

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

17 November 2025

-: Present :-

Councillor Law (Chairwoman)

Councillors Fellows (Vice-Chair), Tolchard and Twelves

Non-voting Co-opted Members

Jim Funnell – (Voluntary and Community Sector and Alternative Provider Education)

Tanny Stobart (Play Torbay – Representing Voluntary Children and Young People Sector)

Nigel Yelland (Devon and Cornwall Police - virtually)

(Also in attendance: Councillors Bye, Chris Lewis, Spacagna (virtually) and David Thomas)

25. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nicolaou, Jo Hunter (Co-opted Member) and Mike Cook (Non-voting Co-opted Member who was represented by Jim Funnell).

26. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Board held on 29 September 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

27. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

28. Young and Young Adult Carers Update

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services – Councillor Bye, Carers Lead - Katy Heard and Young Carers Manager - Jessica Tucker provided an overview of the submitted report in respect of support for young and young adult carers in Torbay and responded to questions.

Members asked questions in relation to the following:

- How many young carers were registered at the moment? Were there hidden carers and what was the Council doing to overcome this?
- Was training targeted towards parents as well?
- What was the attendance at lunchtime clubs and how was the impact measured?
- What was the clear offer for secondary school-aged young carers (13+)?
- How do schools promote young carers' services and drop-ins?
- What were barriers to accessing services (language, home visits)?
- What about transport barriers for engagement?
- How were opportunities for digital communication being used?

The following responses were received:

- The number of Young Carers linked with Torbay Young Carers was 580 (their levels of involvement with the Service varies i.e. some more intensive, some at school drop-ins). The number of 16 + 17 Young Adult Carers (YACs) active to Torbay Young Adult Carer Service was 51 and the number of 18-25 YACs active to Torbay YAC was 192. Many remained unidentified because they do not self-identify or understand what being a carer means. There were many more of both young carers (YC) and YAC believed to be in the community, which was why there was a need for further work to assist early identification – which links to the Council's Commitment to Carers, being refreshed on 20 November 2025 – Carers' Rights Day, and the Memorandum of Understanding for Young Carers which was signed off in June 2025. Actions being taken included:
 - Carer awareness training for Children's Services staff starting December 2025.
 - A three-tiered training approach for professionals and schools to help identify carers.
 - Continuous cycle of training due to staff turnover.
- Training was also targeted at parents. Parents often resist and struggle to acknowledge their child as a carer due to stigma. Initiatives being taken include:
 - Carers celebration events open to all.
 - Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Children's Services and Adult Services to encourage whole-family thinking.
 - Activities for children to reduce negative perceptions of social care.
- Attendance at lunchtime clubs was low and under review with an impact measurement being developed, for example Orchard Forest Day during school holidays which was well attended and fostered meaningful relationships.
- Current offer for young carers was unclear. Plans include:
 - Integration with Youth Hub and Youth Service.
 - Consultation starting January 2026 for three months, linked to Young Carers Action Day (March 2026).
- Promotion of young carers services varies by school. Common methods include:
 - Newsletters, posters, and staff awareness.

- Teacher referrals based on observed patterns (lateness, homework struggles).
- Dedicated workers in schools with strong pastoral links.
- Language like “intervention” can deter families. Home visits can be intrusive. It often takes seven contacts for someone to accept they are a carer. Mental health stigma was reducing, but substance misuse remains sensitive with families.
- Transport was a major issue for out-of-school activities. Solutions include:
 - Locating activities near bus routes.
 - Previously used minibuses and parental collection.
 - Affordable, accessible venues like libraries.
- The Team was exploring different electronic means of communicating with young people for example:
 - Instagram, TikTok for outreach.
 - Text messaging as a safe communication method.
 - Demonstration planned for Spond, an online group management tool.

Members noted the contents of the submitted report.

29. Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Support for Children and Young People - October 2025

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services – Councillor Bye, the Director of Women and Children's Improvement NHS Devon – Su Smart and Holly Billington - Family Devon Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provided an overview of the submitted report in respect of support for children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health and responded to questions.

Members asked questions in relation to the following:

- The report was Devon-wide; what does it mean for Torbay?
- When will we know if the pilot was successful?
- Were care experienced children prioritised for mental health support?
- Why don't we have guaranteed access within 10 days like other areas for care experienced children and young people?
- What feedback had been received from school-based Teams?
- How many schools have not signed up?
- Were eating disorders increasing due to weight-loss jabs?

The following responses were received:

- Data was specific to Torbay. Torbay leads the way with 70% school coverage (compared to 60% Devon average). Recruitment challenges were less severe locally.
- NHS England was reviewing expansion for neurodiversity inclusion. There was no confirmed timeframe, but colleagues were pushing locally for quick implementation.

- Prioritisation was clinically driven by risk and complexity. Care experienced children were given a booked appointment within 8 weeks of referral and were given the highest complexity of need.
- Focus had been on reducing overall waiting times. A triage pilot was due to start in January 2026: all referrals would get a phone call within 14 days, with risk assessment and signposting.
- Teams report:
 - High engagement and award-winning status.
 - Challenges with behaviour policies and parental expectations.
 - Need for more neurodiversity training and flexibility.
 - Plans for workshops with Parent Carer Forum.
- About 6,000 children lack Mental Health Schools Team (MHST) coverage, including home-educated children. Members requested representatives from the MHST to be invited to attend a future meeting of the Sub-Board.
- There had been a few cases of children accessing adult jabs, but no significant trend. Proactive measures include:
 - Body image videos for ages 5–8, parents, and professionals.
 - Focus on neurodiverse children and food issues.

The following links were provided after the meeting which contain key information on mental health support, which Members were encouraged to share:

Mental Health Support Teams:

This link covers the full offer, which schools they we are in and key resources: [The Mental Health Support Team in Schools \(MHST\) - Children and Family Health Devon](#)

Lumi Nova - [Lumi Nova: A therapeutic game for children's worries and anxiety - Children and Family Health Devon](#)

YouTube Videos for Mental health Support Teams: [Mental Health Support Team \(MHST\)](#)

Specific 'Overview of MHST' featuring Torbay: [Mental Health Support Team \(MHST\)](#)

Body image support: [Body image workshops - Children and Family Health Devon](#)

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that Members of the Children and Young People's Overview Scrutiny Sub-Board note the contents of the submitted report;
2. that Members acknowledge the significant improvements highlighted in the report and the support the proposed work going forward; and
3. that all Councillors to be requested to identify locations for My Way sessions to be held across Torbay and share with NHS Devon.

30. Wraparound Programme

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services – Councillor Bye, the Senior Early Years Advisory Teacher – Emma Kerridge and the Lead for Wraparound – Emily Mitchell provided an overview of the submitted report in respect of the Wraparound Project and responded to questions.

Members asked questions in relation to the following:

- What does the funding pay for?
- Have all schools within multi-academy Trusts rolled it out?
- Was the £100k additional to what we already have for out of school activities?
- Will the Government extend the programme?
- Was home working impacting uptake?
- What was offered during Wraparound?
- Were breakfast clubs part of this offer?
- Could schools be flexible on costs for families on free school meals?

The following responses were received:

- Wraparound funding could be used for staff training, resources, and scaling up provision.
- Not all schools within multi-academy Trusts rolled it out. Barriers included sustainability concerns and need for face-to-face engagement.
- This was additional funding, the original allocation was £423,600 and £100,000 of this funding remained unused.
- There was no official extension planned by the Government, but the funds could be spent past April 2026.
- Home working was impacting uptake, families work differently now, and schools need to market the benefits better.
- Snacks, sports, arts, games, and various activities were being offered. Flexibility for shift workers was limited but was possible, especially for those with regular shift patterns.
- The Government offers 30 minutes free breakfast clubs.
- Some flexibility exists, but School Trusts set prices. Reduced rates for vulnerable families has been suggested.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Director of Children's Services be requested to create structured opportunities for direct engagement with school leaders and Trust representatives to discuss the wraparound childcare proposals, including:
 - schools from Trusts where some schools have taken up the offer and working with them together to encourage the other schools in their Trust to subscribe;
 - to work in partnership with the schools to have a reduced rate or different way of working so that all children access the provision as

- some parents may not be able to fund it e.g. children on free school meals and those with adverse childhood experiences;
 - to provide by Ward which schools have not taken up offer and share with the Ward Councillors with a brief to help them promote it and encourage take up; and
 - to attend Torbay Association of Primary Schools (TAPS) to provide an overview and promote take up;
2. that the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Members note contents of the wraparound childcare report, which will empower them to confidently advocate for the initiative, respond to queries, and represent the programme effectively in their respective roles; and
 3. that all Councillors be requested to actively share key information within their local Ward communities to ensure that by raising awareness, we can build momentum around the wraparound offer and reinforce its value to families across Torbay.

31. Fostering Annual Report 2024 - 2025

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services – Councillor Bye and Divisional Director Children's Services Transformation – Shaun Evans provided an overview of the submitted Fostering Annual Report for 2024-2025, which was being considered at the Cabinet meeting on 18 November 2025, and responded to questions.

Members asked questions in relation to the following:

- What progress had been made with the Mockingbird pilot?
- What were the reasons for low recruitment and retention?
- Has the Fostering South West Group had an impact?
- Were there successful regional hubs we could learn from?
- Could we incentivise foster carers locally?
- How many children were placed out of area?

The following responses were received:

- There had been a successful rollout of the Mockingbird pilot in Brixham and there was a plan to consider rolling this out for Paignton and Torquay. The focus would be on preventing placement breakdowns, especially for older children. An update on the pilot would be presented to a future meeting of the Sub-Board.
- Cost of living, retirement, downsizing and adult children returning home were some of the reasons for low recruitment and retention of foster carers. The Council had lost 11 foster carers last year despite 9 new approvals.
- The Fostering South West Group has had minimal impact so far and this feedback shared has been with Minister.
- No successful regional hubs had been identified. It was suggested that the Local Government Association (LGA) be contacted regarding this.

- Options such as Council Tax relief were under review to incentivise foster carers and there was a planned update on the Foster Carers Strategy.
- 98 children live more than 20 miles away due to limited local placements.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board endorse the Fostering Annual Report 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report;
2. that Members thank the Fostering Team and Foster Carers for all their work supporting our cared for and care experienced children and young people;
3. that the Director of Children's Services be requested to explore options to incentivise foster carers, particularly those who take on older children to ensure that they can remain in placements longer; and
4. that the Chair and Vice-Chair be requested to contact the Local Government Association to obtain any examples of any successful regional Fostering Hubs and to share that information with the Divisional Director Children's Services Transformation.

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

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

Members acknowledged that this was Tanny Stobbart's final meeting on the Sub-Board and thanked her for all her hard work supporting Play Torbay, young people and their families and for her the work on the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board. Whilst Tanny was stepping down from Play Torbay it was noted that she would be supporting Play England to ensure sport was recognised across all sectors, as well as working with Great Parks, and Home Education Search.

Chair