

Minutes of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board

6 November 2025

-: Present :-

Councillor Johns (Chair)

Councillors Douglas-Dunbar, Foster and Tolchard

(Also in attendance: Councillors Long and David Thomas)

28. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Spacagna and Tranter, Pat Harris and Amanda Moss.

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative Group, the membership of the Sub-Board had been amended to include Councillor Tolchard in place of Councillor Bryant.

29. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Board held on 9 October 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

30. Public Health Update on Suicide Prevention and Baton of Hope Torbay

Public Health Specialist – Rachel Brett, presented the submitted Suicide Prevention and Baton of Hope Torbay report and responded to Members' questions.

The Suicide Prevention Action Plan focused on three priority areas. The first priority was making mental health and emotional support accessible to all which includes better promotion of the services that are already available and providing more sustainable mental wellbeing support through the Torbay Community Helpline. The second priority was to acknowledge and work with Torbay's risk factors with a particular focus on relationships and creating resources aimed at reducing suicide risks before they occur. The third priority was to harness passion, commit to collaborate and pool resources to reduce suicides. The Baton of Hope Tour, which is the UK's largest suicide prevention campaign gave a structure to do this creatively and well.

The sub-board were shown a video highlighting the Baton of Hope Torbay event, which covered a 14-mile route within Torbay, raising over £5,000 in sponsorship and over £9,000 in ticket sales and donations.

Work was underway on the One Devon Suicide Prevention Action Plan in collaboration with other authorities, with the aim of the Plan being presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting in March 2026.

Devon-wide activities include bespoke suicide prevention training for GPs, media engagement, creation of self-harm support training resources, updating the “It’s Okay to Talk About Suicide” Z-Card, and development of a Safety Plan Z-Card.

The Board raised the following questions:

- was work being undertaken to address the issue of the backlog of data provided by the Coroner’s Office;
- was support provided to families of an individual who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts;
- how accessible was the community support helpline for residents and did it operate 24 hours per day similarly to the Samaritans helpline;
- within the data provided by the Coroner’s Office of deaths by residents from Torbay, was information provided whether the individual was a new or long term resident;
- was mental health training provided to local taxi drivers in Torbay who may pick up a customer and ask to be driven to a known suicide hot spot; and
- was the Public Health Team liaising with Talkworks for individuals to be referred to for support.

The following responses were provided:

- conversations had been held with the Coroner’s Office and there were more staff now in place to assist with reducing the back log to assist with more timely data being provided;
- the Public Health Team have a training package which was used by local employers within Torbay for their awareness of suicide prevention. There was hope that through the Baton of Hope event and the new communication channels created that this would provide more awareness and learning opportunities for families and the general public in Torbay;
- the mental health support operates the same working hours as the community support helpline which was 9 am – 6 pm weekdays with some provision for support on a Saturday. The helpline was not available 24 hours per day. Should a member of the public contact the helpline out of hours, they would hear a voicemail message explaining what alternative support was available and be provided with the relevant contact details;
- the data provided within the Coroner’s report included data for deaths of people who are resident to Torbay;
- the Public Health Team have created business cards with details of support available, which have been provided to local taxi companies to be kept within taxis for drivers to issue to any passengers they may have concerns about.

There was also a free e-learning course available for taxi drivers for their awareness; and

- the Public Health Team and the community helpline were aware of Talkworks and the services provided and would signpost an individual to Talkworks for their assistance if appropriate.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board note the report and support efforts to improve public mental health and reduce the number of local deaths by suicide; and
2. that the Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board be requested write to the Chief Coroner to request their attendance at a future meeting of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board.

31. Public Health Update on Winter Readiness and Year Round Resilience to Adverse Weather and Infections

The Consultant in Public Health – Julia Chisnell, Public Health Specialist – Mandy Guy and Public Health Practitioner – Lu Wills presented the submitted Public Health Update on Winter Readiness and Year-Round Resilience to Adverse Weather and Infections report and responded to Members' questions.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) produces an Adverse Weather and Health Planning Framework, which was used by the Council to help prevent mortality, reduce morbidity, and reduce pressure on healthcare services.

Should severe weather alerts be received, various Council Teams would be involved including Public Health, Emergency Planning, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Events, Rough Sleeping Team, Highways, Harbours, Parking, Health and Safety and Communications. A range of actions would be put in train, including infection prevention and control in schools and care settings support to rough sleepers during severe weather, and ensuring staff protection.

Vaccination awareness remains a key priority for Torbay. Winter vaccines (flu and Covid) were provided locally by GPs, pharmacies and the schools immunisation service. The Outreach Team provided pop-up clinics within the town centre, workplaces such as at SWISCo, and hostels.

Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) remains a critical challenge worldwide, with infections lasting longer and becoming harder to treat, and over 35,200 deaths annually in the UK. Torbay Public Health team had a programme of work to tackle AMR, focusing on schools, early years and care homes. The team were finalists in the UKHSA international AMR awards in 2024.

The Board raised the following questions:

- were plans in place for all alert types received;
- when notifiable diseases were reported, was Torbay Council notified;

- do school children receive vaccines annually within schools or through their own GP surgeries;
- was there a list of warm spaces within Torbay communicated to local residents;
- would the warm spaces provision start earlier in 2025, or not until January 2026 as per the start of the spaces for 2025;
- when a cold alert was received, which voluntary groups would go out and check on elderly or vulnerable residents; and
- do Torbay Council publish communications to remind residents to check in on their neighbours when the weather turns very cold.

The following responses were received:

- there are plans in place for all alert types. Should a red alert be received, emergency response systems would be activated, and Government advice would be followed;
- notifiable diseases are reported to UKHSA by clinicians and through laboratory notifications. Torbay Council receive notifications from the UKHSA of each disease outbreak notified. Individual cases are notified for certain conditions (e.g. meningococcal, E-Coli, iGAS);
- children aged 2 and 3 years old receive their flu vaccinations through their GP practice or at local pharmacies. Children up until the age of 16 receive the nasal spray vaccine in school. Children up to the age of 18 may receive the vaccine if they have certain health conditions. Parents can choose to attend community clinics within their areas should they require.
- Torbay Council have invited submissions for the warm spaces grant funding. All submissions received will be reviewed to ensure a good geographical split within Torbay to provide local residents with a range of options;
- the review of all submissions received for warm spaces grant funding will be completed by the end of November with decisions made and an announcement can be made of the agreed locations in December. These will be well publicised; and
- on receipt of a cold weather alert, Torbay Council issue communications to provide advice to Torbay residents for keeping safe during the colder weather, and residents were reminded to check in on their neighbours.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Director of Adult and Community Services and the Director of Public Health be recommended to work with colleagues across the Council to improve communications with Members to ensure that when important key messages are to be issued to Torbay residents, Members are kept up to date to enable them to use their various communication methods to increase resident awareness; and
2. that the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board note the report and support efforts to build and maintain population resilience to adverse weather and infections.

32. Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker

The Sub-Board noted the submitted action tracker.

Chair
