



Torbay Council - Placement Sufficiency Strategy

2026 – 2029

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce Torbay's Placement Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People 2026–2029. This strategy sets out how Torbay Council, with partners, will strengthen the range, quality and availability of local homes, accommodation and support for children and young people who need us. Our ambition is that every child is supported to remain safely within their family, network and community wherever possible, and that every child who does need care is safe, loved, listened to and supported to thrive.

As corporate parents, we want the same for Torbay's children and young people as any good parent would want for their own child: stable relationships, a secure sense of belonging, good education, good health, ambition for the future and a safe place to call home. This means supporting families earlier, strengthening kinship and connected care, increasing local foster care, developing local residential and supported accommodation options, and securing permanence without avoidable delay.

This strategy is informed by Torbay's local data, current priorities and wider reform context. It should be read alongside, and delivered through, the existing work already underway across Torbay, including the Children's Services Housing Needs Analysis, the Children's Homes Programme, the Department for Education capital bid for residential provision, the Fostering Offer and recruitment work, the Specialist Post-16 Provision proposal, the Joint Working Protocol to Prevent Homelessness for Young People aged 16–25, the Torbay Corporate Parenting Strategy, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the accommodation pathways for care experienced young people.



Cllr Nick Bye

Lead Member Children's Services

1. Introduction

This Placement Sufficiency Strategy sets out how Torbay Council will meet its responsibilities to secure sufficient, safe and suitable accommodation and support for children in care and care experienced young people. It focuses on ensuring that children and young people have the right home, in the right place, at the right time, and that support is planned around their needs, relationships, identity, education, health and long-term outcomes.

Sufficiency is not only about finding placements once children enter care. For Torbay, sufficiency is a whole-system responsibility. It includes the interrelationships between early help, Family Help, Family Hubs, family group decision-making, kinship and connected care, safe reunification, permanence planning, fostering, residential care, supported accommodation, care leaver housing and specialist support for children with SEND, disabilities and complex needs.

2. Our legal duties

Torbay Council's sufficiency responsibilities are rooted in the Children Act 1989 and associated statutory guidance. The overall sufficiency duty requires local authorities to take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the local authority area for children who are looked after by the authority.

- Section 17 places a general duty on the local authority to provide a range and level of services to children in need and their families that are appropriate to those children's needs.
- Section 20 requires local authorities to provide accommodation for children in need who appear to require accommodation.
- Section 21 requires local authorities to accommodate some children who are remanded or subject to certain criminal justice orders.
- Section 22 and Section 22C require the authority to consider the most appropriate placement, including preference for family and connected person arrangements where suitable, keeping children near home, avoiding disruption to education, enabling siblings to live together where appropriate, meeting the needs of disabled children and providing accommodation within the local authority area unless this is not reasonably practicable.
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to have regard to the corporate parenting principles when exercising functions in relation to children in care and care leavers up to the age of 25.

3. Our Commitment to Children and Young People

Torbay's commitment to children in care and care experienced young people is that they benefit from stable relationships, a secure sense of belonging, good education, good health, ambition for the future and a safe place to call home. This strategy helps put that commitment into practice by ensuring children and young people have access to stable homes, trusted relationships, the right support, and opportunities to maintain family, community and cultural connections wherever this is safe and in their best interests.

4. Our children and young people

4.1 Demography, deprivation and future demand

Torbay's sufficiency planning needs to be understood in the context of local demography, deprivation and family stress. Torbay's population was estimated at 140,126 residents in 2024 (latest available data), with around 28,866 residents aged 0–19. Although overall population growth has been relatively modest, Torbay continues to experience significant deprivation across the South West, which is closely linked to family stress, housing insecurity, health inequalities and demand for children's social care. Sufficiency planning must therefore be based not only on population size, but also on the level and complexity of need within families and communities.

4.2 Age, gender, ethnicity and additional needs

Age profile of children cared for by Torbay					
Age group	31/03/2022	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	31/03/2025	31/03/2026
Under 1	30	28	33	13	14
1–4	65	72	73	32	37
5–9	129	119	118	64	64

10–15	67	72	67	108	118
16+	8	21	9	63	64
Grand total	299	312	300	280	292

Age profile of children in care: prediction. The tables below provide projected age profiles for Torbay's Cared For cohort over the next three years. These projections are based on the average age distribution observed over the last four years and applying these proportions to the "High-Demand Scenario" evidenced on page 16. This method aligns these figures with our projected overall population figures and assumes that the age profile of our cohort will remain broadly consistent over the projection period.

Age profile of children cared for by Torbay: averages		
Age Group	Average over last 4 years	% of total population
Under 1	22	7.4%
1-4	53.5	18.0%
5-9	91.25	30.7%
10-15	91.25	30.7%
16+	39.25	13.2%
Total	297.25	100%

Age profile of children cared for by Torbay: projected figures			
	2027	2028	2029
Under 1	22	22	21
1-4	53	53	52
5-9	91	90	89
10-15	91	90	89
16+	39	39	38
Total	297	292	290

Children looked after by age and gender				
Age group	Gender	31/03/2024	31/03/2025	31/03/2026
Under 1	Male	16	7	10
Under 1	Female	17	6	4
1–4	Male	42	18	24
1–4	Female	31	14	13
5–9	Male	61	31	32
5–9	Female	57	33	27
10–15	Male	37	58	66
10–15	Female	30	50	52

16+	Male	7	33	34
16+	Female	2	30	30
Grand total		300	280	292

Children looked after by ethnic origin

Ethnicity	31/03/2024	31/03/2025	31/03/2026
A1 - White British	244	233	240
A3 - Any Other White Background	13	11	9
B1 - White and Black Caribbean	3	9	7
B2 - White and Black African	8	5	5
B3 - White and Asian	1	2	1
B4 - Any Other Mixed Background	17	14	14
C1 - Indian	0	3	3
C3 - Bangladeshi	1	1	1
D2 - African	3	3	2
E2 - Any Other Ethnic Group	7	8	8

E4 - Not Yet Obtained	0	0	2
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Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Year	Torbay	Statistical neighbours
2020	-	13
2021	0	9
2022	6	13
2023	23	21
2024	10	26
2025	9	23
2026	7	N/A

UASC: cared for and care experienced cohorts

Year	CLA UASC	Care experienced UASC
2021/22	8	1
2022/23	38	3
2023/24	24	18

2024/25	18	28
2025/26	10	29

UASC: Cared For and Care Experienced Projection. The table below displays the year-to-date figures for 2026/26 and projected figures for the next two years. Projections are based on a four-year rolling average. This approach reflects longer-term demand patterns, but may differ from very recent trends, where we have seen numbers of UASC Cared For children fall rapidly.

The NTS 0.1 rate for our population indicates that we should expect to have approximately 24 UASC in our care at any one time.

UASC: Cared For and Care Experienced		
Year	CLA UASC	Care Experienced UASC
2026/27 (YTD)	9	26
2027/28 (Projection)	15	25
2028/29 (Projection)	13	27

This strategy includes more detailed needs analysis on the age, gender, ethnicity and additional needs profile of children in care. This analysis helps explain the type of provision Torbay needs. The age profile has shifted over time, with a significantly reduced numbers of children in the 1–9 age range but continued pressure for older children and adolescents whose needs can be more complex and who may be more likely to require specialist fostering, residential or supported accommodation. Gender and ethnicity data will continue to be monitored so that sufficiency planning can respond to any emerging patterns and ensure that provision is inclusive, culturally responsive and matched to individual identity and need.

Torbay’s children and young people are affected by a combination of demographic, social and placement market pressures. The child population is relatively stable, but deprivation, child poverty, housing insecurity, SEND, domestic abuse, parental mental health, substance misuse

and family stress all contribute to complexity of need. Sufficiency planning therefore is based on the level and type of need, rather than population numbers alone.

Children looked after in Torbay need stable relationships, good matching, education continuity, timely health and emotional wellbeing support and purposeful permanence planning. Children with SEND and disabilities require placements and support that are planned jointly across social care, education, health, SEND, housing and adult services. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children require culturally responsive care planning, access to education, health and legal advice, suitable accommodation and careful transition planning into adulthood.

5. The intent of the placement sufficiency strategy

This strategy is held together by one clear thread: Torbay will support more children to remain safely within their families and networks, increase the range and quality of local homes and accommodation for those who do need care, and use evidence, commissioning and young people's voice to make sure the right support is available at the right time. Each priority is important in its own right, but the greatest impact will come from how the priorities work together as a single improvement programme.

The improvement logic is simple. Earlier help, Family Help, kinship and connected care should reduce avoidable entry into care. Stronger local fostering, permanence and reunification should improve stability and reduce reliance on external provision. Local residential and specialist provision will reduce the need for children to live far from Torbay or in high-cost and unregistered arrangements. Better support for children with complex needs and clearer accommodation pathways for care experienced young people will reduce crisis responses and help young people move on safely and confidently. Data, commissioning and governance will knit these elements together so that Torbay can track impact, respond quickly to pressure and redirect resources toward provision that improves outcomes and reduces avoidable cost.

Young people must be taken with us on this journey. Their voices, experiences and aspirations will shape what good looks like, from family-based care and children's homes through to supported accommodation, move-on homes and preparation for adulthood. The strategy will therefore not judge success only by whether placements are available, but by whether children and young people experience support as safe, stable, respectful, local where possible, connected to the people who matter to them and able to help them thrive.

6. The strategic context

National children's social care reform continues to shape Torbay's approach to sufficiency. 'Stable Homes, Built on Love', the Families First Partnership Programme, kinship care reform, supported accommodation regulation, regional fostering reforms and the development of Regional Care Cooperatives all reinforce the need for earlier help, family-led planning, stronger kinship and fostering support, better local provision and more effective regional commissioning.

Locally, this strategy is aligned with Torbay's Children and Young People's Plan, Corporate Parenting Strategy, Family Help developments, Kinship Local Offer, Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy, SEND and education priorities, housing and care leaver accommodation pathways, safeguarding partnership arrangements and commissioning plans. These documented intentions together provide the framework for supporting children earlier, securing permanence and improving the quality, stability and locality of placements and accommodation.

Torbay developed this strategy during a proposed period of Local Government Reorganisation. This proposal has now been "paused" by HM Government. However, if and when further developments are published, this strategy will be updated accordingly as a priority

Solution-focused proposals already in development

Proposal / workstream	What this will help solve	Proposed response and intended impact	Relevant strategic priority
Use the Children's Services Housing Needs Analysis as the evidence base for commissioning and investment.	Reduction in the housing and accommodation pressures that are affecting care experienced young people, families supported under Section 17, residential sufficiency and young parents.	Use the analysis to drive joint planning between Children's Services, Housing, SEND, commissioning and providers. This will support clearer demand forecasting, earlier identification of accommodation gaps, stronger business cases and more targeted development of supported accommodation,	Priorities 3, 6 and 7

		move-on options, Section 17 responses and residential provision.	
Progress the Children's Homes Programme as a local sufficiency solution.	Increase Torbay's limited local residential capacity to reduce exposure to out-of-area, high-cost and unregistered provision for children with complex needs.	Develop local children's homes through council-owned, provider-run homes and provider-owned homes, with strong procurement, mobilisation and contract management. The aim is to increase local regulated capacity, reduce distance from home, improve oversight, support step-down planning and reduce reliance on crisis-led placement searches.	Priorities 3, 4 and 7
Use the Department for Education capital bid to develop provision for children with complex needs.	Meet children's needs by offering a more integrated and therapeutic local response to address trauma, deprivation of liberty risks, complex mental health needs, challenging behaviour, SEND or disrupted education.	Develop specialist local provision that brings together social care, health, education and therapeutic support. This will help children remain closer to Torbay where safe, improve access to local professionals, reduce placement instability and support more planned transitions or step-down arrangements.	Priorities 3 and 4

Strengthen the fostering offer to support recruitment and retention.	Increase local foster carer capacity by improving provision particularly for adolescents, sibling groups, children with disabilities, parent and baby placements, emergency care and children stepping down from residential provision.	Develop a clearer and more competitive local fostering offer, including improved support routes, evening and weekend training, practical placement support, peer networks, Mockingbird, targeted incentives and clearer promotional material. The aim is to recruit more local carers, retain experienced carers and reduce reliance on independent fostering agencies where local family-based care can safely meet need.	Priorities 1, 2 and 5
Commission a more planned Specialist Post-16 Provision pathway.	Reduce significant reliance on spot purchasing and ad-hoc packages for young people whose needs cannot be met through existing commissioned provision.	Develop a planned commissioning approach for young people aged 16–25 with complex SEMH needs, EBSA, EOTAC packages or risk-related needs. This will support clearer pathways, better alignment between education and accommodation planning, reduced ad-hoc purchasing and more sustainable use of specialist provision.	Priorities 4, 6 and 7
Re-establish provider engagement for 16+	Increase supported accommodation which is currently under pressure	Use the provider forum as a practical market-shaping mechanism, bringing together	Priorities 6 and 7

supported accommodation and young people's housing.	from Ofsted regulation, provider capacity, market change and limited move-on options. These create blockages and delay young people's progress toward independence.	supported accommodation and move-on providers with Children's Services and Housing. This will support better intelligence, earlier identification of risks, more flexible provision, improved quality assurance and stronger planning for future accommodation needs.	
Expand move-on and affordable accommodation options through SHAP, Hotels to Homes and housing partnerships.	Care experienced young people and young people at risk of homelessness benefit from increased affordable move-on options from supported accommodation.	Continue to develop affordable and supported housing pathways that provide realistic move-on options, tenancy sustainment and gradual independence. This will improve throughput, reduce unsuitable accommodation, support tenancy stability and help young people move on when they are ready.	Priority 6
Develop a proportionate accommodation response for young parents.	Although demand is low, develop sufficient safe accommodation and support for 16–17-year-old using Ofsted-registered provision.	Use a mixed approach that combines commissioned non-Ofsted provision for older young parents, spot-purchase arrangements for lower-volume 16–17 demand, ongoing monitoring of need and provider engagement. This will maintain flexibility, manage cost and ensure young parents receive	Priorities 4, 6 and 7

		support matched to their circumstances.	
Strengthen Section 17 accommodation prevention and joint working with Housing.	Respond to significantly increased costs of Section 17 accommodation by developing the private rental market to address the shortage of affordable temporary and long-term options.	Continue cross-directorate work between Children's Services and Housing to prevent homelessness, secure suitable short-term accommodation where required and reduce repeat crisis presentations. This supports family stability, reduces avoidable cost and helps children remain safely within their families wherever possible.	Priorities 1 and 7

7. Our care family – a snapshot

- Torbay was caring for 292 children as at 31 March 2026.
- The cared for population has reduced from 359 children in 2019/20 to 292 children in 2026, but Torbay's rate remains higher than national and regional averages.
- Family-based care remains the predominant placement arrangement, with children living with in-house foster carers, independent fostering agencies, relatives and friends.
- Placement sufficiency remains fragile, particularly for adolescents, sibling groups, children with disabilities, children with complex emotional or behavioural needs, parent and baby placements, emergency care and step-down from residential provision.
- Torbay continues to experience pressure from children placed more than 20 miles from home, limited local residential capacity and use of high-cost or unregistered provision for a small number of young people.
- Care experienced young people require a strengthened accommodation pathway, including Staying Put, supported accommodation, social housing, move-on options and transition planning for those with enduring needs.

Our care family – a snapshot



Reduced from
359 in 2019/20



Around **74%**
in family-based care



21
in residential care



100
with in-house
foster carers

292

children cared for by Torbay
at 31 March 2026



16
in 16+ provision



49
with relatives or
friends



5 in high-cost
unregistered
provision



68
with independent
fostering agencies



94 / 32%
placed more than 20 miles
from home



269
care experienced
young people aged
18–25 at March 2026

Parent and child provision

Year	Fostering	Residential
2021/22	8, including 1 in-house	1
2022/23	7, including 1 in-house	3
2023/24	7	3
2024/25	5	6
2025/26	0	8

Snapshot of Torbay's cared for population and placement profile

Indicator	Latest position	Implication for sufficiency planning
Children cared for by Torbay	292 children at 31 March 2026	Continued focus is required to reduce avoidable entry into care while ensuring sufficient local placements for children who do need care.
Longer-term trend	Reduction from 359 children in 2019/20 to 292 in 2026	Progress is being made from the 2019/20 starting point, but Torbay's rate remains higher than national and regional averages and there has been an increase (of 12) in the figure from March 2026.
Family-based care	Approximately 74% of children were living in fostering or wider family arrangements in March 2026	Foster care, connected care and kinship arrangements remain central to local sufficiency.
Children placed more than 20 miles from home	94 children, around 32%, in March 2026	Local placement development and stronger commissioning are required to reduce distance from home where safe and appropriate.
High-cost unregistered provision	Five young people in March 2026	Reducing use of unregistered provision remains a key priority through planned local provision and improved matching.

8. Forward demand and sufficiency assumptions

This section sets out the forward demand and sufficiency assumptions that will inform Torbay's placement planning over the lifetime of the strategy. It is intended to provide a clear framework that can be populated and refined as more detailed forecasting, financial modelling and gap analysis are completed through the Budget Sustainability Plan for Placements and the supporting delivery action plan.

At this stage, the assumptions should be treated as planning assumptions rather than fixed predictions. The strategy uses the current evidence base, including cared for population trends, placement type data, fostering capacity, residential pressures, care experienced accommodation demand, SEND and complex need indicators, UASC trends and housing pressures. These assumptions will need to be tested against live data, finance information, provider intelligence and children and young people's lived experience.

The current baseline is that Torbay was caring for 292 children at 31 March 2026. The cared for population has reduced over time, but Torbay's rate remains higher than national and regional averages and the needs of children and young people are increasingly complex. The working assumption is therefore that overall numbers will remain broadly stable or reduce only gradually if Family Help, kinship, permanence and reunification activity are effective. However, even where numbers reduce, demand for specialist, local and high-quality provision may remain significant because of complexity, SEND, emotional wellbeing needs, adolescent risk, UASC and transition pressures.

Future demand for fostering is expected to remain focused on the availability of local carers who can support adolescents, sibling groups, children with disabilities or additional needs, parent and baby placements, emergency care, short breaks, respite and children stepping down from residential care. The action plan will quantify the number and type of fostering households required, alongside assumptions about foster carer recruitment, approvals, resignations, retirements, retention and net growth.

Future demand for residential and specialist provision is expected to remain concentrated in a smaller but high-complexity cohort of children and young people whose needs cannot be safely met in fostering at that point in time. This includes children with complex emotional, behavioural, disability-related, safeguarding, step-down or therapeutic needs. The delivery action plan will

identify the local residential beds and specialist provision required, the expected timeline for development, the relationship with the Children's Homes Programme, and the cost avoidance assumptions linked to reducing high-cost, out-of-area and unregistered provision.

Future demand for supported accommodation and post-16 pathways is expected to increase because of the growth in the care experienced cohort, Ofsted regulation of supported accommodation, housing market pressures and the need for more planned move-on options. The action plan will quantify expected demand for Staying Put, supported accommodation, semi-independent provision, move-on homes, social housing, young parent accommodation, tenancy sustainment and specialist post-16 pathways for young people with complex needs.

SEND, disability and complex need assumptions will be central to demand planning. Torbay's proportion of cared for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan remains above national and statistical neighbour levels, and this is likely to continue to affect placement choice, education continuity, transition planning and placement cost. Forecasting should therefore include children with EHCPs, children with disabilities, children requiring therapeutic support, children at risk of education disruption and young people who may need adult services or continuing accommodation support.

UASC demand should be treated as a continuing but fluctuating sufficiency pressure. Numbers may change in response to the National Transfer Scheme, local presentations, asylum accommodation arrangements and individual transition needs. Planning assumptions will include suitable fostering or supported accommodation, culturally responsive support, education and health access, legal and immigration advice, and care leaver accommodation pathways where young people remain in need of support into adulthood.

The assumptions in this section should be refreshed at least annually, and earlier if there are significant changes in demand, placement costs, provider availability, UASC pressures, SEND and complex need trends, Local Government Reorganisation, national reform, Ofsted regulation or delivery of local provision. The costed action plan should use this section as the starting point for a more detailed demand forecast and sufficiency gap analysis, setting out what provision is needed, by when, at what cost and with what expected impact on quality, outcomes and financial sustainability.

9. What we have achieved since the last strategy

- Torbay has reduced and stabilised the cared for population, from 359 children in 2019/20 to 292 children at 31 March 2026.
- The use of in-house fostering has improved, with a stronger focus on recruitment, retention, support and regional collaboration through Fostering South West.
- The Mockingbird model has been introduced to strengthen foster carer support, resilience, peer relationships and placement stability.
- There has been a stronger focus on kinship, connected care, permanence and safe reunification, including increased attention to family networks and Special Guardianship pathways.
- Torbay has strengthened its focus on reducing high-cost, out-of-area and unregistered provision, including through local children's home development and improved commissioning oversight.
- Care leaver accommodation and transition planning have become clearer strategic priorities, with continued work required to strengthen Staying Put, supported accommodation and move-on pathways.
- Corporate Parenting governance has been strengthened to provide greater oversight, assurance and challenge around sufficiency, stability, permanence, accommodation and young people's lived experience.

10. Our strategic priorities

Strategic Priority 1: Support more children to remain safely with their parents, families and wider networks

Current position. Torbay's cared for population has reduced and stabilised, from 359 children in 2019/20 to 292 children at 31 March 2026. This is positive progress, but Torbay's rate of children in care remains higher than national and regional averages. Deprivation, child poverty, housing pressure, SEND, domestic abuse, parental mental health, substance misuse and family stress continue to create pressure for families and demand for statutory services.

What we need to develop. Torbay needs to continue strengthening early help, Family Help, Family Hubs, family group decision-making, kinship and connected care, and safe reunification. Sufficiency planning must start before children enter care, by ensuring that families receive the

right help early enough to prevent avoidable escalation and that family networks are explored and supported at the earliest point.

Additional focus on kinship and connected care. Connected persons fostering and kinship care will be strengthened as a core part of Torbay's sufficiency approach. Family members, friends and other people connected to the child should be identified and considered as early as possible, with joint viability assessments completed alongside care planning so that children can remain within their family networks and communities wherever this is safe and in their best interests. This work will support permanence, reduce reliance on external provision where appropriate, and help children maintain identity, belonging, culture and important relationships.

We will:

- Embed the Family Help model and strengthen earlier, whole-family support through Family Hubs and locality working.
- Use family group decision-making routinely so that wider family and community networks are identified and supported earlier.
- Strengthen kinship and connected care pathways so more children can remain within their family networks where this is safe and in their best interests.
- Keep the need for care under active review and strengthen reunification planning where children can safely return home.
- Use data, audit and children's lived experience to understand what is preventing children entering care and what further support families need in order to reduce the rate and numbers of care admissions and the speed of safe reunification back to families.

How this priority connects to the wider strategy. Preventing avoidable entry into care is the starting point for sufficiency and financial sustainability. When families receive effective help earlier, and wider family networks are identified and supported, fewer children need to enter care unnecessarily. This reduces pressure on fostering, residential and supported accommodation, and allows resources to be focused on the children and young people who genuinely require more specialist support.

How we will know we are making a difference. We will see fewer avoidable entries into care, more children supported safely at home or within family networks, increased use of kinship and connected care, more purposeful reunification planning and stronger evidence that children and families are receiving help earlier.

Risks. Demand will remain high if Family Help, Family Hubs and family network approaches are not embedded consistently or quickly enough. Continued poverty, housing insecurity, domestic abuse, parental mental health, substance misuse and SEND pressures will increase family stress and lead to more children requiring statutory intervention. Insufficient capacity across partner agencies could also limit the impact of early help and prevention activity.

Children cared for by Torbay: trend data		
Year	Children cared for	Trend note
2019	361	Peak point in the current trend period.
2020	354	Small reduction from 2019.
2021	319	Reduction continued.
2022	299	Lowest point in the published trend period.
2023	314	Small increase from 2022 (UASC).
2024	300	Reduction from 2023 and 61 fewer than 2019.
2025	280	Latest local trend point included in the attached draft.
2026	292	Latest local Torbay position recorded at 31 March 2026.

Children in care: projection. The table below shows projected numbers of Children in Care in Torbay over the next three years. Three forecasting techniques have been used to provide a range of potential demand levels:

Low demand: Uses linear forecasting to project future demand based on the overall trend observed across all historical data. Each year is given equal weight and calculates a straight-line trend from 2019-2026. It predicts a continued reduction in our cohort, based on the long-term trend. It does not account for year-on-year fluctuations, such as the peaks we saw in 2023 and 2026, and may underestimate future demand.

Expected demand: Uses time-series forecasting that places greater weight on recent years, whilst still considering historical trends. It also accounts for fluctuations in demand, therefore being more responsive to recent changes in our cohort. It predicts a reduced, mostly stable cohort over the next three years.

High demand: Uses a rolling four-year average to calculate an estimated projection for each year. Unlike the above forecasting methods, it assumes demand will remain relatively consistent with recent years and does not rely on the continuation of longer-term trends. It projects a more modest reduction in the Cared For population over the next three years and has been adopted as the preferred scenario for further projections within this strategy.

Whilst the two forecasting models suggest a reduction in our cohort, recent historical performance has remained almost consistently above 290 Cared For children. Given the sustained pressures facing Children's Services and the risks associated with underestimating future demand, adopting a more cautious scenario seems a sensible approach.

Children cared for by Torbay: projected forecast			
	Low-Demand Scenario (Linear Forecasting)	Expected Demand Scenario (Error, Trend and Seasonality Forecasting)	High-Demand Scenario (Based on 4-year-average)
2027	267	269	297
2028	259	262	292
2029	256	269	290

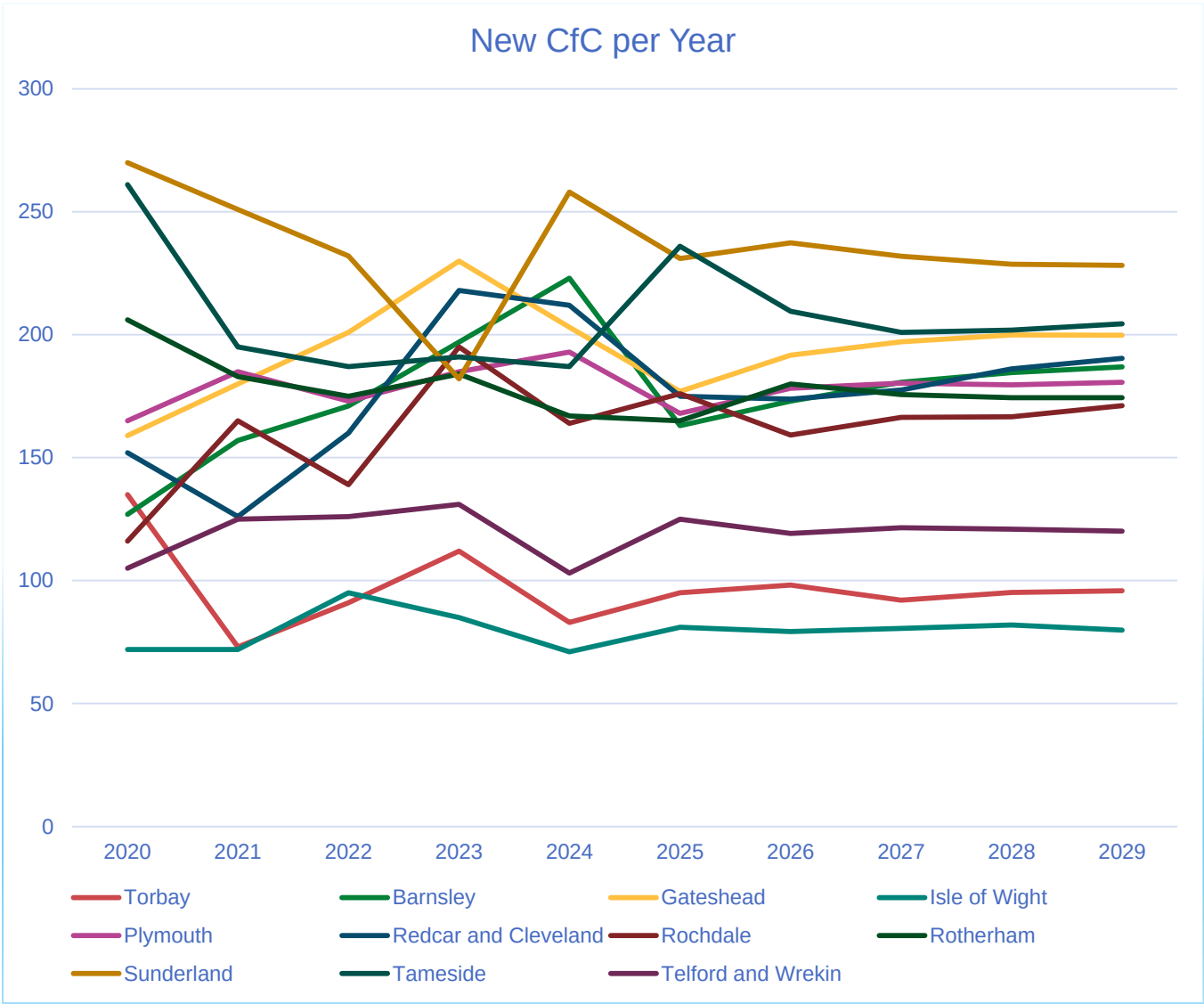
Entries into care: historical and projected figures. The below table, consistent with the methodology used for projected age profiles and out-of-area placements, uses a four-year rolling average to estimate the number of children expected to enter care over the next three years.

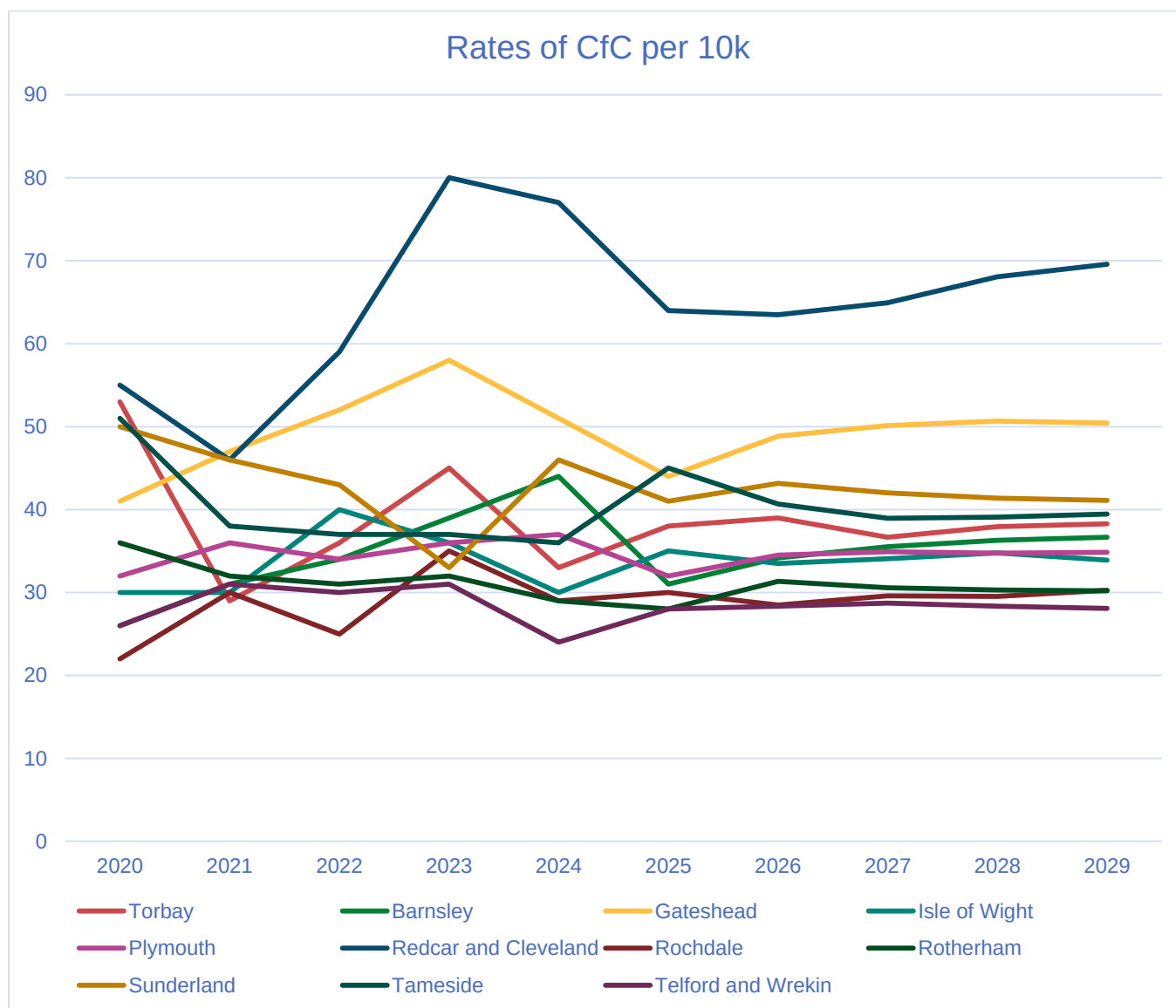
Numbers of children becoming cared for: historical and projected figures						
2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 projected	2027/28 projected	2028/29 projected
72	78	88	95	83	86	88

Entries into care: comparator rates and projection. The table below shows Torbay's rate of new children becoming cared for per 10,000 children, alongside statistical neighbours and wider comparators. It includes confirmed rates for 2021–2026 and projected rates for 2027–2029 based on the attached forecasting dataset.

Entries into care per 10,000 children: comparator rates and projection

Area	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027 projected	2028 projected	2029 projected
Torbay	29.0	36.0	45.0	33.0	38.0	39.0	36.7	37.9	38.3
Statistical neighbours average	36.7	38.5	41.7	40.3	37.8	38.4	39.4	39.8	39.9
South West	22.0	23.0	26.0	24.0	23.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
England	24.0	26.0	28.0	27.0	26.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A





Cared for population trend and comparator position:

The reduction to a figure of 292 cared for children at 31st March 2026 represents important progress, but the rate of children in care remains high compared with national and regional averages. The strategy should therefore continue to balance confidence in the reduction achieved with a clear recognition that Torbay must sustain prevention, permanence, family-based care and local sufficiency work over the life of the 2026–2029 strategy.

Placement hierarchy and matching approach:

Torbay's preferred placement approach should be clearly described as a hierarchy of options, beginning with support for children to remain safely at home, followed by wider family and connected care, in-house fostering, independent fostering, adoption or Special Guardianship where appropriate, supported accommodation for older young people, and residential provision only where this is the right plan for the child. This supports a consistent approach to matching and

helps ensure that placement decisions are based on children's needs, relationships, safety, permanence and best interests.

Age Group	Provision	Mar-24	Mar-25	Mar-26
Under 1	PR0 - Parents or other person with parental responsibility	3	1	1
	PR1 - Own provision by LA	23	9	10
	PR2 - Other LA provision	2	1	1
	PR3 - Other public provision	1	0	0
	PR4 - Private Provision	4	2	2
	PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	0	0	0
	Under 1 total	33	13	14
1 to 4	PR0 - Parents or other person with parental responsibility	8	3	4
	PR1 - Own provision by LA	38	17	17
	PR2 - Other LA provision	3	1	1
	PR3 - Other public provision	2	1	1
	PR4 - Private Provision	21	9	10

	PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	1	1	0
	1 to 4 total	73	32	33
5 to 9	PR0 - Parents or other person with parental responsibility	25	13	14
	PR1 - Own provision by LA	51	28	29
	PR2 - Other LA provision	0	0	0
	PR3 - Other public provision	0	0	0
	PR4 - Private Provision	42	23	24
	PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	0	0	0
	5 to 9 total	118	64	67
10 to 15	PR0 - Parents or other person with parental responsibility	9	15	15
	PR1 - Own provision by LA	22	35	37
	PR2 - Other LA provision	3	5	5
	PR3 - Other public provision	0	0	0
	PR4 - Private Provision	28	45	47
	PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	5	8	8

	10 to 15 total	67	108	112
16+	PR0 - Parents or other person with parental responsibility	0	0	0
	PR1 - Own provision by LA	1	7	8
	PR2 - Other LA provision	0	0	0
	PR3 - Other public provision	0	0	0
	PR4 - Private Provision	7	49	51
	PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	1	7	7
	16+ total	9	63	66
	Grand total	300	280	292

Strategic Priority 2: Increase the number, range and capability of local foster carers

Current position. Family-based care remains central to Torbay's placement sufficiency approach. Torbay has increased the proportion of children placed with in-house foster carers, but sufficiency remains fragile because of recruitment pressures, an ageing foster carer profile, carer retirements and the increasing complexity of children's needs. There is particular pressure for adolescents, sibling groups, children with disabilities, parent and baby placements, emergency care, short breaks and step-down from residential care.

What we need to develop. Torbay needs a stronger and more targeted fostering offer. This includes recruiting more local carers, improving retention, expanding Mockingbird, strengthening training and therapeutic support, and improving support for connected and kinship carers. Local

fostering work will also need to align with Fostering South West and the national end-to-end fostering reforms while retaining local accountability for matching, safeguarding and support.

Additional focus on Fostering South West and carer support. Torbay will continue to work through Fostering South West to improve the journey for prospective foster carers, strengthen regional marketing and make better use of data and insight. At the same time, Torbay will retain local accountability for safeguarding, matching, statutory decision-making, relationships with carers and the quality of support provided to children and fostering families. The local fostering offer should remain visible, competitive and responsive, with strengthened training, supervision, peer support, Mockingbird, therapeutic advice and practical support for both newly approved and experienced carers.

Additional focus on recruitment targets and conversion. The fostering strategy will monitor not only the number of enquiries and approvals, but also the conversion rate, withdrawals, resignations, retirements and net growth in fostering households. Where recruitment targets are used, they will be clear about that they represent gross recruitment and expected net growth after carers leave the service. This will help Torbay understand whether recruitment activity is translating into the right number, range and capability of carers for the children who most need local family-based care.

We will:

- Refresh and deliver Torbay's Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy for 2026–2029.
- Target recruitment toward carers for older children, sibling groups, children with disabilities, children with complex needs, parent and baby placements, emergency care and step-down from residential provision.
- Expand the Mockingbird model and peer support arrangements to improve carer resilience and placement stability.
- Strengthen training, supervision, therapeutic support and out-of-hours advice for foster carers.
- Improve support for connected and kinship carers so children can remain within their family networks where appropriate.
- Work with Fostering South West to improve enquiry handling, prospective carer support, data insight and regional collaboration.

How this priority connects to the wider strategy. Increasing local fostering capacity links prevention, permanence and cost reduction. More local foster carers means more children can live in family-based care close to their schools, families and communities. It also creates more step-

down options from residential care, reduces reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies where local care can meet need, and strengthens the overall placement pathway.

How we will know we are making a difference. We will see more children placed with Torbay foster carers, improved foster carer retention, increased capacity for priority cohorts, fewer children placed with external agencies where local family-based care could meet need, and improved placement stability.

Risks. Recruitment of new foster carers may not keep pace with demand, particularly for adolescents, sibling groups, children with disabilities, parent and baby placements and children with complex needs. Retirements, carer fatigue, cost-of-living pressures and competition from independent fostering agencies may affect retention. If local capacity does not increase, Torbay may remain reliant on higher-cost external placements and children may be placed further from home.

Foster carer recruitment and retention activity			
Year	Enquiries	New	Leavers
2021/22	99	9	10
2022/23	111	8	5
2023/24	65	4	9
2024/25	67	9	11
2025/26	To be confirmed	14	16

Strategic Priority 3: Reduce reliance on out-of-area, high-cost and unregistered provision

Current position. Placement sufficiency remains a strategic risk. Torbay continues to experience pressure from children placed outside the area or more than 20 miles from home, limited local

residential capacity and use of high-cost or unregistered provision for a small number of young people. Some children need specialist provision because of complex emotional, behavioural, disability-related or step-down needs, but local options remain limited.

What we need to develop. Torbay needs to increase local residential and specialist provision, strengthen planned matching, reduce crisis-led placements and ensure that out-of-area placements are only used where they are clearly in the child's best interests. The development of local children's homes, step-down pathways and stronger commissioning oversight will be central to this priority.

Additional focus on local children's homes. Torbay's current local residential capacity remains limited and should be developed as part of the wider sufficiency programme. The strategy should make clear that additional regulated local children's homes are needed to reduce placement distance, improve access to local education, health and therapeutic support, and reduce reliance on high-cost external and unregistered provision. Any new provision should be based on robust evidence of need, clear business cases, realistic workforce models, Ofsted registration requirements and sustainable financial planning.

We will:

- Progress the development of local children's homes and specialist local provision.
- Develop step-down pathways from residential care into family-based or supported arrangements where this is appropriate.
- Strengthen senior oversight of high-cost, out-of-area and unregistered placements.
- Ensure every out-of-area placement is based on clear evidence of the child's needs, wishes, safety and best interests.
- Use the Regional Care Cooperative and Peninsula arrangements to improve market intelligence, regional commissioning and provider engagement.
- Improve matching, quality assurance and review arrangements for children placed at distance.

How this priority connects to the wider strategy. Developing local residential and specialist provision is essential to the wider improvement and savings plan. It will not replace the need for family-based care, but it will provide planned, regulated local options for children whose needs cannot currently be met safely in fostering. This will improve oversight, reduce placement distance, support step-down planning and reduce the use of high-cost, crisis-led and unregistered arrangements.

How we will know we are making a difference. We will see reduced use of out-of-area, high-cost and unregistered placements, more children living closer to home where safe and appropriate, stronger access to local education and health services, improved placement stability and better value from commissioned provision.

Risks. Local residential and specialist provision may not be developed quickly enough to meet demand because of property availability, workforce capacity, provider confidence, Ofsted registration timescales, planning requirements or financial constraints. Continued national market pressures may lead to limited placement choice, escalating costs and continued use of out-of-area, high-cost or unregistered provision in exceptional circumstances.

Residential placements more than 20 miles from home

Year	% placed 20+ miles	Comment	Internal follow-up
2024/25	51%	Residential placements at distance remained a significant pressure.	Check whether this requires a graph or a supporting note in the residential section.
2025/26	33%	All were outside the local authority boundary.	Confirm whether this should be linked to local children's homes development.
2026/27 to date	64%	Early-year position shows renewed pressure at distance.	Check whether to include as YTD data or hold for internal monitoring only.

Children placed more than 20 miles from home and outside the local authority boundary

Area	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Torbay	27%	33%	28%	29%	30%	31%	31%	32%	35%

South West	18%	20%	21%	23%	23%	24%	25%	26%	N/A
Statistical neighbours	12.8%	13.1%	12.4%	12%	11.9%	12.4%	13.1%	14%	N/A
England	15%	16%	16%	17%	17%	17%	18%	18%	N/A

Children placed more than 20 miles from home: projection. The below table provides a projection of the number and percentage of children placed over 20 miles from home and outside the local authority boundary over the next three years. The projections are based on the high-demand forecast for our cohort presented on page 16 and applies the average percentage of children placed out of area over the previous four years to estimate future demand.

Children placed more than 20 miles from home and outside the local authority boundary: projected figures			
Year	CfC Population Projected Figure	Projected % Out of Area	Projected Number Out of Area
2027	297	32%	95
2028	292	32%	93
2029	290	32%	93

Residential placement comparator					
Area	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Torbay	9%	6%	7%	6%	6%
South West	9%	10%	10%	10%	11%
Statistical neighbours	9.6%	9.4%	9.2%	9.1%	10.6%
England	9%	9%	9%	10%	10%

Strategic Priority 4: Improve sufficiency for children and young people with SEND, disabilities, complex needs and emotional wellbeing needs

Current position. Torbay's cared for population includes a significant proportion of children with SEND, disabilities, emotional wellbeing needs and complex lived experiences. Children with these needs are more likely to require specialist fostering, residential care, therapeutic support, specialist education provision and carefully planned transitions into adulthood.

What we need to develop. Placement planning needs to be more closely aligned with education, health, SEND, housing, adult services and commissioning. Children's living arrangements must support education, health and emotional wellbeing rather than disrupt them. Earlier joint planning is essential for children with enduring needs and for young people approaching adulthood.

We will:

- Strengthen joint planning between social care, SEND, education, health, housing, adult services and commissioning.
- Ensure placement matching considers education, EHCP provision, emotional wellbeing, health and transition needs from the outset.
- Improve access to therapeutic and emotional wellbeing support for children and carers.
- Develop local provision and support pathways for children with complex needs, disabilities and step-down requirements.
- Plan transitions into adulthood earlier for young people with disabilities, SEND or enduring care and support needs.
- Use data to identify children at risk of placement or education disruption and intervene earlier.

How this priority connects to the wider strategy. Children with SEND, disabilities, complex needs and emotional wellbeing needs are more likely to experience placement instability and higher-cost support if agencies do not plan together. By joining up social care, education, health, SEND, housing and adult services, Torbay will improve quality, reduce duplication, avoid late crisis responses and support children and young people to remain in the most appropriate local provision wherever possible.

How we will know we are making a difference. We will see improved placement stability for children with complex needs, fewer emergency or crisis-led placements, improved education

continuity, earlier transition planning, better access to specialist support and stronger outcomes for children with SEND and disabilities.

Risks. Fragmented planning across social care, education, SEND, health, housing and adult services will delay the right support being agreed for children with complex needs. Limited specialist provision, workforce pressures, CAMHS capacity, therapeutic support gaps and delays in transition planning may increase placement instability, education disruption and reliance on higher-cost provision. The updated data indicates that Torbay remains above national and statistical neighbour levels for children looked after with EHCPs, reinforcing the need for joint planning and specialist sufficiency oversight.

Children looked after with an Education, Health and Care Plan							
Area	2017	2019	2021	2023	2024	2025	2026
Torbay	30.0%	33.3%	37.9%	40.1%	39.6%	41.0%	38.0%
South West	31.6%	33.3%	37.8%	37.5%	38.5%	39.8%	N/A
Statistical neighbours	27.3%	24.4%	27.0%	28.0%	29.0%	31.5%	N/A
England	26.4%	26.7%	28.5%	30.5%	31.9%	33.9%	N/A

Children looked after with an Education Health and Care Plan: projection. The table below uses a four-year rolling average of the percentage of looked after children with an EHCP (from the table above), alongside the high-demand projected Cared For population figures, to provide projections for the percentage and number of looked after children we could expect to have an EHCP over the next three years.

Children looked after in Torbay with an Education, Health and Care Plan: projected figures			
Year	Projected CfC Population	Projected % with an EHCP	Projected Number with an EHCP
2027	297	39.7%	118
2028	292	39.7%	116
2029	290	39.7%	115

Children looked after with SEN but without an EHCP							
Area	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Torbay	32.3%	31.4%	22.6%	25.9%	24.7%	27.0%	31.3%
South West	31.6%	30.3%	27.0%	28.4%	28.3%	27.4%	28.0%
Statistical neighbours	29.2%	28.6%	27.4%	26.9%	26.8%	28.0%	26.9%
England	28.4%	27.9%	27.1%	27.1%	27.1%	27.6%	27.3%

Children looked after with SEN but without an Education, Health and Care Plan: projection.

The table below uses a four-year rolling average of the percentage of looked after children who are SEN but without an EHCP (from the table above), alongside the high-demand projected Cared For population figures, to provide projections for the percentage and number of looked after children we could expect to have SEN but be without an EHCP over the next three years.

Children looked after in Torbay with SEN but without an EHCP			
Year	Projected CfC Population	Projected % SEN without EHCP	Projected Number SEN without an EHCP
2027	297	27.2%	81
2028	292	27.2%	79
2029	290	27.2%	79

Average Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire score							
Area	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Torbay	13.9	14.5	14.3	15.7	16.2	14.9	16.2
South West	15.5	15.5	14.9	15.5	15.7	15.6	15.8
Statistical neighbours	14.5	14.4	13.6	14.4	13.9	14.9	15.3
England	14.2	14.1	13.7	13.8	14.4	14.7	14.9

Strategic Priority 5: Secure permanence without avoidable delay

Current position. Torbay's current cared for population is increasingly weighted toward younger children and sibling groups, which makes timely permanence planning essential. Children who cannot return home need stable, loving and lasting arrangements without drift or delay. Permanence is achieved through reunification, kinship care, Special Guardianship, long-term fostering or adoption where this is the right plan for the child.

What we need to develop. Torbay needs to maintain a sharper focus on permanence from the earliest stage of involvement. This includes ensuring that the need for care is actively reviewed,

safe reunification is considered where appropriate, family networks are explored, Special Guardianship support is strengthened and adoption planning is timely where adoption is in the child's best interests.

Additional focus on adoption and early permanence. Adoption will continue to be considered carefully where it is the right permanence plan for the child. Torbay should continue to work closely with Adopt South West to ensure timely family finding, matching, panel oversight and transition planning. Early permanence standards should remain a focus so that children do not experience avoidable delay, particularly where they are part of a sibling group, have additional needs, are older, or require adopters able to provide therapeutic, trauma-informed and lifelong support.

We will:

- Strengthen permanence tracking and senior oversight for all children in care.
- Promote safe reunification where this is in the child's best interests and supported by robust assessment and planning.
- Support kinship and connected care as routes to permanence where appropriate.
- Strengthen Special Guardianship assessment, planning and support arrangements.
- Work closely with the Regional Adoption Agency to secure timely adoption for children where this is the right plan.
- Ensure children, families and carers are involved meaningfully in permanence planning.

How this priority connects to the wider strategy. Permanence is the bridge between prevention, placement stability and long-term financial sustainability. When children return home safely, live with family or connected carers, move to Special Guardianship, remain in stable long-term fostering or are adopted without avoidable delay, they are more likely to experience belonging and continuity. Timely permanence also reduces drift, frees placement capacity and prevents children remaining in care longer than necessary.

How we will know we are making a difference. We will see more children achieving permanence earlier, reduced drift and delay, improved timeliness for adoption where this is the right plan, stronger support for special guardians and long-term carers, and clearer evidence that care plans are purposeful and regularly reviewed.

Risks. Permanence planning may be delayed by court timescales, assessment capacity, availability of adopters or special guardians, support package pressures and delays in identifying

or assessing family networks. If permanence is not considered early and reviewed consistently, children may experience drift, placement instability or longer periods in care than necessary.

Destination of children leaving care				
Reason	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 YTD
Stayed with current carers, including Staying Put	17	24	28	11
Adopted	12	11	19	5
Planned return home	10	16	28	6
Special Guardianship with former foster carer who was a relative or friend	15	19	16	6
Special Guardianship with former foster carer who was not a relative or friend	-	-	-	2
Special Guardianship made to carer(s) who was a relative or friend	-	-	-	2
Returned home under Child Arrangements Order	2	12	3	1
Left care to live with person with no parental responsibility	-	-	-	1
Accommodation on remand ended	-	-	-	3
Any other reason	-	-	-	2
Total children leaving care	97	117	88	39

Numbers of children leaving care: projection. The below table, consistent with the methodology used for other projections, uses a four-year rolling average to estimate the number of children expected to leave care over the next three years.

Numbers of children leaving care: historical and projected figures						
2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 projection	2027/28 projection	2028/29 projection
100	97	117	88	101	101	102

Duration of care episodes at the point children ceased to be looked after

Duration	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 YTD
Under 2 weeks	14	9	0	6	4	2
2–8 weeks	12	1	0	2	1	2
8 weeks–6 months	7	8	5	9	5	2
6 months–1 year	15	17	29	27	13	3
1–2 years	24	21	22	29	21	14
2–3 years	12	6	11	13	21	2
3–5 years	10	10	9	7	6	5
5–10 years	19	19	13	15	10	4
10+ years	8	9	6	9	7	4
Total	121	100	97	117	88	38

Strategic Priority 6: Increase the quantity, quality and range of accommodation and support for care experienced young people

Current position. Care experienced young people need planned pathways into safe, suitable, stable and affordable accommodation. Torbay continues to experience pressures across Staying Put, supported accommodation, social housing, move-on options and accommodation for young people with complex or enduring needs. The introduction of Ofsted regulation for supported accommodation has also changed the commissioning and quality assurance landscape.

What we need to develop. Torbay needs a clearer and broader accommodation pathway for care experienced young people, including Staying Put, supported accommodation, semi-independent provision, social housing, private rented options where appropriate, and move-on support. Transitions should be planned, gradual and supported by trusted relationships rather than crisis-led.

Additional focus on supported accommodation regulation. The introduction of Ofsted regulation for supported accommodation has changed the provider landscape and must remain a key consideration for commissioning. Torbay will need to maintain close provider engagement, monitor registration and quality assurance risks, and ensure that 16- and 17-year-olds and care experienced young people are placed only in accommodation that is suitable, safe, regulated where required and able to meet their assessed needs.

Additional focus on care experienced young people aged 18–25. The growth in Torbay's care experienced cohort reinforces the need for planned, flexible and sufficient accommodation pathways into adulthood. As at March 2024, Torbay was supporting 277 care experienced young people aged 18–25, an increase of 74 young people over two years. This creates sustained demand for Staying Put, supported accommodation, semi-independent provision, social housing, affordable move-on options, tenancy sustainment and support linked to education, employment, emotional wellbeing and adult services where relevant.

We will:

- Strengthen the care leaver accommodation pathway from age 16 onward.
- Maximise Staying Put where this is right for the young person and the carer.
- Work with housing, providers and adult services to increase suitable move-on and supported accommodation options.
- Ensure young people with disabilities, SEND or enduring care needs have early transition planning and agreed accommodation pathways.
- Improve tenancy sustainment support, financial capability, emotional wellbeing support and access to education, employment and training.
- Use care experienced young people's views to shape future accommodation and support options.

How this priority connects to the wider strategy. Care experienced young people need accommodation pathways that build on the stability achieved earlier in their care journey. Stronger Staying Put, supported accommodation, move-on homes and tenancy sustainment will prevent crisis moves, reduce unsuitable accommodation, improve independence outcomes and free

supported accommodation capacity for younger people who need it. This is central to both quality improvement and cost reduction.

How we will know we are making a difference. We will see more care experienced young people in suitable accommodation, reduced use of emergency or unsuitable accommodation, increased Staying Put and planned move-on arrangements, improved tenancy sustainment and stronger independence, education, employment and wellbeing outcomes.

Risks. Suitable accommodation options may not keep pace with the growing and changing needs of care experienced young people. Housing market pressures, affordability, limited social housing, provider capacity, supported accommodation regulation, benefit restrictions and young people's complex support needs may increase the risk of unsuitable or emergency accommodation, tenancy breakdown or delayed move-on.

Care experienced young people aged 18–25					
Snapshot date	Male	Female	Other	Total	Key implication
March 2022	109	93	1	203	Baseline position for rising accommodation demand.
March 2023	138	108	1	247	Year-on-year increase requiring wider accommodation and support options.
March 2024	157	119	1	277	Increase of 74 young people over two years, strengthening the need for planned move-on and supported accommodation.
March 2025	154	114	1	269	Decrease of 8 young people since 2024, but not reaching lower levels seen prior.
March 2026	154	114	1	269	Has remained steady since March 2025.

Care experienced young people, aged 18-25, projection. The table below uses a four-year rolling average to calculate a projection of how many care-experienced young people, aged 18-25, we may expect over the next three years. It assumes a broadly consistent number which mostly coincides with our recent history.

Care experienced young people in Torbay: historical and projected figures

2023	2024	2025	2026	2027 projected	2028 projected	2029 projected
247	277	269	269	266	270	269

Care experienced young people by age and gender, March 2025 and March 2026

Date / gender	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Total
March 2025 male	7	21	25	23	20	20	20	13	0	0	149
March 2025 female	7	15	15	15	18	22	16	8	0	0	116
March 2025 non-binary	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
March 2025 total	14	36	40	38	38	42	36	21	0	0	266
March 2026 male	0	7	21	25	23	20	22	20	13	0	151
March 2026 female	0	7	15	15	15	18	20	16	8	0	114
March 2026 non-binary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
March 2026 total	0	14	36	40	38	38	42	37	21	0	266

Care experienced young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The number of care experienced young people who are determined as at risk of or experiencing homelessness are listed has having the following accommodation codes: 'V - Emergency Accommodation' or 'S - No fixed abode / homeless'. We have seen a moderate increase in this figure over the last five years.

Care experienced young people in Torbay, at risk of or experiencing homelessness: historical figures

Snapshot date	Number at risk of homelessness	Total population	Percentage of total population
March 2022	3	203	1.5%
March 2023	4	247	1.6%
March 2024	4	277	1.4%
March 2025	5	269	1.5%
March 2026	5	269	1.5%

Care experienced young people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness: projection. The table below uses the same methodology as utilised for our Cared For cohort predictions, to provide expected numbers and percentages of the number of care-experienced young people who may be at risk of or experiencing homelessness over the next three years. The use of a rolling four-year average alongside the projected Care Experienced population figures has led to a steady predicted result across the next three years.

Care experienced young people in Torbay, at risk of or experiencing homelessness: projected figures

Year	Projected CE Population	Projected % at risk of or experiencing homelessness	Projected number at risk of or experiencing homelessness
2027	266	1.5%	4
2028	270	1.5%	4
2029	269	1.5%	4

Care experienced young people in custody. The number of care experienced young people in Torbay who are in custody is determined by those listed with accommodation code 'X - In Custody'. We have seen this figure remain broadly consistent over the last five years.

Care experienced young people in Torbay, who are in custody: historical figures			
Snapshot date	Number in custody	Total population	Percentage of total population
March 2022	4	203	2%
March 2023	5	247	2%
March 2024	5	277	1.8%
March 2025	5	269	1.9%
March 2026	5	269	1.9%

Care experienced young people who are in custody: projection. The table below uses the same methodology as utilised above to provide expected numbers and percentages of the number of care-experienced young people who may be in custody over the next three years. The use of a rolling four-year average alongside the projected Care Experienced population figures has led to a steady predicted result across the next three years.

Care experienced young people in Torbay who are in custody: projected figures			
Year	Projected CE Population	Projected % in custody	Projected number in custody
2027	266	1.9%	5
2028	270	1.9%	5
2029	269	1.9%	5

Care experienced young people who are parents. Several of our former relevant care experienced cohort have since become parents. The last five years' worth of figures can be evidenced below and can be viewed as a percentage of our total population.

Care experienced young people in Torbay, who are parents: historical figures			
Snapshot date	Number who are parents	Total population	Percentage of total population
March 2022	23	203	11%
March 2023	25	247	10%
March 2024	25	277	9%
March 2025	25	269	9%
March 2026	25	269	9%

Care experienced young people who are parents: projection. The table below uses the same methodology as utilised above to provide expected numbers and percentages of the number of care-experienced young people who may be parents over the next three years. The use of a rolling four-year average alongside the projected Care Experienced population figures has led to a steady predicted result across the next three years.

Care experienced young people in Torbay who are parents: projected figures			
Year	Projected CE Population	Projected % who may be parents	Projected number who may be parents
2027	266	9.4%	25
2028	270	9.4%	25
2029	269	9.4%	25

Strategic Priority 7: Manage placement resources effectively through commissioning, market shaping, data and governance

Current position. Torbay needs robust commissioning intelligence, quality assurance, cost oversight and sufficiency forecasting to respond to placement market pressures. The Council must ensure that children are matched to the right home at the right time, that provision is safe and high quality, and that resources are used effectively to improve outcomes.

What we need to develop. Torbay needs a single sufficiency performance framework that brings together placement data, commissioning intelligence, provider quality, cost information, out-of-area placements, care leaver accommodation, placement stability and children's lived experience. This will support stronger strategic planning, market shaping and Corporate Parenting assurance.

Additional focus on governance and exception reporting. Delivery of the placements sufficiency strategy will be governed through the Budget Sustainability Plan for Placements, which is reported to Directors and Cabinet. The Corporate Parenting Board may receive updates where these relate to children's experiences, outcomes or corporate parenting responsibilities, but it will not own the strategy or the delivery plan. Reporting should remain exception-based and focused on sufficiency risks, financial impact, quality, outcomes and decisions required by senior leaders.

We will:

- Develop a single sufficiency performance framework and dashboard.
- Strengthen commissioning, contract monitoring, quality assurance and provider engagement.
- Use data and forecasting to identify placement gaps and future demand earlier.
- Improve oversight of cost, quality, matching and placement stability.
- Work through regional and sub-regional commissioning arrangements to improve market shaping and provider relationships.
- Report delivery through the Budget Sustainability Plan for Placements to Directors and Cabinet, with Corporate Parenting Board updates provided where relevant to children's experiences and outcomes.

How this priority connects to the wider strategy. Commissioning, data and governance are the mechanisms that bring all priorities together. A single sufficiency framework will allow Torbay to see whether prevention is reducing demand, whether fostering and residential developments are increasing local capacity, whether permanence is being achieved earlier, whether care

experienced young people are moving on safely, and whether these changes are improving quality while reducing avoidable spend.

How we will know we are making a difference. We will see improved sufficiency forecasting, stronger provider relationships, clearer oversight of quality and cost, better evidence of impact, more timely decision-making and regular reporting through the Budget Sustainability Plan for Placements to Directors and Cabinet.

Risks. Gaps in data quality, forecasting, commissioning capacity or financial oversight may limit Torbay's ability to identify demand early and shape the market effectively. Provider instability, regional market pressures, inflation, workforce shortages and insufficient quality assurance may affect placement availability, cost control and confidence in commissioned provision.

Placement type profile, March 2026

Placement type	Number	Percentage	Commissioning implication
In-house fostering	100	34%	Continue to grow and retain local foster care capacity.
Independent fostering	68	23%	Reduce reliance where local family-based care can safely meet need.
Relatives and friends	49	17%	Strengthen kinship and connected care pathways and support.
Residential	21	7%	Develop local children's homes and step-down options for children with complex needs.
Placed with parents	21	7%	Maintain robust oversight and reunification planning.
16+ provision	16	5%	Ensure sufficiency, quality and Ofsted compliance for supported accommodation.

Other placements	10	3%	Review to ensure appropriate matching and oversight.
Placed for adoption	3	1%	Continue timely permanence planning.
Foster to adopt	3	1%	Maintain early permanence options.
Parent and child residential	1	<1%	Monitor specialist provision needs and market availability.
Total	292	100%	Use as baseline for sufficiency dashboard and commissioning oversight.

11. Young person's voice: listening, acting and feeding back

Torbay's Placement Sufficiency Strategy is grounded in the voices, experiences and aspirations of cared for and care experienced children and young people. The Corporate Parenting Strategy describes the Council's relationship with children and young people as a "contract of trust" and makes clear that children and young people must be actively involved in decisions that affect their lives. This strategy carries that commitment into placement sufficiency: children and young people should not only be consulted about services before and after they are designed, but should help shape what good homes, good support and good transitions look like from the outset.

The Pledge within Torbay's Corporate Parenting Strategy states that, as corporate parents, we will support, empower and respect children and young people. It commits us to listen, act and stand beside them. For this sufficiency strategy, that means making sure children and young people are treated as individuals rather than labels; that they are involved in decisions about where they live and the support they receive; that information is explained clearly; that privacy and dignity are respected; and that young people are told what has changed as a result of what they have said.

Children and young people have already told Torbay what matters to them. They want to have a say in decisions, they want adults to hear what they are saying and understand what it means, and they want support that recognises the emotional impact of care and care experience. Young people have also spoken about the importance of having somewhere decent to live, staying

connected to people and places that matter to them, being supported with education, training and work, and not being expected to move into adulthood or independence before they are ready.

This strategy therefore commits to using children and young people's voice as a core part of sufficiency planning, commissioning, quality assurance and governance. Their views will inform how Torbay develops foster care, kinship care, residential homes, supported accommodation, move-on accommodation and transition support. This includes listening to children living in local and out-of-area placements, care experienced young people, young people with SEND, young parents, children and young people living in supported accommodation, and those whose needs are more complex or whose voice may be less often heard.

The voice of children and young people will be gathered through a range of routes, including the Children in Care Council, SEND Youth Forum, Young Person Panel, direct work with the Participation Team, care experienced consultation, placement reviews, pathway planning, provider engagement and feedback from children and young people involved in procurement or service design. Where children and young people are involved in shaping services, Torbay will close the feedback loop by explaining what has been heard, what has changed and, where change is not possible, why this is the case.

This section should be read alongside the Corporate Parenting Strategy, The Pledge and the governance arrangements that ensure children and young people's voices are visible within Corporate Parenting Board assurance. The success of this strategy will be judged not only by whether Torbay has enough placements and accommodation, but also by whether children and young people experience those homes and services as safe, stable, respectful, supportive and shaped around what matters to them.

What young people's voice means for this strategy

What children and young people have told us matters	What this means for sufficiency	How we will respond
"I want my say in decisions."	Children and young people need meaningful involvement in decisions about where they live, who supports them and what their future plan is.	Ensure placement planning, reviews, pathway planning and commissioning decisions include children and young people's views wherever possible.

“Don’t just talk to us. Hear what we have to say and understand what it means.”	Participation must lead to action, not simply consultation.	Build feedback loops into service design, provider reviews and Corporate Parenting governance so young people can see how their views influence change.
Young people want somewhere decent to live and support to move on in life.	Sufficiency must include quality, stability, safety, dignity and preparation for adulthood, not just availability of beds or placements.	Develop accommodation pathways that include supported accommodation, move-on homes, tenancy sustainment and gradual preparation for independence.
Young people want adults to be patient and understand the impact of care experience.	Placement and accommodation planning must consider trauma, emotional wellbeing, relationships and readiness for independence.	Strengthen therapeutic support, relationship-based practice, Staying Put, step-down arrangements and flexible support around young people’s needs.
Young people want to remain connected to the people and places that matter to them where it is safe.	Local sufficiency matters because distance from Torbay can affect family time, friendships, education, health support and identity.	Prioritise local family-based care, local residential provision and local accommodation options where these can safely meet need.
Young people want to be respected as individuals, not defined by care status or need.	Matching and commissioning must recognise identity, culture, strengths, aspirations and individual circumstances.	Use individual care planning, advocacy, participation and quality assurance to test whether provision feels respectful, inclusive and personalised.

12. Finance and value for money

Placement sufficiency is both a statutory responsibility and a significant financial priority for Torbay. The strategy is designed to improve outcomes for children and young people while also reducing avoidable pressure on high-cost, crisis-led and out-of-area provision. Financial sustainability will only be achieved if the Council and partners are able to intervene earlier, support

more children safely within their families and networks, strengthen local family-based care, develop local specialist provision and improve commissioning and accommodation pathways for care experienced young people.

The current financial pressures are driven by a combination of demand, complexity and market conditions. These result in high-cost residential placements, use of unregistered provision where suitable regulated alternatives are not available, Independent Fostering Agency placements where local foster care capacity is insufficient, Section 17 accommodation costs, temporary accommodation pressures, supported accommodation and specialist post-16 education provision. These pressures are not separate from sufficiency; they are direct indicators of where the local system needs more planned, preventative and local options.

The value-for-money approach within this strategy is therefore not simply about reducing unit costs. It is about securing the right provision at the right time, improving stability and outcomes, avoiding escalation where possible and ensuring that investment is directed toward provision that prevents higher-cost intervention later. This includes investing in Family Help, kinship and connected care, foster carer recruitment and retention, Mockingbird, local children's homes, specialist post-16 provision, supported accommodation, move-on accommodation and tenancy sustainment support.

The financial benefits of the strategy will come from the cumulative effect of the priorities working together, not from any single workstream in isolation. Earlier help should reduce demand for care; family network and permanence work should reduce the length and instability of care episodes; local fostering should reduce avoidable external placement use; local residential and specialist provision should reduce high-cost spot purchasing and unregistered arrangements; and stronger accommodation pathways should reduce emergency and unsuitable provision for care experienced young people. Savings and cost reductions will therefore be tracked alongside quality, stability and young people's experience, so that financial improvement does not happen at the expense of children's outcomes.

Financial oversight will be strengthened through the Budget Sustainability Plan for Placements, sufficiency performance framework, high-cost placement review arrangements, commissioning and contract management, and budget monitoring. This will include monitoring placement type, placement distance, cost, quality, stability, use of unregistered provision, step-down opportunities, Staying Put, supported accommodation throughput, care leaver accommodation outcomes and the impact of new local provision as it comes online. Reporting will be to Directors and Cabinet through the sustainability plan, with Corporate Parenting Board updates provided only where relevant to children's experiences, outcomes or corporate parenting responsibilities.

Finance and value-for-money priorities

Area of financial pressure	Strategic response	Value-for-money measure
High-cost residential and unregistered provision	Develop local children's homes, strengthen matching, increase step-down options and maintain senior oversight of high-cost placements.	Reduced use of unregistered provision, fewer out-of-area placements where local care can meet need, improved stability and reduced reliance on crisis placements.
Independent fostering agency reliance	Increase local foster carer recruitment and retention, strengthen the fostering offer and expand support models such as Mockingbird.	More children placed with local Torbay foster carers, fewer external placements where local family-based care is appropriate, and improved placement stability.
Section 17 and temporary accommodation costs	Strengthen prevention work between Children's Services and Housing, improve early intervention and explore more planned accommodation options for families.	Reduced use of costly emergency accommodation, improved family stability and stronger prevention of homelessness.
Care leaver accommodation and supported accommodation pressures	Strengthen move-on pathways, Staying Put, supported accommodation, SHAP, Hotels to Homes and tenancy sustainment support.	Improved throughput from supported accommodation, fewer unsuitable accommodation arrangements and more young people sustaining tenancies.

Specialist post-16 provision and complex needs	Develop planned specialist post-16 commissioning arrangements and align social care, SEND, education, health and housing planning.	Reduced ad-hoc spot purchasing, clearer pathways for young people and better alignment between education, accommodation and support.
Market volatility, inflation and provider capacity	Improve commissioning intelligence, provider engagement, procurement planning, contract management and regional market shaping.	Better forecasting, stronger provider relationships, improved quality assurance and more predictable commissioning decisions.

13. Strategic risks and dependencies

The successful delivery of this strategy is dependent on the pace, alignment and effectiveness of the existing workstreams described above. The following cross-cutting risks should be monitored through the Budget Sustainability Plan for Placements, the sufficiency performance framework and senior leadership arrangements, with escalation to Directors and Cabinet where required.

Key risks associated with delivery of the strategy			
Risk	Why this matters	Related workstream / plan	Mitigation / assurance route
Local residential provision is delayed or does not come online at the required pace.	Continued pressure on out-of-area, high-cost and unregistered provision, with children potentially placed further from family, education, health and community links.	Children's Homes Programme; Cabinet report; DfE capital bid	Maintain senior programme oversight, clear procurement milestones, property and planning risk tracking, provider engagement and escalation through

			children's services and corporate governance.
Provider market appetite, affordability or workforce capacity is insufficient.	Procurements may fail, costs may exceed affordability assumptions or providers may be unable to recruit and retain the right workforce.	Children's Homes Programme; Specialist Post-16 Provision; supported accommodation commissioning	Use early market engagement, realistic tender timelines, provider forums, regional commissioning intelligence, robust cost modelling and contract management.
Foster carer recruitment and retention does not keep pace with demand.	Torbay will remain reliant on independent fostering agencies or residential provision for children whose needs could be met in local family-based care.	Fostering Offer; Fostering South West; Mockingbird; recruitment and retention strategy	Track recruitment conversion, approvals, resignations, carer feedback and sufficiency gaps; progress enhanced support, training, incentives and out-of-hours advice.
Accommodation pathways for care experienced young people remain blocked.	Young people may remain in supported accommodation for longer than needed or may experience unsuitable, unstable or costly temporary accommodation.	Housing Needs Analysis; 16+ Supported Accommodation; SHAP; Hotels to Homes; care leaver accommodation pathway	Develop move-on planning from age 16, strengthen housing partnership arrangements, monitor throughput and tenancy sustainment, and use young people's feedback to shape provision.
SEND, health, emotional wellbeing and housing plans are not sufficiently aligned.	Children with complex needs may experience delayed support, education disruption, placement instability or	Specialist Post-16 Provision; DfE capital bid; SEND and health planning; transition planning	Embed joint planning across social care, SEND, education, health, housing and adult services, with named escalation routes

	escalation into more costly placements.		for children with complex or enduring needs.
Supported accommodation regulation affects provider capacity and availability.	Some providers may choose not to register or may reduce provision, leading to fewer options for 16 and 17-year-olds and young parents who require regulated accommodation.	16+ Supported Accommodation; Young Parents Supported Accommodation; Housing Needs Analysis	Maintain provider engagement, monitor Ofsted registration risks, use spot-purchase arrangements carefully and review longer-term commissioning options.
Financial pressures increase faster than planned sufficiency improvements.	High-cost residential, unregistered, Section 17, temporary accommodation and specialist education costs may limit the Council's ability to invest preventatively.	Section 17 accommodation prevention; residential programme; specialist post-16 provision; sufficiency performance framework	Strengthen financial tracking, demand forecasting, cost avoidance reporting, senior oversight of high-cost placements and alignment with budget monitoring.
Children and young people's voice is not consistently used to shape provision.	Provision may meet technical sufficiency requirements but fail to reflect what children and young people say they need to feel safe, settled and prepared for adulthood.	Corporate Parenting Strategy; care experienced consultation; procurement co-production; supported accommodation listening circles	Embed participation in procurement, mobilisation, provider review, accommodation pathway design and Corporate Parenting assurance.

14. Conclusion

This strategy brings together Torbay's sufficiency evidence, current pressures and planned responses into a single 2026–2029 framework. It confirms that sufficiency is not only about securing placements when children enter care, but about building a whole-system approach that supports families earlier, strengthens kinship and connected care, grows local fostering, develops local specialist and residential options, secures permanence, and improves accommodation pathways for care experienced young people.

The next stage is to complete the remaining data gaps, create the required graphs, test the financial assumptions and translate the strategy into a costed delivery plan. This should include clear ownership, timescales, risks, dependencies, impact measures and reporting arrangements so that Torbay can demonstrate progress against quality, stability, locality, permanence, young people's experience and value for money.

Delivery of these priorities will be overseen through the Budget Sustainability Plan for Placements, which is reported to Directors and Cabinet. The placements sufficiency strategy is a key delivery mechanism for that sustainability plan and should therefore be governed through the same route. Progress should be monitored through a supporting SMART action plan, reviewed regularly and updated in response to changes in local demand, national reform, regional commissioning arrangements, provider market pressures and financial performance.

Governance will ensure that the strategy remains coherent as an improvement and financial sustainability programme. Reports should show how the priorities connect, what progress is being made, what impact young people say the changes are having, what cost avoidance or savings are being delivered, and where Directors or Cabinet need to act to remove barriers. The Corporate Parenting Board may receive updates where there are relevant implications for children's lived experience, stability, permanence, accommodation or outcomes, but it will not be the owning or primary reporting forum for delivery.

15. Summary of high-level success measures

The high-level success measures should be considered together rather than separately. The overall test is whether Torbay is creating a more joined-up local system in which children enter care only when necessary, receive high-quality local support where possible, achieve permanence without delay, move into adulthood with safe accommodation and trusted relationships, and experience services that they have helped to shape.

- Reduction in avoidable entries into care and continued stabilisation of the cared for population.
- Increase in the number and proportion of children living with Torbay foster carers.
- Reduction in reliance on Independent Fostering Agency, high-cost, out-of-area and unregistered provision where local care can safely meet need.
- Increase in local provision for children with complex, SEND, disability-related or step-down needs.
- Improved timeliness and quality of permanence planning, including adoption, Special Guardianship, kinship care, long-term fostering and reunification where safe.
- Increase in care experienced young people living in suitable, stable and affordable accommodation.
- Improved use of sufficiency data, forecasting, commissioning intelligence and market management, quality assurance and financial oversight.
- Stronger evidence that children and young people's voices are informing sufficiency planning and placement development.

16. Recommendations and next steps

The next stage of this work should be to move from strategic intent to a fully costed delivery plan. The strategy sets out the direction of travel and the key priorities for improvement; the action plan will need to translate these priorities into specific actions, accountable leads, timescales, resource requirements, savings assumptions, risks, dependencies and measures of impact. This will ensure that Torbay can track whether the strategy is improving quality, meeting need, taking young people with us and reducing avoidable cost.

Recommendation 1: Develop a costed delivery action plan

Develop a SMART action plan for the full 2026–2029 period, with a clear first-year delivery plan for 2026/27. The plan should identify the actions required under each strategic priority, linked milestones, named owners, delivery partners, timescales, dependencies, risks, data measures and reporting routes. It should distinguish between actions that require new investment, actions that can be delivered within existing resources, and actions that are expected to release capacity or reduce cost over time.

Recommendation 2: Cost the proposals and test the savings assumptions

Complete a financial appraisal of each major workstream, including Family Help and prevention, kinship and connected care, fostering recruitment and retention, Mockingbird, local children's homes, specialist post-16 provision, supported accommodation, move-on accommodation and care leaver tenancy sustainment. The appraisal should identify implementation costs, staffing implications, commissioning costs, capital requirements, potential external funding, cost avoidance, expected savings, and the timeframe over which any reductions are likely to be realised.

Recommendation 3: Identify gaps in current provision and capacity

Undertake a detailed gap analysis against current and forecast need. This should include gaps in local foster care capacity, kinship and connected care support, residential beds, specialist provision for children with complex needs, provision for children with SEND and disabilities, supported accommodation, move-on accommodation, accommodation for young parents, provision for UASC and pathways for young people with enduring care and support needs. The analysis should also identify gaps in data quality, commissioning capacity, provider market intelligence, workforce, participation and governance.

Recommendation 4: Prioritise actions that improve quality and reduce avoidable cost

Use the action plan to prioritise actions that have the strongest combined impact on quality, sufficiency and value for money. This should include reducing avoidable entry into care, increasing local family-based placements, reducing high-cost external and unregistered provision, improving step-down pathways, reducing placement distance, improving permanence, increasing supported accommodation throughput and strengthening move-on options for care experienced young people. Savings should be tracked alongside quality and outcome measures to ensure that financial improvement is driven by better planning and better provision, rather than by reducing support.

Recommendation 5: Build young people's voice into delivery and assurance

Ensure children and young people are involved in shaping the action plan and testing whether delivery is making a difference. This should include children in care, care experienced young people, young people with SEND, young people living in supported accommodation, young parents, children placed out of area and young people whose voices are less often heard. The action plan should include clear feedback loops so that young people know what has changed as a result of their views.

Recommendation 6: Establish clear governance for delivery

The action plan should be owned through the Budget Sustainability Plan for Placements and reported through the existing route to Directors and Cabinet. Reporting should be exception-based and focused on progress, risks, barriers, impact, financial performance, cost avoidance, savings delivery and decisions required. A quarterly sufficiency report should bring together data on demand, placement type, placement distance, cost, quality, stability, permanence, care leaver accommodation and young people's lived experience. Corporate Parenting Board updates may be provided where relevant to children's experiences and outcomes, but the Board will not own the plan or be the primary reporting route.

Recommendation 7: Confirm the immediate next steps

- Agree the final strategic priorities and success measures.
- Complete the sufficiency gap analysis and demand forecast.
- Develop the SMART delivery action plan for 2026–2029, with a detailed first-year implementation plan.
- Cost each action and identify whether it requires investment, can be delivered within existing resources, or is expected to generate cost avoidance or savings.
- Identify quick wins, medium-term developments and longer-term commissioning or capital projects.
- Confirm the Budget Sustainability Plan for Placements as the governance route, with reporting to Directors and Cabinet and Corporate Parenting Board updates only where relevant to children's experiences and outcomes.
- Agree how children and young people will be involved in action plan development, procurement, provider review and ongoing assurance.
- Review the strategy and action plan at least annually, and earlier if Local Government Reorganisation, national reform or demand changes require this.

Appendix 1: Placement Sufficiency Delivery Action Plan 2026–2029

1. Purpose

This action plan sets out the high-level milestones through which Torbay Council and its partners will deliver the Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2026–2029. It brings together the strategy’s seven priorities and the relevant commitments in the 2026/27 Medium-Term Financial Plan Financial Sustainability Plans for Placements, Fostering Families, Managing the Higher Needs Block and Locality Model, and Home to School Transport.

The action plan gives particular priority to reducing reliance on high-cost external residential, out-of-area, emergency and unregistered provision. Residential cost pressure cannot be addressed through price negotiation alone. Delivery will require a coordinated programme of demand management, senior gatekeeping, robust individual placement review, safe step-down, stronger family-based alternatives, development of regulated local provision, improved commissioning and earlier support for children and families.

The plan will be reviewed at least quarterly and refreshed annually to reflect demand, outcomes, financial performance, market conditions and the views of children and young people.

2. Delivery principles

- Children’s safety, welfare, relationships, identity, education and long-term outcomes will remain central to all decisions.
- Residential care will be used where it is the right plan for the child, not as a result of gaps elsewhere in the system.
- Every high-cost placement will have a clear purpose, planned review point and exit or step-down plan where this is safe and appropriate.
- Local family-based and regulated provision will be increased in response to evidenced need.
- Children’s Services, Finance, Assets, Housing, SEND, Education, Health and Commissioning will work as a single sufficiency system.
- Financial impact will be tracked alongside quality, stability, distance from home and children and young people’s lived experience.
- Performance will be reported by exception, with risks, delays and changes to financial assumptions escalated promptly.

3. Strategic outcomes by March 2029

By March 2029, Torbay aims to have:

- Reduced reliance on high-cost external residential, out-of-area, emergency and unregistered placements.
- Increased the range of regulated local residential and specialist provision.
- Increased local foster care capacity, including carers able to support adolescents, sibling groups, children with disabilities, parent and baby placements, emergency care and step-down from residential care.
- Strengthened prevention, kinship, reunification and permanence pathways to avoid unnecessary entry to care and reduce avoidable duration in care.
- Improved stability, matching, education continuity and access to health and therapeutic support.
- Strengthened supported accommodation and move-on pathways for care experienced young people.
- Delivered improved financial sustainability, contributing to the required reduction in placement expenditure over the Medium-Term Financial Plan period.

4. High-level delivery milestones

Workstream	High-level action	Milestone	Target date	Lead and key partners	Intended impact and measures
Governance and financial grip	Confirm Director-level sponsorship and accountability across the placement gateway, accommodation and sufficiency programme.	Clear ownership, decision routes and escalation arrangements approved.	September 2026	Director of Children's Services; Children's Services; Finance; Commissioning	Faster decisions; clear accountability ; monthly reporting against outcomes, placement use and financial impact.

Residential pressure: baseline	Establish a single residential and high-cost placements baseline covering need, weekly cost, location, registration status, education, health, placement duration, review point and potential alternatives.	Baseline and priority cohort agreed and refreshed monthly.	September 2026	Head of Service; Commissioning; Finance; SEND; Health	Complete and reliable evidence base; all high-cost placements visible to senior leaders.
Residential pressure: review and step-down	Operate a monthly high-cost placement review board. Require every high-cost residential, unregistered and bespoke placement to have an outcome-focused plan, review point and safe exit, step-down or	All current high-cost placements reviewed and action plans agreed; new placements reviewed at gateway and monthly thereafter.	October 2026, then monthly	Director-level sponsor; Operational Heads of Service; Commissioning; Finance; SEND; Health	Reduced duration and cost of high-cost placements; increased planned step-downs; reduced unregistered use.

	permanence pathway.				
Residential pressure: gatekeeping	Strengthen the accommodation needs and placement gateway so residential admission is based on evidenced need, alternatives considered, intended outcomes, maximum review period and senior authorisation.	Revised gateway criteria and decision record implemented.	October 2026	Children's Services; Commissioning; Finance; SEND; Legal	Fewer crisis-led admissions; stronger challenge; improved matching and cost containment.
Residential pressure: local provision	Translate demand analysis into quantified targets for local regulated residential beds and specialist provision, including priority cohorts, service model,	Local residential sufficiency specification and quantified capacity requirement approved.	October 2026	Children's Services; Commissioning; Assets; Finance; SEND; Health	Clear local capacity target linked to forecast need and reduced external reliance.

	workforce, property requirements and financial assumptions.				
Residential pressure: property pipeline	Agree a prioritised property and provider pipeline for small local children's homes, specialist provision and step-down accommodation.	Preferred options, delivery route, ownership, indicative cost and mobilisation timetable agreed.	December 2026	Children's Services; Assets; Commissioning; Finance; Legal	Deliverable pipeline for local regulated capacity; reduced distance from home and external-market exposure.
Residential pressure: business case	Approve phased business cases for the Children's Homes Programme and any specialist provision, including the Department for Education capital proposal	Investment and commissioning decisions secured for phase one.	January 2027	Director of Children's Services; Finance; Assets; Commissioning; Cabinet or delegated decision route as required	Mobilisation of local provision; quantified cost avoidance and improved outcomes.

	where applicable.				
Residential pressure: mobilisation	Procure or appoint providers, recruit workforce, complete registration activity and mobilise agreed local provision.	First phase of additional regulated local provision operational.	By September 2027, subject to property, procurement and registration	Commissioning; Provider; Assets; Children's Services; Ofsted liaison	Additional local beds; fewer external placements; improved oversight, education and health continuity.
Residential pressure: further capacity	Review the impact of phase one and approve any additional provision required for 2028/29.	Phase-two decision based on updated demand, outcomes and savings evidence.	March 2028	Sufficiency Programme Board; Finance; Commissioning; Assets	Capacity remains aligned to changing need and Medium-Term Financial Plan delivery.
Commissioning and market management	Review all high-cost fees, uplifts and bespoke packages; strengthen contract compliance, negotiation, framework use and escalation where cost is not justified by	Fee-challenge protocol and monthly financial impact report embedded.	October 2026, then monthly	Commissioning; Finance; Operational Services	Immediate cost containment; negotiated reductions; improved value and provider accountability .

	assessed need.				
Regional commissioning	Develop a shared provider, placement and rate intelligence baseline with Devon County Council and Plymouth City Council and agree a strategic joint commissioning framework.	Regional baseline completed; governance and market-engagement principles agreed.	November 2026	Commissioning; Devon County Council; Plymouth City Council; Finance	Stronger market intelligence, negotiating position and regional influence.
Regional commissioning options	Appraise joint frameworks, block purchasing and shared commissioning options for residential, specialist and post-16 provision.	Options and recommendation presented for decision.	January 2027	Commissioning; Finance; Legal; regional partners	Reduced spot purchasing and future cost avoidance.
Fostering: local offer	Approve and implement a competitive Torbay foster carer offer covering	Foster carer offer launched and communicated .	October 2026	Director of Children's Services; Fostering Service; Finance;	Improved recruitment, retention and placement stability; reduced

	allowances, fees, training, supervision, peer support, therapeutic advice, out-of-hours support and retention.			Communications	Independent Fostering Agency reliance.
Fostering: targeted recruitment	Implement evidence-led recruitment and conversion activity focused on adolescents, sibling groups, children with disabilities and complex needs, parent and baby placements, emergency care and residential step-down.	Monthly funnel established covering enquiries, assessments, approvals, withdrawals, leavers and net growth.	October 2026, then monthly	Fostering Service; Fostering South West; Communications	Increased capacity matched to pressure cohorts.
Fostering: capacity milestones	Deliver an interim milestone of 10 additional approved fostering households	Interim and full-year recruitment positions reported, including household	December 2026 and March 2027	Fostering Service; Director-level sponsor	More local family-based placements; reduced Independent Fostering Agency and

	and work towards 30 additional approvals, while explicitly reporting net growth after resignations and retirements.	capability and placements created.			residential use where appropriate.
Fostering: retention and stability	Implement the retention and support framework, including Mockingbird development, support for challenging placements, respite, therapeutic input and enhanced supervision.	Retention framework implemented and impact reviewed.	December 2026, with review in March 2027	Fostering Service; Health; therapeutic services	Reduced carer attrition, fewer disruptions and more sustainable step-down placements.
Prevention and family networks	Embed Family Help, family group decision-making, kinship and connected care so that family	Consistent pathway and audit framework in place.	December 2026	Early Help and Children's Social Care; Family Hubs; Legal; partners	Fewer avoidable entries into care; increased kinship and connected care.

	alternatives are explored before admission and throughout care planning.				
Reunification and permanence	Review children with potential for safe reunification, Special Guardianship, adoption or another permanence arrangement, with clear support plans and senior oversight.	Priority cohort reviewed and permanence tracker strengthened.	December 2026, then quarterly	Children's Social Care; Legal; Fostering; Adopt South West	Reduced drift and duration in care; placement capacity released safely.
SEND and complex needs	Establish an integrated review of children at risk of residential admission or placement breakdown, bringing together social care, SEND, education, health and	Joint risk cohort and preventative plans reviewed monthly.	October 2026	Children's Services; SEND; Education; Health; Commissioning	Fewer emergency placements; improved stability and earlier support.

	commissioning.				
SEND commissioning	Complete the shared provider, rate and placement intelligence baseline and use it to inform regional commissioning, local sufficiency and challenge of high-cost packages.	Baseline informs commissioning intentions and financial modelling.	November 2026	SEND; Commissioning; Finance; regional partners	Greater cost control and stronger local or regional alternatives.
Post-16 specialist pathways	Refresh the post-16 pathway and sufficiency plan, including specialist education, supported accommodation, care leaver housing and transition to adult services.	Demand, gaps, commissioning intentions and transition responsibilities agreed.	December 2026	Children's Services; SEND; Education; Housing; Adult Services; Commissioning	Reduced bespoke purchasing; planned transition and accommodation pathways.
Supported accommodation and move-on	Re-establish structured provider engagement and agree an	Provider forum operating; pathway gaps and development	November 2026	Children's Services; Housing;	Better throughput, reduced crisis placements, improved

	improvement plan for supported accommodation, move-on housing, Staying Put, young parent accommodation and UASC transitions.	actions agreed.		Commissioning; providers	quality and tenancy sustainability.
Education continuity and transport	Ensure local sufficiency development and placement decisions consider education continuity and transport implications from the outset. Review transport costs linked to distant placements and identify opportunities for route optimisation, shared transport, personal transport	Integrated placement, education and transport impact assessment included in gateway decisions.	December 2026	Children's Services; Education; SEND; Home to School Transport; Finance	Reduced disruption, improved attendance and avoidance of unnecessary transport cost.

	budgets and independence planning.				
Data and forecasting	Create a quarterly sufficiency dashboard covering demand, admissions, placement type, residential use, distance from home, unregistered placements, vacancies, fostering capacity, stability, step-down, permanence, provider quality and cost.	Dashboard agreed and used for exception reporting.	October 2026, then quarterly	Performance and Intelligence; Finance; Commissioning; Children's Services	Single view of delivery, risk, outcomes and financial impact.
Children and young people's voice	Build feedback from children and young people into placement reviews, service specifications,	Feedback method and reporting route agreed; themes reported at least twice yearly.	December 2026	Participation Service; Commissioning; operational teams	Provision reflects lived experience; improved safety, support, belonging and preparation

	provider quality assurance and evaluation of new provision.				for independence .
Financial benefits	Validate the contribution of high-cost placement review, step-down, local provision, fostering growth, commissioning grip, prevention and permanence to the overall placement savings requirement.	Costed benefits profile approved and tracked against the Medium-Term Financial Plan.	November 2026, refreshed quarterly	Finance; Director of Children's Services; workstream leads	Transparent tracking of cashable savings, non-cashable cost avoidance and investment requirements.
Annual refresh	Refresh the demand forecast, gap analysis, capacity targets, milestones and financial assumptions.	Updated action plan approved for the following year.	March each year	Sufficiency Programme Board; Corporate Parenting Board; Finance	Action plan remains responsive to demand, outcomes, market changes and financial pressures.

5. Financial framework

The Placements Financial Sustainability Plan identifies a requirement to reduce the placements budget by £4 million over two and a half financial years. The contribution from this action plan will be developed and validated across five linked routes:

1. High-cost placement review, reduced duration and safe step-down.
2. Development of regulated local residential and specialist provision.
3. Increased in-house fostering, kinship and other family-based alternatives.
4. Stronger commissioning, fee challenge, contract management and regional market influence.
5. Prevention of avoidable entry to care, safe reunification and timely permanence.

The current MTFP assumptions identify increasing cashable and non-cashable benefits across 2026/27 to 2028/29. These remain planning assumptions and will be validated through live placement data, individual placement changes, provider rates, delivery timescales and approved investment decisions. Progress reports will distinguish clearly between:

- Cashable savings released from budgets.
- Non-cashable savings that contain or avoid forecast growth.
- One-off savings.
- Investment and transition costs.
- Slippage, risks and changes to the expected benefits profile.

6. Governance and reporting

The Director of Children's Services will act as Senior Responsible Owner for delivery. A cross-council Sufficiency Programme Board will coordinate delivery across Children's Services, Finance, Commissioning, Assets, Housing, SEND, Education, Health and Adult Services.

Operational workstreams will maintain detailed plans beneath this high-level appendix. The programme board will receive monthly information on residential and high-cost placements and quarterly updates on the wider action plan. Reporting will focus on progress, impact, exceptions, decisions required and financial delivery rather than routine operational activity.

The Corporate Parenting Board will receive strategic assurance on placement sufficiency, stability, permanence, distance from home, care experienced accommodation and children and young people's lived experience. Financial delivery will be reported through the council's established MTFP and budget monitoring arrangements.

7. Core measures

The following measures will be monitored:

- Number and weekly cost of residential placements.
- Number of high-cost, unregistered, emergency and bespoke placements.
- Number and percentage of children placed outside Torbay or more than 20 miles from home.
- Percentage of high-cost placements with a current review point and exit or step-down plan.
- Residential admissions and step-downs.
- Local regulated residential beds commissioned, developed and occupied.
- Foster carer enquiries, assessments, approvals, withdrawals, resignations and net household growth.
- Number of carers available for priority cohorts.
- Use and cost of Independent Fostering Agency placements.
- Placement stability and unplanned endings.
- Entries into care, reunification, kinship, Special Guardianship, adoption and other permanence outcomes.
- Supported accommodation capacity, quality, vacancies, move-on and tenancy sustainability.
- Education continuity, attendance and transport impact for children placed at distance.
- Cashable savings, non-cashable cost avoidance, investment costs and forecast variance.
- Feedback from children and young people about safety, stability, location, relationships and support.