

Meeting: Cabinet

Date: 12 May 2026

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Child Friendly Torbay – Action Plan

When does the decision need to be implemented?

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Councillor Bye, Lead Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

Director Contact Details: Anne-Marie Bond, Chief Executive

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report seeks Cabinet endorsement of Torbay’s *Child Friendly Torbay – Action Plan* to support Torbay’s submission for UNICEF UK *Certificate of Commitment*.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1. The Child Friendly Action Plan will help us to deliver our vision of a healthy, happy, and prosperous Torbay by embedding a child rights approach across the Council and its partners, ensuring that the rights, voices and lived experiences of children and young people are at the heart of local decision-making. The Action Plan sets out clear priority areas and outcomes to improve how safe, healthy and included children and young people feel in Torbay, alongside a monitoring framework to track progress and drive continuous improvement. Whilst UNICEF are ending their Child Friendly programme in the UK, there is an opportunity to receive endorsement from them through the approval of our plan receiving UNICEF ‘Certification of Commitment’ as a Child Friendly Community. by demonstrating a robust, evidence-led and deliverable programme of activity.
- 2.2. The reasons for the proposal, and need for the decision are to agree and endorse a sustainable, partnership-led Action Plan that responds directly to what children and young people have told us through extensive consultation (1,860 voices captured) and provides a clear route to delivery, governance and accountability. The Action Plan focuses on the issues most consistently raised by children and young people, including feeling unsafe in town centres and some parks, needing better access to mental health and healthcare support, and wanting clearer information and meaningful involvement in decisions. It also formalises the Council’s commitment to a child rights-based approach through training, improved participation structures (including youth governance), and the routine use of child rights impact assessment in policy and service design. UNICEF have confirmed that the

Action Plan and governance arrangements will likely meet UNICEF's criteria when submitted.

2.3. The benefits of this proposal are summarised as follows:

- Improved safety and public spaces for children and young people, through child-informed safer streets activity, urban planning and the Play Improvement Strategy, supported by ongoing consultation and perception measures.
- Better health and wellbeing outcomes, by addressing barriers to access for mental health and healthcare support, strengthening health and wellbeing information, and improving how council-led services respond to children's needs.
- Stronger participation and trust, by developing consistent mechanisms for children and young people to influence decisions and by demonstrating "you said, we did" feedback so children can see the impact of their involvement.
- A more child-friendly culture across the workforce and partnership, through rolling out child rights education and training (including applied approaches such as Childs Rights Impact Assessments (CRIA) and implementing a Childs Rights Based Approach (CRBA)), improving confidence and consistency in practice.
- Clearer accountability and performance oversight, via dashboards, milestones, audits and annual surveys to evidence progress, identify gaps, and target improvement activity.
- Progression towards UNICEF Child Friendly certification, strengthening Torbay's reputation as a place that actively respects and upholds children's rights and helps children and young people to thrive.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1. That Cabinet approves the *Child Friendly Torbay – Action Plan* (Appendix 1) and endorses it as the framework for delivering Torbay's commitment to embedding children's rights in decision-making, and approves submission of the same to UNICEF, in order to receive their 'Certification of Commitment'.
- 3.2. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Chief Executive to oversee implementation and governance arrangements for delivery of the Action Plan, including agreeing any minor amendments required to reflect the final UNICEF requirements, and to receive regular progress updates through established governance and scrutiny routes.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1: Child Friendly Action Plan

Appendix 2: UNICEF Certificate of Commitment Guidance

Appendix 3: Governance Structure Chart

5. Background Documents

- None

Supporting Information

6. Introduction

- 6.1. Torbay Council has been part of the original UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) *Child Friendly Cities & Communities* programme. The programme supports councils and partners to embed a child rights-based approach, guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, so that children and young people have a meaningful say in—and benefit from—the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives. Torbay’s participation has been underpinned by partnership working and by a commitment to listen to children and young people and translate what we hear into measurable, sustained improvement. This work has been supported by a shared, cross-party commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people.
- 6.2. UNICEF UK has advised participating areas that it will cease delivery of the full *Child Friendly Cities & Communities* programme and is replacing the former programme offer with a revised *Certificate of Commitment* approach. The purpose of this report is therefore to seek Cabinet endorsement of Torbay’s *Certification of Commitment* submission, including the accompanying *Child Friendly Torbay – Action Plan* (Appendix 1). This Cabinet decision forms Torbay’s local sign-off stage, following UNICEF UK sign-off of the final Action Plan, and—if awarded— Certification of Commitment lasts for a three-year period.
- 6.3. The Action Plan has been developed through an extensive programme of engagement and consultation with children and young people, supported by partners and informed by local data and insight. This consultation produced a robust evidence base (1,860 voices captured) and a needs assessment that identified the issues children and young people most consistently raised about living in Torbay. Key themes included: feeling unsafe in parts of Torbay (particularly town centres and some parks and play spaces), wanting improved access to mental health support and healthcare, and wanting clearer information and more meaningful involvement in decisions that affect them. This evidence base has directly shaped the priorities, milestones and measures within the Action Plan.
- 6.4. UNICEF UK’s Certificate of Commitment guidance requires participating areas to evidence three minimum criteria: an Action Plan that sets out how a child rights-based approach will be embedded to address local priorities identified by children and young people; a strong decision-making governance structure with clear roles, responsibilities and reporting; and the continued leadership and participation of children and young people in decision-making, delivery and review. Torbay’s Action Plan and governance arrangements have been developed to meet these minimum criteria and ensure that children and young people remain central throughout implementation and ongoing evaluation.
- 6.5. The resulting Action Plan focuses Torbay’s work into clear priority areas and outcomes, supported by dashboards, milestones, and ongoing annual engagement to measure progress and maintain accountability. It is designed to demonstrate clear, systemic and sustained change aligned to a child rights-based approach, and to provide a credible and deliverable commitment through the UNICEF process.

- 6.6. Alongside direct engagement with children and young people, the programme has included wider partner involvement through the Child Friendly governance structure. Partners contributed to the needs assessment and participated in the Discovery activity (including the Discovery Day). UNICEF child rights learning has also been offered to councillors, staff and partners to support consistent practice as the programme moves into delivery.

7. Options under consideration

- 7.1. No other options have been considered.

8. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 8.1. It is envisaged that the Action Plan will be delivered primarily within existing resources. Any additional resource requirements (for example training, engagement activity) will be scoped through delivery planning and managed through existing budget processes. Aligning activity to shared priorities provides an opportunity to better target existing spend and avoid duplication, while embedding a child rights-based approach may help reduce avoidable costs arising from unintended impacts of decisions.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. None.

10. Engagement and Consultation

- 10.1. Engagement and consultation have been central to the development of the Child Friendly Torbay – Action Plan and UNICEF Certificate of Commitment submission. A programme of engagement was delivered with children and young people across Torbay to understand what matters most to them, what needs to change, and what “good” looks like in practice. This generated a strong local evidence base (1,860 voices captured) which informed the needs assessment and directly shaped the priorities, outcomes and milestones within the Action Plan.
- 10.2. Engagement activity was designed to be inclusive and to reach children and young people from different backgrounds, communities and settings. This included working through established youth participation routes and in partnership with schools, services and community organisations to maximise reach and ensure that the voices of children and young people who experience vulnerability or disadvantage were represented. Engagement and consultation also took place with key partners through the Child Friendly governance arrangements.
- 10.3. Ongoing engagement is embedded within the delivery approach. UNICEF guidance requires that children and young people continue to lead and participate in decision-making, delivery and ongoing review of the Action Plan. Torbay will therefore maintain “you said, we did” feedback loops and use regular engagement (including annual activity) to track whether children and young people feel safer, healthier and more included, and to adjust delivery priorities where required

11. Procurement Implications

11.1. None

12. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

12.1. N/A

13. Associated Risks

- 13.1. **Risk if the proposal is not implemented:** If the proposal to endorse the Action Plan is not accepted then Torbay will not secure UNICEF Certification of Commitment and will lose a clear, agreed framework for embedding a child rights-based approach. These risks reduced momentum and accountability for addressing the priorities raised by children and young people through consultation, and may weaken trust and ongoing engagement
- 13.2 **Risks associated with making the decision (and implementation):** The key risks are delivery and sustainability risks—if capacity, partner commitment, governance or performance monitoring are not maintained over the three-year period, delivery could slip and progress may be difficult to evidence. There is also a risk that CRIA and workforce development requirements are not embedded consistently in day-to-day decision-making, which could reduce the programme’s intended impact and risk falling short of UNICEF expectations.

14. Equality Impact Assessment

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18% of Torbay residents are aged under 18 years old. • 55% of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old. • 27% of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older. 	<p>This proposal is specifically intended to advance equality of opportunity for children and young people (aged under 18) by embedding a child rights-based approach and ensuring their views inform decisions that affect them. Positive impacts are expected for children and young people across Torbay, particularly through actions focused on safety, health and inclusion.</p> <p>Potential adverse impacts relate mainly to unequal participation and access: some groups of children and young people may be less likely to engage (e.g., younger children, care experienced young people, those with SEND, or those facing disadvantage), which could mean priorities reflect the views of those who find it easier to participate. There is also a risk that changes designed around children and young people could be</p>	<p>inclusive engagement methods, targeted outreach to under-represented groups, accessible formats, and ongoing monitoring/"you said, we did" feedback</p>	<p>Various</p>

		perceived as having limited direct benefit for adult and older residents ; however, the action plan includes place-based and community-focused improvements that are intended to benefit the wider community as well as children and young people.		
Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these carers provided 50 hours or more of care. 	The proposals are intended to have a positive impact on children and young people by embedding a child- focused and rights- based approach to decision- making and delivery. Some children and young people have caring responsibilities, which may make participation more challenging if engagement approaches are inflexible.	To mitigate this, delivery will use inclusive and flexible methods and work through existing support networks to ensure young carers are not excluded.	
Care experienced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of January 2026, there were 277 former care experienced young people aged 18-24 in Torbay. 	This proposal is intended to have a positive impact for care experienced children and young people by strengthening participation, ensuring decisions consider children’s rights, and focusing activity on safety, health and inclusion. Care experienced young people may experience greater barriers to feeling safe, accessing services and being heard, so effective delivery has the potential to reduce inequality.	Targeted engagement with care experienced children and young people (working with Corporate Parenting/Leaving Care services and existing participation groups), accessible communications, and “you said, we did” feedback. Strong governance and	Various

		<p>Potential adverse impacts relate to unequal engagement and benefit if care experienced children and young people are not consistently included in ongoing participation and review, or if actions are not implemented in a way that is accessible to them (e.g., changes to services and communications not reaching care leavers, or reliance on engagement routes that do not routinely include them). There is also a risk of disappointment and reduced trust if expectations are raised through engagement, but progress is not visible.</p>	<p>performance reporting to ensure actions benefiting care experienced young people are delivered and reviewed with them on an ongoing basis.</p>	
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the 2021 Census, 23.9% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness. 	<p>The proposals are intended to have a positive impact on children and young people by embedding a child- focused and rights- based approach to decision- making and delivery. Children and young people with disabilities may face additional barriers to engagement if approaches are not accessible or flexible.</p>	<p>Mitigation will include inclusive design, accessible formats, reasonable adjustments and working through existing support networks to support participation and benefit.</p>	
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth. 	<p>No differential impact</p>		

Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership. 	No differential impact		
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 2013 and 2024, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 56.0 per 1,000) than the Southwest (53.4) and broadly in line with England (56.3). • For the period 2022 to 2024, rates in Torbay (44.6) have been significantly below England (50.0). 	No differential impact		
Race	<p>In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.6% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh • 0.3% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African • 1.5% as being of Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups • 96.1% as White • 0.4% described their ethnicity another way. 	No differential impact - Engagement will be designed to be inclusive and accessible to children and young people recognising that some groups may face additional barriers to participation.		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England. 			
Religion and belief	<p>The 2021 Census showed that the residents in Torbay identify their religion and/or belief as the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 48.5% are Christian 0.4% are Buddhist 0.2% are Hindu 0.6% are Muslim Less than 0.1% are Sikh 0.1% are Jewish 0.7% have another religion 43.2% have no religion 6.3% did not answer 	No differential impact		
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 51.3% of Torbay's population are female. 48.7% of Torbay's population are male. 	No differential impact		
Sexual orientation	<p>In the 2021 Census, residents described their sexuality as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 89% as Straight or Heterosexual 1.7% as Gay or Lesbian 1.1% as Bisexual 0.1% as Pansexual 	No differential impact		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.1% described their sexuality another way • 7.4% of people didn't answer the question 			
Armed Forces Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. • In Torbay, 5.9% of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces. 	No differential impact		
Additional considerations				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torbay is ranked as the 39th most deprived upper tier local authority in England in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025. 	<p>Torbay includes areas of significant deprivation and child poverty, and children and young people from low-income households may face greater barriers to feeling safe, accessing services, taking part in activities, and having their voices heard. The Action Plan is intended to help reduce these inequalities by prioritising improvements identified by children and young people and embedding a child rights-based approach in decision-making.</p> <p>Potential adverse impacts relate to unequal access and participation if engagement activity, communications, or resulting service improvements are more accessible to families with time, digital access, transport and fewer competing pressures. There is also a risk that,</p>	Targeted outreach in deprived areas, accessible/low-cost engagement methods, and monitoring outcomes by geography/deprivation where possible	Various

		without sustained delivery and monitoring over the three-year period, the benefits for children and young people in the most deprived communities are not realised.		
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the five-year period 2020 to 2024, data shows there is a 6-year life expectancy gap between males who live in Torbay's least and most deprived areas and, a 3-year gap for females. 	No differential impact		
Human Rights impacts		The proposal is intended to strengthen protection and promotion of children's rights locally by embedding a child rights-based approach in decision-making, and by ensuring children and young people continue to participate in decisions that affect them. A potential adverse impact is that, if the approach is not embedded consistently, children's rights considerations may be applied unevenly and some groups of children and young people may benefit less.	Embed and monitor use of Child Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs) in relevant decisions and policy/strategy development, supported by clear governance, workforce development, and ongoing participation and review led by children and young people.	Various
Child Friendly		This decision is explicitly "child friendly" because it endorses a plan designed around what children and young people said matters most, and it commits to making the Council's ways of working more child-centred. A potential adverse impact is that "child friendly" benefits	Maintain a decision-making governance structure with clear accountability and reporting, deliver the workforce development plan, keep participation	Various

		could be reduced if delivery slips, if engagement becomes tokenistic, or if participation routes do not consistently include under-represented groups of children and young people.	routes active and inclusive, and use ongoing feedback (“you said, we did”) and monitoring over the 3-year period to evidence progress and adjust delivery.	
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15. Cumulative Council Impact

- 15.1. Delivery of the Action Plan will require coordinated input across multiple Council services (e.g., policy, communications, workforce development/training, performance reporting, and service areas delivering priority actions). This may create additional demand on existing capacity and could affect the timing and prioritisation of other corporate programmes if not managed through clear governance and programme planning. Alignment with existing strategies, work programmes and reporting (including use of CRIA within decision-making) is intended to mitigate duplication and support consistent delivery across the organisation.

16. Cumulative Community Impacts

- 16.1. The Action Plan brings together activity across partners and communities over a three-year period, with the intention of improving outcomes for children and young people (including safety, health and inclusion) and strengthening participation. Community impact is expected to be positive overall; however, there is a risk of uneven impact if engagement and delivery is stronger in some areas/communities than others, or if expectations are raised without visible progress. Ongoing inclusive participation, clear communications and regular reporting/feedback (“you said, we did”) will help manage expectations and support equitable impact across Torbay.