



**TORBAY COUNCIL**



**Torbay and South Devon**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Adult Social Care Local Account Summary 2024/25

## Local Account Summary 24/25 – Draft Version

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## **Cllr Hayley Tranter, Torbay Council's Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities**



I'm pleased to once again present our local account summary, which provides a snapshot of how adult social care is performing across Torbay.

We continue to enhance the quality of our services, promote independence, and improve the overall wellbeing of those we serve.

We have implemented innovative programmes, strengthened partnerships – so important in Torbay – and adapted to the evolving needs of our community.

Teams across the Bay work tirelessly to ensure that every individual receives the compassionate and effective care they deserve.

You can read figures and statistics in this summary but just as important are the voices of those delivering this care. You'll also hear the experiences of those who have been cared for. This year's summary has more video content than ever before, and I hope this truly brings to life their stories.

The continued high cost of living, recruitment challenges and rising demand for services presents us with many challenges but we remain committed to continuous improvement and building on our successes.

## **Anna Coles – Director of Adults and Community Services, Torbay Council**



As a newcomer to Torbay, this is my first introduction to this annual summary.

In the first few months in my new role, I've been learning lots about adult social care in Torbay.

We support more than 2,700 people with a range of needs, many of them more complex than ever before. This means we need to be more innovative and creative in how we best support individuals to meet their outcomes than ever before.

We continue to encourage people to be healthy and stay healthy so that they can retain their independence for as long as possible.

We also need to be ready to adapt to new technologies, moving away from the conventional. I'm pleased that we now have 28 technology-enabled care champions to be ambassadors for using more innovative ways of support.

One thing that has struck me, and I hope it's obvious in this local account summary, is how much – and how well – we at the council and the ICO work with our voluntary sector.

Their support is vital and we continue to build these strong relationships to deliver excellent care.

I'm pleased that our Adult Social Care Survey 2024 showed most people were satisfied with the care and support services they receive. We engage and collaborate with people regularly so we can understand their experiences and improve services.

This report features their stories, in words and in videos, and we focus on the voices of specific groups. These include those with autism, people receiving support for poor mental health and young people transitioning into adulthood.

This year has also seen us engage more with our workforce as we undergo our transformation programme to become a service fit for the future.

Adult social care would not be what it is without our staff. Their compassion for the people they care for really does come across in this report.

We know improvements can always be made and we do not shy away from them. By strengthening our relationships with service users, partners and our workers, we will be in a good position to meet those challenges head on.

Thank you to our fantastic social care teams, care providers and partners for the work that you do to support residents in Torbay to thrive and prosper.

Anna

**Joe Teape Chief Executive and Chris Balch –Chairman, Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust**



We are pleased to present our annual local account summary, our first as Chairman and Chief Executive at Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust.

We are proud of our partnership and, importantly, our people who work tirelessly every day to support people in our community to access high quality adult social care when they need it. This summary provides an opportunity for us to

celebrate our achievements and the challenges of the past year at a time when demand continues to grow, while managing our financial pressures.

While people's attention is often focused on our urgent and emergency care system, the work of our adult social care teams is central to our belief that care as close to home as possible benefits everyone.



There is much to be proud of, particularly in our work to support people to remain independent at home, to receive the care and support they need in their community and supporting them to get home from hospital when they no longer need acute care. Technology-enabled care and our virtual wards are critical in helping us to deliver 21<sup>st</sup> century care, in line with the government's shift of moving from analogue to digital, and you can read more about these exciting innovations in this report.

Thank you to our teams for all you do.

Chris and Joe

## **Introduction: Torbay Adult Social Care Local Account 2024/25**

Welcome to the Torbay Adult Social Care Local Account Summary for 2024/25. This document provides an overview of how adult social care services are supporting people in Torbay to live independent, fulfilling lives, with dignity and choice.

Adult social care in Torbay plays a vital role in supporting residents who are older, disabled, or facing challenges that impact their day-to-day living. Each year, we work alongside our partners in the NHS, voluntary sector, and local communities to meet growing and changing needs while continuing to focus on what matters most to people: being safe, staying connected, and having control over the care they receive.

In this summary, we highlight the key achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement in 2024/25. It reflects the voices of those who use our services, carers, and professionals, offering transparency and accountability to residents. As we continue to operate in a context of financial pressures and increasing demand, our commitment remains firmly rooted in improving outcomes, promoting wellbeing, and ensuring that care and support are person-centred.

Thank you for taking the time to read this account. Your feedback helps us learn and improve, and we welcome your thoughts on how we can better serve you.

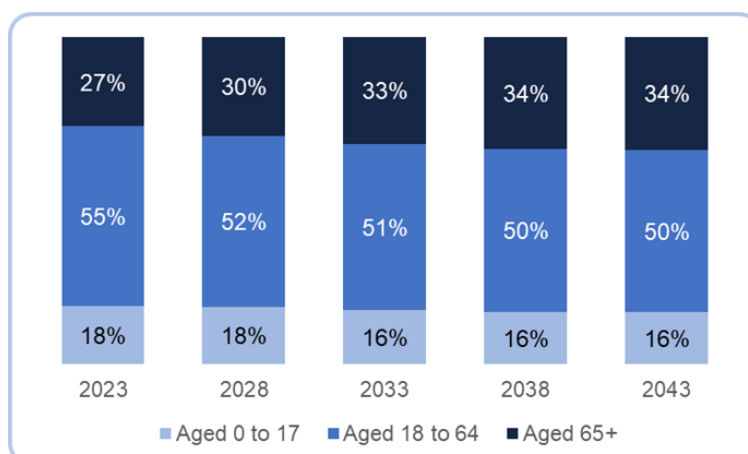
### **Our Community**

The Office for National Statistics estimates that Torbay has 139,485 people living in our area in approximately 63,000 households. The overall population in Torbay has grown by 4.9% in 2023 since 2013, this compares to 7% growth across England. 27% of our population is over 65 years of age which is set to increase to 34% during the next 20 years. This is only a slight increase since 10 years ago, when this group represented 25%.

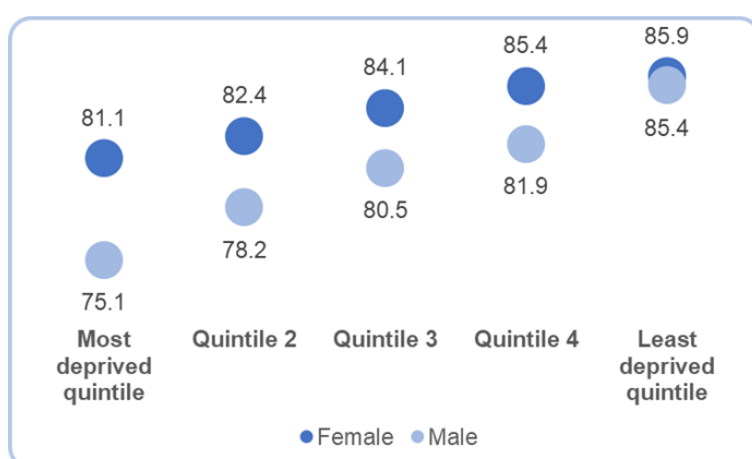
Torbay's population is projected to rise from 139,485 in 2023 to 153,088 by 2043.

The proportion of the population aged 0 to 17 is projected to fall from 18% to 16% by 2043. Those aged from 18 to 64 are projected to fall from 55% to 50% by

2043, the proportion of those aged 65 and over is expected to rise from 27% in 2023 to 34% by 2043. The projected rate of fall amongst those aged younger than 65 is steeper than the projections for England as a whole.



Life expectancy for males is 78.3 years and females 83.1 years. This is slightly below the national average for the latest three-year period for males but in-line for females. The average England life expectancy in males is 79.1 years and females 83.1 years. When compared to the South West, Torbay's life expectancy is approximately two years lower during the past three years for men and one year for women. The average for males in the Southwest is 80.1 years and females 84.0 years.



It is known nationally that there is a gap in life expectancy between the richer and poorer. From 2019 – 2023, men living in areas of Torbay that are amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England have a life expectancy of 10.3 years less

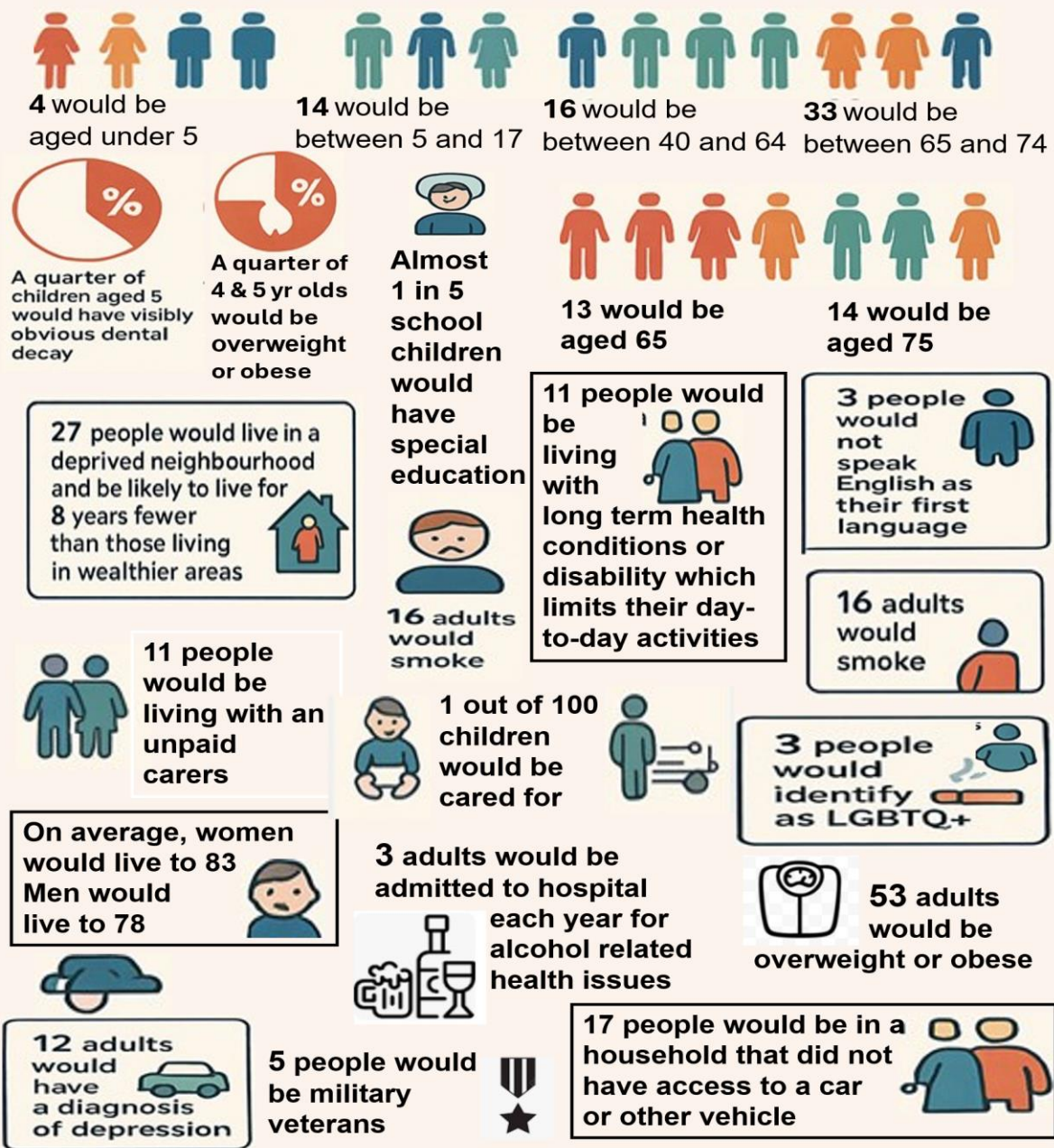
than those men living in our 20% least deprived areas. For women, the gap is 4.8 years.

Data on early mortality in Torbay from 2021 - 2023, those younger than 75, indicates that for causes of death relating to cardiovascular diseases, cancer, respiratory

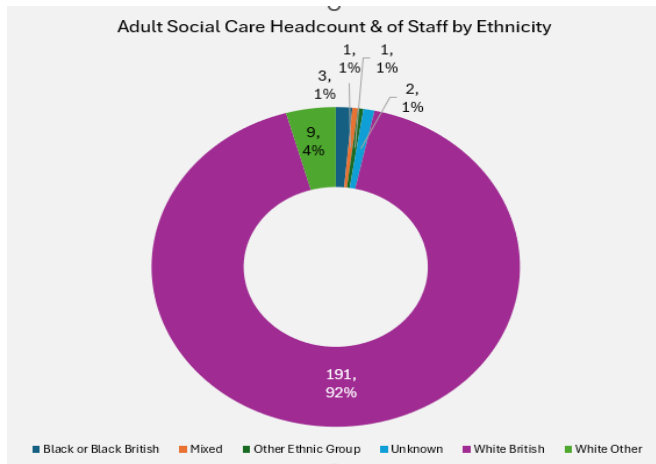
diseases and liver diseases, in females are broadly in line with the England national average along with respiratory diseases and liver diseases for males. When looking at cardiovascular diseases and cancer, in males are significantly higher than the England national average. Torbay is reported as having similar rates to the England average rates for both males and females in the preventable causes category over recent years.

## IF TORBAY WAS A VILLAGE

Torbay has a population of around 139,500, and remains the most deprived local authority in the Southwest

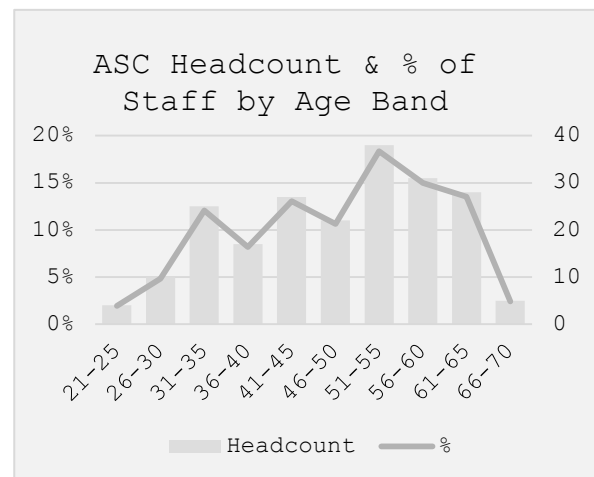


## Our adult social care: people and teams



Adult Social Care (ASC) in Torbay has made significant strides in modernising service delivery and strengthening workforce engagement. A major milestone was the reorganisation of teams to a Bay-wide model, enhancing consistency, efficiency, and flexibility in operations.

To support this transition, senior leaders introduced a range of engagement initiatives, including listening events, whole-service updates, and lunch and learn sessions. Long-standing monthly social care leads meetings continue to provide a platform for collaboration and are being reviewed to better align with ongoing transformation work.



The 2023 NHS Staff Survey and Local Government Association (LGA) Employer Standards Health Check highlighted key strengths such as flexible working, strong management support, and a safe working environment. Challenges, however, remain, including low survey participation, concerns around discrimination and inclusion, and reports of harassment from the public. These findings have informed a detailed action plan to drive improvement (IR04F).

ASC governance is supported by the Section 75 Executive Board and thematic steering groups, enabling co-produced improvements, such as refining panel

procedures. Senior leadership team meetings ensure strategic oversight, while targeted training supports professional development.

### **Financial position and use of resources (Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust)**

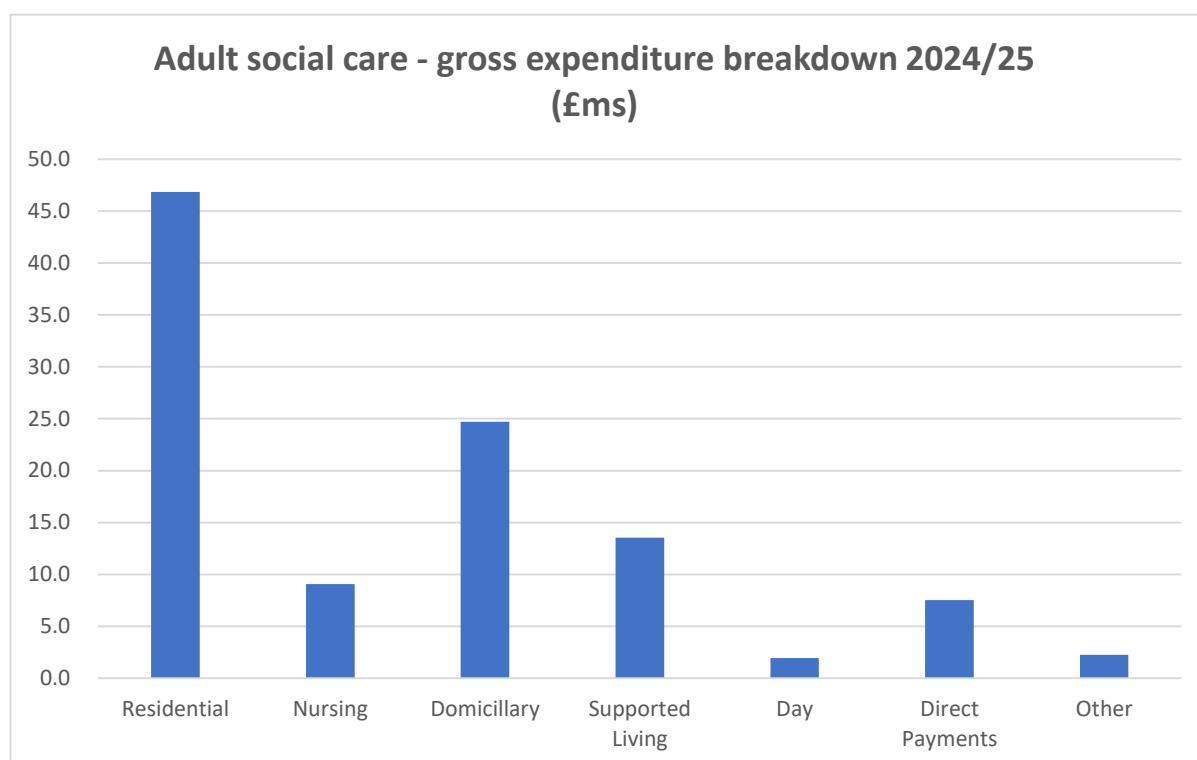
Our aim with this section of the review is to describe the financial resources available and how they have been used in the care sector. On 01 October 2015, an Integrated Care Organisation (ICO) was formed, and this organisation's remit was to provide Adult Social Care (ASC) on behalf of the population of Torbay. From a financial perspective Torbay Council's role as a commissioning body is to provide a funding contribution to the overall running costs of the ICO. In 2024/25 the council income contribution, including grants amounted to £65.6million. This was made up as follows.

	£million
Core contract	£56.500
Market sustainability	£3.625
Social care grant	£3.425
Delay discharges grant	£2.065
<b>Council income contribution 2024/25</b>	<b>£65.615</b>

The ICO provides a diverse range of service, of which ASC is a part. The ASC aspect specifically comprises of care management and social care support across Torbay as well as the cost of social workers, community care workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, finance and benefit assessors and support service staff. The council contribution towards ICO running costs aims to cover the cost of these staff, in addition to the actual cost of client care (outlined in more detail below).

The vast majority of ASC spend is used to purchase client care (including residential, nursing, supported living and domiciliary care) from independent providers. The majority of these providers are based in Torbay; however, the ICO also funds some specialist residential care provided out of area.

Net expenditure on the cost of care totalled £82.3million in 2024/25. This is the net figure after taking into account all client contributions towards the cost of care.



Under national legislation people assessed as having a social care need are also given an individual financial assessment. This assessment can result in a client being asked to contribute towards the cost of any care that the council then puts in place. The income collected from these client contributions in 2024/25 amounted to £23.6million. The total (gross) expenditure on services was £105.9million and the allocation of this gross expenditure across different types of services is illustrated in the following chart.

At any point in time throughout 2024/25 we are supporting more than 2,700 people and these services are provided to people aged 18 – 100 (and older), who have a range of needs such as learning disabilities, mental health issues, dementia, as well as those with sensory or physical disabilities, vulnerable people, and the frail and elderly.

Continuing from last financial year, in 2024/25 Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust has faced a number of ASC challenges linked with sustained pressure from the health system in general and a marked increase in the volume of people needing support, as mentioned above.

There has also been a continued increase in complexity which has seen the average cost of packages of care rising throughout the year (over and above any inflationary uplift). Underpinning this is the dynamic between care work and hospitality work and the latter have increased remuneration to attract workers into their sector. In the last couple of years to acknowledge this, the council, through national funding (ASC Market Sustainability) has been able to increase some rates to residential, nursing and domiciliary providers. This rise in cost has continued despite the volume of clients tailing back, highlighting the impact of the net movement of new clients coming into the system at higher rates.

### **Financial outlook for 2025/26 and beyond**

The 2025/26 fee setting process is now complete and a new structure has been shared with providers.

Partners are working closely together on a joint adult social care transformation programme (using identified council reserves), to identify improvements and efficiencies to the current operating model in Torbay to address the variance in budgets set and costs accrued, focussing on areas such as robust commissioning arrangements, improved contractual management, streamlined processes and procedures, enhanced reablement offers, greater choice and control for individuals, improved learning disability support and additional extra care provision.

Financial pressures, together with the ageing profile of our population, mean that we must optimise all the adult social care funding we have available.

The ICO and its partner organisations are committed to ensuring resources are managed to ensure the best level of care, for the highest number of people, can be provided. Both Torbay Council and NHS Devon Integrated Care Board acknowledge the pressures facing health and social care and continue to believe that the ICO is still best placed to manage these services.

The ICO will aim to achieve this through the managing of resources across health and social care to deliver a more efficient and effective profile of expenditure. This is needed not only to maintain a financially stable and sustainable model of care, but one that can improve people's experiences. Any development will be done in partnership with the Local Authority. Any service developments will be co-produced

with individuals in receipt of care and support, and we will consult with staff and care providers when appropriate.

### **Adult social care demand and performance 2023/2024**

Continued improvements and developments were made to the operational performance reporting during 2024-25. With reporting now well established within the appropriate governance routes and core areas of service performance routinely reported to the Council and Trust Board. Attention has been focussed on incorporating more key areas of service delivery into performance reporting. Work across 2024-25 has included:

- the roll out of referral data into the performance report, giving service leads more insight into cases flowing into ASC and supplementing existing front end waiting list reports
- the inclusion of occupational therapy waiting lists, showing rolling 12-month totals by priority, as well as length of wait data
- the inclusion of mental health service waiting list data for both Adult Mental Health Social Care (working aged adults) and OPMH (65+) teams
- the inclusion of FAB (Financial Assessments and Benefits) team waiting list data
- further development of review reporting, showing the rate of reviews being completed by duration since the last assessment, which provides service leads with greater insight into the rate at which reviews are getting completed
- client attrition reporting, giving improved insight into the rate at which new clients enter, and current clients leave the ASC system, which supplements existing data on the bottom-line number of clients supported at any one time
- the inclusion of a top-level balanced scorecard, providing a quick view picture of month-on-month changes in performance across all reported service areas

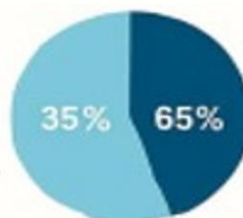
ASC operational performance reporting is being continuously improved to provide ever greater insight for service leads and executives into how services across ASC are performing and 2025-26 will see further developments being implemented to ensure improvement trajectories are set against national benchmarking data.

## Performance at a glance:

### Performance 2024-25



**3,740** received long term support services in 2024-25, compared to 3,596 in 2023-24 (+4.0%)



35% are aged 18-64

65% are aged 65 and older



People were accessing long term support services attend of 2024-25, compared to 2,450 at the end of 2023-24 (+5.5%)



**2,141** people received home care support to enable them to stay in their own home, compared to 2,014 in 2023-24 (+6.3%)



**5,764** carers are on Torbay's carers' register in 2024-35, compared to 5,302 in 2023-24 (+5.9%)



1,546 carers were assessed and reviewed

**733** carers accessed direct payments during 2024-25 compared to 748 (+2.3%)



**916** people with mental health issues were supported in 2024-25, compared to 851 in 2023-4 (+2.6%)



**95** people with learning difficulties are living in residential or nursing accommodation compared to 97 in 2023-24



**2,141** people received home care support to enable them to stay in their own home during 2024-25 (+2,014 in 2024-25 (+6.3%))



**1,104** people were in sermanent residential placements during 2024-25 compared to 1,057 in 2023-24 (+4.4%)



**1,034** safeguarding concerns were raised during 24 -25. This compares to 1,180 in 2023-24 (-12.4%)

The number of requests for support (new people drawing on care and support) increased in 2024-25, from 2,450 to 2,584 (+5.5%) however, fewer requests resulted in long term social care support, with this dropping slightly from 572 in 2023-24 to 561 (-1.9%). Instead, there was a marked increase in new requests leading to other support (+9.2%), such as short-term care, reablement, health funded support and referrals for Technology Enhanced Care and equipment. This is likely due to growing awareness of alternative and more suitable support away from conventional ASC services. There was also an increase in the number of new requests leading to no support (+2.4%).

The number of people with identified mental health needs who were supported by services again saw a notable increase in 2024-25 on the previous year (+7.6%). This followed a similar increase in 2023-24 of +6.9%.

The number of carers on the carers' register continues to increase, with 2024-25 seeing a +6.9% increase on 2023-24.

The number of safeguarding concerns raised saw a significant decrease in 2024-25 of -12.4%. The 2024-25 total dropped from 1,180 the previous year to 1,034.

ASC in Torbay supports thousands of residents to live independently, stay safe, and enjoy the best possible quality of life. During the past year the service has not only supported more people but also continued to improve how it monitors and manages care, making sure services are working well and meeting local needs.

### **What's new? – better information for better services**

In 2024/25, we made real progress in how we understand and improve our services:

- We now track more types of support, like occupational therapy and mental health services, helping us better manage waiting lists and respond faster.
- We've added new reporting tools that show how many people are entering and leaving the care system. This helps us plan better and keep support sustainable.
- A new scorecard gives a quick monthly snapshot of how we're doing across all service areas.

These changes mean local care leaders can act more quickly to improve services and plan for the future more effectively.

## **Who did we support in 2024/25?**

- 3,740 adults received long-term care (an increase of 4.0% on the previous year) 65% were aged 65 or older
- 2,736 people were still receiving ongoing long-term care at the end of the year (up 4.5%)

We also helped in many other ways:

- 2,584 new requests for support were made (up 5.5%)
  - 22% led to long-term care
  - 62% led to short-term or alternative support (like equipment or health-funded care)
  - 16% required no further help, for example, some people arranged their own care or were supported to find an alternative.

This shift shows that more people are being supported through quicker, more flexible services that may avoid the need for ongoing care.

## **Supporting carers and mental health**

Carers continue to play a vital role:

- 5,764 carers are now on the local register – a 6.9% rise from last year
- 1,546 carers were assessed or reviewed (-2.7%)
- 733 carers received direct payments to manage support themselves (-2.0%)

Mental health needs are also increasing:

- 916 people with mental health issues received support (+7.6%)
- This follows a similar rise last year, showing a continuing trend in need

## **Other key services**

- 2,141 people received help at home – a 6.3% increase, helping more people stay independent
- 1,104 people were in residential care – up 4.4%
- 500 people used direct payments for their own care – slightly down from last year

**What does it all mean?** In 2024/25, more people asked for help – and more received flexible, tailored support that met their needs without always requiring long-term care. That's a sign that early support options like reablement, equipment, and tech-based care are working well.

We also saw growing demand for mental health services and continued growth in the number of carers. These areas will remain a key focus as we move forward.

## **Looking ahead**

We're committed to continuing this progress in 2025/26. Our goals include:

- Improving support for unpaid carers
- Making it easier for people to manage their own care through direct payments
- Keeping a close eye on safeguarding trends to ensure people are protected
- Using better data to make quicker, more informed decisions

### **Key service areas:**

- Mental health: 916 people supported (+7.6%) reflects growing demand, echoing wider public mental health trends. Sustained year-on-year growth signals a need for strategic workforce and commissioning planning.
- Home care: 2,141 supported (+6.3%) reflects an effective community-based support model.
- Residential care: Slight increases in both learning disabilities and older adults' placements. Alternatives to residential care are being progressed alongside council commissioning colleagues
- Direct payments: The decrease from 517 to 500 (-3.3%) is disappointing. Efforts are underway to embed direct payments more effectively into practice, making them more accessible and user-friendly for both individuals who draw on care and support and the staff who assist them, in order to encourage greater uptake.

## **5. Quality analysis and Strategic implications**

The overall performance trajectory in 2024/25 reflects a maturing, data-driven approach to quality assurance and continuous improvement:

- Proactive diversification: The shift from long-term care to earlier, alternative interventions is aligned with national strategic direction and person-centred outcomes.

- Performance intelligence: Enhancements in reporting enable earlier identification of emerging pressures and ensure more agile, informed leadership responses.
- Sustainability and demand management: Despite a year-on-year increase in demand, the system has responded with proportionate increases in service provision, suggesting resilience, but also a need to monitor capacity closely.

2024/25 has been a year of purposeful enhancement in ASC performance management, grounded in better data, broader scope, and clearer insights. These improvements provide a robust platform to further elevate service quality, improve user outcomes, and support strategic planning into 2025/26 and beyond.

The **Adult Social Care Survey 2024** demonstrated several positive outcomes, reflecting the dedication of staff and the overall quality of care services provided across Torbay and South Devon.

Key highlights include a consistently high level of satisfaction among people who draw on care and support:

- 88% of people who completed the standard questionnaire were satisfied with the care and support services they receive. This compares to 88% in 2023.
- 98% of people who completed the Easy Read version thought that the way staff help them is ok or better (96% in 2023).
- 72% of people feel as safe as they want (68% in 2023) and 22% feel adequately safe, but not as safe they would like (26%). 5% feel less than adequately safe (5%) and 2% do not feel safe at all (1%).
- 85% of those of who completed the standard survey rated their quality of life as alright or better (84% in 2023).

The findings also reflect the success of early engagement strategies, with 75% of responses received following the initial round of letters, indicating an effective approach to outreach and communication. These achievements re-affirm the positive impact of ongoing efforts to support independence, dignity, and satisfaction among those who rely on social care services.

The **Healthwatch report on unpaid carers** reveals several accomplishments that highlight the commitment to supporting unpaid carers across Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay.

From the Healthwatch report, collaboration with carers led to important insights. Carers' feedback helped develop co-designed surveys and guided conversations, reflecting a shared dedication to understanding their needs. Around half (53%) of Torbay respondents said they do know where to go for support, with the most common responses being carers services, social services and the GP, highlighting effective awareness-building efforts. Additionally, many carers reported using beneficial coping strategies, such as time outdoors and support from friends, showing the effectiveness of resilience-building initiatives.

These achievements underline a consistent focus on maintaining user satisfaction, improving accessibility, and ensuring carers and service users are supported through thoughtful policies and practices.

#### 1. Training and awareness resources

The main priority mentioned in the report was around dementia. A particular success in Torbay has been the co-design of a dementia carers' training programme in partnership with a carer / carers' group / carers' services and Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust's education team. This was launched in February and has had extremely good feedback.

### **Amplifying people's voices**

We recently progressed the Amplifying People's Voices engagement project led by Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, which was designed to help us better understand the experiences of people who live in care homes, their families, and representatives. We contacted more than 500 people. A third of people responded. As a result, work is underway to develop a co design approach to the development of a care home toolkit that people said they wanted; two workshops have been held with families and the contract team to co design the new specification for our care homes.

## **Improving feedback and embedding learning**

During the past 12 months, ASC received 45 complaints and concerns. These comprised 60% concerns, 29% formal complaints, 10% MP enquiries, and 1% no further action. Key themes identified included finance and billing (41%), communication (22%), and service delivery (16%).

In response, we have taken targeted action:

- **Finance and billing:** Updated public charging policy leaflets and made them accessible online; increased staff awareness through meetings, emails, and case note reminders.
- **Communication:** Complaint findings are shared with team leads, and learning is embedded through supervision and reflective practice.

All feedback is tracked using a digital tool, with learning outcomes and actions monitored by the Quality Assurance (QA) Lead. This ensures that staff training and service improvements are directly informed by lived experiences.

## **Carer feedback and service gaps**

Recent carer surveys highlighted concerns around communication, lack of respite care, and barriers to accessing support. In response, we are:

- Incorporating carer recognition into all service contact points
- Launching self-assessment tools for carers
- Improving training for professionals on carer identification
- Partnering with local organisations to enhance engagement
- Developing a robust Replacement Care (Respite) offer
- Created a Service Improvement Board to provide a forum to oversee continuous Improvement

## **Looking ahead**

We are committed to a continuous cycle of feedback, learning, and improvement. By reducing crisis interventions, increasing carer support, and embedding reflective practice across teams, we aim to provide responsive, transparent, and person-centred care for all.

## **Transformation**

Adult social care plays a vital role improving people's lives by helping them to remain independent at home and in their community. As we continue to support people to live well within their communities, we recognise we need to do more to ensure we can effectively meet the rising demand for adult social care support and provide sustainable, high-quality support across Torbay.

During the past year, we have undertaken a significant amount of work to improve the service to enhance the support we provide to people. We have continued to remain focused on promoting independence, managing demand effectively, and ensuring we meet our legal duties under the Care Act through preventative and person-centred approaches.

The two key areas of improvement this year have been our reablement pilot and the improvement work happening to improve how people access information and guidance before needing to approach adult social care for support; both of these initiatives have delivered positive outcomes for people and our wider health and care system.

### **Reablement pilot: Promoting independence**

Recognising the importance of supporting people to regain and maintain their independence our delivery partners, Channel 3, helped to launch a reablement pilot in 2024. The aim was to improve people's independence via a community pathway or on a waiting list to enable them to regain skills and confidence with everyday activities.

Key achievements of the reablement pilot include:

- Increased independence levels for people, with 79% of people achieving full independence following their reablement intervention and not requiring a package of care.
- A proportion of people ended up with a reduced package of care because they had developed the skills for daily activities.
- A reduction in commissioned statutory support packages, as people are better equipped to manage their own health and wellbeing at home.

- Positive feedback from people who use our services and families, who report improved quality of life and greater confidence in self-care.
- Cost efficiencies within the care system, as more people successfully move to lower levels of support.

Building on this success, we will be integrating reablement principles further across our services to ensure more people benefit from strengths-based approaches that promote self-sufficiency. We will use the learning from this pilot to inform future commissioning.

### **Accessing adult social care services: managing demand and promoting diversion**

To enhance how people access adult social care support, we have undertaken a front door service improvement activity aimed at improving demand management by promoting diversion to more appropriate services. This work aligns with our Care Act duties, focusing on early intervention, diversion, and appropriate signposting to community-based support.

Key improvements include:

- Strengthened partnerships with community organisations and voluntary sector services, providing alternative support options that prevent escalation of need.
- Enhanced workforce training to embed strengths-based conversations, focusing on what people can do rather than what they cannot.
- Implementation of an enhanced telephony system.

As a result of these improvements, we have seen:

- A reduction in formal care assessments, with more people accessing community-based solutions.
- Greater awareness among residents of preventative support options, helping to build resilience and reduce long-term dependency on statutory services.
- Improved oversight of call quality and demand data which has supported improved decision making, operational planning and management.

## **Panels**

To improve decision-making, one initiative considered practice and process around panels to improve their effectiveness. Key improvements include:

- Streamlined processes which have led to enhanced oversight and accountability.
- More effective decision making because of changes to meeting preparation including a standardised format and chair.
- Technology-Enabled Care (TEC) and intermediate care are now consistently represented in all meetings.
- Commissioning representatives attending the complex care panel.
- Arranging Support Team (AST) validates care package costs and processes care home placements.
- All of which is contributing to improved grip on cost control.

## **Brokerage**

Our aim was to standardise practices for sourcing care via the AST team to improve market management, process for practitioners and grip on spend. Key improvements include:

- A refreshed process and referral form implemented across teams.
- Fee rates negotiated consistently with agreed market rates.
- Reduced errors with contract set up saving operational teams' time.
- Improved data capture.

## **Hospital discharge**

People who no longer need acute care recover better at home, in their own bed, surrounded by their loved ones. We have been working hard to improve how we support people to return home from hospital, with a care package if needed, for lunchtime or by 5pm.

We spent time with teams to understand the reasons why some people were delayed being discharged from hospital, the impacts on outcomes, demand and costs of people discharged through pathway 2. Pathway 2 is a model designed to integrate health and social care services for people with complex needs. By offering

a coordinated, person-centered approach, Pathway 2 has significantly improved health outcomes and quality of life for many residents. This has been evidenced where individuals previously at risk of hospital admission were able to receive tailored care in their homes, leading to a reduction in unplanned hospital stays and increased satisfaction people and their carers. A multi-disciplinary team (MDT) approach was used to review individuals and understand through a social work lens if people could have achieved a better outcome. Recommendations are being reviewed but immediate actions were taken to:

- Improve Technology Enabled Care practice by organising training for the team.
- Reinforce Home First principles.
- Address improvements linked to mental capacity assessments

## **Commissioning report**

### **Our vision: Thriving communities where people can prosper**

During 2024/25, our strategic commissioning team has continued to deliver against the wide-ranging programme of work set out in the [Torbay Adult Social Care Market Transformation Blueprint](#) to support commissioning projects across health, housing and adult social care. Our Market Position Statement (MPS) 20025 (draft), reinforces our commitment to meet our moral and statutory duties. The Care Act 2014 places a duty on Torbay Council to “facilitate a diverse, sustainable, high-quality market for their whole local population and to promote efficient and effective operation of the adult care and support market as a whole. They must also ensure continuity of care in the event of provider failure”. This duty will be met within the context of four overarching strategic priorities:

Our priorities remain:

- Enabling more people to be healthy and stay healthy
- Enhancing self-care and community resilience
- Integrate and improve community services and care in people’s homes
- Deliver modern, safe and sustainable services

In line with the strength-based approach underpinning the Care Act 2014

We are working to increase the use of enabling housing-based models of care and support so that people have greater choice and control over how, where, and with whom they live and how their care is provided.

These options include

- Ambitious capital projects such as multigenerational extra care housing, smaller schemes for groups with specific needs, and new models of home care to support people's remaining living with family carers at home.
- Increase the number of people maintaining their own independence by offering better information at an early stage to enable people to recognise their own strengths and assets, combining them with voluntary or community support and access to equipment and technology to meet their needs in the first instance.
- Reduce the systemic use of residential care to meet low-level social care needs. This means not placing working-age adults into care homes wherever possible and delaying the point at which older people enter residential care. The council and our NHS partners will only commission homes capable of meeting very complex and nursing needs, working with our care home sector to constantly improve quality and capability within Torbay.
- To support and help people stay as well and independent as possible and able to manage their own well-being in their homes, wherever possible. Where care is needed, we want people to have a choice about how their needs are met and only have to tell their story once. The people receiving services must be at the heart of what we and providers deliver together.
- We want people to remain in control of their lives, to remain independent and to have the opportunity to make their own choices about their care and support arrangements.
- We will achieve this by our direct payment system being as clear as possible and allowing people true autonomy to meet their eligible care and support needs.

- To further our work, Torbay have initiated the direct payments project, which aims to review and implement recommendations for improvement. This meeting will bring together key partners from the council and the ICO for collaborative work to improve our approach to direct payments in ASC.
- We have supported a wide-ranging transformation programme which has included developing a policy framework for direct payments, redevelopment of our front door into social care and test some small-scale test of concept ideas around reablement.

This has led to setting up some priority pieces of work to be completed in 2025/26.

We are proud of the work that continues around our LD ambassadors this has included further development of the [Big Plan learning disability strategy](#), and an event held called the Big Event to galvanise support for the strategy. This strategy is now leading to the development of an action plan which we are committed to starting during 2025/26.

We have also supported the trust and the council in its preparation for a pending CQC inspection process. In June 2024 we took part in a LGA peer review for ASC which allowed us an opportunity to review our system with the support of an external team.

This year the team led on or supported an increasingly demanding stream of grant funding programmes from central government, including the market sustainability and improvement fund, the accelerated reform fund, and the better care fund. The team has provided a strategic market view that supports quality assurance workstreams such as adult safeguarding, provider quality assurance and individual packages of care that require support with services outside of adult social care.

Finally, the team has continued to directly procure and support key infrastructure services, including the community helpline and hub, Healthwatch Devon, and an extension to the Citizens' Advice contract.

## **Voluntary sector partnerships**

We have continued to build positive partnerships across our third sector organisations. The community and voluntary sector are buoyant and well developed in Torbay. We receive actively engaged from the sector to work on shared endeavours with a common goal of maximising independence and support to people within our communities. This wider network supports people in ways that are outside of scope for statutory services but neither the less offer the glue that often keeps people safe, well and connected. We remain committed to furthering our relationship so we can really hear and understand the voices from our community and find ways to strengthen and build resilience for local people closer to home.

## **Front door and in-person hub support**

We have re-procured our community helpline and community hub (which is in Paignton Library)

These services support us to divert statutory referrals to the community and voluntary sector, where we believe outcomes can be improved by addressing low level needs early, which may prevent or delay people needing statutory/commissioned care.

We continue to actively engage with the voluntary sector network as we start to look at national schemes that build on the principles of place and neighbourhoods. Taking a joined-up view on how services (across the whole health and social care network including voluntary sector) work in a joined-up way to impact on the whole population living within a defined geographic area.

The hub at Paignton Library offers a relaxed and accessible environment where people can get advice, information, and support. The helpline is a telephone service which is accessible to members of the public or health and social care professionals to seek advice, guidance or make a referral for support.

## **Supported living and extra care housing**

- Our vision is to ensure that people can be as independent as possible in a place they can call home, with the right support. For some people this may mean increasing care and support provision over time to delay a need for

more intensive support like a residential placement, for other people this may be about building new skills and decreasing support until they can move onto their very own accommodation one day without support. In some circumstances this means the housing care and support offer needs to be more specialised in the form of a supported living scheme or extra care housing.

- We continue to support people who draw on social care services to make choices about where, how and with whom they live across a range of housing options. By having an experienced supported housing commissioner within the Strategic Commissioning Team, we have greatly improved our ability to meet increasingly complex needs within mainstream social housing. This has enabled people to step down from long-term out-of-area hospital beds directly to a home of their own with the security of an assured tenancy and all the necessary adaptations to maximise their independence.
- We also continue to slowly increase the availability of housing with support, now that we have an effective Strategic Housing Delivery Team working with us and using the Government's social housing funding programme to deliver the adult social care housing requirements set out in the Torbay Housing Strategy. The Council is now seeking planning consent for a new 92-apartment extra-care housing scheme in Paignton, with building due to start in March 2026 and be completed in late Spring 2028. This will be followed by a further scheme of similar size in Torquay, scheduled for completion in 2030.
- Work is ongoing to improve our commissioning partnerships with Registered Providers of social housing, independent social developers, specialist support providers, health and social care professionals and the supported living sector as a whole. During 2025-26 this will ensure the delivery of 8 new 1-bed and 2-bed adapted apartments for people with complex learning disabilities; 12 new 1-bed apartments for people recovering from mental illness and other bespoke housing opportunities for people needing specific environments or locations.
- Looking ahead, our focus will be on continuing to prepare the supported housing sector for the implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, and to deliver more Social Housing Grant-funded social housing for people drawing on health and social care services. We will

continue to improve our engagement with both housing providers and commissioned support providers, driving up quality and choice across Torbay.

### **Direct payments**

Enabling people to have choice and control over their care is an important feature of adult social care. In June 2024, a review was undertaken on direct payments with a series of recommendations which include:

- Improved policy and procedures.
- Streamline processes and resources to support operational team's practice.
- In-depth analysis of the Personal Assistant (PA) market and improve visibility and quality of PAs.
- Exploring the creation of a direct payment officer role to drive practice improvements.

### **Looking ahead**

The work undertaken in 2024/25 has demonstrated the impact of proactive, person-centred approaches in adult social care. We will continue to refine our reablement offer, expand the improvements which will enable people to access community support before seeking ASC interventions, and strengthen our partnerships with health, housing, and community services to create a more sustainable, integrated system of care.

We remain committed to ensuring that people receive the right support at the right time, promoting independence, and enhancing quality of life across our communities.

### **Principal Social Work Annual Report**

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) describes the social worker role as aiming to improve people's lives by helping with interpersonal difficulties, promoting human rights and wellbeing. From helping keep a family under pressure together to supporting someone with mental health problems, to safeguarding adults with care and support needs from abuse, social work is a varied, demanding, often emotional and very rewarding career.

Social workers must be registered with Social Work England (SWE) and apply a set of professional standards which describe what they must know, understand and be able to do.

The principal social worker role is enshrined in the Care Act to ensure there is professional practice oversight in place to lead, oversee, support and develop excellent social work practice and in turn lead the development of excellent social workers and social care practitioners.

### **Local Government Association's Peer Challenge Review statement.**

#### **[LGA Corporate Peer Challenge \(Torbay\) Report](#)**

In June 2024 Torbay's adult social care service took part in the Local Government Association's (LGA) Peer Challenge Review. The review was an opportunity for the LGA to provide feedback as a critical friend to support improvement across the service. It was not an inspection and nor did it award a rating or score.

People working across our services in the council and NHS, carers and other partners took part in the review, including giving interviews to inform the LGA's feedback report.

The feedback identified our strong culture of "grow your own" in the local workforce, with good evidence from staff about opportunities for development and promotion, and low sickness, vacancies, and turnover rates.

Staff who met with the team were very positive about the support they received from their colleagues and described good support from visible professional leadership and line management, including through supervision and appraisal, and more informally.

Learning processes are in place to support improvements in practice, and more widely to assure it: this includes through safeguarding adult reviews, the mandatory Oliver McGowan training, working with people who draw on care and support, and working with the voluntary sector. Training was described as good, and there was positive engagement with social work practice weeks, where a focus on sharing good practice has engaged staff and senior managers.

### **My story: Abbie, a newly qualified social worker**

"I absolutely loved my first year of practice within an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme and feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to transition from completing the degree into an ASYE role.



"It goes without saying that the level in which I enjoyed my ASYE and first year of practice, is because of the fantastic team I worked within, alongside very supportive managers and the well-mapped ASYE programme. I always felt heard, understood, and part of a team where we all root for one another.

"I benefited from the ASYE a lot, as it enabled me to integrate what I learnt through the degree and placements into practice, while also being protected with a reduced caseload to continue to learn, reflect, and find my feet putting everything into real practice while developing my social work identity. I enjoyed the timescales of the ASYE programme as the level of demand was significantly less than completing the degree, and I also had a good level of study time which could be used flexibly in a way that best suited my learning style. This study time was very important for my ASYE journey, as the day-to-day role in social work is so busy, it would be challenging to factor in real time for reflection and research.

"I am grateful to my manager, practice educator and the complex care team for all the support and consistency they gave me. Honestly, I could not have asked for a better start to my social work career."

### **My story: Naomi, an ASYE assessor**

"I have worked for Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust since 2008, joining as a health and social care coordinator. Throughout my employment I have progressed to become a social worker, practice educator and now, in the past 12 months, as an ASYE assessor.



"It is both a privilege and pleasure to be in this role and be part of the journey as the social worker embarks on their new career path. The role supports the social worker to implement learning from their social work training and

apply this into a practice setting, providing provision for support to ensure rich learning and development, with a real focus on the AYSE critical reflective skills.

“As an assessor, I feel the organisation provides good levels of support to both the AYSE, the assessor and supervisor. The organisation also provides access to the Research in Practice for Adults ([RIPFA](#)) website. This provides me with excellent practice teaching tools and the AYSE an evidence-based resource to enable the continuation and embedding of learning into practice.

“I feel my role as AYSE assessor has developed directly because of the ongoing support of the principal social worker and senior leadership team as they are demonstrably keen to support continuing professional development.

“I thoroughly enjoy my role of AYSE Assessor and look forward to working with many more social workers undertaking their AYSE in the future.”

#### **Pete – Student social worker**

“Since I started working for the trust in 2006, I had recognised an evolving passion for working with those accessing our services, becoming increasingly aware of the struggles people face in life, whether it be inequality, social injustice, mental health challenges, the impacts of poverty or simply the weight of feeling unheard. With this developing desire to empower individuals, families, or communities I was encouraged and supported by my line manager, and the trust’s Principal Social Worker, to apply to study social work via the Open University. This represented a significant opportunity, but one that came with huge feelings of trepidation and anticipation, would I be good enough, could I return to academic study after twenty years? All these thoughts were tempered with the desire to effect positive change and a knowledge that I had a lot to give to the profession. Since starting the course, I have been afforded so many positive opportunities, initially in the transitions team and subsequently with the adult mental health social care team. During my time within these teams, I have developed a keen awareness of the skills and capabilities of the organisation’s social workers, as well as being afforded the opportunity to apply my developing knowledge of social work legislation and theories into practice. For example, exploring how theories such as the social model of disability or the ecological perspective can help empower people, promoting the wellbeing principle and person-centred ethos of the Care Act 2014. I am so pleased that I chose to

study to be a social worker. For although the material is challenging, taking a significant amount of time and a considerable amount of self-reflection, it is so rewarding and laced with the opportunity for creating positive change.”

### **My Story: Alex, a practice educator**

“I have been a qualified practice educator for more than three years. Despite now being in a more senior role within the organisation, I still very much enjoy providing the practice educator role; not only is it thoroughly rewarding being part of a student social worker’s journey into their new career, it also offers timely reminders to ensure fundamental aspects of the profession are applied as a practitioner myself. This could include, for example, time to reflect on values or to look at new pieces of research. The practice educator role is crucial in ring-fencing time to ensure the theory and concepts that underpin our work are understood and applied by students; on that basis, its positive impact on our student social workers and workforce in general cannot be understated.”



### **Professional practice**

During 2024/25, we reviewed our practice quality standards which provide the fundamental practice benchmarks for all staff to embrace and use in their day-to-day practice. They are designed to help people who draw on care and support to understand our practices. They also help staff measure their work and use these standards for quality assurance and supervision in adult social care." The standards describe everything from our approach to strengths-based practice to equity, diversity and inclusion.

We have also provided workforce training opportunities ranging from a leadership training programme, trauma-informed practice to cultural humility and anti-racist practice.

We are looking forward to embedding our Practice Quality Standard framework as well as focusing on a number of workstreams in our transformation programme.

## **Findings from audits**

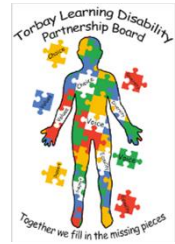
We continue to undertake a monthly audit system focusing on the quality of adult social care intervention. We continue to undertake a monthly audit system focusing on the quality of adult social care intervention. The findings from these audits are analysed and thematically reported to the Service Improvement Board, where they inform decision-making, identify areas for development, and shape improvement plans. This process ensures a clear line of sight to the Council by providing a structured mechanism for governance, accountability, and assurance on the quality and impact of adult social care practice.

Last year we recruited a quality assurance social work lead, who now runs the monthly audits, capturing any themes that require improvements and working closely with colleagues and their line managers to improve standards. One of the main audit outcomes has been the need to better identify and support carers. The quality assurance lead has been meeting with teams and undertaking one to one training sessions with staff to demonstrate where we can improve performance.

The audits have evidenced that our standards of social care assessments, case recordings and multi-disciplinary working are of a good standard overall. Positive feedback is also shared with colleagues, which has been received well with one stating, 'it is nice to have my hard work recognised, as we only usually receive feedback when something has gone wrong'.

The monthly audits support the findings of the LGA Peer Challenge Review which summarised: 'The case file audit undertaken as part of the challenge review found good practice, including around legal decision making, and least restrictive practice' (LGA Peer Challenge Review 2024).

## Torbay Learning Disability Partnership Board ambassadors' report 2025



The ambassadors have completed another busy year with more than 20 people visiting them to talk about a variety of subjects. They were really pleased to welcome Torbay Council's Chief Executive, Anne- Marie Bond, and asked her a lot of TEC questions about her role. Tracie, who is one of the Learning Disability Ambassadors, created three pieces of artwork for Anne- Marie which are proudly displayed in her office.



The ambassadors spent time working with Macmillan to look at the information that is available about cancer and how it could be improved for people with learning disabilities. The team created a poster and leaflet for people to take to GP appointments to explain any symptoms or things they are worried about.



Torbay Hospital made the ambassadors very welcome when they took part in the Treat Me Well day in April 2024. The ambassadors worked with hospital staff to look at the reasonable adjustments that are made for people who use the hospital. It was a good day, and everyone felt they learnt a lot.



Dr Clenton Farquharson a consultant, auditor, trainer, and coach on inclusion, equality and disability, visited the team of ambassadors as part of the Local Government Association's Peer Challenge Review, and he was impressed with the work the ambassadors have achieved. He particularly liked the training delivered and how the council listened to the need for Easy Read information and Reasonable Adjustments.



The work on the Big Plan continues and the team meet up with Nigel Williams, Torbay Council's Strategic Commissioning Manager, to see what is needed next. The team has created a survey about day services and helped with information about housing. It is good that the plan is becoming a real focus and there is still a lot to do.

At the partnership board, Neil Harvey stood down as co-chair with Mike Fuller taking over the role.



Three members of the ambassador team are delivering the Oliver McGowan training. This is training to provide health and social care staff with the knowledge and skills to better support people with learning disabilities and autism. Three ambassadors are directly employed by the partnership board.

## **Hollocombe Community Resource Centre**

[Take a tour of Hollocombe](#)

## **Autism Partnership Board annual report**

### **Focus on Autism**

Learn more about how we provide safe, quality care and the best experience for autistic people.

### **Autism Partnership Board**

The Autism Partnership Board launched in November 2022 and members meet four times a year. The board is driven by the voices of autistic people, their carers and professionals who work together to improve outcomes for Torbay's autistic community. The board is supported by eight ambassadors and two carers' representatives who raise issues important to the autistic community.

In September 2024, the ambassadors held their second autism awareness event, the Autistic Education and Employment Conference and Fair, at the Redcliffe Hotel Paignton. More than 100 autistic people, their carers, professionals and local organisations attended the successful event. The ambassadors gave speeches about their experiences on a variety of topics relating to education (studying and teaching), employment, self-employment, and volunteering. Afterwards, stalls run by local organisations opened for attendees to visit, and the ambassadors ran a drop-in Q&A session for attendees to have one-to-one informal chats.

The ambassadors were very grateful for the overwhelmingly positive feedback they received and will be using it to plan their 2025 event. When asked what the most useful part of the event was, comments included:

- ✔ "I was interested to listen to the experiences of the ambassadors. Also, the networking was very useful."
- ✔ "Listening to lived experiences - this was the most impactful part. Also, being able to network, meet other professionals, organisations and parents."
- ✔ "Getting to hear from the ambassadors was very informative and uplifting. They really are ambassadors."

The board's main focus last year was the production of the Torbay Autism Strategy, Torbay Council's application of The [national strategy for autistic children, young](#)

[people and adults: 2021 to 2026](#), the government's policy for improving the lives of autistic people and their families and carers. This has been done in full co-production with both the autism ambassadors and the carers representatives, tailoring the strategy to focus on the needs of Torbay's autistic community. A six-week public survey was launched in October 2024, and more than 270 responses were received. The Torbay Autism Strategy will be available in the Autumn of 2025.

In the past year, the Autism Partnership Board has consulted on Torbay Council's Reasonable Adjustments Policy, the Torbay multi-agency Suicide Prevention Plan 2024-2027 and the Local Government Peer Review. The autism ambassadors have consulted on Torbay Council's web review, the NHS 10 Year Plan, and the carer's' representatives have consulted with representatives from Devon and Cornwall Police's diverse communities' team to develop a communication strategy for information on exploitation and grooming, with a focus on hidden crime.

The Autism Partnership Board and the autism ambassadors have worked together to develop a health passport. Autistic people can use health passports to record personal, medical and other essential information such as communication styles, sensory differences, anxiety and distress responses and how medical professionals can best assist that person. The health passport can then be taken to medical appointments to share with health professionals to better inform their care. This health passport is available to download from [Torbay Council's website](#).

The Autism Partnership Board, the autism ambassadors and the carers' representatives continue to pursue and support the interests of Torbay's autistic community, increasing public awareness, understanding and acceptance, improving recognition of autism by statutory organisations, improving social inclusion and pushing for reasonable adjustments for autism in all fields.

### **Torbay Advice Network**

Torbay Advice Network (TAN) is commissioned to support autistic people and their carers and provides free impartial advice on a range of benefit issues. This includes helping people to understand what benefits they are entitled to and assist in challenging benefit decisions, including improving access to support with appeals.

TAN's employment-related support also includes guidance and templates for reasonable adjustment requests in the workplace and details on how the Access to Work scheme can help people to stay in or access employment.

In addition to Access to Work scheme guidance, they give free advice on welfare and benefits including:

- Accompaniment to benefit related medical assessment
- Attendance allowance
- Benefit appeals
- Benefit application assistance
- Carers' Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Reasonable adjustments guidance
- Universal Credit

You can access TAN's services at [www.advisingtorbay.org](http://www.advisingtorbay.org)

## **Dimensions For Autism**

Dimensions for Autism (DFA) provide peer support groups for autistic adults. The Torbay group usually meets on the last Monday afternoon of each month in Paignton. There are also online support groups that meet at least twice a month, such as the LGBTQ+ ASC group and younger adults' group, to support people who do not feel able to attend real-life events. Members can attend any online or in-person group regardless of where they live, such as the women's group based in Exeter. The groups provide a vital platform for members to share interests and hobbies and speak about day-to-day matters that may be affecting them.

Here are some of the things members have said about the help they have received from Dimensions for Autism:

"I was diagnosed with autism when I was 15, but I knew that I was autistic from a very young age. The world I grew up in was very different to the one we live in today

– stigma was rife, even among my own family members, and while there were a fair few people in my life trying their best to support me, the understanding they had of autism was very limited. Sadly, that meant that a lot of that stigma ended up bleeding into the way I viewed myself. I felt a great deal of shame for being autistic, felt guilty about the way I was judged by others, and was hesitant to even be diagnosed, fearing carrying the label with me, but a diagnosis was required for me to access support in my GCSEs.

“Due to my low self-esteem, I never made an effort to learn about autism, or the way it affected me. All I had was the stigma, the occasional media representation (many of which were equally stigmatic), and deeply complicated labels like high functioning that made me even more critical of my own intelligence, successes and capabilities. After leaving school, now feeling like a failure in addition to all the other ways I hated myself, I isolated myself from the world for the better part of 10 years, feeling that it was better that I felt lonely than to find the ways I’d been judged in the past, and the ways I continued to judge myself, be validated in other people.

“I missed a lot in that time, but one thing I did miss was the way that public awareness and understanding of autism improved, and Dimensions for Autism played a big part in that. I now know that many people felt just as lonely as I did, and in finding, and eventually coming to Dimensions for Autism’s groups, I, like they did before me, found so much healing in coming together to share experiences. DFA’s dual focus of having the chance to talk about your experiences with people you can trust who have gone through similar things, and discussing psycho-educational topics and topics that impact our community as a group of peers, means I’m learning so much more about myself, and learning how many things about myself I felt I was alone with that I share with the rest of my community.

“Dimensions for Autism is a vital part in the wider picture of autism awareness and acceptance in Torbay. We live in a better world today than the one I grew up thanks to the efforts of Trish and everyone that makes DFA the safe and healing space that it is, one that is rapidly becoming free of stigma, of misinformation and of judgement, and I’m so grateful to them to know that not only do I not need to feel ashamed or guilty for simply being myself, but that nobody ever should.”

## **Autistic After Hours**

Autistic After Hours is a Community Interest Company (CIC) set up as a result of conversations at the Autism Partnership Board. Members of the board identified that there was a distinct lack of services for autistic adults in the evenings and weekends which left people socially isolated, so two board members decided to apply for funding to provide that support. Autistic After Hours has now been running for more than a year and has 87 members on its mailing list. The group meet once a month on a Saturday afternoon in Paignton, where members come and socialise in a safe environment with other autistic people. Additional evening and weekend events are planned by the group on a month-to-month basis and include a regular games night in Torquay and a coffee morning in Paignton.

The group has gone from strength to strength and offers additional activities such as a day at the Autism Woodland Project and a trip to a National Trust house and garden. There are many positives to spending time with other people who understand you and members of the group have expressed how valuable they find the time together. We hope to expand our offerings to people in the future and are considering offering peer support in the future.

Here is feedback from one of AAH's members about the impact being part of AAH has had on their lives:

“Before becoming a member of Autistic After Hours, I was in a significantly worse place. I always felt like my autism was something I needed to compensate for, and that I would never be enough as I was. My self-esteem and confidence were incredibly low, I was socially isolated outside of my job, which I felt was the only thing that gave me tangible value, and when I was unable to continue working, it felt like my life was over, and knowing the place I was in, it truly may have been if not for being told about AAH.

“At my first meeting I remember my anxiety was through the roof, I barely spoke, I avoided eye contact, I kept the exit in my peripheral vision, all things I'd been taught how to mask when I'd interacted with people before, and all things I simply didn't have the energy to hide anymore. To my surprise, it wasn't a problem like it'd been made out to be in my past, in fact many people were feeling just as anxious, and

those who weren't feeling as anxious right then had absolutely felt like that previously. Everyone understood, and, even more importantly, I was accepted as I was.

"Since that first meeting, the impact AAH has had on my life has been immeasurable. Having the space to be my authentic self, even having the space to discover who that authentic self is after decades of having to hide it in the interest of being accepted, has done wonders. My confidence and self-esteem got higher with each month, and being accepted and even welcomed by AAH meant beginning to accept myself, and in doing so, the foundations were laid for me to make the most meaningful friendships I've ever had.

"The best part about the impact AAH has had on my life, as paradoxical as it will sound, is that I still have days where my anxiety is high, where I struggle to say anything, where things still feel harder than the many challenges the confidence and self-worth that my time with AAH has instilled me with have allowed me to overcome. I know now that that's okay. Even when I'm not in a good place, Autistic After Hours is a group where I will feel just as accepted and just as welcomed on my worst day as on my best day."

## **A.I.M.S**

The Autism / ADHD Information, Mentoring and Support service (A.I.M.S) is a service run by Therapy Services South West CIC. Launched in September 2024, it provides monthly 45-minute one-to-one sessions, either by phone, face to face or online, focusing on post-diagnostic and social skills support and covering issues people may experience.

The service works with people to help them understand their autism and / or ADHD better, helping people to identify the ways their lives are impacted and to develop coping strategies. They also act as a sounding board for people that may not have family or friends they feel able to confide in, promote independence, signpost people to advocacy and other appropriate autism-friendly community-based support and provide guidance to mainstream services on how they can better provide support.

Here are some of the things clients of A.I.M.S and professionals referring to them have said about the importance of their support:

“Services like A.I.M.S are vital to neurodiverse members of the community. Many forms of therapy are a one size fits all structure which is not conducive to effective treatment of those with additional needs. A.I.M.S has given me preventative measures to manage my ADHD/autism on a day-to-day basis as opposed to the usual reactive measures given when my condition has reached a boiling point. This allows me to work through my needs at a steady pace. I believe this will save the trust a huge amount of money on expensive mental health care. Support for neurodiversity should be regular and not given as a last resort when the condition becomes unmanageable.”

“Being a late diagnosed autistic adult has brought up lots of confusion, questions and uncertainty. It has made me look back on my life with new eyes and forced me to re-evaluate my sense of identity. Finding the A.I.M.S service has been invaluable. To be able to talk through things with someone who understands has been really strengthening at a time when I have felt very fragile. This service is vital to help provide ongoing support for the autistic community. Having autism can often make it difficult to connect with others and one can end up feeling alone and isolated. Having a service like A.I.M.S has helped me feel listened to and that I matter. Thank you for being there at a time when no one else was. I have really appreciated your time and care.”

“As an occupational therapist working in primary care, I have made several referrals for mentoring support under the A.I.M.S programme with Therapy Services Southwest CIC. With a rise in people seeking diagnosis for both ADHD and autism, A.I.M.S meets an unmet need for our neurodiverse population. People referred have been positive about the specialist neuro-affirming guidance, mentoring and support that they have received and are gaining important insights, coping strategies and community connections. Having a monthly space to help manage life events, reflect on their strengths, needs and manage anxieties is invaluable and not anything provided by other services. I hope that Therapy Services Southwest CIC can continue to offer this support free of charge for this to be fully accessible for a group of people who are often disadvantaged economically.”

The AIMS service is making a significant positive impact on autistic and ADHD adults by offering low intensity coaching that is person centred, empathic and strength

based. It creates a safe space for neurodivergent people to thrive both as clients and as coaches. The service focuses on personalised practical support that not only helps people better manage their lives but also creates an inclusive and empowering workplace for neurodivergent professionals promoting an environment where everyone's unique strengths are valued and celebrated.

The service's coaching helps people gain the tools they need to live more independently reducing reliance on external support systems and boosting their self-sufficiency.

AIMS offers an excellent workplace for neurodivergent people by offering opportunities for reflection, supervision and self-care practices where neurodivergent coaches can lean on each other for support and strategies and learn from one another's experiences. This reduces the isolation often felt by neurodivergent people in traditional work settings. AIMS encourages an atmosphere of mutual respect, understanding and shared learning. Neurodivergent coaches bring a valuable perspective that resonates with clients. Their lived experience enables them to connect with people on a deeper level offering insights and strategies that are both practical and empathetic.

### **Focus on mental health**

As we work towards developing our vision to create thriving communities where people can prosper, we need to offer accessible quality mental health care and support.

### **Older person mental health service**

Torbay Older Person Mental Health (OPMH) service ensures we provide our statutory social care functions, alongside our partners Devon Partnership NHS Trust which provides community mental health services.

We work with older people and their families and carers who are experiencing complex mental health difficulties including dementia. The service prides itself on actively challenging perceptions of older age, oppression, and discrimination. Social workers have expertise in areas of assessment, safeguarding, individual and family therapeutic intervention.

Our work is underpinned by legislative frameworks (the Care Act 2014, the Mental Health Act 1983/2007, the Mental Capacity Act 2005, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 etc.), which ensure evidence-based and proportionate interventions in the lives of the people we support.

We work with our partners to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to integrated care, improved communication, and timely joint visits to people who need our services. We work with those who have dementia as well as those with life-long mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety.

We work hard to involve families in assessments and decision making from the start. We have a dedicated carer support worker who can come alongside loved ones with knowledge and compassion at critical times. Our team of social workers and community care workers understand the legal aspect of caring for their loved ones when they can no longer make decisions for themselves and help families through this.

We are creative in care planning recognising that everyone is an individual and one size doesn't fit all. We believe people have the right to take risks even in older age and we champion people's rights to live independently for as long as possible in their own homes and will help find specialist carers to achieve this.

We are skilled in safeguarding older people from those who may not have their best interests at heart.

We are skilled practitioners who have a wealth of expertise and experience in older age mental disorders. We support and work collaboratively with our social care colleagues through the link work scheme where specialist mental health support and joint working is offered to social work colleagues who are working with people who might be experiencing mental health difficulties. This also provides an opportunity to identify people who are in need of social care and would benefit from the care of the specialist mental health service.

We are proud to host student social workers, several of whom have stayed with as qualified workers. We have also supported social workers to complete specialist training as approved mental health professionals, which enhances our legal literacy and speedy access to enhanced expertise. We embrace a grow your own approach

having supported several excellent community care workers through the Open University training programme to become qualified social workers. For the first time this year we are supporting one of our community care workers to undertake the social work apprenticeship programme.

### **Care Home Education and Support Services (CHESS) – part of Older People Mental Health**

CHESS provides support, advice, and guidance to care homes in Torbay. Its role is to support care homes to develop ways to improve the mental health and wellbeing of residents who have a diagnosis of dementia, and who present with the associated behavioural and psychological challenges (BPSD) of the condition.

CHESS is a multi-disciplinary team and develops collaborative partnerships across health and social care to enhance the quality of service and lived experiences of people living in care homes and experiencing the symptoms of BPSD.

In April 2022 a 12-month development project began to implement CHESS as a standalone service with dedicated staff members from Devon Partnership Trust and Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust. The trial was a success and has been established as the model of care for Torbay-based care home patients with dementia. The service has continued to evolve since then and is now an integral part of the Enhanced Health in Care Homes (EHCH) support framework for care homes.

During the past six months, following investment from NHS England, we have been able to focus on the provision of specialist dementia education to the care homes across south Devon in non-pharmacological approaches. This is in addition to our established reactive support and has given us the opportunity to explore proactive educational work to improve the quality of life for those with dementia residing in residential and nursing care environments. This has been very well received by the care homes and wider health and social care support network.

### **Mental health adult social care team**

During the past year the Torbay mental health adult social care team started using the Torbay electronic system which aligns with our colleagues in other adult social care teams in the Bay to continue delivering a high-quality service.

The team has close links with the Bay's social care teams, and community mental health team. It's in a unique position to provide creative and collaborative services for people across the Bay, working on close links with housing providers, voluntary sector partners and community resources. Our aim is one of a strength-based approach, working with people to find solutions from a wide range of sources.

We have embarked on a journey to review and reimagine our mental health services with a view to developing stronger partnerships not only with our colleagues in secondary mental health services, but also with our social work colleagues in all the teams across Torbay to provide the best quality care for people who need our help.

The team includes mental health social workers and community support workers who assess eligible social care needs and plan support with people and their families and carers. We work with people to identify strengths in their networks and to access services and activities in their community that promote their independence, recovery, and social inclusion.

Where appropriate we work with our partners in the arranging support team to build packages of support to meet people's unmet needs and regularly review the commissioned care, under statutory responsibilities.

We ensure section 117 aftercare rights of a person are reviewed and meet NHS policies, and any commissioned social care support is identified to support hospital discharge and reviewed in the community to ensure it continues to meet people's aftercare needs.

Next year we will review and reimagine our mental health services, with the aim of developing stronger partnerships not only with our colleagues in secondary mental health services, but also with our social work colleagues in all the teams across Torbay,

Our aim is to provide the best quality service for people who may need our help and their families and carers, and to ensure that people with lived experience of mental health have a voice and play a key role in transforming the service.

**My story: Ele, a mental health social worker in mental health adult social care team**

I have been working with SW who is a vulnerable woman with a diagnosis of Autism and Dissociative Identity Disorder. SW experiences dissociative episodes which impacts on her daily living skills alongside her neurodiversity, and she requires support to live independently in the community.

“There are also safety issues linked to dissociative episodes, and I have needed to support the community team to manage the risks involved in these events which have included periods of being missing and alleged abuse during these times.

“I have worked with SW continually during the past two years and taken time to build the rapport and continuity with SW to develop her trusting relationship in me. This has enabled SW to feel safe and confident in my approach towards her and allow her to share the complexities of her life with her social worker to build a thorough and robust plan of care around her. Having had social workers in the past, it was difficult when she first met me to be able to put her trust in such a professional relationship, however taking the time to listen to her and validate her experiences has allowed us to work well together and it has been a pleasure to not only work alongside SW, but for me to learn as a practitioner first-hand what it involves to experience this condition.”

### **My story: SW shares her experience of working with Ele:**

“Ele’s work with me started with a social care needs assessment. Since then she has responded to many changes in my circumstances with curiosity, compassion and (when needed) humour. When things have been stable and good, she’s left me to it. When things have changed and not been good, her response has always been proportionate. I enjoy working with her- it does feel like collaboration. I have nothing but praise (which is unusual for me) for the way that she has persevered to gain trust and help me live as independently and safely as possible. She understands my needs really well, but also my strengths. I’m a 3D person.”

### **Approved mental health professionals**

Mental health services play a crucial role for supporting our community. The prevalence of mental health issues has surged since Covid-19 and world hostilities.

To deliver our vision to create **thriving communities where people can prosper**, we need to offer accessible quality mental health care and support. The Torbay

approved mental health professional (AMHP) service is a vital part of this delivery of care

Our AMHPs are approved by Torbay Council to carry out certain duties under the Mental Health Act. A key function of the AMHP is considering and coordinating Mental Health Act Assessments (MHAAs). When satisfied that it is appropriate to do so, we are responsible for making applications for detention in hospital for assessment/treatment of mental disorder, alongside various other statutory responsibilities and duties, whilst adhering to the Guiding Principles set out in the MHA Code of Practice (DoH 2015). Torbay has a 24/7 access to an AMHP.

The convening of a Mental Health Act Assessment is complex and wholly dependent upon multi-agency working.

### **Emergency duty service**

We are very proud of our emergency duty service (EDS) and the often-challenging work they undertake in a calm and effective manner.

A social worker is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Outside of normal working hours (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm), this role is undertaken by the emergency duty service. This is a small team consisting of six qualified social workers and five health and social care coordinators. There is always at least one social worker on duty.

In practice this can mean that we can find ourselves moving from dealing with someone's concerns about a young baby, to arranging a support package for an older person who is near the end of their life, to undertaking a Mental Health Act assessment to determine whether someone needs admission to hospital. The role is therefore wide and varied, and being an emergency duty team means that we never know what situation will arise that needs us to offer support next. Our aims as a team are:

- To ensure that children, young people, and adults within Torbay remain safeguarded from harm.
- To ensure that the statutory social care responsibilities are met in a consistent and timely manner.

- To ensure that people in priority need of housing are placed in accommodation until the next working day when they can have a fuller assessment of need.

## **Sensory team**

We understand the life-changing impact that sight and hearing difficulties, including loss, can have on someone's life.

Our team of specialists and community care workers, including a British Sign Language communication and rehabilitation support worker, play a vital role in supporting people to understand the impact of sensory loss and work with them to reduce isolation, confusion and challenges with communication and mobility difficulties.

We support people living alone to maintain their independence, especially when their confidence has been reduced because of their sight and/or hearing loss. An example of this in practice could be providing equipment to support people to hear the safety alarms and other alerts such as the doorbell or phone to accept visits from family, friends, carers and health professionals.

We advise on support, provide rehabilitation, low vision assessments, and support to people and their carers with hearing and/or sight difficulties to lead independent lives. We work closely with the Guide Dogs Trust to support our young people when they move from children to adults' services.

We visit people in their home to assess need and can provide information and advice, which can include the loaning of equipment such as amplified phones, lighting, alerting equipment and magnifiers.

We team encourage people to attend Jasmyn House, sight and hearing hub in Paignton which is a drop-in centre for people with sensory loss. During drop-in sessions, help and advice is provided, and regular groups are held such as:

- Regular tinnitus meetings.
- Coffee mornings
- Craft club
- Book clubs

My story: Bob (pseudonym)

Feedback from Bob following assessment and support from a rehabilitation office for visual impairment (ROVI) highlighted the following: “I met the ROVI for the first time and was very reticent with her due to not accepting my sight situation. She was very understanding in her approach and made several helpful suggestions, explaining the benefits of white sticks and tactile markers. I was also provided with useful equipment to promote my independence at home including a liquid level indicator, high contrast matt and bright coloured tape to highlight edging.”

[illegible]

We created a feedback form for home visits and groups and for the past 12 months we've had extremely high returns with 100% excellent feedback and also some useful requests for guest speakers at some of the groups.

Group feedback:

"Very good content and the practical was very helpful and useful."

"Bevis exemplifies the ethics of 'praising his pupils'. He has never ending patience with us all and we never feel that we are not keeping up. He is also very humorous which is refreshing and lightens up the sessions".

## **Transitions – Pathway to Adulthood**

Torbay ASC is committed to providing young people with the support they need as they transition from children's services into adult social care. This crucial period of transition is designed to empower young people, ensure continuity of care, and help them live as independently as possible in adulthood. Our approach is person-centred, collaborative, and focused on equipping young people with the skills, knowledge, and resources to thrive in their adult lives. This summary provides an overview of the activities, progress, and plans related to young people in transition in Torbay.

### **1. Transition process overview:**

The transition from childhood to adulthood can be a challenging time, particularly for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). In Torbay, we follow a coordinated approach to transition that brings together children's services, adult social care, education providers, healthcare professionals, and other relevant agencies.

The transition process begins at least 12 months before the young person turns 18, with a focus on:

- **Assessment of needs:** A thorough assessment is carried out to understand the young person's health, social care, and education needs.
- **Person-centered planning:** We work closely with the young person, their family, and any professionals involved in their care to develop a transition plan that reflects their aspirations, needs, and preferences.

- **Skills development:** Throughout the transition period, the emphasis is placed on developing skills for independent living, including budgeting, cooking, managing personal care, and accessing services.
- **Preparation for adulthood:** Our transition plans incorporate elements of employment, housing, social inclusion, and health, preparing young people for the challenges and opportunities of adulthood.

## **2. Key achievements and activities:**

### **Person-centred transition plans:**

We have seen significant progress in developing tailored, person-centred transition plans for young people. These plans cover a broad range of areas including education, employment, health, housing, and community involvement. Key achievements include:

- **Collaboration with families:** Families have been fully engaged in the planning process, with regular reviews to ensure the plans remain relevant and reflect the changing needs of the young person.
- **Transition support workers:** Dedicated transition workers have been assigned to young people to provide consistent guidance and support throughout the process. They ensure that plans are implemented and that young people are supported in accessing the appropriate services.
- **Education and employment pathways:** We have worked closely with education providers and local employers to support young people in accessing further education, training, or employment opportunities. Several young people have successfully secured apprenticeships or placements within local businesses.

### **Personal independence and wellbeing:**

We have focused on equipping young people with the skills needed for independent living. Several key initiatives have been implemented to enhance personal independence:

### **Promoting independence – Sarah’s journey**

Sarah is a young adult with a learning disability and global developmental delay. She expressed a strong desire to become more independent, although her parents initially felt uncertain about this transition. In response, the social care team worked

closely with Sarah and her family to identify a suitable personal assistant who could support her in developing key life skills.

For 18 months, Sarah was supported to build confidence in using public transport, particularly travelling to and from college and to various social activities. Regular reviews were held throughout this time to ensure the support provided was appropriate, effective, and responsive to Sarah's evolving needs.

As a result of this support, Sarah is now confidently travelling independently by bus to college and planned social events. During this journey, Sarah expressed a new aspiration — to find employment. The team helped her access volunteering opportunities, which eventually led to part-time paid work. Sarah is now successfully employed and has chosen to end her involvement with adult social care, as she no longer feels she needs formal support.

### **3. Challenges and areas for improvement:**

While significant progress has been made, there are still areas that require ongoing attention:

- **Timeliness of transition planning:** Some young people's transition plans have been delayed, impacting their ability to move smoothly from children to adult services. We are working to address this by ensuring that assessments and planning begin earlier, with a focus on meeting key deadlines.
- **Access to ASC services:** Moving to ASC can be complex, particularly for those with complex needs. We have identified the need for clearer pathways and more support in navigating adult services.
- **Mental health and wellbeing support:** Many young people in transition experience mental health challenges, and access to appropriate services can sometimes be inconsistent. We are working to strengthen mental health support within the transition process, ensuring that young people's emotional wellbeing is adequately addressed.
- **Employment and training opportunities:** While some young people have successfully secured employment or education placements, others face barriers to accessing suitable opportunities. We are exploring partnerships with local employers and training providers to improve these opportunities.

#### **4. Plans and actions:**

Torbay's ASC service is committed to continuing to improve the transition process for young people. Our plans include:

- **Streamlining the transition process:** We will work towards earlier identification of young people who will require transition support, with a focus on ensuring that assessments and planning start well in advance of the young person turning 18.
- **Developing new partnerships:** We aim to expand our partnerships with local businesses, educational institutions, and housing providers to create more opportunities for young people in transition, particularly in terms of apprenticeships, internships, and supported living options.
- **Improving access to mental health support:** Recognising the importance of mental health in the transition process, we plan to further integrate mental health services into the transition planning process, ensuring that young people receive the support they need to manage emotional well-being as they move into adulthood.
- **Expanding independent living programs:** We are planning to enhance independent living programs to include more tailored support for those with complex needs, ensuring that young people have the skills and confidence to live as independently as possible.
- **Feedback and review mechanism:** We are committed to improving our feedback mechanisms, ensuring that young people and their families have a voice in shaping the transition process. We will be introducing regular surveys and consultations to gather insights and identify areas for improvement.

#### **Focus on the arranging support team**

The Arranging Support Team (AST) is a group of nine professionals who work with health and social care teams, people, families, and providers to match individuals with the right support. They focus on specific areas of care, building strong relationships with providers to negotiate fees and provide expert guidance. The team arranges various types of care, including residential placements, home care, live-in care, respite, day care, supported living, and specialist services for complex needs.

They also help prevent hospital admissions and assist with hospital discharge to maintain patient flow. In 2024, the team created a list of voluntary and community

organisations in Torbay, helping people access community support instead of relying on paid services.

The team collects data on care services, which is shared with commissioners to help shape the market and understand service availability and demand. Additionally, they ensure contracts are raised and payments to providers are processed promptly, supporting efficient financial tracking for adult social care spending.

#### My story: Mr G

Mr G is an elderly gentleman who has various health conditions including dementia. He had several cycles of going from home to hospital into a care home for rehabilitation and then home again, which he found very distressing. Following another hospital admission the arranging support team looked at different options to support Mr G rather than him go into a care home. The broker was able to source wraparound care at a reduced fee to support Mr G at home where he could be in a familiar environment and carry out his usual routines which helps to minimise his distress.

His family said he was settled and doing well, his daughter reports “they are really good at keeping him busy, they always seem to be doing something, which is nice for dad.”

#### My story: Mr B

Mr B lived on his own with no family or next of kin. He received care from an agency four times a day to support him with his daily needs and had involvement from Rowcroft.

On arriving for their morning visit, the care agency called an ambulance crew who assessed Mr B as being near the end of life and too unwell to move. A broker sourced support for Mr B to ensure his care needs were met and he had someone with him until his passing later that day.

#### My story: Mrs K

Mrs K is a 59-year-old woman who has a diagnosis of Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder (EUPD) and has experienced complex trauma. Her physical health conditions include COPD, angina and acute coronary syndrome.

In January 2024 Mrs K was detained under the Mental Health Act. On discharge from hospital, she was provided with a package to support her in the community. This was unsuccessful and a referral was made to AST to find a placement for her. Mrs K had previously received support from a variety of agencies in Torbay including a residential placement, home care and enabling support which were all unsuccessful due to the care arrangements not being able to meet her complex needs.

The broker was able to source a placement for her in a home which specialises in supporting people who have a diagnosis of EUPD. Mrs K moved into the placement in January 2025 and is settling in well.

#### My story: Mrs J

An urgent referral was made into AST by an occupational therapist (OT) at 1.45pm on a Friday. They had been to visit Mrs J at home following a referral from the district nurse team. Mrs J had recently discharged herself from Jack Sears House, a reablement care home. On visiting Mrs J, the OT found her in bed uncared for and there were signs of domestic abuse. They were concerned for her health and wellbeing and concluded she needed to go into a placement as soon as possible.

Within an hour of receiving the referral the broker sourced a placement for her to move into that afternoon. The OT had exhausted all options to arrange transport; pulling on the resources of our adult social care teams, our in-house day service provider was able to provide a minibus and driver to support with moving her. A HSCC liaised with her GP to organise essential medication.

Altogether, seven members of staff across five different teams worked together swiftly to make sure Mrs J was in a place of safety where her needs could be met.

#### **Signposts for Carers - information**

Signposts for Carers is Torbay carers' information and advice service. It's the first stop for anyone with a caring role in Torbay. The service is available 9am-4.30pm, Monday to Friday (except bank holidays) by phone, email or in person at Torbay Hospital's advice point on level 4 main reception.

Carers can also drop into the Carers Centre at Paignton Library or make appointments at Brixham or Torquay Carers Centres.

Colin is the Signposts Information Officer.

### **What is the best part of your job?**



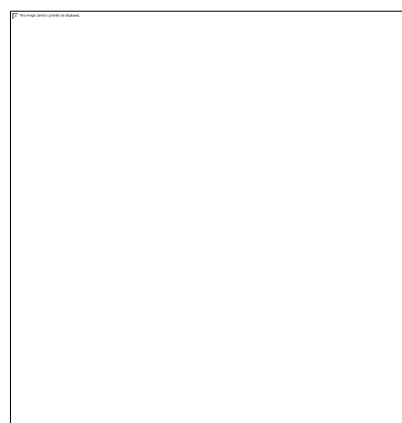
“Providing people with information that supports them with their caring role. Referring carers onto carer support workers and other agencies to boost their confidence and enable them to thrive. Carers should know that they are not alone in their caring role. They should not struggle in silence or solitude. Support, advice and advocacy are all available in various forms from many different agencies. It only takes a

phone call or email to Signposts for Carers.”

**This year the service has answered 786 phone calls, made 482 visits and responded to 1189 email queries. The service has posted 1393 register packs.**

### **Carer support workers**

The mainstay of the carers services is the carer support workers which is based in GP surgeries. They undertake carers’ health and wellbeing checks / assessments. This helps carers to look at the impact of their caring role and give them the support that they provide.



**This year our GP-based carer support workers have undertaken 629 assessments (against a target of 500).**

There are other carer support workers based in mental health services, older people’s mental health and working with young adult carers aged 16-25 or carers from the armed forces community.

Carers Aid Torbay provides assessment, support and advocacy.

**This year Carers Aid workers have completed 148 assessments against a target of 100. Its Bay Benefits service also brought in £731,291 in additional benefits to carers in Torbay in 2024.**

Various support workers also run groups which offer carers' peer support, with positive feedback, including:

"Great friendly environment to come to and chat with other carers. It's a good place to get out of the house and to get help and advice if needed."

"I have found Wednesdays every month to be very informative. Everyone is friendly and you soon learn from other people, and to have someone listen is the best thing."

"Discussing circumstances is very helpful and I have learnt a lot. Would be nice to do a few more activities/ quiz so I can get to know people better."

"Convenient location and free parking is good. I received a friendly welcome and it felt easy to make conversation with other carers. I asked a question of the organisation and was pointed in the right direction."

"This was my first visit and have found it relaxing and pleasant to be able to talk to others that understand where I'm coming from."

"A friendly group of people, the carers' support is very helpful with anything that you need."

"I really look forward to coming to this group. I can speak freely, get useful advice and meet understanding people. We have a laugh and chat about all sorts apart from our caring roles."

**My story: Sally Smith, a hospital carer support worker**

"My role is to speak up for carers when the person they care for is in hospital. I offer help around complex discharge planning and support carers to have the right conversations to get what they need in hospital and when they leave hospital. I also signpost carers to community and volunteer support. Part of my role is to identify carer stress and put things in place to avoid situations reaching crisis point."

## What is the best part of your job?

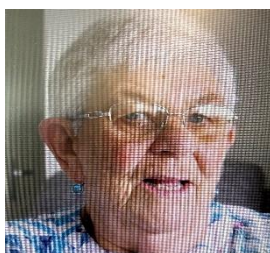
“Helping carers to navigate the help and support that is available when the person they care for is in the hospital. I find preventing people from feeling isolated in their caring role and ensuring their voice is heard very rewarding.”

## Involving carers

Carers have been involved in many aspects of carer services work.

[They've written five 'I statements' saying what Carers' priorities are for the Carers' Strategy.](#)

Carer ambassadors involved in the Learning Disability Partnership Board, the Autism Partnership Board and the Carers' Strategy Steering Group. They've also helped re-write and re-design some of our carers' leaflets.



[Diane Clarke](#) tells us about her experience of Carer's support

## Focus on safeguarding adults

Our aim in the broadest sense is for the public, volunteers, and professionals to work together to uphold human rights and ensure everyone is treated with dignity and

respect, and that people have choice, control, and compassionate care in their lives. Everyone has the right to live their lives free from violence, fear and abuse and all adults have the right to be protected from harm or exploitation, but not everyone can protect themselves.

Safeguarding is a term used to mean both specialist services and other activity designed to promote the wellbeing and safeguard the rights of adults with care and support needs where neglect or abuse has or is suspected to have occurred.

Our responses to concerns are driven by Care Act 2014 statutory guidance and the national Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) agenda. This includes working with people or their representatives to establish their preferred outcomes to concerns and work with people to meet those outcomes. Where adults with care and support needs do not have the mental capacity to make specific decisions, we will ensure there is an appropriate legal advocate to act on the individual's behalf.

### **Qualitative feedback on safeguarding responses**

We actively seek feedback from people who experience safeguarding responses. We commission independent quality checkers who undertake discovery interviews with those who consent to giving feedback. We then receive summary reports from the quality checkers and feed this information back to frontline practitioners via our Safeguarding Adult Improvement Group. An example of feedback given in 2024 is:

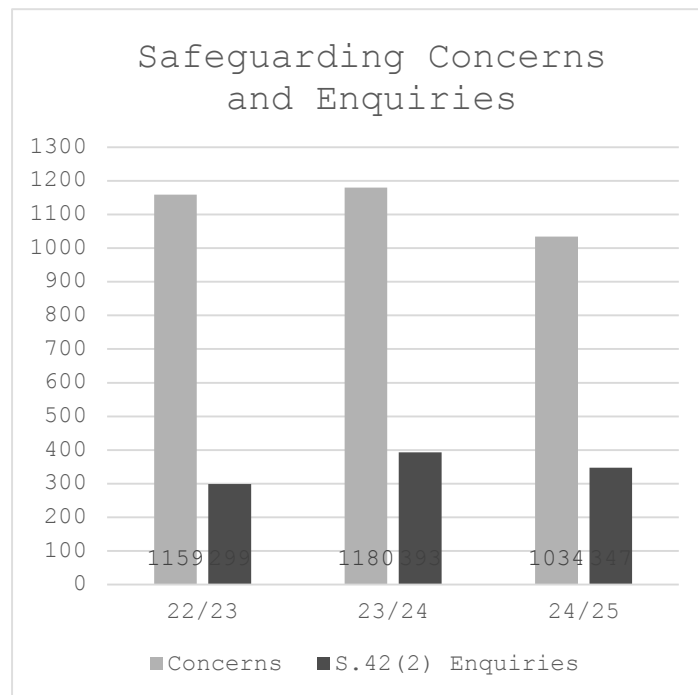
I feel the safeguarding process was detailed and robust in ensuring that relevant policies, procedures, and practice were reviewed and updated to ensure appropriate safeguards were implemented and embedded where required. The evidence indicates that best interests' decisions considered the principles of least restriction in relation to any protective measures that were required" (Independent Mental Capacity Act Advocate)

'All questions were answered positively with all objectives fully met, when asked about safety, the response was "Absolutely". (Quality Checker summary of discovery interview)

She felt that all outcomes were fully achieved, she felt listened to and "much safer". (Quality Checker summary of discovery interview)

## Safeguarding adult enquiries summary

Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 requires that local authorities must make enquiries or cause others to do so if it believes an adult with needs for care and support are experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect.



From April 2024 to March 2025 there were 1034 safeguarding adult concerns were received which is a 12.4% **decrease** on the previous year. The number of concerns which proceeded to Care Act s.42(2) enquiry **decreased** by 11.7% **to 347**. The conversion rate from concerns to s.42 enquiries increased by 0.3% to 33.6%. The table below provides a comparator during the past three years.

Our work in this area primarily divides between the adult social care community operational teams who respond to safeguarding concerns and our market management team which works with care homes and domiciliary care providers to promote high quality care and proactively monitor quality standards.

We also work closely with Devon and Cornwall Police, Devon Partnership NHS Trust, NHS Devon and the Care Quality Commission both in causing enquiries to be made and maintaining strong local partnership arrangements.

Last year, the most common types of alleged abuse were neglect, self-neglect, financial and physical.

During 2024/25 we completed one large-scale safeguarding enquiry in response to system-wide safeguarding adult concerns.

## **Torbay and Devon Safeguarding Adult Partnership (TDSAP)**

TDSAP oversees local safeguarding arrangements and has a structure to support its objective to protect adults with care and support needs.

The structure includes learning and improvement and performance and quality assurance sub-groups. The partnership also has a specific Safeguarding Adult Core Group responsible for commissioning and overseeing Safeguarding Adult Learning Reviews. The partnership has an independent chair who oversees local arrangements.

The TDSAP Strategic Business Plan for 2025 – 2028 sets three priorities:

- Seek assurance from partners in relation to practice improvements in key risk areas.
- Seek assurance from partners that learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) is embedded into practice.
- Improve awareness, engagement and inclusion.

More information on the partnership can be found at

[www.devonsafeguardingadultspartnership.org.uk](http://www.devonsafeguardingadultspartnership.org.uk)

We continue to support the partnership to meet its strategic objectives.

### **Learning from safeguarding adult reviews**

The TDSAP must arrange a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) when an adult in its area dies as a result of abuse or neglect, whether known or suspected, and there is a concern that partner agencies could have worked more effectively to protect the adult. Boards must also arrange a SAR if an adult in its area has not died, but the Safeguarding Adult Board (SAB) knows or suspects that the adult has experienced serious abuse or neglect. Boards may also arrange for a SAR in any other situations involving an adult in its area with needs for care and support if it deems it appropriate. The focus of SARs is to identify learning not to apportion blame.

In this reporting period there have been three SAR referrals to TDSAP connected to our local area. Two referrals related to people in circumstances of self-neglect have been identified as meeting section 44 Care Act safeguarding adult review criteria by the TDSAP, which is a system wide referral. The Partnership published seven SARs

which are available on the TDSAP website here. The learning and improvement subgroup ensures that recommendations from learning reviews are completed and is supported by a number of organisations, including ourselves.

### **Advocacy for people unable to make decisions for themselves.**

We continue to use advocacy services across the three legal frameworks: mental health/IMHA, mental capacity/IMCA and Care Act.

This is via a contract with the Devon Advocacy consortium. We regularly refer people and have contract monitoring systems in place to monitor uptake of services.

### **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards**

The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) procedure is designed to protect people's rights if the care or treatment they receive in a hospital or care home means they are, or may become, deprived of their liberty, and they lack mental capacity to consent to those arrangements. For example, where due to the serious onset of dementia someone's capacity to act safely is significantly affected.

We proactively work with colleagues across the South West to ensure our systems and processes remain contemporary and as streamlined as possible.

### **Safeguarding adults: a summary**

We constantly strive to understand emerging issues for safeguarding adults in Torbay and our joint board arrangement with Devon County Council assists in driving collaborative responses to the safeguarding adult agenda.

We promote a zero tolerance of adult abuse, and that safeguarding adult is everyone's business. When adult abuse concerns are raised, we work in a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency context to understand risk and ensure responses are person centred, include the right people, and include the right partner agencies.

Our main focuses next year is to support TDSAP in meeting its strategic priorities as well as ensuring qualitative feedback is sought and listened to from those who experience a safeguarding adult response.

## **Technology enabled care service (TEC)**

It's been an extremely busy year for the service, with more staff being trained and an increase in people using the service. TEC's position and recognition of an alternative to in-person care, helping people to stay independent and confident in their own situation, has grown, and Torbay has seen the benefit of this. This has led to a greater involvement in social care package input through multi-disciplinary working across all teams.

Our teams are committed to embedding TEC across Torbay's ASC service to empower people to fulfil their potential, retain their independence and remain at home. Focus was given to improve practice across teams to drive the opportunities for people to receive TEC as part of packages of care.

Key improvements include:

- Since April 2024, 29% of new people who draw on care and support are now receiving TEC.
- An additional 28 TEC champions have been created across teams since July 2024
- A staff practice survey identified increased confidence using TEC and further initiatives are being identified to help them improve.
- A TEC decision-making tool launched with teams to assist with linking people's outcomes and TEC equipment.

Work is also underway to develop a new TEC model to commission.

Training has been a focus of the year, with many of the staff receiving specialised approvers and awareness sessions so that knowledge can be cascaded into the teams. We have generated more guidance than ever before to allow staff more access to equipment functionality. TECS has also supported Jack Sears House by providing a box of demonstration equipment for residents to see and for staff to explain how it could be of assistance as they are discharged home.

The TECS team has been involved in various projects throughout the year alongside a delivery partner, including: input into review and insights team activity; a pilot involving the remote sensor system, Canary Care; assisting a project with the health and social care coordinators when reviewing people's support packages.

The service is due to be recommissioned as the term has matured, and in-depth requirements work on a service that will best serve our community have been another major focus of the year. Staff and members of the public should expect to see a new service begin in 2025/26/

The team is fully linked into local, regional, and national subject groups and regularly attends sessions both online and in-person to learn best practices and bring new and innovative input to the service in Torbay; this will continue as we seek to be a forward-thinking and market leading TECS provider in the UK.

## **Experiences**

### My story: Mr T

Mr T, a 29-year-old with learning difficulties, lives with his mother. His goal is to find suitable accommodation to live independently in the community and to feel safe using public transport. However, due to a previous bad experience, Mr T does not feel comfortable traveling outside his current town and experiences anxiety when using public transport.

The social care and TEC teams met with Mr T to explore TEC solutions that could support his needs. With his consent, they provided him with an Oysta Pearl II, a device that includes:

- An emergency button
- A falls detector
- A loudspeaker phone for two-way communication
- A location tracker

The Nottingham Rehab Service Ltd (NRS) technician demonstrated how to use the Oysta Pearl II, to make sure Mr T felt confident using the device. .

Since receiving the Oysta Pearl II, Mr. T's confidence has increased significantly. He is now looking forward to using public transport independently, which will allow him to expand his accommodation search and meet new friends. Knowing he can call for help if he feels threatened or anxious, he feels safer and more in control of his journey toward independent living.

### My story: Mrs B

Mrs B, an 80-year-old woman, often forgets to take her morning medication. Her daughter, who works full-time, is unable to provide daily support. Concerned about the risk of hospital admission, Mrs B's daughter contacted the social care team to explore possible solutions that could help her mother manage her medication independently.

The team recommended Memrabel 3 as a suitable solution to support Mrs B's needs. With her consent, the device was ordered and installed, and both Mrs B and her daughter were shown how to operate it. The Memrabel 3 provides timely reminders, enabling Mrs B to manage her medication without requiring carer support.

Since using the Memrabel 3, Mrs B has reported a significant reduction in anxiety and feels more in control of her medication and overall wellbeing. Her daughter has also expressed relief and reassurance, knowing that her mother can remain independent while effectively managing her medication.

## Jack Sears Rehabilitation Unit



Jack Sears is a 29-bed rehabilitation unit in Paignton which opened in June 2024. It aims to support people to recover and regain independence to be able to return home.

People can be admitted from hospital or if they are struggling at home. Common reasons for admissions are falls, fractures, infections and reduced mobility due to illness. Staffing in the unit consists of a team of carers and a therapy team

(physiotherapist, occupational therapist, assistant practitioner and support worker).

We also have visits from nursing, pharmacy, GPs and dieticians. Assessments are carried out by the therapy staff on the day of admission and rehabilitation goals are jointly agreed.

Since Jack Sears opened, we have admitted 209 patients. 87% were admitted from hospital and 13% from the community. The average length of stay for a patient is 22 days and 75% of patients were able to return to their own homes. 2% of patients were transferred to a long-term care home placement.



## Jack Sears – Patient Stories



My story: Mr C



### Mr C

#### My admission

I was admitted to hospital following a fall and unfortunately fractured my hip and required surgery. Following my surgery, I was only able to stand up with the help of two staff and I was not able to walk. The hospital recommended I go to Jack Sears rehab unit to have intensive therapy to help me walk again. On the day I arrived, I was feeling very low in mood and tearful. My wife had recently been admitted to a care home due to her dementia and I missed her. I had not been able to visit her since before my fall. The staff in Jack Sears immediately arranged for me to speak with my wife by a video call. They also arranged to take me to visit her at the care home a couple of days later, even arranging flowers and a card to celebrate our anniversary. I felt that the staff understood what mattered to me and this helped me to feel more positive about my future.



#### My rehab

I was assessed by the therapy team, and they discussed what my goals were with me. I wanted to be able to walk with a frame and to be able manage the stairs to return home. The therapy team and the carers helped me to achieve this within a few weeks. They also took me home for a visit and to decide what equipment may help me at home. The team also discussed with me what help I may need at home initially and we agreed I would benefit from four carer visits a day initially and hopefully this would reduce as I settled, and my confidence increased.



#### My discharge

I returned home with my care package to support me and was also visited regularly by the community therapy team. I told them I wanted to be able to walk outside and be able to take a taxi to visit my wife. They gave me an outdoor walker to use and practised this with me. I was able to visit my wife within a week of returning home. My confidence increased and I was able to manage



# Jack Sears – Patient Stories



My story: Mr B



## Mr B

### My admission

I was admitted to hospital with a chest infection. I was very poorly and needed to stay in bed for several days. As I have Parkinson's disease my ability to walk declined very quickly and I was pleased to be able to come to Jack Sears to help me walk again.



### My rehab

The physiotherapist came to see me and checked my chest as well as my mobility. I was given exercises to do which the carers helped me with. They also helped me to practise walking. I needed two people to help me stand up initially and I could only take a few steps. A dietician also came to see me as I had lost a lot of weight. My wife and I had a meeting with the team to plan for me returning home and what support I may need.



### My discharge

I returned home after 10 days.. I was able to walk with a frame by myself and I could manage the stairs. The community team visited me to help with showering and I was soon able to manage this with just support from my wife. I am so grateful for my time at Jack Sears. I will always remember how caring the team were, particularly on my first night when I was anxious and a carer sat and talked with me to help me feel calm; I never felt alone. This was so important to me at that time.

## Preparing for Care Quality Commission inspection of Adult Social Care

The CQC assessment of local authorities was reintroduced as part of the Health and Care Act 2022, after a break of 10 years. CQC has the responsibility to assess how well local authorities are meeting their duties under part one of the Care Act.

The CQC assessment is broken down into four themes with nine sub sections.

Theme 1: Working with people	Theme 2: Providing support	Theme 3: Ensuring safety	Theme 4: Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessing needs</li><li>• Supporting people to live healthier lives</li><li>• Equity in experiences and outcomes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Care provision, integration and continuity</li><li>• Partnerships and communities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safe systems, pathways and transitions</li><li>• Safeguarding</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Governance, management and sustainability</li><li>• Learning, improvement and innovation</li></ul>

As part of our preparations for an upcoming CQC assessment, there have been several activities undertaken:

- Completion of a self-assessment describing areas of good practice and areas which need improving
- Identification of 50 cases, of which CQC will randomly select eight to 10 to talk to about their experience of care and support provided.
- Evidence gathering for the information return, requested by CQC.
- Staff engagement sessions, sharing key information around the CQC assessment process, overview of key policies, reflection of good practice and open discussions in relation to what could be improved.

- Mock inspections of teams, giving staff an idea of what to expect, also highlighting team strengths and areas of improvement.

Along with our internal preparations, in June 2024 we took part in the [LGA peer review challenge](#)

Areas of Strength	Areas for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our new Section 75 agreement and our long-embedded integration of health and social care services.</li> <li>• The Partnership Boards also received praise and were described as very good.</li> <li>• Quality individualised care through the Multi-Disciplinary Team and people are kept safe and urgent issues responded to well.</li> <li>• Ambassadors were seen as a good example of giving local people a voice.</li> <li>• Case file audit – good practice around legal decision making, least restrictive practice and good person-centred practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More work to do in relation to carers - communication and expectation management and explaining how different services interact with each other.</li> <li>• Improve staff awareness of priorities plans and strategies.</li> <li>• Direct payments are below the England average, processes not well understood or embedded in teams.</li> <li>• It was recommended that we should develop our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work, and ensure its more visible across Council and Integrated Care Organisation (ICO).</li> </ul>

With the areas of improvement and the recommendations given in the report an action plan was put into place, and work has commenced. The Peer Review Action Plan is reported on quarterly to the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board and its current progress can be viewed [here](#).



## Healthwatch Devon, Plymouth and Torbay – Response to the TSDFT Local Account Summary 2024/25

Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay welcomes the publication of the Local Account Summary 2024/25 and appreciate the commitment of Torbay Council and the Integrated Care Organisation (ICO) to transparency, co-production, and service improvement.

Healthwatch is pleased to see that feedback from people using services, carers, and community partners has informed service developments over the past year. The increased focus on prevention, independence, and person-centred care is welcome, especially in light of rising demand and financial pressures.

We particularly commend the report's emphasis on "Amplifying people's voices" and "Improving feedback and embedding learning." The increased integration of service user and carer experiences, including video content, is a positive step towards truly person-centred care. The success of initiatives like the co-designed dementia carers' training programme and the "Amplifying People's Voices" engagement project with care home residents are excellent examples of co-production in action.

Our own Healthwatch report on unpaid carers further underscores the importance of collaboration, with carers' feedback actively shaping survey development and guiding conversations. This Carer feedback, collected through our joint engagement activities, has rightly shaped new initiatives such as co-designed dementia training and improved recognition of carers in service contacts. However, our engagement still shows that many carers face significant challenges, including inconsistent communication, limited access to respite, and lack of visibility of available support. We support the Council's commitment to improving these areas and call for measurable outcomes to ensure carers' experiences improve in practice.

We welcome the development of the Autism Partnership Board, and the way it is driven by voices of autistic people, their carers, professionals and local organisations. People with lived experience have been at the centre of strategy, events, and practical tools like the health passport. Similarly, the mental health service developments – particularly efforts to improve transitions, recovery-focused planning, and integration with community support – reflect what some people have shared with us about their needs and aspirations.

We also note the council's efforts to improve learning from complaints, and to embed service user feedback into quality assurance. We believe it's vital this learning is routinely shared with the public, to build trust and show how listening leads to change. This is echoed in a recent report into the NHS Complaint's process from our national partner Healthwatch England, which among other areas recommended the development of a culture of listening to and learning from complaints.

The progress in data-driven performance reporting, the reablement pilot's success in increasing independence, and the streamlining of access to adult social care services are commendable. We look forward to seeing the continued positive impact of these initiatives.

Finally, we applaud the emphasis on working with the voluntary sector and community partners to provide earlier support, especially through initiatives like the community hub and helpline. These routes often make a difference in preventing crisis, and we encourage further investment in this area.

Healthwatch remains committed to working collaboratively with Torbay Council and its partners to ensure that adult social care services continue to evolve, respond to community needs, and provide high-quality, person-centred care for all residents in Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay.

We look forward to continuing our work with the council, the ICO, and wider system partners to amplify people's voices and ensure services across Torbay remain responsive, accessible, and accountable.