

Meeting: [Overview and Scrutiny Board](#) **Date:** [14 November 2024](#)

Wards affected: [All Wards](#)

Report Title: [Multiple Complex Needs \(MCN\) Alliance Review](#)

When does the decision need to be implemented? [n/a](#)

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Multiple Complex Needs Alliance (MCNA) was commissioned under an Alliance Agreement to better respond to and meet the needs of those who experience homelessness, drug & alcohol problem, and domestic violence or abuse. Following a mobilisation year, the Alliance went live on 21 June 2022.
- 1.2 The Alliance is now known as 'Growth in Action' (GiA) and comprises Substance misuse treatment services (Torbay Recovery Initiatives); Homeless Hostel (Torbay Council); and Domestic Violence and Abuse Support Service (Sanctuary).
- 1.3 An Alliance is where a group of providers have a contract with one or more commissioning organisations, where risk and responsibility for delivery of the contract is shared between all parties. Critically, the overall budget is held at the Alliance level rather than with individual services. The result being that the Alliance itself assumes responsibilities such as budgetary decisions and detailed performance oversight due to commissioners and providers sitting as equal partners within the Alliance and decisions being made on a democratic basis.
- 1.4 The purpose of commissioning in this way was to improve delivery for people and empower a more flexible response through involving people with lived experience and developing support collaboratively between MCNA services and those who use them.

- 1.5 To date, there has been evidence of improvement in experience and outcomes, as well as evolution in how the Alliance works collaboratively. However, progress against some of the transformative aspects of the Alliance Agreement have been sub-optimal for this point in the contract term.
- 1.6 To facilitate further focus on the transformational expectations of the Alliance Agreement, whilst retaining the ethos of the approach members of Torbay Council's MCN Alliance Oversight Board will be attending some Alliance Leadership Team meetings on a support and challenge basis.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 The proposals in this report help us to deliver our vision of a healthy, happy and prosperous Torbay by delivering a service that is seeking to bring about real sustainable change with many of those who experience greatest need and complexity in Torbay. Central to this is empowering those with lived experience of the issues as well as services by putting them at the heart of shaping the support offer to best meet their needs and aspirations through a coproduction approach.
- 2.2 The reasons for the proposal and need for the decision are that this initiative is a significant provision for delivering against the community and corporate plan and as such Overview & Scrutiny have sought an ongoing understanding of progress. Whilst there is evidence of benefit from the MCNA being realised, the timeliness and scale (particularly against the transformational ambition of the Alliance Agreement) is not wholly where it should ideally be.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 That the improvements made in the performance and quality of support as well as the positive changes made through the Multiple Complex Needs (MCN) Alliance be acknowledged.
- 3.2 That the attendance of members of the MCN Alliance Oversight Board to offer support and challenge to the Alliance Leadership Team be endorsed.
- 3.3 That the Overview and Scrutiny Board seeks assurance over the coming 12-months that the transformational opportunities afforded by the Alliance approach are observable and progressing towards realisation and a report be brought to the Board in November 2025.
- 3.4 That the Board acknowledge and highlight the lack of suitable, affordable move on accommodation is compromising the functioning and outcomes of the Alliance. This is adversely impacting on those vulnerable residents being supported but unable to move on with their lives. Consideration of funding and access to accommodation to meet the needs these residents is urgently required to address the impacts being faced.

- 3.5 That the Board acknowledge and highlight risk to delivery and outcomes gained from central government grants for drug and alcohol treatment and domestic violence and abuse support due to these coming to an end on 31 March 2025. This external grant funding has significantly benefited the available support, experience and outcomes for vulnerable Torbay residents and consideration needs to be given to this risk, impact and therefore budget considerations in 2025/26 if central government does not reinstate or mainstream this funding. For domestic abuse specifically, there remains a statutory duty to provide support in designated safe accommodation.

Background Documents

Transformational requirements of the Alliance Agreement Specification
(highlighted)

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The commissioning of the MCNA was informed by an independent business case that concluded while there was limited evidence in the public sector of the benefit of an alliance approach the learning from the private sector was sufficient to indicate such an approach may realise benefits. Against a context whereby Council budgets are constricting there was recognition that continuing with a traditional 'silo' contracting approach where individual services are procured in isolation, it would be increasingly challenging to maintain performance and quality. An Alliance approach would be more likely to as a minimum maintain delivery at the requisite level.

Performance

- 1.2 Against this contractual benchmark of maintaining performance, performance across many metrics has improved, some markedly. Key examples are:
- Throughout 23/24 the average length of stay at the hostel has reduced dramatically from over 500 days to now just over 200.
 - The Hostel's longest standing resident at 872 days successfully moved onto a social housing tenancy of their own during 2024.
 - There has been an increase in safe accommodation available through the Torbay Domestic Abuse Service.
 - The number of people accessing drug and alcohol treatment has increased, with improving numbers of people successfully completing treatment.

- There has been a significant increase in the number of people released from prison who successfully engage with drug and alcohol treatment.
- The number of people in treatment who have been referred by criminal justice partners as a proportion of the treatment population has increased quarter on quarter.

1.3 The main challenge facing the MCNA has been around access to affordable 'move on' accommodation, which is affecting throughput. This relates to the homeless hostel, the community and residential rehabilitation services as well as those in safe accommodation with the Domestic Abuse Service. Addressing this sits outside the control of the Alliance itself.

1.4 A further challenge has been the resource required of all MCNA partners in developing the Alliance operationally in bringing three separate provisions together to not only create an integrated approach but to deliver the collective transformation required of the Alliance Agreement. The structural, process and cultural demands have been, and continue to be significant.

Transformational Improvements

1.5 Against the transformational requirements of the Alliance Agreement, there have been notable improvement in collective ownership, with all services beginning to take collective responsibility as an Alliance and its outcomes. For example, an exercise has begun to understand where there may be duplication in staffing that can be consolidated for benefit across the MCNA and identifying those roles and functions currently funded through grant funding that could be mainstreamed within the existing budget.

1.6 Similarly, there has been progress in creating a coproductive model for involving people with lived experience who use services and staff to develop and improve services. Further work is needed in broadening representation from across the Alliance and making best use of this resource in understanding and developing the Alliance offer.

1.7 Additionally, there has been significant development in making sure that all services across the MCNA are trauma informed.

Transformational Issues

1.8 The areas for MCNA development that require greatest attention are:

- The primacy of relationships for people who use services, to avoid unnecessary handovers, so that people keep the trusted relationships with professionals that is known to matter most.
- The development of a sustainable and resourced learning model. This is to allow the Alliance to gain an understanding of people's experience of the support offer and using this to change and develop the offer in a continuous way to improve the experience and outcomes for people.

- The creation of an optimal coproduction model. There is recognition of the transformational opportunities of involving people with lived experience in understanding how services, work can be improved and shaped, but this can mean it takes longer to progress key activities, to ensure that those who use services are heard and acted upon. Getting the balance between benefit of coproduction as an approach; developing optimal methods for meaningfully involving those who use services; representation of service users; pace of change; and understanding impact need further work.
- Development of an Alliance-wide workforce rather than a service-specific one.

1.9 To date, a long-term strategic plan that provides a road map for achieving the aspirations stated in the Alliance Agreement has not been shared with the Oversight Board. This limits the confidence and assurance required by the Council as to how the MCNA will grow and evolve to meet the commissioned expectations over the duration of the contract.

2. Options under consideration.

2.1 Not applicable as this is a commissioned and established provision.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

3.1 Under the Alliance Agreement, all parties focus on people rather than organisational needs. Central to this is the enabling flexibility around resources, which include finances. It is in the gift of the MCNA to reallocate finances within the overarching financial envelope. There is representation in the Alliance of Torbay Council Officers with commissioning responsibilities.

3.2 For this financial year the MCNA has had additional central government grant funding for substance misuse treatment and domestic violence and abuse support. These grants come to an end on 31 March 2025.

3.3 Assurance that no stranded costs remain post-grant will be taking place from April 2025 onwards.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications for this report.

5. Engagement and Consultation

5.1 Coproduction is a central component of the MCNA. This is well embedded in the culture and practice of the MCNA but requires further iteration to be fully representative and impactful.

5.2 Further engagement with MCNA stakeholders by the Alliance is required to ensure that its development is consistent with the needs and practices of its partners.

6. Procurement Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct or immediate procurement implications because of this report.
- 6.2 Social value has been incorporated into the Alliance Agreement bidding and award process.

7. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

- 7.1 There are no direct environmental or climate change impacts as a result of this report.

8. Associated Risks

- 8.1 Additional capacity funded through central grants for substance misuse and domestic violence come to an end on 31 March 2025. There has been no formal notification from central government whether there will be an extension or mainstreaming of these grants. The planning assumption, therefore, is that there will be no further funding available for April 2025. Notification of the cessation of grant funding has been given and exit planning is commencing.
- 8.2 This additional funding has been used to achieve some significant improvements in delivery and associated outcomes achieved by the Alliance. While work is currently being undertaken by the Alliance to explore whether grant funded functions can be sustainably delivered within the financial envelope of the Alliance it is not known at this time how successful this will be.
- 8.3 There is a significant risk that additionality benefits derived from central grants will not be maintained in their entirety.
- 8.4 For domestic abuse provision, irrespective of any reduction in grant funding and mitigation of impacts, there remains a statutory duty to provide support in designated safe accommodation.
- 8.4 The greatest impact will be on those in receipt of treatment and recovery support for drug and alcohol dependence, with specific reference to those entering treatment through the criminal justice system and those who experience domestic violence and abuse.

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>	<p>The MCNA's delivery benefits directly some of the most vulnerable populations in Torbay. Family need is identified and responded to, not only adults.</p>	n/a	n/a
Carers	<p>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.</p>	<p>Recovery is integral to reducing the demands on carers significant others. Additionally supporting family members is integral to the service model.</p>	n/a	n/a
Disability	<p>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.</p>	<p>All MCNA support of inclusive, with many accessing support having physical and/or mental health difficulties. The service is open to all.</p>	n/a	n/a
Gender reassignment	<p>In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community</p>	<p>The service is open and accessible to all.</p>	n/a	n/a

	<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>			
Marriage and civil partnership	<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>The service is open and accessible to all.</p>	n/a	n/a
Pregnancy and maternity	<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>The service is open and accessible to all.</p>	n/a	n/a
Race	<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>The service is open and accessible to all.</p>	n/a	n/a

Religion and belief	64.8% of Torbay residents who stated that they have a religion in the 2021 census.	The service is open and accessible to all.	n/a	n/a
Sex	51.3% of Torbay's population are female and 48.7% are male	The service is open and accessible to all.	n/a	n/a
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.	The service is open and accessible to all.	n/a	n/a
Armed Forces Community	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 served in the UK armed forces.	The service is open and accessible to all.	n/a	n/a
Additional considerations				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)		The service is open and accessible to all. There is a focus on more deprived populations and recovery mitigates child poverty	n/a	n/a
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of		The service is a public health provision.	n/a	n/a

the population of Torbay)				
Human Rights impacts		Human rights are respected and promoted by the MCNA.	n/a	n/a
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.	The MCNA supports and protects some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Torbay directly or indirectly.	n/a	n/a

10. Cumulative Council Impact

- 10.1 The MCNA improves lives and outcomes for vulnerable communities in Torbay. This has current and future benefits for adult social care, children's social care, community and environmental services as well as reducing financial demands on the council.

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

- 11.1 The cumulative benefit is derived by the service model that recognises service delivery being built around the person in an integrated way.
- 11.2 Additionally, there is cumulative benefit at community, family and individual levels by addressing the underlying causes to trauma, distress to self and others.