

Monday, 16 September 2024

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
SUB-BOARD**

A meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board**
will be held on

Monday, 23 September 2024

commencing at **3.00 pm**

The meeting will be held in the Banking Hall, Castle Circus entrance on the left corner of the Town Hall, Castle Circus, Torquay, TQ1 3DR

Members of the Board

Councillor Fellows (Chairman)

Councillor Law
Councillor Nicolaou

Councillor Tolchard
Councillor Twelves (Vice-Chair)

Co-opted Members of the Board

Laura Colman, Primary Parent Governor Representative

Pete Brown, Church of England Diocese

Vacancy - Secondary Parent Governor Representative

Vacancy - Roman Catholic Diocese Representative

A Healthy, Happy and Prosperous Torbay

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Governance Support, Town Hall, Castle Circus, Torquay, TQ1 3DR

Email: governance.support@torbay.gov.uk - www.torbay.gov.uk

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-BOARD AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
To receive apologies for absence, including notifications of any changes to the membership of the Board.
2. **Minutes** (Pages 5 - 12)
To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board held on 29 July 2024.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
 - a) To receive declarations of non pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda

For reference: Having declared their non pecuniary interest members may remain in the meeting and speak and, vote on the matter in question. A completed disclosure of interests form should be returned to the Clerk before the conclusion of the meeting.
 - b) To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda

For reference: Where a Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest he/she must leave the meeting during consideration of the item. However, the Member may remain in the meeting to make representations, answer questions or give evidence if the public have a right to do so, but having done so the Member must then immediately leave the meeting, may not vote and must not improperly seek to influence the outcome of the matter. A completed disclosure of interests form should be returned to the Clerk before the conclusion of the meeting.

(Please Note: If Members and Officers wish to seek advice on any potential interests they may have, they should contact Governance Support or Legal Services prior to the meeting.)
4. **Urgent Items**
To consider any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent.
5. **Youth Provision in Torbay** (Pages 13 - 16)
To receive an update on the direction of travel for the review of youth provision and consider how the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board can contribute towards the review and add value, to include Youth Improvement Fund, youth work including sport, leisure and culture, accessibility to play park and Holiday, Activities and Food (HAF).
6. **0 to 25 Services Procurement** (Pages 17 - 20)
To review the procurement proposals for 0 to 25 services.

7. **Torbay Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Self Evaluation Framework (SEF)** (Pages 21 - 72)
To consider the draft Torbay Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Self Evaluation Framework (SEF).
8. **Our Promise to You - The Torbay Pledge to care for and care experienced children/young people - Revised Children's Pledge** (Pages 73 - 82)
To consider the Revised Children's Pledge (title to be confirmed) and to hear from the representatives from the Children in Care Council who have helped to develop the Pledge.

To receive an update on the progress of implementing the Pledge.

To receive an update on youth engagement, Children in Care Council's (CICCs), My Voice and The Circle.
9. **Fostering Annual Report** (Pages 83 - 116)
To consider the Fostering Children Annual Report and make recommendations to the Cabinet.
10. **Regional Adoption Agency Joint Scrutiny Board** (Pages 117 - 124)
To receive the Report and review of the Terms of Reference for the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Joint Scrutiny Board.
11. **Ofsted Annual Conversation Letter** (Pages 125 - 128)
To consider the Annual Ofsted Conversation Letter and identify areas for overview and scrutiny.
12. **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker** (To Follow)
To receive an update on the implementation of the actions of the Sub-Board and consider any further actions required (as set out in the submitted action tracker).

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**Minutes of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny
Sub-Board**

29 July 2024

-: Present :-

Councillor Fellows (Chairman)

Councillors Law, Tolchard and Twelves (Vice-Chair)

Co-opted Members

Laura Colman, Primary Governor Representative (virtually)
Pete Brown, Church of England Diocesan

Non-voting Co-Opted Members:

Tanny Stobart, Play Torbay
Miranda Pusey, Devon and Cornwall Police (virtually)

(Also in attendance: Councillors Bye and Kole Gjikolaj (Torbay Youth Parliament))

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nicolaou, Jo Hunter (who was represented by Pete Brown who would be the Church of England Diocese Representative from 1 September 2024 with Jo Hunter being his Deputy), Hayley Costar who was represented by Miranda Pusey), and Mike Cook (Voluntary and Community Sector and Alternative Provision – education).

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Board held on 22 April 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Care Experienced, Including Housing for Care Experienced Young People

Members considered the submitted report which provided an update on support to care experienced young people including housing which remained an urgent need to help provide a foundation of stability to enable them to achieve their full potential and achieve a sense of safety. The report highlighted that at the end of 2023/2024 there was evidence that 81% of Torbay's care experienced young people were assessed as living in suitable accommodation. As of June 2024, this was now 94% which was above the national figure of 88%.

It was highlighted that in May the Department for Local Government and Communities and Department for Education looked to increase joint working in housing and children with joint governance arrangements and joint decision

making. This aligned with the updated Youth Homeless Protocol and the recommendations from Mark Rydell had been included in the new Corporate Parenting Plan which was endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Board in April 2024 to ensure that the placement was safe and meets the needs of the care experience young person. This also links to the Corporate Parenting Strand which had achieved 38% of its action plan.

Members asked a number of questions in relation to why the report did not include a more detailed update on the action plan around housing; what progress had been made around prioritising new properties for care experienced through the planning system; what was the likelihood of care experienced people being included in the YMCA housing proposal; when the bid for YMCA housing proposal was put in it was for a house with units for care experienced young people, they had previously said that they did not want to be identified in that way what has changed; and if a care experienced young person was offered a placement in the YMCA project and they turn it down what would happen.

It was noted that work was ongoing with the Planning department around Section 106 Agreements and also conversations with Procurement around social value and TOMS (Themes, Outcomes and Measures) for contracts to help provide support to care experienced people. This was part of the ambition for a corporate approach to Corporate Parenting. The Council's Business Plan had also been amended for care experienced young people to be given a priority in all references to housing.

Members were advised that the YMCA proposal was looking at two sites and that they would also provide transitional placements for care experienced young people. They would be part of the options offered, with a young person being able to refuse an option and then revisit other viable options including friends, family and other block contracts. Some groups, particularly asylum seeking young people wanted to see a sense of community being with other similar people.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Sub-Board endorses a joint update to the Youth Homelessness Joint Protocol by Children's and Housing, to incorporate the proposals to amend governance processes outlined in the submitted report. This will include an agreed process for senior leader sign off of intentional homeless decisions from both Housing and Children's; and
2. that all further updates regarding care experienced and housing/accommodation should be jointly authored and presented to the Sub-Board by Children's and Housing, to further enhance joint working and responsibility.

4. Youth Justice

The Sub-Board reviewed the submitted report which provided an update on the Youth Justice Services Improvement Plan. Since the report had been written the Youth Justice Plan was submitted at the end of June with the Cabinet signing it off at their meeting in July 2024. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) Worker was now in post. Out of 13 priority areas 9 were now green and

completed. However, there had been a slip in performance towards the end of last year and the Youth Justice Board and Chief Executive had undertaken a deep dive to see how progress could be made. One of the most important areas outstanding was the failure to find suitable accommodation. Work was currently underway with a new site and it was reported during the meeting that costs had been confirmed so that this could be taken forward. This was the 11th building that had been explored and this remained an outstanding action from the last inspection with the next inspection due in November 2024.

The Sub-Board asked a number of questions in relation the report identifying that Swifter Justice was likely to be in force in early 2024, what progress had been made; was there anything the Sub-Board could do to support the Youth Justice Service; why had the website not been moved forward; what work had been done to find out why more young people were entering the system; there had been a 41% increase in interventions how confident were officers that they were seeing the right children; what happens when the Targeted Prevention Funding ceases in March 2025; what was the reason for the peaks and troughs of young people entering the system; what was preventing the Service from securing suitable accommodation and what was the impact on the young people; and how much work was done with schools around prevention.

It was acknowledged that the Swifter Justice was a big area of work which was being impacted significantly by the length of time investigations into young people's crimes and offences took. Torbay does not have a Child First Investigation Team which Plymouth and other areas have. Many of the delays were as a result of forensic investigations which was a national issue. The Youth Justice Service was working closely with the Police and a new Niche reporting system had been introduced making tracking progress easier to monitor regularly. There was a commitment from the Police to help prioritise children alongside other priorities. There were now improved processes in place to understand who the youth cohort were going into custody, including structures to identify the children at most risk of harm. The Police was also looking at if they could move Policing around the child centred approach to support the new structures.

Members were advised that the website had not been updated as it had fallen in priority with other work. It was hoped it could be included on the Children's Hub website but this was deemed inappropriate. There was information on the Youth Justice Plan on the Council's website to signpost people. Part of the reason was funding as the content had been written it just needed someone to create the pages. Members highlighted the importance of good signposting of relevant support particularly to parents and carers.

It was noted that between June and November 2023 30 young people had entered the system, this was due to a high rate of offending in Paignton, lots of antisocial behaviour and repeat offending. Since December 2023 there were no more than 2 young people in a month coming into the system and this was expected to continue. Work had been done to identify people at risk of offending earlier and the Service was working with the Police to review out of court and disposals.

The Targeted Prevention work was carried out by three full time workers with the main funding 'Turnaround Fund' ending in March 2025 and there was no guarantee of any other funding after this time from this or the other two funding

pots. Evidence demonstrated that young people supported through the Team 79% did not go on to commit an offence. If future funding was not identified, then the Team would come to a point before March 2025 when they would stop taking referrals. There was a concern also that the existing staff would look for other jobs.

There were a number of reasons why the Service had not been able to secure suitable accommodation. The impact was that staff were seeing young people in cafes, libraries, parks and cars which may not be safe or confidential.

The Youth Justice Service did not work with schools directly due to capacity but helped to provide resources to the Police who did go into schools. Most referrals come from Children's Services or the Police and the Service only had capacity to work with 30 young people at a time.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Torbay Youth Justice Board be recommended to find suitable resources to enable the Targeted Prevention Programme to continue post March 2025 when the existing funding streams cease as this is a demonstrated invest to save project which reduces the numbers of young people offending as well as exploring other potential funding opportunities to support the Youth Justice Service; and
2. that the Clerk be requested to write to the Chief Executive Officer of Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust and the Police and Crime Commissioner on behalf of the Sub-Board to raise concerns about the lack of a partnership approach to finding suitable accommodation for the Youth Justice Service and encourage wider partnership working for the benefit of our children and young people.

5. Exclusions and Absence

Members considered the submitted report which provided details of absence from schools in Autumn to Spring 2023/2024. This included details on the levels of exclusion and suspension, number of Electively Home Educated (EHE) children and young people, school attendance and number of children on part time or who were educated other than at school (EOTAS).

The Sub-Board asked questions in relation to 75% of exclusions being children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), 88% of those were primary age, does that not demonstrate that their needs were not being met by mainstream school, as well as 8.3 children per week leaving school; does the Attendance Officer link into the Family Hubs to reinforce to parents how important school was; how many children who become EHE had poor attendance; what impact has the Attendance Officer meetings had (a written update was requested around the attendance work and penalties especially for those educate other than at home (EOTAH) and from the most deprived communities and what was being done to support those children); how had the knock-on impact of Covid-19 been addressed; how was evidence gathered on the impact of the roles introduced; and was there any data on absence during exam seasons for children with SEND (a

written update on the data to see if there was a link with the exam aged students and absence was requested).

It was noted that Mayfield School had made new provision after school in term time with the Head Teacher and SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services) with parents coming to the sessions and booking space to talk to SENDIASS reaching at least seven parents a week. It was suggested the voluntary sector could help provide some play activities for children whilst their parents speak to professionals.

Members were informed that a number of children on part time timetables were following an improvement journey and had previously been coded incorrectly and were not attending school. This resulted in improved attendance. Work was being undertaken in the Family Hubs to help families get ready for school, in 0-5 early years settings and at families' homes especially around speech, language and communications, but the impact of this work would not be seen for a few years. This needed to be rolled out to Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 with primary schools in deprived areas being targeted first. The impact of the Attendance Officer and Early Help Panel was to work with families and to help understand the barriers to attendance and to work with them. Penalties had a mixed impact and if a school puts in a claim and the parent was engaging with early help, they do not have to pay the penalty.

It was noted that some schools had embedded a graduated response to attendance and it was working well and needed to be rolled out to all schools.

Members were advised that when a child was excluded from a primary school support was provided to families to get their child into a suitable primary school, with the Local Authority having to direct schools in some cases and to provide wrap around support around reintegration. Following a second exclusion they would likely to be placed at Mayfield Chestnut Centre and then look at alternative provision. As a partnership they discuss disruption around attachment.

It was noted that there was a need to go through the data to understand fully the reasons behind why parents elect to home educate their children. Looking at parental confidence and if children's needs were being met.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that future reports include the number of children coming off a part time timetable; and
2. that the Director of Children's Services be requested to explore with partners, including the voluntary and community sector, what support parents might need to enable discussions with professionals about attendance.

6. Special Educational Needs and Disability Update (SEND)

The Sub-Board considered the submitted report which provided an update on the Co-production of the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) of Torbay Local Area for Special Educational Needs (SEND) Provision and a report of the SEND Area Engagement

meeting with Ofsted on 27 February 2024. It was nearly three years since the original inspection and now the new SEF was being developed with work also focussed around gathering the annex documents to provide evidence to support the response. The Torbay way was to co-produce work and had seen benefits of working with parents, carers, services and users. The co-produced Charter and Pledge had big momentum at the start but communication had not been maintained, this was being picked up to ensure that the message was reinforced. Good feedback had been provided from children and young people that they were seeing change but this was not reflected in confidence from the parents and carers.

Members asked questions in relation to how long do we need before we get to a good place if we were inspected; the Government had announced there would be a big reform for SEND how does that fit with our written statement, and would the ISOS research paper on SEND get taken into account by the Government; do we know if the Family Hubs would receive future funding; how would the Board track progress; and was there anything the Sub-Board could do to help.

Members were advised that it would depend on the timing of the next inspection as to how we would be judged as a partnership for SEND. The Partnership was monitoring the areas they know they can have impact e.g. schools, early help offer, mental health support in schools with Teams getting the biggest reach.

It was acknowledged that SEND was a national issue which would require huge systematic change which would take a while to affect. There was a need to base everything on the lived experience of the young person. It was hoped the Government would take into account all relevant research papers on SEND. Changes to NHS policies were starting to emerge, they had been asked for a community recovery plan whereas in the past it was always a focus on acute services. The Government had advised that any future funding would be picked up in the October spending review.

The Partnership acknowledged that work was not happening fast enough but there was a commitment, and a huge amount of work was being undertaken and colleagues now need to realign it to look at impact versus activity.

A graduated response toolkit to support those with additional help had been rolled out and was working well in some schools but needed to be rolled out to all schools.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Self Evaluation Framework be presented to a future meeting of the Sub-Board;
2. to circulate the appendices to the Sub-Board; and
3. that Members be encouraged to promote the Graduated Response to schools and the community and share the video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWHt3tbwjms>

7. Exploitation and Children Missing

Members received an update on the partnership approach to exploitation and children missing. The Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) in January 2024 had provided positive feedback mainly around multi-agency partnerships, forums, focus on identified children and perpetrators, networks and the impact they had. Currently 177 children were being tracked through the system.

Members asked questions in relation to what was the Professional Difference Policy; who were the main partners; when a child was given a toolkit what work goes on with the school; what were the barriers around addressing domestic abuse; and what percentage was the younger cohort and what was the youngest person.

It was noted that the Professional Difference Policy was a safeguarding policy which was used when professional colleagues had a difference of opinion to ensure that the young person and/or their families were safeguarded. The main partners were the Police, Education, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Health, Checkpoint, Benardos and Early Help. The Team also worked with over 30 care providers, the Fire Service etc.

Members were advised that the toolkit was completed with the parent, child and school and it was expected that schools would have copies of the toolkit and any action plans arising from the discussion to help with implementation. A large cohort of children were under early help support with many toolkits being completed by Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools.

It was noted that where there was anything adverse happening at a child's home including domestic abuse and violence the vulnerability of the child significantly increased. The child has their own lived experiences and wider vulnerabilities at home and with peer relationships. This was addressed through a partnership approach rather than seeing a case in isolation. There was a national campaign #LookCloser which encourages members of the public and businesses to look closer at young people – more information can be found on the website at [#LookCloser To Spot Exploitation | The Children's Society \(childrensociety.org.uk\)](https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/look-closer). It was agreed that #LookCloser cards would be provided to Councillors.

Members were advised that the youngest person being supported was 9 years old. Training had been provided to primary schools to help them think about identifying children which need early help. Toolkits were also being completed for younger siblings of older children.

A case study was referred to at the meeting from a parent who ended up giving up their daughter to social care because she did not know how to deal with her exploitation. This was a long time ago but highlighted the huge impact on the family of exploitation and the length of time it could take for families and the young person to recover.

Members thanked the Exploitation Manager, her Team and Partners for all their hard work and dedication supporting young people and their families around missing and exploitation.

8. Young Carers Strategy

Members considered the submitted report which provided an update on the Young Carers' Strategy and Young Carers' Service which transferred back to the Council in June 2023. The Service had undergone a slight structural change and separated from the Youth Service with more focus on delivery. The Service undertakes its statutory role undertaking assessments to anyone deemed as a Young Carer and the impact on their caring role, education, opportunities in life with the aim to raise awareness and identify Young Carers at the earliest opportunity. They support children Elective Home Educated (EHE), in primary schools, in secondary schools and elsewhere. They also offer activities and a group environment for Young Carers and their families who see a huge benefit.

Members asked questions in relation to the value and savings made to the NHS and Adult Social Care by Young Carers; and if the voluntary and community sector work with the Young Carers' Service.

The importance of having events that Young Carers have permission to attend which were free to attend was acknowledged as invaluable and Members supported the continuation of such schemes.

It was noted that the Service worked with the voluntary and community sector and they were also involved in supporting events for Young Carers.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board supports the development of a financial business case to seek investment in the Young Carers' Service to ensure that it remains sustainable for the Young Carers within Torbay;
2. that the Director of Children's Services be requested to consider writing to NHS and Adult Social Care Partners to demonstrate the costs saved by Young Carers and if they would consider contributing towards the Young Carers Service; and
3. that the Director of Children's Services be requested to consider exploring options to fund a free bus pass for Young Carers for school holidays.

9. Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker

The Sub-Board noted the contents of the submitted action tracker.

Chairman

The report template does not lend itself to be able to answer the proposed question. I have taken elements of the report template to ensure that we try to reach the same intended outcome

Meeting: [Overview and Scrutiny – Children and Young People](#)

Date: [Click here and enter date](#)

Wards affected: [All wards](#)

Report Title: [Youth Provision in Torbay](#)

What we were asked to report on:

Youth Provision in Torbay - *To receive an update on the direction of travel for the review of youth provision and consider how the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board can contribute towards the review and add value, to include Youth Improvement Fund, youth work including sport, leisure and culture, accessibility to play park and Holiday, Activities and Food (HAF).*

The last update report was written in October 2023.

The current youth provision under the Youth Hub in Children's Services:

- Youth Service
- Young Carers Service
- HAF
- Community Youth Clubs

Proposed developments:

- YIF

Youth Service:

As a small team, we have continued to deliver 1-1 youth work, group sessions, and holiday programmes for young people 11+ in Torbay. We are recruiting for a new part-time Youth Support Worker as one of the Senior Youth Workers has reduced their working hours, which we are hoping will bring some new energy and offer a bit more flexibility to cover leave or sickness within the team.

We have and continue to deliver weekly drop-in sessions at [Parkfield](#) in partnership with [Reach Outdoors](#), [Torquay United Community Sports Trust](#) and have recently welcomed the [YMCA](#) to become part of those sessions. We have also delivered and continue to deliver drop-in sessions on Saturdays at [Chill'd Out](#), a weekly young women's group called She N Us and a Tabletop Role Play group (TTRP) who meet weekly at Chill'd Out also.

Young Carers Service:

The O&S Group have received a recent update on the service, so please see that report for the detail regarding the service, however since meeting we have delivered activities over the summer and are working with the [Orchard Forest School](#) and the [Babbacombe and St Marychurch Lions](#) to deliver young carer and family activities up until the end of the financial year.

The Service Manager has been off on long-term sickness for over 6 months which has created some additional pressure on the existing team.

Youth Service and Young Carers Service staffing:

A Change Paper is being developed to ensure all staff are on Torbay Council terms and conditions as there are still staff who TUPE'd over in June 2023 who need to transfer, and there are some necessary changes to be made in the staff structure. The intention is for this to be out for consultation with changes to be made between January and March 2025.

Youth Work and School Attendance

The Attendance Youth Worker has been working across small groups of children who are at risk of not succeeding on transfer to secondary school, In the Autumn term this will be developed into a pilot programme alongside the Early Help Community Engagement Officer to focus on specific groups in the TQ1 postcode area.

Community-based youth clubs:

The commissioned providers deliver five youth clubs, all of which will operate twice a week across Torbay (10 youth club sessions every week). Two in Torquay, two in Paignton and one in Brixham. The providers - The Windmill Centre, Love Enterprise CIC and Plymouth Argyle Community Trust, are continuing to deliver these clubs and this agreement has been extended until the end of this financial year.

Other funded community-based youth clubs:

The Youth Hub has part-funded some youth activity at Great Parks Community Centre over the summer period, part-funded youth wellbeing sessions delivered by the YMCA, we have funded Cycle Torbay to deliver youth engagement at Crafty Fox in Foxhole and the Medway Centre in Watcombe, contributed to food being made available at the Foxhole Community Centre, and have contributed to the youth volunteer sessions at YES Brixham. These are all one-off investments with the understanding that their valued activity helps to meet the needs of young people across Torbay, gives young people access to trusted adults outside of a school or home environment, and offers safe spaces for young people to go to.

HAF:

The Holiday Activities and Food Programme is funded until March 2025, so our last guaranteed holiday club offer will be in December 2024. We are working with our current providers to encourage them to become Ofsted registered as this will allow families who are entitled to Government funded discounted childcare (up to 85%) to access the holiday clubs still. We are waiting to find out whether there will be an extension of the HAF Programme going forward or an alternative offer in 2025 – this is yet to be announced by Government.

The current providers – Play Torbay, Achieve4All, Sporty Stars, Premier Education, Libraries Unlimited, Imagine Torbay Multicultural Group, NOVA/Love Enterprise CIC, Argyle Community Trust, Kinetic Sports Group, Shear Soccer and ProCoaching.

Youth Hub Torbay Social Media:

Since November 2023, the Youth Hub and Participation Team have been running @YouthHubTorbay on Instagram and Facebook. This has helped showcase the work undertaken by the Youth Hub, the Participation Team and from local providers to young people 13+ years old and parents/carers of young people in Torbay.

YIF:

There have been several delays to the planned delivery at the Acorn Centre both on the capital and revenue development due to the changes and concerns raised by the Board of Trustees there. This is currently sat with the Legal Team within the Torbay Council, the CEO of Torbay Council and the YIF funders, so we are not able to offer an update at present.

Accessibility to Play Parks – The Participation Team have spoken to 30 young people over the summer aged 4-16 years old children, over the last few weeks at holiday clubs, children's week and at the young person panel and SEND youth forum meetings on which parks they use in Torbay, how often they use them and what equipment they most use at the parks. This information has been shared with SWISCo and the Divisional Director of Environment and Infrastructure.

We made the collective decision to not ask children and young people what they would like to see because there is currently no available budget for investment. It has been made clear of what young people want to see happen in Torbay previously, and this has not yet been delivered, so it was deemed unfair to keep asking young people without being able to deliver this.

Where the Overview and Scrutiny Board could assist and play a role:

As mentioned in the report in 2023, resources and investment in youth provision and services is always a challenge. The intention is to consider how Torbay Council uses the existing investment as part of the Change Paper proposal that will be up for consultation with the team when this is ready, so we are not able to share this proposal outside of a confidential environment until staff have been made aware of the proposed changes.

The HAF programme is unlikely to continue in its existing format and potentially not at all in 2025, and the Community Youth Clubs funding agreement ends in March 2025 also, so there will need to be a discussion relating to the £100k currently allocated to these.

There will be some changes in staffing going forward and we are hopeful that there will be future investment from the Government for youth and preventative services going forward. The request to the O&S Board is for continued support for young people, ensuring young people have a voice and access to support in Torbay, and to ensure that the welfare of Torbay Council staff and the staff teams working with young people in Torbay is considered with decision making, planning and communications going forward.

Thank you

Overview and Scrutiny

Subject: Torbay 0-19 Service Procurement

Director: Lincoln Sargeant and Nancy Meehan Cabinet Member: Hayley Tranter and Nick Bye

1. Issue

Background

Torbay Local Authority, specifically Public Health and Children's Social Care, are responsible for commissioning the services that sit within the Healthy Child Programme, also known as 0-19 provision. The current 0-19 Service contract, held by Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust (TSDFT) with Action for Children and The Children's Society - Checkpoint (TCS) as sub-contracted providers, expired in March 2024 and a further one-year extension has been agreed with the contract holder. Procurement planning for a new service has been initiated and is progressing in line with new contract start dates for April 2025, decisions for which are governed by the 0-19 Procurement Board, with membership including the Directors of Children's Social Care, Finance and Public Health.

0-19 commissioning arrangements

Torbay Local Authority Cabinet Members have endorsed the 0-19 Procurement Board's decision that the Authority undertake a 'hybrid' commissioning model, resulting in some of the current 0-19 provision following the Health Care Services Provider Selection Regime (('PSR for Health') a UK Government set of regulations for procuring health care services) with other provisions following a separate process where some services are re-procured and others delivered in-house.

The outcome of the PSR for Health framework assessment of the in-scope services, led by Procurement and endorsed by the 0-19 procurement Board, was to follow a direct contract award process to the incumbent provider and to not follow a competitive tender process. The result from the process was based on the *existing provider satisfying and likely to satisfy the proposed contract to a sufficient standard.*

Current 0-19 Services to be directly awarded to the incumbent contract holder, TSDFT with Action for Children as a sub-contracted provider are the 0–5-year-old provisions with School Nursing and include:

- Public Health Nursing (Health Visiting and School Nursing)
- National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP)
- Family Hubs as Community Services
- Early Help and Family Support
- Child Development and School Readiness

The current 0-19 services to follow an open market procurement include:

- Advocacy Services
- Independent Visitor's Service

The 0-19 services to be delivered in-house, forming part of a wider Torbay Council youth service include:

- Young People's Substance Misuse
- Missing and Return Home Conversations

Risks and opportunities

As the grant funded Family Hubs Start for Life programme is not expected to be sustained by the government beyond March 2025, a shortfall has been identified for programmes linked to 0-19 provision. Torbay's substantive Family Hubs as community centres along with the breadth of support available to families from the Hubs are not at risk; however, Family Hubs Start for Life services, financed through the Start for Life grant have been identified as being at risk including Infant Feeding, Volunteer and Peer Support, and Perinatal Infant Mental Health. Additional funding specifically for these programmes is not available under the existing 0-19 financial envelope and therefore would be required from core Council revenue streams if these programmes were to be continued post March 2025. A proposal has been put forwards to continue these provisions as part of sustained Council revenue from April 2025 onwards, with an emphasis on Perinatal Infant Mental Health provisions which are considered the greatest risk to children and families if the programme is no longer resourced.

The opportunity afforded by the PSR for Health direct award route is that the conclusion of a new contract and specification should, in principle, be concluded within the next 6 months in time for an April 2025 start date. This approach is beneficial for several reasons:

1. Reduces officer time to set up and deliver an open market procurement exercise where there is no material value identified for the Authority or our residents,
2. keeps consistency of provider and delivery models where there are no significant concerns which need to be rectified;
3. allows for a re-design of the current provision whilst maintaining existing services that are well established,
4. allows a strategic focus and re-design on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) early identification and support offer, developed and implemented alongside key strategic partners including families.

2. Proposed timetable for progression

The timeline for progression is predicated on the approval of the PSR for Health regime and outcome of direct award. If approved, a new service start date would be expected to be no later than April 2025. For this to be achievable, the following timetable for progression includes:

- Negotiation on Finance and Specification with incumbent providers: April - September 2024 (ongoing)
- Initial draft specifications: August 2024 (completed)
- Specification sign-off: October 2024
- Issuing and signing of contract: December 2024
- Lead in time, including service transfer and TUPE: by April 2025

3. Wider engagement - members and community (as appropriate)

Community engagement has included working alongside service users to hear their experiences when accessing 0-19 provision. Insights have been gathered with support from the community and voluntary sector, the Children's Social Care participation team and through the 0-19 service-user feedback exercises. All of which have been taken into account and considered when developing the model.

Consultation on the preferred hybrid model will take place with key strategic stakeholders and wider with council leadership and members if required.

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Torbay Local Area Self Evaluation Framework

One Torbay - working for all Torbay



Version Control

Date	Details	Updated by
27 March 2024	New Model V.1 draft 1	Graham Pirt
9 April 2024	New Model V.1 draft 2	Graham Pirt
16 April 2024	New Model V.1 draft 3	Graham Pirt
1 May 2024	New Model V.1 draft 4	Graham Pirt
14 May 2024	New Model V1.1 draft 5	Graham Pirt
3 June 2024	New Model V1.2 Following Comments	Graham Pirt
10 June 2024	NEW Model V1.3 Following further comments	Graham Pirt
11 June 2024	NEW Model V1.4 Following further analysis	Graham Pirt
25 June 2024	NEW Model V1.5	Graham Pirt
26 June 2024	NEW Model V1.5.2	Graham Pirt
1 July 2024	NEW Model 1.6	Graham Pirt & Hannah Baker
16 July 2024	New Version 1.6.2	Graham Pirt

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What did the Last Inspection say?

The Local area SEND inspection took place between 15 and 19 November 2021 and highlighted areas of significant weakness. The HMCI has also determined that the local authority and the area's ICB (previously CCG) are jointly responsible for the Written Statement of Action to Ofsted. Torbay's Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was finalised in May 2022, detailing our commitment to improving service delivery in the local area.

The Inspection detailed Areas For Improvement in:-

- **Joint Commissioning**
- **Culture**
- **SEND Strategy**
- **Joint Working**
- **Graduated Response**
- **Becoming an Adult**
- **Quality assurance and Community Engagement**

As well as our own governance structure, which has included an independent Check and Challenge group to scrutinise and advise on our progress Torbay has received 6 monitoring visits from the DfE. Following these visits, the Local Area has taken forward further recommendations and improvements in line with their findings.

As a Local Area our feedback from our parent and carer forum has told us that our greatest progress has been seen in the shift in culture for SEND in Torbay; this has been evidenced by our SEND forum for young people, our completely coproduced SEND Strategy and the integration of parent and carer forum as "full strategic partners"* (*DfE Monitoring visit quote).

We are also pleased with our progress towards our Graduated Response where new toolkits have been

co-produced with the Local Area and are currently being embedded. Our SEND audit and quality assurance protocols and procedures have been created and are fully embedded which is leading to higher quality EHCP plans and are being continuously being reviewed to be robust and support improvement of EHCP's processes. Our community engagement has improved with events, forums, newsletters and training reaching out to a greater number and a greater reach of SEND families.

What we have achieved against the Written Statement of Action demands

Joint Commissioning

Change achieved	Evidence of Impact	Key Next Steps
<p>Independent Deep Dive into Joint Commissioning</p> <p>Re focused and reformed Torbay SEND Needs & Joint Commissioning Group</p> <p>SEMH SLCN workforce training delivered to over 1,000 people</p>	<p>SFVT are actively involved and taken on the coordination role for the Pilot Autism & Us parent programme with feedback being collected and will inform a more sustainable offer</p>	<p>Develop understanding of a shared language which reflects a partnership-wide understanding of the capacity challenges of individual agencies</p> <p>Agree a revised Joint Commissioning model</p> <p>Complete initial review of the JSNA</p> <p>Develop information for families to consider when paying for a private provider assessment.</p>

Culture

Change achieved	Evidence of Impact	Key Next Steps
<p>Membership of new SEND Priority Group – SEND is Everyone’s Business established, to continue Culture workstream</p> <p>Second annual Participation Survey completed</p> <p>KPIs have been coproduced to monitor the effectiveness</p>	<p>A range of participants across health, social care and education who can progress actions</p> <p>The KPIs provide a robust framework to match impactful actions against</p> <p>Draft SEND survey shows positive relationships as well as good provision are important to CYP</p>	<p>Publication of the SEND survey</p> <p>Future planning for SEND surveys to provide consistent insights into progress from the perspective of CYP and their families to understand the impact of changes</p>

SEND Strategy

Change achieved	Evidence of Impact	Key Next Steps
<p>SEND Strategy is fully embedded into our improvement priorities</p> <p>KPI's developed as part of the strategy are the accountable measures for the priority areas and reported to the project board</p> <p>Co-produced Action Plans have clear timebound targets</p> <p>Quality Standards for Alternate Provision have been coproduced with parents</p> <p>Providers and the new system embedded with all providers receiving their quality assurance visits</p>	<p>Case Conferencing is making a difference with a greater number remaining in their setting</p> <p>More schools are engaging in multi-agency meetings to help to plan to meet needs, rather than move to suspension and exclusion.</p>	<p>Embed the Monitoring of the five key priorities in the SEND Strategy, using the SEND Strategic Board, ICB Board and Children's Continuous Improvement Board to unblock any issues</p> <p>Revisit our needs from our Sector Led Improvement Partner and make an application to the DfE</p> <p>Focus on lowering our exclusions and suspensions for the two schools who continue to do so despite our intervention</p> <p>Suspension data further analysed to ensure that children continue to be referred to at risk panels at the earliest opportunity</p>

Joint Working

Change achieved	Evidence of Impact	Key Next Steps
<p>Established partnership approach to all SEND work</p> <p>Participation Officer ensures a wide range of young people voices work towards all the different elements</p> <p>Designated Clinical Officer employed in NHS Community provider CFHD as an interim (6 month) SEND Lead post to support and develop the SEND agenda</p>	<p>Our communications show that a greater number are engaged in the SEND agenda</p> <p>Our evidence of accelerated growth in young people's participation</p>	<p>Continue to reach a wider audience of young people and families</p> <p>Hear and respond to the PCF feedback regarding ensuring that communications are clear and evidencing change</p> <p>Further embed the Coproduction charter to disseminate confidence for our families that all improvement projects are being coproduced</p>

Graduated Response

Change achieved	Evidence of Impact	Key Next Steps
<p>Creation of the Graduated Response toolkits</p> <p>New programme for parent carers commissioned</p> <p>New Section 23 process active</p> <p>Educational Psychology team rolling out ELSA training</p> <p>Success in Mental Health in Schools Team</p>	<p>Each family that accepts a 'Next Steps' meeting has a multi-agency discussion about support in place through the SEND support</p> <p>Record of the meeting is given to the education provision and parent/carer</p>	<p>Embedding the Graduated Response</p> <p>SEMH and Graduated Response toolkits to be created</p> <p>MHIST and CAMHS to work on linkage and thresholds to ensure there are no gaps</p> <p>Review of Behaviour outreach at primary phase</p>

Becoming an Adult

Change achieved	Evidence of Impact	Key Next Steps
<p>New Transition protocol is well embedded</p> <p>NEETS have reduced, with Apprenticeships and Internships increasing</p> <p>Mapping work completed which shows services currently available</p> <p>Links with National Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) groups have further progressed Pathway to Adulthood best practice.</p>	<p>Parents have benefitted from workshop sessions on The Power of Attorney and Mental Capacity Act.</p> <p>NEET Figures continue to be on and positively under target</p> <p>Changes with AP offers are meaning greater choice for our young people</p>	<p>Relaunch of Bi-annual Panel</p> <p>Follow up Stakeholder event</p>

Quality Assurance & Community Engagement

Change achieved	Evidence of Impact	Key Next Steps	General Overview of Progress	
<p>Two cycles of EHCP audits</p> <p>Quarterly reports are driving progress forward</p> <p>Building a data dashboard on quality of plans</p> <p>Piloted SEND multiagency tracking meetings</p>	<p>EHCP quality data dashboard on Invision 360</p> <p>EHCP auditing reports and action tracker</p> <p>DSCO spreadsheet</p>	<p>DSCO undertake audit of Appendix Es</p> <p>Ensure CAPITA reflects audit activity</p> <p>Joint audit with Health on Appendix Cs</p> <p>Liquidlogic process maps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised governance arrangements • Revision of work into five priorities areas aligned with SEND Strategy • Representatives in Priority Delivery Groups include: Headteacher of CEO level, Health and Social Care Strategic Leads • Chairing arrangements from across the partnership • Implementation of Graduated Response • Embedded Quality Assurance • Autism Education Training in secondary schools • Effective collaboration with children, young people and their families e.g. SEND Youth Forum • Improved marketing of the Learning Disability Annual Health Checks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEND Strategy has now been coproduced with all partners and is ambitious in its aims and fully embedded into our improvement priorities. • Community engagement has grown • Go live of Family Hubs website • Neurodiversity Transformation Programme activities • SLCN Transformation Programme activities • Family Feedback Event • Community engagement has grown • Go live of Family Hubs website • Neurodiversity Transformation Programme activities • SLCN Transformation Programme activities • Family Feedback Event 	

Our SEND and Inclusion Vision

The shared vision for the strategy was produced with representatives from across the local area. Partners across the local area in Torbay are committed to working in partnership with SEND Family Voice Torbay as well as children, young people, parents, carers and partner organisations to radically improve support for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities within Torbay so they have the very best life chances. The strategy cannot be considered in isolation and acknowledges that there are interdependencies with the development of Family Hubs, Child Friendly Torbay and the development of the Integrated Care System for Devon.

Torbay have revised their governance arrangements to ensure that the agreed improvements in the WSOA are delivered whilst embedding recommendations from the new SEND reforms, Inspection Framework and Safety Valve. This has resulted in a revision of work into five priorities areas aligned with our SEND Strategy that still cover the full breadth of the written statement of action agreed work



Our 5 Priorities

Priority 1: SEND is everyone's business - embedding our values through education, health and social care, changing culture and reforming our workforce.

Priority 2: Identify and act on children's needs at the earliest opportunity, through valuing lived experience and expertise.

Priority 3: Understand the needs of our children, young people and families and make sure joint commissioning supports service delivery and we make best use of all resources.

Priority 4: Make sure that all early years' providers and mainstream educational settings support an inclusive approach to education

Priority 5: Improve transition planning for young people moving into adulthood.

Our SEND Strategy Partnership Pledge

Be Honest

We will tell you the truth, we will listen and work with you to plan and explain what is possible and why things may need to change or happen.

Show you we care

We will listen carefully and make sure that we build a plan of support around your aspirations, hopes and goals.

Be Thoughtful

We will treat you as the expert, build our professional knowledge of your needs and what is available to help you.

Be Fair

We will treat you and your family with respect.

Be Kind

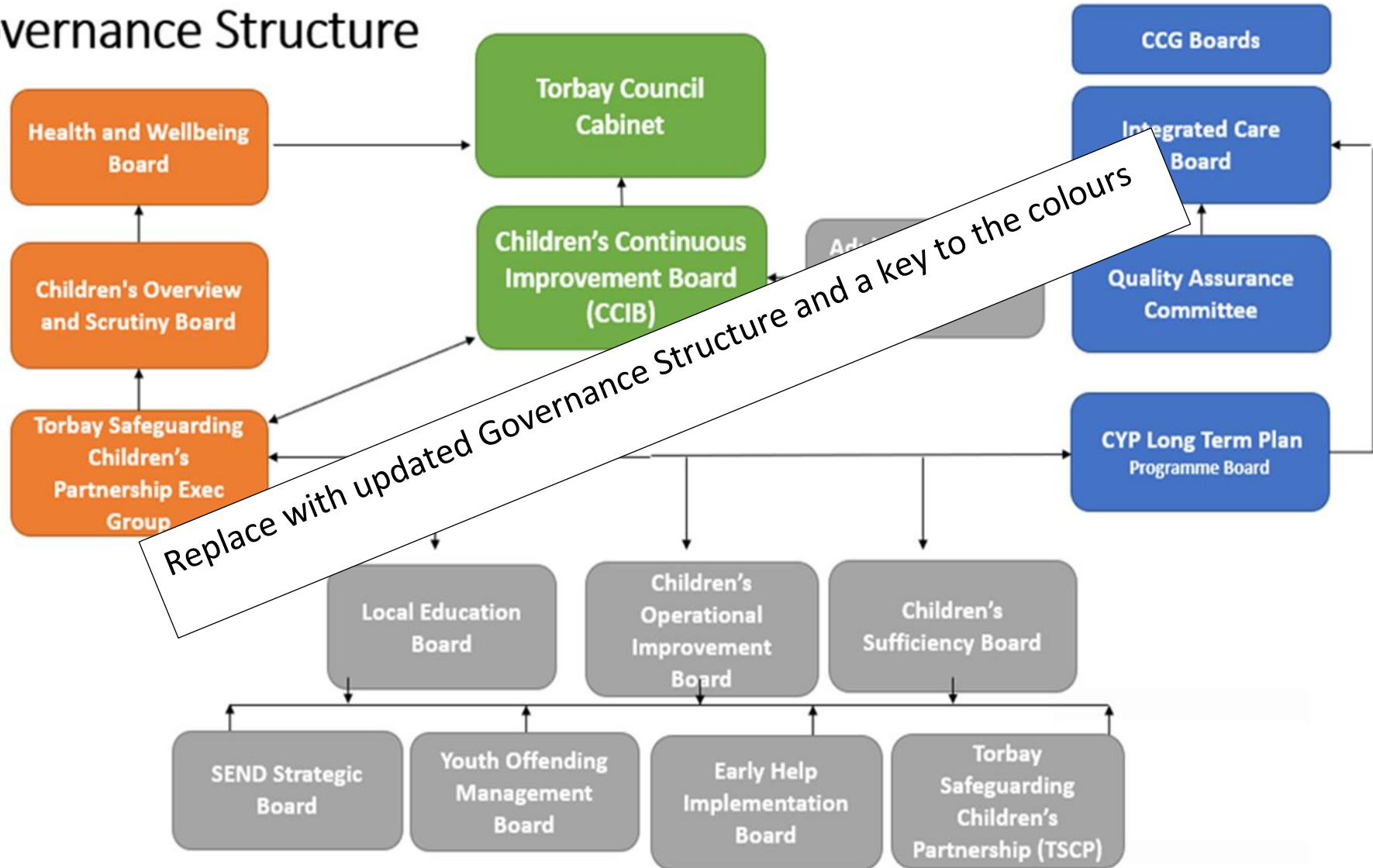
We will listen carefully and ask you how you want to receive your support.

The co-produced SEND strategy sets out a vision and direction of travel for children and young people 0 – 25 years, with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Torbay. It is intended to cover the 'local area' of Torbay and can only be achieved through effective partnership between children, young people, parent and carers and our local system; the local authority, Integrated Care System (ICS) (health), public health, NHS England for specialist services, early years settings, schools, further education provisions and the voluntary and community sector.

To achieve this vision, young people, parents, carers, professionals and services across the local area have agreed to adopt a set of principles that have been set out in a partnership pledge. We know that the success of our strategy depends on cultural change. The commitments that we expect everyone to adopt and sign up to have been defined by our children and young people.

How our Local Area Governance and reporting systems are organised.

Governance Structure

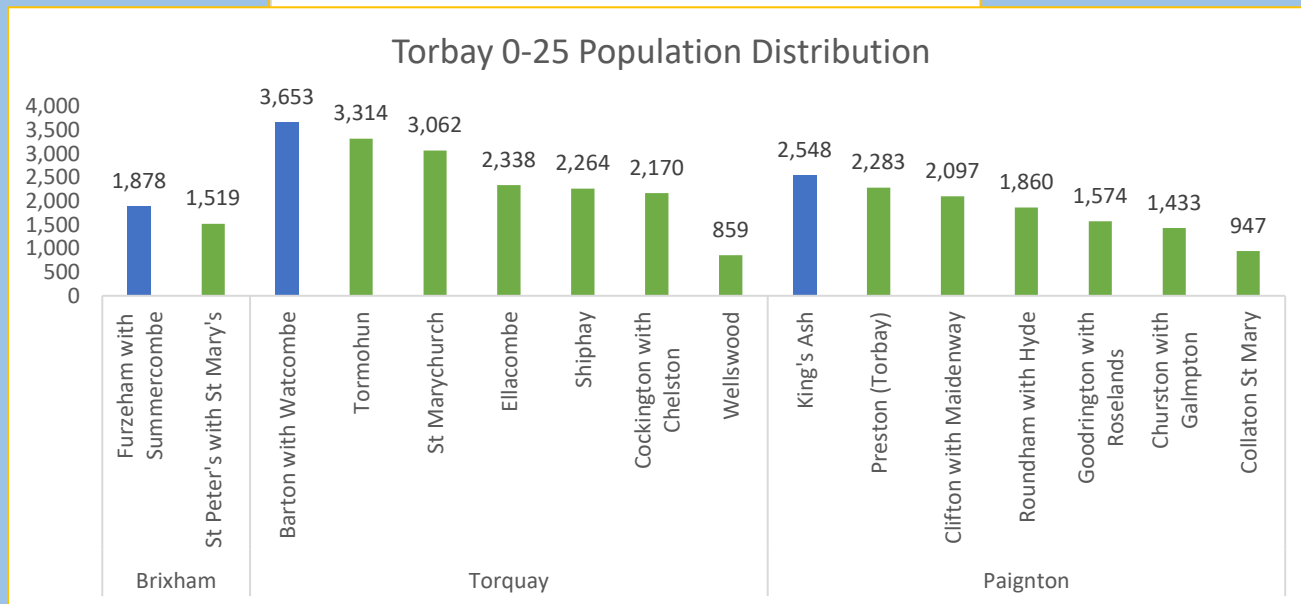
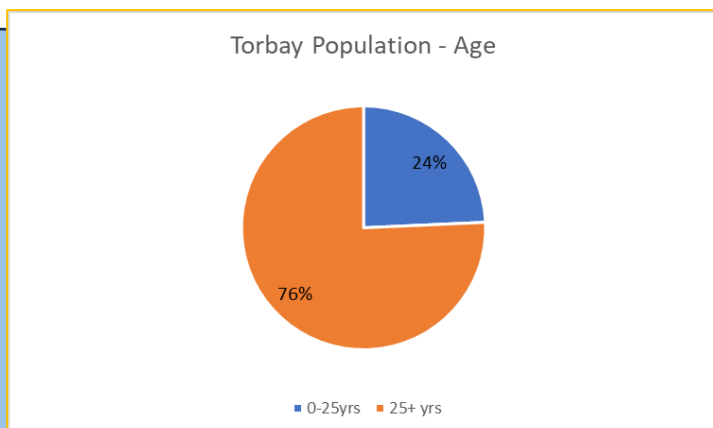


Replace with updated Governance Structure and a key to the colours

What we know about Torbay

Latest data from Office for National Statistics is that in March 2021, Torbay has 33,808 children and young people aged 0-25 years. This accounts for **24%** of Torbay's total population.

As of 2021, Torbay is the seventh most densely populated of the South West's 30 local authority areas. There has been an increase of 20.6% in people aged 65 years and over, an increase of 1.4% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 4.2% in children aged under 15 years, from 2011 census.

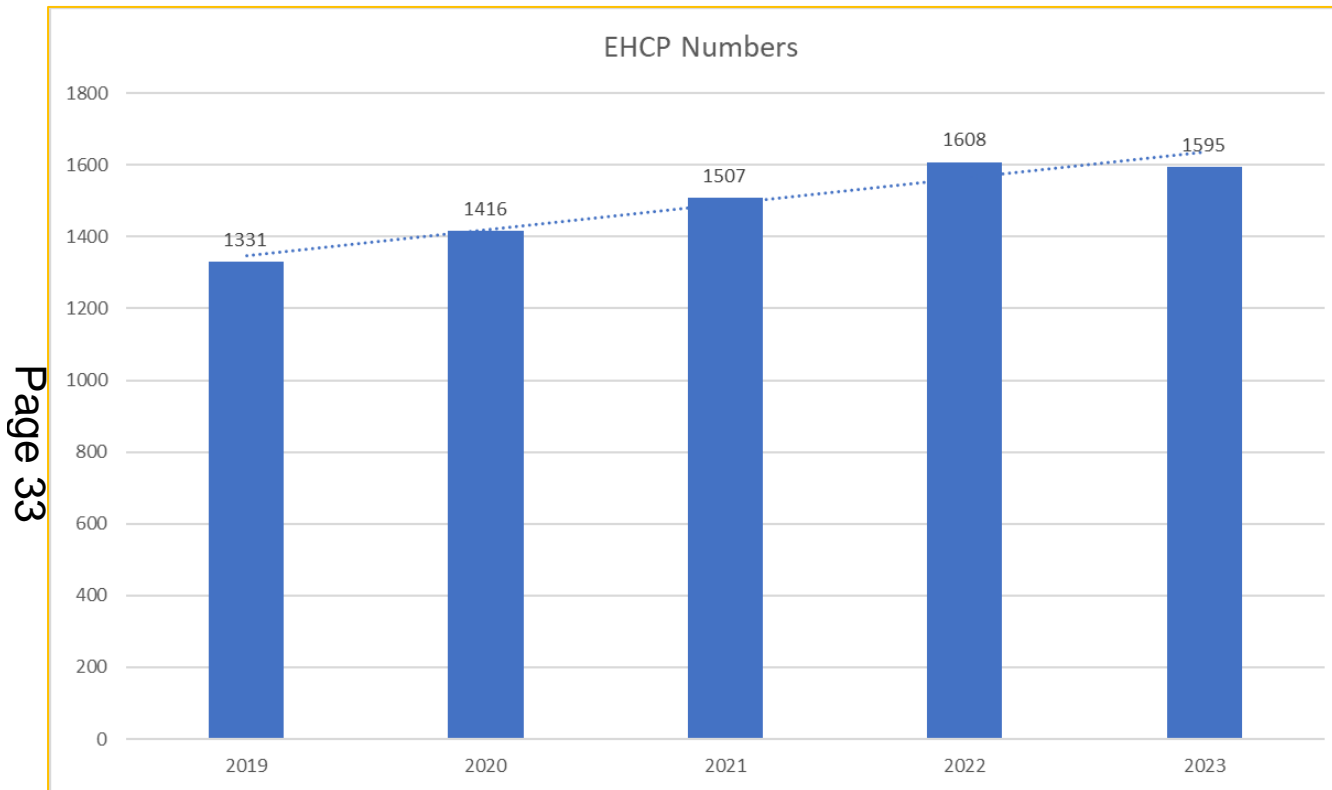


The SEND Needs Analysis of Torbay shows:

- **0-25 general population age group shows ages 10-15 as highest subgroup.**
- **Wards with most needs are Kings Ash (1st) (4th lowest ward of deprivation) and Barton with Watcombe (2nd) (5th lowest ward of deprivation)**
- **Speech, Language and Communication is the highest SEN support need.**
- **Autism Spectrum Condition is the highest need for EHC plans.**
- **Combined highest need is Speech, Language and Communication Needs.**
- **Birth rates, specifically Torquay, have declined.**
- **Primary Admission Rate has remained around the same.**

What we know about SEND in Torbay

Information taken from our SEND JSNA, our Data Dashboard and our SEND Needs Analysis.



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EHCP breakdown (2023) - Source: SEN2 Census. SEN2 Census 2024 submitted figure is 1535

Torbay has 33,808 children and young people aged 0-25 years. This accounts for 24% of Torbay's total population.

Torbay is the seventh most densely populated of the South West's 30 local authority areas. There has been an increase 1.4% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 4.2% in children aged under 15 years, from 2011 census.

Historically EHC plan numbers in Torbay have continued to increase and have been above the National rate.

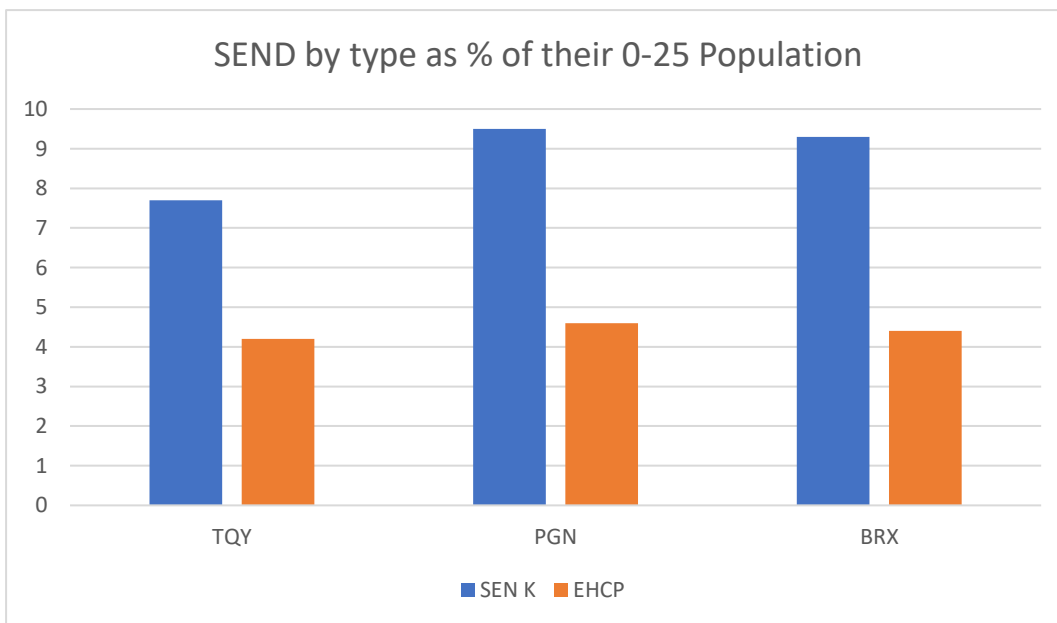
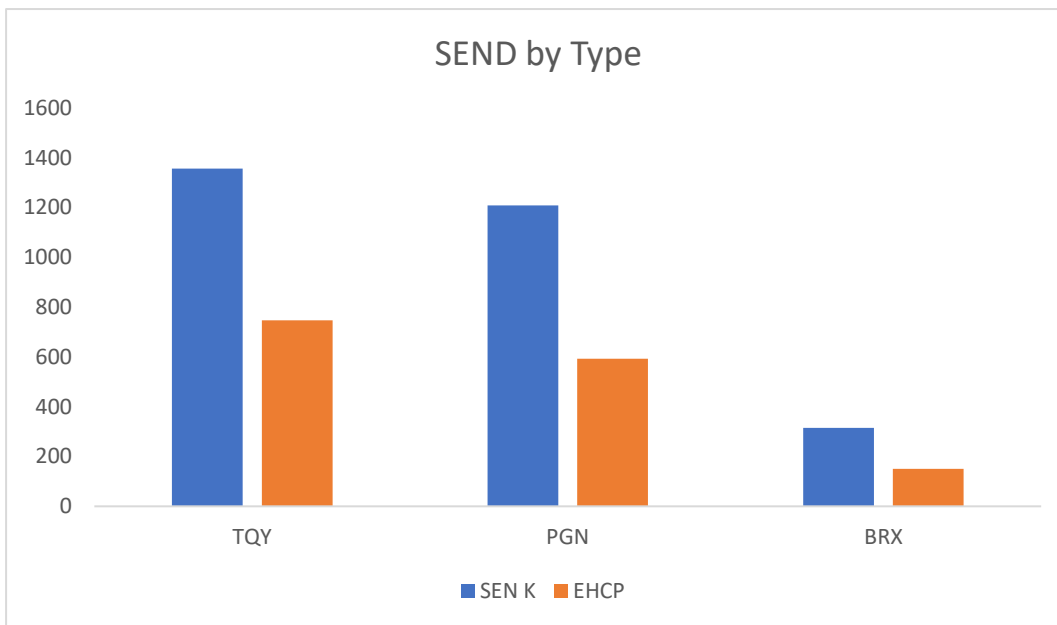
Torbay Council joined the DfE's Safety Valve Programme in 2023. Since mitigations have been put in place, Torbay's EHC plan numbers are now reducing.

There are 1,535 EHCP pupils on Capita (as at 01/07/2024) and working towards our target of 1488

- 60 EHCP pupils live out of area.
- 1,489 have a home address listed as Torquay, Paignton or Brixham.
- 2,881 pupils on SEN K (SEN Support census day January 2024)
- 128 SEN K live out of area

This makes a total of 4,448 young people This represents 13% of our 0-25 population in Torbay.

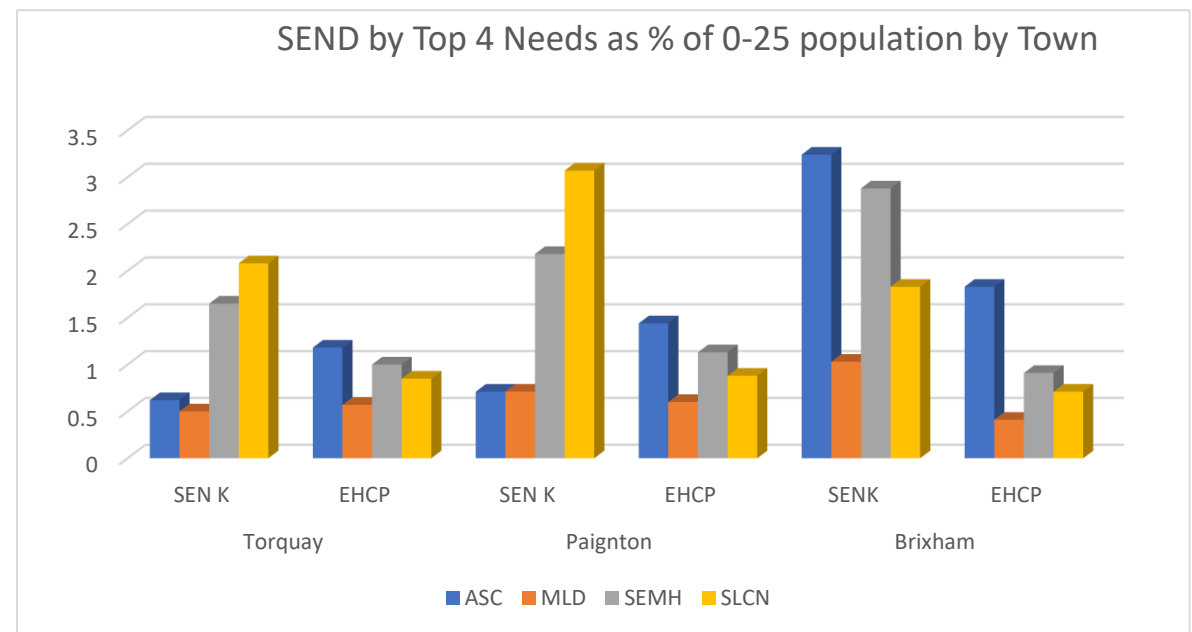
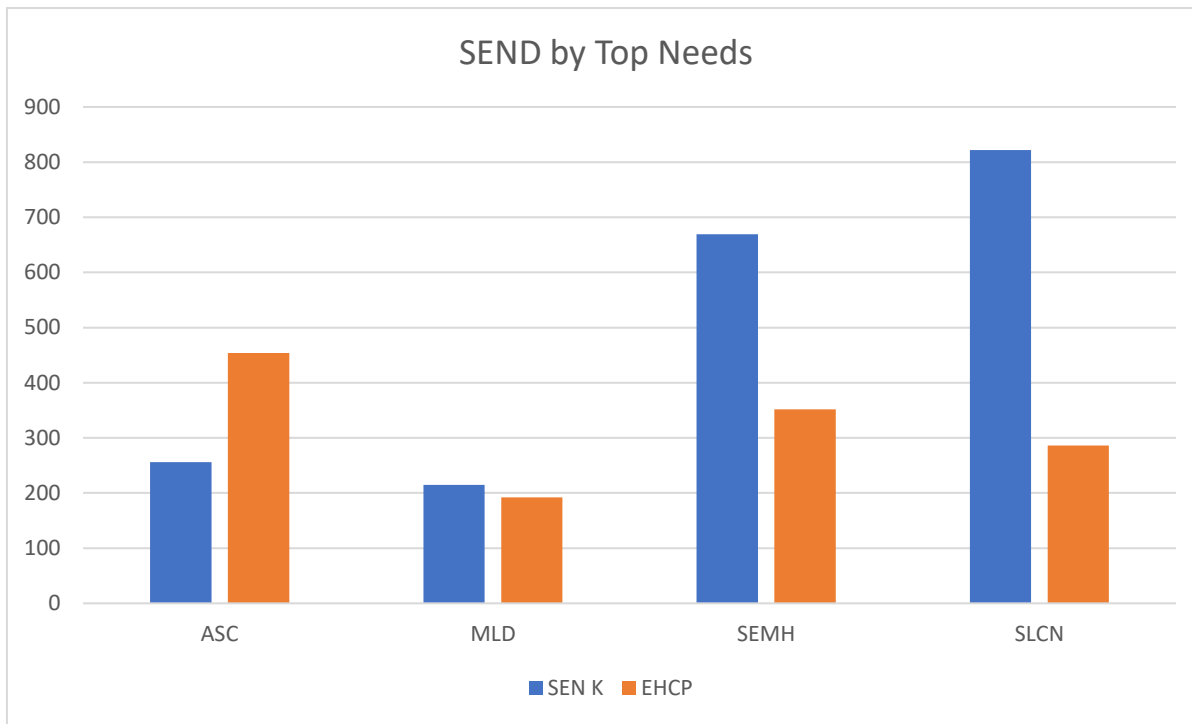
13%



The number of Children and Young People with SEND across the three main towns of Torbay show that Torquay and Paignton have the greatest number. Not unexpectedly, as they have the greatest populations of 0-25 yr olds. However, when judged as a proportion of each town's 0-25 yr old population Torquay has a lower proportion of SEN K and slightly lower proportion of EHCPs

Paignton and Brixham have similar proportions.

%	Torquay (17660)	Paignton (12792)	Brixham (3397)
SEN K	1357 (7.7%)	1209 (9.5%)	315 (9.3%)
EHCP	747 (4.2%)	593 (4.6%)	150 (4.4%)
ALL SEND	2104 (11.9%)	1802 (14.1%)	465 (13.7%)

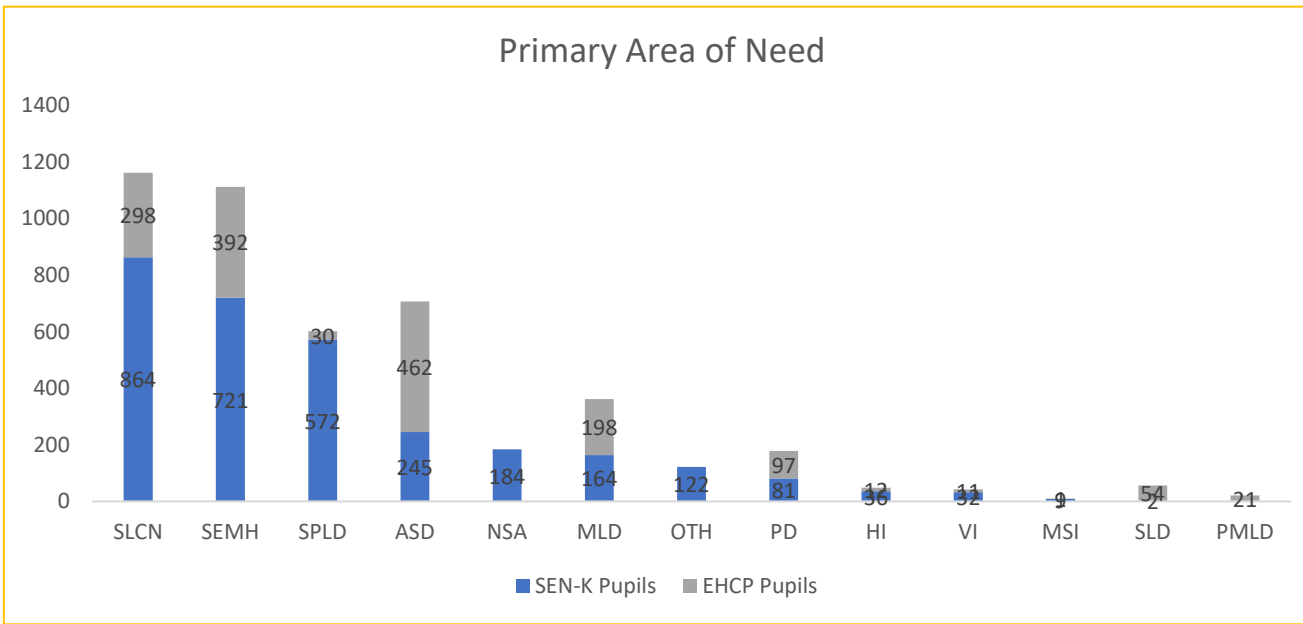


The highest number of SEN K are for SLCN, whereas the highest number of EHCPs are for ASC. However when these figures are broken down as a percentage of the 0-25 population across Torquay, Paignton and Brixham the figures reveal different balances.

The highest percentage of SLCN for SEN K is in Paignton and the lowest is in Brixham. However, the highest percentage of ASC at SEN K is in Brixham (3.24%). This is significantly higher than in either Torquay (0.62%) and Paignton (0.71%). The proportions for EHCP with ASC show Brixham the highest (1.83%), Paignton (1.44%) and Torquay (1.18%).

	T Q Y SEN K	T Q Y EHCP	P G N SEN K	P G N EHCP	B R X SEN K	B R X EHCP
ASC	0.62	1.18	0.71	1.44	3.24	1.83
MLD	0.5	0.57	0.71	0.6	1.03	0.41
SEMH	1.65	1	2.18	1.13	2.88	0.91
SLCN	2.08	0.85	3.07	0.88	1.83	0.71

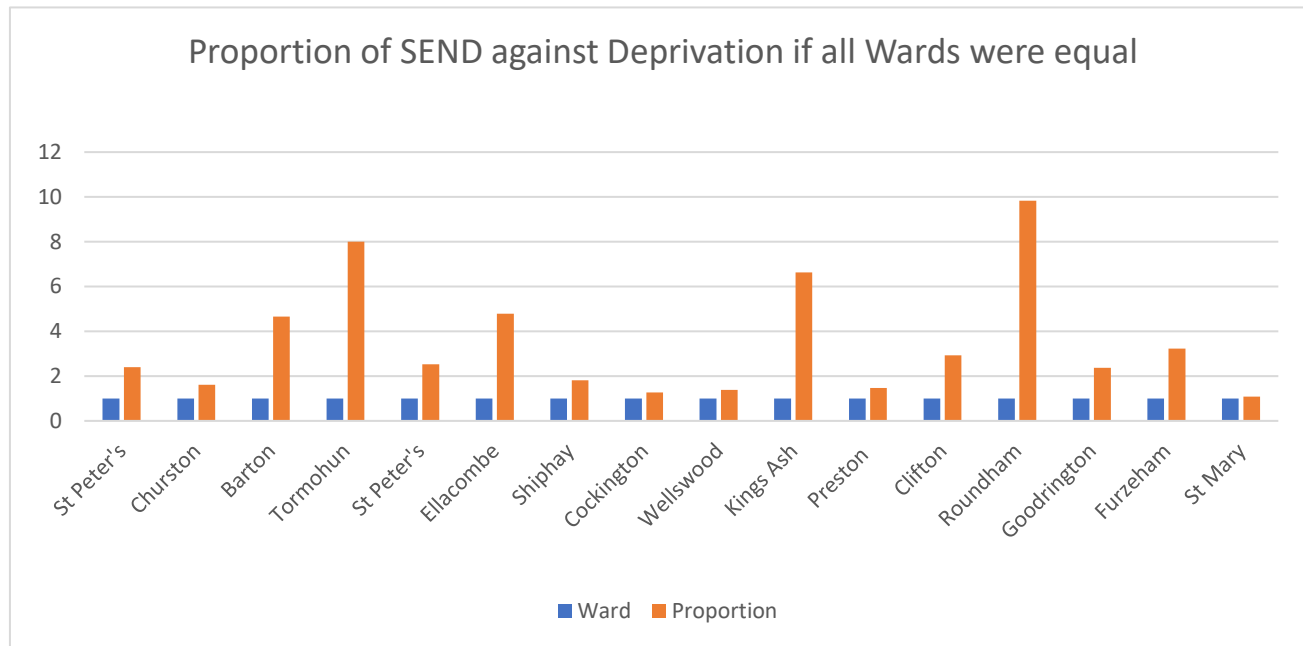
The highest level of SEMH at SEN K is in Brixham (2.88%). The proportion of EHCP for SEMH is similar across all three but still lowest in Brixham.



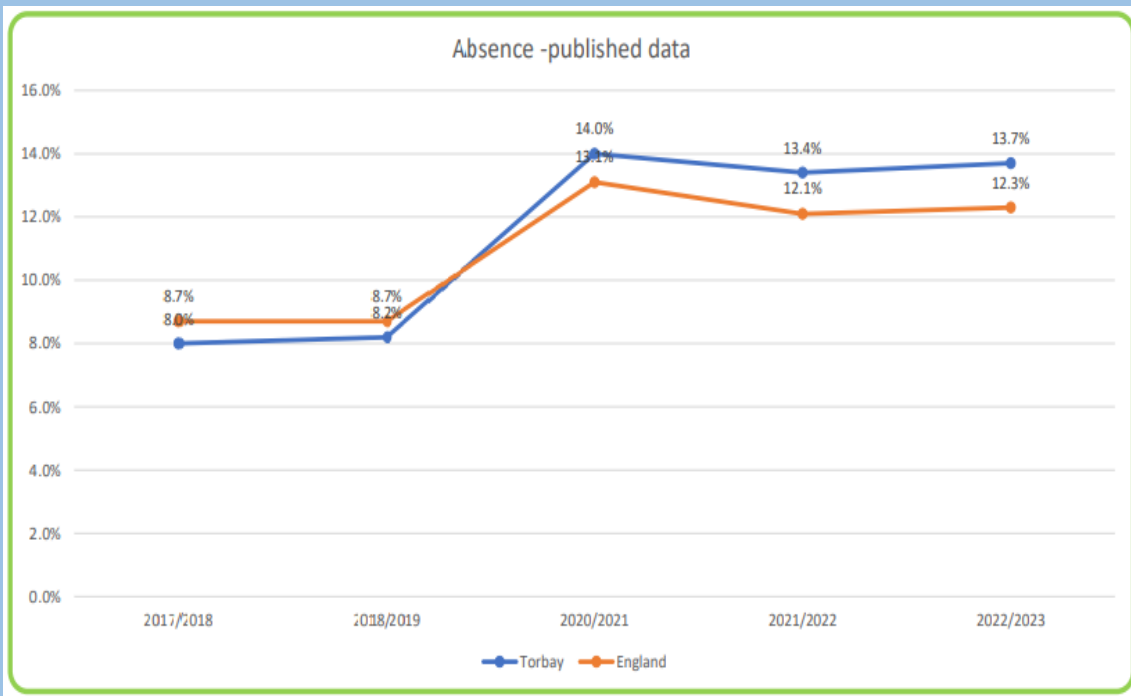
The number of children and young people with SEND needs is greatest for SLCN, SEMH, SpLD and ASC.

However, in terms of those with SEN K, the number for ASC is significantly lower than those for SLCN, SEMH and SpLD., whereas the number of EHCPs with ASC is significantly higher than the other three areas.

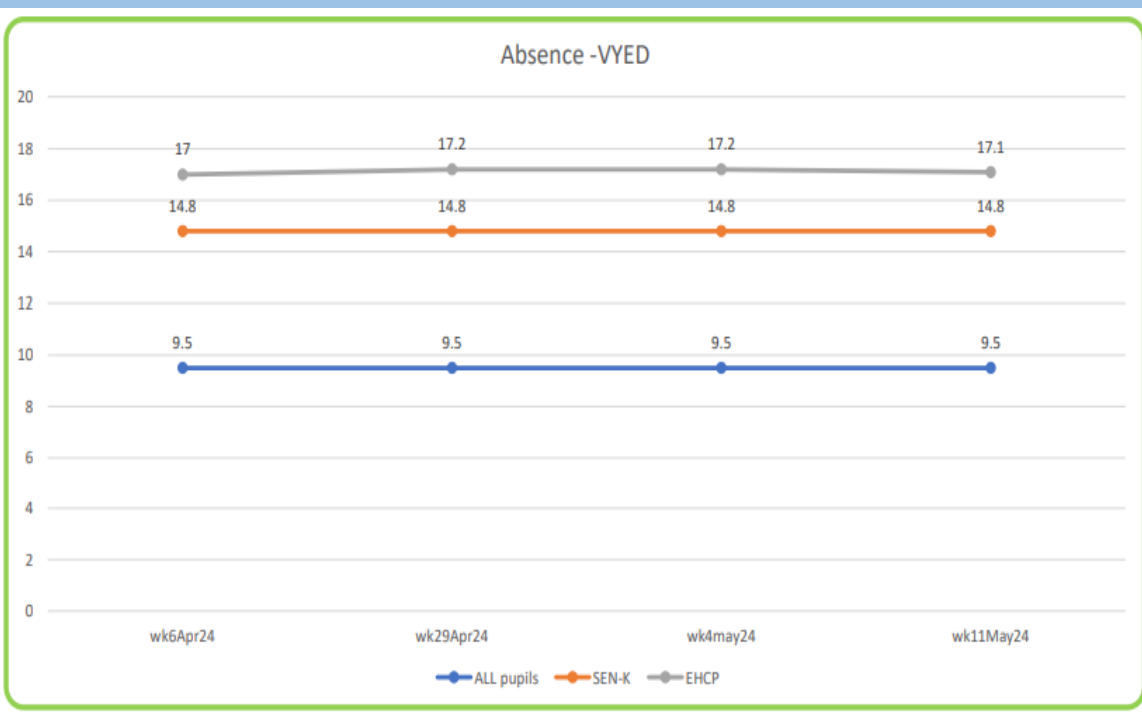
Nationally, the most common type of need for those with an EHCP plan is ASC and for those with SEN Support it is SLCN. This matches the Torbay profile.



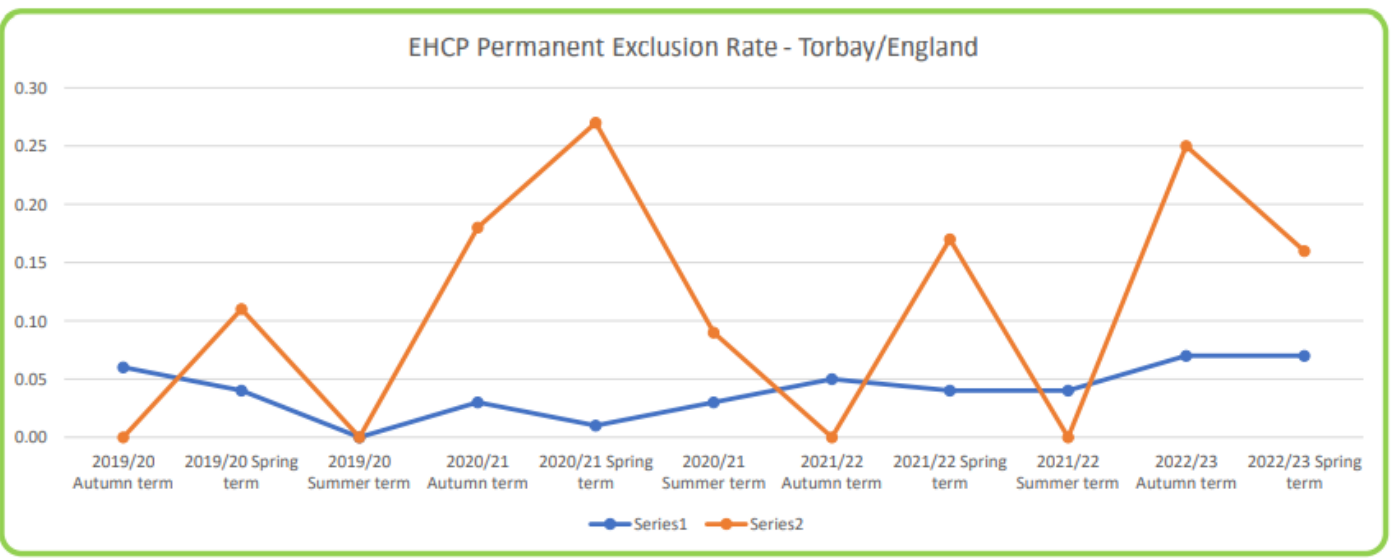
When the profile of SEND against deprivation is viewed the areas of highest deprivation Barton, Tormohun, Ellacombe, Kings Ash and Roundham. If the proportion of SEND to the population of the Wards, if all wards were equal, is examined then Roundham has the highest proportion followed by Tormohun and Kings Ash.



The published (2022/23) absence rate for Torbay EHCP pupils is 1.4% higher than National levels.
The current level of 13.7% (May2024) is above our target of 12.3%



Data collected weekly via the DfE 'View Your Education Data' (VYED) show current figures (May 2024) indicate that EHCP absence is 17.1% for the month compared to the target of 12.3%

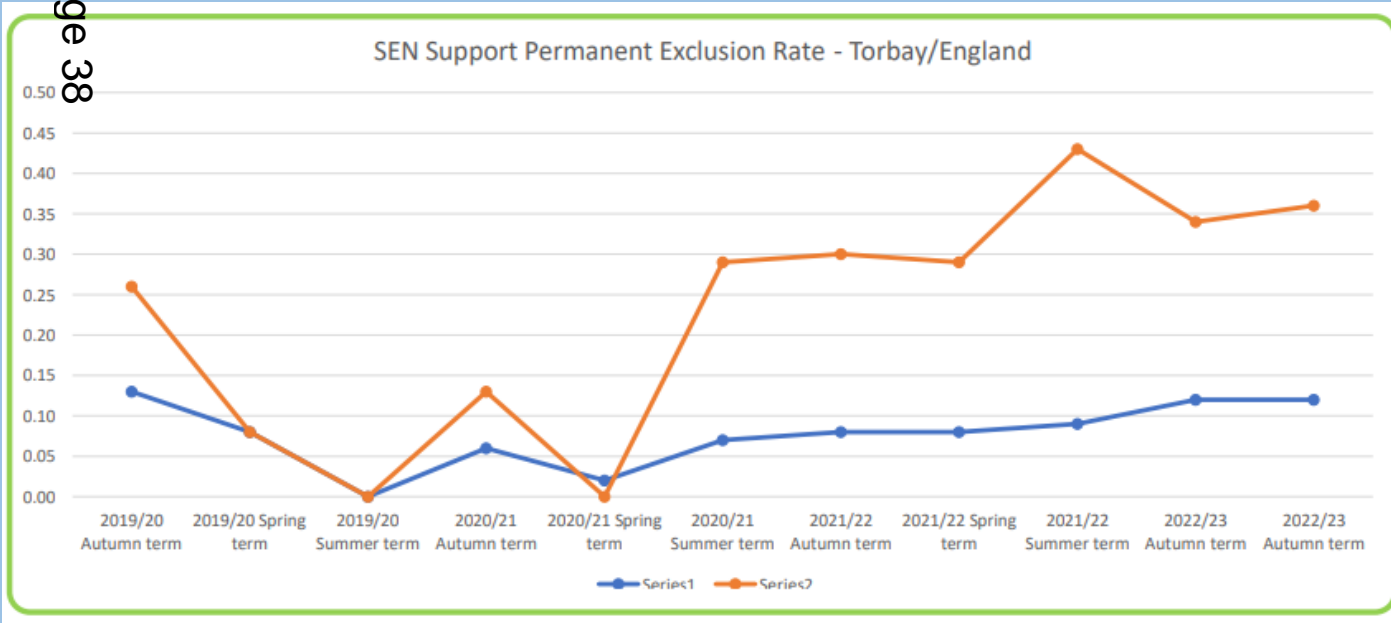


Exclusion and suspension rates are above national levels.

Current EHCP permanent exclusion rate is 0.16%, higher than the National rate at 0.07%.

Torbay has an average rate of 0.11% compared to national of 0.04% from the Autumn term 19/20

SEN K is higher at 15.74 than the national rate of 6.98%



Current SEN K permanent exclusion is significantly higher than the national rate.

SEN K is also much higher at 13.46% compared to national at 8.04%

Elective Home Education has increased to 420. Of these 25 have an EHCP, 123 were SEND K at last education, which is an increase of 66. The most frequent reason is dissatisfaction with school SEND or are concerned about mental health. 28 of 123 (up from 12 of 57) have mental health concerns (either young people or parent/carers) and 57 are dissatisfied with school provision.

What does Torbay Local Area do well in supporting SEND?

The effectiveness of the pre-birth panel to safeguard children as identified in the JTAI.

The Early Years team with EPs deliver Early Talk Boost delivering train the trainer to Early Years providers including advice and guidance to parents.

There is a strong partnership approach to providing early help including creation of SEND Lead role within Children and Family Health Devon

The Graduated Response, now fit for purpose. With training being delivered through the SENCO forum plus the EPS 'consultation first' model of service delivery.

Strengthening of the multi-agency QA framework and process through SENDQAMP and Creation of an earlier Next Steps meeting system

Section 23 process has improved so that there is now greater connection to family hubs and support

Increased programmes for ASC, SLCN mapping and a robust EHCMB focussed on building parental confidence.

Working directly with SEND Family Voice Torbay, , to co-produce and design information and forums which support the sharing of information

A selection of the impact of the local area partnership's SEND arrangements on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

The Home Learning Environment Outreach worker is working alongside the existing teams within the Family Hubs.

A new funding matrix is in place recognising the increasing demand for mainstream places for SEND.

Transitions Panel in place to review the provision for young people from the age of 14 years and understanding in detail the young people with an EHCP and the reasons for them to be NEET

PEPs are strong for transition work – targets are smart, and social care involvement is improving

Short breaks review for SEND children and young people is now underway and the Holidays, Activities and Food (HAF) programme for young people with SEND is now underway

Local offer website has been completely updated in a co-produced manner and re-launched and is much more accessible to users.

There is increasing employer engagement in supported internships and has engaged a number of large local employers and educational providers

ASRUS is successfully delivering social learning experiences for those on the autistic spectrum.

What does Torbay Local Area do well in supporting SEND?

Work continues to be implemented delivering the reform programme needed and setting the conditions for future and sustained change

Participation officers have been appointed for SEND to increase the involvement of young people in planning for the future.

SEND Strategy has now been coproduced with all partners and is ambitious in its aims and fully embedded into our improvement priorities.

Check and challenge Board is now in place to hold those responsible to account.

Most children benefit from help by skilled and frontline early help, social care and health practitioners, police officers and school staff working collaboratively

More schools are engaging in multi-agency meetings to help to plan to meet needs

The SEND JSNA, introduced as part of the Written Statement of Action provides a detailed breakdown against need types, demographic element of location.

A selection of how the local area partners work together to plan, evaluate and develop the SEND system

Data dashboard is now in place and provides a greater understanding of needs across the local area.

KPI's developed as part of the SEND strategy are the accountable measures for the priority areas and reported to the project board

The send QA team have a termly cycle of auditing New EHCPs, Annual reviews and amended plans.

A Torbay Children and Young People's Health Needs Assessment addressing quantitative data and the voice of the child and young person

The development of an Alternative Provision Commissioning Strategy is underway

The development of Proposal for Locality Provision is now underway.

There is a commitment from leaders in all areas to improve the environment so that there is shared understanding and ability to work as one partnership.

PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT IDENTIFIED FROM THE WORKSTREAMS AND CURRENT INFORMATION

Following analysis of this self-evaluation there are elements that demand prioritisation to improve the provision for all children, young people and families. Co-production is consistently present throughout the identification of all of these priorities as well as the actions that need to be taken.

IDENTIFICATION & INCLUSION

Improve identification of needs through greater use of the Graduated Response and increase the ordinarily available provision, through increased training opportunities, to allow more pupils to remain in their home school without the need for an EHCP. Improve both attendance and exclusion rates. Review Social care thresholds in both Children's Disability and Adult Social Care for access to a range of support processes. Explore the culture change necessary to maintain children and young people in their communities and help them feel part of their community. Improve the role of Health in identification processes.

ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

Continue to implement and embed new EHCP and AR formats that are quality assured and receive advice in timescales to improve timeliness. Ensure that Health funding is identified and accessed along with reductions in waiting times for services and health checks. Improve attendance at, or reports for, Annual Review processes.

PARENTAL CONFIDENCE

Provide rapid communication with parents, carers and young people around developments and improvements so that they understand clearly what is happening and their confidence in the system improves. Support parent/carers, children, and young people with conversations regarding the transition to adulthood so that their voice in the amended plan is reflective of preparing for adulthood outcomes and the local offer.

SUFFICIENCY

Ensure that there are places for those who need specialist provision through the development of locality hubs linked with the Family Hubs to provide joined approaches through education, social care and health. Develop provision for those at Post 16 transition providing for increased attainment at Level 2 and 3 and also supported internships and apprenticeships. Review transitional arrangements in health where there are congenital issues.

JOINT WORKING AND COMMISSIONING

Use the Single Point of Contact for Health and Single Point of Contact for Social Care to support joined up working at the amended plan stage. Remove the opportunities for silo working by reviewing working and office practices across local partners. Review the meeting culture to ensure that meetings are effective and influence practice without duplication where possible. Work to fully develop the joint commissioning opportunities.

DATA

Conjoin the JSNA and data dashboard information and increase the specificity of demographic location against more specific need types, ensuring that the SEND data is used across the partnership to aid planning and delivery to meet the needs in the Local Area and that the impact of interventions can be judged.

Following the revision of governance arrangements to ensure that the agreed improvements in the written statement of action (WSOA) are delivered whilst embedding recommendations from the new SEND reform, Inspection Framework and Safety Valve, we have matched the Priorities for Improvement with the five priorities areas aligned with our SEND Strategy that still cover the full breadth of the WSOA.

MATCHING WITH THE WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION PRIORITIES

Priority 1 – SEND is Everyone’s Business

This incorporates all the identified Priorities in the SEF. It applies to all partners within the Local Area, the young people and their families, voluntary and support agencies and the community of Torbay and increasing parental confidence. Using data across the Local area to plan more effectively.

Priority 2 – Early Intervention and Lived Experience

This involves the Improvement of identification of needs through greater use of the Graduated Response and increase the ordinarily available provision and explore the culture change necessary to maintain children and young people in their communities.

Priority 3 – Needs and Joint Commissioning

Use the Single Point of Contact for Health and, also, for Social Care to support joined up working and continue to fully develop the joint commissioning opportunities.

Priority 4 – Inclusion

Allow more pupils to remain in their home school without the need for an EHCP along with Improving attendance and exclusion rates for those with SEND and Review thresholds in both Children’s Disability and Adult Social Care.

Priority 5 – Transition and Preparation for Adulthood

Support parent/carers, children, and young people with conversations regarding the transition to adulthood so that their voice in the amended plan is reflective of preparing for adulthood outcomes and the local offer.

INSPECTION THEMES

The starting point for inspection is the expectation that the local area should have a good understanding of how effective it is, including any aspects of its responsibilities that require further development. Inspectors will test out this understanding during the inspection as they make their evaluations.

To make their judgement about the effectiveness of the local area, inspectors will gather evidence to answer three primary questions:

- How effectively does the local area identify children and young people with SEND?
- How effectively does the local area assess and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND?
- How effectively does the local area improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND?

In gathering evidence and making judgements for questions A to C, several crucial aspects will inform the inspectors' evaluations. These include:

- The accurate and timely identification of children and young people's needs
- That children, young people and their families participate in the decision-making
- That children and young people receive the right help and support at the right time.
- That children and young people are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes.
- That children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

And

- the leadership of provision for SEND across the local area
- the impact of joint commissioning
- the local arrangements, including the local offer and how well leaders understand the local area
- how well leaders have understood the impact of COVID-19 on the local SEND system and how they have adapted their plans to deal with the challenges caused by the pandemic
- how the local area uses the intelligence gathered from evaluation of its effectiveness to plan for and lead future improvement.

This Self -evaluation is formatted so that we can address those questions and are clear about what we do well and know what we need to improve , as well as how we will do it as a partnership across the local area, to provide the best for those children, young people and families that need the support.

1. The impact of the local area partnership's SEND arrangements on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

1.1

Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way



Strengths

- Section 23 is systematic and has robust identification through specific panels, happening monthly, and now identifying early years needs promptly ([Hyperlink to data](#))
- The effectiveness of the pre-birth panel to safeguard children as identified in the JTAI. This also identified that there is a strong partnership approach to providing early help and this is making a positive difference for many children. ([Hyperlink to JTAI](#))
- The Early Years team including Educational Psychologists have been trained to deliver Early Talk Boost, train the trainer to Early Years providers which includes providing advice and guidance to parents. Training for the Partnership 'Putting the Pieces Together, Language Enrichment Groups (LEG) being delivered to all Early Years and Primary settings from September. Also currently advertising for an Early Language Consultant to strengthen the work. ([Hyperlink to Evidence](#)) [Emme Kerridge](#)
- In the MASH, hosted by children's social care, decision-making is timely, and thresholds that trigger appropriate responses are well understood and applied consistently. ([Hyperlink to Evidence](#))
- Following the Written Statement of Action, significant co-produced work was undertaken on the Graduated Response which is now fit for purpose. Training has been delivered through the SENCO Forum to develop its application further. There is a system-wide focus on co-production, with much support and effort given to involving parents and children and young people in local decision-making.
- The creation of the Graduated Response toolkits is allowing schools and settings to make more informed judgements about the needs of children and young people. Education, health and social care feature in every toolkit and embedding this has begun. The SEND Monitoring Team have been visiting schools to work with SENCOs to embody the toolkits
- Training has taken place to whole school staff, alongside Neuro-diversity improvement work to enable better identification from the partnership (with Devon and Plymouth) with the aim to develop a website of tools to support identification of neurodiversity. There is a pilot on clinical 0-5 pathway for neurodiversity with community paediatricians. ([Hyperlink to GR and programme of training](#))
- Link has been made with 'Whole School SEND' who will sponsor Torbay to deliver a professional development group for SLCN.
- The EPS move to a 'consultation first' model of service delivery appears to be having a positive impact. In anecdotal evidence, schools have commented that they are having to 'do' more to bring about positive change for CYP because of this consultation-and-review approach.
- There has been strengthening of the multi-agency QA framework and process through SENDQAMP and the regular audits using Invision 360 are helping us to monitor improvements. ([Hyperlink to Evidence](#))
- Considerable work has been put in place by the DSCO on the backlog of App E (section D). They are now more robust and timeliness has improved. There is a plan in place to improve quality. There has been improvement in the last 6 months so that there is now no backlog. ([Hyperlink Data Dashboard](#))

- Creation of an earlier Next Steps meeting system. Each family, that accepts a 'Next Steps' meeting, has a multi-agency discussion about support in place through the SEND support helping to clarify needs and most appropriate provision. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- Completed the introduction of the newly co-produced EHCP format and AR format, to be rolled out imminently.
- Creation of SEND Lead role within Children and Family Health Devon provides a dedicated focus on improving timeliness and quality of advice, as well as staff training and support.

Areas for Development

- There needs to be an increased clear understanding of the core processes of identification in place in the schools across the authority, along with Local Area responses from Health and Social Care to requests for statutory assessments ensuring that all involved in identification of need understand the local support that is available. The development of a consistent of identification for SLCN, aligned with the Balanced System across schools and settings.
- Improve the availability of information on the Family Hubs website so there is clearer guidance around access and eligibility for support.
- Build the role of Educational Psychologists supported by the new Principal Educational Psychologist, in developing inclusive practices within the mainstream schools, providing targeted support and early intervention strategies in a holistic manner.
- Develop a strategic and highly professional core offer support and outreach system across the localities within the local area ensuring that there is a link with social care and health to provide a joined-up approach through the Family Hubs provision.
- Increase the programme of Train the Trainer through Schools Forum to increase self-assessment for class teachers to inform workforce development as well as Investing in CPD for SEND for all class teachers/colleagues and improve the consistency of understanding on what the Graduated Response looks like.
- Quality assurance is now becoming business as usual with SEND service leading on the improvements needed.
- Improve timeliness – this needs to increase. There is a need to build EP capacity so that the plans issued remain the same quality, but timeliness can be improved. The overall performance for November 2023 has increased. We purposely reduced our timeliness for a period to ensure we could achieve the quality needed. [\(Hyperlink to data Dashboard\)](#)
- Continue working to meet our required WSoA target of 15 RSA's per month but we are aware we are not close to this at present. Schools remain the highest requesters of EHCP's in line with the highest population of students, with the highest age group now being 5-10
- We also continue to challenge the financial contributions from our health partners for individuals. There has now been a small contribution and work continues to develop this. This is a key priority and the ICB has allocated commissioning capacity to develop arrangements and actions to address pre panel multi agency discussions to identify needs and eligibility; panel decision making; review and tracking. Individual commissioning was discussed at the Joint Commissioning workshop on June 10th as well as feature in a further workshop on June 11th focused on EHCP processes. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- The Learning Disability Annual Health checks, for 14-17 year olds, has increased to 63.08% compared to 56.92% in 2023. This is higher than the regional figure of 59.89% although still lower than national at 68.46%. The continued extensive lengthy waiting times for SALT, OT, Autism, CAHMS services continues to mean that children and young people do not have up to date assessments to best inform planning around their needs. This can lead to escalation from schools that are trying to meet need in isolation. It also leads to a high level of parental dissatisfaction. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- Feedback in the Participation Survey in respect of health services is in line with the acknowledged and significant barriers for children and families, and highlighted in the Written Statement of Action and JTAI. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- Improve guidance for schools about the impact of their behaviour policies on attendance and exclusion rates.

1.1 ACTION – Improve accuracy of identification of needs along with the timeliness and effectiveness of assessment.

- a) Develop and expand the core processes of identification in place in the schools across the authority, along with Local Area responses to requests for statutory assessments.
- b) Ensure that all involved in identification of need understand the local support that is available through an effective use of the Graduated Response. Develop a programme of Train the Trainer through Schools Forum to increase self-assessment for class teachers to inform workforce development as well as Investing in CPD for SEND for all class teachers/colleagues and improve the consistency of understanding on what the Graduated Response looks like.
- c) Develop a strategic and highly professional core offer support and outreach system across the localities within the local area ensuring that there is a link with social care and health to provide a joined up approach through the Family Hubs provision, involving the role of Educational Psychologists in developing inclusive practices within the mainstream schools.
- d) Quality assurance – needs decision makers to unblock more strategic actions which are blocking further progress in quality assurance action plan. Embed the action plan from SENDQAMAP
- e) Improve the timeliness of EHCPs to, at least, National levels.
- f) Continue the financial contributions from Health towards EHCPs and create a long term plan for contributions.
- g) Improve the rate of Annual Health checks for 14-17 year olds



1.2 Children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support.

Strengths

- Section 23 process has improved so that there is now greater connection to family hubs and support. This involves new protocols and process to understand health needs in relation to SEND in early years as soon as possible. ([Hyperlink to Evidence](#))
- Education Psychologists often undertake co-production of their reports, and this is well regarded by those involved. ([Hyperlink to Evidence](#))
- ASC family programmes (following from Early Bird/+) was piloted from January 2024 and has received excellent family feedback and agreement to co-produce a Torbay programme that will be available in the Autumn term and currently funded by the ICB ([Hyperlink to Evidence](#))
- SLCN mapping of demand and capacity completed showing predicted levels of need and by ward to support the prioritisation of resources and new models
- EHCMB – management board is a robust multi agency board, decisions not to assess are consistently high. There are now Next Steps meetings in place, attended by Social Care and Health, supporting decisions not to issue and plans to move the meetings earlier in the process.
- As parents are demonstrating confidence in the special school offers, we are using special school outreach to promote the development of shared approaches for children into other provisions including mainstream. This will extend to our proposals for SEND sufficiency for introduction in 2025, based on our new SEND Needs Analysis and a Locality based model. ([Hyperlink to Analysis](#))
- Our focus has widened to building parental confidence in the SEND system across all provisions. We are working directly with SEND Family Voice Torbay, our parent carer forum, to co-produce and design information and forums which support the sharing of information and provide opportunities to explore myths and overcome concerns. ([Need Parent/Carer views & hyperlink to them](#))
- The Home Learning Environment Outreach worker is now in post and is working alongside the existing teams within the Family Hubs. The Outreach worker has developed provision of resource packs that are provided to families to create learning opportunities and build parental confidence in supporting early development. ([Hyperlink to Evidence](#))
- Participation Officers have met with CYP to gather their thoughts and feedback on paperwork used in EHCPs and Annual Reviews that feed into Amended Plans. The Young Persons panel has made suggestions to improve ways to support attendance at all types of meetings, which will increase their voice in amended plans. ([Hyperlink to Evidence](#))
- Online sessions have been run to support understanding of transitions for CYP with SEND.
- More schools are engaging in multi-agency meetings to help to plan to meet needs, rather than move to suspension and exclusion.
- The SEND Annual Quality Report (Sept 2023) ([Hyperlink to report](#)) found, of the EHCPs audited, that:
 - Every parent contributes to their child or young person's EHC Needs Assessment.
 - EHCPs provide information about what the CYP can do, their strengths, which is built on throughout plans.
 - There is evidence that the EHC Needs Assessment process is multi-agency, demonstrating evidence of shared work and co-production.
 - Evidence of outstanding practice has been found in sections A (CYP and parent Voice) and B (the CYP special educational need).
 - Quality Standards for Alternate Provision have been coproduced with parents.
- There are pilot SEND Tracking Meetings and this is being built into the QA framework.

- Local Offer has been redesigned and is being continually reviewed to ensure that information that parents and carers request is present.
- Now have a SEND Youth feedback Service as a way of collecting Young People's views coherently and consistently.

Areas for Development

- Parents still lack confidence in the provision of SEND in the wider mainstream school and health landscape, this is evident by the significant numbers of RSA.
 - Parents confidence is further impacted by the extremely lengthy waiting lists for specialist assessments.
 - SEND Team will support EHE programme to analyse the needs of EHE young people with SEND and reduce the perceived need for EHE.
 - There is a need for change to be grounded in the best interests and needs of children which are committed to on a long term, sustainable basis.
 - In the Participation Survey one theme highlighted children, young people and parent/carers having to ask for help and support on multiple occasions, without resolution.
 - A key theme arising from the survey responses is in relation to the difference between support and signposting. Having access to information is one aspect, however the value of being given support which enables that information to become knowledge and skill is another.
- Local Area supporting development of SFVT capacity to allow for full access to co-production.
- Study the response from Young People about listening to their voice. ([Hyperlink to EHCP Child's Voice document](#)) ([Hyperlink to AP Lived Experience document](#))

ACTIONS 1.2 - Act to ensure that children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support.

- Develop strategies to improve the confidence parents have of the wider school and health landscape through greater successful inclusion and health provision being more available and within timescales.**
- Develop strategies to ensure that Parent, carers and young people receive prompt replies to their queries.**
- Increase communication around the reasons behind delays in assessments and provide strategies in the interim.**
- Grow the Youth feedback provision beyond its starting point**
- Local Area supporting development of SFVT**



1.3 Children and young people receive the right help at the right time.

Strengths

- There is evidence of the positive difference that support to schools from the Torbay Education Support Service (TESS) is making for children. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence in JTAI\)](#)
- Family Hubs are now established and functioning under their own directorship.
- The DSCO calls all parents/carers of CYP who are not known to social care or early help at that time, following a yes to assess identifying the local offer and the right to an early help assessment and information relating to the family hubs. This has been positively received by parents/carers.
- The JTAI also identified that the Local Area Partnership are effective in responding to missing and exploited children. . [\(Hyperlink to JTAI\)](#)
- Rigorous processes are in place to ensure that deliver 'Next Steps' meetings with schools, parents and SEND caseworkers. These meetings discuss the rationale for the decision and support the agreement of a plan that can be delivered under SEN (K) and the Graduated Response. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- Between September and November 2023 there have been 25 next steps meetings held. Our tracking of data shows that 16 out of 25 in this period have led to no appeal and an agreed plan with multi agency participation. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- Enhanced resource provisions for Autism remain well regarded by parents. Further work has taken place with The Steps provision to ensure that the staffing structure and curriculum offer further meets needs. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- First steps clinic is now up and running with an associated app – 'waiting well' which is being well received.
- Torbay was chosen to be included in year 3 of the Comic Relief Early Years Inclusion Project, run by Dingley's Promise. The project aims to increase the number of young children with SEND accessing early years and childcare places.
- Within Torbay there are 49 educational settings including Primary, Secondary, Specialist and alternative provisions. The MHST's support 41% of Torbay's educational settings. Based on MHIST being able to support 7500 CYP, 74.4% of the eligible school age population in Torbay have access to the MHST. Success in Mental Health in Schools Team is having a significant impact on the mental health of Young People. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- There is a new funding matrix in operation recognising the current demands for mainstream school places for SEND
- A Graduated Response Roadshow began in September 2023. We visited 34 schools and colleges to promote the SEND support and provision toolkits, attended the Early Years Conference and have been to 9 staff briefings. We have handed out over 5000 Graduated response bookmarks to parents and carers. [\(Hyperlink to Overview and Scrutiny report 19 February 2024\)](#)
- Workforce development is a key component to change. We have also:
 - created a suite of resources and delivered a "Train the trainer" session to our SENDCos so that they could continue to cascade this training at a more in-depth level across the workforce during training time.

- We have also created a specialist professional development area on our learning platform to enhance training for staff and holds sample documents and templates to support their delivery. We plan to host five webinars in the New Year to deliver specialist training to support teachers to embed the toolkits into their daily routines.
- Our well attended SENDCo Forums continue to focus on both the Graduated Response and Funding Formula this quarter.
- Ensured that NASEN training is available through the Local SWIFT Hub and embedded in our local training offer for all schools/practitioners.
- Our AET training for Secondary providers is now completed. With a further planning session in January 2024 to include an expansion of the scheme to primary.
- Torbay has 5 primary schools taking part in the Partnerships for Inclusion of neurodiversity in school (PINS) national programme
- SEND Support numbers have increased 11.7% in 2021 to 12.6% in 2023 although still below national figures by 0.7%. *(See Data Dashboard)*
- Overall numbers of EHCPs have reduced from a high of 1673 in October 2022 to 1588 in December 2023, following Safety Valve work.
- Although the waiting time for Speech and Language Therapy 1st treatment is high, there has been a reduction since August 2023. In addition, there has been a reduction in waiting times for 1:1 SLCN support through provided by the 0-19 Service. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- The Early Language Consultant (ELC) has been appointed commenced in role in January 2024. The ELC will be responsible for developing and delivering on Early Language pathways with our health partners. This includes taking forward the Section 23 process and SLCN projects.
- We have revised our Section 23 process to ensure that a process for identifying needs leads to support and advice at the earliest opportunity. This process is now within Family Hubs we have received notifications during this quarter which has not been evidenced previously within Torbay and in the next quarter we will be tracking and measuring the impact of the interventions and support with a view to further refining our offer.
- New website launched by CFHD which focuses on giving information support and advice to Parents and Carers.
- The DSCO has been collating information relating to input from social care into annual reviews, this data will be available in the coming months and will be built into the QA data dashboard and framework

Areas for Development

- Implement LA SEND Service Delivery Plan to deliver the new strategic placing and forecasting system to ensure placement sufficiency and best deployment of placements.
- Continue to develop the process where we provide earlier intervention for those who meet criteria for specialist provision but cannot be allocated a place because the lack of spaces in the chosen school. To be part of the proposed Locality model.
- Young people tell us they would like 'Virtual Classrooms' so they can learn together and not feel alone.
- Reduce the length of time children have to wait for support from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) when categorised by the service as low risk.
- Returns to support the assessment process can be poor from Health The position has been improving and Paediatrics have a dedicated EHCP co-ordinator with a plan to increase the number returned on time.
- The awaited Health audit needs to be presented to allow planning for improvements.
- Absence rates from school have risen since Covid from below England average to 13.7% which is above England average of 12.1%.
- Reduce exclusion and suspension rates for SEND which have increased to above national levels, both for EHCP and SEND Support young people.

- Despite the rise in SEND support numbers, the number of EHCPs has increased from 5.5% in 2021 to 6.2% in 2023, almost 2% higher than National.
- Improving Autism Diagnostic waiting times less than 18 weeks is well below target.
- The waiting times for SLCN referral to 1st Treatment is almost double the 12 week target with the longest waiting time being well above that. ([Hyperlink to Evidence](#))
- Of the young people referred to the Dialectical Behavioural Therapy team (DBT-A), the largest proportion who were referred to an alternative service or withdrew from them, were identified with SEND. This needs investigating. ([Hyperlink to Evidence](#))
- The Participation Audit themed survey found:
 - Opportunities to improve provision for CYP with EHCPs with physical and sensory listed as their primary needs.
 - 10% of plans audited had provision in Section G that was detailed specific and quantified.
 - Suggestions for areas of focus re joint commissioning, eg. OT, Physio and S&L, regularly listed as provision for CYP.
 - Evidence of high expectations of health expertise in specialist settings.
 - 0-19 Offer and provision, eg. updated health care plans for settings, not always referenced in individual CYP EHCPs.
 - Evidence of a lack of joined up recording eg. Children's Continuing Care Plans or Support Tools in individual CYP EHC File or Liquid Logic.
 - Different ways Element 3 funding recorded in individual CYP EHC File.
 - Difficulties finding information about health funding for CYP with EHCPs.
 - Significant difference in the number of health professionals involved with YP (over 16) than CYP of compulsory school age in mainstream and specialist settings.
- Communication between partner agencies when new information is gathered about families where there are existing safeguarding concerns.
- Expand AET to primary schools.

ACTIONS 1.3

Act to ensure that children and young people receive the right help at the right time.

- a) Increase locality based sufficiency of places to provide earlier intervention for those who meet criteria for specialist provision but cannot be allocated a place because the lack of spaces in the chosen school.**
- b) Ensure that all returns to support the assessment process are returned within timescales and are of high quality.**
- c) Work with schools and settings to improve attendance rates of children and young people with SEND to at least National levels before Covid.**
- d) Health to work to reduce Autism Diagnostic Pathway waiting times and improve SLCN 1st treatment waiting times.**
- e) Implement the recommendations in the Themed Survey of the Participation Audit**
- f) Analyse why the young people referred to the Dialectical Behavioural Therapy team (DBT-A), are largely those identified with SEND.**
- g) Expand AET work into Primary Schools.**
- h) Explore and create the Virtual Classrooms young people request.**



1.4 Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes.

Strengths

- Torbay continues to have a transitions panel in place to review the provision for young people from the age of 14 years. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- The DSCO has been collating information relating to input from social care into annual reviews, this data will be available in the coming months and will be built into the QA data dashboard and framework.
- We understand in granular detail the young people with an EHCP and the reasons for them to be NEET. We continue to use the Council opportunities for young people with SEND to gain meaningful work experience opportunities alongside our NDTI programme. This is being co-ordinated through our HR teams with young people accessing work either for a week or a longer period of time to gain experience
- Success in childhood transition points – from Chestnut onwards. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- Pilot SEMH programme has been introduced in preparation for Year 6-7 transition. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- PEPs are strong for transition work – targets are smart and social care involvement is improving. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- There are good results for those coming out of ERPs. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- New Transition protocol is well embedded and parents have benefitted from workshop sessions on The Power of Attorney and Mental Capacity Act. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- Mapping work completed which shows services currently available. Links with National Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) groups have further progressed Pathway to Adulthood best practice. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#) Supported internships – NTDi grant to forward this. Now a forum and plan to develop more over the next 12 months.
- For those with a learning disability, in health we are developing transition from children into adults with a focus on therapies.
- There is increasing employer engagement in supported internships. Our new SEND Employment Forum is planned to roll out from January 2024 and has engaged a number of large local employers and educational providers so we can work together to provide more opportunities to provide supported internships in Torbay. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- Significant work continues being undertaken with South Devon College (the single FE provider for Torbay). This work includes: - [\(Hyperlink to Evidence for point below\)](#)
 - continuing to use the annual review process to recognise when outcomes have been achieved and bringing forward activity to conduct the review to impact on ceasing plans.
 - SDC (along with all other providers) will start to use our new Funding formula for new plans and Phase Transfer
 - Greater challenge and oversight of consults and decision making regarding the entry of learners.
 - Use of directions to take when necessary.
 - Worked with SDC on a revision of the Risk assessment process for young people with EHCP's

- Implementation of a formal contract management process and the start of greater contractual SLA's for bespoke provisions.
- Linking our College with the SLIP Partner College to share best practice, including funding arrangements.
- The SEND EHCP NEETS have reduced, with Apprenticeships and Internships increasing with NEET Figures continuing to be on or positively under target. The proportion of young people who are NEET – Available (Not ready) is less than half the target figure of 15. Those that were Ready were at target level, although there was a sudden rise in December. (See Data Dashboard)
- Work is underway to provide a series of Post 16 Pathways for Young people with SEND. These include Vocational, Employment, Academic and Community Inclusion along with a Transition Pathway for those with significant difficulties and to cater for students who are in Out of Area and independent provision.
- A Preparing for Adulthood/Transition meeting is held regularly within CFHD, with improving attendance from services across the organisation and work is beginning on reviewing and improving processes.

Areas for Development

- Expand the data dashboard to demonstrate the outcomes for young people.
- Create an analysis of Ofsted Inspections of schools highlighting SEND outcomes.
- Need to continue to develop transition processes in health services. This is a focus for CFHD who have initiated a Preparing for Adulthood monthly meeting to develop links with adult services, review and improve processes.
- Reduce the sufficiency gap in education for Post 16 students through the proposed locality model of provision through the Service Delivery Plan a Post 16 Pathways Model will create better choice and sufficiency.
- Increase opportunities for low attainers (not just SEND pupils)
- Review, through the locality model of provision, the need for Specialist Provision to 'hold on' to Post 16 where they offer 5-day provision as opposed to 3 day provision.
- The % of 19yr olds with Level 2 qualifications is significantly lower than both regional and National levels.
- The % of 19yr olds with level 3 qualifications is 6% compared to 14.7% nationally.
- The number of Apprenticeships for 16-19 years olds is well below target and is falling.
- The apprenticeships for 20-25 years olds is rising but still below the target.
- The Participation Audit elicited this response from a parent, "Having SEND doesn't stop when it's the end of the day or when the holidays begin. It's not just about education and it also doesn't stop when your child reaches 16. There isn't much at all to do for older children. Feels like they are left to rot."

ACTIONS 1.4

Act to ensure that children and young people are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes.

- a) Improve the sufficiency and variety for Post 16 transition and ensure that information is widely accessible, including reviewing the 5 day provision in specialist provision.**
- b) Plan to improve level 2 and level 3 outcomes for 16-19 and 20-25 year olds respectively.**
- c) Improve apprenticeships take-up for both 16-19- and 20–25-year-olds.**
- d) Review transitional arrangements in health where there are congenital issues.**
- e) Attend and/or provide reports for the annual reviews of children and young people with EHCPs that you are working with to support the Amended Plan Process.**
- f) Use the Single Point of Contact for Health and Single Point of Contact for Social Care to support joined up working at the amended plan stage.**
- g) Support parent/carers, children, and young people with conversations regarding the transition to adulthood so that their voice in the amended plan is reflective of preparing for adulthood outcomes and the local offer.**
- h) Increase the opportunities for supported Internships and Apprenticeships across Torbay with the Council, NHS and local businesses to also include students who are in Out of Area and independent provision.**



1.5 Children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities.

Strengths

- Paignton Academy SEND Department is demonstrating very positive attitudes and measures to supporting pupils who may have been at risk of suspension or exclusion. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- ASRUS is successfully delivering social learning experiences for those on the autistic spectrum.
- Local offer website has been completely updated in a co-produced manner and re-launched and is much more accessible to users.
- The Holidays, Activities and Food (HAF) programme for young people with SEND is now underway delivering four hours per day for four days per week. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- A panel is now in place to identify low level support to meet unmet need within the adult SEND community. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- There is a short breaks task and finish group established currently reviewing the needs and offer with children, young people and their families lived experience at the centre and how they can be improved and extended.
- Dingley's promise – early years access to provision.
- Health reports that there have been improvements in learning disability annual health checks. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- Changing places – There have been Improvements in toilet/changing facilities for disabled. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- Accelerated the development of listening to Young people through the 'Point of You' service which has now been launched.
- SEND newsletter readership has increased since being modified to make it more accessible to Young People. *(Hyperlink to evidence)*

Areas for Development

- Reduce the high numbers of suspensions and Permanent exclusions, particularly within secondary schools that means the lack of acceptance in their community. A significant proportion have EHCPs or are on SEN Support. *(See Data Dashboard)*
- A number of exclusions are of Devon pupils, so there needs to be increased liaison between Torbay and Devon Authorities.
- Looking at local data over the 5 year period 2017/18 to 2021/22 for the rate of suspensions per 1,000 children identified with SEN, 4 wards have statistically higher rates than the rest of Torbay. These are, Tormohun, Ellacombe, Barton with Whatcombe and King's Ash. Compared to the Torbay average, the rate of suspensions for children identified with SEND is significantly higher amongst those children who live in the most deprived areas of Torbay (See Data Dashboard & SEND JSNA)
 - Greater development of Social Care involvement, including reviewing thresholds. The Participation Survey found feedback to social care services highlighted: a number of families were not in receipt of social care support, leading to beliefs around accessibility of support;
 - the Short Breaks offer and how well this meets the needs of children with SEND;
 - the importance of ensuring that the workforce is sufficiently trained and able to access continued professional development in relation to working with children who experienced SEND.
- Address Parents and carers perception of a cliff edge. This needs improvements to pathways between children and adults which will require access to funding to remove this. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*

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Joint commissioning – DFE and internal deep dive to improve the whole area of joint commissioning.

Improve commissioning so that gaps between post 19 adults services and post 16 provision which falls in-between large college offer and bespoke AP are resolved.

There is a need for Culture Change in relation to retaining young people with SEND in their local community.

- Review the accessibility of 32.5 hours provision for all young people.
- Address the Elective Home Education numbers which have high proportions of SEND pupils.
- The Participation Survey found a recurrent theme within the children and young people's responses connected to a feeling of isolation, and feeling like they do not fit in.

ACTIONS 1.5

Act to ensure that Children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities.

- a) Reduce exclusions and suspensions of EHCP and SEND Support young people to be at least at National levels and review the demographic nature of events. (As in 1.3)**
- b) Work with Devon to improve relationship over placements.**
- c) Review Social care thresholds in both Children's Disability and Adult Social Care for access to a range of support processes.**
- d) Explore and develop the culture change necessary to maintain children and young people in their communities and help them feel part of their community.**

2. How the local area partners work together to plan, evaluate and develop the SEND system



2.1 Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

Strengths

- Work continues to be implemented delivering the reform programme needed and setting the conditions for future and sustained change. Local scrutiny of performance remains considerable, the work of the safety valve continues to be overseen by the CEO through the executive transformation board and reviewed by School Forum Browse meetings - Schools Forum (torbay.gov.uk). The interdependencies between the Safety Valve and Written Statement of Action for SEND and the implementation of our Family Hubs are understood, and further challenge is provided by the SEND Strategic Board Participation officers have been appointed for SEND to increase the involvement of young people in planning for the future. CYP voices are being collected more frequently and across the local area – evidence of “Point of You” new send forum run by young people for send. E.g hospital inviting parent support groups to see changes, adults’ stakeholder event YP views, coproduction in adults much development and progress. SEND Strategy has now been coproduced with all partners and is ambitious in its aims.
- An improved SEND Newsletter currently has 1253 subscribers (April 2024) which is 44% increase on the previous year.
- Check and challenge Board is now in place to hold those responsible to account.
- Tissues and Issues group have been invited to the hospital to see changes that have been made.
- There has been co-production with adults looking at their experiences relating to housing activity.
- ‘Becoming and Adult’ Board has 41 representatives and is wider than just Social Care. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- Services that provide healthcare provision you children and young people are making links between SLCN and SEMH in their work. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- A SPOC has been created with the new DSCO for Children’s Social Care. Adult Social Care have a single point of contact.
- Health Partner Agencies have produced a document which details the areas covered by 2 SPOC to support smooth EHCP requests for information. There are also details on who to contact for adult health queries.
- A flowchart for children’s social care has been created to support requests for social care input at different points of EHCP processes.
- Membership of new SEND Priority Group – SEND is Everyone’s Business established, to continue Culture workstream.
- SEND Strategy is fully embedded into our improvement priorities. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)

Areas for Development

- The partnership's strategic approach to children with poor emotional and mental health.
- Breaking our siloes that are still in evidence.
- There is a perception that there are too many meetings reducing time for development to be delivered.
- Effective leadership system needed across all parts of the Local Area.
- There needs to be increased synergy with Devon and Plymouth Authorities, linked through the common ICB.
- Review what commissioned services are available in health and how well are they joined?
- There is ambition but evidence of outcomes is not strong so needs greater communication.
- Embed the Monitoring of the five key priorities in the SEND Strategy, using the SEND Strategic Board, ICB Board and Children's Continuous Improvement Board to unblock any issues.

ACTIONS 2.1

Act to ensure that Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

- a) Jointly work to develop the joint commissioning opportunities.**
- b) Improve communication over what is happening across the Local Area in terms of what and how essential information is communicated to be as accessible to as wide an audience as possible through the Local offer.**
- c) Ensure the five key priorities of the SEND Strategy are embedded in all work.**



2.2 Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families.

Strengths

- The Torbay Safeguarding Children Partnership (TSCP) was reconstituted in 2020 following a short period of alignment with a neighbouring local authority. Since that time, a clearer focus on the children of Torbay has resulted in a more targeted and cohesive approach to both strategic oversight and the identification and delivery of services to children who may be in need or at risk of harm. The TSCP Executive Group functions effectively and benefits from healthy challenge from independent scrutiny. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- Most children benefit from help provided by skilled and committed frontline early help, social care and health practitioners, police officers and school staff working collaboratively to support them and their families and to prevent risk and harm escalating. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- There is strong Partnership with SEND Family Voice Torbay. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- Established partnership approach to all SEND work with communications showing that a greater number are engaged in the SEND agenda. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- Designated Clinical Officer employed in NHS Community provider CFHD as an interim (12 month) SEND Lead post to support and develop the SEND agenda. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- More schools are engaging in multi-agency meetings to help to plan to meet needs, rather than move to suspension and exclusion. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- Quality Standards for Alternative Provision have been coproduced with parents. *(Hyperlink to Evidence)*
- As part of the Children's Research Project, Family Hubs were visited and families engaged with to ascertain challenges when accessing support in Torbay, not only relating to Family Hubs but also housing, health and social care *(insert Children's Research finding Morgan Weiland/Julia Chisnell/Joey Needham)*

Areas for Development

- The failure of senior leaders in health to have sufficient oversight and assurance of professional curiosity across practice to safeguard children.
- The variable quality of scrutiny and supervision by health staff leading to safeguarding risks in children not being consistently identified and responded to appropriately. A particular area of concern is the management of unexplained injuries to children.
- Communication between partner agencies when new information is gathered about families where there are existing safeguarding concerns.
- The meaningful involvement of children, families and the wider Torbay community in the development and delivery of strategic priorities and services.
- There is a need for greater joint working, removing siloed experiences as there are too many meetings that often overlap the areas of concern.
- The Torbay Parent Carers Forum is under pressure because of the numbers involved in work with the Local Area and need supporting further.

ACTIONS 2.2

Act to ensure that Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families.

- a) Improve the consistency with which professional curiosity and challenge are applied, particularly in situations in which children living with chronic domestic abuse or neglect are not making progress and situations in which children have unexplained injuries.**
- b) Improve communication between agencies to share safeguarding concerns.**
- c) Further develop the meaningful involvement of children, families and the wider Torbay community in the development and delivery of strategic priorities and services.**
- d) Support the Torbay Parent Carers Forum in recruiting more members to spread the workload.**



2.3 Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area

Strengths

- The SEND JSNA, introduced as part of the Written Statement of Action provides a detailed breakdown against need types, demographic element of location, deprivation indices and many other measures. This is now an extremely valuable set of data that is used in planning, [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- JSNA reviewed to ensure current as well as include further areas for focus, dental and weight management.
- Data dashboard is now in place and provides a greater understanding of needs across the local area.
- Children are visited with appropriate consent from parents or when this has been overridden because of safeguarding concerns. Social workers, police officers and teachers coordinate these visits well so that they are at a time and place where children feel most comfortable. In the interim, the voice of children is evident in the records, as are their wishes. Police notifications to the MASH (PPNs) are detailed and child-focused and capture the presentation and lived experience of children. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- KPI's developed as part of the SEND strategy are the accountable measures for the priority areas and reported to the project board.
- The send QA team have a termly cycle of auditing New EHCPs, Annual reviews and amended plans. These provide information through the EHCP quality data dashboard on Invision 360, building a data dashboard on quality of plans, with Quarterly Reports supporting progress forward. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- A Torbay Children and Young People's Health Needs Assessment was completed in two parts, the first addresses quantitative data and the second part provides the voice of the child and young person. [\(insert links Joey Needham\)](#)

Areas for Development

- The rigour of the partnership's quality assurance function.
- New SEND JSNA needs embedding and greater links with Power Bi data and the new Needs Analysis for ERP provision.
- There is a need to communicate this more widely and ensure it is used in planning across all partners.
- Greater use of the JSNA across all parts of the council.
- Greater expansion of the JSNA into need types against location
- Performance information across the partnership to inform needs analysis and measure the impact of strategic approaches to areas of concern.
- Identify and understand the needs of Post 16 learners and what is available for all needs.
- The auditing team to create a QA data dashboard.

ACTIONS 2.3

Act to ensure that Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area

- a) Improve the Quality Assurance process through the Strategic Board**
- b) Conjoin the JSNA and data dashboard information and increase the specificity of demographic location against more specific need types.**
- c) Ensure that the SEND data (as above) is used across the partnership to aid planning and delivery to meet the needs in the Local Area.**
- d) Establish the role of the Area in identifying and encouraging opportunities for Post 16 SEND Learners.**



2.4 Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people, including commissioning arrangements for children and young people in alternative provision.

Strengths

- Families have direct access to support under the umbrella of early help services, including from the well-regarded family hubs in each of Torbay's three main towns. These make a positive difference to their lives. The risk to missing children and the link to exploitation are well understood and the partnership has made significant progress in this complex area of practice. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- There is a high quality of partnership working when a child is in significant mental health crisis and requires a safeguarding response. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- Commissioning is looking at alternatives to residential provision and doing everything to promote independence. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- Re focused and reformed Torbay SEND Needs & Joint Commissioning Delivery Board. Agreed priority areas: SLCN, Neurodiversity; EHWP & Individual Health Funding arrangements [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- SEND Family Voice Torbay are actively involved and have taken on the coordination role for the Pilot Autism & Us parent programme with feedback being collected and will inform a more sustainable offer. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- SEMH SLCN workforce training delivered to over 1,000 people across Devon, Torbay and Plymouth. This has incorporated the findings from the independent deep dive in to joint commissioning. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- The expansion of increased regularity of the Section 23 Notification meetings allows leaders to understand where needs are greatest and where to direct and re-direct resource.
- The SEND Executive Board and key stakeholders Joint Commissioning workshop developed an agreed set of standards which can be applied to all relevant SEND commissioning arrangements (in anticipation of June's meeting, insert agreed principles once developed)
- A 0-19 Service Procurement Board is in operation and chaired by the Directors of Public Health, Children Services and Finance to assess and address the existing and future provision. Once commissioning arrangements of a new service have been underpinned, the service will be co-produced across the sector and involving the community.
- Have now introduced a full review of ISEP provision to examine outcomes for young people.

Areas for Development

- Improve analysis of financial data to better understand pressure areas and improve deployment of resources to better meet the needs of young people with SEND.
- Explore available provision that doesn't need commissioning arrangements.
- Develop understanding of a shared joint commissioning language and principles which reflects a partnership-wide understanding of commissioning and capacity challenges of individual agencies.
- Agree a revised Joint Commissioning model.
- Need to deal with sufficiency of capacity more effectively, including culture change to increase inclusion, including the need for a re-integration plan.
- Develop information for families to consider, when paying for a private provider assessment.
- Continue and complete the work being done on independence and alternatives to residential provision.
- (NHS Devon ICB to) develop and commission a Trusted provider framework for children with complex needs in the pre and Tribunal stage.
- EOTAS Project to offer more robust programmes to meet the needs of this cohort and provide better value for money.
- Review ISEP provision to ensure they are meeting young peoples needs and providing value for money.

ACTIONS 2.4

Act to ensure that Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people, including commissioning arrangements for

- a) Create a process to link both sufficiency of appropriate places and an inclusive culture across all schools and settings, involving children, young people and parents and carers, clarifying choices and limitations.
- b) Complete the work done within the WSOA process to agree the joint commissioning model and work to develop the joint commissioning opportunities.
- c) Complete the work on reduction of need for residential provision.
- d) Seek to improve the information for parents and carers when paying for private assessment provision.
- e) Improve analysis of financial data to better understand pressure areas and improve deployment of resources to better meet the needs of young people with SEND.



2.5 Leaders evaluate services and make Developments.

Strengths

- There is greater communication and information sharing with Schools Forum. *([Hyperlink to Evidence](#))*
- The provision of SEND Auditors within the Torbay Learning Academy has led to a greater understanding of performance across the Local Area, with report presented to the SEND Partnership Board. *([Hyperlink to Evidence](#))*
- The development of Proposal for Locality Provision.
- The development of an Alternative Provision Commissioning Strategy is underway
- The improved JSNA and SEND Needs Analysis being used to inform strategic planning.
- The involvement of SEND Torbay Family Voice in strategic developments.
- The Torbay 0-19 Service is monitored through robust governance processes with improvements to provision agreed and implemented collaboratively across the partnership.
- Recognition of the sufficiency of places and active planning to provide for these pupils through a re-formulated EOTAS offer that will meet their needs

Areas for Development

- The consistency with which professional curiosity and challenge are applied, particularly in situations in which children living with chronic domestic abuse or neglect are not making progress and situations in which children have unexplained injuries.
- Revise the QA framework using the performance information across the partnership to inform needs analysis and measure the impact of strategic approaches to areas of concern.
- For a small number of children, there is insufficient consideration of safeguarding concerns by partner agencies, particularly when mobile and older children have bruises or injuries.
- Continue to develop and implement the revised EOTAS offer.
- Appoint a Principal Educational Psychologist to embed the EPS within the strategic aims of the partnership.

ACTIONS 2.5

Act to ensure that Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people, including commissioning arrangements for

- a) Create systems that ensure those children and young people living with chronic domestic abuse or neglect have their needs met so that they can make progress.**
- b) Ensure the sharing of information in efficient and effective systems across all partners in the Local Area.**
- c) Create and implement systems to measure the impact of strategic approaches.**
- d) Implement the Revised EOTAS Offer**



2.6 Leaders create an environment in which effective practice and multi-agency working can flourish

Strengths

- Operationally, partner agencies work well together. Information-sharing and attendance at meetings in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), child protection strategy discussions and in child protection enquiries is consistently timely and effective. Thresholds for different levels of intervention are jointly understood across partner agencies and, for the majority of children, risks and support needs are identified early, resulting in the right support at the right time. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- There is a commitment from leaders in all areas to improve the environment so that there is shared understanding and ability to work as one partnership. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- The new role of the DMO (being piloted by the ICB in Torbay) has led to improved quality and timeliness of health advice. [\(Hyperlink to Audit & Timeliness\)](#)
- For most families receiving support from early help services, there is considerable progress. Schools and the local community have welcomed the family hubs. Families are increasingly able to access early help directly and immediately instead of waiting. [\(Hyperlink to Evidence\)](#)
- The Family Hubs are embedded into communities, from where multiple agencies operate including public health nursing, maternity, housing, speech and language therapy, and children's social care provision.
- There is a recognition that children's mental health and wellbeing is a system wide priority as endorsed by O&S deep dive and members of the CCIB : CYP EHWP group is in place chaired by ICB Strategic mental health commissioner

Areas For Development

- Reliable, disaggregated data for Torbay from an integrated care board (ICB) on behalf of health providers and a police force that cover much larger geographical areas is not available to the partnership. Allied with delays in establishing a children's mental health subgroup and insufficient quality assurance, both of which the partner agencies are fully aware of, it is difficult to chart the impact of the partnership on Torbay's children in some key strategic areas.
- Remove the silo working that still exists, creating a joined approach within education and social care environments within the Council and joined approaches across all other partners.
- The quality of communication, information and decision-making across health services varies significantly, and overall is not good enough.
- Ensure that all members of departments are aware of how budgets are managed to provide more understanding of how to provide effective delivery of roles.

ACTIONS 2.6

Act to ensure that Leaders create an environment in which effective practice and multi-agency working can flourish

- a) Review the meeting culture to ensure that they are effective and influence practice without duplication where possible.**
- b) Create greater data sharing across the Local Area and its neighbours so that impact of interventions can be judged and used to inform developments.**
- c) Review working systems to reduce and remove the situation where silo working takes place.**
- d) Improve the quality of communication, information and decision-making across health services**

GLOSSARY

ADASS	Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
AET	Autism Education Trust
AR	Annual Review
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Condition
ASRUS	Torbay Youth Club Social Support Club for Autism
CAMHS	Child And Adolescent Mental health Service
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CCIB	Children's Continuous Improvement Board
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFHD	Children and family Health Devon
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CYP	Children and Young People
DBT-A	Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (Team)
DfE	Department for Education
DSCO	Designated Social Care Officer
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EHE	Elective Home Education
ELC	Early Learning Centre
EHCMB	Education, Health and Care Management Board
EHXB	Emotional Health & Well-being Board
FE	Further Education
HAF	Holiday, Activities and Food
HMCI	His Majesty's Chief Inspector
ICB	Integrated care Board
ICS	Integrated care System
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
JTAI	Joint Targeted Area Inspection
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LEG	Language Enrichment Group
MASH	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
MHSIST	Mental Health Independent Support Team
NASEN	National Association of Special Needs

NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NHS	National Health Service

NDTI	National Development team for Inclusion
OT	Occupational Therapist
PEPs	Personal Education Plan(s)
QA	Quality Assurance
RSA	Request for Specialist Assessment
S&L	Speech and Language
SEF	Self Evaluation Framework
SEMH	Social Emotional and Mental Health
SEN2	Government data for special educational needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disability
SENDCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SENDQAMAP	Special needs Quality Assurance Multi Agency Panel
SEN K	SEND Support
SFVT	SEND Family Voice Torbay
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
SpLD	Specific learning Difficulty
SPOC	Single Point of Contact
TSCP	Torbay Safeguarding Children Partnership
VYED	View Your Education Data
WSOA	Written Statement of Action

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Meeting: [Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Board](#)
[2024](#)

Date: [23rd September](#)

Wards affected: [All](#)

Report Title: [Revised Children's Pledge](#)

When does the decision need to be implemented? [N/A as update](#)

Cabinet Member Contact Details: [Cllr Nick Bye, Cabinet Member for Children's Services –
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to provide members of the Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update on the 'Revised Children's Pledge'

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 On 1 March 2021 the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board considered the 'Our Promise to You – The Torbay Pledge to cared for and care experienced children/young people 2021-2022'
- 2.2 The Board approved the adoption of the pledge and the development of an action plan to demonstrate how the Council will implement the Pledge to have the greatest and most positive impact on our cared for and care experienced children and young people. The Board requested that updates on the action plan be monitored by the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board.
- 2.3 This report has been prepared to provide Board Members with an update on the above and the next steps.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

1. That Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board note the contents of this report and the plans for the next steps to review the existing Pledge.

2. That an updated Children and Young People's Pledge is scheduled on the agenda for the Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting in 3 months time.

Appendices

N/A

Background Documents

[Click here to add your list of documents.](#)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 1 March 2021 the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board considered the 'Our Promise to You – The Torbay Pledge to cared for and care experienced children/young people 2021-2022'. This Pledge was developed working with Children and Young People from across Torbay, and at that time was supported by the Torbay Youth Trust, the Youth Service and the 'Cared for Council' - The collective group were formerly known as The Circle and My Voice dependent on their ages.
- 1.2 The adoption of this Pledge provided a commitment to our cared for and care experienced children/young people to listen and work with them to provide and secure the best outcomes for our looked after children.
- 1.3 Since this time a number of key changes have been undertaken including transferring services from Torbay Youth Trust back 'in house' and resetting our Cared for Council. This has naturally taken some time to implement, and as a result there have been a number of priority actions underway such as the 'Young People's Manifestos' and individual projects such as guides for social workers and resources for our Relational Conference.
- 1.4 It should also be noted that currently, our 'Cared for Council' does not meet as a group due to their preference to work individually on their separate projects. The way that the Cared for Council meet will be regularly reviewed and will be adapted to meet their needs. Direct meetings and hybrid meetings will be facilitated accordingly to meet the young people's needs as and when this is appropriate.
- 1.5 Due to the changes outlined above it is recommended that a review of the Pledge is undertaken - to ensure this is now up to date and that all members (and the wider cared for population) are able to have their say.
- 1.6 The review of the Pledge will include the following:
 - Are the 'You Said' elements still relevant?
 - Are the associated pledges therefore still relevant?
 - How can we learn from other pieces of participation work and reflect this is a revised Pledge?
 - How can we align this Pledge to others, such as our SEND pledge?
- 1.7 We anticipate we need a further three months to undertake this work, as such it further recommended that an updated Pledge is scheduled on the agenda for the Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Board at a future meeting.

2. Options under consideration

2.1 N/A – as above.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

3.1 None

4. Legal Implications

4.1 None.

5. Engagement and Consultation

5.1 As above – as part of the revision of the Pledge consultation and engagement will be undertaken. We will seek to understand Children and Young Peoples views on the pledge to inform the review. The platform to complete this work and enhance participation will be both offered online and in person. A hybrid approach will enhance the way we engage children and young people.

6. Procurement Implications

6.1 None.

7. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

7.1 N/A

8. Associated Risks

8.1 N/A

9. Equality Impact Assessment

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Age	<p>18 per cent of Torbay residents are under 18 years old.</p> <p>55 per cent of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old.</p> <p>27 per cent of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older.</p>	As part of the revision of the pledge Children and Young People will be consulted.		
Carers	At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these provided 50 hours or more of care.	No differential impact		
Disability	In the 2021 Census, 23.8% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.	No differential impact		
Gender reassignment	In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community	No differential impact		

	<p>answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth. This proportion is similar to the Southwest and is lower than England.</p>			
<p>Marriage and civil partnership</p>	<p>Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership.</p>	<p>No differential impact</p>		
<p>Pregnancy and maternity</p>	<p>Over the period 2010 to 2021, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 63.7 per 1,000) than England (60.2) and the South West (58.4). There has been a notable fall in the numbers of live births since the middle of the last decade across all geographical areas.</p>	<p>No differential impact</p>		
<p>Race</p>	<p>In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as white. This is a higher proportion than the South West and England. Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England.</p>	<p>No differential impact</p>		

Religion and belief	64.8% of Torbay residents who stated that they have a religion in the 2021 census.	No differential impact		
Sex	51.3% of Torbay's population are female and 48.7% are male	No differential impact		
Sexual orientation	In the 2021 Census, 3.4% of those in Torbay aged over 16 identified their sexuality as either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or, used another term to describe their sexual orientation.	No differential impact		
Veterans	In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. In Torbay, 5.9 per cent of the population have previously serviced in the UK armed forces.	No differential impact		
Additional considerations				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)		No differential impact		
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of		No differential impact		

the population of Torbay)				
Human Rights impacts		No differential impact		
Child Friendly	Torbay Council is a Child Friendly Council and all staff and Councillors are Corporate Parents and have a responsibility towards cared for and care experienced children and young people.	As this is a pledge for Children and Young People this supports Torbay Councils ambition to become a 'Child Friendly' community.		

10. Cumulative Council Impact

10.1 N/A

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

11.1 N/A

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As a service, we aim to be:

- F – forward-thinking and focused on the continued professional development of our staff and our carers
- O – open to transparent communication and participation with our fostering families
- S – safe, secure and stable
- T – trustworthy and reliable
- E – encouraging and proactive in respect of our fostering families' education and training
- R – robust in respect of statutory and regulatory compliance
- I – innovative in terms of service organisation and development
- N – nurturing, supportive and caring
- G – guided by best practice

Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Profile of cared for children
3. Key Priorities and Actions of the Service in 2023/24
4. The Role of the Fostering Service
5. Organisational Structure
6. Fostering Recruitment Performance
7. Fostering Recruitment and Marketing Strategy and Campaign
8. Events
9. Fostering Support
10. Special Guardianship Support Team
11. Key Priorities and Actions of the Service in 2023/24

1. Executive summary

This document is intended to read alongside the revised Torbay Fostering Statement of Purpose 2023-24.

Torbay Council have continued to revise their sufficiency strategy. The aims of the Sufficiency Strategy 2021-24 are summarised below:

Torbay's Sufficiency Strategy

Torbay Council's vision is to provide sufficient care in the community and high quality placements for children and young people in its care which meet their needs and offer the necessary support to enable their aspirations to become their reality.

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Torbay aims to:

- Strengthen the delivery of edge of care, early help, early intervention, and prevention services.
- Increase the numbers of in-house foster carers and review our existing bank of carers to develop and match their skills to the needs of our children.
- Reduce the use of out of local area provision which may disadvantage our children and young people.
- Increase the number of adopters who can adopt children who are known to be harder to place.
- Provide young people who are leaving care with a variety of placement choices and support to independence.
- Provide a robust commissioning framework which is effectively responding to the sufficiency challenges and driving up standards.
- Improve the overall data capture and data management of cared for children to better inform this strategy and improve accurate responses to sufficiency challenges.
- Raise our aspirations for educational attainment and other outcomes for cared for children.
- Continue to build on the strength of the Torbay Corporate Parenting Board.

This report will identify some of the improvements and challenges made in terms of performance, participation, fostering recruitment and the implementation of a restorative model which incorporates our fostering families.

This is a report of the Fostering Service and covers the period of 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

This report will address the roles and functions of the Fostering Service and should be read in conjunction with the Fostering Statement of Purpose 2023-24.

Throughout 2023-24, the Fostering Service has continued to ensure that there are a range of placement options for children which offer both high quality and cultural appropriateness.

Please note, for the purpose of this document, the word 'placement' is used throughout. In line with the implementation of the restorative model, it is fully recognized that this word may not be the right choice for individual children; however, each child will wish for the place where they live to be called something different, and home can have powerful connotations for cared for children and young people and therefore 'placement' is used in this instance.

2. Profile of cared for children

Torbay were corporate parents, as of the 31st March 2024, to 298 cared for children; this overall figure also incorporated fourteen Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who Torbay had welcomed either as part of the National Transfer Scheme or through representation as UASC by residents placed at local asylum hotels. The number of cared for children decreased over the year 2023-24 and stood at 298 as of 31st March 2024, compared with 314 at the same point the previous year. The decrease was due to a combination of preventative work that reduced the number of children becoming cared for in the year along with a substantial reduction in unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) presenting in Torbay.

There is evidence to suggest that permanency for Torbay's cared for children has continued to improve, with further progress in adoptions and staying put arrangements coupled with SGOs all outperforming statistical neighbours and national averages. There were 11 children adopted throughout the year 2023/24 out of 97 total children who ceased to be cared for, equating to 12%. This compares favourably with the Torbay figure of 4% in 2022/23 and 3% in 2021/22 and demonstrates the strength that Torbay is showing in leading the way across the South West Peninsular with regards to adoption performance. 43 young people ceased to be cared for in the 2023/24 year who were aged 18 or over at that point. 25 of those were in foster placements at the point they ceased to be cared for. Of those 25, 13 remained Staying Put with their foster carers. That is 52% of children in foster care ceasing to be cared for aged 18 or over who Stayed Put.

As of 31st March 2024, 77% of children in foster care in Torbay were in in-house provision. Although this is now close to the national average of 76% and substantially higher than last year's figure of 57%, there remain challenges with in-house foster placement sufficiency connected to factors such as the aging profile of long-term foster carers who have retired and the challenges in recruiting new foster carers against a backdrop of a cost of living crisis. 49% of children in foster care were in long-term placements at the end of the year, an increase from 39% in the previous year and this is a reflection of more robust permanency planning and tracking through Permanence Panel. Long-term matching also allows decisions to be made with children and their foster carers around reduced visiting which in turn allows cared for children to experience childhoods that feature less intrusion from the Local Authority.

The number of children placed more than 20 miles away is still significantly above the statistical neighbours and national average. The figure of 34% for 2023/24 is slightly higher than the previous year (31% in 2022/23). There are many reasons a cared for child might be placed out of county and at a distance from the address they lived in at the point of becoming cared for, and significant analysis of our cared for population identifies many of these reasons to be in line with the distinct and bespoke wishes and feelings or best interests. For example, 3% of those children are placed for adoption, and 16% placed with family or friends in the locality of their address; similarly, in line with their wishes and feelings, 5% of this cohort are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who have expressly asked to be placed in more urban areas. Those children and young people who require specialist settings, such as secure or residential provision, are all placed more than twenty miles away from the address they lived in at the point of becoming cared for also.

Torbay continue to recognise the increased vulnerability of children placed at a distance from Torbay, and this is reflected in the Out of County Placement Protocol which advises of the specific role of the social worker, Team Manager and senior leadership team in supporting these cared

for children and tracking and monitoring their placements, as well as particular expectations in terms of placement and care planning. This Protocol is updated on a quarterly basis.

Torbay continues to focus on expanding the range of foster placement options available to our children. This understanding of the needs of our cared for children is used continuously to inform and enhance our fostering recruitment strategy and planning which continues to be focused on expanding the in-house placement options available to:

- Cared for children between the ages of 13-17.
- Cared for children who require placements alongside their siblings.
- Cared for children with additional or complex needs.
- Cared for children who are transitioning from residential settings into fostering families. -
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

As outlined in previous Annual Reports, it remains imperative that placement sufficiency, and in particular the development of our in-house fostering provision, remains a key strategic priority and the work with the regional fostering hub and the implementation of the Mockingbird project are just two examples of how this work will develop over 2024-25. There is a continued need for a collective view that our cared for children have a right and a need for high quality, safe placements in their local area.

Cared for children on 31st March 2024 by placement type:

Placements at 31st March 2024		Number	%
Foster placement with relative or friend	Inside local authority	23	8%
	Outside local authority	16	5%
Placement with other foster carer:	Inside local authority	109	37%
	Outside local authority	76	26%
Secure unit		0	0%
Homes and hostels (residential care, K2 code)		16	5%

Placements at 31st March 2024	Number	%
Hostels and other supportive residential placements (H5 code)	15	5%
Residential schools	0	0%
Other residential settings (codes R1, R2, R3, R5)	1	0%
Placed for adoption (including placed with former foster carer)	5	2%
Placed with own parents	24	8%
In lodgings, residential employment or living independently	0	0%
Other placements (Z1) (DfE guidance suggests use for unregulated foster care only)	13	4%

The national picture is as follows:

	2021/22	2022/23
Foster care (U codes)	70%	54%
Placed for adoption (A codes)	3%	3%
Placed with own parents (code P1)	7%	9%
Children's homes (code K2)	16%	21%
Hostels / Semi-independent living accommodation not subject to Children's Homes regulations (code H5)		
Secure units (code K1)		
Residential schools (code S1)	-	-
Other residential (adult residential care homes, NHS provision, family centres, mother and baby units, YOIs or prison - R codes)	1%	4%
Independent living (code P2)	2%	5%
Other (mostly unregulated foster placements with family / friends, code Z1)	2%	4%

NOTE: The national data groups several codes together (K2 children's homes, H5 supported living and K1 secure units), so comparisons are not straightforward, but in general the national and local pictures are similar.

3. Key Priorities and Actions of the Service in 2023/24

The key priorities and actions of the service in 2023/24 have been:

- Continuing to identify and enhance ways to capture the voice of our fostering families and use this feedback to improve and enhance fostering assessment and services. ***This action is ongoing and forms a foundational aspect of the Regulated Service Plan.***
- Expanding and developing the Corporate Parenting Offer for fostering families, cared for children, care experienced young people, parent/carers and Special Guardians throughout the year. ***Ongoing.***
- Reviewing the training provided to foster carers on a regular basis. ***Ongoing.***
- Running high quality and varied support groups, both internally to provide foster carers with therapeutic and emotional support. ***Ongoing.***
- Providing bespoke and individualized plans of support, to enhance placement stability, inclusive of out of hours support from the Building Futures Together team and intensive support programmes which last up to sixteen weeks, when needed to stabilise the placement. ***Ongoing.***
- Reviewing the Fostering Recruitment Strategy. ***Achieved.***
- Home for Good finalised their contract after three years of commissioning by Torbay Council. Home for Good is a national Christian fostering and adoption focused charity working to inspire Christians to foster or adopt and equipping the church communities to support those who are caring for vulnerable children. Home for Good works with local authorities to develop and strengthen connections with local churches around foster carer recruitment and retention so they can best meet their obligations as corporate parents to the children in their care. Home for Good made 1 referral in 2023/24 which progressed to assessment. In 2023-24, one family was identified through the charity and subsequently approved through Panel. ***Achieved.***
- Enhancing the impact of our Quarterly Fostering Forums, to ensure that they provide a direct platform for collaboration on our model and implementation of services and provide an open portal of discussion relating to current live issues/events between our carers, social workers, managers, the Virtual School and the Head of Service. The Participation team also regularly attend Foster Carer Support Groups and meet with our Cared for Council. This also supports the development of our collaborative working response, with our carers, thereby embedding the restorative and co-produced approach to our improvements. ***Achieved.***

- Torbay Council received Fostering Friendly accreditation from the Fostering Network in May 2023. We launched this during our Fostering and Social Worker Celebration Event on all social media channels and the Council website. We continue to actively promote this to local business groups and the plan is to roll this out more widely in the Torbay community. **Achieved.**
- Celebrating the commitment and achievements of our fostering families through the Letters of Thanks scheme, the Children's Celebration event and our fostering communications. **Ongoing.**
- Audits focused on the bridging to adoption process and the voice of foster carers were undertaken, with the learning feeding into service improvement. **Achieved.**
- Considering and implementing the new reforms of Stable Homes, Built on Love. The principle of kinship care has featured heavily in developing enhanced training for our connected carers with our foster carers. We are also committed to the Mockingbird approach of foster care which will develop supportive networks and a stronger sense of community for our children and young people in Torbay and also for their foster carers and connected carers. **Ongoing.**
- Family Hubs have been launched and are now part of each of the three towns which make up Torbay. This means that there is community support that is accessible in each area, including universal support for fostering and kinship families. The support offered by the Special Guardianship team through the Hubs will continue to be promoted as a priority in Torbay. **Ongoing.**

Mockingbird

Torbay Council has partnered with the Fostering Network to deliver the Mockingbird Family Model. This is an innovative extended family model that aims to improve the stability of fostering placements for our cared for children/young people and strengthen the overall relationships between carers, children/young people, fostering services and birth families. Our goal is especially to ensure that sibling attachments and relationships are supported to thrive.

Mockingbird is an alternative way of providing foster care. It involves 6-10 foster carers becoming part of a group with other foster carers who are part of a wider constellation of satellite foster homes. The satellite homes in turn are supported by a central hub home, which provides advice and support to all the satellite homes.

The hub home and the satellite homes are supported by the fostering service which provides a worker to take on a liaison role across the whole Constellation.

The hub home provides children and their carers with support including sleepovers where appropriate and shared social activities on a 1 x monthly basis for all members of the constellation.

Torbay also plans to use the Mockingbird model as part of our foster care recruitment promotion for the future. We currently have a project lead who is working closely with the Fostering Network, with our immediate colleagues from within Torbay's fostering service and with several other key colleagues who are actively involved in ensuring we are driving our ambition of the successful implementation of Mockingbird within Torbay. It is hoped that 2 young people from our cared for council will be part of driving the project to ensure the voice of children/young people is clearly heard in our overall implementation.

The aim of the Mockingbird family model is to improve placement stability for children who are looked after, prioritise sibling connection, promote active child protection, support permanence and improve the support provided to foster carers, so that foster carers feel more supported, valued and less isolated.

The model fits with Torbay's approach of putting families at the centre of finding solutions and solving problems using restorative approaches. From a number of evaluations carried out, including by the UK Government, the positive impacts of the Mockingbird project, includes:- Reduced placement breakdown, Improved placement stability, Improved sibling contact, Improved experience of peer support, Improved experience of birth family contact, Improved levels of carer recruitment / retention, Improved process / experience of respite care, Improved skills, confidence and role satisfaction for foster carers, Building a network of strong / authentic relationships able to replicate support of extended family.

Extensive planning is currently underway in order to ensure that we are in a position to successfully launch our first Mockingbird constellation in Torbay by March 2025.

4. The Role of the Fostering Service

The Fostering Service continues to develop and improve practice to meet the needs of cared for children in Torbay in line with the requirements of National Minimum Standards 2011 and Fostering Regulations. Torbay Fostering Service aim a range of fostering placements which meet the needs of our cared for children: Whilst there are universal standards within our fostering offering of care there are individual specialisms/focuses that carers can offer to our children:

Emergency Fostering Placements

- These are carers who can offer a fostering family home at short notice, and for short period of time at point of need in an emergency.

Short Term Fostering Placements

- These are carers who are able to offer a fostering family home on a short term basis; this could be for anything up to two years, for children who are cared for subject to proceedings and who need a safe and secure home whilst decisions are made about their care. These carers may then be involved in bridging to adoption, support to reunification, transition to other family care arrangements, transition to a longer term fostering placement or bridging to independence.

Long Term/Permanent Placements

- These are carers who can offer a fostering family home to children whose plan is one of long-term fostering, and when final decisions have been made that a child cannot return home to the care of their parent/s or previous caregiver. These long-term placements offer security and stability for children for their minority and often into their adulthood. These carers make a long-term commitment to a child, and are often matched as a long term permanent placement for the child following a year in placement, through the Permanence Panel supported by an up to date assessment and recommendation of the child's allocated social worker.

Respite Placements /Stay Overs

- These are carers who are able to offer a fostering family home to children, who are often in a long-term matched placement, as part of their plan of stability and permanence within that placement, to provide appropriate support to long term carers. At times, these placements may be use as a short-term measure, and as part of the bridging process to alternative placements for a child at point of need.

Parent and Child Placements

- Torbay currently offer limited parent and child placements however we have identified several carers who have an interest in offering this type of placement and are actively looking to support progression of this interest by supporting focused training opportunities and a development programme to move this forward and expand our service offer and expertise within our fostering families. Currently we are meeting this need of our service through specialist placement agencies that offer this level of expertise. These are carers with specific training who can offer placement to parent/s and child/ren. These may be young parents, under the age of sixteen, or parents of any age, who require intensive support, guidance, and modelling to developing their parenting capacity in a safe environment.

Placements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

- These are carers who are able to offer a fostering family home to unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, to enable them to adjust fully to being in a new country, and provide a nurturing safe base from which these young people can begin to recover from their experiences and forge a life for themselves in their new surroundings and communities.

Sibling placements

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- These are carers who are able to offer a fostering family home to sibling groups, not only in respect of providing accommodation, which is suitably sized for the sibling group, but carers who are suitably skilled to manage the presenting needs of each child within a sibling group of two or more children.

Resilience placements

- Resilience foster carers are carers who can offer a fostering family home to support young people aged 10-18 years who currently live in residential care and/or who may have particularly complex needs, or young people who may be in the youth justice system. For those who have the knowledge, skills and experience to care for a child with these needs, it's a unique fostering opportunity where carers provide long term, family-based placements, with the intention of fostering one young person and supporting them into adult life. We are developing our capacity in this area of care through our fostering recruitment strategy to assess suitably skilled potential carers through this route, in addition to exploring opportunity of training and development from our existing cohort of carers to expand on their current offer.

Staying Put Placements

- These are carers who can offer a home to those care experienced young people aged eighteen and above who they have previously fostered.

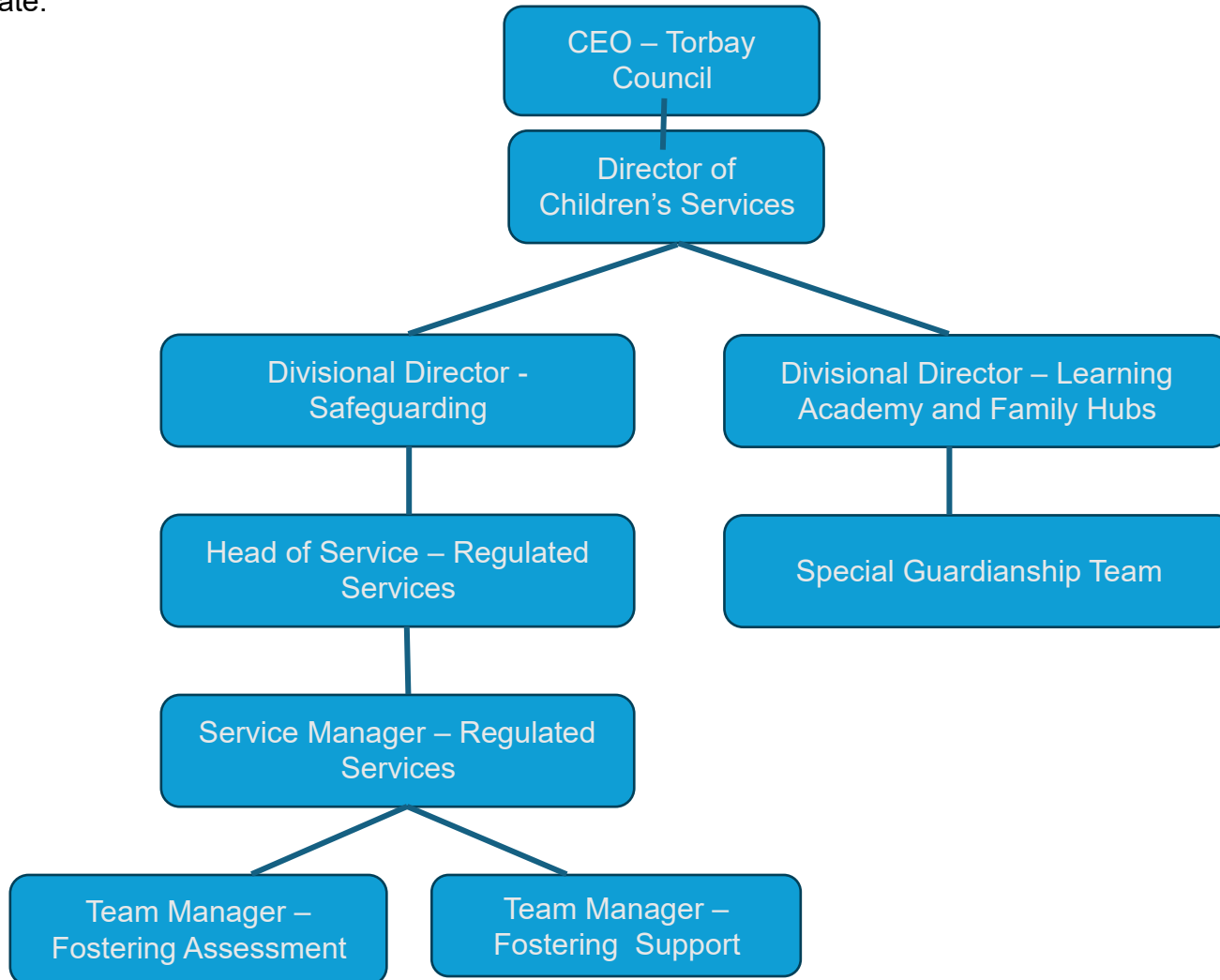
All our foster carers are supervised and supported by social workers within the fostering service and this also includes our Connected Carers who are afforded opportunities to engage in training and support alongside other foster carers to ensure their support. The overall aim of the Fostering Service is to provide a range of high quality, safe and aspirational foster care placements that meet the array of needs of Torbay cared for children.

Torbay Fostering Service's objectives for service provision are:

- We want cared for children to live in an environment which is warm, stable and consistent to meet their needs.
- We want cared for children to have access to fostering homes which provide a safe, secure and nurturing base from which they grow into confident and happy young people who have aspirations for their future.
- We want cared for children to feel supported to achieve the best possible outcomes, not only in the short term but in the medium to long term too.
- We want cared for children to feel fully involved in their planning.
- We want cared for children to feel like they have a voice in the development of services designed to support them.
- We want social workers to understand the value of the fostering role and how their actions and practice can support the delivery of high quality fostering services.
- We want to provide social workers with the relevant training and development opportunities to help them to under this.
- We want to provide fostering families with high quality and individualised training and development opportunities.
- We want to provide support of our fostering families which is personalised and inclusive of appropriate support for out of hours response.
- We want to continue to recruit fostering families who have a wide range of skills and experience, who can offer homes to a wider range of cared for children, including sibling groups, older children or those children who may have additional needs.
- We want to continue to recruit fostering families from a diverse background who can offer a range of homes for cared for children, thereby enhancing the quality of the matching process.
- We want to be a service which demonstrates its core values of equality and the value of diversity through its operational actions as well as its strategic review of practice, policy, training and development.
- We want to be a service which is compliant with the statutory, regulatory and legislative framework under which we work within daily.
- We want to be a service which recognises learning opportunities and ensures that service delivery is robustly monitored, reviewed and developed.
- We want to develop a team approach, which centres on the child and their needs, and which ensures that all involved in supporting a child are focused on the achievement of best practice.

5. Organisational Structure

Torbay Fostering Service is based at Children's Services, Tor Hill House in Torquay, and sits under Regulated Services. The Fostering Service consists of two teams: Fostering Assessment and Fostering Support. The governance structure is as follows, with the service sitting within the Safeguarding directorate:



Day-to day management and development of services is overseen by the two Team Managers, who are both social work qualified managers with experience in social work with children and families. Both Team Managers oversee a team of staff, inclusive of fostering assessment social workers, fostering supervising social workers, Community Care Workers, business support officers and a Recruitment and Events Co-Ordinator to support the delivery of service. Operational delivery is overseen by the Head of Service for Regulated Services, supported by the Divisional Director of Safeguarding.

Our Fostering Assessment Team focuses on recruitment activity, assessments of prospective foster carers and support for prospective fostering families going through the Panel approval process. They also deliver the pre-approval 'Skills to Foster' training programme offered to adult applicants and a specially created workshop for their children to attend to support the development of skills through the assessment process.

The Recruitment and Events Co-Ordinator role is an officer who works closely with the Fostering Assessment Team Manager, Communications team and other professionals to understand our local demographic and support them to view the potential skills people may have for fostering, thereby contributing to the development of a wider range of fostering families and skillsets.

Our Fostering Support team focuses on the support and supervision offered to approved foster carers, support through the Annual Review process, ongoing or updating assessments and investigations, participation and feedback work, training and development and the implementation of support groups and other celebratory and collective opportunities for our cared for children and their fostering families.

Torbay has its own Fostering Panel that meets regularly to make recommendations for the approval of foster carer candidates as well as to receive reviews of approval. The panel also consider other matters that are brought to them by the social work team. The panel is independent and has a chair and co-chair to sit alongside members to enable the function of the panel. In addition to the panel membership, our Placements Auditor sits on the panel to provide a Quality Assurance lens to our preparations, reports and presentation are to the highest standard. The panel is supported by a panel advisor who provides expert advice to the panel on arising matter.

Torbay Children's Services also has its own Learning Academy and works with a number of Universities to offer social work placements for students as well as offering a robust and supportive programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers employed by Torbay, some of whom may work within the Fostering Service and contribute to the service offer to our families.

All the Managers and Supervising or Assessing Social Workers hold social work qualifications and are registered with the Social Work England.

All staff working at Torbay have access to a wide range of continued professional development and training opportunities which are coordinated and promoted by our Learning Academy.

The social work staff establishment on 31st March 2024 comprised of:

- Two permanent Team Managers
- Two permanent Assistant Team Managers
- Three full time social workers (Fostering Support)
- Four part time social workers (Fostering support)
- Four assessing social workers full-time (Fostering Assessment)
- Two part time Social workers (Fostering Assessment)
- One Community Care Worker providing services across the fostering service.
- One Recruitment, Retention and Events Co-Ordinator
- One Fostering Panel Chair and one vice chair
- Fostering Panel members
- Fostering Panel Advisor (this role is undertaken by the two team managers).

6. Fostering Recruitment Performance

During 2023/2024 the fostering service received a total of 65 initial enquiries, and as a result of these enquiries 4 mainstream fostering households were approved. This is a reduction of 50% compared to last year.

Years	Number of enquiries	Approvals	Conversion
2014- 2015	118	29	24%
2015- 2016	65	10	15%
2016- 2017	42	3	7%
2017 - 2018	86	10	12%
2018 - 2019	45	4	9%
2019 - 2020	51	2	4%
2020 - 2021	111	20	18%
2021 – 2022	99	9	9%
2022 – 2023	111	8	7%
2023 - 2024	65	4	6%

The conversion of enquiries to approval during 2023/24 has decreased by 1% from 7% in 2022/2023 to 6%.

As a baseline expectation, the Fostering Service aim to increase the net number of fostering households by a minimum of ten per year. As of the 31st March 2024, Torbay supported 80 mainstream fostering families and approved only four families in the 2023-24 financial year. There were a total of 9 families that left fostering due to personal circumstances including retirement. Therefore, the current mainstream net total number of fostering families decreased by five in Torbay in 2023-24, with significant under-performance in the area of recruitment against our local target.

There are a number of factors which have impacted upon this performance. Factors such as the cost of living and individual financial considerations continue to be cited by both prospective and current fostering families as influencing factors when making the decision to begin to or continue to foster. Nationally, sufficiency and recruitment continues to be a challenge and a number of government led initiatives, aligned to the ambition of Stable Homes Built on Love, are being implemented to address this. Despite increasing event activity by up to 36% in terms of attendance at events and fostering drop-in sessions, only 65 initial enquiries were received in 2023-25; typically, only one in ten initial enquiries will convert into approvals, and therefore the lower generation of enquiries has had a direct impact on the number of fostering families who have been recruited in this financial year.

Eleven applicants progressed from the point of Initial Enquiry to the stage whereby they were allocated a social worker and the form F assessment had begun, however they subsequently withdrew or were withdrawn. This is a lower number than the previous year with the breakdown as below:

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Withdrawn in Assessment	0
Management Decision	3
Due to family circumstances	5
Due to health concerns	2
No contact	1
Went to IFA	0
Total:	11

There were a total of 34 prospective applicants who withdrew having made an initial enquiry. The majority of this number comprises of applicants who did not contact us again or who did not respond to our attempts to contact them. There were four prospective applicants who withdrew after a positive Initial Visit. One couple decided to remain with their IFA, and the remaining applicants were unavailable.

There were a total of 12 Initial Visits which had a negative outcome, with the majority of these not having enough relevant experience or transferable skills to foster. When this is the case, we support with opportunities to gain experience with children, including opportunities within Torbay's Enabling

Service and at South Devon College. We also offer opportunities to link in with current Torbay foster carer mentors, who can share experiences with them and give them first hand testimony. We also signpost to free on-line courses to gain valuable insight into the lives of children who have experienced trauma. Other factors included lack of physical space that could not be resolved, and single carers who upon further investigation did not have the capacity to care for another child alongside their own.

The fostering service is however also responsible for the assessment and supported of connected kinship carers and prospective Special Guardians. The proportion ceasing to be cared for due to a Special Guardianship Order being granted in 2023-24 was in line with the national figure, at 14% compared to 13% nationally. The majority of SGOs made in 2023/24 made were to connected people (17 out of 24), however there were still six children who had Special Guardianship Orders made to previous foster carers who were not family or friends. Overall, this demonstrates a positive picture for cared for children in terms of permanency within a forever family during childhood.

In the year 2023/24, the fostering assessment team undertook a total of 73 Connected Carer and Special Guardianship assessments to explore the viability of permanence through Kinship Care. This is a significant increase from the previous year which saw 40 such assessments completed. As of the 31st March 2024, 16 Cared for children were living with Connected carers under Regulation 24 arrangements on a temporary basis pending the outcome of approval at fostering panel and with permanence plans for a Special Guardianship arrangement.

Numbers of Foster Carers (as at 31st March 2024):

As of 31st March 2024, the total number of approved fostering households was 80 which is comprised as follows:

Total Beds	150
Current Placements	102 (inclusive of 14 Staying Put)
Vacancies	7
Respite Beds	17
Voids	24

In March 2024, the total number of approved fostering households was 80. This is a decrease of five mainstream carers from the 85 as of the 31st March 2023.

Throughout 2023/2024 financial year there have been **0** cases through the Independent Review Mechanism process.

From 1st of April 2023 to 31st of March 2024, 12 fostering families were deregistered of which 9 were mainstream fostering families for the reasons as outlined below:

Mainstream Foster Carers

- Five were personal reasons around family circumstances.
- One due to ill health.
- One due to lack of availability concerns.
- One carer adopted their foster child.
- One carer was deregistered due to concerns.
- One death of foster carer.

Connected Foster Carers

- Two were awarded SGOs.

7. Recruitment and Marketing Strategy and Campaign

Fostering recruitment remains a key strategic focus within Regulated Services. Whilst continuing to recognize the immense skill and expertise contained within our current fostering family cohort, there is an ongoing need to expand the placement sufficiency and variety we are able to offer our cared for children. Whilst the number of cared for children continues to decrease overall, the needs of cared for children do not and there is specifically a need to develop our in-house ability to provide placement options for: older children; children with additional needs; children with complex needs; young people bridging out of residential provisions; unaccompanied asylum seeking children; sibling groups.

Torbay's aim is to increase our fostering family cohort by a net increase of ten new fostering families per year, to ensure that we have sufficient, local in-house provision to meet the needs of all of our children; the Strategy incorporates a profile of our cared for children, and their evolving needs (for example the increased need for fostering families who can support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children). When considering an increase nationally in foster carer resignation, the drive and focus on increasing our in-house provision must continue. The Fostering Network have undertaken research which indicates that for every ten initial enquiries, only one will convert to an approval. On this basis, and in line with Torbay's target, we will need to generate 100 enquiries at minimum per year.

In the year 2023/24, an analysis of the recruitment and marketing activity evidenced that the majority of interest is created via a staff presence at activity and information sessions, which are advertised via the website and social media platforms. Having a face-to-face discussion is then prompting people to make online enquiries. Information sharing sessions are also a critical means of establishing an initial contact with prospective foster carers, and building relationships with them from the outset of their fostering journey. Insight analysis demonstrates that those a high proportion of prospective foster carers who make initial enquiries are those who have come into contact with the fostering service, either through first or second-hand experience of being a foster child or knowing someone who has fostered. As such, there is great power within social media campaigns for example in providing insights into being a foster carer, for those who already foster for Torbay.

On July 1st 2024, it is anticipated that Torbay's updated website, and social media campaign will be going live.

As from April 2024, there will be the introduction of a new regional fostering recruitment support hub for the South west. The regional hub is called Fostering South West and covers all local authorities. The new hub will work to improve the customer journey for prospective foster carers from initial enquiry through to applications. The aim is to help increase the conversion rate between initial enquiry and application.

The regional support hub will be a centrally run front door across our regional local authority cluster and will act as the first point of contact for prospective carers making an enquiry. Once processed through the hub each local authority will pick up the enquiries and ensure the prospective foster carers have the information and support, they need. Fostering South West will continue to provide increased levels of support and share resources for the benefit of children and fostering families. The new approach will provide an efficient approach particularly in the early

stages of prospective foster carers finding out information. The regional hub will build on and enhance the good work already being created by individual local authorities. The hub will support prospective applicants through their assessment process with their local authority and offer opportunities for additional learning, support and guidance to help in preparing them in their transition to become a foster carer with the purpose of increasing the number of applicants being approved to become foster carers.

The Fostering Recruitment Strategy outlines the following three year plan moving forward:

Month/Year	Targeted Marketing Activity	Frequency	Policy or procedure changes
April 2022 – March 2025	Offering our Foster Carers Refer a Friend incentive	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2022 – advised Foster Carers of the new incentive. Refer an Applicant Scheme now launched which will provide a £250 one-off payment to any existing foster carer who refers a fostering applicant, at the point the applicant is approved and accepts their first placement. This has already generated three high quality initial enquiries.
April 2024	Fostering South West goes live	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links to Fostering South West to be included on all Torbay marketing material.
By July 2024	Update of the Fostering section on the Torbay Council Website and linked to the Family Hubs website. The update will be including up to date events, incentives, and restorative language.	Reviewed every three months	Fostering Service Manager, Fostering Retention, Recruitment & Events Coordinator to work with Torbay Council Web Team to update the current website and Family Hubs website.

June 2023 – September 2023	Consult with fostering families on the enhancement of the Family Hubs website, to ensure this is a one stop shop for fostering families in Torbay in terms of signposting, advice and guidance.	Reviewed every three months	Fostering Service Manager, Fostering Retention, Recruitment & Events Coordinator to work with Family Hubs lead to update the website.
March 2022 – ongoing	Weekly social media posts to promote Fostering with Torbay Council.	Weekly	A procedure for requesting for regular social media posts to be added needs to be created and implemented.
March 2023- Sept 2024	Developing the resilience of our fostering panel and panel advisors by a recruitment campaign to support development of panel membership and targeted training for Panel advisor role – lead by Fostering Service Manager.	One off	
Aug 2022 – ongoing	Running of Fostering Information Sessions on a monthly basis. This will be via Teams on an ad hoc basis if required.	Monthly	A new PowerPoint to be created and used during Information Sessions and the same information can be sent to all applicants awaiting an initial visit.
May 2023, 2024 and 2025	Childrens Services and Fostering Celebration Event. This is to be run on or around Foster Carer Fortnight.	Annually	
March 2023, 2024 and 2025	Foster Carer Workshop with Childrens Services Management, Chief Executive, councillors, and Foster Carers	Annually	
March 2023 onwards	Skills for Fostering training for new applicants	Monthly As and when	New training has been created and a new procedure has also been created and shared with the fostering assessment team and managers.

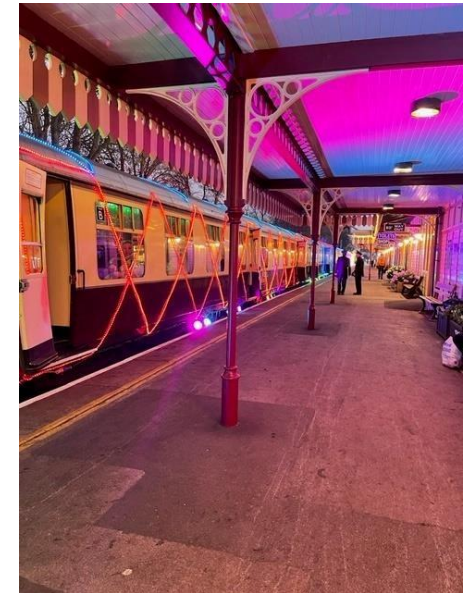
	Birth children Skills for Fostering training to be undertaken during assessment.		
April 2023 onwards	Fostering Forums to be held at minimum quarterly and face to face.	Every three months	
March 2025	Implementation of Mockingbird first constellation.	Work ongoing.	Key policies and protocols are in progress.

8. Events

The Torbay Fostering Service have, as part of ongoing recruitment activity and the developed Corporate Parenting Offer, been able to attend and participate in the following 45 events in the year 2023-24

- Armed Forces Day
- Childrens Week
- Torquay United Event
- Lions Club Community Day
- Kings Coronation event
- Paignton/Torquay/Brixham town centres
- Paignton/ Torquay/Brixham/Newton Abbot/Churston Libraries
- Oldway Primary school summer fete
- Galmpton Gooseberry Pie Fayre
- Career Fayre – Torquay
- Torbay Pride
- South Devon College Careers event
- Totnes Christmas markets
- Torquay town hall – Fostering Friendly event.
- Celebration event for staff and carers

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In 2024/25, we have 70 planned events that we will be attending and providing a platform to promote our fostering service. These events will have representation from our fostering team and other staff members; in addition, current foster carers that have committed to support these events and share their experiences of being a foster carer with Torbay. The events have increased by 36% and therefore there has been a greater presence of the fostering campaign in and around Torbay.

9. Foster carer support

Performance

Torbay Fostering Service aim to provide the best possible care for children and maintain high standards in respect of children's care. In order to ensure that this is consistently achieved, Torbay have rigorous and comprehensive quality assurance frameworks in place, with audit activity across Children's Services taking place regularly.

The Fostering Service routinely provides reports in respect of the profile of the cared for children cohort and their placement types, information relating to vacancies and investigations, recruitment activity and performance, staffing considerations, training and development, service outcomes and aims and any other information relating to the performance of the service and the wellbeing of our fostering families and our cared for children.

Themes and patterns arising from Fostering Panels are tracked and monitored, with specific actions arising from any consistent areas for development. Compliance with policies and procedures is monitored by managers in supervision and audit and dip sample activity. All staff receive regular supervision, the frequency agreed according to their role, experience and need.

The performance of the service is also monitored within our regulatory framework, and by the Corporate Parenting Board, the Overview and Scrutiny Board, the Continuous Children's Improvement Board and the senior leadership team.

Areas of key quality assurance focus for the Torbay Fostering Service are:

- *The numbers of cared for children, in relation to their plan of permanence.
- *Placement stability, with a key focus on minimising disruption for cared for children and enhancing placement stability which involves monitoring the number of placement changes for cared for children.
- *Placement sufficiency and the recruitment of new fostering families.
- *Compliance, including foster carer training, DBC checks, timely Annual Reviews and fulfilment of basic training requirements. *Timely and quality foster carer supervision.
- *Purposeful and comprehensive placement planning meetings.
- *The use of placement support and stability meetings.
- *The timeliness and impact of unannounced visits.

The Fostering Service have consistently sustained good performance in the four Key Performance indicators.

Fostering performance as of the 31st March 2024 stands at:

Foster carers with up-to-date training – 64%

Foster carers with up-to-date DBS – 100%

Foster carers with up-to-date medical – 98%

Foster carers with up-to-date Annual Review – 87%

The percentage of foster carers post one year who have completed the minimum (TSD) training has decreased from 89% to 65% in February 2024. This decrease relates to newly approved carers in the last two years. One significant change which appears to have had an impact the transition of this training to the central iLearn system. Some newly approved foster carers and Connected Carers have cited issues in finding the time to complete training due to work and fostering commitments and the fostering service are providing high levels of support to these carers to ensure they have protected time to complete the work, with each relevant fostering family having a bespoke session booked with them to provide support.

Performance against these key indicators is a regular focus of the monthly performance surgeries chaired by the Head of Service, Regulated Services.

Support Groups

Torbay Fostering Service also run a number of support groups, which are organised at various times throughout the year and through various platforms. Torbay are committed to learning from feedback and participation and are constantly looking for ways in which we can make our training as accessible and purposeful and meaningful for fostering families as possible.

It is intended that support groups provide an opportunity for fostering families to meet with each other and share their views and experiences of fostering; in addition, fostering families can access support, guidance and signposting through these groups, and receive information about recent changes to policies and guidance and practice.

Currently, Torbay Fostering Service offer:

- A support group run by CAMHS which offers support through a therapeutic lens.
- Special Guardianship Support group for all Special Guardians receiving support from the Special Guardianship Team.
- A general foster carer support groups which is held monthly face-to-face.
- Foster Carer Forums which are held quarterly.
- Evening support groups and Connected Carer support groups.

- Single foster carers support group.
- Evening support groups.

Foster carers receive financial allowances which value and respect their skills, learning and commitment. Detailed financial information and guidance around expectations are made available to each foster carer. In addition to the financial support, our foster carers benefit from local discounts and offers from providers that have made a commitment to support Torbay's foster care families as part of the Corporate Parenting Offer. Paignton Zoo have made a pledge to provide all of our foster carers an annual family pass in addition to other local attractions providing discounted rates to access to foster carers.

Out of hours support

Torbay Fostering Service currently also have access to an out of hours team which offers direct support to fostering families whereby issues in relation to placement instability have been identified; this is operating through our Building Futures team and provides a weekly response until 9pm weekdays and a service on weekends 10-6pm Saturdays. In addition, the EDS (Emergency Duty Service) provides advice and support 24 hours, 7 days a week. This is a generic service and will provide a duty response in the event of an emergency.

Support during Allegations

Torbay Fostering Service also commission specialist support, for example mediation or advocacy services, in situations whereby this is required for foster carers through the allegation process. Fostering Service commissions, the independent individual support for foster carers from Fostering Network to support them through the investigation process.

Training

At Torbay, we believe that every moment of the fostering experience provides rich opportunity for learning and development; we are committed to supporting fostering families to grow and learn and develop their practice and recognise that this will be on an individualised basis, with at times a bespoke training need.

Fostering families begin their training journey during the assessment and approval process and build on this learning as they move on to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards. Fostering families receive a full induction, in order to enable them to understand the expectations of the fostering role, the key principles and values which underpin the fostering role and how they can best meet the needs of the cared for children they may be supporting and caring for.

Foster Carer training includes:

Record Keeping for Foster Carers

Safer Caring

LADO Role and Allegations Against Foster Carers

SGO PACE Training

Delegated Authority for Foster Carers

Paediatric First Aid

Life Story Work

Introduction to attachment theory and practice

Grief, Loss and Change

Family Time Supervision

Bridging to Adoption

Fostering Changes Training

PACE Training

Skills to foster (as part of the assessment)

In certain circumstances, Torbay Fostering Service will explore alternative types of bespoke training for individual or groups of fostering families, where this is an identified need.

Torbay foster carers have been able to access relationship and sexual health training led by health in 2023-24.

10. Special Guardianship Support

As of March 2019, all Special Guardianship assessments and Special Guardianship Support has been held within the Fostering Service. In December 2023, Special Guardianship Support moved to Family Hubs and since this time there has been a joined-up approach between Special Guardianship Support and Regulated Services.

The following staff make up the Special Guardianship Support team:

1 Team Manager – FTE 1 fixed term since January 2024 (with oversight for Special Guardianship Support and Breathing Space Service)

3 Community Care Workers

- Full time – FTE 1 fixed term since May 2024
- 4 days – FTE 0.8 permanent
- 4 days – FTE 0.82 permanent *absent due to sickness since January 2024

All Special Guardianship Order assessments are undertaken by social workers within the Fostering Assessment Team; all support for children subject to these Orders and their families is coordinated through the Special Guardianship Support team. Referral routes, roles and responsibilities in relation to Special Guardianship Support are currently being reviewed in light of 'Championing Kinship Care; the national kinship care strategy' (DofE, 2023) and 'Kinship Care: statutory guidance for local authorities' (DofE, 2024) *pending publication.

A flowchart outlining social work responsibility in respect of Special Guardianship support plans, how these are recorded and the recording of communication of this to applicants. This has been communicated to all teams across Children's Services.

Information leaflets for assessment and support are in use by both the Fostering Assessment and Support teams. Consultation was offered by legal services in the creation of these leaflets.

A Special Guardianship Order tracker is being maintained, to include all those children subject to the Order, the status of the support being offered to them and the dates for review of the Special Guardianship Support plan. Additional reporting capabilities are also expected through Liquid Logic pending a review of the Special Guardianship pathways open for our Special Guardians. This will include trigger dates for the children at the age of fifteen years and six months, which will then prompt a letter explaining their rights to access from the Care Experience service.

Each Special Guardianship Support plan is then reviewed annually, in line with the month the Order was made, and a letter is sent to every Special Guardian at this point, outlining the support available to them, information in respect of our Family Hubs and our Family First support leaflet. For

those Special Guardians receiving active support from the team, more frequent reviews of the Special Guardianship Support plan are undertaken in line with the child, Special Guardian, and family need.

Special Guardianship Support team have completed 22 Adoption and Special Guardianship Support applications between April 2023 – March 2024.

An internal Special Guardianship Support working group was initiated in January 2024 in order to consider the support needs of our SGO children and Special Guardians. The working group has considered the findings of a survey completed by 15 Special Guardians and begun work on improving areas of support that Special Guardians have told us matter to them. Some priorities for the working group have been on hold pending publication of new Kinship Care statutory guidance and associated anticipated Kinship local offer.

Key priorities for Special Guardianship Support 2024 – 2025:

- Reimplementing local support group – this is now up and running monthly with positive engagement from Special Guardians. Additional national support groups will be available via ‘Kinship’.
- Quarterly Special Guardianship events/activities – this is up and running with a successful Easter event held at Paignton Zoo. Planning for 2x summer events is underway and a further event will take place at Christmas.
- Updating Special Guardianship Support Offer – this action will be replaced by the anticipated Kinship local offer.
- Kinship information page for Family Hubs website – this is being developed and subject to publication of statutory guidance.
- Quarterly Kinship Support Newsletter to be sent out to all Special Guardians and added to Family Hubs Kinship information page – this is being developed with the first newsletter anticipated July 2024.
- Training programme for Special Guardians – this requires finalising subject to partnership meeting with ‘Kinship’ Network Development Officer in June 2024.
- Kinship Information packs – not yet actioned.
- Annual Special Guardianship survey provides means of consultation – survey completed in January 2024, further survey planned for January 2025.
- Updated systemic process for Special Guardianship assessment and support – this has begun to be considered and is subject to statutory guidance.

In conjunction with the Learning Academy and the charity, ‘Kinship’, Special Guardians will have access to specific training opportunities and also benefit from our growing Corporate Parenting Offer. In addition, Special Guardianship support groups are in place, and we will look to develop this over the next year and also through Torbay’s ongoing Family Hub implementation.

11. Key Priorities and Actions of the Service in 2024/25

- Embed the Stable Homes Built on Love reforms including strengthening our offer to those children in a kinship arrangement.
- Strengthen the process of reunification with timely reviews and assessments to inform good quality planning.
- Relaunch the fostering website and associated branding with communications, and links to both Fostering South West and the Torbay Family Hubs website.
- Make the fostering brand recognised and effective and linked in with the Fostering Hub.
- Progress a community of foster carers for our children in Torbay within a Mockingbird community 'constellation' and continue to work with the Fostering Network.
- Embed the new process of the Fostering Hub and readiness for increased enquiries.
- A review of the Fostering Contract will be finalized, to support a relevant and up to date response to our inhouse fostering carers.
- Ongoing consultation with foster carers will take place over this year via thematic surveys looking at specific topic such as their participation within the professional groups working with the children, training and development, support systems within the inhouse fostering, developing back up carers and use of enablers and other support services.
- Continued development of our offer of Parent and Child placements, with a clear support and assessment plan.
- Whilst the number of cared for children reduces, there remains a vital need for greater variety in respect of the nature of in-house placements on offer to our cared for children, particular our older children, our sibling groups and our children who have additional or more complex needs. As such, recruitment must and does remain a key priority.
- Continue to implement the Former Foster Carer SGO Offer and secure Special Guardianship Orders in respect of identified children who could achieve enhanced permanence through this option.
- Increasing the numbers of cared for children engaged in the Cared for Council.

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Report authored by:	Colin Schumacher (Head of Service), Lucy Reeves and Gina Powell (Service Managers)
Date:	24th May 2024
Date of Review:	1st April 2025

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Report of the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group – 25th July 2024

1. Introduction

The Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Joint Scrutiny Group is an informal meeting of representative Scrutiny Members from Cornwall Council, Devon County Council, Somerset Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council and has been established to maintain a strategic overview of the activity and performance of Adopt South West, the RAA for Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Plymouth and Torbay, and report any significant findings or recommendations back to individual local authority scrutiny committees.

This report outlines the topics covered at the Group's meeting on 25th July 2024, highlights the key points raised during discussion, and details any agreed actions or recommendations back to the individual local authority Scrutiny Committees.

2. Attendance

Scrutiny Members

Cornwall Council: Councillor Peter Guest

Devon County Council: Councillors Tracy Adams (Chair) and Philip Sanders

Plymouth City Council: Councillor Zoe Reilly

Somerset Council: Councillor Evie Potts-Jones and Councillor Frances Nicholson (substitute for Councillor Leigh Redman)

Torbay Council: Councillor John Fellows

Other attendees

Steve Liddicott, Deputy Director of Children's Health and Wellbeing (Devon County Council)

Amanda White, Head of Service - Adopt South West (Devon County Council)

Ben Davies, Service Director – Children and Family Services (Cornwall Council)

Charlie Fisher, Scrutiny Officer (Devon County Council)

Fiona Abbott, Senior Democratic Services Officer (Somerset Council)

Teresa Buckley, Democratic Services Team Leader (Torbay Council)

Apologies: Councillor James Mustoe and Councillor Leigh Redman

3. Meeting Notes and Actions

3.1 Welcome and introductions

Cllr Adams welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting.

3.2 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting, 31st January 2022, were agreed.

3.3 Terms of Reference

Charlie Fisher, Scrutiny Officer, introduced the revised Terms of Reference document for the Group. The terms of references needed revising due to the inclusion of Cornwall Council to the group, the recognition that Somerset Council was now a unitary authority and not a County Council and some changes to the names of Scrutiny Committees amongst the Member authorities.

It was felt that the document needs to be strengthened in terms of strategic accountability of the RAA and the strategic oversight and influence of the Group. It was agreed that the draft terms of reference would be referred back to the Adopt South West Strategic Board for reconsideration. It was noted that this was timely since the Strategic Board is undertaking a wider review of the Inter-agency Agreement that governs Adopt South West.

Actions:

- (a) That the Terms of Reference document would be re-circulated to Members after the meeting.
- (b) That the Terms of Reference be referred to the Adopt South West Strategic Board to review as part of a wider review of accountability of the strategic overview of Adopt South West.

3.4 Adopt South West Annual Report 2023/24

Amanda White, Head of Service - Adopt South West, presented the [Adopt South West Annual Report 2023/24](#) to the Members of the Group.

Key areas highlighted in the report:

- Adopt South West started on 1st April 2018 as the Regional Adoption Agency for Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay. There are now 33 RAAs across the Country. Cornwall Council and the Isles of Scilly have been part of the RAA since 1st April 2024.
- **The children** - By year end, there were 196 children with a plan for adoption, an increase of 15.2%. Of the 109 children placed in 23/24, 91.3% (100) were placed with Adopt South West adopters, 8% higher than the previous year.
- **Timeliness** – the average number of days between a placement order being made and a child being formally matched to their adoptive family fell from 214 to 206 days, although Devon’s timeliness as a local authority rose from 147 to 269 days.
- **Early Permanence** – This year saw a national focus on Early Permanence (or Foster for Adopt) following the launch of the Early Permanence National Standards in February 2023. The principle of this is that the first placement is the only placement. Adopt South West has seen improved performance to 42.4% of children placed under early permanence regulations, compared to 36.15% in 2022/23 and 21% nationally in 2023/24. The Head of Service reported that this means Adopt South West is the highest performing area.
- **Adopters** – Despite active marketing, the recruitment of adopters fell 19% last year from 81 to 67 adopters. National data also shows a decline in applicants for adoption. The Head of Service highlighted that potential adopters were coming forward and being interested and there was only 6% lower attendance at information events. However, it was the Head of Service’s view that potential adopters were taking longer to make a decision about their adoption journey and as such the service is trying to analyse this to get feedback on potential adopters. In 2024/25 so far, the service has seen an increase of 27 households and the Head of Service was optimistic that performance would improve in the current year.

- The adopter gap, (the number of children needing families against the number of families available) slightly decrease on last year, from 29% to 27%, with 43% of our children who had been waiting 3 months placed.
- **Marketing and Recruitment** – The service has continued the ‘Think Again’ campaign, appealing to prospective fosters who had previously considered adoption but had decided it wasn’t the right time.
- **Non-agency adoptions** – The number of adoption orders for partner adoption assessments rose from 10 in 2022/23 to 28 in 2023/24.
- **Family breakdown** – The numbers of family breakdowns are coming down, 7 in 2022/23 to 5 in 2023/24. The Head of Service commented that the Service sometimes do not know about family breakdowns because there are a number of differentials within ‘family breakdowns’ outside of the adoption simply not working. However, nationally the percentage of family breakdowns is low.
- **Adoption Support** - Head of Service highlighted it is the priority for the service and the Strategic Plan to improve the post-adoption support to be earlier. There have been an increasing number of referrals for Adoption Support from 332 in 2019/20 to 1068 in 2023/24. A significant development in Adoption Support has been the introduction of a Triage Team, a dedicated team of social workers and family practitioners who act as the first point of contact for people referred to the service for support.
- **Maintaining relationships** - Adopt South West co-ordinated 3113 exchanges between birth and adoptive families in the year. There were 10,086 letterbox exchanges, the exchange of information between the adoptive family and members of the birth family.
- **Finance** – In 2023/24 the Service had a net underspend of £551,804 against their budget of £5.430m, received from the constituent local authorities. This underspend was returned to the local authorities. In 2024/25 the Service has a budget of £6.588m, with a revised funding formula to reflect the addition of Cornwall.
- **Focus for 2024/25** – The focus for the following year reflects the expansion with Cornwall and a need to ensure practice and process alignment with Cornwall. The key themes are Voice and Influence, Maintaining significant relationships and Timely adoption support.

Discussion with Members included:

- Members welcomed the report and improved performance across the service.
- Members welcomed the improved performance of 91% of children placed with Adopt South West Adopters and improved performance with Early Permanence. Members asked what Adopt South West did to improve the performance? The Head of Service highlighted national and regional conferences that covered Early Permanence and key research which highlighted the need to ensure Early Permanence. The service also reviewed family finding for the children who were waiting based on the think again campaign, asking potential adopters to think again about their situation and utilise adopters who were waiting for children.

- Members welcomed inter agency adoptions and what more can Adopt South West do to improve performance? The Head of Service commented on the peer reviews across local authorities and the RAA. Cornwall joining the RAA meant learning could be shared amongst the other local authorities. In addition, there were Early Permanence champions within each local authority within adoption and fostering services.
- If Early Permanence improvements had positively impacted avoiding family breakdowns? The Head of Service responded there wasn't the evidence for this yet but the service has better relationships in families and children having a better understanding of who has looked after them. The service has seen positive outcomes where adopters have bridged children back to birth families and gave an example of this to Members.
- If the cost of living crisis has had an impact on the number of adopters coming forward? The Head of Service highlighted the Adoption UK's [Adoption Barometer report](#) and stated there is a lack of confidence in people's personal circumstances with adopters not being able to or financially ready to adopt and sustain an adoption.
- Members asked about the process to become an adopter and if there was a drop-out rate? Notwithstanding the need for checks and processes to be stringent, the Head of Service commented that generally, potential adopters do not drop out midway through the process because they were committed to adoption. The Head of Service highlighted there is a 6 month target for the process, and that ASW's performance was good on this timeliness. In recent years, families with more complexities are coming forward as potential adopters which do mean more checks and references are needed.

Actions:

- (a) Members welcomed the Adopt South West Annual Report 2024/24 and noted the Adopt South West Strategy 2024/27.

3.5 Work Planning / Future Meetings

It was agreed that when the Strategic Board had reconsidered the joint scrutiny group's terms of reference, and any amendments to the inter-agency agreement, that they should be brought for consideration to the joint scrutiny group.

Actions:

- (a) That the Chair would convene a further meeting in 2024 to consider the final Terms of Reference and Inter Agency Agreement.
- (b) That the next meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Group to review the Annual Report be chaired and hosted by Somerset Council in around 12 months time (July 2025).

The meeting began at 14:05 and ended at 15:20.

Councillor Tracy Adams
Chair of RAA Joint Scrutiny Group
25th July 2024

RAA Joint Scrutiny Group Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Joint Scrutiny Group is an informal meeting of representative Scrutiny Members from Cornwall Council, Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Somerset Council, and Torbay Council, those councils which form Adopt South West.

This Terms of Reference has no constitutional standing, but simply serves as a guide to support the running and work of this group.

2. Scope and remit

The main focus of the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group is to maintain a strategic overview of the activity and performance of Adopt South West across the RAA area and report any significant findings or recommendations back to individual local authority scrutiny committees.

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group will also receive and consider the Adopt South West Annual Report.

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group may make recommendations to the relevant Scrutiny committees of Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay Councils but has no decision-making powers, or powers to make formal recommendations directly to any of the five local authorities' Executive/Cabinets or to Adopt South West.

3. Membership and attendance

Membership of the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group:

- Cornwall Council: Chair and Vice Chair of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Devon County Council: Chair and Vice Chair of Children's Scrutiny Committee
- Plymouth City Council: Chair and Vice Chair of Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel.
- Somerset Council: Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families
- Torbay Council: Chair or Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board.

Members of each constituent authority may nominate a substitute to attend in their absence. Any substitutions must be non-executive Members.

Other Attendance:

- Chair of the Adopt South West Strategic Partnership Board
- Chair of the Adopt South West Operational Board

- Head of Service - Adopt South West
- Scrutiny/Democratic Services Officers (to support the running of the group)

4. Frequency of meetings

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group will hold its main meeting annually in July, to consider the draft Adopt South West Annual Report.

Where business requires, additional meetings and training sessions may be held in consultation with the nominated Chair, hosting authority and Head of Service, and subject to resourcing.

5. Hosting and resourcing

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group meeting will be hosted by the local authority of the incumbent Chair, and as such will rotate annually. The 'Election of the next meeting's Chair' will be listed on the agenda at the main annual meeting.

Agenda preparation, note taking and scrutiny support will be provided by the Scrutiny/Democratic Services officer from the hosting authority. The Scrutiny/Democratic Services Officer will also draft a report on behalf of Members (referenced in paragraph 7 below).

It is expected that meetings would take place virtually, although Members may decide to meet in person if necessary.

Each constituent authority will be responsible for meeting any travel expenses incurred by its own Members and officers.

6. Agendas and reports

The agenda will be drafted by the Scrutiny/Democratic Services Officer in consultation with the Chair and the Adopt South West Manager, and will reflect the RAA Scrutiny Group's scope and remit. Additional items may be included at the discretion of the Chair.

The agenda and relevant reports will be circulated by email to Members and other attendees, five working days in advance of the meeting.

It is expected that the majority of the reports considered at the meeting will be produced by Adopt South West.

7. Reporting and local scrutiny arrangements

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group will provide a brief report to the individual local authority scrutiny committees to be considered at their next meeting of their usual Scrutiny Committee cycle. The report will summarise the information shared and any pertinent discussion points from the annual meeting of the group. Where appropriate, papers considered by the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group will be made available online.

The report may include recommendations or suggestions for the future work programmes of the individual local authority scrutiny committees.

Local arrangements for scrutinising adoption will be retained by individual local authority Scrutiny committees e.g. Each of the local authority Scrutiny committees can receive a report from the RAA Service Manager on adoption performance and outcomes for children in their local authority area (i.e. Devon's Children's Scrutiny Committee can receive a report on adoption in Devon).

Created: February 2020

Updated: July 2024

Contact: Charlie Fisher, Scrutiny Officer, Devon County Council
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19 August 2024

James McNeillie HMI
Regional Director

Ms Nancy Meehan, Director of Children's Services
Torbay Council

Sent via email: nancy.meehan@torbay.gov.uk

Dear Nancy,

Thank you for meeting with me, Dominic Stevens, Senior HMI, Social Care and Simon Rowe Senior HMI, Schools on 29 May 2024. Please extend our thanks to your team for their valuable contributions. Apologies for the delay in getting this letter to you.

Social Care

While there are clearly numbers of ongoing and emerging challenges and areas of practice that you want to strengthen, it felt like our conversation mirrored the very 'can do' and future-focussed, but honest, clear and evidence-based character of your self-assessment. We also, of course, touched on the achievements and particular areas of good practice, of which you and your colleagues are rightly proud. With both ILACS and SEND inspections in early 2022 and a 'front door' JTAI only just over six months ago I feel that we had a good body of evidence against which to compare your self-assessment as a marker of progress.

We began our conversation looking at the bigger whole council picture. Anne-Marie Bond, Chief Executive, told us how as a result of your LGA corporate challenge, you had received feedback that you are, 'a radically different council than when they last did a corporate peer challenge. You attributed this to the relational and trauma-informed approach now becoming a whole council approach. You outlined how this goes hand in hand with strong corporate and political support for children's services. For example, you said that although Torbay is a 'no overall control' council, there is no 'political point scoring' at the expense of children's services and there is a financial commitment to children. Like most councils you are under financial pressure but despite a £1 million overspend in 2023-24 you are under no pressure to make cuts and have benefitted from both a £3 million uplift and a three-year financial planning window. You have made some efficiencies, but money from this has been redirected back into services. Sufficiency of homes for children in care, wider housing pressures and ensuring the future viability of your early help hubs are your key financial pressures and three of your key priorities. Alongside this you are also focussed on the

impact of poverty and the cost of living on families, children missing education (for a variety of reasons) and ensuring that you have a workforce that is sufficient in number, experience and skills to meet the needs of your children.

You are proud of the work of the three physical, and one virtual, family hubs, and they remain central to your future plans for early help, in line with 'Stable Homes Built on Love'. You are confident that early help is now stronger and on a positive trajectory and feel that this was validated by a Spring 2023 LGA Early Help Peer Challenge, which also gave you some helpful recommendations for how to further strengthen services. You now have a higher percentage of initial contacts going through to early help and have further tightened up the 'step-down' process from CIN to early help to ensure that families receive joined up support. You are confident that your MASH is identifying risk appropriately and is helping to ensure that children receive further assessment and services in a timescale that meets their needs. You were pleased with the positive feedback from the recent 'front door' JTAI. That said, both from the JTAI and your own performance and quality management, you are concerned about the high rate of re-referrals. You have work ongoing to better understand and tackle this issue, which is particularly the case for children suffering from chronic neglect or domestic abuse and for adolescents (especially girls for who there are concerns about their mental wellbeing and about extra-familial harm). Whilst maintaining a strong focus on early help, in line with 'Stable Homes Built on Love', you have been more cautious in how early help and child in need work fit together. Whilst you are working to better align them and to ensure a progressively more seamless transition from one to the other for children, you have not fully merged these categories of work with families. You have adopted this more staged approach because you want to provide clarity for referring professionals and because you want to be assured that children are consistently getting the level of services and degree of social work assessment and oversight that matches their level and complexity of need.

The areas for improvement and priority action highlighted within the JTAI provided you with a helpful focus in discussions with some partner agencies, notably health and the police, although it is still relatively early days in terms of that post inspection planning. You shared with us that although some police colleagues who you felt were child centred have moved on the partnership is achieving progress in more joined up working. Linked to this you highlighted to us some of the ongoing work to further strengthen your approach to tackling extra-familial harm, an area that was highlighted at the JTAI as much improved. This has centred on improving the access of the exploitation team, and relevant others to up to date and relevant performance data to support practice.

As for most, if not all, local authorities in England, ensuring that you have a sufficient breadth and depth of suitable, and mostly local, homes for children in care is a challenge. The availability and cost of housing in Torbay puts an additional pressure on this, as it does for staffing. Within these constraints you continue to work to strengthen your support to these children and to improve their outcomes. There are some key areas of progress but also areas in which you acknowledge that you need to continue to focus your attention. With appropriate oversight and 'checks and balances' in place you have, over time, reduced

the number of children who need to be in care. This has been achieved through meeting needs earlier and so diverting children from the need to come into care, managed returns home, foster to adopt, and moving to other legal arrangements such as special guardianship. Based on a belief that most children do better in families, you have moved to a situation in which far fewer of your children in care are in residential care (16 at present). However, the short-term placement stability of children is not where you want it to be, many children are not receiving initial and annual health checks and dental checks in a timely manner (an area you are very actively working with health agencies on) and you currently have six children living in unregistered children's homes. You have arrangements in place to help ensure regular, strong oversight of these children in place and robust planning to move them to appropriate registered homes as soon as possible, but their situations are a measure of the challenges that exist in meeting the needs of children with particularly complex needs. Eight of your children in care are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. With the government's 0.1% figure working out as 25 children, you are expecting to welcome more asylum-seeking children to Torbay.

You have 21 care leavers who were formerly unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and so these make up a sizeable cohort with your overall care leaver population. You allocate PAs to children in care earlier than many local authorities and this gives them the opportunity to build a relationship and plan for independence in a gradual and incremental way. Accommodation for care leavers remains a challenge, with about a quarter not living in suitable accommodation. You are taking steps on a number of fronts to improve this, including through close working with housing to enhance the options and availability of housing for care leavers and through continued promotion of staying put options. You have invited Mark Riddell back again, after his 2022 visit, to look at progress and to make further recommendations.

The social work vacancy rate has steadily reduced year-on-year and is now in line with the national average at just over 15%. This is positive and says something about your continually improving ability to retain staff. You have a number of measures in place to help ensure that staff are listened to and can help to shape services and that they are equipped with the practice knowledge, skills and tools they need. These are well outlined in your SEF but include your Learning Academy, regular 'listening circles' for staff and your co-produced 'Ways of working' practice standards. You are however aware that average caseloads have crept up from high teens to 20 at the time of the JTAI, to low twenties now and you are continuing to monitor this. As well as listening to your workforce you were also keen to stress the measures you have taken, particularly over the last 12 months, to enhance the voices of children, young people and their families, both in the individual care they receive and in shaping service delivery more widely. This has included the launch of your Children and Young People's Panel, the re-launch of your Children in Care Council and the now mandatory seeking of feedback from children and families for the completion of full audits.

Focus on alternative provision (AP)

We discussed your commissioning arrangements for alternative provision. Unregistered provision is commissioned by different teams within the local authority. You state that all have their own processes to commission places for pupils. You are moving to a model where the information your teams hold is being held in one place. Placement sufficiency is now the responsibility of one manager, and there will be one contract in place for each pupil. You aim to ensure a more consistent approach to the commissioning of places going forward.

Your own local authority alternative provision has capacity for around 50 pupils. This is currently used predominantly for 6th day provision. You are looking to extend this service to conduct more outreach work. The intention is to be able to meet the needs of pupils at an earlier stage. Rightly, you recognise that understanding a pupil's needs and putting in early support will alleviate some of the pressures for the alternative provision of having to react to urgent, immediate work.

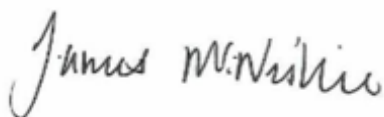
The quality assurance of alternative provision in the local authority has a focus on pupils' safety and attendance. Alternative providers produce a weekly report which includes pupils' attendance Reports on alternative providers and pupil placements are shared at your headteacher forums. This helps you, along with your key stakeholders, to have oversight of each pupil and their engagement with placements.

You state that there are a growing number of pupils accessing alternative provision and an increasing number of pupils who are on the waiting list. It is encouraging to hear that your education inclusion board now includes chief executive officers from multi-academy trusts. You are keen to use this forum to discuss and debate how you can work together effectively to ensure pupils' needs are met particularly back in their home schools. You also hope this may help some schools to be more willing to re-integrate pupils back from alternative provision when they are ready to return.

When Ofsted inspects a school, it telephones or visits a sample of alternative providers that school is using. You told us that some alternative providers feel uneasy about the prospect of these conversations/visits. We offered to speak to groups of alternative providers if that would be helpful.

Thanks to you and your colleagues for the time spent preparing and for their contributions to this useful meeting.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "James McNeillie", written in a cursive style.

James McNeillie HMI
Regional Director, South West, Ofsted