

## **Record of Decisions**

### **Re-procurement of Mental Health Helpline**

#### **Decision Taker**

Cabinet on 16 September 2025.

#### **Decision**

That a procurement exercise for the provision of a mental health helpline be approved and any subsequent contract to be awarded in line with the officer scheme of delegation (Paragraph 1.3).

#### **Reason for the Decision**

The sustainability of the service for a mental health helpline had always been precarious; the service had been financially maintained through the use of grants, one off adult social care funding and public health grant funding. The proposal aimed to shore up the provision to give it longer-term viability and stability.

#### **Implementation**

This decision will come into force and may be implemented on 29 September 2025 unless the call-in procedure is triggered (as set out in the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny).

#### **Information**

The Mental Health Helpline had been operating on short term contracts since its inception by the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in 2021 as a response to the COVID pandemic and the increasing needs for low level mental health and emotional wellbeing support.

The proposal sought to procure the service so that a new contract could commence from April 2026 with a longer-term, more stable financial basis. The outcomes were to maintain access to signposting, advice and low-level interventions for those people who present with emotional or mental wellbeing needs who do not meet thresholds for statutory mental health services.

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

#### **Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision**

The alternatives considered were:

Do not procure any service - this option would provide cost savings to both public health and the Local Authority General Fund. However, it would erode any good work brought about by the contract to date, eradicating low level support for residents of Torbay which would likely, in turn, increase demand for and pressure on already stretched mental health (and potentially social care) services. The likelihood was that this would decrease productivity in the communities affected due to time off or inability to work due to unsupported mental health issues. This option was discounted.

Procure a service with a reduced cost basis - this option would also provide cost savings to either or both public health and the Local Authority General Fund. It would however reduce the impact and effectiveness of the service. Cost saving was not the desired outcome in this process and funding had been secured and baselined in both the general fund and public health budgets. Depending on the value of the reduction in funding the impact on both effectiveness and outcomes, would be proportionate to the reduction. Therefore, this option was discounted.

Procure the service on a like for like basis - this option would not cost more money than was already agreed in the baseline spend for both the General Fund and the Public Health Grant. The gains made through supporting the service to date could be maintained, it would most likely allow the voluntary sector capacity to obtain sustained, longer term secure funding. This was the preferred option.

**Is this a Key Decision?**

No

**Does the call-in procedure apply?**

Yes

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

None

**Published**

19 September 2025

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet