

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Making Social Care
Better for People



Ms Elizabeth Raikes
Chief Executive
Torbay Council
Castle Circus
Torquay
Devon
TQ1 3DR

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Dear Ms Raikes

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN TORBAY

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment process for your local authority. We are grateful for the information which you provided to support this process and for the time made available by you and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

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Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

Torbay is making a good contribution to maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people. All the recommendations of the social care service inspection in January 2005 have been implemented. Children's services have been restructured with clear lines of accountability for service delivery. There is better performance management information and communication at all levels, and performance in many key areas has improved. There is good capacity to continue improving services for children and young people.

Being healthy

Outcomes in this area continue to be good. Inspections of regulated services, including the fostering agency, found that there was good attention to the health needs of children and young people. Performance on the health of looked after children is at good levels despite a small reduction in performance resulting from the temporary absence of the Children Looked After nurse.

The health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are addressed well through the South Devon Learning Disability Team. This includes a clinical psychologist who works effectively with the 'Team Around the Child'.

The proportion of children and young people (under 18) in substance and misuse treatment is high, well above comparator authorities and national averages. Healthy School status has been achieved in 38 of 45 schools and initiatives are in place in schools to reduce obesity.

There are continued concerns about the high level of teenage pregnancies and the council recognises this as an area for further improvement. Robust interagency measures are in place in schools and for identifying targeted support. Performance in this area will be a feature of the Local Area Agreement.

Work continues to improve further Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) with the council engaged with the Primary Care Trust, Strategic Health Authority, and Devon County Council. The Strategic Health Authority has undertaken a detailed analysis of current provision and their recommendations will provide a basis for an action plan. A dedicated primary care mental health worker has been appointed and provides direct short-term intervention and support for foster carers and social workers. Additional time has been allocated for the community psychiatric nurse to increase the opportunities for intervention work with young offenders.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are good overall. From section 5 inspections there is evidence that all schools are giving good advice on staying safe. Schools are also working with the police to reduce road accidents. All schools have safeguarding policies and there is a comprehensive training programme for teachers who have identified responsibilities for child protection issues, 84% having attended this training. Two hundred and forty

practitioners, from a range of agencies, have attended child protection training during 2005/06.

The Local Safeguarding Children's Board is fully functional, with the first board meeting held in May 2005. A business plan has been agreed, there are pooled budget arrangements and the development and expansion of the child protection team into a safeguarding unit. An education safeguarding officer has been appointed to promote safeguarding in schools and offer assistance, guidance and support to headteachers and designated staff. There have been no serious case reviews.

The overall number of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) has fallen from 88 to 51 and child protection outturns are good. There are no unallocated child protection cases and 97% of child protection reviews were completed on time. The council must ensure that there is 100% completion for 2006/07.

While the number of re-registrations on the CPR has increased, the numbers concerned are small with six of the eight families having been re-registered after five years. The council continues to monitor this closely.

There is very good participation of looked after children in their reviews and good performance on timeliness of reviews of looked after children. There has been very good improvement in the stability of placements of looked after children, an area identified in the 2004/05 APA letter. The number of looked after children has reduced by one-fifth and 95% now have a qualified social worker allocated, compared with just 67% in 2004/05. There has also been very good performance on adoption indicators.

Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) inspections of adoption, fostering and residential care indicate significant improvement with private fostering arrangements now in place. Staff recruitment practices are sound. There is also good performance on pathway plans.

The council recognises that there is continued poor performance in relation to assessments. Initial and core assessments completed within timescales are rising consistently but are below national and expected levels. The introduction of a new IT system should significantly improve performance, facilitating more robust monitoring. Additional staff appointments have been made to enable managers to undertake case reviews and ensure consistency.

Enjoying and achieving

The overall outcomes in this area are satisfactory. The council has demonstrated the capacity to improve some aspects of educational provision and outcomes, but clear targets for improvement in other aspects have not been set. The impact of the council's contribution to ensuring that children and young people achieve good standards and enjoy their education is not consistent across all key stages. The council is proud of the fact that none of its schools has been placed in a formal category of concern by Ofsted since 2001.

Provision for early years education is mostly good. Sure Start and children's centre provision are well integrated. Inspections of childcare and nursery education judged that the vast majority of provision inspected was good or better with regard to children's enjoyment and achievement. Nevertheless, attainment on entry to reception classes is relatively low and, by the end of the Foundation Stage, too many children are not achieving the levels expected, particularly in mathematical development and in all aspects of communication, language and literacy.

At Key Stage 1, test results in 2005 show that standards in reading and mathematics, which had declined in the previous three years, were amongst the most improved nationally. Girls significantly outperform boys despite improvement in boys' attainment. Performance at Key Stage 2 has declined since 2004 in English and mathematics and, although science improved marginally, the council's performance has fallen further behind that of statistical neighbours and the national figure. Key Stage 2 remains a cause for concern for the council as performance is not improving sufficiently.

Outcomes for students at Key Stage 3 have been improving consistently and average scores are above statistical neighbours' and national figures. The secondary improvement team has developed an effective approach to school support. As with Key Stages 1 and 2, there is also a difference in improvement in Key Stages 3 and 4. GCSE results have not risen in line with the national rate of improvement. Performance at Key Stage 5 is very good on account of the council's three selective schools.

Rates of authorised absence in primary schools and unauthorised absence in secondary schools are not reducing. The council is considering models in other authorities and implementing some innovative strategies: early indications suggest that these may reduce absenteeism in secondary schools.

The council has a very high proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need and is discussing with schools how this number can be significantly reduced. Permanent and fixed-term exclusions fell in 2005 and access to education for excluded pupils has improved. The performance of Black and minority ethnic pupils, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, does not differ significantly from that of other groups.

The council has achieved excellent performance with all newly looked after children being placed within 20 miles from home. Looked after children receive good support for their education in residential and fostering settings, and their educational qualifications are good.

Although spending on the youth service is low by comparison with statistical neighbours and the national average, it represents a large proportion of the available budget. The council recognises that further progress is needed in service objectives and has outlined key developments in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP).

Making a positive contribution

The council has increased opportunities for children and young people to participate in a variety of settings and become engaged in decision making. Almost all looked after children participated in their reviews. Evidence from regulatory and school inspections indicates that children and young people are effectively encouraged to make a positive contribution to their community.

The council has demonstrated good practice with support for young carers.

The youth offending team (YOT) is among the 10 most successful in the country. There is good YOT performance with a consistently high approach to quality – this was noted in the 2004/05 joint inspection and annual audit letter. Youth crime is down overall in detected crime and anti-social behaviour and compares very favourably with the region.

Achieving economic well-being

The outcomes in this area are good. Progress is being made with the 14-19 strategy, bringing together a range of diverse partners and significantly improving previously inadequate provision. The council has worked with South Devon College in particular, to expand its influence and provision. Although Ofsted's report on the college judged it to be inadequate in 2003, the 2005 inspection concluded that it is now a good partner with local schools.

Children and their families continue to benefit from the 'Team around the Child' initiative which has had an excellent independent evaluation. The introduction of key workers has helped to bring services and support together more effectively to meet parents' needs. There are a range of day care services including holiday schemes for children with disabilities and parent support groups. A dedicated transition worker ensures the move to adult services is well managed. There has been some improvement in the number of direct payments but the council recognises this is an area for further improvement.

Transition plans are now in place for 90% of children with disabilities aged over 14: a significant improvement since last year. All care leavers aged 19 and over are in suitable accommodation and there is excellent performance in relation to their employment, education and training. Around three quarters of the most vulnerable care leavers get assistance from CAMHS. Emergency housing initiatives with children's services provide accommodation for young homeless people overnight.

Connexions Cornwall and Devon is deemed to be a high performing service with a very good Ofsted report. There are signed partnership agreements with all secondary schools and a number of local agencies. Personal advisers ensure that young people progress from statutory education into further training or employment. A very low percentage of young people are not in education, employment or training, which compares very favourably with the region and nationally.

The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further

Children's services have been restructured with clear lines of responsibility for delivering services. Performance management information and communication have improved at all levels. Opportunities for innovation exist at all operational levels. The council continues to give strong support to the further development of children's services which has a high priority with elected members. The recently elected mayor is the lead member for children's services. The scrutiny committee has been effective in ensuring that independent placements for children are carefully monitored. There is good capacity to continue improving services for children and young people.

The council has made a significant investment over the last two years as part of the action plan following the last CSCI service inspection. This has improved assessment and care planning: it has reduced unallocated work and made financial savings by reducing the number of children and young people placed in the independent sector. This has, however, had an adverse effect on the indicator for the stability of placements.

The annual audit letter noted that interagency working is a strength. It also commented on good performance on value for money and a reduction in the cost of placements for looked after children. Joint commissioning has improved the use of available resources. Good attention is paid to recruiting and retaining staff. Leaving rates and absence rates for social care staff have both fallen and are lower than comparator councils. All workers in children's residential settings have achieved NVQ level 3 awards, which is much higher than in comparator councils.

Improvement and development agency evaluation confirmed that children's services are making good progress in implementing the Change for Children agenda. Particular strengths were noted in partnership working, workforce development and communication.

Engagement with children and young people has improved particularly through the Take Part participation project.

All regulation 33 visits undertaken by the council to ensure effective management of in-house residential services have been completed in a timely manner.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good attention to health care needs of children and young people in regulated settings • under 18 substance misuse treatment levels • 38 of 45 schools achieved healthy schools status • schools initiatives to reduce obesity • 'Team around Child' provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage pregnancy rates • Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fully operational safeguarding arrangements and strong multi-agency involvement in child protection training • excellent performance in looked after children's reviews and participation • all children on child protection register allocated to a qualified social worker and 95% of looked after children have a named qualified social worker • good performance on stability of placements and adoption • high percentage of pathways plans in place. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance on timing of initial and core assessments remains poor – work is in progress; need to monitor carefully to ensure targeted improvement is achieved • improve performance on indicator D35.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvement in Key Stage 1 • continued improvement in Key Stage 3 • reduction in exclusions • 100% of newly placed looked after children placed within 20 miles of home. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attainment in Foundation Stage • lack of improvement in Key Stage 2 outcomes • lack of improvement in Key Stage 4 outcomes • lack of reduction in authorised absence in primary schools and unauthorised absence in secondary schools • high proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excellent performance of youth offending team • consultation with children and young people has improved and is now good • almost all looked after children participate in their reviews • reduction in reported youth crime • reduction in the number of young people entering the youth justice system. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significant improvement in, and implementation of, 14–19 strategy • improved influence of South Devon College in partnership with schools • very low percentage of young people not in education, employment or training • care leavers 19 and above in suitable accommodation • performance of Connexions 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of direct payments for learning difficulties and/or disabilities • continued targeting of high risk groups to look a post 16 learning and employment (ie teenage mothers, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities).
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong interagency collaboration • improved management structures and improved performance monitoring information and scrutiny • good recruitment practice and retention rates • good value for money and reduction in expenditure on high cost independent placements noted by Audit Commission • all regulation 33 visits completed • strong council support amongst elected members. 	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased spending on provision of practice learning days • continued development of opportunities for participation of children and young people at strategic level • need to ensure that support for school improvement leads to consistent improvement across all key stages.

Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA

- **Being healthy:** it will be important to monitor progress on teenage pregnancy rates and improvements in the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
- **Staying Safe:** progress on the performance and timing of initial and core assessments should be closely monitored.

- **Enjoying and achieving:** the focus should be on attainment in Foundation Stage, the lack of improvement in Key Stages 2 and 4, progress on reducing authorised absence in primary schools and unauthorised absence in secondary schools. There is also a need to assess progress in reducing the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- **Achieving economic well-being:** it will be important to monitor the number of direct payments for LDD and initiatives to target high risk groups (ie teenage mothers and young people with LDD) access to post 16 leaving and employment.
- **Management of children's services:** the focus should be on increased spending on the provision of practice learning days and continued development of opportunities for participation of children and young people at strategic level. There is also a need to monitor what action is being taken to ensure that support for school improvement leads to consistent improvement across all key stages.

We confirm that the children's services grade will provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection