcomes for our children and young people.

2. Who is responsible?

The responsibility for the services to children and young people is shared among all partners who are represented on the Torbay Safeguarding Children Board. The response to this report is a collective one and by working together we can enable and drive real sustainable improvements across the entire range of services for children.

3. What is being done to address leadership issues?

The leadership of Children's Services has changed a number of times over the past year, but from summer 2015 the previous Director of Children's Services, Richard Williams, stepped back into this role. The role of Assistant Director of Children's Services is now permanent with the appointment of Dr. Jacqui Jensen. Ofsted have stated that they "recognise the strength of a stabilised management team".

4. Are there children at risk in Torbay today?

The report does state that no children were found to be at immediate risk during inspection. However, as with other local authorities, we do have children who are on child protection plans and we will continue to support and protect them whilst they are on these plans and beyond.

5. Why haven't changes been made more quickly to prevent services being rated inadequate?

Senior managers identified earlier this year that our safeguarding practices were not as good as they should have been. As soon as this was identified action was taken quickly and this is where our improvement plan, which Ofsted approved during their visit, was put in place. Also recognised in the report is that we do have the appropriate resources to turn this around. We will now be following this improvement plan, with guidance and support from the Department for Education and the Local Government Association.

6. Why does the council rely so heavily on temporary staff?

Historically Children's Services needed significant support of agency staff, however this has improved. We have been working hard and replaced temporary staff with permanent staff and this still continues to be our priority. We work closely with all our staff to ensure they

have the right support and development they require to do their job effectively, which encourages them to stay. Feedback we have received from staff is that they enjoy working here and are committed to ensuring our children and young people receive the best outcomes for them.

7. What happens now and what is the timeline?

An Improvement Board has been set up which has representatives from Children's Services, Torbay's Safeguarding Children Board, the wider council, health, the Department for Education and the Local Government Association. This Board will ensure that the Improvement Plan is being implemented and services are improving. The Board will also monitor the integration of social care with Torbay and South Devon Foundation Trust.


8. What is being done to strengthen the Partnership?

All of the partners represented on the Torbay Safeguarding Children's Board have committed to improve outcomes for the children and young people in Torbay. This includes a new approach to safeguarding and a new independent chair to the Board, who starts in March, will be driving this forward. Along with this, progress will continue to be made with integrating social care staff with the Integrated Care Organisation.

9. Are Children's Services going back into intervention? What does that mean?

This is linked with the answer to question 7 - We have agreed to a 12 month improvement plan, working with Ofsted, the Department for Education and the Local Government Association.

10. Will we get any additional funding from Government?

No, but we will be receiving support from the Department for Education, the Local Government Association and Ofsted. We have also already received £1million from the Department for Education towards the [SWIFT](#)  (Social Work Innovation Fund Torbay) project which will oversee the integration of social care staff with health.

11. What is being done to ensure performance, assessments, case work and quality assurance process become consistent?

We identified issues earlier this year regarding how data, quality assurance and performance is recorded, and have started to make changes. We are already seeing improvements and will continue to ensure we are capturing the right data and can see how our children and young people are receiving the best outcomes. This will be monitored in partnership with Ofsted over the following year with an expected progress inspection this time next year.