

Meeting: Cabinet **Date:** 26 November 2024

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Response to Notice of Motion: Review of Torbay Sensory Services

When does the decision need to be implemented?

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Councillor Hayley Tranter, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health and Inequalities plus Communities, hayley.tranter@torbay.gov.uk

Director Contact Details: Joanna Williams, Director of Adult and Community Services, Joanna.Williams@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the Notice of Motion (Appendix 1) made to the Cabinet on 13th February 2024 by Cllr Mandy Darling, regarding Vision Rehabilitation Services. The report will outline, review and evidence the current service provided to individuals with a Sensory Impairment by Torbay Sensory Team, including but not exclusively, rehabilitation, provision of community equipment and minor adaptations. As the sensory team deliver an integrated service, the terms of the Notice of Motion were amended with permission from Cllr Darling, to include hearing impairment and dual sensory loss as well as the vision rehabilitation services.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Notice of Motion Decision Notice

Appendix 2: Sensory Team booklet

Appendix 3: Statistics from ONS on national registrations

Appendix 4: Figures for Jasmyn House

Appendix 5: CVI and SI registrant figures

Supporting Information

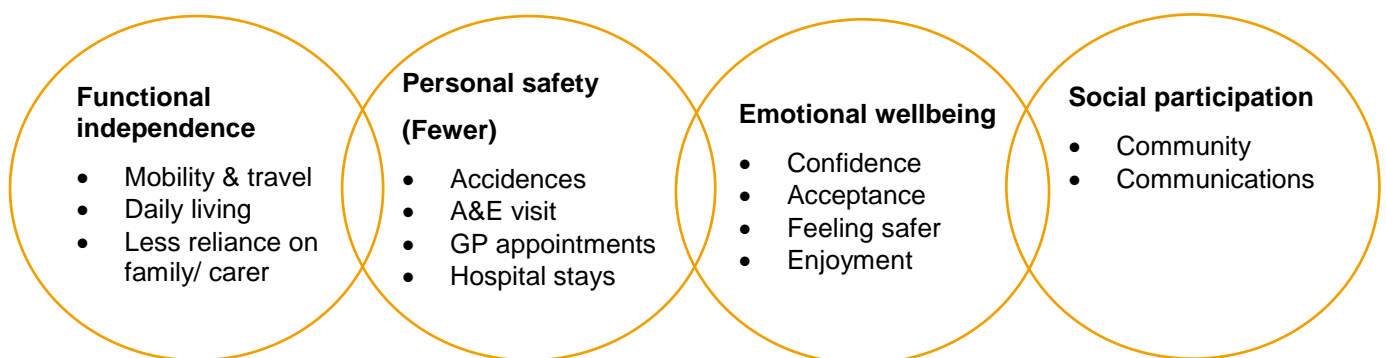
1. Introduction

- 1.1 Torbay Council (“the Council”) delegate the statutory duty to provide sensory services via the s75 Agreement between the Council and Torbay and South Devon Foundation Trust

(TSDFT). The sensory team provide specialist sensory services, including hearing, visual or dual sensory loss support to the residents of Torbay. (Appendix 2) The team consists of:

- 2 (1.6wte) Referral co-ordinators/admin,
- 4 (2.7wte) Vision Rehabilitation Specialists
- 2 (1.4wte) Rehabilitation Officers Hearing Impairment (HI)
- 1 (.8wte) Communication Support Worker
- 1 (0.8wte) Support worker/resource centre manager.

1.2 The team understand the impact of sensory loss and will aim to reduce isolation, confusion, challenges with communication, and mobility difficulties a person may experience. The team give advice, provide information, complete assessments including rehabilitation assessments, low vision assessments and annual reviews.



(2017, RNIB, Demonstrating the impact and value of vision rehabilitation)

1.3 The team also give advice to families, carers and professionals. The support is free and impartial with a focus on rehabilitation and support for people with a sensory loss to live their best lives, independently in their community. We work closely with other organisations and voluntary services to be able to sign post.

For family and informal carers

- Reduced burden of informal care
- Increased confidence as service user has support
- Decreased feelings of worry/anxiety

(2017, RNIB, Demonstrating the impact and value of vision rehabilitation)

- 1.4 The team provide demonstrations and short/long-term loans of a range of equipment that help increase independence and improve the quality of life for people both in and outside of the home. Anyone with a sight and/or hearing impairment can access this support; they do not need to be registered as having a visual impairment or hearing loss.
- 1.5 The team work alongside Guide Dogs for the Blind who hold the contract for supporting our young people in Torbay as they transition into adulthood. The team accept referrals for young people from 17.5 years old and start working with them prior to their 18th birthday, to ensure a smooth transition. Guide Dogs have supported 199 people under 18 years old in the past 3 years. As a service, the team seek ways to work in partnership with children's services and the Guide Dog charity to identifying young people with sensory loss from an earlier age. This will enhance the young person's experience and provide valuable opportunity for the team to understand and respond to emerging trends.
- 1.6 The team have established working relationships with both local and national statutory, voluntary and third sector organisations. This allows seamless joint working, avoids duplication and people being 'over assessed
- 1.7 Public health records for Torbay show a slight increase in the number of people requiring support over the past 3 years (includes under 18):

Torbay residents on the register at the end of March 2023:-

Blind/severely sight impaired – 515 (480 – March 2020)

Partial sight/sight impaired – 510 (465 – March 2020)

The Royal National Institute of Blind People have a tool which estimated 6,340 people in Torbay (2022) are living with sight loss.

1.8 The sensory team are primarily based at Jasmyn House resource centre (1 Midvale Road, Paignton, TQ4 5BD), where the team welcome people to drop in for advice, well-being support, assessment, and demonstration of equipment which includes access to several donated equipment items which can be given to people in need.

Within the resource centre, provision includes coffee mornings, craft groups, book clubs, a tinnitus group and a Lip-reading course. We arrange guest speakers such as the fire service or new tech providers to promote safety and knowledge.



The resource centre is an invaluable and heavily utilised community resource. As a small staff group, the sensory team are often able to offer a relationship-based consistent approach to individuals reducing the need for the person to continually retell their story. 100% of respondents to the customer satisfaction survey have rated the service 'excellent' with the embedded word cloud indicating some of the feedback received through this mechanism.

1.9 The sensory team run a 6-week HOPE (Help Overcoming Problems Effectively) programme which due to success will now be running twice a year to support individuals with sensory

"The course has given me tools for life going forward"

loss. The HOPE programme helps people to focus more on them as an individual, not as a condition. It aims to boost self-confidence and resilience, helping people to cope better emotionally, psychologically and practically with their conditions.

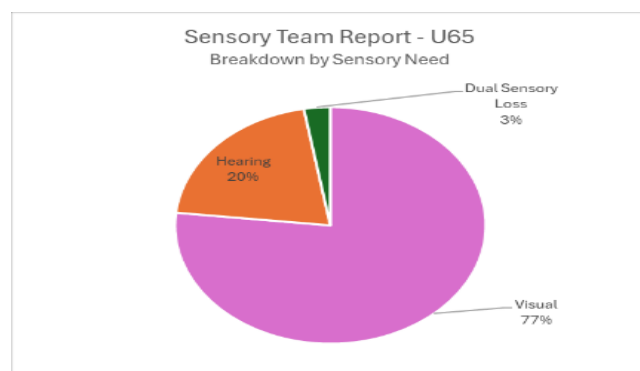
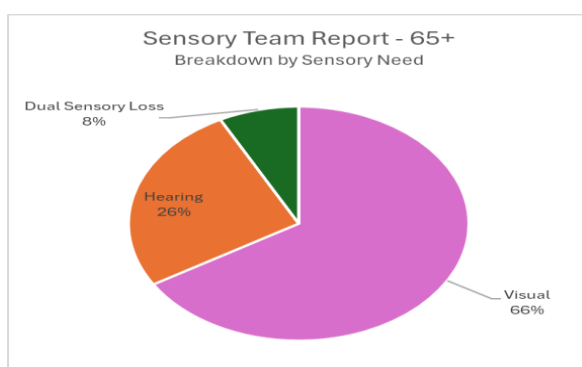
The HOPE Programme is delivered by two of the team's skilled facilitators, both of whom live with sensory loss. The outcomes and feedback from the programme have been incredibly positive.

"The facilitators lived experience, and expertise made the course more comfortable and enriching"

1.10 Performance

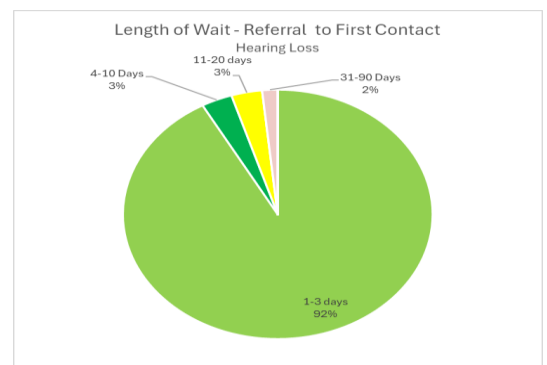
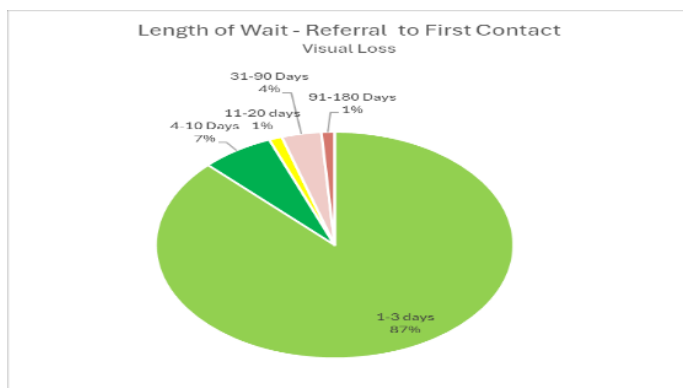
1.10.1 Demand for sensory service interventions has remained steady over the last 10 years (Appendix 3 ONS figures). The Sensory team in the past 12 months have: assessed and worked with 373 people in the community, completed 354 annual reviews, taken 253 phone calls and 455 drop ins to Jasmine House and had an average of 80 people attending groups on a weekly basis (appendix 4). Despite Torbay being a small geographical area, we have an extremely high density of people, with high levels of deprivation, further compounded by an aging population. This often results in more complex presentations requiring extended involvement from the team. There are notable referral peaks occurring in the autumn, often coinciding with the clocks changing resulting in lower lighting and shorter daylight times.

1.10.2 The team are working at capacity and utilise resources effectively, including allocating low-level Visual Impairment assessments to Rehabilitation Officer Hearing Impaired (ROHI) specialists, with additional training and support provided by Vision Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS) colleagues as this supports waiting list recovery when necessary. The breakdown of referrals made to the service are referenced below for information.



1.10.3 Hearing impaired referrals have reduced over the past few years since the GP systems have devolved and changed in Torbay. Feedback from the team and people with lived experience, indicate this is due to the increased difficulty of being able to see a GP; especially for people with a hearing loss who often struggle with telephone conversations. This is being addressed with improved working relationships with audiology, promoting the sensory service within GP practices and promoting the sensory service via social media.

1.10.4 The Torbay sensory team contact 92% of people with hearing loss and 87% with visual loss within 3 days of referral which is a significant improvement in comparison with other Local Authorities, as referenced in the [RNIB report](#) (2024) which suggests that “Some 86% of Local Authorities are missing the 28-day recommended deadline to explore a person’s needs after sight loss.” The same RNIB report further suggests that an estimated 26% of Local Authorities are leaving blind and partially sighted people waiting more than a year for a vision rehabilitation assessment and subsequent support; in Torbay most people who are deemed not to require an urgent response can expect to have an allocated worker to start work with them within 6- 8 weeks. Wait time data can be inaccurate as some people have chosen to wait longer for an initial contact or assessment due to personal reason and this can be seen in the graphs below. Most people begin their conversation with the sensory



team within the first 3 days following contact.

2. Legal Implications

- 2.1 The Care Act s77 requires Local Authorities to establish and maintain a register of adults who are severely sight-impaired and sight-impaired and ordinarily resident in their areas.
- 2.3 Under the Care Act 2014 people who are deaf/blind, experience dual sensory loss or have multi-sensory impairment are entitled to a specialist assessment which must be carried out by a trained 'L3' experienced specialist deaf blind assessor. During the past 12 months, all the team completed specialist deaf blind training.

3. Recommendations for Action post review

- 3.1 That Cabinet give thanks to the Sensory Team for their work in Torbay and note the submitted report.

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>Sensory Team work with ages 17 (transitioning to adult services) – no upper age limit.</p> <p>As Jasmyrn House Resource Centre anyone of any age can get support and information</p> <p>Under 17 service is contracted to Guide dogs for the blind</p>	None	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>Sensory Team work with paid and unpaid carers, as well as all family members to support our clients. The team refer carers for carer assessments where appropriate.</p>	None	N/A
Disability	<p>In the 2021 Census, 23.8% of Torbay residents answered</p>	<p>Torbay Sensory Team are a specialist Disability Team and work alongside</p>	<p>To ensure that clients preferred</p>	<p>On-going work by the</p>

	<p>that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.</p>	<p>clients with a multitude of other Disabilities, illnesses and conditions. The team joint work with colleagues from Statutory, voluntary and the third sector to get the best possible support for our clients.</p> <p>The team work hard to ensure that our clients preferred communication formats are recorded accurately and followed.</p>	<p>communication be achieved whether this is BSL or large print</p>	<p>disability information service.</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community 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>The team work alongside local partners, working with the LGBT+ community to ensure awareness of the service</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>N/A</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>None</p>	<p>N/A</p>
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</p>	<p>We work with any parent with sensory loss.</p> <p>As The team work with age 17 and above., The team work with any parent</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>N/A</p>

	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.	who has a Sensory impairment to support them to fulfil their parental duty as independently as possible.		
Race	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.	We recognise some people from ethnic minority backgrounds may experience barriers accessing the service. For people who speak English as an additional language there are translation services where appropriate.	To ensure this information is recorded accurately with client consent	Staff members On-going
Religion and belief	64.8% of Torbay residents who stated that they have a religion in the 2021 census.		None	N/A
Sex	51.3% of Torbay's population are female and 48.7% are male			

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 team work alongside local partners working with the LGBT+ community to ensure awareness of the service	None	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 serviced in the UK armed forces.	The team work closely with various organisations including Blind Veterans to ensure our clients receive as much support as is required	None	N/A
Additional considerations				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)	Torbay is known to have some areas that fall within the top 20% of deprived areas in the country	We recognise the social and economic barriers can hinder a person's ability to seek support. Everybody we work with are treated fairly under the eligibility criteria.	None	N/A
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of	Torbay has an aging population, and with advance	These factors have and will continue to potentially increase our workload over	To ensure the team have planned and increase in service	To consider in forward planning for

the population of Torbay)	in medicine – conditions are being found earlier.	time and also increase the complexity of clients The team see	need, in anticipation of this increased demand and complexity of need we are workforce planning.	the Sensory Team.
Human Rights impacts		Every person is treated equally and given choice. It is not anticipated that this decision would adversely impact a person's Human Rights.	None	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.	There is a seamless transition from child to children's services and those children with any Sensory impairment are getting the support and services they require. The team work closely with Guide Dogs for the Blind who currently hold the contract for children with sight loss.	None	To be investigated for future planning

10. Cumulative Council Impact

10.1 None

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

11.1 None