

Monday, 10 October 2022

CABINET

A meeting of **Cabinet** will be held on

Tuesday, 18 October 2022

commencing at **5.30 pm**

The meeting will be held in the Meadfoot Room, Town Hall, Castle Circus,
Torquay, TQ1 3DR

Members of the Committee

Councillor Steve Darling (Chairman)

Councillor Carter

Councillor Long

Councillor Cowell

Councillor Morey

Councillor Law

Councillor Stockman

Together Torbay will thrive

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Email: governance.support@torbay.gov.uk - www.torbay.gov.uk

CABINET AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
To receive apologies for absence.
2. **Minutes** (Pages 4 - 15)
To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 27 September 2022.
3. **Disclosure of Interests**
 - (a) To receive declarations of non pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda.

For reference: Having declared their non pecuniary interest members may remain in the meeting and speak and, vote on the matter in question. A completed disclosure of interests form should be returned to the Clerk before the conclusion of the meeting.
 - (b) To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda.

For reference: Where a Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest he/she must leave the meeting during consideration of the item. However, the Member may remain in the meeting to make representations, answer questions or give evidence if the public have a right to do so, but having done so the Member must then immediately leave the meeting, may not vote and must not improperly seek to influence the outcome of the matter. A completed disclosure of interests form should be returned to the Clerk before the conclusion of the meeting.

(Please Note: If Members and Officers wish to seek advice on any potential interests they may have, they should contact Governance Support or Legal Services prior to the meeting.)
4. **Communications**
To receive a presentation from Unleashed Theatre and any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council.
5. **Urgent Items**
To consider any other items the Chairman decides are urgent.
6. **Matters for Consideration**
7. **Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy** (Pages 16 - 95)
To consider a report that seeks approval to launch public consultation on the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy.
8. **Housing Strategy Consultation** (Pages 96 - 116)
To consider a report that seeks approval to launch public consultation on the Housing Strategy.

9. **Further disposal of Council owned land at Hatchcombe** (Pages 117 - 125)
To consider a report that seeks approval to dispose of Council owned land at the old Hatchcombe Nurseries site, in addition to the previously agreed land disposal on the same site.
10. **Multi-Functional Devices Contract Award Approval** (Pages 126 - 132)
To consider a report that seeks approval to award a contract for new Multi-Functional Devices across the Council estate.
11. **Highways Review - Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board** (Pages 133 - 149)
To consider the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Board on the Highways Review and formally respond to the recommendations contained within the submitted report.
12. **Torquay Town Deal - Land Assembly** (To Follow)
To consider a report on the above.

Meeting Attendance

Please note that whilst the Council is no longer implementing Covid-19 secure arrangements attendees are encouraged to sit with space in between other people. Windows will be kept open to ensure good ventilation and therefore attendees are recommended to wear suitable clothing.

If you have symptoms, including runny nose, sore throat, fever, new continuous cough and loss of taste and smell please do not come to the meeting.

Live Streaming and Hybrid Arrangements

To encourage more people to engage in our public meetings the Council is trialling live streaming our Cabinet meetings on our YouTube channel in addition to recording the meetings and publishing the recording on our website. To watch the meeting live please visit <https://www.youtube.com/user/torbaycouncil>.

We are trialling hybrid meeting arrangements to enable officers and Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet to either attend the meeting in person or to attend the meeting remotely via Zoom. Anyone attending the meeting remotely must use their raise hand function when they wish to speak and to declare any interests at the appropriate time. As this is a trial if anyone attending the meeting remotely loses connection the meeting will continue and they will have the option to follow the meeting via the YouTube live stream.

Minutes of the Cabinet

27 September 2022

-: Present :-

Councillor Cowell (Chairman)

Councillors Carter, Law, Long and Morey

(Also in attendance: Councillors Brooks (virtually), Kennedy (virtually), Chris Lewis and Loxton (virtually))

385. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Steve Darling and Stockman. Councillor Cowell, Deputy Leader of the Council chaired the meeting in the absence of the Councillor Steve Darling.

386. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 30 August 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

387. Communications

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Cowell invited Reverend Nathan Kiyaga to share with Members the work faith leaders had been undertaking to tackle food poverty and cost of living crisis in Torbay. Reverend Kiyaga informed Members that there were in the region of 14,000 people accessing food banks, the faith community had been using funding to support affordable food clubs and social supermarkets and from October a mobile food bank. It was hoped that wrap around support would also be developed, in order to become a one stop centre, bringing services to people.

Reverend Kiyaga also advised that faith leaders were reviving school pastors who would assist and guide young people. Reverend Kiyaga explained that when young people were coming together, they were not necessarily making the choices you would expect then to make. Therefore, the youth pastors were creating safe spaces with adult guidance to ensure right choices and opportunities are available to young people.

Reverend Kiyaga confirmed that the faith community were committed to working in partnership in order for Torbay to thrive. Members thanked Reverend Kiyaga for attending the meeting and his inspirational approach and commitment to serving the residents of Torbay.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance informed Members that following the Chancellor of the Exchequers establishment of Investment Zones, the Council would be actively pursuing the opportunity to be selected.

388. Matters for Consideration

The Cabinet considered the following matters, full details of which (including the Cabinet's decisions and recommendations to Council) are set out in the Record of Decisions appended to these Minutes.

389. Torbay Food Strategy and Partnership

390. Budget Monitoring 2022/23 - April - July 2022 Revenue Outturn Forecast & April to June 2022 Capital Outturn Forecast

391. Lease Surrender & Renewal - Shoalstone Seawater Pool, Brixham

392. Lease Extension renewal - Brixham Rugby Club, Astley Park

393. Herbicide Use in Torbay

Chairman/woman

Record of Decisions

Torbay Food Strategy and Partnership

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 27 September 2022.

Decision

1. That the longer-term commitment by the Council to the food workstream to 2028, as requested by the Torbay Food Partnership, be approved, namely to host and champion the Partnership, rather than a long term financial commitment.
2. That the Director of Adult Social Services be requested to work with the Torbay Food Partnership to undertake the following actions over the next year:
 - i. Co-produce a Food Strategy for Torbay for 2023 – 2028;
 - ii. Scoping of the creation of a CIC similar to Food Plymouth, which would facilitate and resource the Torbay Food Partnership long-term.
3. That the Vision and Charter and identity “Food for Good Torbay”, which has been co-produced by the multi-sector Partnership, be supported and approved.

Reason for the Decision

The development of a 5-year Food Strategy for Torbay, and commitment to the Vision and Charter would help to ensure that the future resilience of our communities and local food system is maximised. The food workstream was also fundamental to delivering priorities within Public Health, Climate, Turning the Tide on Poverty, Family Hubs, and Economic Development.

Implementation

This decision will come into force and may be implemented on 10 October 2022 unless the call-in procedure is triggered (as set out in the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny).

Information

Since original intentions were set for the Food Partnership, a series of global events have made the need for systemic change even more important. We are now facing the worst cost of living crisis in decades which has impacted the poorest disproportionately; and has the potential to push many people beyond poverty into destitution.

Issues with global food and fuel supplies have also highlighted the need to reconsider how we get and use our food. These issues are likely to worsen in the long term as the impact of climate change is felt more keenly. Torbay needs to make best use of its assets and resources to mitigate these effects, creating an environment that better supports local food production. Therefore, whilst the Council acts to address the immediate cost of living crisis, it is vital that a longer-term, strategic view was taken to address where possible the significant challenges

ahead. The development of a 5-year Food Strategy for Torbay, and commitment to the Vision and Charter, would help to ensure that the future resilience of Torbay's communities and local food system was maximised.

At the meeting Councillor Cowell proposed and Councillor Law seconded a motion that was agreed unanimously by the Cabinet, as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

The options considered were to:

- (i) Continue to operate the Partnership on a year-to-year basis with no long-term strategic planning; or
- (ii) Discontinue the Partnership and assume that food-related issues would be adequately addressed within individual programmes/priorities

Neither of these options were deemed to be a sustainable or suitable option and were discounted. The scale and complexity of challenges within the local and national food system were significant, and therefore required a more strategic, joined-up approach to address them in any meaningful way.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

Yes

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

None.

Published

30 September 2022

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Deputy Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet

Record of Decisions

Budget Monitoring 2022/23 - April to July 2022 Revenue Outturn Forecast and April to June 2022 Capital Outturn Forecast

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 27 September 2022.

Decision

That Cabinet Recommends to Council that:

1. The increase of the capital contingency budget to a total of £12m, with the allocation of the same to be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance be approved. In increasing the capital contingency budget Council recognise that the increased costs of schemes may mean that the revised total scheme costs would be outside of the thresholds set for the Economic Growth Fund at the time of approval; and
2. the TorVista Homes working capital facility be increased from £1.0m to £1.5m.

Reason for the Decision

To ensure the Council operates in a prudent manner and works to maintain a balanced budget.

Implementation

The recommendations of the Cabinet will be considered at the Council meeting on 13 October 2022.

Information

The Budget Monitoring report 2022/23 set out a high-level budget summary of the Council's revenue (April to July 2022) and capital (April to June 2022) position for the financial year 2022/23. The Council was facing significant external pressure due to the wide-reaching UK implications of the current economic situation. The levels of cost inflation impacting the Council were affecting almost every single service and were expected to be a 'recurring theme' when looking to set the budget for 2023/24 and draft the Medium-Term Resource Plan.

The Cabinet welcomed and supported the establishment of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022/2023 Budget Pressures Review Panel. At the meeting Councillor Cowell proposed and Councillor Long seconded a motion that was agreed unanimously by the Cabinet, as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

There were no alternative options considered.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

No

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

None.

Published

30 September 2022

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Deputy Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet

Record of Decisions

Lease Surrender & Renewal - Shoalstone Seawater Pool, Brixham

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 27 September 2022.

Decision

That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing, be authorised to agree terms and enter into a new lease of 125 years, that will replace the existing agreement and provide the tenant, Brixham Town Council with security of tenure to allow a sub-lease to be granted to Shoalstone Seawater Pool CIO that will facilitate access to funding to undertake immediate repairs and improvement to the facilities.

Reason for the Decision

By permitting the current tenant a long leasehold interest in the facility, opportunities to seek major grant funding to undertake immediate repairs will become accessible. In addition, it will allow the tenant to invest in the wider facility in the longer term and be able to grant a legal agreement with Shoalstone Seawater Pool CIO (Community Interest Organisation) to manage and operate the facility.

Implementation

This decision will come into force and may be implemented on 10 October 2022 unless the call-in procedure is triggered (as set out in the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny).

Information

Brixham Town Council occupy the premises (Shoalstone Seawater Pool, Brixham) under a 40-year lease granted in April 2015. This tenancy incorporates the seawater pool, car park, former putting green, shelter and the WC block.

In 2020, it became increasingly apparent that the pool and surrounds were gradually deteriorating and without access to substantial funding, the necessary investment needed in the pool would not happen, which would result in the facility not lasting beyond the length of the lease granted.

The current 2014 lease agreement places the repairing and maintenance responsibility of the asset on the tenant, although this is limited by reference to a schedule of condition. The repair and maintenance of the sea wall is retained by the Council. However, other than an obligation to inspect any damage to the sea wall reported by the Tenant, the Council is under no obligation to carry out any repairs. The lease permits the Council to bring the lease to an end at any time, if it considers it is not cost effective to comply with its obligations to maintain the sea wall.

Shoalstone Seawater Pool CIO aims, and objectives are clear in that they wish to repair the damage to ensure longevity in the life of the pool. They are fully aware that any grant funding

they can raise will not be enough and there will be a need for them to crowdfund. They are also aware none of this can be done until they are in possession of a much longer lease beyond the 32 years remaining under the existing lease.

The proposal therefore is to surrender the 2014 lease and, in its place, obtain a new 125-year lease from the Council.

At the meeting Councillor Long proposed and Councillor Morey seconded a motion that was agreed unanimously by the Cabinet, as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

Yes

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

None.

Published

30 September 2022

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Deputy Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet

Record of Decisions

Lease Extension renewal - Brixham Rugby Club, Astley Park.

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 27 September 2022.

Decision

That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing, be authorised to agree terms and enter into a new lease of 150 years, that will replace the existing agreement and provide the tenant, Brixham Rugby Football Club with security of tenure to permit access to funding to undertake further improvement to the facilities.

Reason for the Decision

To enable the tenant to access grants from sports bodies.

Implementation

This decision will come into force and may be implemented on 10 October 2022 unless the call-in procedure is triggered (as set out in the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny).

Information

Torbay Council wishes to enter into a new long lease agreement with the existing tenant of Brixham Rugby Club which will permit further investment and access to funding. The new lease will provide additional security of tenure over that already in existence under the current agreement.

At the meeting Councillor Long proposed and Councillor Morey seconded a motion that was agreed unanimously by the Cabinet, as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

The Council was under no obligation to consider a change in the lease arrangement. An alternative option would be for the Council to reject the proposal with the existing arrangements continuing as they have done since 1976. If the status quo were to remain as currently, then there would be a reluctance by the club to invest as heavily as previously, therefore this option was discounted.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

Yes

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the

Standards Committee)

Councillor Morey declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of Brixham Rugby Club.

Published

30 September 2022

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Deputy Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet

Record of Decisions

Herbicide Use in Torbay

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 27 September 2022.

Decision

That SWISCo on behalf of the Council:

- 1) Commits to minimising the use of all Glyphosate (herbicide), to find a balance between environmental considerations and the statutory responsibilities of the Council and the quality of street scene within the Bay;
- 2) Move to the use of Nomix Dual distributed in a more controlled manner by way of electric utility vehicles fitted with kerbside application units;
- 3) Commits to work in partnership with allotment holders to promote and encourage chemical free management of allotments; and
- 4) Review herbicide use on an annual basis to ensure progress towards minimisation, compliance with best practice and practical herbicide free techniques.

Reason for the Decision

To detail the current use of Glyphosate (herbicide), consider alternatives and measures to reduce usage by SWISCo services. Strict controls were applied by the council on the herbicides that were applied to sites, with alternative methods being researched and trialled.

Implementation

This decision will come into force and may be implemented on 10 October 2022 unless the call-in procedure is triggered (as set out in the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny).

Information

To provide an update on SWISCo's strategy to minimise the use of Glyphosate (herbicide), and the trialling of any practical implications or alternative methods.

At the meeting Councillor Morey proposed and Councillor Law seconded a motion that was agreed unanimously by the Cabinet, as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

Alternative options were set out in the submitted report.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

Yes

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

None.

Published

30 September 2022

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Deputy Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet

Meeting: Cabinet **Date:** 18 October 2022

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy

When does the decision need to be implemented? N/A

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Councillor Carter, Cabinet Member for Community and Customer Services, Christine.carter@torbay.gov.uk

Director/Divisional Director Contact Details: Tara Harris, Divisional Director of Customer and Corporate Services, tara.harris@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet's approval to launch a 6-week public consultation on the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 The proposals in this report help us to deliver this ambition by creating safe spaces for our vulnerable residents to thrive.
- 2.2 The current Strategy ends this year. In preparation for the new strategy a strategic review of the domestic abuse response in Torbay was undertaken last year. The findings were reported at an extraordinary Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG) meeting on 24th June 2022, where it was decided that the new strategy would continue to address both domestic abuse and sexual violence, however with an increase focus on sexual violence.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

1. That the draft Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved for a 6-week public consultation.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy

Background Documents

Short version of review work undertaken which includes – DA Strategic System Review, MARAC Review and Listening Exercise.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The current Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy ends this year. In preparation a strategic review of the domestic abuse response in Torbay was undertaken last year. The review incorporated a review of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), the Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment as required by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (DAA21) and a lived experience listening exercise. All the recommendations have been incorporated into the findings to inform the direction and focus of the new Strategy.
- 1.2 The findings from the Call to Action sexual violence project that Torbay Council participated in last year (with people with lived experience of sexual violence, Devon, Plymouth, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Devon CCG and the Innovation Unit); have been used to inform the focus and direction for sexual violence. In addition data about sexual violence services and demand has been gathered to inform a local position statement on sexual violence in Torbay.
- 1.3 A theory of change has been devised following analysis of all the review findings, which has informed what change needs to happen, what outcomes have been identified and how we deliver them. This revealed a commonality of themes between both domestic abuse and sexual violence that are a focus for the strategy. A small number of themes specific to domestic or sexual violence are also included.
- 1.4 The Strategy focuses on lived experience, prevention, identification, disruption, evidence and understanding; aiming to:
 - a) Elevate responses to sexual violence to achieve parity with domestic violence over the lifetime of the Strategy
 - b) Hold those who harm accountable and not their victims
 - c) Change the narrative and address myths and victim blaming language and practice
 - d) Embed trauma informed practice and improve understanding of how trauma frames victims' responses
 - e) Develop a robust evidence base and consistent monitoring
 - f) Broaden knowledge and understanding of what constitutes domestic and sexual violence and abuse both in the workforce and across the general public, framed in the context of relationships.

1.5 Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence needs to be considered as a whole system response across the life course. There is a risk that separating out various themes can lead to fragmentation and poor oversight of the overall strategic response. However, this is necessary as some areas of activity fit more appropriately with, for example, children's safeguarding. It will be the responsibility of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group to ensure connectivity and line of sight between the main Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy and related strategies or workstreams so that everything is aligned to the overall strategic direction. Changes to direction or focus resulting from legislative or policy changes will be incorporated into reviews of the strategy which will take place at regular intervals.

2. Options under consideration

2.1 An alternative option would be to do nothing. However this was discounted as the current policy was set to expire this year and would not take account of the information gathered from the review.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

3.1 None

4. Legal Implications

4.1 None

5. Engagement and Consultation

5.1 The 'Are you ok?' survey undertaken in 2021, lived experience interviews undertaken 2021 as part of strategic domestic abuse review and Devon wide work on sexual violence in 2021 have formed the basis for draft strategy. However, a 6 week public consultation will be undertaken.

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

6.1 Not applicable

7. Tackling Climate Change

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Associated Risks

8.1 Domestic abuse and sexual violence rates are disproportionately high in Torbay and can have life-changing effects for those directly and indirectly victimised, it has been and continues to be a strategic priority for these reasons. An effective response can only come from coordinated efforts across the system, inclusive of our communities and the voluntary sector. Not having a strategy that unites, challenges and drives these efforts risks ineffective and inadequate responses, which ultimately would leave people at heightened risk, the perpetuation of all the harms associated which are significant and in worse case scenarios deaths.

8.2

9. Equality Impacts - Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people	DA and SV are generally under-reported, but prevalence across older people is recognised but requires more insight and response. Younger people also form part of a priority group as a preventative measure to stop any abuse form happening, but also to prevent chances of repeat victimisation and negative		

	outcomes across the lifecycle.		
People with caring Responsibilities			Impact is neutral (although may link to other groups)
People with a disability	Having a disability is a known risk factor associated with being vulnerable to DA and or SV		
Women or men	Women are more likely to experience DA and or SV than men. Although men are also victims too.		
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)	The strategy seeks to be more responsive to Torbay's diversity, in doing so will seek to ensure that people can identify with service responses and resources available		
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			Neutral
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual	Services offers have historically been less visible and responsive to LGBTQ community – Strategy seeks to address		
People who are transgendered	Services offers have historically been less visible and responsive to LGBTQ community – Strategy seeks to address		
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			Neutral
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave	Pregnancy is an identified risk factor for occurrence of DA.		
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on	Whereas DA and SV cuts across socio-		

child poverty issues and deprivation)	economic boundaries, there is a correlate with Torbay's more deprived areas (in terms of reporting).		
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	Domestic Abuse and sexual violence are determinants of a range of social, economic, mental and physical ill's – this strategy contributes very directly to promoting the general health of Torbay.		

10. Cumulative Council Impact

10.1 None

10.2

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

11.1 None from a localised perspective. But continued and worsening economic hardship for citizens will most likely result in increased incidents of domestic abuse.

11.2

Breaking the Chain Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy

2023 - 2030

Adding an image

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- Double click the top of the page to access the 'header and footer section
- Select a suitable photograph - contact the design team for access to the photo library. No clip art please!
- Choose 'insert' > 'pictures'>'this device' and navigate to the location of the saved image
- Once the image is inserted, resize to fill this space by dragging a corner, while holding the 'shift' key to prevent it distorting
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- Close the header and footer and continue editing your document. Don't forget to delete this text box!

Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Definitions, framework and headlines	7
Definitions.....	7
Regional and Local Strategies	8
National Data on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	8
Torbay Domestic Abuse Headlines	9
Torbay Sexual Violence Data Headlines	9
Developing our strategy	11
What people have told us	13
Summary of Findings	16
What needs to change	17
Our Strategy	19
Short term outcomes	19
Medium term outcomes	19
Long term outcomes.....	20
Delivery of the outcomes	21
Activity 1 - Embed lived experience and co-production	21
Activity 2 - Prevent victimisation and harmful behaviours.....	21
Activity 3 – Identify victimisation and harmful behaviours.....	22
Activity 4 – Disrupt harmful behaviour	22
Activity 5 - Develop data and understanding	22
Resources	23
Review.....	23

Foreword

To be added post public consultation:

Foreword from Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group Chair DASVEG chair, and lead portfolio holder (member) to be added, with reference to the phrase "Breaking the Chain

maximum 1 page

Needs to include reference to all the people with lived experience of domestic and/or sexual violence and abuse who took time to share their experiences and reflect on what would have been better for them, during the DVA strategic review and the Devon wide Sexual Violence Call to Action work that informs this document.

Warning - this document contains references and quotes that may be triggering for some people.

Introduction

“it definitely started off completely mental, not physical, but it was just literally putting me down all the time. Keeping me in my place. Making sure I was where I was supposed to be”

Domestic abuse survivor, Torbay

Since our last Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Strategy, which was launched in 2018, there have been a number of significant events and policy changes which have brought the emotive subjects of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) and sexual violence (SV) to the forefront of our attention.

Firstly, the Covid-19 pandemic led to an almost overnight change in the way front line domestic abuse and sexual violence services were delivered. Virtual (online) support, which had previously been unthinkable, became the norm. Practitioners and support workers had to develop skills in using unfamiliar technology to ensure they could still see clients face to face and keep them safe. Forensic services for victims of sexual violence had to find ways to continue to safely provide forensic examinations whilst keeping victims and their staff protected from the virus. Strategic partnerships between local authority domestic abuse and sexual violence commissioners, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall (OPCC) health colleagues in Devon and Cornwall Clinical Commissioning Groups, as well as Devon and Cornwall Police, became stronger and more robust. New relationships were forged as together we worked through the pandemic to listen to and learn from our services and communities to ensure victims and survivors of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence were able to access and receive support.

In 2021 the Domestic Abuse Act came into force, and amongst a range of measures - for the first time - a statutory duty was placed upon local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic violence living in what is defined as "safe accommodation" (such as a refuge). Importantly, the Act provides for children to be recognised as victims of domestic violence in their own right.

The same year brought the terrible crimes of sexual violence and murders of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa, and closer to home of Bobbi-Anne McCleod in Plymouth; and the advent of the "Everyone's Invited" campaign. Ofsted carried out a themed inspection of sexual harassment and abuse in schools. The Home Office produced its End to End Rape Review. Torbay undertook a Multi-Agency Case Audit of harmful sexual behaviour across Torbay.

Through all the events and change of this period, Torbay's Partnership commitment to addressing DVA and SV has remained steadfast with much progress being made in developing and expanding our response. Some key activities have included:

- Expanding number of Independent Domestic Violence Advocate roles, including within Torbay hospital, sexual health services and for LGBTQ community
- Specialist roles within Children's Services

- IRIS pilot established sensitive clinical enquiry enabling identification of domestic abuse and sexual violence in primary care
- White Ribbon re-accreditation
- Standing Tall DASV CVS Partnership developed and delivering support within the community
- Numerous training opportunities and awareness campaigns delivered
- Meeting statutory requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

In Torbay, the Council has procured a new Alliance of services that will work together - comprising the domestic abuse service, homeless hostel and the adults' drug and alcohol services. These services, which go live in 2023, will work collaboratively with the Council as equal partners to provide trauma informed, integrated and holistic support for people experiencing a range of challenges in their lives. Instead of having to move around between different services and organisations, people can engage with one service that will work with them to address the underlying causes of their issues and support people in the way that best works for them.

"We need services to talk and listen to us rather than talk at us"

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

Our understanding of the issues around domestic violence and the partnerships in which we work have matured considerably since the last Strategy was written. Sadly however, the same cannot be said of sexual violence. Sexual violence remains a taboo subject for general discussion, cloaked in discomfort and shrouded in prejudicial myths that are systemically prevalent. We have found there is an inadequacy of support for victims of sexual violence and assault, particularly if a criminal justice response is not wanted or is not successful. The rates for successful prosecution are low nationally and regionally.

In this Strategy we aim to elevate the issue of sexual violence and our systemic response to it so that it becomes equal to that of domestic violence. That is not to say that we will not continue to address and improve our response to domestic violence; instead that we approach this work in the knowledge that those experiencing sexual violence in Torbay receive limited support, unequal to the support received by those who experience domestic violence and abuse.

"It's a cultural thing. As soon as you say: 'I've been in a domestic violence relationship'. 'What did you do to deserve it? Or what did you do to annoy them' as if that makes it all okay"

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

To aid understanding and avoid stigmatisation we look to frame our conversations and language around relationships as this is the enduring context of most domestic abuse and sexual violence.

We fully acknowledge that DVA & SV is perpetrated against women and girls and is rooted in gender based patriarchal, misogynistic, historic and cultural norms. However, we want to make our response as inclusive as possible in consideration of the broader nuances of violence and abuse within relationships and in keeping with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 definition of DVA, as well as gender identity and sexual orientation. As Torbay works to become a more trauma informed Council, we want to consider the impacts of trauma not only on victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence and abuse, but also on those who are causing these harms; whilst still holding them fully accountable for their actions.

This Strategy is aligned to the **Council Fit for the Future** and **Thriving People** objectives set out in Torbay Council's Community and Corporate Plan, working in partnership to promote community resilience, promote good mental and physical health, and protect our children and young people.

Definitions, framework and headlines

“...I didn't see that I was in an abusive relationship because it wasn't physical”

Domestic abuse survivor, Torbay

The list below sets out the key legislation, national policies and strategies relating to domestic violence and abuse and sexual violence:

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

National Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021

End to End Rape Review 2021

Crown Prosecution Service Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Strategy (RASSO) 2020

The Victims Code (2020)

Victim's Bill 2022

Police Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 - Serious Violence Duty

Serious Crime Act 2015

Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004)

The Care Act 2014

The Children Act 1989

Police Response to Violence Against Women and Girls Final inspection report -Her

Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (September 2021)

Definitions

The World Health Organisation defines sexual violence as:

“Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments, or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting including but not limited to home and work.”

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic violence and abuse as follows:

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if:

A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse;

- psychological, emotional or other abuse; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

“Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to:

- acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
- obtain goods or services.

For the purposes of this Act: A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

Regional and Local Strategies

The following regional and local strategies are relevant:

Torbay Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 to 2024

Devon Clinical Commissioning Group Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence GP Policy

Devon & Cornwall Police Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Plan 2022/2023

National Data on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

Sources: Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) 2020; Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2020

- 74% of victims of DVA crimes recorded by police In the year ending March 2020 were female
- In the year 2020 to 2021 unwanted sexual touching was the most common type of sexual assault experienced by both men and women
- Of sexual offences recorded by the police in the year ending March 2020, the victim was female in 84% of cases. This is a prevalence rate of approximately 3 in 100 women and 1 in 100 men (ONS 2020)
- In 57% of all adult rape cases the victim feels unable to pursue the case
- One-third of all female SV victims were aged under 15 years old
- More than half (55%) of all male victims were aged under 15 years.
- Adults with a disability are more likely to have experienced DVA in the last 12 months than non-disabled people (CSEW 2020)
- People from black and minoritised ethnic communities suffer DVA for 1.5 times longer than those with White British or Irish backgrounds (Safelives 2020)
- LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse are more likely to be abused by multiple perpetrators - 15% compared to 9% of non-LGBT+ victims (Safelives 2018)
- Adults are six times as likely to experience rape or assault by a partner or ex-partner than a family member (ONS 2020)

“ ...constantly having to, like, justify everything because your abusers of the same sex, and it’s really, really difficult. Because it’s like ‘oh a woman is capable of doing

that?'. It's like 'yes, they're very capable'. A man is capable, a woman is capable, it doesn't matter. If somebody wants to be abusive, they're going to be abusive"-

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

"we're not just talking about t-shirt sizes, it doesn't fit all, genders don't fit all, religion, doesn't fit all, you know, and trauma doesn't feel, it's all different and we all come out of it differently"

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

Torbay Domestic Abuse Headlines

- There were **2,005 police incidents** of domestic abuse in Torbay in 2020/21.
- Domestic abuse accounts for **22%** of all crimes in Torbay.
- **217 Marac** referrals in 2020/21
- **72%** of victims reporting to the police over the past 3 years have been female (2018-21)
- **84%** of domestic abuse offenders were male in 2020/21
- **126** Domestic Violence Protection Orders were granted in 2020/21
- Almost a quarter (**24%**) of DVA related crimes are for stalking and harassment.
- **80%** of DVA incidents are assessed as being standard or medium risk.
- **113** Victims of domestic abuse presented as homeless in Torbay in 2020-21
- It is projected that **30% (667)** of referrals to Children's Services in 2020/21 had domestic abuse as a factor. **40%** of these came from the police.
- **164** children became looked after where domestic abuse was a factor over the three years 2018-2021
- Almost half (**47%**) progressed to a Child Protection Plan
- It is estimated that only **33%** of people experiencing DVA in Torbay are known to services

Torbay Sexual Violence Data Headlines

The data below is sourced from:

First Light Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) service data 2021/22,
Devon and Cornwall Police data provided to Torbay Council Community Safety Team
Devon Rape Crisis service data
Torbay Council online Are You OK survey 2021

- The police received **166** reports of rape in the year ending March 2022
- There were **264** sexual offences reported to the police in 2021/22

- **41.2%** of all ISVA referrals in 2021/22 were from Devon (including Torbay)
- In **81%** of cases, the person causing the harm was known to the victim
- In **43.5%** of cases the person causing harm was a family member, relative, or partner/ex-partner
- In 2021/22 **31%** of referrals to Devon Rape Crisis were self-referrals, **36%** were from mental health providers
- **More than half** of females responding to the Are You OK survey who had experienced sexual abuse/violence, said they had been raped
- **More than half** of both males and females survey respondents who had experienced sexual abuse/violence reported they had experienced inappropriate touching.
- **97%** of those whose drinks had been spiked or thought they probably had been spiked were female
- **41%** of survey respondents did not recognise it as sexual abuse or violence at the time and **13%** were not sure.

Estimated of Proportion of Adults in Torbay who have experienced recent rape and/or sexual assault in the last 12 months, since the age of 16, or in childhood (based on self-reporting module of the CSEW¹ and MYE Population 2019):

Column heading	Males	Females
Since the age of 16	2,085	11,164
Last 12 months	406	1,542
In Childhood	1,655	5,613

“I thought it was you know, husband and wife or living partners. I didn't really think that domestic abuse applied to boyfriend and girlfriend”

Domestic abuse survivor, Torbay

¹ Local Authority Population Estimates MYE 2019 - <https://tinyurl.com/ybzvaomb>

Developing our strategy

“So it was controlling, it's like walking on eggshells. You just, you know, something flared up, you kind of try and diffuse a situation as quickly as you can”

Domestic abuse survivor

In 2021 the Torbay Community Safety Partnership commissioned a strategic review of the system response to domestic violence in Torbay. The result was 241 pages of analysis of the strengths, weaknesses and identifiable areas for change across the system's responses. It produced 44 recommendations of how and where improvements could be made, with further recommendations from accompanying reports. This work also incorporated:

- a review of Torbay's Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC),
- the Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment (as required by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021- DAA21)
- a lived experience listening exercise
- analysis of the responses to the Council's online Are You OK? Survey conducted in late 2021.

The findings and recommendations from these activities have been collated to inform the direction and focus of this new Strategy and will be directly referenced in it's Delivery Plan. A summary of the Strategic Review, MARAC review and Listening Exercise is included as an Appendix.

The Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 (required by the DAA21) sits beneath this Strategy.

Torbay Council also participated in the Call to Action sexual violence project with Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Devon Clinical Commissioning Group, and the Innovation Unit. This included a mapping exercise of the support available to victims of sexual violence across wider Devon, and a listening exercise with people who have experienced sexual violence and abuse and practitioners working with them. The aim was to develop an understanding of what support victims and survivors want and need to help them recover and make sense of what has happened to them. The findings from this project have provided the strategic direction for sexual violence. In addition data about sexual violence services and demand has been gathered to inform a local position statement on sexual violence in Torbay.

There are some areas of DVA & SV activity which, out of necessity and pragmatism fit more appropriately with, for example, the children's safeguarding arena. This Strategy aims to consider DVA & SV in the context of a whole system response across the life course. The exclusion of some areas of work could lead to fragmentation and poor oversight of the overall strategic response. This risk will be addressed through the oversight and governance structures in place, ensuring connectivity and line of sight between the main DVA & SV strategy and related strategies

or workstreams. Changes to the strategic direction or areas of focus resulting from legislative or policy changes will be incorporated into reviews of the strategy.

The scope of this Strategy includes adult victims of domestic abuse and violence (i.e. those aged 16+) and adult victims of sexual violence (including historic child sexual abuse).

The scope includes children and young people who are victims of domestic violence and abuse and who are occupying safe accommodation with their parent/carer as part of the DAA21 duties, as well as the wider needs of children and families experiencing DVA. They are statutorily defined victims in own right. We know that we need to better understand the profile of children and families who experience domestic violence and abuse to mature the system response.

Issues which are out of the scope of this Strategy are:

- Child Sexual Abuse – this is within the remit of Torbay Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (TSCP)
- Child Sexual Exploitation – this is included in the TSCP Exploitation Strategy
- Child against Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) – this is within the remit of Children’s Services; except for those aged 16 and over which can be raised at MARAC where risk level indicates
- Peer on Peer abuse – this is in the remit of Children’s Services except where both parties are aged 16 and over and there is evidence of coercive control. These will be raised at MARAC where risk level indicates.
- Human Trafficking – this is within the remit of the Devon and Torbay Anti-Slavery Partnership
- Prostitution – this within the remit of the Devon and Torbay Anti-Slavery Partnership.

The draft Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy was published for public consultation from 18th October to 29th November 2022

An overview summary of the review findings document available at: [insert link](#)

“..it takes a while to get into and realise ‘oh I can have a phone. I can wear t-shirt in the sun. I can put makeup on’

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

What people have told us

“... people need to be carried. Because you don't have the, just don't have the will to walk anymore. And for some of them, absolute horror, some of them don't have to will to live anymore”

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

“We need the voices of children, young people, communities and people with lived experience to inform us about what activity we should take”

Call to Action project participant

People don't always know that what they have experienced is domestic violence or sexual assault. This might be because they are not living together (so it's not “domestic”), it's not physical violence but coercion and control, or a rape took place within marriage. Some said that they did not feel what had happened was sufficiently serious to report to the police, many felt that they would not be believed.

Many described negative experiences of the system when they did report domestic violence or abuse to the Police, and Children's Services becoming involved having been alerted by the Police. Women spoke of feeling that they were being held accountable for the behaviour of the person causing the harm, because they had to take all the responsibility for protecting their children. Meanwhile the person who had harmed them was ignored or “invisible”. Many felt that professionals did not understand how domestic abuse affected their ability to take action, nor of how the Family Court system re-traumatises the victim survivor and their children and allows the person who caused the harm to continue to exercise control over them.

“... I'd call the police. They said, 'don't open the door', but that's okay when they tell you not to open the door, but what they do is, they report it to social services. And social services then say that you're not protecting your kids. But you tell me how that works, if you phone the police and the police come and you've obviously phoned the police to get them removed and they removed them, how's that not you protecting your kids?”

Domestic Abuse Survivor, Torbay

“when you leave the abusive relationship that escalates the domestic violence more. But what people don't understand is it escalates even more four years, five years down the line. They get really, really bitter. And that's when they fight and they'll fight until they're blue in the face”

Domestic Abuse Survivor, Torbay

Those people who left their abusive relationships spoke of the difficulties finding somewhere to live and of navigating the rehousing process with the Council.

“the one thing that seems so hard at first was actually housing. It was literally one thing is you have nowhere to go. And first, obviously when I walked down that road, the first day, the hardest bit was walking and realising my children were still there. And so it was ‘where am I gonna go?’”

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

People feel guilt and shame about what has happened to them. This is reinforced by the prevailing myths and negative stereotyping surrounding rape and sexual assault, which hold the victim responsible for their attack because they were out late/drinking/of what they were wearing and so on. This is compounded by negative national media about the police – including sexual offences carried out by serving officers – the low conviction rate, the time it takes to progress to court (if the case does go to court), and the re-traumatisation of the court proceedings for what is often an unsuccessful outcome.

We heard that sexual violence is complex, often taking place in an intra-familial context, with patterns of behaviour repeating into the next generation. Victims and survivors of sexual violence suffer trauma long into adulthood – the stories we heard, information from Devon Rape Crisis, and the feedback in the Are You Ok survey show that many victims of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) don't disclose their experiences until many years after the event/s occurred. People are holding years of unresolved trauma that can present in a number of ways – through poor mental health, physical illness, or self-medication in the form of substance misuse for example. When a number of these factors co-exist, we see people who might be rough sleeping, some being coerced into prostitution by drug dealers in order to feed their habit; adding to their sense of shame and poor self-worth.

“some people are so traumatised, that it's hard for them to reach out for help. It doesn't mean that they don't want help, it just means that person is a bit more fragile..... Spend time and I'll open up with you and you'll see that I'm not that person and I need more help than what I ever let onto”

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

Practitioners working in a range of support services – not specialist rape and sexual assault services and including the community and voluntary sector – spoke of the challenges in trying to help victims who disclose sexual violence during support. The fragmented funding and commissioning arrangements for sexual violence services mean that there is a “postcode lottery” of support with very limited support in Torbay itself, making it difficult for both victim survivors and practitioners to navigate. The services that exist tend to be in Exeter or Plymouth and have long waiting lists. This sometimes leaves practitioners who are not trained in working with victims of sexual violence and trauma, “holding” the person because there is no specialist support immediately available to them. This is risky for both the practitioner and the individual.

Examples have been provided that demonstrate the “silo” nature of working in the system, with sexual violence victims being referred to mental health services because of their trauma, only to be referred on to a sexual violence service – there is limited recognition of the long term impacts of trauma. As the Chief Executive of Devon Rape Crisis told us:

“people are being referred to [Devon Rape Crisis] if they have any history of sexual violence or abuse, regardless of whether this is causing the most difficulty for them or not”.

When support is obtained, it is often constrained by time or a restricted number of support sessions is available. Victims of sexual violence may not want a criminal justice response and just want to be listened to by someone who understands their experience. Some may want to follow the criminal justice process a period of time after the incident/s, others want to be able to access support at different points of the process but don’t have the choice.

“I think I would have found it easier if I was talking to somebody else who had been through it, rather than somebody who hadn't.”

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

There is limited availability of targeted support for victims and survivors of sexual violence in Torbay. Much of what is available is not directly funded or commissioned by statutory agencies and is instead reliant on non- recurrent short term grant arrangements, or in some cases “topped up” with grant funding. This means that the support provision is insecure and therefore unstable.

Finally, loud concerns were voiced around the role of pornography on social media and how this is impacting on the attitudes and behaviours of children and young people. The suggested solutions to this were several and wide ranging – and cannot be solved through the Relationships and Sex Education curriculum in isolation.

We did also hear stories that were positive and complimentary about the support people had received, including praise for individual workers, organisations, and agencies. Those that shared

their stories with us wanted to make sure that their experiences were used to make things better for others.

Summary of Findings

While some of the quotes below are from survivors of domestic abuse, the underpinning narrative of lack of belief, victim stereotyping and re-traumatisation are equally as applicable to people who have experienced sexual violence:

“...they just need to believe the person that’s sat in front of them. That’s all anybody needed to do for me, and nobody did it. Nobody believed me”

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

“You hear this criticism all the time about ‘Oh, why did she go back to him?’ It’s very obvious why women go back, because they’re convinced that it’s their fault, that they deserve to be mistreated and it’s so bloody difficult to get away. It’s so hard”

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

"I was a person that was middle age by that stage. I did have a disability and I was challenged because people often discriminated against me because of my race."

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

“Feels like the system is organised to support perpetrators not victims.”

Call to Action project participant

"The onus is on you to get out and escape, it kind of enables the abuser, doesn't it?"

Domestic Abuse Survivor, Torbay

“The whole court scenario is just horrendous. Family court is just the worst experience anyone could ever go through ever. So you go through all this horrible abuse, you try to come the other side and then you have to face family courts, where they tear you and your children apart in front of you...”

From all of the feedback that has been received, there are many consistent messages that have been heard. These can be summarised as follows:

- Victims don't report because they think they won't be believed
- Victims are not always sure that what they have experienced is DVA/SV
- Victims are fearful of repercussions if they report, especially they fear statutory interventions (e.g. having their children removed) because the police inform Children's Services when they receive a report
- Victims who do report have negative experiences
- System focuses on the victim rather than placing accountability on the person who harmed them
- Victims find it difficult to find a safe place to live if they choose to leave
- System responses are not trauma informed - instead they re-traumatise
- Risk management by the MARAC could be more effective
- Culture of victim blaming and myths evident within parts of the system
- Limited or no understanding of the needs of victims from minoritised communities, or those with multiple and intersectional needs
- Lack of consistent and coordinated data recording – the strategic response is not always evidence based
- Response to sexual violence is limited and immature despite having a high public profile
- Voice of victims is unheard in strategic response
- People feel shame, guilt, blame and anger
- Victims and survivors of sexual violence feel let down by those supposed to help them and that their experiences are minimalised or not believed
- People want choice around when and how they access support.

What needs to change

“...I wasn't listened to, I was belittled. Can you imagine being stood in a dock with no, you've got no legal representation. Yet you've been told by judges and told by social services that the domestic violence isn't an issue now, because you're not in it. Now, my child is now suffering. He has a tracker on his phone when he's with me. So I'm being trapped when my son's with me. There's nothing I can do. I can't afford to go to court and if I could go back in time, I'd stay with him, I wouldn't have left him. I wouldn't. Because there's no ongoing support”

Domestic Abuse Survivor, Torbay

“Our society doesn't want to talk about sex so to talk about sexual abuse and intrafamilial harm is an underlying issue to address - we all need to feel confident to do this.”

Call to Action project

Based on all of the information collected, the following areas for change can be identified:

- We must listen to the voices of those with Lived Experience if we want to design services and responses that will effectively address DASV
- Understanding and addressing Sexual Violence must be brought to the forefront as it is the poor relation to DVA
- We must manage risk more effectively BUT
- We must stop holding the victim responsible for the behaviour of the person harming/who has harmed them
- We must believe victims and validate them to build trust and safety
- The system must stop re-traumatising victims
- We must address the fear of reporting - otherwise we will not address the causal link between high levels of DVA and the fear of statutory interventions
- We must better understand the needs of minoritised groups and those with intersectional needs so we can respond to them
- We need to understand the different drivers and typologies of DA & SV
- Professionals and practitioners must understand the dynamics of power and control - and the power they hold as actors within the system
- We must accept discomfort in order to challenge cultural norms and attitudes in the system
- We must accept that not all victims and survivors want a criminal justice response
- We must collect consistent, meaningful data and use it to inform and develop the system response.

Our Strategy

".. So, if you had somewhere where, you know, people that have been victims in the past could help people that were victims now, then that would be amazing because I don't think anybody else would believe it."

Domestic Abuse survivor, Torbay

We know that we need to strengthen the strategic response to domestic and sexual violence and abuse in Torbay and have built a strong base of evidence to inform our work over the life course of this Strategy:

There needs to be trauma-informed support for victims and survivors and their families.

We need to prevent harm in the first place whilst disrupting harmful behaviour and holding those who harm accountable.

We know that victims and survivors don't report because they fear system generated reprisals or do not think they will be believed. We recognise that sexual violence is the poor relation to domestic abuse in terms of the strategic response.

We want to:

Work in partnership with organisations, communities and individuals to tackle domestic abuse and sexual violence in Torbay, to enable our residents to live safe and happy lives.

In delivering this ambition, we have identified the outcomes that we want to achieve over the short, medium and long term.

Short term outcomes

- People understand that domestic abuse is not just physical and can occur in any intimate relationships
- People understand consent, and that rape and sexual assault can occur in intimate relationships.
- Victims and survivors know that they will be believed.
- Victims and survivors know how and where to get advice on their options in a range of ways, that responds to what they say they need at the time.
- The response to domestic violence and abuse is designed with victims and survivors, and informed by their lived experiences and needs

Medium term outcomes

- Victims and survivors receive peer support and advice before, during and after their experiences to help them recover.

- People who harm others by using domestic and/or sexual violence and abuse are identified and disrupted.
- Professionals understand the impacts of DVA/SVA and trauma on victims and survivors and/or their families and the coping mechanisms they use to keep themselves and their children safe.
- Professionals and statutory agencies understand the range of ways that people who harm use and continue to use coercive control and harassment to continue to abuse long after relationship has ended.

Long term outcomes

- Services and interventions are informed by a developing evidence base supported by robust data and monitoring of trends; including understanding why people who harm do and the typologies of harmful behaviour.
- The strategic system response to sexual violence is prioritised and continually evaluated to achieve parity with the DVA response.

Delivery of the outcomes

“Be compassionate and hold people safely when they disclose”

Call to Action Project participant

We will undertake five key activities to meet the outcomes we want to achieve:

1. Embed lived experience and co-production
2. Prevent victimisation and harmful behaviours
3. Identify victimisation and harmful behaviours
4. Disrupt harmful behaviour
5. Develop data and understanding

Across all these activities we will work to the following principles and will proactively encourage and challenge others to do so:

- Connect different parts of the system together to create a coordinated community response to domestic abuse and sexual violence
- Hear and learn from people with lived experience
- Be trauma informed and shame sensitive
- Make the best use of existing resources and assets
- Elevate, develop, and improve our responses to sexual violence.

For each activity an action plan will be developed and will include various workstreams.

Activity 1 - Embed lived experience and co-production

We will:

- Develop mechanisms to hear and learn from people with experience of DA&SV
- Ensure contributions are recognised, valued, and appropriately reimbursed
- Utilise and build upon existing community assets

Activity 2 - Prevent victimisation and harmful behaviours

We will:

- Grow the Healthy Relationships Education offer
- Implement the findings from the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Project
- Frame awareness raising and communications in the context of relationships
- Develop the Bystander training offer
- Increase the pool of DA Champions and White Ribbon Ambassadors
- Implement relational approaches across the system

- Challenge cultural norms and attitudes in respect of victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse

Activity 3 – Identify victimisation and harmful behaviours

We will:

- Exercise belief and let victims know they will be and are believed
- Identify early people who harm others and work with them to address their behaviour
- Develop a skilled workforce that are confident in handling disclosures of DVA &/or SV and know what to do next (competency framework)
- Ensure that people working with victims and survivors of DVA & SV have an understanding of trauma (including judiciary)
- Ensure that services are inclusive and understand how DVA &SV may present differently amongst minority communities
- Establish simple pathways that easily connect services
- Ensure compliance with statutory requirements

Activity 4 - Disrupt harmful behaviour

We will:

- Implement the MARAC review recommendations
- Establish pathways to support for those who harm others
- Ensure effective safety planning and risk management with focus on the person causing the harm
- Ensure a co-ordinated approach to disrupt the person causing harm
- Focus on the person who harms, not the victim
- Develop peer support and recovery options in the community for victims and survivors

Activity 5 - Develop data and understanding

We will:

- Develop wider understanding of the different types of behaviour and motivations of those who harm to improve our system response to them and better protect victims and survivors
- Establish consistent data collection and monitoring including for protected characteristics and people with intersectional needs
- Establish a baseline dataset and evaluation to check how we are doing
- Consider a systems/case management system to improve reporting
- Develop a quality assurance approach to ensure the system response meets the needs and aspirations of victims and survivors

Resources

The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG) will be responsible for strategic oversight of this Strategy and delivery of the action plans. This group also acts as the statutory Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board for the purposes of the Domestic Abuse 2021 Part 4 and the delivery of the associated Safe Accommodation Strategy.

The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Operational Group (DASVOG) will be responsible for undertaking the work required in the Delivery Plan. This includes connecting with other agencies and practitioners and involving them in specific workstreams.

DASVEG reports into Torbay Community Safety Partnership, Torbay Children's Safeguarding Partnership, and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Review

The activity action plan will be kept under review to ensure that we are achieving our outcomes. As part of that review, consideration will be given to whether this Strategy remains fit for purpose. This will include consideration of the impact of any significant change in legislation or policy.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats.
For more information please contact ****insert your team email or phone no
here****



**A review of the whole system
response to domestic abuse in
Torquay (Short Version)**

April 2022

Foreword

Davis and Associates Consultancy Limited is a small consultancy firm offering expertise in interpersonal violence with a particular specialism in domestic abuse and the wider forms of violence against women and girls. By conducting robust research and evaluation, we help local areas to understand social issues and work with them to find evidence-based solutions to improve outcomes for the community.

Commissioned by Torbay Council we have been pleased to have worked with the Domestic Abuse Partnership locally conduct this a strategic review of the whole system response to domestic abuse. This report is the fourth and final one in a series and provides an overarching review of the system in Torbay. It should be read in accompaniment with the safe accommodation needs assessment, Marac review and victim and survivor listening exercise, although key points from all of these will be presented in this summative report.

This report is a culmination of the efforts of all stakeholders who we thank for their active collaboration in sharing data and information with us for the report, with acknowledgements to Shirley Beauchamp who has seamlessly coordinated the project throughout and support from David Parsons, Victoria McGeough and Jason Preece.

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Contents

Contents	3
Section 1: Introduction	5
1.1 Scope.....	5
1.1.1 About this report.....	5
Section 2: Domestic abuse partnership and governance arrangements	6
Overview of the domestic abuse and sexual violence governance structure in Torbay.....	7
Learning points – “the invisibility of the perpetrator”	7
Feedback from victim survivors:	8
Section 3: Estimated prevalence of domestic abuse in Torbay	9
Learning Point	10
Section 4: An overview of victim and survivor experiences of domestic abuse in Torbay	11
Thematic analysis of victim and survivor interviews	12
Learning points	12
Section 5: Domestic abuse service provision and pathways in Torbay	18
Recommendations for development of the Marac (see separate Marac review report).....	19
Torbay victim and survivor experiences of domestic abuse service provision.....	20
Section 6: Domestic abuse and the criminal justice and court system	22
Victims experiences of the police in Torbay.....	23
Summary of learning points	23
Section 7: Domestic abuse and the housing system	24
Section 8: Domestic abuse and the health system	25
Learning Points	25
Three key themes emerged from the feedback from victims and survivors using health services in Torbay	25
• The need for greater awareness of the risks around domestic abuse at the point of pregnancy	25
• Understanding the impacts of trauma and it’s relation to poor mental health	25
• Opportunities for undertaking safe enquiry and exercising professional curiosity... ..	25
Theme.....	26
Details	26
Section 9: Domestic abuse and the safeguarding system	28
Overview of experiences of the safeguarding system.....	29

Section 10: Conclusions: applying systems thinking to the Torbay response to improve the system.....	30
10.1 Context.....	30
10.1.1 Creating systems change.....	30
10.2 Analysis of the domestic abuse system.....	30
10.2.1 Defining the system	30
10.2.3 Commissioning and pathways for victims	31
10.2.4 The statutory system.....	35
10.2.5 Safe accommodation pathways	37
Section 11: Summary of recommendations	39
Recommendations	39
11.1 For the DASV partnership.....	39
11.2 Commissioners.....	40
11.3 For the children’s safeguarding partnership	41
11.4 Peninsula-wide.....	41
11.5 Safe Accommodation specific recommendations	42
11.6 Marac specific recommendations	43
1. Priorities for Torbay Marac.....	43
11.7 Recommendations from the Listening Exercise	46

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Scope

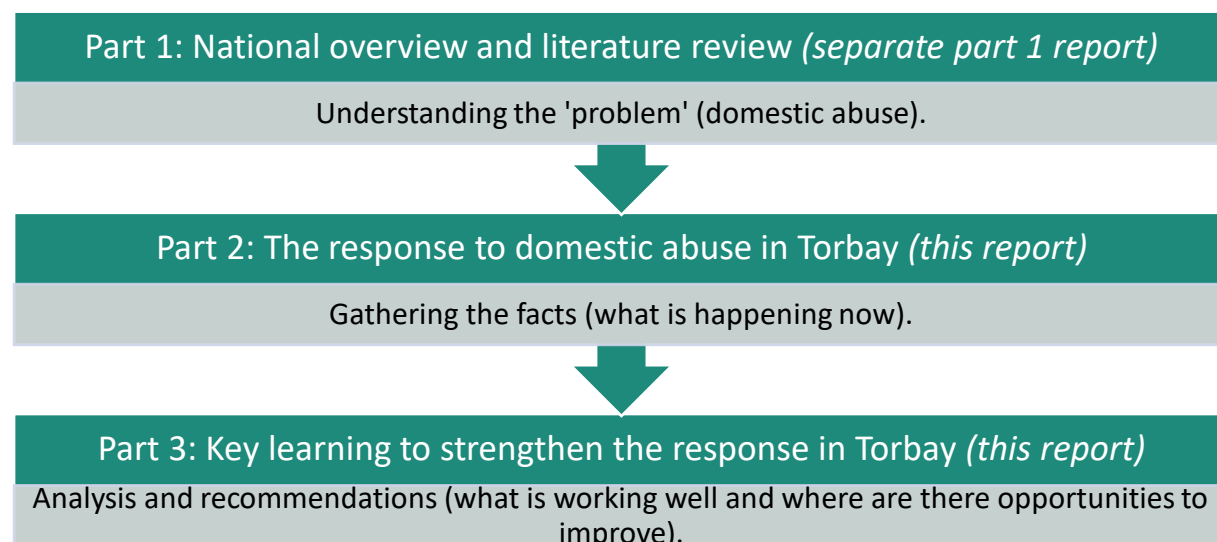
1.1.1 About this report

This report is one in a series of reports which have formed part of our strategic review of the whole system response to domestic abuse in Torbay. This report is the final report, which provides a culmination of all of our learning through each of our specific reviews including:

- The safe accommodation needs assessment
- The Marac review
- The listening exercise

Each of the above reports provide more in depth detail around the specific methodologies of the particular review. This report will use the findings and learning from these reports but attempt to do so in summary where possible with reference to the supplementary reports where required. This is to enable us to avoid duplication and ensure the strategic review report is as concise as possible, recognising the vast breadth of information is required to cover.

The report for this reason will be broken down in to three component parts starting with a wide lens, analysing the problem at a national and theoretical level to provide context to our review approach and subsequent findings. Part 1 is a separate report providing the national overview and literature. Part two will provide the bulk of the review by presenting our findings in terms of the response in Torbay. This section will focus on the facts with some reflection and interpretation, however our full analysis and bringing together of these facts and what lessons we can draw from them, will be presented in Part 3 where we present our analysis.



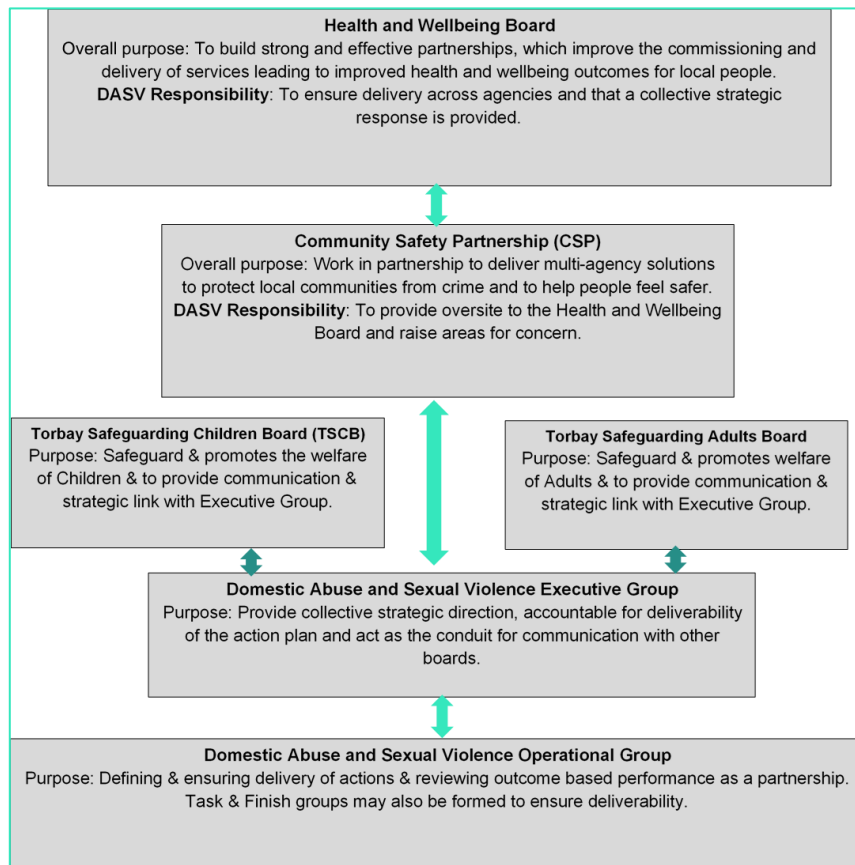
As this report is of significant length, with many chapters containing a range of key information, we have endeavoured to include a chapter summary with key information from the chapter at the beginning of each section.

Section 2: Domestic abuse partnership and governance arrangements

Summary

- The current strategy is due to end and requires a refresh. The existing approach follows the national 'four p' approach; prevent, protect, provision and protection. The strategy is delivered through an established governance structure led by the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG) which feeds directly into the Community Safety Partnership.
- There is an operational arm to the governance and partnership arrangements in Torbay through the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Operational Group (DASVOG) and the Marac steering group. Arrangements in terms of how communication occurs vertically and horizontally across these structures is ad hoc and could be formalised.
- There is currently no clear mechanism for victims and children's voices to be represented across the partnership. This will need to be addressed as the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) stipulates under the regulations that this is a requirement. There are agencies that represent both victims and children on the Board, so these representatives could become formalised in terms of their role to represent the voice of children and victims, but the mechanism for this must be clarified. Our listening exercise report provides recommendations around embedding lived experience including options for appraisal.
- The Are You Okay 'brand' is positive and provides a clear message and one space for victims to go to in terms of getting advice and information. How this links with wider arrangements is not clear including links to the Standing Tall partnership. Torbay should consider how the operational and delivery arms of the partnership feed in to the overall strategy and approach.
- The DASVEG feeds in to the Children's Safeguarding Board through the Community Safety Partnership and is chaired by a children's services representative. The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) recognises children as direct victims in their own right now which will have implications around the governance and partnership arrangements. The children's Board have updated their guidance to reference the Act, however the old definition remains and there is no reference to this change. Additionally the guidance contains some problematic language which the partnership and Board should consider updating.
- CRAFT has initially been a positive programme in order to create culture change across the system. The evaluation remains pending, but the DASVEG should consider following this how it could be embedded.
- Victims and survivors discussed through the listening exercise how they would like agencies to work more collaboratively together. They experienced some agencies not understanding the role or remit of other organisations which impacted victims getting help quickly and rather felt as though they were being pushed from 'pillar to post'.

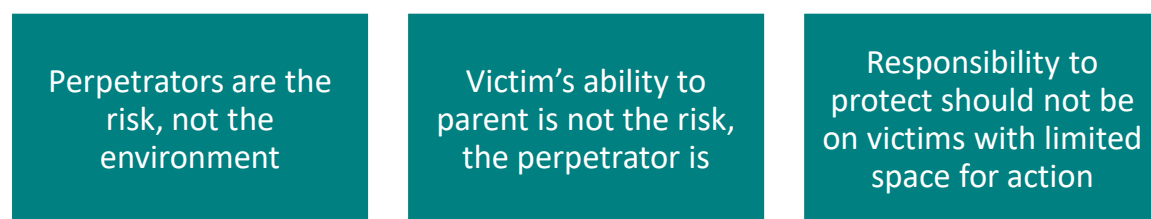
Overview of the domestic abuse and sexual violence governance structure in Torbay



Learning points – “the invisibility of the perpetrator”

The key theme that emerged from the review of the Children’s Safeguarding Partnership guidance was the invisibility of the perpetrator and the focus on the victim.

Three key learning points identified are:



Feedback from victim survivors:

What victims think is working well	What victims think requires development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some instances organisations within the system are able to support them to speak with other services and navigate pathways through advocacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all services and organisations understand one another's role or remit which means victims do not know what to expect when signposted Victims felt they had to repeat their story to multiple services In some survivors experiences they described having to 'chase' services who were difficult to get hold of and not proactive

Recommendations

- The DASVEG should agree and outline within the terms of reference the mechanism they will adopt to ensure victims and children's voices are represented across the partnership.
- The children's safeguarding partnership should update their domestic abuse practice guidance to reflect the Domestic Abuse Act new definition.
- The children's safeguarding partnership should update their domestic abuse practice guidance to reflect the Domestic Abuse Act recognising children as direct victims in their own right.
- The DASVEG and children's safeguarding partnership should conduct a joint deep dive audit of the current whole system pathway for children including identification (e.g. in early years and school settings such as encompass) through to the provision and intervention offer.
- The children's safeguarding partnership should develop a task and finish group which includes individuals with domestic abuse expertise (e.g. providers) to work to update their domestic abuse practice guidance in line with the learning points described.
- Commissioners should identify a budget for the champions network to develop the coordination function to ensure all organisations are clear on who the champion within their organisation is (this could include a list on the Are You Okay website)
- The domestic abuse partnership should consider developing a set of practice principles/values outlining a minimum standard all professionals sign up to in terms of working with victims of domestic abuse.

- The domestic abuse partnership should consider developing one leaflet/booklet for victims in Torbay which gives an overview of all services within the system they may come in to contact with including their role and escalation processes. This could be electronically published on the Are You Okay website as well as hard copies for victims to be given.
- The domestic abuse partnership, alongside the safeguarding boards, should develop a quality assurance monitoring framework to routinely assess the quality of practice across all services in the system, this should specifically measure multi-agency working such as information sharing.

Section 3: Estimated prevalence of domestic abuse in Torbay

This section considers the local population size¹ alongside the domestic abuse evidence base² to estimate how many people in Torbay will have experienced domestic abuse.

Summary

- **Domestic abuse is highly prevalent:** On an annual basis, this equates to 6,430 individuals likely to have experienced domestic abuse (both familial and intimate partner violence) of which around three quarters (n=4,730, 74%) will be intimate partner violence.
- **It disproportionately affects women:** Of those experiencing abuse each year 68% are likely to be female, and 32% male. Domestic abuse also often starts or escalates during pregnancy. In 2018 there were 1,714 conceptions in Torbay (ONS, 2020). If we use the national prevalence rate of domestic abuse amongst women (7.3%) we can estimate at least 125 pregnant women might experience domestic abuse each year.
- **There are fewer young people than the national average in Torbay, but they are at higher risk of experiencing DA:** In Torbay we estimate that 1,080 young people between 16-24 will experience domestic abuse every year. Of those around a quarter (n=260, 24%) will be 16–17-year-olds.
- **There is a significant role for adult social care in the response:** Based on the age of the population in Torbay we estimate around 1,690 individuals over the age of 60 will experience domestic abuse every year. We estimate there are around 30,480

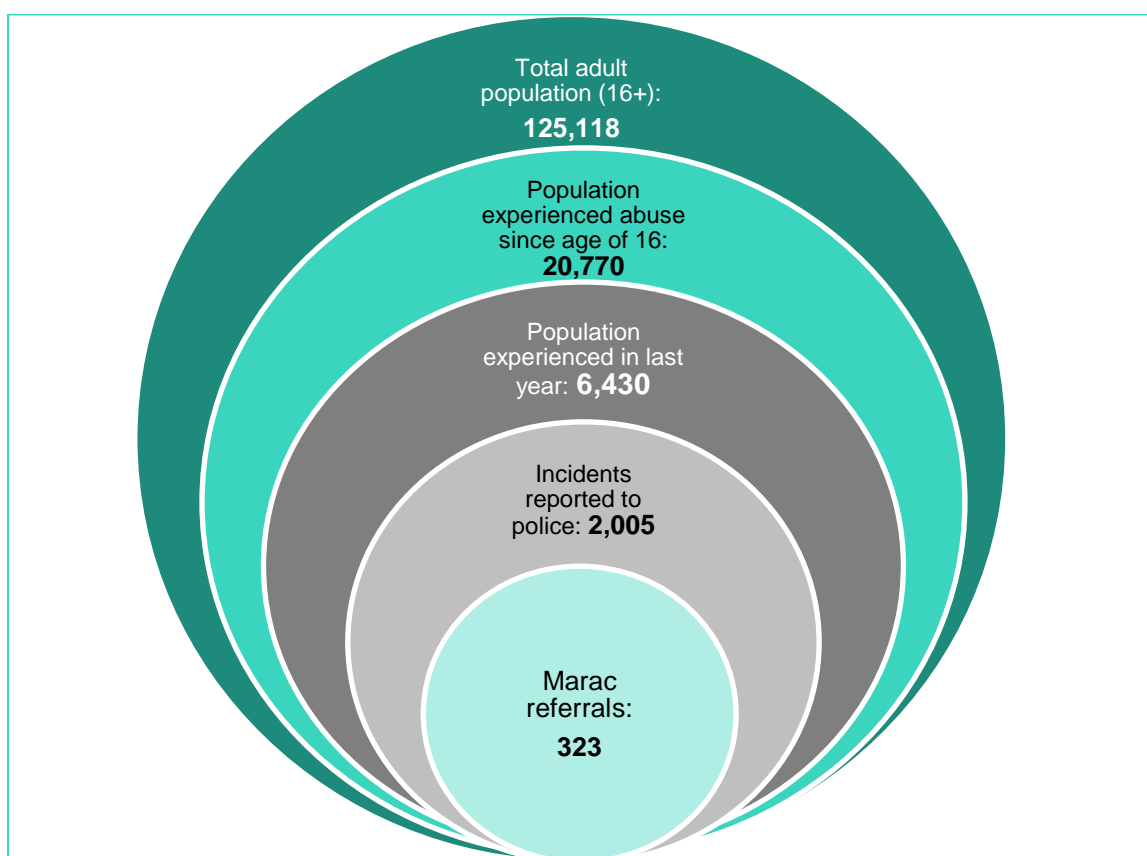
¹ Office for National Statistics Mid-year estimates (2019)

² Crime survey for England and Wales

individuals with a disability in Torbay. Of those individuals around 3,520 are likely to experience domestic abuse every year.

- Marginalised communities may be invisible to the system:** Around 810 victims of domestic abuse each year in Torbay will identify as LGBT+. The total non-white population in Torbay is 3,260 which is around 2.4% of the total population. Using this figure alongside the estimated prevalence of domestic abuse we can estimate that around 110 victims of domestic abuse in Torbay will be from a Black or racially minoritised community

Overview of domestic abuse prevalence in Torbay



Female	155	1,440	34%
Male	5	490	24%
Total	160	1930	-

Learning Point

In keeping with the findings from the Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment, there is a lack of consistent and comprehensive data collection across agencies in Torbay, thus making it challenging to monitor demand and develop system responses to meet identified needs.

Recommendations:

- The DASV partnership should develop a performance dashboard which includes the data presented here as a baseline to track and monitor prevalence and demand on a quarterly basis across the strategy period
- The DASV should set up a task and finish group to review data quality across all organisations around domestic abuse to ensure all agencies are able to, and consistently collect data around domestic abuse cases to understand the nature of abuse in Torbay (e.g. referral numbers, needs presenting, outcomes)
- The DASV partnership through the data quality task and finish group also audit the demographic data collection (e.g. ethnicity, disability) across all organisations to i) ensure it is collected in comparable formats across all services, ii) ensure it is collected consistently by all organisations. This should culminate in a recommended data collection approach for the DASVEG to approve and continuously monitor.

Section 4: An overview of victim and survivor experiences of domestic abuse in Torbay

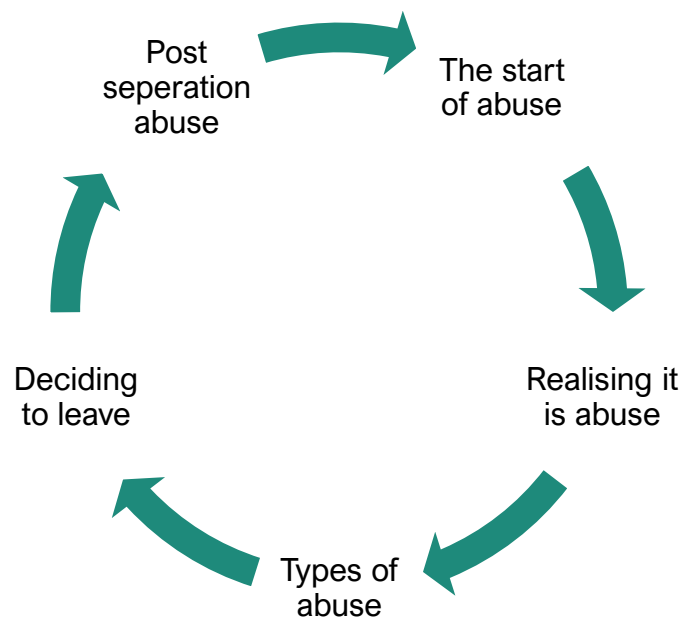
Summary

- Victims and survivors of domestic abuse in Torbay go through a process in which they often do not realise the perpetrator is abusive due to deliberate tactics they use to normalise abusive behaviours. Efforts across the system are required through targeted awareness activities to support the realisation process as soon as possible to reduce harm.
- Victims are not a homogenous group, and neither are their support needs. As needs vary considerably and can include emotional, mental health, practical and wider support, there must be a clear offer outlining the options for survivors so they can pick the options right for them. These needs differ over time, with many survivors continuing to experience post separation abuse which is often when they describe support as 'dropping off'.
- Survivors in Torbay are clear that there is not enough done about perpetrators. Our evidence highlights several ways in which perpetrators will portray an external face to professionals which is designed to undermine the credibility of the victim. There is an urgent need for professionals to receive adequate training around working with perpetrators. Moreover many survivors discussed how they feel action should be taken against perpetrators such as removal from the home or conviction which currently does not happen consistently.

- The cost of leaving an abusive relationship and finding freedom is costly. Survivors are navigating complex systems around courts, finances and housing with little support. Domestic abuse services currently are not set up to offer this type of support so clear partnerships between sectors is required to ensure survivors are able to safely leave and remain separated from perpetrators.

Thematic analysis of victim and survivor interviews

Through our interviews with survivors we noted key patterns emerge in terms of the trajectory of abusive relationships. Whether they were short term or long term relationships these patterns appeared apparent across almost all of the experiences we heard.



Learning points

The table below provides an overview of each of these five stages of abusive relationships as well as some of the quotes illustrating these key learning points.

Please note that the content of the quotes may be triggering.

Timeline of abuse	Key points	Quotes
<p>The start of, and realising abuse</p>	<p>Pace: there was a binary learning point in terms of the pace of abuse starting with some survivors stating that the abuse happened quickly, whilst several suggested it was gradual.</p> <p>Hard to spot: most survivors discussed that the start of abuse was difficult to recognise. Where it was a relationship starting at pace, some of the controlling elements mirrored the initial 'honeymoon' phase of a normal relationship. Those that were gradual usually started with coercive control too, and perpetrators were manipulating victims to believe their behaviour was 'normal' which led victims to accept they were the problem.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"looking back on it now, it's very clear, you know, sort of buying your interest, there was a lot of that, you know, going on and showering me with different experiences that to the naive 19 year old it's like 'this is amazing' and he was quite older than me"</i> • <i>"but I didn't recognise it for a long time and it just sort of like gradually happened"</i>. • <i>"he wasn't violent the entire time, but I really don't know when it started"</i> • <i>"before I was thinking, because he's so lovely and that was the real him, and then the horrible stuff happened and the rape happened, that wasn't really him. That was my fault somehow"</i>.
<p>The experience of abuse</p>	<p>A range of tactics: perpetrators all appeared to use a range of tactics; with no victims we spoke to describing one form of abuse. The abuse ranged from physical abuse and violence through to non-physical. Several victims discussed how perpetrators would be economically abusive and limit their actual, or access to resources. Many of the tactics were specifically designed to manipulate victims in to not seeking help and support which must be considered in terms of interventions. This ranged from manipulating them that it was their fault through to threats that children would be removed.</p> <p>An external face: many victims discussed how perpetrators would display an external face to friends, family and professionals in which they would appear to be 'charming'. It appeared that this was a tactic to diminish the victims credibility as people would be shocked, or not believe them if they were to disclose. This tactic would often work as some</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"the violent episodes, just escalated and lots of physical violence being locked in rooms and homes and going [...] and very controlling of what I'd wear and what I would eat and people that I spoke to"</i> • <i>"He being so controlling. Always said everything in his name. Nothing mine and stuff like that"</i>. • <i>"he said to me all the time, when I will be going from him, children will be gone. Social services will take my children. I be so scared"</i>. • <i>"he would be verbally abusive; he would isolate me from friends. He would be abusive to friends that came to the house, so they wouldn't come again"</i> • <i>"Just general destruction of property. Kicking laundry baskets. I think we've replaced that. Damage to woodwork, wood frames on the door. Constant banging, banging, banging. Just injuries to me. I have permanent injuries to my legs and arms"</i>

Timeline of abuse	Key points	Quotes
	<p>survivors noted not seeking help due to this, or when they did they felt professionals did not believe them in favour of the perpetrator.</p> <p>Violence to consolidate control: a number of survivors described how perpetrators use of violence would be functional rather than sporadic. Specifically survivors discussed how the use of violence created a context around perpetrators behaviour which enabled controlling tactics to work, as victims were frightened of violence as a potential, feeling it was a consistent threat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Once I’d been hit quite a few times, even just raising his voice was enough. So, you just anticipate and what else might follow. And quite often, there wasn’t any physical violence, but I was as scared as if he would be”.</i> • <i>“when I had my first child, I had to have DNA testing because he was adamant that I was cheating on him and it was just that sort of controlling, constant accusations, constant not letting me leave the house”</i> • <i>“So controlling behaviour, strangling, head-butting, theft, which I found out recently how much had actually been taken, because it’s from an account that I never really used”.</i> • <i>“if I’d gone against whatever he wanted me to do and I would be punished in the sense that he would not speak to me for days on end, and he would barricade himself in the bedroom”</i> • <i>“Having the phone taken off me, texting my family making out that was me and I was alright”</i> • <i>“Then there was sexual violence, financial abuse. And, I mean, to be honest, I find it easier to say what he didn’t do than what he did. So, never used a firearm, never murdered me”.</i>
<p>Deciding to leave the relationship</p>	<p>A process: leaving an abusive relationship was noted by all survivors as a process which was incredibly difficult and challenging to navigate. There were a range of complexities including fear of repercussions and the trauma of the relationship which had made some of the survivors we spoke to feel the abuse was their fault. Support around this process is a necessary part of survivors journey to safety to ensure they can dip in and out of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“to be going into a bed & breakfast or a refuge and having nothing of your own. That makes it a lot worse”</i> • <i>“I remember running down my road, where we used to live and going to a family member’s house”</i> • <i>“I think and then it was lots of like going back and trying again to leave. And going back again and mostly just because I didn’t feel safe and it was, it was like if I went back, it kept him happy for a bit. And</i>

Timeline of abuse	Key points	Quotes
	<p>support whilst they make up their mind.</p> <p>A point of escalation: several survivors discussed that it was a particular event or behaviour which escalated that acted as a catalyst enabling them to leave the relationship. For some victims it was an act of severe physical violence, and for others the threat or risk of harm to their children. This is important learning as there is an opportunity for commissioners in Torbay to work to offer support (including information, advice and guidance) at a lower level to support decisions to leave before the point of escalation. This will reduce the harm to families significantly.</p> <p>Practical barriers: at the point in which survivors decide to leave the relationship, we observed all victims noting practical barrier which prevented them. This related primarily to housing and finances, highlighting the necessity of support around these areas to enable survivors to leave.</p>	<p><i>I think I was kind of kidding myself that that was safer.”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“If I'd known there was some way that if I was to have made that move and I'm not saying everything will be handed to you on a plate. But that they could help them. And I mean, a proper accommodation, not necessarily you're having to stay in a B&B room for six months”</i> • <i>“I've been made to believe that everything I did was wrong. I couldn't get anything right, and I failed at everything and when you're in that mindset and you've been made to believe that for so many years, the thought of actually breaking away and doing it yourself is terrifying”</i> • <i>“You hear this criticism all the time about ‘Oh, why did she go back to him?’ It's very obvious why women go back, because they're convinced that it's their fault, that they deserve to be mistreated and it's so bloody difficult to get away. It's so hard”</i> • <i>“at one point I had thought about moving really far away, to get away and be safe. But I couldn't because of the stability I still had with the job being there”.</i>
<p>Post separation abuse</p>	<p>It gets worse before it gets better: the majority of survivors described experiencing an escalation in abuse at the point of leaving, which mirrors national findings. The DASH risk assessment specifically asks about whether there has been a recent separation for this reason and the increased risk in homicide. It is vital that the strategic approach including commissioned pathway recognises this and services are available to ‘wrap around’ survivors at this point.</p> <p>Practical processes take time: survivors discussed how the practical process after leaving such as housing, finances and court arrangements can take time. This</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“he was still abusing me by coming to my house, by getting his brother to come to my house, by pulling up alongside me in the car. All those kinds of things that still carried on, threatening my friends.”</i> • <i>“he actually applied for several loans and credit cards in my name because I was still registered with the property. It was just something, I didn't, I didn't think I needed to worry about.”</i> • <i>“Even though he wasn't even with me, and then, obviously then, controlled the following relationship I had, because everything we did was controlled”</i>

Timeline of abuse	Key points	Quotes
	<p>often means victims have to keep in some contact with perpetrators who continue to use these systems and processes as a means to further abuse victims. In some cases this can become so stressful and overwhelming that some victims described returning to the perpetrator at this point before they finally left for good. It is vital therefore that commissioned services and pathways include specialist advice around housing, finances, and legal support to ensure victims do not feel returning to abusive partners is their own option.</p> <p>Using children and wider networks: finally, we found that there was a local synergy in Torbay with Marianne Hester’s three planet model in which victims that had left for the safety of themselves and their children were then involved in complex child contact arrangements which the perpetrator would use to continue their abuse. As well as children, perpetrators would use wider family and peer networks as part of their continued abuse efforts including to directly engage in the abuse, to humiliate victims in front of peers either in person or online as well as to direct threats towards victims friends and family members to scare them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I’ve been split up with him five years, but it’s taken me four years, for him to leave me alone”.</i> • <i>“when you leave the abusive relationship that escalates the domestic violence more. But what people don’t understand is it escalates even more four years, five years down the line. They get really, really bitter. And that’s when they fight, and they’ll fight until they’re blue in the face”.</i> • <i>“he actually moved in to a flat directly across the road from where I lived. And, and that was kind of like, you know, so close that he could even see my front door from his living room window”.</i> • <i>“my ex was still abusing my daughter, so I was trying to stop that, and I was taking him to court to trying to get residency. He was trying to steal my house of me by taking me to court for that. It was very complicated. So in, in one year, there were 14 different court cases. And I was absolutely terrified of him”</i>

Recommendations

- The DASV partnership should consider a follow up Are You Okay survey which takes more of a general population view to get a better insight in to i) true prevalence and ii) perceptions of abuse (what people define as DA/SV) to target intervention and resource more effectively

- The DASV partnership should work with all health colleagues to review policies around enquiry (e.g. routine) within health settings where injuries may be reported (e.g. GP, A&E and minor injury clinics) to understand current guidance and practice. This should include a review of how repeat injury presentations are recorded and reported.
- The DASV partnership and Are You Okay partnership should ensure domestic abuse awareness materials are displayed within settings such as A&E and minor injury clinics to promote help seeking.
- The Are You Okay champions network should include at least one champion from health settings where injuries may be reported.
- The new integrated service which includes the Idva service should include key performance indicators to be reported through contract monitoring around how many victims are spoken to (and their views collected) about their needs from Marac.
- The DA strategy should consider how to support victims identify the abuse as early as possible before harm escalates. Case study examples should be used so residents are clear on what constitutes abuse and how it can start to appear in relationships.
- The DASV partnership should formalise arrangements with Standing Tall to ensure there is a clear pathway between CVS organisations and commissioned services with a single point of contact in the system (a front door) for information and advice where victims are unsure if their experience constitutes abuse and want to 'talk it through'
- The DASV partnership should work with the safeguarding partnerships to review the training offer and quality assurance (e.g. which agencies attend) of training around compassionate domestic abuse enquiry in Torbay (including post training evaluations to continue to monitor confidence levels of all professionals)
- The DASV partnership should consider the development of a common assessment tool around domestic abuse which all services use when domestic abuse is identified (incorporating the DASH and wider tools). This assessment could be shared with the victim so they can use it as a 'passport' or 'logbook' to access wider services without repeating their 'story.'

Section 5: Domestic abuse service provision and pathways in Torbay

Summary

- There is only one commissioned service provider in Torbay which is commissioned through the Local Authority. They provide an Idva service, safe houses, awareness courses and group work, and an outreach service. The Idva service has good engagement rates of 88% in 2020/21 and all Marac referrals were contacted to be offered support.
- Overall TDAS are commissioned to deliver 15 'refuge' spaces, although one of these is a two bedroom flat share so could accommodate two individuals. The number of referrals to the refuge in TDAS has been variable year on year with a substantial but steady decline from 108 in 2018-19 to only 39 in 2020-21. The 2020-21 numbers may have been affected by the pandemic. The most common referral source by a considerable margin into refuge is self-referral or a referral from the community based domestic abuse service. During 2020-21 housing only referred 3 victims to refuge, and the police only 2. All of the victims and survivors accessing refuge over a three year period have been women.
- There is a vibrant community and voluntary sector in Torbay providing support for victims and survivors including through the Standing Tall partnership.
- The Marac in Torbay is currently at high volume with referrals at 57 cases per 10,000 population compared to the national recommendation of 40 per 10,000. There is also a high level of repeats with over half being repeat cases. This suggests a challenge locally in terms of identifying the right cases, which in part may be due to the Marac hearing medium risk cases. In addition to this there is very limited multi agency engagement with only 6% of referrals coming from partner agencies (outside of police and Idva).
- The listening exercise found in relation to domestic abuse service provision that most survivors had positive experiences from services with feelings of being listened to and believed. However many survivors felt that there were limited options in terms of meeting their needs with several referencing being told a refuge was their only option. Additionally they found domestic abuse services too generic to meet all of their needs so required additional support around housing, finances, legal and mental health support which they found difficult to access.
- Survivors in Torbay highlighted a strong preference towards a by and for service where the people supporting them had lived experience of domestic abuse. In some instances, survivors had experienced this and felt the level of empathy and understanding reassuring. Other survivors had not experienced this but noted that they believe it would have been something important to them.

Recommendations for development of the Marac (see separate Marac review report)

Principle	Recommendations
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Marac steering group should begin to review data on Marac referrals to identify the ratio of professional judgement and visible high risk referrals • The Marac steering group should consider whether medium risk cases continue to be heard, and if so agree the legal basis for sharing information (including updating the ISP) • The Marac steering group should work with the DASVOG to understand practitioners awareness and knowledge around identifying, risk assessing and pathways in to the Marac • The current definition in Torbay of a repeat should be reviewed and revised in line with national guidance
Multi-agency engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core agencies with less than 90% attendance should be reviewed to understand causes • All multi-agency representatives (core and non-core) should update the Marac steering group with a named deputy
Independent representation and support for victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idva capacity should be reviewed to increase the FTE equivalent by 0.5 • At the Marac meeting the case discussion structure should be changed with the Chair asking the referrer to present the case followed by any information from the Idva to ensure the victims voice and wishes is at the forefront of the discussion • The Idva's should be recognised at the Marac as exerts in the dynamics of domestic abuse and particular patterns within each individual case to ensure key questions around victim behaviour and decision making is explored
Information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the Marac meeting the case discussion structure should be changed to ensure that after the referrer and Idva information the Chair goes to each agency individually to ensure all information is sought before action planning starts • All Marac representatives should be encouraged to constructively, and compassionately, challenge colleagues where their language may constitute victim blaming.
Action planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the Marac meeting the case discussion structure should be changed to ensure the Chair to asks the administrator to recap on actions at the end of each case.

Number of cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Marac steering group should conduct an audit of repeat cases to the Marac to understand why the volume is so high and develop a plan to mitigate the number of repeat cases
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Marac steering group should begin to review data around diversity including ethnicity, disability and sexuality
Operational support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Marac administrator capacity of 1 FTE should be maintained The Marac administrator should collate minutes of the Marac which outlines the information shared and risks identified as well as the actions All Marac representatives should receive continued professional development opportunities and training which includes understanding the dynamics of domestic abuse, trauma informed practice and victim blaming
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A role profile for the Marac steering group chair should be created which outlines how they work with the Marac chair's employment organisation around supervision A Marac Operating Protocol and Information Sharing Protocol should be developed immediately

Torbay victim and survivor experiences of domestic abuse service provision

The accompanying Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment report and Listening exercise details the experiences of victims and survivors accessing the domestic abuse service in Torbay. It also covers the housing response as outlined in section 8 of this report.

The key recommendations from the Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment are:

Recommendations

- The dispersed, self-contained model for safe spaces should continue to ensure capacity for all victims and survivors including those with teenage sons, or male victims
- Additional capacity for more safe spaces should be explored to reduce the number of referrals declined currently
- Developing additional spaces with mobility access should be explored in partnership with Adult Social Care to ensure a holistic offer for adults with a disability (including those with statutory care and support needs)

- Data collection for homelessness applicants should include more robust demographic data including disability, ethnicity, and sexual orientation to ensure the true need is evidenced
- Data collection for the safe accommodation service provider should be more robust ensuring routine collection of demographic data including disability, ethnicity, and sexual orientation to ensure the true need is evidenced
- An operational partnership that includes domestic abuse, housing, financial and legal specialists should be considered. The practical elements above should all be included to ensure specialist domestic abuse services have Single Point Of Contact (SPOCs) within each sector making referral pathways simple and advice timely.
- Through commissioning of the safe accommodation service and the voluntary sector Standing Tall partnership, the development of joint domestic abuse and practical support 'drop in's' should be considered in partnership with local services (e.g. legal firms). A timetable of these could be given to all victims entering appropriate safe accommodation as a 'welcome' style leaflet/pack.
- The Are You Okay website should be widely promoted across Torbay and include a page relating to safe accommodation options and practical support to ensure as many residents as possible experiencing domestic abuse that need to flee are aware of their options.
- As discussed in previous section: A flexible funding pot should be made available to remove some of the financial barriers to accessing safe accommodation.
- Operation encompass should be explored to consider notifications to schools to inform them of when children have had to leave their home and go in to safe accommodation. This could link to the existing pathway for support for children in safe accommodation.
- Review and improve data collection across agencies in relation to children accessing safe accommodation. This should include identification, agencies signposted too, risk assessment levels, identified needs, outcomes and demographics to ensure the true need of children is explored.
- Data on children within safe accommodation should feed in to partnership sub groups across the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence partnership as well as Children's Safeguarding Board.
- Commissioning of safe accommodation services should include the allocation of a dedicated children's worker for each child to support and advocate on their behalf. They should continue to work with the child through to resettlement and ensure appropriate referrals to other agencies are in place for more formalised therapeutic or statutory support.
- Safe accommodation support should continue through to when victims have settled in their long term home to ensure a positive transition.

- Commissioned safe accommodation services should work in partnership with the Standing Tall partnership to ensure as part of victim and children's resettlement, they are introduced and offered community based support.

Section 6: Domestic abuse and the criminal justice and court system

Summary

- Police reported domestic abuse incidents and crimes has remained reasonably stable over the past three years, ranging from a peak of 2,470 crimes in 2018-19, to a low of 2,319 in 2020-21. Approximately 80% of domestic abuse incidents are assessed by the police as being standard or medium risk, with high risk cases accounting for 7% to 8% of the total. Up to a further 17% of incidents have been classified as 'unknown' risk level.
- Sanction detection rates for both domestic and non-domestic abuse crimes in Torbay have reduced in the past three years. The number of individuals charged/summonsed for domestic abuse crimes has also fallen, from a high of 235 in 2018-19 to a low of 164 in 2020-21. The proportion classified as evidential difficulties in cases where the victim supports action has increased, from 18% in 2018-19 to 43% of total section 15 outcomes in 2020-21.
- There is a clear gendered element to domestic abuse in Torbay with female victims have accounted for approximately 72% of all domestic abuse victims in Torbay whilst perpetrators remain predominantly male. This was the same as probation where over 90% of domestic abuse perpetrators through probation were male.
- Probation have 180 perpetrators of domestic abuse identified within the Torbay PDU cohort. Of these 85 SARA risk assessments were carried out, with 53% being assessed as 'medium' risk, and a further 31% as 'high' risk. In terms of the whole system and multi-agency working 4% of the domestic abuse perpetrator cohort were part of the IOM scheme, and 38 were being managed under multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA).
- Not all domestic abuse perpetrators through probation access an accredited programme such as Building Better Relationships. The number of times an accredited programme for domestic abuse was recommended has reduced, from a high of 16 in 2019-20 to a low of 3 in 2020-21. This is considerably low given the number of perpetrators and should be further explored to understand how perpetrators are offered opportunities to change their behaviour. Despite a drop in recommended programmes, the completion rates for those accessing them has remained stable.
- Our listening exercise with victims and survivors found that positive experiences of the criminal justice system, particularly police officers could be the turning point for them in terms of feeling believed and supported. However, from the cohort we spoke

to many described a more negative experience. In particular there were some areas for development around key themes including victims not feeling, or being believed, a lack of action being taken, where action is taken it being inappropriate, automatic referrals to children social care and understanding victims when English is not their first language.

Victims experiences of the police in Torbay

From the 25 survivors we spoke to the biggest disparity they experienced from services across the system was the response from the police. In some instances survivors described a positive experience, whilst others note the challenges and negative experiences they had. Of the negative experiences, the key themes that emerged were:

- Victims not feeling, or being believed
- A lack of action taken by the police
- Inappropriate action taken by the police
- Automatic referrals to children social care
- Understanding victims whose first language is not English

Summary of learning points

What victims think is working well	What victims think requires development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of the DASH risk assessment was seen as beneficial to support victims to understand their experience and feel validated in their feelings of being unsafe • Where officers had demonstrated compassion and empathy victims had felt believed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there was no action taken by the police, victims felt confused and disappointed. In a number of cases they had not understood why action was not taken which made them feel they were not being believed or taken seriously • In many cases the police had removed the perpetrator (either formally through custody or informally by requesting they leave and driving them somewhere else) and then released them with no restrictions so they went straight back to the victim • Where victims had called the police they sometimes felt pushed in to supporting a prosecution even if it did not feel right for them at the time • Police did not always follow up with victims after they reported, including where they had asked to be referred for support

Recommendations

- The DA strategic lead within Torbay should agree with counterparts across the peninsula a proposed police data and outcomes dashboard which measures police activity around domestic abuse including 'soft' outcomes such as referrals for specialist services
- The DA leads across the peninsula should work with senior police colleagues to appraise and approve the data and outcomes dashboard, which should feed in to each local partnership board (the DASVEG in Torbay)
- Torbay should work with Devon and Cornwall police to embed the voices of those with lived experience in to quality assurance and performance reviews

Peninsula- wide:

- The domestic abuse partnership should initiate peninsula wide discussions (particularly with the OPCC) about an approach to audit the response³ victims of domestic abuse get from the police to include gathering survivor feedback
- Devon and Cornwall police should work with the local domestic abuse partnerships across the peninsula, and the OPCC, to create an awareness raising campaign around two key messages: a) highlighting that victims of domestic abuse will be believed and b) ensuring victims know they can report non-physical abuse. We would encourage the use of 'good news' case studies as part of this.

Section 7: Domestic abuse and the housing system

This section does not have a section summary to avoid duplication. The safe accommodation needs assessment should be referred to for full details and information regarding the housing system across Torbay. The recommendations are as outlined in section 5 above and are captured in full at the end of this document.

³ This audit should include the extent to which the victims code is realised within domestic abuse cases as well as softer police culture and values by asking victims about the extent to which they felt believed or taken seriously. This mixed approach will enable the practice to be better understood and developed than looking at criminal justice and process outcomes alone.

Section 8: Domestic abuse and the health system

Summary

- Positively Torbay has an IRIS service across primary care. Between its start and June 2021, a total of 681 referrals have been made to IRIS across Devon and Torbay of which 20% of referrals (136) were from Torbay. Within Torbay, the majority of IRIS referrals were domestic abuse related, forming 87% of the total. 13% of IRIS referrals in Torbay were sexual violence related. Since the start of the IRIS programme, there have been 29 referrals to MARAC, 35 referrals to Children Services and 12 referrals to Adult Social Care
- The biggest barrier victims and survivors noted in terms of health was waiting lists for mental health services, and a generic response from GPs in which they were more often medicated than signposted for support. Of the survivors we spoke to none had referenced IRIS which could suggest they did not attend the IRIS practices, or that IRIS was not yet fully embedded. This may be an area for exploration.
- Children's services have commissioned Operation Encompass across health visiting which is positive. Initial data highlights the pathways has been successful in increasing identification of domestic abuse. The listening exercise included some survivors who had been allocated a health visitor. One noted that the impact of domestic abuse was picked up through the mental health questions, however she did not receive support around the domestic abuse but triggered a referral to children's services who removed her children. This is likely an extreme example, however it highlights the opportunity health visitors have to offer advice and signposting.
- Substance use services did not identify domestic abuse in most of their cases, however of the 37 service users that were noted to be experiencing domestic abuse in 2020-21 around half (49%) of these were perpetrators of domestic abuse with 38% being identified as a victim. In both the victim and perpetrator cohort alcohol was a more significant treatment need than alcohol use, however perpetrators were more likely than victims to have co-morbid drug and alcohol needs. Interestingly 22% were noted to be 'both'. Almost all service users identified (86%) were referred to Marac.

Learning Points

Three key themes emerged from the feedback from victims and survivors using health services in Torbay

- The need for greater awareness of the risks around domestic abuse at the point of pregnancy
- Understanding the impacts of trauma and it's relation to poor mental health
- Opportunities for undertaking safe enquiry and exercising professional curiosity.

Theme	Details
<p>Safe and appropriate enquiry and signposting</p>	<p>Midwifery service to show and discuss the leaflet with patients as an opportunity for enquiry and asking them if they would like it to be left in their booklet.</p> <p><i>“When I was with my abuser and I fell pregnant and I went to a midwife here, the midwife, I don’t know if you’ve got kids. But when you go for your first midwife appointment, they give you like a booklet, and they give you loads of leaflets. One of the leaflets they give you is a domestic abuse one. Obviously, when you go back home and the abuser is there, they look through everything that you’ve been given. So, before I even got back out of the waiting room, I ripped up and put it in the bin, because if he’s seen that, he would have been like, well what you’ve been saying about me for them to give you that leaflet”</i></p> <p>Another experience one survivor had was around proactive enquiry, as she had to have what she defined as an abortion, but seemingly appeared to be a miscarriage following an assault:</p> <p><i>“I had to have an abortion, because he kicked me so hard, I was bleeding, I was going to lose baby anyway. But still, I got told by social services, basically, I’ll lose my other kids, if I kept the baby anyway. So it’s all very much, you get threats, you spend the entire time with the abuser getting threats and then you get threats from social services”</i></p> <p>She found she was not asked about her experience of domestic abuse but discussed how the impact of the abuse meant children’s services may have removed her child had she not had the medical intervention.</p>
<p>Awareness of links between maternity, mental health and domestic abuse</p>	<p>There were some links around health visitors and domestic abuse discussed with survivors often feeling there was not enough support following the birth of their children:</p> <p><i>“I mean I went in to the health visitor one day and when they did my mental health check, they said, how are you feeling? And I said, ‘the only way I can describe it is if you took my child, I can’t say I wouldn’t consider suicide’. Next thing you knew they’d taken him off me for six months”</i></p> <p><i>“the health visitor. My mental health got so bad that we’re not sure if it progressed into postnatal depression or if it was just depression that got severe, but it got to the point where they took my child off me for six months because they deemed I was unsafe”</i></p>
<p>Pathologisation of victim survivors and</p>	

the need for a trauma informed approach

“apparently it was PTSD, you know, especially after the rape. So, there’s just not a great deal they can do. They put me in touch with like group counselling and like Talk Works and things. They’ve put me on anti-depressants, which I didn’t want to go on, because it was like such specific thing, I knew it wasn’t that I was depressed as such, it was the situation”

The only people that were helping was the doctors and all they were doing was giving more and more anti-depressants which wasn’t helping at all.

“I’d already made a suicide attempt and hadn’t asked for any help and so I shouldn’t survive, but I did, and I was not happy I survived. So when I was in the hospital, they diagnosed me with PTSD, anxiety, and depression due to my domestic situation. And the only help I got from them was a psychiatrist, sitting down telling me I’ve got to fight, and he told me that about six times, telling me ‘you’ve got to fight’. And I remember looking at him completely blankly and thinking he’s mad. I had no psychiatric support”

“The support that I did get from mental health services kicked in a bit later and that was useless. That was all doing what they wanted me to do. But not listening to me to find out what I needed help with. So, it was like ‘will you attend this course on mindfulness”

Recommendations

- DASVEG should look to embed versions of the Devon CCG Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence GP Policy across all services as the messaging is transferable to all settings.
- CCG to fully embed IRIS approach (or similar) across all GP practices in Torbay
- CCG to improve data collection and embed key performance indicators to monitor trends and demonstrate how the strategy is being delivered in Health settings
- Ensure health visiting and midwifery services are aware of the heightened risk and links between pregnancy and childbirth, poor mental health, and domestic violence; and explore potential for safe signposting including proactive enquiry.
- As part of service design the newly procured Multiple Complex Needs Alliance (MCN) service incorporating the domestic violence, substance treatment and homeless hostel services to consider how to respond to bi-directional/situational couple violence, and the high level of needs within the MCN cohort
- Develop a specialist service response for support around finances, particularly for those identified as economically inactive due to long or short term health issues.
- Implement trauma informed workforce development across key health settings to raise awareness of trauma and its impacts and reduce pathologisation of victim survivors

- Develop community based therapeutic support offers for those waiting for acute mental health support or who do not meet required thresholds.

Section 9: Domestic abuse and the safeguarding system

Summary

There is low identification of domestic abuse through the adult social care system. Referrals to adult social care has varied, from a low of 9 in 2019-20, to a high of 15 in 2020-21. The most common referral source of domestic abuse S42 enquiries was recorded as unknown, accounting for 91% of the total. The only other referral source recorded between 2018 and 2021 was the police, accounting for 3 of 35 referrals. This suggests there are minimal multi agency referrals to adult social care, but also low identification amongst the population who have already been identified to have a care and support need. The majority (78%) of referrals do result in action being taken.

Most victims of domestic abuse identified through adult social care are female (80% between 2018 and 2021) however there is an increasing proportion of male victims/survivors has been noted in the most recent year, accounting for 27% of the 2020-21 total. The most common age group of identified domestic abuse victims/survivors known to Torbay adult social care was 65 to 74 years. Interestingly only 9% of victims through adult social care have a disability.

Children's services data is currently limited with data only being collected around the children. Although this may in part be due to a change in case management systems, this was the case previously and an area for improvement. It would be beneficial for data to be collected around parents, particularly where it is their needs that may be the cause for the safeguarding concern. Early help data is more challenging and no domestic abuse specific data is able to be extrapolated, with data presented in this section providing an overview of all referrals.

Overall, there were 667 referrals in 2020-21 having domestic abuse as a factor and all progressed to a Child In Need (CIN) assessment and 316 progressed to a Child Protection (CP) assessment. Domestic abuse is a leading cause for children becoming looked after in Torbay which is similar to our findings within the listening exercises. The number of children who started to be looked after where domestic abuse was a factor has varied year on year since 2018 however at its highest in 2019-20, domestic abuse was a factor for 61% of children who started to be looked after. The most common reasons recorded where domestic abuse was a factor were abuse or neglect (82%) and family dysfunction (10%).

The listening exercise highlighted victims' experiences of children's social care. Positively, where social workers create trusting relationships with victims where they feel listened to, believed and respected, victims find children's services supportive.

However, most victims discussed a negative experience in which they report being told they are not being protective parents due to domestic abuse which makes them feel blamed, and fearful to be honest or report further incidents. We noted this within the guidance explored in section 2 which we have recommended is changed to focus more on the perpetrator rather than victims having to modify their behaviour. Additionally victims report not feeling children’s services spend enough time speaking with them to understand their experiences to support them, but rather feel the process punitive and some victims described having their children removed due to their experience of domestic abuse which has caused significant trauma. This was noted through the Domestic Homicide Review explored in section 2.

To avoid duplication and repetition, a separate abstract is available outlining the Children’s Services response in Torbay, which should be read alongside the abstract on Torbay Safeguarding Children’s partnership. In addition the Listening exercise details the experiences of victims and survivors accessing the domestic abuse response in Torbay.

Overview of experiences of the safeguarding system

What victims think is working well	What victims think requires development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where social workers create trusting relationships with victims where they feel listened to, believed and respected, victims find children’s services supportive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims discuss being told they are not being protective parents due to domestic abuse which makes them feel blamed, and fearful to be honest or report further incidents Victims report not feeling children’s services spend enough time speaking with them to understand their experiences to support them, but rather feel the process punitive Some victims have described having their children removed due to their experience of domestic abuse which has caused significant trauma

Recommendations

- The safeguarding boards should conduct an annual domestic abuse quality assurance audit, using specialist domestic abuse services expertise. The results of the audits should be presented to the domestic abuse partnership for joint recommendations and action plans to be developed.
- The training offer for children’s services should be reviewed to ensure it includes the key concepts of trauma informed practice with non-abusive parents

- Children’s social care should develop a domestic abuse protocol and guidance which stipulates the minimum standard for assessments and working with families where domestic abuse is a significant risk. This should include the need for all victims to have independent support and advocacy to meet their needs and represent their views in meetings.

Section 10: Conclusions: applying systems thinking to the Torbay response to improve the system

10.1 Context

10.1.1 Creating systems change

Throughout the strategic review we have gathered facts and data about the current response to domestic abuse in Torbay with a view to understand the whole system response to effect positive change. There is no uniformed definition for systems change currently, however the below provides a useful insight in to our interpretation of ‘systems change’:

“A system is an interconnected and independent series of entities, where decisions and actions in one entity are consequential to other neighbouring entities”

Welbourn, D. et al (2012)

Systems include policies, routines, relationships, resources, and power. This makes them a challenge to review as many elements of systems are intangible. However there are a number of tangible elements of the system, such as the organisations who are entities within it. Each of these organisations are micro-systems within their own right, which makes the boundaries of the domestic abuse system, vast. As such we have attempted to consider the domestic abuse system as a multi-layered system, and our analysis is broken down in to each of these.

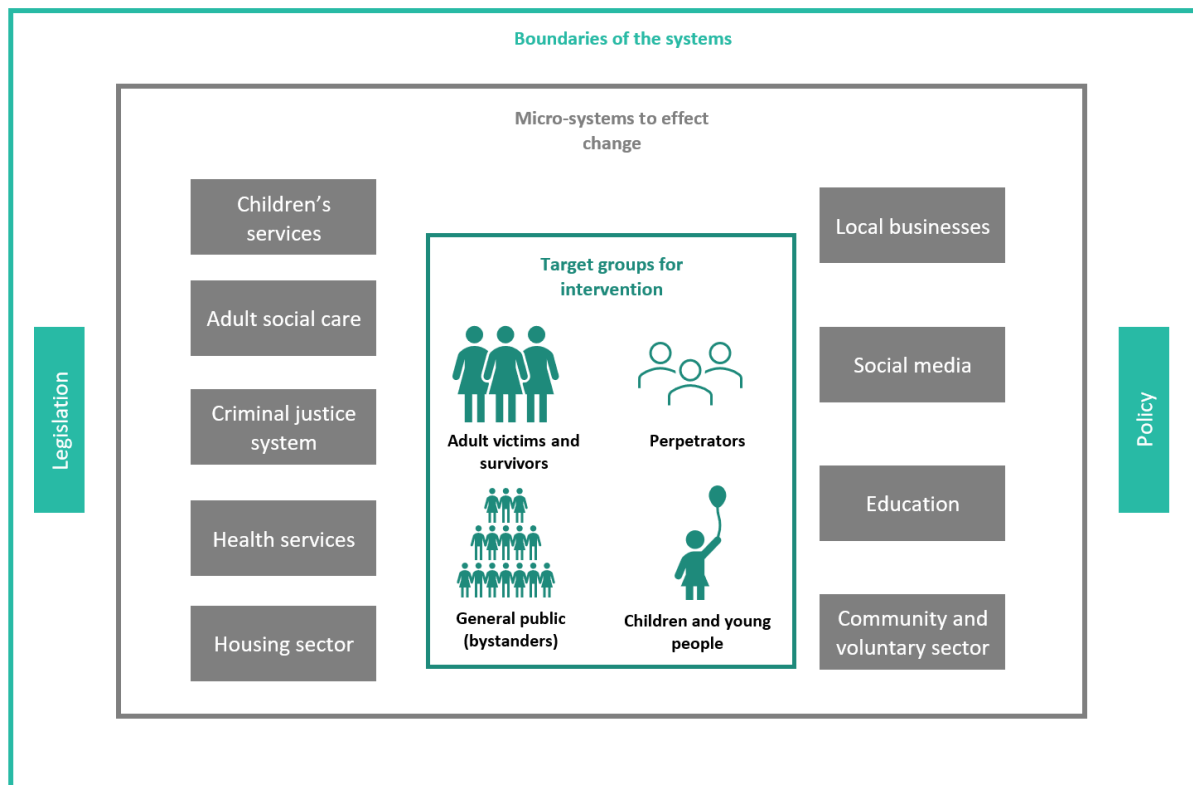
10.2 Analysis of the domestic abuse system

10.2.1 Defining the system

Domestic abuse is a complex, multi-faceted societal issue which means defining and setting system boundaries is also challenging, as there a wide range of agents involved. The diagram below highlights how we have set the system boundaries for this strategic review. The outer

layer of the system includes the national context through legislation and policy. We recognise this as an impactful agent within the system, but one which is particularly difficult to influence through local strategy.

The second layer of the system includes the ‘micro-systems’ that exist locally in Torbay that could be considered key players in creating an impact on reducing or responding to domestic abuse. These microsystems are broad, and each has its own relationships with the outer system boundaries through the varying Governmental departments they report in to. These are the main focus of our strategic review as they are micro-systems that can be influenced, to a large extent, at a local level to improve the lives of victims and families experiencing abuse.



Throughout the review we have approached each of these microsystems separately to understand their current response by reviewing data and speaking to key stakeholders. We have tested these findings through our lived experience exercise to fully understand their current approach and response. The inner part of the system is the target groups for intervention which these microsystems will be in contact with. This is a key point of exploration to understand the interaction and experiences between target groups and microsystems.

This section considers all of these lessons through a wide lens to pull out key lessons in relation to how these microsystems work together, or indeed against one another, to make recommendations for a future whole system response.

10.2.3 Commissioning and pathways for victims

It was clear from discussions with stakeholders, reviewing data and hearing from those with lived experience that there is a need to further develop the way victims and survivors move ‘through’ the various microsystems that are involved in their experience. For example, we know that during their experience they may have contact with a range of agencies including

police, specialist domestic abuse services, children's services, housing and health services. Although there is a significant amount of positive practice in terms of this, including the commissioning of a new integrated service, there were some key learning points we observed through our review.

Improving the current response at the point of help seeking

The review indicated that victims and survivors needs are not static, they change depending on the timeline of the abuse. For example what victims need at the start of a new relationship to identify abuse is significantly different to their needs after leaving when they experience post-separation abuse. The feedback from the survivors we spoke to, as well as several professionals, was that there is no clear distinction across this timeframe currently.

Primarily most survivors discussed receiving an overwhelming amount of support at the point of escalation when the types of abuse they were experiencing were at the highest risk, or at the point in which they decided to leave. At this point a wide range of agencies become involved, but from a survivors perspective this is not always joined up and they are required to discuss their experience with a wide range of professionals who all have different remits and expectations of the victim. Survivors used words such as 'confusing' at this time.

Filling the gap around earlier intervention

There is an opportunity before this stage for the whole system response to act earlier through a more strategic approach to communications and awareness, to support victims in a more informal way to spot the signs of abuse, and to have a safe space to talk to get advice, information, and guidance where they may have concerns. This would need to be confidential as many survivors noted their fear of being judged, not being believed, or having their children removed, so having to give personal details would likely deter them accessing this. At this point there is a key role for the domestic abuse partnership through upskilling all professionals in identifying the signs and engaging in proactive enquiry, as well as through community and voluntary sector organisations who can offer informal support.

Filling the gap around recovery

Survivors also discussed how support services would often 'drop off' after they were seen as safe or had left the relationship. This highlights how the system leans towards the highest risk end of the spectrum in terms of support but suggests there may be a gap in terms of longer term support once victims are physically safe.

The below diagram provides an overview of our learning points in terms of a recommended model. We do not suggest this model as final, but rather an initial discussion point for the DASV partnership to consider in developing the response for victims at each stage of their relationship, recognising their needs, and what barriers may exist at each stage. We have thematically considered the barriers we heard from victims in terms of barriers, and how the partnership could develop these into core operating principles across the system. These principles should be further developed alongside measurable indicators to enable the system to test the extent to which these are reality for survivors. They are:

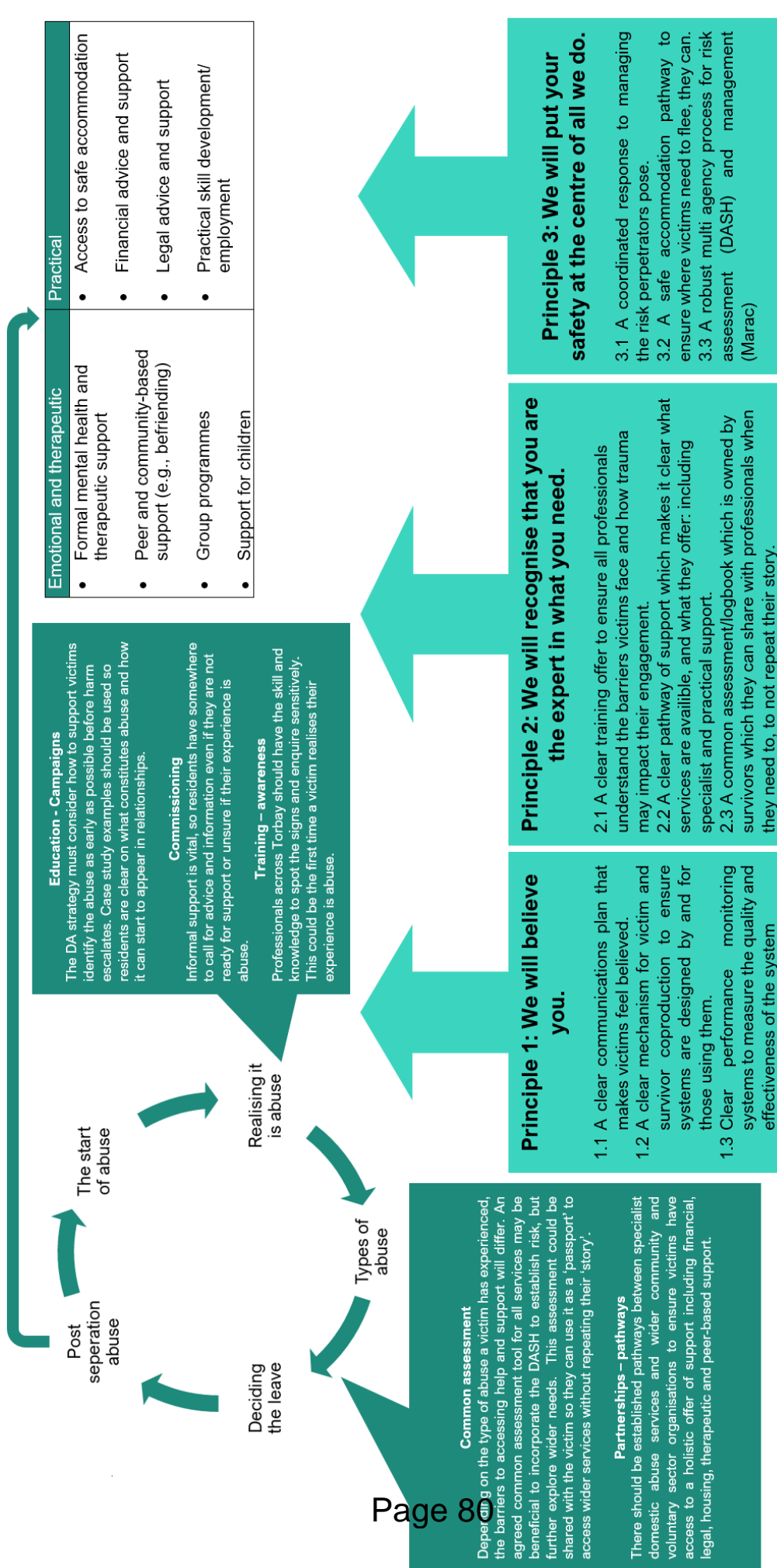
- Principle 1: We will believe you.

- Principle 2: We will recognise that you are the expert in what you need.
- Principle 3: We will put your safety at the centre of all we do.

In any commissioned activity such as service provision, training, communications or campaigns, these principles can be used as a central thread to improve the experience of victims in Torbay. These cannot however just be ambitions; they must be realised to ensure they are not misleading.

During the abuse

After the abuse



Education - Campaigns

The DA strategy must consider how to support victims identify the abuse as early as possible before harm escalates. Case study examples should be used so residents are clear on what constitutes abuse and how it can start to appear in relationships.

Commissioning

Informal support is vital, so residents have somewhere to call for advice and information even if they are not ready for support or unsure if their experience is abuse.

Training - awareness

Professionals across Torbay should have the skill and knowledge to spot the signs and enquire sensitively. This could be the first time a victim realises their experience is abuse.

Emotional and therapeutic

- Formal mental health and therapeutic support
- Peer and community-based support (e.g., befriending)
- Group programmes
- Support for children

Practical

- Access to safe accommodation
- Financial advice and support
- Legal advice and support
- Practical skill development/employment

Common assessment

Depending on the type of abuse a victim has experienced, the barriers to accessing help and support will differ. An agreed common assessment tool for all services may be beneficial to incorporate the DASH to establish risk, but further explore wider needs. This assessment could be shared with the victim so they can use it as a 'passport' to access wider services without repeating their 'story'.

Partnerships – pathways

There should be established pathways between specialist domestic abuse services and wider community and voluntary sector organisations to ensure victims have access to a holistic offer of support including financial, legal, housing, therapeutic and peer-based support.

Principle 1: We will believe you.

- 1.1 A clear communications plan that makes victims feel believed.
- 1.2 A clear mechanism for victim and survivor coproduction to ensure systems are designed by and for those using them.
- 1.3 Clear performance monitoring systems to measure the quality and effectiveness of the system

Principle 2: We will recognise that you are the expert in what you need.

- 2.1 A clear training offer to ensure all professionals understand the barriers victims face and how trauma may impact their engagement.
- 2.2 A clear pathway of support which makes it clear what services are available, and what they offer: including specialist and practical support.
- 2.3 A common assessment/logbook which is owned by survivors which they can share with professionals when they need to, to not repeat their story.

Principle 3: We will put your safety at the centre of all we do.

- 3.1 A coordinated response to managing the risk perpetrators pose.
- 3.2 A safe accommodation pathway to ensure where victims need to flee, they can.
- 3.3 A robust multi agency process for risk assessment (DASH) and management (Marac)

10.2.4 The statutory system

As established through our review, we observed a causal loop that is currently occurring within Torbay in respect of the criminal justice system and children's services. The diagram below provides an overview of this causal loop.

In the green we can observe the current way the system works. The start of the causal loop is the perpetrator who is using a number of threats and abusive behaviours. Those that are specific to this causal loop related to:

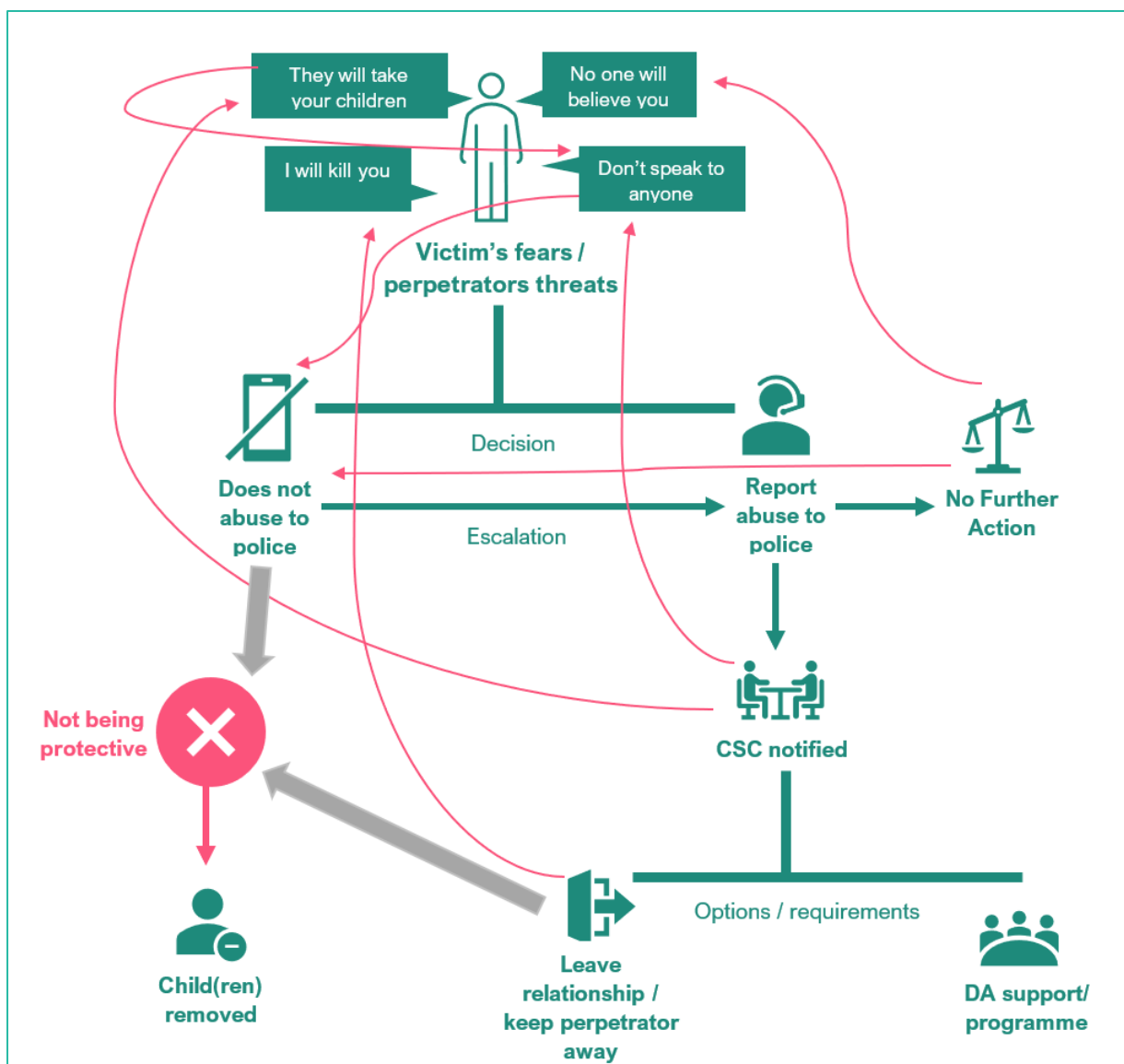
- Threats around children such as they will be removed, or the perpetrator will take them
- Threats around victims credibility that they will not be believed
- Threats of harm if the victim speaks to anyone about the abuse including threats of significant harm including homicide

These behaviours and the tactics that perpetrators use against the victim dictate the decision they make to report the abuse to the police or not. From our review this decision was heavily influenced by fear such as that described above in terms of children being removed or not being believed. In fact often victims were only making the decision to report to the police at points of significant escalation where they feel it is their only option.

Where victims report abuse to the police they describe a lack of action being taken against the perpetrator. From our interviews this is due to them not feeling able to support a prosecution which relates back to the victims fears about repercussions or due to the police not feeling they have enough evidence. The lack of police action reinforces the idea victims hold that they will not be believed. This therefore creates a causal loop in which the decision to report to the police becomes less likely over time.

In instance where victims have reported to the police a notification is sent to children's services. This usually results in the victim having to take some kind of action to prove they are safeguarding their child(ren). Most commonly referenced from our interviews was the necessity to leave the perpetrator and ensure they are kept away from the home. Despite this instruction the victim remains in fear as per the start of the cycle (that there will be repercussions, or their children will be removed). This makes following through with these actions a challenge which is combined by the fact that perpetrators continue to seek contact with the child(ren) which is often mandated through the family court.

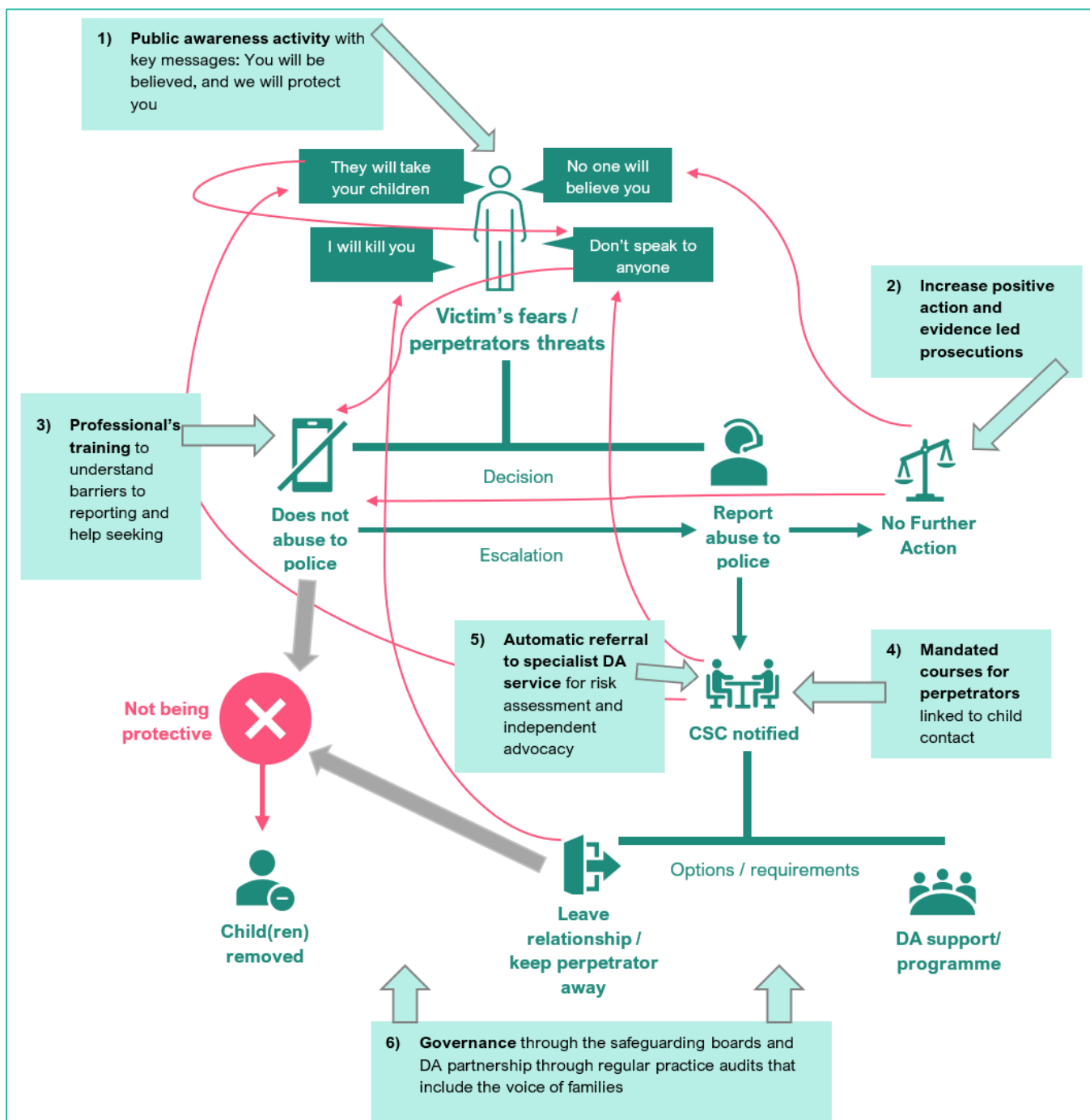
The combination of unrealistic instructions alongside a lack of action when victims do report to the police creates a paradox in which victims are penalised as being 'not protective' if they do not continue to report incidents but told that no action can be taken if they do. This reinforces the fear of not being believed and increases their risk of repercussions from the perpetrator if they do continue.



As a result many victims report being told they are not protecting their children which acts as a further reinforcement to the original cycle in which they fear their children being removed. In some of the instances we heard, victims children were eventually removed and became looked after.

This is a reinforcing cycle where the way the current system in Torbay is structured and works together, serves to reinforce the abusive tactics used by perpetrators which further reduces victim and survivors availability of choice. *One of the most significant areas Torbay could strengthen to improve the response to domestic abuse is to disrupt this cycle through a number of key activities to ensure the response is empowering and strengths based rather than reinforcing.*

The below diagram includes (in light green) the key six activities we believe will disrupt the current reinforcing cycle. These actions range from communications activities through to service provision. The key underpinning action is the governance and continuous review of the cycle through the joined up working between the domestic abuse partnership and Children’s safeguarding board.



10.2.5 Safe accommodation pathways

As part of the strategic review it was evident that *housing and accommodation is one of the biggest factors within victim and survivor experiences. Safe accommodation was noted as both a barrier to leaving, a reason for returning as well as a means for post separation abuse.*

Overall we identified three distinct pathways in relation to victims and survivors who need to find a safe space to stay which includes;

- a) Those that would like to remain in their own home
- b) Those that need to leave their home, but it is not an immediate emergency, and they may have time to plan their move
- c) Those that need to leave their home in an emergency situation and do not have time to plan

We will not reiterate the learning here from the safe accommodation needs assessment to reduce duplication, but it is vital that the learning and recommendations from the review are used alongside the development of the proposed model in section 13.2.4 of this report.

Section 11: Summary of recommendations

This section provides an overview of the recommendations throughout this report. The recommendations from the Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment, Marac Review and the Listening Exercise are added at sections 11.5 onwards for completeness.

Recommendations

To aid the recommendations to be appraised in the correct forums we have themed the recommendations throughout this review by audience. We would be pleased to support the partnership in developing relevant implementation plans if required.

11.1 For the DASV partnership

1. The DASVEG should agree and outline within the terms of reference the mechanism they will adopt to ensure victims and children's voices are represented across the partnership.
2. The DASVEG and children's safeguarding partnership should conduct a joint deep dive audit of the current whole system pathway for children including identification (e.g. in early years and school settings such as encompass) through to the provision and intervention offer.
3. The domestic abuse partnership should consider developing a set of practice principles/values outlining a minimum standard all professionals sign up to in terms of working with victims of domestic abuse.
4. The domestic abuse partnership should consider developing one leaflet/booklet for victims in Torbay which gives an overview of all services within the system they may come in to contact with including their role and escalation processes. This could be electronically published on the Are You Okay website as well as hard copies for victims to be given (where appropriate).
5. The domestic abuse partnership, alongside the safeguarding boards, should develop a quality assurance monitoring framework to routinely assess the quality of practice across all services in the system, this should specifically measure multi-agency working such as information sharing.
6. The DASV partnership should develop a performance dashboard which includes the data presented here as a baseline to track and monitor prevalence and demand on a quarterly basis across the strategy period
7. The DASV should set up a task and finish group to review data quality across all organisations around domestic abuse to ensure all agencies are able to, and consistently collect data around domestic abuse cases to understand the nature of abuse in Torbay (e.g. referral numbers, needs presenting, outcomes)
8. The DASV partnership through the data quality task and finish group also audit the demographic data collection (e.g. ethnicity, disability) across all organisations to a

ensure it is collected in comparable formats across all services, b) ensure it is collected consistently by all organisations. This should culminate in a recommended data collection approach for the DASVEG to approve and continuously monitor.

9. The DASV partnership should consider a follow up Are You Okay survey which takes more of a general population view to get a better insight in to a) true prevalence and b) perceptions of abuse (what people define as DA/SV) to target intervention and resource more effectively.
10. The DASV partnership should work with all health colleagues to review policies around enquiry (e.g. routine) within health settings where injuries may be reported (e.g. GP, A&E and minor injury clinics) to understand current guidance and practice. This should include a review of how repeat injury presentations are recorded.
11. The DASV partnership should ensure domestic abuse awareness materials are displayed within settings such as A&E and minor injury clinics to promote help seeking.
12. The Domestic Abuse champions network should include at least one champion from health settings where injuries may be reported.
13. The DA strategy should consider how to support victims identify the abuse as early as possible before harm escalates. Case study examples should be used so residents are clear on what constitutes abuse and how it can start to appear in relationships.
14. The DASV partnership should formalise arrangements with Standing Tall to ensure there is a clear pathway between CVS organisations and commissioned services with a single point of contact in the system (a front door) for information and advice where victims are unsure if their experience constitutes abuse and want to 'talk it through'
15. The DASV partnership should work with the safeguarding partnerships to review the training offer and quality assurance (e.g. which agencies attend) of training around compassionate domestic abuse enquiry in Torbay (including post training evaluations to continue to monitor confidence levels of all professionals)
16. The DASV partnership should consider the development of a common assessment tool around domestic abuse which all services use when domestic abuse is identified (incorporating the DASH and wider tools). This assessment could be shared with the victim so they can use it as a 'passport' or 'logbook' to access wider services without repeating their 'story'.
17. The DA strategic lead within Torbay should agree with counterparts across the peninsula a proposed police data and outcomes dashboard which measures police activity around domestic abuse including 'soft' outcomes such as referrals for specialist services

11.2 Commissioners

1. Commissioners should identify a budget for the champions network to develop the coordination function to ensure all organisations are clear on who the champion within their organisation is (this could include a list on the Are You Okay website)

2. The new integrated service which includes the Idva service should include key performance indicators to be reported through contract monitoring around how many victims are spoken to (and their views collected) about their needs from Marac.

11.3 For the children's safeguarding partnership

1. The children's safeguarding partnership should update their domestic abuse practice guidance to reflect the Domestic Abuse Act new definition.
2. The children's safeguarding partnership should update their domestic abuse practice guidance to reflect the Domestic Abuse Act recognising children as direct victims in their own right.
3. The children's safeguarding partnership should develop a task and finish group which includes individuals with domestic abuse expertise (e.g. providers) to work to update their domestic abuse practice guidance in line with the learning points above
4. The safeguarding boards should conduct an annual domestic abuse quality assurance audit, using specialist domestic abuse services' expertise. The results of the audits should be presented to the domestic abuse partnership for joint recommendations and action plans to be developed.
5. The training offer for children's services should be reviewed to ensure it includes the key concepts of trauma informed practice with non-abusive parents
6. Children's social care should develop a domestic abuse protocol and guidance which stipulates the minimum standard for assessments and working with families where domestic abuse is a significant risk. This should include the need for all victims to have independent support and advocacy to meet their needs and represent their views in meetings.

11.4 Peninsula-wide

1. The DA leads across the peninsula should work with senior police colleagues to appraise and approve the data and outcomes dashboard, which should feed in to each local partnership board (the DASVEG in Torbay)
2. Torbay should work with Devon and Cornwall police to embed the voices of those with lived experience in to quality assurance and performance reviews
3. The domestic abuse partnership should initiate peninsula wide discussions (particularly with the OPCC) about an approach to audit the response victims of domestic abuse get from the police to include gathering survivor feedback
4. Devon and Cornwall police should work with the local domestic abuse partnerships across the peninsula, and the OPCC, to create an awareness raising campaign around two key messages: a) highlighting that victims of domestic abuse will be believed and b) ensuring victims know they can report non-physical abuse. We would encourage the use of 'good news' case studies as part of this.

11.5 Safe Accommodation specific recommendations

1. The dispersed, self-contained model for safe spaces should continue to ensure capacity for all victims and survivors including those with teenage sons, or male victims
2. Additional capacity for more safe spaces should be explored to reduce the number of referrals declined currently
3. Developing additional spaces with mobility access should be explored in partnership with Adult Social Care to ensure a holistic offer for adults with a disability (including those with statutory care and support needs)
4. Data collection for homelessness applicants should include more robust demographic data including disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation to ensure the true need is evidenced
5. Data collection for the safe accommodation service provider should be more robust ensuring routine collection of demographic data including disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation to ensure the true need is evidenced
6. An operational partnership that includes domestic abuse, housing, financial and legal specialists should be considered. The practical elements above should all be included to ensure specialist domestic abuse services have Single Point Of Contact (SPOCs) within each sector making referral pathways simple and advice timely.
7. Through commissioning of the safe accommodation service and the voluntary sector Standing Tall partnership, the development of joint domestic abuse and practical support 'drop in's' should be considered in partnership with local services (e.g. legal firms). A timetable of these could be given to all victims entering appropriate safe accommodation as a 'welcome' style leaflet/pack.
8. The Are You Okay website should be widely promoted across Torbay and include a page relating to safe accommodation options and practical support to ensure as many residents as possible experiencing domestic abuse that need to flee are aware of their options.
9. A flexible funding pot should be made available to remove some of the financial barriers to accessing safe accommodation.
10. Operation encompass should be explored to consider notifications to schools to inform them of when children have had to leave their home and go in to safe accommodation. This could link to the existing pathway for support for children in safe accommodation.

11. Review and improve data collection across agencies in relation to children accessing safe accommodation. This should include identification, agencies signposted too, risk assessment levels, identified needs, outcomes and demographics to ensure the true need of children is explored.
12. Data on children within safe accommodation should feed in to partnership sub groups across the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence partnership as well as Children's Safeguarding Board.
13. Commissioning of safe accommodation services should include the allocation of a dedicated children's worker for each child to support and advocate on their behalf. They should continue to work with the child through to resettlement and ensure appropriate referrals to other agencies are in place for more formalised therapeutic or statutory support.
14. Safe accommodation support should continue through to when victims have settled in their long term home to ensure a positive transition.
15. Commissioned safe accommodation services should work in partnership with the Standing Tall partnership to ensure as part of victim and children's resettlement, they are introduced and offered community based support.

11.6 Marac specific recommendations

1. Priorities for Torbay Marac

The priorities for the Marac going forward based on this review should be:

Priority	Key performance indicators	Baseline	Target
To increase the identification of all victims at the highest risk of harm and homicide across the whole system	% of non-police/Idva referrals	6.1%	25%
	% Black and minority ethnic victims identified	4.6%	5.2%
	% LGBT+ victims identified	0.3%	2.5%

	% victims with a disability identified	2.4%	19%
	% male victims identified	3.4%	5%
To reduce the demand on the Marac to ensure it is able to safeguard victims at the highest risk of harm or homicide	Cases identified at high risk per 10,000	57	40
	Repeat referrals	56%	28-40%
	Number of referrals at high risk	Unknown	100%
To increase the effectiveness of the Marac in reducing the risk of harm perpetrators pose to victims including children	Attendance of probation at Marac	83%	100%
	# DVPN/O's through Marac	N/a	Tbc
	# DVDS through Marac	N/a	Tbc
	# actions focussed on perpetrators	N/a	Tbc
To improve the knowledge, awareness and confidence of the Marac to perform their function	# multi agency referrals	6%	25-40%

2. Recommendations for Torbay Marac and wider system

Principle	Recommendations
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Marac steering group should begin to review data on Marac referrals to identify the ratio of professional judgement and visible high risk referrals

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Marac steering group should consider whether medium risk cases continue to be heard, and if so agree the legal basis for sharing information (including updating the ISP) • The Marac steering group should work with the DASVOG to understand practitioners' awareness and knowledge around identifying, risk assessing and pathways in to the Marac • The current definition in Torbay of a repeat should be reviewed and revised in line with national guidance
Multi-agency engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core agencies with less than 90% attendance should be reviewed to understand causes • All multi-agency representatives (core and non-core) should update the Marac steering group with a named deputy
Independent representation and support for victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idva capacity should be reviewed to increase the FTE equivalent by 0.5 • At the Marac meeting the case discussion structure should be changed with the Chair asking the referrer to present the case followed by any information from the Idva to ensure the victims voice and wishes is at the forefront of the discussion • The Idvas should be recognised at the Marac as experts in the dynamics of domestic abuse and particular patterns within each individual case to ensure key questions around victim behaviour and decision making is explored
Information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the Marac meeting the case discussion structure should be changed to ensure that after the referrer and Idva information the Chair goes to each agency individually to ensure all information is sought before action planning starts • All Marac representatives should be encouraged to constructively, and compassionately, challenge colleagues where their language may constitute victim blaming.
Action planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the Marac meeting the case discussion structure should be changed to ensure the Chair to asks the administrator to recap on actions at the end of each case.
Number of cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Marac steering group should conduct an audit of repeat cases to the Marac to understand why the volume is so high and develop a plan to mitigate the number of repeat cases

Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Marac steering group should begin to review data around diversity including ethnicity, disability, and sexuality
Operational support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Marac administrator capacity of 1 FTE should be maintained • The Marac administrator should collate minutes of the Marac which outlines the information shared and risks identified as well as the actions • All Marac representatives should receive continued professional development opportunities and training which includes understanding the dynamics of domestic abuse, trauma informed practice and victim blaming
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A role profile for the Marac steering group chair should be created which outlines how they work with the Marac chair's employment organisation around supervision • A Marac Operating Protocol and Information Sharing Protocol should be developed immediately

11.7 Recommendations from the Listening Exercise

Recommendations to support system change:

1. The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG) should commit within the next domestic abuse strategic period to embedding the voices of lived experience at every opportunity across the partnership.
2. The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG) should commit to developing a 'Torbay victims charter' to stipulate the minimum expectations victims can expect if they approach any service.

Other Recommendations:

1. The DASV partnership should consider a follow up Are You Okay survey which takes more of a general population view to get a better insight in to i) true prevalence and ii) perceptions of abuse (what people define as DA/SV) to target intervention and resource more effectively

2. The DASV partnership should work with all health colleagues to review policies around enquiry (e.g. routine) within health settings where injuries may be reported (e.g. GP, A&E and minor injury clinics) to understand current guidance and practice. This should include a review of how repeat injury presentations are recorded.
3. The DASV partnership and Are You Okay partnership should ensure domestic abuse awareness materials are displayed within settings such as A&E and minor injury clinics to promote help seeking.
4. The Are You Okay champions network should include at least one champion from health settings where injuries may be reported.
5. Working with the Standing Tall partnership and residents with lived experience, the domestic abuse partnership should consider using case studies throughout campaign work across Torbay to ensure it supports victims to understand non-physical abuse tactics perpetrators may use, particularly in early stages of the relationship, so they can seek support as early as possible.
6. The domestic abuse partnership (through DASVOG) should conduct an audit of existing awareness raising activities including public awareness campaigns and education to ensure they a) reflect different types or abuse, b) represent different relational perspectives of domestic abuse, c) consider bystander messaging for peer networks and d) challenge stereotypical beliefs around domestic abuse
7. The audit (conducted through DASVOG) should be presented to DASVEG with clear recommendations for a domestic abuse awareness raising policy as part of the refreshed domestic abuse strategy
8. Domestic abuse commissioners should consider commissioning a specialist domestic abuse organisation to develop a 'leaving pack' with information about support options for victims considering leaving.
9. Domestic abuse service providers across Torbay, including commissioned and the voluntary sector, should offer the leaving pack to survivors and ensure it is downloadable on the Are You Okay website.
10. Domestic abuse commissioners should include specific economic abuse advocacy as part of domestic abuse service provision contracts, and ensure this includes support post separation

11. The domestic abuse partnership should undertake a mapping exercise to understand the agencies across Torbay with expertise around economic matters such as debt, money advice and housing and raise awareness around domestic abuse with these services

12. The domestic abuse partnership should formalise the roles of economic sector agencies as members across the governance structure, and facilitate operational partnerships with the standing tall partnership and commissioned services

13. The domestic abuse partnership, following the evaluation of CRAFT, should consider full implementation to ensure social workers are able to work compassionately with survivors and understand child contact related post separation abuse

14. The domestic abuse partnership should develop a one front door approach so victims have one place they can go to for support. This pathway should include at the point of referral an assessment to understand which services (commissioned or community based) the victim needs. This could be through developing an existing 'brand' such as the Are You Okay model or Standing Tall partnership.

15. The domestic abuse partnership should consider developing a set of practice principles/values outlining a minimum standard all professionals sign up to in terms of working with victims of domestic abuse.

16. The domestic abuse partnership should consider developing one leaflet for victims in Torbay which gives an overview of all services within the system they may come in to contact with including their role and escalation processes. This could be electronically published on the Are You Okay website as well as hard copies for victims to be given.

17. The domestic abuse partnership, alongside the safeguarding boards, should develop a quality assurance monitoring framework to routinely assess the quality of practice across all services in the system, this should specifically measure multi-agency working such as information sharing.

18. We recognise that Devon and Cornwall police are not distinct to Torbay and so we have tried to ensure our recommendations reflect realistic ambitions that would work across the peninsula. The domestic abuse partnership should initiate peninsula wide discussions (particularly with the OPCC) about an approach to audit the response victims of domestic abuse get from the police to include gathering survivor feedback

20. Devon and Cornwall police should work with the local domestic abuse partnerships across the peninsula, and the OPCC, to create an awareness raising campaign around two key messages: a) highlighting that victims of domestic abuse will be believed and b) ensuring

victims know they can report non-physical abuse. We would encourage the use of 'good news' case studies as part of this

21. The safeguarding boards should conduct an annual domestic abuse quality assurance audit, using specialist domestic abuse services expertise. The results of the audits should be presented to the domestic abuse partnership for joint recommendations and action plans to be developed.

22. The training offer for children's services should be reviewed to ensure it includes the key concepts of trauma informed practice with non-abusive parents

23. Children's social care should develop a domestic abuse protocol and guidance which stipulates the minimum standard for assessments and working with families where domestic abuse is a significant risk. This should include the need for all victims to have independent support and advocacy to meet their needs and represent their views in meetings.



Meeting: Cabinet **Date:** 18 October 2022

Wards affected: All wards

Report Title: Housing Strategy consultation

When does the decision need to be implemented? 18 October 2022

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Swithin Long, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing

Director/Divisional Director Contact Details: Tara Harris, Divisional Director Community and Customer Services

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet's approval to launch a 6-week public consultation on the Housing Strategy for Torbay

2. Reason for proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 Better inform the Council about what the public and our communities think about our priorities, and enlighten the decision making process
- 2.2 Give housing professionals the opportunity to ask the public, stakeholders and partners what can be done to improve the housing offer in Torbay
- 2.3 Gain a better insight as to how impact of the C-19 Pandemic, the housing crisis and climate emergency has affected service delivery, as well as any wider implications for the economy, health and social care in our communities
- 2.4 Raise awareness about how the Council proposes to tackle the housing and climate crisis
- 2.5 Develop on-going conversations with individuals, groups and organisations to help drive the Council's housing ambitions and help 'Torbay thrive'
- 2.6 Realise the Council's commitment to listening and learning from local people and asking their views to improve local areas, as well as our services and policies

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 That the draft Housing Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved for a 6-week public consultation.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Housing Strategy

Background Documents

Not applicable

Supporting Information

The Housing Strategy is the over-arching strategic document that pulls together all aspects of the Council's strategic housing function. It sits below and aligns with our Community and Corporate Plan and Local Plan. It sits within the Council's policy framework and provides the context for other plans policies and strategies, such as the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Empty Homes Policy, the Temporary Accommodation Strategy etc

The Strategy supports the Community and Corporate Plan 2019-2023 to 'improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing', 'regenerate and re-invent our town centres' and to 'encourage a sustainably developed built environment. It also supports Torbay's Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans.

Our housing priorities:

1. Improve housing supply
2. Improve housing quality
3. Improve housing support

Our cross-cutting principles:

4. Put our customers first
5. Tackle climate change
6. Work in partnership¹.

Introduction

- 1.1 Our current Housing Strategy was adopted prior to the Council declaring a Housing and Climate emergency in 2021 and prior to the C-19 Pandemic in 2020. Both the Housing Delivery Group and the Torbay Strategic Housing Board have recommended that the Strategy be reviewed in light of the Council's new priorities
- 1.2 The draft Strategy will set out what the Council, with its partners, will be doing over the next 10 years to improve the housing situation for our current and future residents. Responses to the consultation will better inform the approach we will take with all our partners and stakeholders to improve housing supply, conditions and support.
- 1.3 The draft Strategy has been developed Council wide and has been reviewed by Senior Leadership Team and elected members.
- 1.4 The Strategy supports a number of local strategies and plans, such as the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026, Carbon Neutral Torbay by 2030, the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.
- 1.5 An action plan will be developed to sit alongside the strategy and will be presented to Cabinet for ratification together with the final strategy on 23 February 2023.

2. Options under consideration

- 2.1 Not undertake a consultation; this would negate the benefits identified in Section 2 above, 'Reason for proposal and its benefits'

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 3.1 Staff resources will be needed to undertake the consultation and analyse results

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications to undertake the consultation, other than the Council's commitment to consult for a minimum of 6 weeks on major plans that affect all of Torbay

5. Engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The draft Strategy has been developed Council wide and has been reviewed by Senior Leadership Team and elected members. The next step is to engage with the public, partners and stakeholders.
- 5.2 We intend to consult with the following groups and platforms:

- Affordable Housing Partnership (27)

- Devon Home Choice applicants (1,500)
- Living Options
- Elected members
- Torbay Council newsletter
- Households in temporary accommodation
- Neighbourhood forums
- Senior Voice of Devon
- Staff Newsletter (600)
- Torbay Council website
- Facebook and Twitter
- Registered provider tenants
- Town Councils
- Torbay Strategic Housing Board
- Children's Services
- Adult Social Care
- Public Health England
- Planning
- National Health Service
- Health & Well-being Board
- Private landlord associations
- Voluntary sectors
- Torbay Schools and Learning
- Devon County Council
- Devon and Cornwall Police
- Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue
- Homes England

6. Purchasing or hiring of goods and/or services

- 6.1 It is not anticipated that the consultation will require the purchasing or hiring of goods and/or services

7. Tackling climate change

- 7.1 One of the cross-cutting principles in the Strategy is to 'tackle climate change' and will contain a number of actions to address this issue

8. Associated risks

8.1

9. Equality impacts - Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

- 9.1 We will work across the Council, particularly with the Communications Team, as well as with partners and stakeholders to make sure that everyone in the Bay has an opportunity to

get involved. The consultation will be conducted in plain English and offer alternative formats to those who need assistance

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people			Neutral
People with caring Responsibilities			Neutral
People with a disability	Other formats available		
Women or men			Neutral
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)			Neutral
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			Neutral
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			Neutral
People who are transgendered			Neutral
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			Neutral
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			Neutral
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)			Neutral
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)			Neutral

10. Cumulative Council Impact

10.1 Build on the Council's understanding about what our communities want in relation to housing and planning

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

11.1 To reinforce our commitment to let our communities know that we are listening

DRAFT Housing Strategy

2022-2030

Adding an image

- Open this template in the desktop version of Word,
- Double click the top of the page to access the 'header and footer section
- Select a suitable photograph - contact the design team for access to the photo library. No clip art please!
- Choose 'insert' > 'pictures'>'this device' and navigate to the location of the saved image
- Once the image is inserted, resize to fill this space by dragging a corner, while holding the 'shift' key to prevent it distorting
- With the image selected, right click and select 'send to back' > 'send behind text' to move the image behind the coloured block above.
- Close the header and footer and continue editing your document. Don't forget to delete this text box!

Contents

Foreword	2
Introduction	Error! Bookmark not defined.
External influences and local issues	4
Housing needs	4
Our housing ambition	4
The economic challenge.....	4
Strengths, challenges, and opportunities	5
Strengths	5
Challenges	6
Opportunities	7
Vision	7
Our Priorities	8
Improve housing supply.....	8
Improve housing quality.....	10
Improve housing support	11
Measuring success	13

Introduction

A home is special to everyone and directly contributes to good health, wellbeing, and life achievement. Having a place to call home is one of life's main goals. It offers warmth and shelter; and is the place where we feel safe, and secure; a place to shape family.

Known as the English Riviera, Torbay comprises of three towns: Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham. Torbay has a population of c. 135,000 and has an increasingly skilled workforce; increasing numbers of small and micro businesses; and a large catchment population. The recent investment in the A380 South Devon link road, directly connecting Torbay with the M5 at Exeter, has significantly reduced travel times locally and regionally making the Torbay area an increasingly attractive place to live and work.

It is a place of huge ambition, and we want it to be the best place for children to grow, for people to live and work and for residents to fulfil their ambitions today and for many years to come.

However, Torbay is facing a housing crisis. There is a shortage of new housing supply and particularly affordable housing.

This strategy sets the vision and approach we will take through our leadership; and by working with partners to 'improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing'.

We have the foundations in place to build more affordable homes through our urban and town regeneration plans; our housing company TorVista and the Torbay Strategic Housing Board.

By working with our partners, we will achieve more, giving more families a home and more children the best possible start in life.

We will prioritise brownfield locations in our towns to reduce the impact on the climate and endeavour to protect our natural environment. We will create jobs and investment to support inclusive economic growth and make safe homes for residents and their families.

Whilst the council and its partners face many significant challenges, we are determined to provide appropriate and affordable homes, particularly for those with the greatest need.

Separate to this Housing Strategy an Action Plan will be developed to deliver our vision for housing in Torbay. The Action Plan will be an agile document, which we will use to monitor progress and it will be overseen by a cross-directorate Housing Delivery Group.

External influences and local issues

Housing needs

Housing needs for Torbay have been objectively assessed in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework guidance, which, taking into account local policy added targets for employment growth, estimate that 615 new homes are required to be provided per year over the Local Plan period. However, as part of the Examination of the Torbay Local Plan, this figure was reduced to 495 homes per year to reflect environmental constraints in Torbay.

Consequently, the adopted Torbay Local Plan 2012-2030 identifies land for the delivery of around 8,900 new homes over the plan period and we are reviewing our current Local Plan.

Our housing ambition

A balanced housing market is essential to sustainable communities, but this will not be achieved without the right level of new housing development, across all tenures. As well as providing desperately needed new homes, house building also delivers substantial benefits and better facilities for the wider community. The affordability and environmental sustainability of homes will be crucial factors in getting the balance right between homes, jobs, the green environment and protecting the climate.

We already know from our community led neighbourhood plans, that protecting the natural environment of Torbay is a priority; along with providing more affordable homes; reducing the impact of climate change and creating a sustainable economy. It will be necessary to strike a balance between competing priorities.

There is little appetite for green field development despite the level of additional homes required. So, we need to be bold, innovative, creative, and sensitive in the delivery of those additional homes.

The economic challenge

The current economic backdrop provides challenges for us all, including housebuilders and registered providers.

The English Riviera Destination management plan 2022-2030 to make Torbay the UK's premier visitor destination and help boost the local economy was approved at Council in August 2022. The new plan sets out the interventions that can help propel the English Riviera forward, building on the strengths of the destination and the opportunities to achieve a more sustainable and resilient destination.

There has been a huge increase in demand for available properties, both rented and for home ownership. This has pushed up local prices and rents, making it much more difficult for households to afford. Rents are now well above the Housing Benefit rates, and we are seeing an increasing number of households at risk of homelessness.

Families on Housing Benefit struggling due to the mismatch with private rents and the Council continues to lobby government on Local Housing Allowance rates to reflect the challenging rental market specific to Torbay.

Additionally, since the energy price cap was lifted at the beginning of 2022, we have seen heating and electricity costs rise by over 50%, which has come alongside increases in the cost of food, taxes and other everyday expenses.¹

Strengths, challenges, and opportunities

Strengths

The council has put the foundations in place to kick start delivery of affordable homes in Torbay, as set out in our **Community and Corporate Plan** objective to **'Improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing'**

We will ensure we put our residents and clients first; we continue to tackle climate change and we work in partnership to achieve better outcomes. We will focus on preventing and alleviating homelessness and we will continue to do everything we can to make sure our residents are treated fairly.

We are taking action to improve supply:

- Through the Torbay master plan for town centre and waterfront regeneration to support sustainable, residential communities
- The refreshed English Riviera Destination Management Plan 2022-2030 to make Torbay the UK's premier visitor destination and help boost the local economy
- Progressing sites and regeneration identified in the Local Plan growth areas
- Delivering 100+ new homes (maximising affordable homes) on the Preston Down Road site
- Seeking a Strategic Partner to deliver more affordable homes on small challenging sites
- Purchasing up to 37 homes to meet current demand for family Temporary Accommodation (TA), with the option to use these homes for longer term affordable rentals as we tackle and reduce the need for TA
- Delivering new homes through modern construction; such as Modular build pilots currently under consideration for two sites.
- Commissioning two Extra Care homes of 150 units to meet future older people supported housing need
- Investing in property to increase the supply of social rent homes in Torbay.
- By adopting an Empty Homes Policy and recruiting an Empty Homes Officer to help bring empty homes back into use

¹ Cost of living rises for households: ONS.gov.uk

- By pledging financial support to introduce Interim Management Orders within the private rented sector to raise standards for tenants
- Continuing to make the best use of existing social housing through Devon Home Choice plus our Rightsizing and empty homes project
- TorVista due to deliver new homes

Challenges

- 42% of CO2 emissions in Torbay are from domestic homes (2019)
- Private rental properties are well above the local Housing Benefit rates (LHA)
- 68% of households renting privately rely on Housing Benefit, higher than national (48%) and regional (44%) averages
- 8% social rented stock in Torbay; 18% national average
- Current delivery of homes built is an average of 343 per year, the Local Plan target is 720
- By 2040 one in three (34%) of Torbay's population will be over 65

We know that, for our residents:

- Housing is unaffordable to many in Torbay. The average house price in Torbay is nine times average annual earnings and house prices have increased significantly post 2020
- Increasing demand for holiday accommodation has reduced the availability of accommodation for local people
- Homelessness in Torbay is over twice the national and regional averages
- One third (34%) of households are being made homeless due to the end of a private rented tenancy
- Homes becoming available through the Housing Register have fallen 6% since 2019

In Torbay:

- Housing need outstrips demand for new affordable homes
- There is not enough brownfield land across the Bay to provide all the homes Torbay needs, and the cost of any site clearance means there is less money to build affordable homes
- The complicated geographic relief of Torbay makes site development challenging
- Our small developments can reduce affordable housing delivery, as units fall below planning obligation thresholds
- Regeneration takes time due to site assembly and financing complexities
- A low growth local Plan to protect the environment can reduce the opportunities to build new homes
- The challenging economic climate is making house building difficult. Financial uncertainty, cost of materials, and labour shortages are delaying housebuilding

Opportunities

Whilst accepting that there are significant challenges in providing decent homes for all our residents it is important to recognise that there are opportunities that can help us achieve this, including:

- The Government's new Affordable Homes Programme (2021 to 2026) managed by Homes England. By working with Homes England, we hope to deliver more affordable homes through new build, residential led regeneration and purchase and repair of existing stock
- The Torbay Affordable Housing Development Partnership, which was established in 2022 to work more closely with Homes England, registered providers, and other stakeholders to increase the overall provision of affordable housing
- TorVista Homes Limited, which was awarded registered provider status in 2021. As a new registered housing provider, wholly owned by the council; its aim is to deliver a wide range of good quality, affordable and supported housing
- The Council announced a 'climate crisis' in 2021, making a commitment that Torbay will be carbon neutral by 2030
- Our Local Plan is under review and sets out how the need for homes of all types will be delivered together with jobs and infrastructure
- We have created the Torbay Strategic Housing Board to promote our ambitions and actively engage with partners to help increase housing supply and be a critical friend
- We are maximising the use of existing social housing stock through our Rightsize programme and working with owners of empty properties to bring them back into use

Vision

The housing vision for Torbay is to:

Improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing

To achieve this vision, we will:

- Work across the Council and with partners to come up with innovative ideas and modern build techniques to increase the delivery of affordable housing for rent and ownership
- Deliver a diverse choice of housing for our residents that meets every stage of life and lifestyle
- Support our communities to improve and maintain their homes; to be safe, warm, fit for purpose and be more environmentally friendly
- Continue to protect homeless households and those threatened with homelessness, whilst putting an end to street sleeping

Our Priorities

Our housing priorities are:

- Improve housing supply
- Improve housing quality
- Improve housing support

Our cross-cutting principles:

- Put our customers first
- Tackle climate change
- Work in partnership

These aspirations are underpinned by our community and corporate visions:

- Thriving people
- Thriving economy
- Tackle climate change
- Council fit for the future

Within each priority we have identified key areas of work that we believe will directly contribute to the overall sense of community health and wellbeing in Torbay.

Improve housing supply

We will:

1. Build affordable homes for rent
2. Build homes for low-cost ownership
3. Build and acquire innovative and specialist homes
4. Make better use of our housing stock

This is important because:

- Need on the Housing Register has increased by 50%, since 2018, with 1,572 applicants now in housing need
- The Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (2022) identifies a local need for 721 affordable homes per year: 387 for rent and 334 for low-cost sale
- The Government requirement on Torbay is to build 720 dwellings a year

- Torbay is the corporate parent to nearly 5 times as many children and young people as the England average (302, compared with 62), with a 42% increase since 2011
- There is a distinct lack of larger family homes, both in the private rented and social sectors

We want local households to have access to quality housing that they can afford in a range of tenures. Open market housing is the main route to securing the delivery of affordable housing via S106 planning obligations. However, affordable housing can also be provided using Government grants and the Council's assets, including land. The majority of this delivery is focused in urban areas, yet we recognise the need for smaller development in our less urban communities.

Homes built for rent by registered providers are the only type of homes that remain affordable for the majority of low-income households in Torbay. Traditionally, homes let on social rents are around 60% of the local market rent, but in 2010 the government introduced a new 'affordable rent' at rents on new homes of up to 80% of market rent levels.

Since 2016, we have delivered an average of 343 market homes each year, 47 (14%) of which have been affordable. At the current trajectory, with no additional greenfield allocation, Torbay is likely to only develop up to 50 affordable units a year through the Section 106 developer contributions. To meet the total need on the Housing Register with new builds alone would take 30 years.

Our strategy proposes a mix of Homes England grant and local housing investment, such as Council land and assets, with a view to establishing two thirds affordable homes for rent and one third for low cost ownership. We will also strive to maximise energy efficiency, making our homes more affordable to heat and run.

Torbay Council and our NHS partners want to increase independent living; allowing people receiving social care and support to have a greater choice and control over how, where and with whom they live. Whilst we are commissioning 150 extra care units for people to live well for longer in a home of their own, there is more to do.

There is also an urgent need to create housing stock that provides independent living and move-on accommodation options for our care experienced young people.

To improve housing supply, we will:

- Use Council land and the redevelopment of existing buildings to create new affordable homes and sustainable communities
- Look to establish a strategic housing partnership to progress our affordable home delivery programme
- Maximise opportunities to deliver affordable homes through Homes England's new Affordable Homes Programme (2021 to 2026)
- Work with TorVista, the Council's wholly owned Housing Delivery Company to deliver specialised housing for older people, for those with learning disabilities and autism and for people with enduring mental ill health
- Deliver more homes to improve the outcomes for our care experienced leavers

- Purchase around 37 self-contained properties in the Bay to help accommodate homeless households to help them move-on into more permanent homes
- Work with 'build for rent' developers to investigate funds, suitable land, or property to accommodate a shared housing project
- Bring empty homes back into use, making them affordable to rent where appropriate
- Deliver Torbay Council's 'Right-Sizing Project', to free up much needed larger family homes and developing larger homes if necessary

We will work with our partners to increase supply:

- We will pro-actively build strong partnerships with Homes England, landowners, registered providers, and local communities to improve the delivery of new homes
- Through our Economic partnership work with Home England, neighbouring authorities, NHS, local colleges, local landowners, developers and employers to find solutions to new, existing, and stalled development sites
- Through the Torbay Strategic Housing Board, working in partnership to build stronger relationships to increase the supply of new homes, including affordable and supported housing
- Utilise TorVista to deliver additional homes
- Chase developers to progress sites that have received planning permission, but are not coming forward in a timely fashion
- Look to explore alternative solutions such as self-build and modular build for challenging sites to deliver new homes

To understand future needs/demand, we will:

- Gather evidence to better understand where our unmet housing need is coming from
- Better understand local housing need by regularly reviewing applications on the Housing Register and predicted demand from children's and adults services, local colleges and employers
- Undertake a structured review of planning policies to make sure that they are relevant, joined-up, straightforward and encourage development, particularly on brownfield sites

Improve housing quality

We will:

1. Tackle conditions in the private rented sector
2. Improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty
3. Keep people independent at home

This is important because:

- On average, Torbay Council serves 49 legal notices to remedy disrepair each year
- Nearly 20% of our enforcement work was to remedy poor heating in people's homes
- There is a higher proportion of homes in private rented sector in Torbay (26%) compared to England (19%)

- Three quarters (75%) of Torbay’s housing stock’s energy performance is below band C, for England it’s just over half (54%)

Housing has a key role to play in health and wellbeing. The poor condition of a property can negatively affect the physical and mental health of our residents. Similarly, some people’s physical health needs, particularly for older residents, can restrict their ability to live an independent life without some adaptations to the home.

The expansion of the private rented sector has focused attention on the need to improve conditions in this tenure. The English Housing Survey (EHS) estimates that in 2019, 23% of these homes did not meet the Decent Home Standard. This compares with 18% of owner-occupied and 12% of social-rented homes.

The housing conditions in the private rented sector are worse than for any other, so making sure that the quality and standard of the private rented sector is a priority for us. We also focus much of our work in this sector because tenants have little, or no control over getting remedial works carried out, so we use all the tools available to take action against poor standards.

The main enforcement issues identified relate to poor heating, risk of fire, damp and mould and falls. The Housing Standards Team identified and remedied 578 housing hazards, resulting in a significant cost saving to the NHS and wider society.

A key theme running through our plans is a commitment to become carbon neutral. The carbon emissions from our area will fall as our homes and businesses become more energy efficient. The widespread reliance on gas as an energy source will mean few households will be immune from rising bills. However, homes with poor fuel efficiency will be hit hardest by energy price rises. Households who live in a property they own or rent from a registered provider have the least likelihood of being fuel poor at 8% and 19% respectively. However, households living in privately rented accommodation are most likely to be fuel poor (25%).

The scale of the issues facing the private rented sector are such that the answer does not lie with regulation alone. We must create the right environment to encourage self-compliance by working alongside landlords, property agents and landlord associations.

To improve housing quality, we will:

- Tackle disrepair and poor housing conditions by proactively targeting non-compliant landlords, taking appropriate action where standards are not being met
- Support communities to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and meet our carbon neutral target, tackle fuel poverty, and reduce carbon emissions
- Help households adapt existing homes, so they can remain independent for longer
- Regularly consult with our customers to improve service design and delivery

Improve housing support

We will:

1. Prevent homelessness
2. Offer intervention
3. Help households sustain accommodation

This is important because:

- Need on the Housing Register has increased by 50%, since 2018, with 1,572 applicants now in housing need
- Typically, households who rent privately spend around 35% of their income on housing costs, compared to 18% for those with a mortgage, or 29% in social housing
- There has been a 92% increase in use and stay of temporary accommodation for homeless households since 2019 [169, 37% families (2022)]
- The most common reasons for homelessness is the loss of a private rented home (34%), family and friends no longer able to accommodate (19%) and domestic abuse (12%)
- Last year the Housing Team received around 13,000 requests. Calls about being 'homeless tonight' increased by 12%
- Around 24 people a month sleep rough in Torbay

Homelessness has a serious and harmful effect on those who experience it. Our approach is to act at the earliest opportunity, before individuals, or families lose their home. We are developing a separate homelessness and rough sleeping strategy that will be published during the life of this strategy.

Our primary focus is upon helping households to remain in their own home, provided that it is safe and suitable for them to do so. There are a number of in-house services available to help households remain in their homes, including: money advice, mediation and partnership work to tackle harassment and domestic abuse.

It is not always appropriate for people to remain in their existing home and sometimes it is not possible to prevent homelessness. Over recent years we have seen a steady rise in demand for temporary accommodation, with many households placed in increasingly costly and sometimes unsuitable accommodation. This is having a significant impact on Council budgets.

Due to the low provision of social homes and new build affordable homes Torbay is reliant upon the private rented sector to meet its homelessness duties. However, recent rental increases have pushed this type of accommodation beyond the reach of low-income households, particularly for families. Additionally, some landlords are converting to the holiday market, both permanently, and across the summer months.

Three quarters of homeless households are re-housed in the private rented sector, more than twice the national average. However, as tenancies in this sector are less secure than other tenure and can create a repeating cycle of homelessness.

The theme throughout this strategy is to make sure that the entire system is working to prevent all forms of homelessness, but also to work across the Council, and with partners to deliver more affordable homes, and work with the private rented sector to promote longer, more secure tenancies.

To improve housing support, we will:

- Continue to improve the Housing Options Service, to make sure that we give residents high quality, accessible advice when they need it
- Work with members, partners, and clients to develop a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy that is fit for purpose and meets statutory and legislative requirements
- Improve engagement with private and social landlords, letting agencies and tenants to promote compliance and the importance of those threatened with homelessness seeking help at an early stage
- Develop a domestic abuse and sexual violence strategy with an emphasis on moving victims to safe and secure accommodation
- Work with partners to create sustainable tenancies through local employment, training, and education

Measuring success

We will measure our success through the following indicators

Improving housing supply

- Total additional homes provided
- Number of affordable homes delivered
- Number of households housed through the Housing Register

Improving housing quality

- Number of home hazards remedied
- Number of homes fitted with adaptations to help people remain independent
- Number of homes receiving energy efficiency measures

Improving housing support

- Average number of single households, including couples, in temporary accommodation on any one night per quarter
- Average number of families, including pregnant, in temporary accommodation on any one night per quarter
- Number of new homelessness cases per quarter
- The % of homelessness cases that were taken at the prevention stage
- Number of families in bed and breakfast for longer than 6 weeks

- Number of families where Children's Services have a duty to accommodate in temporary accommodation
- Number of children where Children's Services have a duty to accommodate in temporary accommodation
- Number of rough sleepers per year

This document can be made available in other languages and formats.
For more information, please contact housing@torbay.gov.uk

Meeting: Cabinet **Date:** 18 October 2022

Wards affected: Barton with Watcombe

Report Title: Further disposal of Council owned land at Hatchcombe

When does the decision need to be implemented? ASAP

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Cllr Swithin Long, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing, Swithin.long@torbay.gov.uk.

Director Contact Details: Kevin Mowat, Director of Place, Kevin.Mowat@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to agree the disposal, at zero cost, of Council owned land at the old Hatchcombe Nurseries site, in addition to the previously agreed land disposal on the same site as approved by Cabinet and the Council on 22nd and 24th September 2020.
- 1.2 This Hatchcombe Nurseries land is a housing development site owned by Torbay Council and Sanctuary Housing.
- 1.3 The latest scheme design proposes a revised access onto the site, to improve the scheme and deliver additional affordable housing units, which in turn requires a further land transfer from the Council to Sanctuary Housing (see Appendix 2).

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 The transfer of the parcel of land identified will facilitate a revised scheme, which will provide in the region of sixty apartments for affordable rent. This will assist in meeting the housing needs of households on the waiting list and experiencing homelessness. The revised scheme will deliver more housing units than the originally proposed development.

- 2.2 This proposal will not result in a capital receipt, but it will see the delivery of a mix of affordable housing to which the Council will have 100% nomination rights. The Council's Housing and Economic Needs Assessment identifies an annual unmet affordable rented housing need of 387 dwellings. This has implications for the Council's budgets in other areas, particularly in respect of temporary accommodation costs. Therefore, the long-term benefits of securing 100% nomination rights to these dwellings and facilitating an improved development scheme, by transferring this land at zero cost, will outweigh the short-term benefit of a one-off capital receipt.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

1. That the disposal of the land shaded orange on the plan, as set out in Appendix 2 to the submitted report, to Sanctuary Housing, at zero cost, in return for nomination rights into 100% of the properties in perpetuity under the Local Government Act 1972: General Disposal Consent Order 2003, be approved.
2. That the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing, be authorised to further agree the detailed terms of the disposal.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Hatchcombe Nurseries site plan appended to the original Cabinet/Council report September 2020

Appendix 2: Hatchcombe Nurseries site plan containing revised design

Background Documents

Cabinet/Council report 22 & 24/09/2020: Proposed disposal of Council owned land at Hatchcombe.

www.torbay.gov.uk/DemocraticServices/documents/s99407/Disposal%20of%20Hatchcombe%20Nurseries%20-%20Covering%20Report.pdf

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The old Hatchcombe Nurseries land has been identified for some time as a potential development site for affordable housing. The site is in the ownership of Sanctuary Housing and Torbay Council. The plan at Appendix 1 was appended to the Cabinet/Council reports of September 2020 and sets out ownership at the time of that report. Sanctuary have now acquired the land shaded green within the appended plan.
- 1.2 This is a challenging site to develop due to both ecological and topographical constraints. However, it presents a rare opportunity to provide affordable housing on a substantial site which is in Council and Registered Provider ownership. Sanctuary developed an initial scheme which would be facilitated by the transfer of a parcel of Council land. This is identified as the land shaded yellow within the plan at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 On 24th September 2020 Council approved the disposal of this parcel of land at zero cost. The disposal of this parcel of land at zero cost was conditional upon nominations rights being granted to the Council. These rights will be secured by way of the Sale Agreement and governed by a Nominations Agreement. Legal agreements have been progressed during the design phase and the principles and terms of the agreements have been provisionally agreed by both parties.
- 1.4 Subsequent to Council approval of 24 September 2020, pre-application advice was sought on the first design iteration (ref DE/2020/0132). Pre-application advice raised some concerns about the linear design of the scheme appearing at odds with the scale and character of the local area. The initial design sought access by way the existing hammerhead and sought to work with a challenging topography, which also proved cost prohibitive.
- 1.5 As a result of the pre-application advice on the first design, Sanctuary have revisited their design to create five distinct blocks as opposed to one linear block. Key to the new design is the proposed new access. By moving the access to the site further west by approximately thirty metres, the scheme makes better use of the existing topography of the site with the new access road running along the existing contours through the middle of the site. The re-siting of the access road allows for a more sensitive design of the apartment blocks with these spaced along the natural contours of the site. This makes best use of the site towards the southern and northern boundaries and adopts a more sensitive approach of retaining structures. There will be a more defined separation of each of the apartment blocks and a more considered approach to parking.
- 1.6 The proposed new access traverses Council owned land not contained within the original transfer of land. To provide comfort to Sanctuary and allow them to progress the revised design to pre-application stage, the report proposes that the additional land, shaded orange on the plan at Appendix 2, is transferred on the same terms as the original land shaded yellow on the plan at Appendix 1. This will not materially affect existing agreements. It will

simply require the additional land to be included within the transfer plan. Officers will also seek as part of the negotiations in respect of the planning application to maintain pedestrian access to the shops on Barton Hill Road that runs alongside the Co-op.

2. Options under consideration

- 2.1 Option 1. Do nothing. Not disposing of the land to Sanctuary Housing would likely mean that the scheme would not go ahead in any form.
- 2.2 Option 2. Sell the council owned land on the open market. The Council land proposed for disposal to Sanctuary has little value other than as a ransom strip for the rest of the site.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 3.1 Disposal of the land to Sanctuary Housing, at zero cost, represent a loss of a potential capital receipt, although as highlighted above the Council land proposed for additional transfer has little commercial value and the Council will gain the benefit of nomination rights to the affordable rented dwellings, as set out in the covering report.
- 3.2 There will be some officer time taken up with the on-going scheme development. Sanctuary Housing are meeting the Council's legal fees.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 The terms of disposal of the parcel of land agreed by Council on 24 September 2020 are set out within the Sale Agreement and Nominations Agreement. The additional parcel of land will be added to the transfer plan without any material amendments required to the Sale Agreement and Nominations Agreement.

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 The principle of disposing of Council land to facilitate the development has been established via the previous approval process. The iteration of the scheme that the land disposal will facilitate have been subject to previous consultations and will be subject to a statutory planning consultation.

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

- 6.1 Not applicable.

6.2 Not applicable.

7. Tackling Climate Change

7.1 The dwellings will be built to high environmental standards and in compliance with prevailing regulatory standards.

8. Associated Risks

8.1 The main risk is that the development does not go ahead, either due to failure to achieve planning permission or construction costs inflation that could render the site unviable.

9. Equality Impacts - Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people			Everyone in housing need is eligible to apply for accommodation via Devon Home Choice and would be able to bid on this scheme and hence there will be no differential impact
People with caring Responsibilities			Everyone in housing need is eligible to apply for accommodation via Devon Home Choice and would be able to bid on this scheme and hence there will be no differential impact
People with a disability	Wheelchair accessible units will be delivered within this scheme. This will have a positive effect for people with a disability		
Women or men			Everyone in housing need is eligible to apply

			for accommodation via Devon Home Choice and would be able to bid on this scheme and hence there will be no differential impact
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)			Everyone in housing need is eligible to apply for accommodation via Devon Home Choice and would be able to bid on this scheme and hence there will be no differential impact
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			Everyone in housing need is eligible to apply for accommodation via Devon Home Choice and would be able to bid on this scheme and hence there will be no differential impact
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			Everyone in housing need is eligible to apply for accommodation via Devon Home Choice and would be able to bid on this scheme and hence there will be no differential impact
People who are transgendered			Everyone in housing need is eligible to apply for accommodation via Devon Home Choice and would be able to bid on this scheme and hence there will be no differential impact
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			Everyone in housing need is eligible to apply for accommodation via Devon Home Choice and would be able to bid on this scheme and hence there will be no differential impact
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			Everyone in housing need is eligible to apply for accommodation via

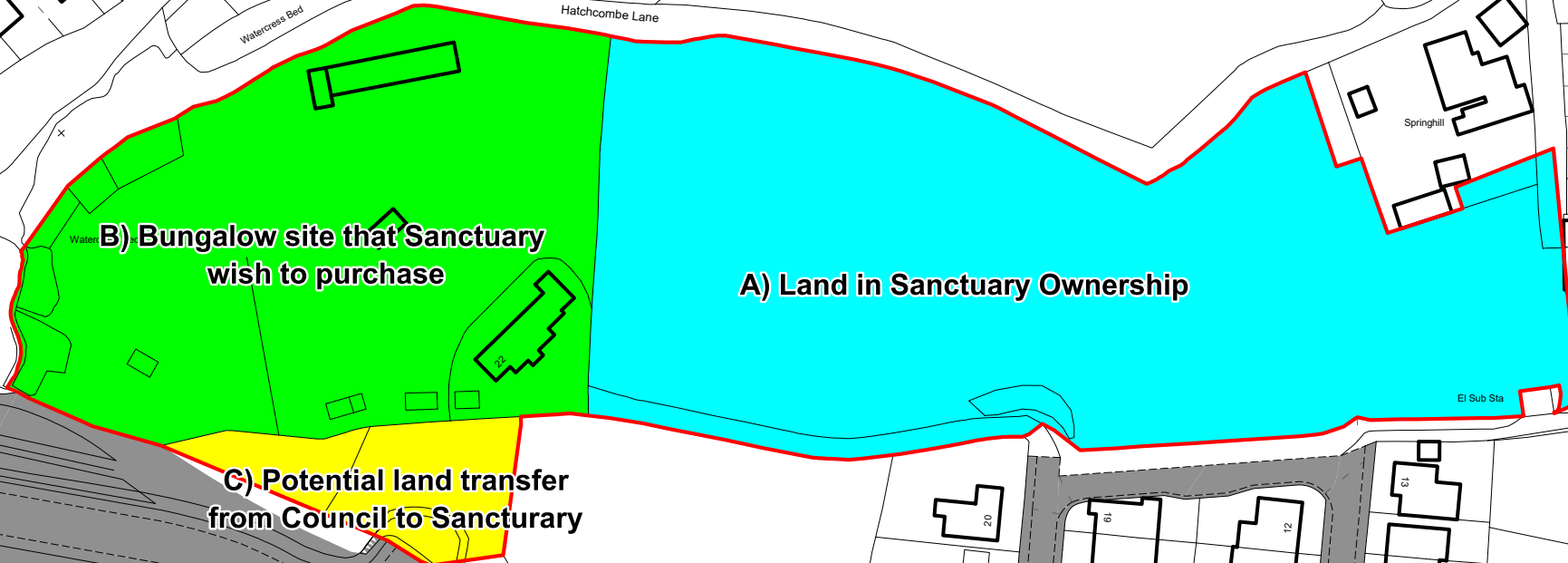
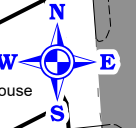
			Devon Home Choice and would be able to bid on this scheme and hence there will be no differential impact
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)			Everyone in housing need is eligible to apply for accommodation via Devon Home Choice and would be able to bid on this scheme and hence there will be no differential impact
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)			Everyone in housing need is eligible to apply for accommodation via Devon Home Choice and would be able to bid on this scheme and hence there will be no differential impact

10. Cumulative Council Impacts

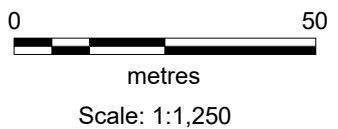
10.1 None

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

11.1 None



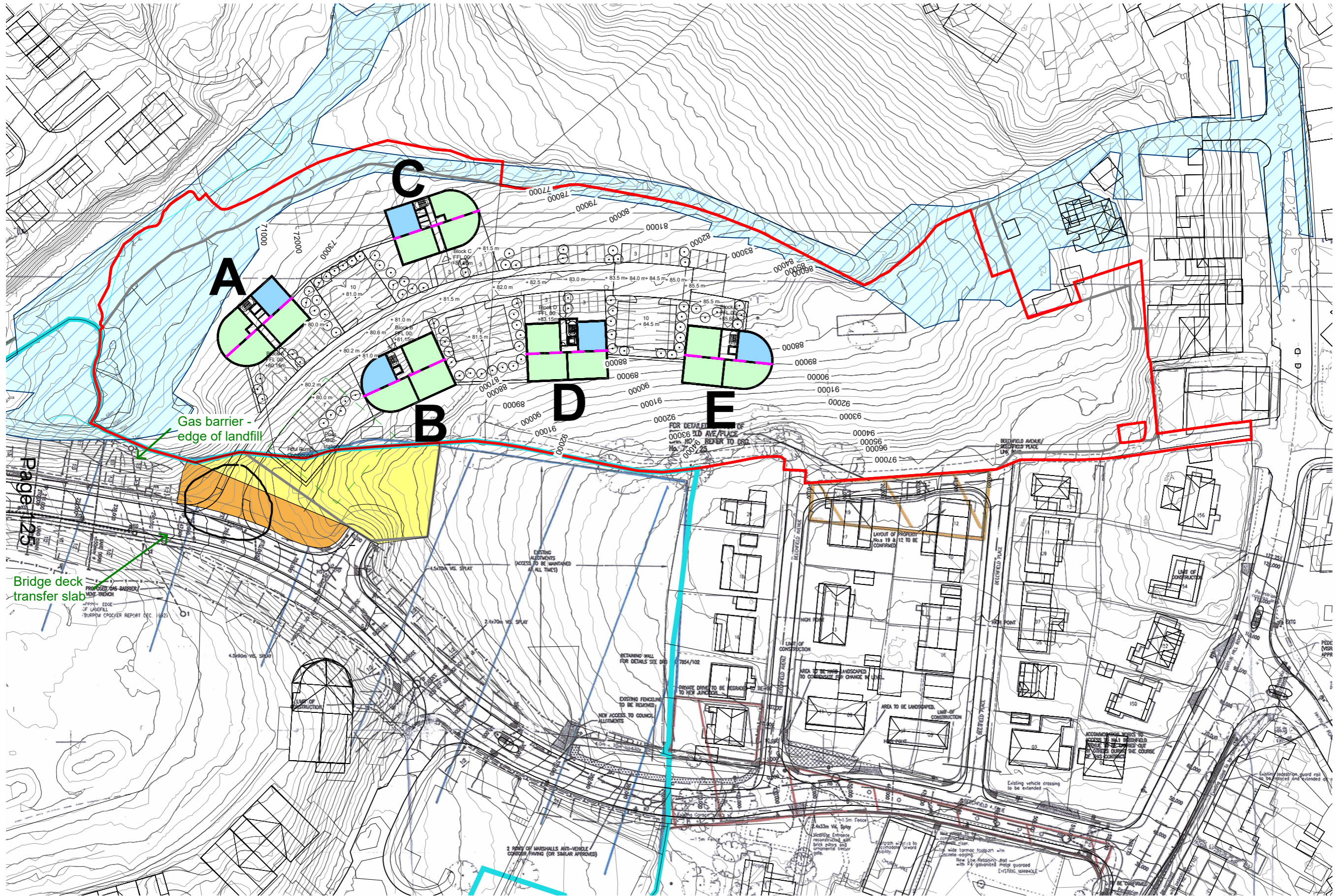
Page 124



EM Plan No: EM3573
Date: 25th August 2020
Title: Land North of Beechfield Avenue, Torquay.

Scale: 1:1250
Area: 18,075m²





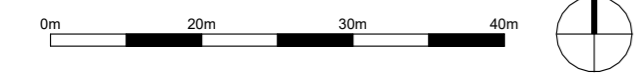
- KEY**
- Site Boundary
 - Previous Site Boundary for comparison
 - Torbay Administrative Area (DN520459)
 - Agreed land transfer from Council to Sanctuary
 - Additional proposed land transfer from Council to Sanctuary
 - Flood Zone
 - Stepping building line
 - 1 Bed flat
 - 2 Bed flat
 - ▲ Main entrance levels
- Block A
FFL 00:
+80.0m

Page 125

Bridge deck transfer slab

Gas barrier - edge of landfill

Proposed Site Plan
1 : 1000



Rev	Date	Description
00	29/07/20	First Issue
22		

Dwn	Ckd	Drawn	DP
DP	SDT	Checked	SDT
		Date	Jul-2022
		Scale @ A3	As indicated

Hatchcombe Torbay
Site Layout, Council Land and S38 Overlay

AA9997-1027
REV 00

CDM REGULATIONS 2015. All current drawings and specifications for the project must be read in conjunction with the Designer's Hazard and Environment Assessment Record. All intellectual property rights reserved.

Meeting: Cabinet **Date:** 18th October 2022

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Multi-Functional Devices Contract Award Approval

When does the decision need to be implemented? ASAP

Cabinet Member Contact Details:

Cabinet Member for Corporate and Community Services, Councillor Carter,
Christine.carter@torbay.gov.uk

Director/Divisional Director Contact Details:

Divisional Director for Corporate Services, Matthew Fairclough-Kay, matthew.fairclough-kay@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The current arrangement in place to provide Multi-Functional Devices (MFDs) across the Council estate will conclude by May 2023.
- 1.2. Multi-Functional Devices provide printing, copying, and scanning facilities across the Council estate.
- 1.3. A further competition call-off on the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) Framework was completed to identify a suitable new supplier for MFDs.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1. The proposal in this report is the award of the contract for the new MFDs across all Council estate which will continue providing printing, copying, and scanning facility to all staff with newer and more efficient devices.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1. That the preferred supplier be awarded a contract for the provision of Multi-Functional Devices (MFDs) across the Council estate for a fixed five (5) year term from 2nd November 2022 until 2nd November 2027, as set out in Exempt Appendix 3.

Appendices (PART 2) EXEMPT – Commercial in confidence

Appendix 1 – Supporting Information

Appendix 2 – Projected Costs

Appendix 3 – Preferred Supplier

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Highways Review – Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Report to Cabinet on 18 October 2022

Background

1. The Highways Review Panel met on 23 June, 26 July and 9 August 2022 to:
 - To understand the current situation on how highways schemes are prioritised and funded and explore the options available for future highways improvements.
 - To explore how we can work with our key partners and utilities on major highways projects (such as Network Rail and BT Openreach).
2. The Review Panel comprised of Councillors Atiya-Alla, Barnby, Douglas-Dunbar, Hill, Kennedy, Chris Lewis and Mills (with Councillor David Thomas representing Councillor Barnby for the first meeting and Councillor Lewis at the final meeting) and was Chaired by Councillor Kennedy, Scrutiny Lead for Place.
3. The background papers, including the detailed Scope for the Review and the recordings of the meetings can be found at <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/DemocraticServices/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=1905>
4. Key evidence considered by the Panel included:
 - Highways Review Scope and Timeline;
 - Details of the public engagement for the Network Rail bridge replacement and Torwood Street resurfacing by the Council;
 - Presentation from Network Rail;
 - Letter dated 2 November 2021 from Network Rail to the Council regarding the bridge works;
 - Letter dated 25 March 2022 from the Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance to Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Transport regarding Network Rail bridge works;
 - Letter dated April 2022 from Department for Transport to the Leader of the Council regarding Network Rail bridge works;

- Letter dated 16 June 2022 from the Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance to Ed Vokes, Department for Transport;
- Letter dated 18 July 2022 from Department for Transport to the Leader of the Council regarding Network Rail bridge works;
- Transport Asset Management Plan;
- Local Transport Plan 3- 2011-2026;
- Local Transport Plan Action Plan 2021-2026;
- Briefing note on highways budget, where the funding comes from and how the additional £570,000 allocated to the budget for 2022/2023 would be priorities and allocated;
- Road Safety Strategy 2017-2020;
- Presentation on Vision Zero South West – (more details can be found on their website at <https://visionzerosouthwest.co.uk/>; and
- Timeline of communications between BT Openreach, South West Highways and SWISCo regarding the damage to the BT chamber during the Torwood Street reconstruction works.

5. Key Findings

- 5.1 **Who is responsible for activities on our Highways?** Ian Jones, Head of Highways advised that the overall responsibility for the management and safe running of the highways was Torbay Council as the Local Highways Authority, who had commissioned SWISCo to manage all the highways functions on behalf of the Council. This included deciding what maintenance was required and how to distribute the budget and managing permitting to other utilities who need to carry out work. In turn the utility companies have a statutory duty to maintain their services. The Council works with its partners through the Highways Authority Utilities Committee (HAUC) to discuss upcoming works and forward planning. Utility Companies notify the Authority of programmed works through the highways permitting scheme which was required to be in place before they can carry out any work on the highways. Whilst there was no requirement for the Highways Authority to consult on highways maintenance each scheme was assessed to see what the appropriate levels of engagement should be and details were published on the Council's website see <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/roads/roadworks/>.
- 5.2 **Engagement Activities.** The Panel received a paper which set out the engagement activities which had been carried out in respect of the Network Rail bridge repair and the Torwood Street resurfacing. It was noted that more engagement had been carried out on these two schemes with residents and businesses than had been previously carried out on other highways schemes. However, the Panel acknowledged that not all the engagement had been done in a timely manner and improvements could be made to ensure continued and ongoing engagement, especially where issues or delays occur. Jo Penhaligon, Community Engagement Officer advised the Panel of the improvements in communications between the Highways Team and Communication and Engagement Team with more notice being provided on other upcoming highways schemes e.g. Penny's Hill, Teignmouth Road and Meadfoot Sea Road enabling them the opportunity to get the right messages out at the right time.

- 5.3 **Network Rail bridge repairs.** Mike Contopoulos (Project Director – Buildings and Civils) and Mike Smith (Regional Assistant Manager – Structures) from Network Rail gave evidence on the timeline of events and causes of the delays which occurred in connection with the bridge replacement at Torbay Road, Livermead, Torquay. This included initial development and design delays, assumption that the BT cables could be diverted prior to the new deck being installed, working around critical BT cables which provided key broadband to residents and businesses in Torbay – resulting in further design changes, storms in January and February and delays in equipment and supply of the bridge beams.
- 5.4 The Panel acknowledged the following key lessons which had been learned from the project which would be assessed and evaluated for any future major Network Rail schemes in Torbay:
- Earlier escalation of Network Rail design consultant not being able to maintain their design programme for the replacement scheme.
 - Fragmented contracting strategy – Network Rail procuring sub-contractors and suppliers had led to ambiguity relating to risk. There was a need for an improved procurement strategy for awarding of contractors.
 - Earlier constructability and buildability discussions between Principal Contractor and Designer. This could have improved construction programme sequencing.
 - Improved engagement between Network Rail, Principal Contractor and Network Rail appointed sub-contractors and suppliers.
 - Designer availability for modifications and on-site attendance during critical works.
 - Constructability review of the design – beams on cant, weight of cill units, difficulty in getting appropriate lifting equipment to site, heavily congested areas of reinforcement within the bridge deck, significant temporary works required throughout.
- 5.5 It was anticipated that the final works to the bridge and public walkway would be completed within eight weeks and Network Rail were meeting with the suppliers on 23 June 2022 to seek assurance that the work would be completed within this timescale and they agreed to communicate the outcome to the Council and the community. At the meeting of the Panel held on 9 August 2022, Members were advised that there were further delays and that the work was not expected to be fully completed for a further two months due to difficulties with the contractors. A further meeting was due to be later in August to agree a more detailed timeline for the remaining works.
- 5.6 The Panel Heard from June Pierce (Chairwoman) and Paul Lidstone (Secretary) from the Cockington, Chelston, Livermead Community Partnership on the impact of the delay of the bridge works and the communication and engagements with the residents on the scheme. They outlined the difficulties residents had joining the flow of traffic and occasions when the road was closed for longer than expected and the impact that this had. Concerns were also raised in respect of the Livermead Hill overbridge which had taken higher numbers of vehicles because of the diversion. Reassurance was provided by Network Rail that the bridge was subject to an

annual inspection which was due during June and would pick up any structural issues with the bridge. They felt that if the Council had engaged with the Community Partnership sooner they would have been able to help share communications and updates with the community and hope that lessons had been learned and they can work together with the Council in the future on other schemes in their area. Since the meeting and as a result of the challenges put forward by the Community Partnership to Network Rail, the Chairwoman had been advised that communications have greatly improved.

- 5.7 The Leader of the Council advised that he had written to Network Rail in late October and had received response back on 2 November 2021 which confirmed the plan to demolish the existing bridge while the line was already closed for planned rail upgrade works on the weekends 8-10 January and 15-17 January 2022. The construction of the new bridge would then take place over five Saturday nights when trains were not running at the end of January and beginning of February to allow them to deliver the work more quickly – reducing the impact on the road and rail network. The letter did caution that due to the complexity of the scheme there was a risk that issues may arise that could impact on the programme of work.
- 5.8 The Leader of the Council also summarised his letter to Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Transport dated 25 March 2022 where he raised concerns over further delays on the Network Rail scheme with the work due to be completed on 23 May 2022 and the impact that this would have on Torbay's tourist season. It also highlighted issues with poor communications between Network Rail and the Council and sought mitigation for the pressures this placed on highways and consideration of potential subsidies for bus users. The response from the Secretary of State for Transport apologised for the delay and explained the reasons for this and referred to a productive meeting with the Council and Network Rail on 31 March 2022 which had resulted in improved communications between both parties.
- 5.9 The Leader of the Council referred to his follow up letter dated 16 June 2022 to Ed Vokes, Department for Transport highlighting that the Network Rail works had taken three months longer than planned, with the rebuilding of the parapet on the railway bridge resulting in overnight closures well into July and the impact that this had on residents. He requested that the Government should facilitate compensation to local residents on the diversion route and others immediately affected by the works on the bridge. The Panel also noted the content of a letter dated 18 July 2022 from Department for Transport to the Leader of the Council in response to this letter confirming that the bridge had opened to all traffic and pedestrians with one way traffic signal controls overnight whilst work to the bridge parapet was completed. Which was expected to be the case until September and that Network Rail had agreed to write to residents to keep them informed. They confirmed that the Government would not be able to help with compensation payments, but that Network Rail had offered to help with a community project that would give something back to the people that had been affected and that the Council was considering what may be most beneficial.
- 5.10 Ian Thomas, BT Openreach advised that they were informed back in 2020 about the proposed works and brought in solicitors to extend their concern as

the time for the bridge deck works was fast approaching and the risk of network damage given the fibre optics and major services was a concern.

- 5.11 The Panel heard from Councillor Morey, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Environment and Culture that communications with residents in the early stages could have been better. Over the last two months this had improved with weekly or bi-weekly meetings with Network Rail, Communications and Engagement Team, Highways, the Leader of the Council and Councillor Amil as Ward Councillor. They had also walked the areas to see what the issues were and whilst residents were unhappy with the delays they appreciated the walk around. There had been three delays in completion time and Network Rail have apologised for the delay. The main concern was ensuring that the road was open for the Airshow and if possible a pedestrian link between Torquay and Paignton, this was completed with a temporary pedestrian route by this date.
- 5.12 The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Community Services, Councillor Carter, highlighted the importance of communication and explained that lessons had been learned from the rail project which relied on information being provided by a third party before the Council was able to update the community.
- 5.13 The Panel felt that the Council had underestimated the amount of traffic which would use the diversion through Livermead with heavy goods directed via the Ring Road. Large vehicles and buses were still using the residential route which added to the congestion and difficulties faced by residents entering and existing their properties on the diversion route.
- 5.14 **Torwood Street resurfacing.** Ian Jones, explained that the works to Torwood Street were planned for a twelve week period (this was longer than normal works to allow for any contingencies) over the winter to replace the road surface at Torwood Street which was in a poor state of repair. During the work contractors had issues with a South West Water sewer which was in poor condition and not shown on the plans due to its age which was addressed promptly. They also caused damage to the roof of a BT Openreach chamber which was also not shown on the plans and caused further delays as they were unable to get the cover off themselves to check and required action from BT Openreach. They had contacted BT Openreach at the end of January but following no action SWISCo raised the issues with BT Openreach in March. The Panel heard from Ian Thomas (BT Openreach) that they had not been informed about the damage until March. They had to seek the views of a structural engineer on the suitable remedy to safely repair the chamber and were informed that the contractors would not be able to repair this until August, which they felt was too long, therefore alternative solutions were put in place and the carriageway box was rebuilt on 27 May 2022.
- 5.15 The Panel noted that the main part of the road opened in March (earlier than planned) with the area around the chamber blocked off until it could be repaired. The Panel felt there was ambiguity in respect of the timeline for communications with BT Openreach on the damage to the chamber and who had told who and the timing of this and sought a timeline of the events. The Panel received a copy of the timeline at its meeting held on 9 August 2022.

This showed that South West Highways (SWH) had reported the damage to BT Openreach on 20 January 2022 which was followed up by a site inspection and photos being taken of the site. SWH had chased action and resulted in a further visit by BT Openreach on 16 February 2022. Following further delays SWISCo then became involved and telephoned and sent several emails between February and April which resulted in a further site meeting on 4 May to plan the works with BT Openreach. Works commenced by BT Openreach to build the chamber on 23 May with the final section of the road surfaced and opened by SWH on 30 May 2022. Members concluded that whilst the representative from BT Openreach who attended the meeting had been unaware of earlier communications about the issue, there had been considerable dialogue between the contractor and BT Openreach over a period of several months before final responsibility and action was taken by BT Openreach.

- 5.16. The Panel heard from Councillor Morey, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Environment and Culture that early engagement had been carried out with businesses, including a Facebook Live event, initial meetings held in October, pre-warning signs before Christmas in addition to press releases and social media communications. The businesses were consulted on the timing of the works to determine if they wanted them to start in December or January. A special parking promotion was introduced in neighbouring car parks to pay for one hour and stay for three hours to encourage people to the area.
- 5.17 Susie Colley, Chairwoman of the Torquay Chamber of Commerce outlined the difficulties faced by the traders and visitors, particularly the access to the Hilton Hotel and parking at the Terrace car park which was accessed via Museum Road. She raised concern over the time taken by BT Openreach to repair the chamber and felt that this should have been actioned and communicated quicker.
- 5.18 The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Community Services, Councillor Carter, advised that lessons had been learned and the Communications and Engagement Team were working on plans to solve some of the difficulties around communication not just to the public but also between the Council/SWISCo and other suppliers, as was the case with the Torwood Street works. This included regular and continued engagement throughout projects to keep key interested parties updated and informed. The affected businesses had been informed that they may be able to claim some money back on their business rates. Consideration also needed to be given to what happens if a scheme runs over and how the communications would be managed.
- 5.19 **How highways schemes are funded and prioritised.** The Panel noted the contents of a briefing note which provided the background to how highways schemes were funded and prioritised. Torbay Council's Highways Management Service was delivered annually by SWISCo. Highways maintenance and improvement works were generally funded from the following 3 allocations.
1. Torbay Council Revenue. – This allocation has been reduced considerably in recent years and funds routine highway maintenance, statutory issues, fees and charges, emergency and temporary works,

investigatory works, energy costs, communications and control costs and cyclical maintenance. This funding may be used to support the Local Transport Plan (LTP) capital programme if funding was available.

2. LTP Structural Maintenance Block – This was grant capital funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) and includes the ‘Pothole fund’ and ‘Incentive Fund’ elements. This may be used for permanent repair works and should be primarily used in the delivery of improvement of the Highway Asset. This funding was used for major resurfacing works, preventative maintenance, street lighting replacements, repairs to bridges and retaining walls. Due to the recent reductions to the Revenue funding, this allocation was also used to fund reactive permanent repair works to carriageways, footways and highway drainage, which had previously been funded by the Revenue budget.
3. LTP Integrated Transport Block – This was also a grant capital funding from the DfT which could be used for transport initiatives. The allocation was therefore split between initiatives managed by Spatial Planning (Transportation) and SWISCo highways. The highways elements were generally highways and transport upgrades, which could include highway improvements, road safety engineering, traffic engineering, traffic systems and associated traffic studies and modelling.

Torbay Council had also provided additional highways funding in the years 2021/22 and 2022/23 (see extract of the Council Minute from the meeting held on 3 March 2022). Some of the 2021/22 funding was carried forward into the current year. The briefing paper provided an outline of how this additional funding would be allocated in the current financial year.

- “1) that for 2022/23 net revenue expenditure of £120.8m resulting in a Council Tax requirement of £78.1m for 2022/23 (a 2.99% increase in Council Tax, of which 1% is for Adult Social Care) be approved, now including £570,000 for one-off highways improvements (including repairing pot-holes, repainting double yellow lines, improved signage, improved road safety, the introduction of new traffic regulation orders) to be allocated from the Comprehensive Spending Review Reserve. The reserve balance to be reinstated as the first allocation of any underspend in 2021/22 and 2022/23;”

Members requested a more detailed breakdown on how the additional £570,000 would be spent to meet the requirements of the above Minute. This document was provided for the meeting on 9 August 2022 and the Panel was satisfied with the content.

- 5.20 The Panel heard how there was currently no formal agreement on how the budget allocated for lines and signs would be spent and prioritised and suggested the merit of including this within the Service Level Agreement with SWISCo and the Council to include clear expectations on how this would be managed moving forward to ensure regular maintenance to enable appropriate enforcement. Members questioned if some of the income

received from parking enforcement could be ringfenced to help with the maintenance of lines and signs etc.

- 5.21 Members discussed the Council's Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) Policy and if residents were still able to apply for controlled or residents parking due to a potential moratorium on spend in this area. They suggested that the Policy should be reviewed to ensure that it was fair and fit for purpose and then the current operational policy to be made clear on the website and also to all Councillors to help them support their communities with any future requests. It was noted that new CPZs were on hold pending the update of the CPZ Policy which would be updated as part of the review of the overall Parking Strategy to ensure that the two documents were aligned.
- 5.22 Members noted that the Local Transport Plan (LTP) was a 15 year strategy document which was developed with Devon County Council in 2011 recognising the resources of Torbay Council and Devon County Council and how we could best work together to develop our shared priorities, whilst still maintaining a local Torbay element. Alongside the LTP were five yearly action plans 2011 to 2016, 2016 to 2021 and 2021 to 2026. Each version of the action plan had changed how it allocated funding to schemes and used flexible pots of funding taking into account National and Local Policies and priorities as the time of the action plan. The Panel acknowledged the anticipated changes to the way LTPs would be developed and funded in the future, particularly in respect of decarbonisation and improved focus on public transport, walking and cycling etc. linking in with LCWIP (Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plans) and improved infrastructure for electric charging points etc. It was proposed that Torbay would develop its own plans but would continue to work with Devon County Council also using the same consultancy team who would help develop some aspects of the plan.
- 5.23 The Panel also had regard to the climate emergency and discussed what SWISCo was doing to explore use of sustainable materials other than tarmac or concrete for highways repairs and maintenance. It was noted that the availability of alternative materials was limited in the South West and there had to be a balance between spending more money on alternative materials or investing more in preventative maintenance which would save money in the medium to long term.
- 5.24 **Road safety in Torbay.** The Panel noted that the Road Safety Strategy shows how the Council plans to deliver safer roads in Torbay and was a ten year strategy from 2010 to 2020. This had to be changed in 2017 due to removal of Road Safety revenue funding and the loss of 1.5 FTE (full time equivalent) staff which limited the resources available to deliver the Strategy including elements such as education interventions and campaigns. The current Strategy 2017 to 2020 had not yet been replaced as the Council was working with Vision Zero South West on a regional strategy which would then support the development of a local strategy for Torbay.
- 5.25 The Panel heard from Natalie Warr, Partnership Manager from Vision Zero South West, which was a collection of strategic and operational leaders and organisations who sought to reverse the negative trends in terms of casualties on the road network in the South West Region. Their four key principles were: to collaborate with each other and co-ordinate use of resources;

maximise opportunities to invest in road safety; engage with and involve our communities and stakeholders in delivering their aims; and be evidence led to explore innovative solutions. Their strategic aims were:

“To deliver our vision, we will work together in partnership, to drive changes which:

- Prevent death and serious injury as a consequence of using our road network;
- Improve our post collision response and care;
- Reduction in the number of road related deaths by 50% by 2030;
- Reduction in number of road related serious casualties by 50% by 2030.”

- 5.26 The Panel noted the governance and funding arrangements as set out in the submitted presentation. Torbay Council was represented by Ian Jones (Head of Highways), John Clewer (Senior Engineer, Strategy and Project Management) and Councillor Mike Morey (Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Environment and Culture). Superintendent Adrian Leisk, Roads Policing acknowledged the great contribution provided by Ian Jones and John Clewer but advised that other local authorities were represented at Director level to ensure strategic input from the Senior Leadership Team.
- 5.27 Vision Zero South West Partnership had set a Strategy to run until 2030, which was refreshed every two years with a Road Safety Delivery Plan with 50 initiatives which had been agreed and were progressing. They were working with lots of organisations and want to extend this further through the establishment of a wider stakeholder forum to enable connection with other groups.
- 5.28 Superintendent Leisk highlighted the importance of road safety in Torbay and provided reassurance that this was a key priority for the Police, who were also a key Lead Partner of Vision Zero South West with him Chairing the Activity A Group. He advised that the Police had recruited additional speed detection officers (an increase from 6 to 14) and introduced a dedicated speed detection hub in South Devon. They made use of the latest technology with mobile units which were regularly deployed across the network, including in Torbay. They have Community Speed Watch Co-ordinators with administrative support and would be holding awareness campaigns in Exeter and Cornwall later this year. They had increased the number of Community Speed Watch volunteers across the region from 410 in 2021 to 837 in July 2022 who were regularly engaged with Speed Watch. It was noted that compared to other areas Torbay did not have as many volunteers and Councillors were encouraged to raise awareness in their communities and encourage people to join Community Speed Watch. Members of the public could also use Operation Snap where they can upload videos of highways offences, they were then reviewed by a Team funded through Vision Zero. Approximately 4,300 drivers had been dealt with through this channel (more information can be found on their website at - <https://operationsnap.devon-cornwall.police.uk/>). The Police take an evidence-based approach to target areas where intervention was most needed. They want to reduce the number

of people killed but this needs to be done through creation of a culture where people drive safely and reflect on their behaviour. They put people through education via the driver awareness courses, 5,000 people a month were being put through these courses in Devon and Cornwall. They were developing an online tool where people would be able to put in a street and see the number of road traffic collisions and reasons.

- 5.29 Members requested the Police to provide information to be circulated to all Councillors raising awareness of Community Speed Watch and encouraging residents to sign up and get involved in the process and also to provide a quarterly briefing on current road safety initiatives.
- 5.30 The Panel discussed hazards caused by poor parking and the confusion between if these offences would be dealt with by the Council or Police. The Council's enforcement officers were only able to enforce where there were parking restrictions, dangerous parking and obstructions would be a matter for the Police but they would have to consider the severity of this due to their limited resources. The Government was consulting on a number of parking options such as footway parking and blocking boxes on junctions to see if this could be dealt with by local authorities with them collecting the fines and reinvesting them within the local area, but this had not yet been finalised.
- 5.31 The Panel heard how school crossing patrols had been maintained but they were now funded through the schools rather than the Council. Members noted a pilot scheme in Plymouth where they deny parking on streets by schools during certain hours through Vision Zero South West and initiatives such as school speed watch. Cornwall Council had worked with Sustrans to deliver training on walking and cycling (more information can be found at <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/>), there was also Bikability the Government's national cycle training programme which helps young people to learn practical skills and understand how to cycle on today's roads (more information can be found at <https://www.bikeability.org.uk/>). Consideration of schemes like this need to be considered in the wider context of strategic planning and transport strategies to ensure a consistent and fair approach across Torbay.
- 5.32 The Council would be introducing 20 mph zones in key areas to reduce speed, in priority order Fore Street, Barton; Fisher Street Area, Paignton; and Queensway, Torquay but it was noted that there may not be sufficient resource to implement all three schemes in a single financial year. It was proposed that this would be reviewed as the schemes progress and may be supported by the Integrated Transport Block funding if budget allows.
- 5.33 The Panel noted that following the reductions in 2017 the Council had very limited road safety professional expertise. John Clewer was retiring at the end of August (he worked between SWISCo and Strategic Planning on road safety issues) and SWISCo was looking to appoint a senior officer for Traffic Support Scheme but the wider elements of his role had not yet been decided.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Panel reflected and debated all the information provided to them, both in writing and orally and concluded that whilst there had been increased communications in respect of the Network Rail bridge repairs and Torwood

Street resurfacing works, further improvements still needed to be made. The Council needs to look at different and timely communications with Councillors, residents and businesses to keep them informed and updated as well as improving communication with our contractors and utilities. Network Rail have acknowledged the need to work differently to prevent the delays which occurred for the bridge repairs. The Panel acknowledged that their first meeting had helped to bring together key representatives from our Highways Department, BT Openreach and Network Rail which would help improve relationships and communications moving forward.

- 6.2. The Panel thanked all those who had contributed towards the review, particularly the representatives from Network Rail and BT Openreach for their honesty and their proactive approach to reach out to each other and the Highways Team following the first meeting to facilitate closer working together in the future and to the representatives from the Cockington, Chelston, Livermead Community Partnership and Torquay Chamber of Trade and Commerce for putting across the views of the communities and local businesses. Also representatives from Vision Zero South West and Devon and Cornwall Police.
- 6.3 The Panel welcomed and supported the principle of the highways spending and allocation of the additional £570,000 approved by Council on 3 March 2022 set out in the submitted briefing note to Members, but were also concerned over the backlog in maintenance and repairs and the lack of sustainable funding to address this. As a result lines and signs were not always fit for purpose to enable appropriate enforcement and income generation.
- 6.4 The Panel acknowledged the excellent partnership working through Vision Zero South West but felt that more should be done to raise awareness of their work across the Council as most of them had not heard of the partnership prior to the review. Torbay's input and influence in this work would also be strengthened by the suggested involvement of the Director of Place as well as strategically reviewing how this linked to other Council areas and strategies. Members were concerned over the reduction in the budget for road safety in 2017 but felt that this would be alleviated by reviewing our policies and improved partnership working with the Police and Vision Zero South West.
- 6.5 The Panel did not get a chance to gather evidence from schools on how they were promoting road safety but felt it was important that they work together with the Council, Police and Vision Zero to share good practice to help improve road safety within the school communities.
- 6.6 The Panel formed the following recommendations to the Cabinet, which were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 14 September 2022. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried unanimously.

7. Recommendations

Recommendations to the Cabinet:

That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. to share with Communications and Engagement Team, Councillors, communities and members of the public the planned works for highways to give early notification of planned schemes, to ensure:
 - better communication with the businesses and residents before the works started i.e. either virtually or face to face meetings and followed up with an email or letter to ensure all the businesses hear the full discussions, timelines, reasons for delays etc.
 - these meetings/communications to continue throughout the scheme to keep everyone updated – including representatives from Highways, Communications/Engagement, contractor / utilities, local Ward Councillors, relevant Community Partnership etc. The meetings to be followed up with notes so those that weren't in attendance get to see what was discussed;
 - the Communications and Engagement Team to include within their Comms & Engagement Plan actions for what would happen if the schemes overruns;
 - that SWISCo ensure that where contractors find issues with utilities and chase them up with the relevant provider, if a response is not received within a reasonable timescale they escalate the issue to ensure robust action is taken in a timely manner;
 - that improved signage be provided for future road schemes showing routes which are suitable for HGVs to discourage them from using residential routes, where appropriate;
2. to ensure that the Communications and Engagement Team are notified of schemes at the earliest opportunity to help them plan and ensure early and regular communication and engagement is carried out with communities and affected businesses and other parties prior to any highways works being carried out, where possible involving contractors and utilities on major schemes;
3. to identify a contact point with the communities prior to the start of the highways work to help share communications with the community such as the community partnerships;
4. to request the Leader of the Council to write to Network Rail to express concern over the continued and excessive delays to repair the bridge and the impact that this is having on our communities and businesses;
5. to request the Managing Director of SWISCo and the Divisional Director Economy, Environment and Infrastructure to review the Service Level Agreement with SWISCo to specify the budget allocation and expectations for lining and signing to ensure they are maintained and fit for purpose;

6. to request the Director of Place to review the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) Policy to ensure it is up to date and fit for purpose and to provide a timeline for completion;
7. to review the income received from parking/highways enforcement and consider if a percentage of this can be ringfenced to help with the maintenance of lines and signs etc.;
8. to dual track the road safety schemes for Queensway at the same time as implementing the scheme for Fore Street, Barton;
9. that the Director of Place be recommended to regularly engage with the Vision Zero South West Project Board and other relevant Groups to ensure appropriate strategic input from Torbay Council and to access available support and share learning which can be implemented in Torbay and provide updates to all Councillors to keep them informed;
10. that the Director of Place be requested to work with the Senior Leadership Team to undertake a strategic review on how road safety can be improved in Torbay, focussing on safety outside schools, working alongside the work of Vision Zero South West whilst encouraging greener and more sustainable travel and to identify any additional resources required to support this;

Recommendation to TAPS/TASH:

That the Torbay Association of Primary Headteachers (TAPS) and Torbay Association of Secondary Headteachers (TASH) be requested to review and share good practice on how they support and promote road safety and what action they can take to improve road safety within the school communities.

Recommendations to the Police:

That the Police be requested:

- i. to provide information to be circulated to all Councillors raising awareness of Community Speed Watch and encouraging residents to sign up and get involved in the process for Councillors to share with their Community Partnerships; and
- ii. to provide a quarterly briefing on current road safety initiatives;

Cabinet Response to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Board – Highways Review

No.	Recommendation:	Cabinet Response:
1.	<p>to share with Communications and Engagement Team, Councillors, communities and members of the public the planned works for highways to give early notification of planned schemes, to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better communication with the businesses and residents before the works started i.e. either virtually or face to face meetings and followed up with an email or letter to ensure all the businesses hear the full discussions, timelines, reasons for delays etc. • these meetings/communications to continue throughout the scheme to keep everyone updated – including representatives from Highways, Communications/Engagement, contractor / utilities, local Ward Councillors, relevant Community Partnership etc. The meetings to be followed up with notes so those that weren't in attendance get to see what was discussed; 	<p>The Policy, Performance and Community Engagement Team are currently developing a framework which sets out the level of support which will be provided to teams across the Council in relation to communication, engagement and consultation activity. This will include a toolkit of resources which officers can use to improve how we share information about changes in service, including highways works.</p> <p>Appropriate mechanisms will be used depending on the scale and impact of the highways work in order to make best use of the available resources.</p> <p>As part of the toolkit, guidance will be provided around the actions which should be taken if schemes overrun.</p>

No.	Recommendation:	Cabinet Response:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Communications and Engagement Team to include within their Comms & Engagement Plan actions for what would happen if the schemes overruns; • that SWISCo ensure that where contractors find issues with utilities and chase them up with the relevant provider, if a response is not received within a reasonable timescale they escalate the issue to ensure robust action is taken in a timely manner; • that improved signage be provided for future road schemes showing routes which are suitable for HGVs to discourage them from using residential routes, where appropriate; 	
2.	to ensure that the Communications and Engagement Team are notified of schemes at the earliest opportunity to help them plan and ensure early and regular communication and engagement is carried out with communities and affected businesses and other parties prior to any highways works being carried out, where possible involving contractors and utilities on major schemes	Work is ongoing between the Policy, Performance and Community Engagement Team and SWISCo (as well as with colleagues across the Council) to ensure the early identification of projects which will require communication, engagement and/or consultation. As explained in 1. above, not all projects will have dedicated support from the Policy, Performance and Community Engagement Team but resources and support will be available to ensure officers across the Council engage better with communities in a timely manner.
3.	to identify a contact point with the communities prior to the start of the highways work to help share communications with the community such as the community partnerships	The first points of contact for sharing information with communities would be the ward councillors and the community partnership. If the works were also taking place where a number of businesses were impacted, Chamber of Commerce's

No.	Recommendation:	Cabinet Response:
		could also be informed. We would ask that information is then shared via their networks.
4.	to request the Leader of the Council to write to Network Rail to express concern over the continued and excessive delays to repair the bridge and the impact that this is having on our communities and businesses;	A couple of letters have been written to Network Rail during the course of the works, highlighting the impact that the works have had on Torbay residents and businesses. The Leader of the Council also meets bi-weekly with the Capital Delivery Director of Network Rail at which the impact of the delays is also raised.
5.	to request the Managing Director of SWISCo and the Divisional Director Economy, Environment and Infrastructure to review the Service Level Agreement with SWISCo to specify the budget allocation and expectations for lining and signing to ensure they are maintained and fit for purpose	This will be aligned with the development of the budget for 2023/24 and review of the SWISCo commissioning agreement to ensure that there is a clear agreed programme in place.
6.	to request the Director of Place to review the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) Policy to ensure it is up to date and fit for purpose and to provide a timeline for completion	The Council's parking strategy is scheduled to be reviewed over the coming months and consideration of the controlled parking zone will be taken forward through this review.
7.	to review the income received from parking/highways enforcement and consider if a percentage of this can be ringfenced to help with the maintenance of lines and signs etc.	The Council is under resourced for parking enforcement with several vacant posts in the team. The Divisional Director, Economy, Environment & Infrastructure is working with the Head of Parking to review the structure in the team to increase enforcement capacity. Options on how any increased enforcement can be used to improve maintenance will be developed.
8.	to dual track the road safety schemes for Queensway at the same time as implementing the scheme for Fore Street, Barton	Dual tracking will be considered but is subject to appropriate officer resources.
9.	that the Director of Place be recommended to regularly engage with the Vision Zero South West Project Board	Cllr Morey and the Divisional Director Economy, Environment & Infrastructure are engaging with the Vision Zero South West.

No.	Recommendation:	Cabinet Response:
	and other relevant Groups to ensure appropriate strategic input from Torbay Council and to access available support and share learning which can be implemented in Torbay and provide updates to all Councillors to keep them informed	Vision Zero South West is now closely supporting the road safety campaign now underway across Torbay.
10.	that the Director of Place be requested to work with the Senior Leadership Team to undertake a strategic review on how road safety can be improved in Torbay, focussing on safety outside schools, working alongside the work of Vision Zero South West whilst encouraging greener and more sustainable travel and to identify any additional resources required to support this	This work begun with the development of the road safety campaign which began in September and was launched at South Devon College. There is a programme of communications that will see messages and material be issued over the winter to highlight the issues.