

Torbay

Area Assessment

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oneplace

for an independent overview
of local public services

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Torbay at a glance

This independent assessment by six inspectorates sets out how well local public services are tackling the major issues in Torbay. It says how well they are delivering better results for local people and how likely these are to improve in future. If, and only if, our assessment shows that the following special circumstances are met in relation to a major issue, we use flags to highlight our judgements. We use a green flag to highlight where others can learn from outstanding achievements or improvements or an innovation that has very promising prospects of success. We use a red flag to highlight where we have significant concerns about results and future prospects that are not being tackled adequately. This means that local partners need to do something more or different to improve these prospects.

Green flags - exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from

No green flags have been identified for Torbay

Red flags - significant concerns, action needed

 Red flag: Helping the worst off

The local area

Torbay is an urban area in South Devon in a region known as the English Riviera. Its population is 134,000 with most residents living in the towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham. Torbay is home to more older people than average and these numbers are growing. Deprivation - poverty, poor housing and health - is worse than the national average. Unemployment and the number of people who claim housing benefits are high and wages low.

The next section tells you how Torbay's public services are doing in each of their local priority areas.

How is Torbay doing?

Pride in the Bay

Torbay's citizens live in a clean and attractive environment. Torbay Partnership is having some success in tackling climate change. It is developing plans to reduce carbon emissions that lead to global warming and aims to reduce water and energy use. Torbay exceeded its own waste recycling targets this year but is still worse than many other areas in the south west.

The Council keeps the streets clean and free from litter and graffiti although local people do not always recognise this.

Culture and leisure in Torbay is improving. More people including vulnerable, disadvantaged and older people are enjoying the Bay's cultural and leisure activities. New attractions such as Torre Abbey are popular and more are planned.

Learning and skills for the future

The Council has improved its rating for children's services from "adequate" last year to "performs well" this. It has a good understanding of children and young people's needs in the area. The health of children and young people is improving. Exam results in recent years have improved faster than the national average. South Devon College is rated as "outstanding" and day care for children is improving. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training is relatively low. This is potentially good for the future of Torbay's economy as people will have the skills that employers need.

The quality of nursery, primary and secondary schools and sixth forms is average. Fostering services are good but the adoption agency is inadequate. The number of young people offending for the first time is high but re-offending is low. Torbay's children and young people who live in less well off areas do not achieve so well. There is high child poverty. More young people than in other areas have reported that they use alcohol or drugs.

The new economy

Torbay is tackling its weak economy - for a long time it has suffered from high unemployment and low wages. The Community Plan, 'Turning the Tide' and Mayor's vision are a clear commitment to meeting the economic needs of each town in the Bay. Partners like the Council and business sector understand the issues and are working hard to get to grips with them. They are investing in the right areas and there are some signs of improvement. Torbay encourages people to start new businesses and grow existing ones.

Partners have worked well to deal with the effects of the recession. Unemployment has increased but not as fast as in other areas. The Council is working closely with its partners to help more people make benefit claims, pay bills quicker, and fund credit unions that help protect vulnerable people from loan sharks.

The proposed South Devon link road into Torbay is a good opportunity to improve transport links in the area and create new jobs. Partners do well at providing opportunities for education, training and employment opportunities for 16-18 year olds. Housing partners provide reasonable numbers of new homes, including some that people in the Bay can afford, but still cannot meet demand. The state of houses for rent in the private sector is poorer than in other areas.

Stronger communities

People are living longer but there remains a big gap in life expectancy between Torbay's most and least deprived communities. Alcohol-related health problems continue to rise. The rate of teenage women who become pregnant in Torbay has been rising for years and the rate is higher than in most of England. Partners such as the Police, Council and Torbay Care Trust are addressing the problems but with few obvious signs of success yet.

The Police and Council work well together and this is bringing crime down. In particular, violent crime at night has reduced by 25 per cent. Fewer residents now think there is a problem with drugs or drunk and rowdy behaviour in public. Partners work well together to create stronger communities and people get on well.

The Council, in partnership with Torbay Care Trust provides good services for adults that need care such as older people or people with learning disabilities. But plans for older people do not look far enough ahead or cover all the issues of an increasingly ageing population. Public satisfaction with health services is among the best in England.

About Torbay

A recent survey shows that in Torbay 82 per cent of people are satisfied with their immediate local area as a place to live. This is broadly the same as the average for similar areas and broadly the same as the national average of 81 per cent.

Torbay is an urban area in South Devon in a region known as the English Riviera. It is a popular tourist destination with 35 kilometres of coastline. Most of its residents live in the towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham.

Torbay's population is 134,000 and this increases by up to 50 per cent during the busiest holiday periods. Torbay is home to more older people than average and these numbers are growing. The ethnicity of the area is mostly white, with the proportion of minority ethnic people below average.

Like other seaside resorts, deprivation - poverty, poor housing and health - is worse than the national average. Unemployment and the number of people who claim housing benefits are high. The local economy relies on tourism for many jobs and this contributes to seasonal employment and low wages.

The local strategic partnership, known as Torbay Together brings together the Council, Care Trust, Police, Fire and voluntary, community and business organisations.

How well do priorities for Torbay express community needs and aspirations?

Public organisations in the Bay - like the Council, Police Health and Fire - have a good understanding of people's needs. They look at information together to help them understand what life is like for people in Torbay and to find out the things that will affect their quality of life in the future. They have made sure they set priorities that match what local people say is important. Important issues for local people are affordable decent housing, better job prospects, community safety and activities for young people. Young people have identified parks and green spaces, cleaner streets with less litter and better shops as important.

Partners in Torbay are sensitive to the needs of people from different walks of life. For example they have listened to people from black and minority ethnic communities, people with disabilities, and lesbian and gay people to find out what they think of services and to say what needs to happen in future. Links have also been made with migrant workers and gypsies and travellers.

Partners work well together in a partnership called Torbay Together. Led by the Mayor, the Partnership has developed a long term (twenty years) plan to address Torbay's issues. The Partnership is well managed and receives good and relevant information. It has agreed an ambitious local area agreement - a set of future targets agreed by Torbay partners and government - that shows clear commitment by all partners to long term improvement. But there are not always plans to say how they will achieve the targets. Nor have partners always set measures that they can track to see if they are being successful. For example it is not clear how, over time, Torbay will reduce deprivation or improve how well people feel they get on together.

Local partners recognise that people are often most concerned about issues in their own local neighbourhood. For this reason the Council supports twelve community partnerships which involve people in decision-making at a local level. This is encouraging but the number of people in Torbay who feel able to influence decisions in their locality is lower than the average.

Providing value for money from public services is important to the public and will be a challenge with expected cuts in public spending in future years. All public services have made efficiency savings in recent years. Partners in Torbay recognise that money will be tight in future. They are taking some innovative early steps to help them save money in the future without reducing the quality of services. The Police, Council, Care Trust, Fire Service and others are working out the total amount of money they spend in the Bay. They then plan to look at whether they can work even more closely together to deliver services more efficiently between them.

Pride in the Bay

Most people in Torbay are satisfied with Torbay as a place to live. People in the Bay, have in the past, said that clean streets and better parks and green spaces are important to them. The Council has responded to this and increased the money it spends on these issues. It is doing well at keeping the Bay looking good.

The Bay has the second highest number of Blue Flags and Quality Coast Awards in the country. In 2009 Torbay has been given five blue flag awards

for its beaches. But this is down from seven a few years ago. Preston beach lost its blue flag award but still holds one of the Bay's 9 Quality Coast awards. Several parks are now run by community groups.

The area is well kept. The Council quickly deals with fly-tipping, graffiti and abandoned cars. Schools are getting more involved in keeping the place tidy. Torbay Council encourages young people to take pride in their environment. For example it rewards young people who help with beach cleaning, rubbish collecting, and planting bulbs in parks. Areas that some people would like to see the Council take more action on include litter dropping, the problems caused by seagulls and dog fouling.

People in Torbay do not recycle as much rubbish as people in other parts of the south west, but this is improving. The Council raises public awareness of recycling and is making it easier to recycle a wider range of household goods such as batteries and furniture. It has started a monthly garden waste collection in Brixham and Torquay and this is composted on a local farm. But public satisfaction with doorstep recycling and recycling centres and tips is low. More progress will be needed if Torbay is to meet the national recycling target of 40 per cent by 2010.

Torbay's carbon emissions are lower than other areas and residents benefit from clean air. The Partnership, led by the Council, is developing plans to further reduce carbon emissions by reducing the water and energy it uses. It raises awareness of local people and encourages them to reduce energy and minimise the waste they produce. The Partnership is starting to build its knowledge of places with high levels of emissions. The Council leads the way in its work with schools, libraries and South Devon College. Other partners such as health and local business need to join in more.

The Partnership faces the challenge of increasing economic activity at the same time as trying to meet national targets to reduce the Bay's carbon footprint. Part of the solution will be to reduce car use in the Bay - perhaps by looking at cycle lanes and park and ride schemes and by encouraging more school children and students to walk to schools and colleges. There is good public satisfaction with bus services.

The Council is improving the number and quality of activities for local people and visitors. Torre Abbey reopened as a major cultural and tourist attraction following a £6.5 million makeover and provides art gallery space and community events. More projects are planned to improve parks, leisure centres, historic buildings such as Berry Head, and coastal attractions. Encouragingly the Council is making sure that these facilities are available to all, for example there is good use of libraries, museums and galleries by older and disabled people.

Learning and skills for the future

Torbay has a good understanding of what children and young people want. The health of children and young people is slowly improving. More young people see a dentist, and take part in sports at school. Children's services work well together to spot problems affecting children's well-being before they get too serious and stop them getting worse. There are fewer young

obese children than in similar areas. But there are too many children living in poverty, a higher than average number of under 15s that are not in good health, and a relatively high number of children taking drugs and drinking alcohol that end up in hospital.

The quality of early years' education and day care provision compares very well to national standards. Primary schools' quality is close to the average, but secondary schools are below average. By age 11 children achieve as well in schools as in similar areas, and at 16 they do better. Successes include improving results in early year's education and South Devon College is now rated as outstanding. At both ages 11 and 16 there has been some success over recent years in narrowing the gap between pupils from low-income families and the rest. Persistent absenteeism in secondary schools is high but has gone down substantially.

The number of 17-year olds staying on in education or training is about the same as in similar areas and there are much lower numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training. Young people from low-income families at 19 in getting GCSEs (or equivalent) do better than average, but they do worse in getting A-level qualifications. The numbers of these young people going on to university is comparatively low and getting lower.

Some persistent problems are being tackled but others not quickly enough. The standard of behaviour in secondary schools is well below average. The number of young people offending for the first time is high. However, the youth offending service works well and re-offending is low. Special school provision is below national average standards, and young people with special educational needs or disabilities do worse in school than the national average. Provision for these young people after 16 is good. Improving support for young people with special educational needs or disabilities is a priority for local services.

The fostering service is good but the adoption agency is inadequate. Children in public service care were less likely to have stable placements than average. A comparatively high number of those leaving care move into education, training or employment and get suitable housing. Local services work well together to identify safeguarding problems early and to provide support to stop them getting worse. Where there are serious concerns about children and young people's welfare, services are prompt to assess children's needs.

Torbay is investing in learning and skills and improving access for local communities. Torbay is spending nearly £33 million on new schools, including £16.8 million towards the new Torquay Community College (TCC). The new college offers a wider range of services such as an adult learning centre for the community, a library and a crèche. This will also improve sports facilities.

The new economy

Partners like Torbay Council and Development Agency and business organisations have a good understanding of the Bay's economy. They are starting to work well with the business sector to tackle the difficult issues they face but there is still much more to do. Torbay's economy remains the weakest economy in the south-west. It is only two thirds as wealthy as the

national average and in the last five years Torbay experienced only half of the growth of the rest of Devon.

Torbay's response to the recession is making an impact. Unemployment and the number of people claiming benefits are the highest in the South West but they are not rising as fast as in some other areas. The Council is dealing with an increase in benefit claims, paying bills quicker, and funding credit unions that help protect vulnerable people from loan sharks. Torbay Pound gives access to banking for people with financial problems. The Council supports voluntary organisations to give good support to people especially older people and families coping with debt.

Torbay's economy shows better prospects for improvement. Torbay Development Agency is delivering economic projects for Torbay Council. Also proposals for a local economic development company are seen as a good way to bring in more investment into Torbay. Partners in Torbay Together have good plans for the future. The Mayoral Vision identifies 23 regeneration schemes and is planning to use the Council's buildings and land to support many of these. They are focusing on less well off areas. The Council is spending over £5.4 million on Brixham's new fish market which includes a restaurant and offices. The new Lymington Road Innovation Centre in Torquay is giving fledgling businesses a good start. These initiatives provide jobs now and in the future for local people.

Partners are working with South Devon College to make sure that young people get the skills they need to help them find jobs. South Devon College provides good training courses that will develop skills for people that business in the area needs. They are working hard to provide opportunities for young people. Good numbers of 16 to 18-year-olds are in education, employment or training. Partners have worked well to make this a priority and have set up some high quality learning programmes for young people. Partners support employers to take on apprentices - 85 young people have been placed into a wide variety of occupations.

Partners in Torbay work well together to support businesses. The Council and partners such as Business Link give good advice and guidance to businesses that are facing financial problems. They support business owners if they go bankrupt. The Town Centre Company gives good support to town centre businesses in Torquay and a new urban enterprise programme is aiming to create new jobs in deprived parts of Torbay.

Despite some of this good work significant challenges need to be overcome if Torbay's economy is to recover. The biggest challenge is in improving the prospects for those living in the poorest areas. This is important because low wages and debt are big issues for many families in Torbay. Also Torbay may be hit hard by any future public spending squeeze. Nearly a third of Torbay's jobs are in the public sector. Not all projects to bring in money and jobs are evaluated for their impact on people living in Torbay's most needy areas.

Future recovery of the economy will also partly depend on how well the Council and partners can improve road access in and out of the Bay and direct rail links to the rest of the country. There are good direct coach services to the rest of the country but direct rail links are limited. Main roads in and out of Torbay can get congested. Proposals for a South Devon link road from Kingskerswell to Torquay are, therefore, a good opportunity to improve

access to the Bay. This can help in attracting new businesses and skills to the Bay.

Housing partners such as the Council and housing companies and associations are working well together to improve housing in the Bay. They are delivering good numbers of new homes and a reasonable number of these are affordable to rent or buy. But demand for affordable housing is five times higher than current supply. Housing partners could help more by making sure empty houses are let again more quickly. A fifth of people in Torbay live in privately rented houses. But a higher proportion of these than in other areas are not in good condition. The Council cannot control this directly but does give grants for improvement. It needs to make plans to see what else it can do to work with landlords to improve conditions. The Council has not previously dealt with housing benefit claims as quickly as others and has missed opportunities to maximise government funding. We will inspect this service in December 2009.

Stronger communities

Red flag: Helping the worst off

Torbay, like some other seaside resorts, has pockets of deprivation - 15,000 residents live in conditions similar to the worst 10 per cent in England in terms of poverty, housing and health. Torbay Together - the Council, Care Trust, police, housing and other organisations - has not yet done enough to help the worst off in the Bay. The partners have started to respond and the progress being made with Torbay's economy can help. But they do not have clearly defined aims setting out what it is they hope to achieve for the worst off or the responsibilities of each partner. Nor have they set targets and milestones that they can measure to check if they are succeeding.

Torbay is the 71st most deprived area out of 354 in England. Some seaside resorts attract people who are less well off and Torbay is no exception. In the deprived parts of the Bay, many people lack jobs or are low-paid. Housing is often of lower quality. More people in these areas smoke and drink too much and have poorer physical and mental health. There is more crime, particularly violence in the home. For a variety of reasons, people from poorer areas attend hospitals for treatment more often. Poverty and lack of opportunity are likely to be playing a part in the high number of teenage pregnancies.

As well as the hardships people have to face, there is a financial cost to police, health and council services if they do not work closely together to prevent such problems before they arise. These organisations, along with housing providers, are now starting to tackle deprivation. Health and education for children from low-income families are improving. Partners are getting to grips with the Bay's economic problems. They are also spending more money on reducing smoking and drug misuse and have recently set up a group to work together in one of the poorer neighbourhoods. These building blocks are welcome but they are not co-ordinated and have made few obvious differences yet to the quality of life for the worst off.

What's being done in response?

Partners recognise the need to develop clearer plans setting out what they will do to improve the quality of life of Torbay's poorer neighbourhoods and how they will know when they have been successful. The approach being taken in one neighbourhood will be rolled out to other neighbourhoods if it is successful. The inspectorates will monitor progress in the coming year.

Stronger communities

The Council and police working with community and voluntary organisations seek to maintain community spirit in the Bay. Torbay does not have as broad a mix of people as some areas in the country and its communities are fairly strong. Partners promote tolerance of people from different backgrounds and cultures.

Public organisations have a good understanding of the needs of people from different walks of life. They are taking effective action to address some of them. For example they have developed a DVD to help students from abroad understand local customs and feel welcome when they arrive. A welcome pack has also been produced for new migrant workers. The Council has supported a local multi-cultural group with the organisation of two festivals to reflect different national cultures - the Teranga Festival and Fiesta Comunidad celebrated multi-cultural values. These actions are helping to improve relationships between people from different backgrounds.

The Council and groups of local people are working together to improve relationships between older and younger generations. Council street wardens have encouraged young people in projects to organise a tea dance, pick litter and help older people in their gardens. Torbay Together includes representatives from volunteer groups. Many people work in the community as volunteers. The Partnership recognises that voluntary and community organisations have an important role in helping public services to serve local people well. It has set a target to improve the support it gives to volunteer groups.

The number of people in Torbay who think people from different backgrounds get on is above the national average but below the South West average. Partners like the Council and Police have not developed plans to try to improve these perceptions in the future.

Partners such as the Council, Police, Housing and Care Trust have started a neighbourhood management project in Hele to help make life better for local people there. This could save money in the area too. Improving people's lives now can save having to spend on Police and hospital services later. The project is innovative and encouraging. But it is too early to see whether the approach will improve life for Hele's residents. The partners intend to roll the approach out to other neighbourhoods but have no specific plans in place yet. Also the Partnership has not set out in detail what results they hope to see from this project. They have not set targets and milestones so they can know if they are on track.

The Council with the voluntary sector has worked hard to tackle homelessness and potential homelessness. But homelessness can be a difficult issue in some seaside resorts and Torbay is no exception. The numbers of people accepted as homeless are high. This puts pressure on council services.

The use of temporary accommodation for families and the length of time people spend in hostels and bed and breakfasts is also high.

Health and social care

The Council and Torbay Care Trust are performing well in providing adult social care. More people can choose the services they receive and have their own budgets to pay for them. There is more effort to support people in their own homes rather than spending money on residential and day care. More carers are being identified, assessed and provided with services.

Torbay Together has a good knowledge of the health needs in the area. It works hard to improve people's health and reduce the differences between the most deprived and wealthiest areas of the Bay. For example people in better off neighbourhoods live 8 years longer than those in the worst off. Although the health of people in Torbay is getting better, health problems are still highest in less well off areas. Torbay Care Trust, the Council and partners are committed to reducing this gap.

Partners are stopping people from smoking and taking drugs. The Torbay Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) achieves good results and is highly rated by health inspectors. Torbay is achieving its targets for reducing the number of drug users who stay on courses. The Care Trust has put more effort into helping people stop smoking in the last two years and as a result is one of the few areas in the south-west that has achieved its national targets.

Growing numbers of people in Torbay suffer from the harmful effects of drinking alcohol. Hospital admissions for alcohol related problems are high and alcohol related deaths among men are much worse than many places. People living in the poorer parts of Torbay are up to five times more likely to end up in hospital through liver disease caused by drinking alcohol. Partners have invested more money in preventing alcohol abuse and this is beginning to show some results.

There are some issues that the Partnership needs to do more on. Mental health remains a significant issue within Torbay. Deaths and hospital admission rates in some parts of the area are higher than the national average. People in the least well-off parts of Torbay with mental health problems are more likely to need emergency hospital care. This could be because people in deprived areas are less likely to seek help at an early stage, or because they have other problems and misuse drugs or alcohol. Partners recognise they need a better understanding of the reasons for this. They know it is better and more cost effective to prevent health problems than to treat them in hospital. The Care Trust and other public organisations have plans to improve services for people who misuse drugs or alcohol or have other mental health problems. We will check these areas in more detail next year.

The rate of teenage women who become pregnant is still higher in Torbay than in other places in the south, or in most of England. Partners like the Council and Care Trust have worked hard to understand and address the issues. In the last 2 years they have put more money into sexual health and free contraceptive services for young people. This money is spent on more clinics and better practical advice to young women and men including health education visits to schools and colleges, and an advice shop in Torquay town

centre. But it is too early to see if this is working.

More time and money is being spent by partners to help young mothers in the least well-off parts of the Bay. Young mothers now get more home visits from specially trained staff. This will help them to learn better parenting skills that will keep their young children healthy. This is good for the individuals involved but also it makes financial sense for tax payers. Less money will need to be spent on treating the health problems that might otherwise arise.

Public satisfaction with health services is very high. Torbay people's satisfaction with South Devon Hospital in Torquay is the highest in the England. Satisfaction with GPs is the fifth highest in the country.

Community safety

Torbay is a safe place to live. Partners such as the police, council, probation, fire, NHS and business and voluntary organisations work well together. Total crime fell by 5 per cent last year. In particular, burglary and theft of vehicles fell by a quarter and violent crime reduced.

Partners have a good understanding of local issues and are taking action to deal with them, for example, using the 'car5afe' project to help reduce vehicle crime. They also recognise that problems are not evenly spread and are addressing problem local hotspots such as the town centres of Torquay and Paignton, particularly at night. The Police and Council know what is important to local people. They are tackling anti-social behaviour as it is linked to many other issues such as fear of crime, and criminal damage. They are also committed to reducing drug related crime, domestic abuse, road traffic accidents, and re-offending rates.

Anti-social behaviour is a concern to local people and the partners are working hard to tackle this and keep people informed about what they are doing. For example, partners have established a family intervention project to work with families with problems. This has improved their behaviour and also, in some cases, lifestyles leading to better health. This provides good value for money too as it is more cost-effective to prevent crime and health problems than to deal with them. The partners publish monthly briefings describing what they are doing about anti-social behaviour on the web. As a result of initiatives like these, more people in Torbay than other areas think that the council and police are dealing well with anti-social behaviour.

The police, fire and Council work well with younger people. Fire and police have set up a cadet scheme to teach young people skills and values. They also promote safety initiatives. They provide activities such as discos and sports to occupy young people and keep them out of trouble.

The Police and partners have reduced the problems linked to night time disturbances. There is good joint working in place, particularly at the Harbourside. In the last two years they have reduced night time crime by two fifths. The partners have introduced a number of good ideas. Street Pastors work well to keep people safe at night by helping those who are drunk or in need of medical help. The "SASH" campaign provides helpful information to vulnerable young women. A "SafeBus" has been set up at the harbourside. It is run by volunteers, medical staff and fire staff and helped 138 people last

year. This has helped to cut down alcohol related attendances at the Accident and Emergency Department and freed emergency services to deal with other incidents around the Bay.

The Community Safety Partnership which includes the Council and Police is addressing domestic abuse well and spending more money on it. New developments include, an awareness raising campaign, better victim support and a specialist domestic violence court. There is good housing support and refuge facilities for women and children. The Partnership works well to identify and support victims of domestic violence, including men.

Older people

Partners like the Council, Care Trust and voluntary organisations work well together to look after older people who need care. Torbay provides good services for older people. There are few delays when people are ready to go home from hospital. Services for people who have memory problems like dementia are good. More older people than the national average are satisfied with the support they get to live in their own homes.

The Council, Care Trust and other partners make sure they provide help to people when they need it most. They are putting more money into stopping older people needing treatment in hospital or going into a residential home. They are doing this by investing in home alarms, preventing falls and by providing short and prompt spells of nursing and therapy at home. This provides good value for money for tax payers. Helping people stay safely at home is more caring and efficient than treating people in hospital later.

Planning ahead to address the challenges and opportunities of a growing older population is not good enough. Torbay has a higher number of older people than most other areas, particularly aged over 85. Also these numbers are growing fast. The partners have a plan but senior managers have not been tracking its progress effectively. Also, the plan does not look far enough ahead and does not address all the issues and opportunities of an ageing population. We will look more closely at this next year.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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