

Minutes of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board

3 June 2026

-: Present :-

Councillor Law (Chairwoman)

Councillors Fellows (Vice-Chair), Nicolaou and Tolchard

Co-opted Members

Jo Hunter, Church of England Diocese

Non-voting Co-opted Members

Jim Funnell (Voluntary and Community Sector and Alternative Provider Education)

(Also in attendance: Councillors Bye and David Thomas)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Twelves.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Board held on 16 March 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4. Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services - Councillor Bye, Director of Children's Services - Nancy Meehan and the Youth Hub Manager – Jessica Tucker, provided an overview of the submitted report regarding the Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service and responded to questions. Key points included:

- Positive progress following new arrangements, with improved young people's engagement;
- Working towards a target of 130 young people;
- Part of a wider focus on early relationship-building with young people;
- Team expanding from 2 to 3 workers (June), strengthening delivery;
- Partnership with the College supporting access and coordination;

- Ongoing work to maintain engagement and shape next steps, informed by young people's views; and
- Recognising increased summer risk, with Public Health collaboration to promote safety messages.

Members asked questions in respect of the following:

- Was the data on the age and gender profiles of young people receiving treatment locally compared with national data?
- How did the service engage with young people who were not in school?
- Were alternative locations available for young people who might not have felt comfortable engaging within the home?
- Why were there no referrals from Checkpoint, and how could communication have been improved with partners such as paediatrics?
- How common was the use of opioid substitute treatment among young people?
- Did opioid use include both heroin and prescription medication?
- Was a 33% conversion rate into structured treatment in line with expectations?
- How did the service respond to referrals that were not appropriate for structured treatment?
- Would future reports include comparative data over time?
- Why were referrals not consistently received through GPs or paediatrics, particularly where young people had presented at emergency departments?
- Could future updates have included detail on alternative pathways into support?
- How was co-production with young people being used to shape the service?
- How were services adapted to support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)?
- How did the service consider neurodivergence in relation to substance use?

The following responses were received:

- The data formed part of ongoing analysis, with early indications suggesting identifiable patterns within the local cohort;
- Engagement with young people who were not in education remained a significant challenge. As they could not be accessed through school settings, practitioners undertook outreach work, including home visits;
- The service worked with partners, including the Youth Justice Team and community organisations, to provide neutral and familiar spaces for engagement;
- Discussions with paediatrics services were scheduled, and opportunities to strengthen partnership working with Checkpoint were explored, including at joint events to improve communication and referral pathways;
- This was currently uncommon, with very few cases locally. However, there had been a shift in substance use trends towards synthetic and mixed substances, and work was underway with health partners alongside preventative activity;
- Opioid use included both heroin and prescribed medications;
- This was consistent with national benchmarks. Work was ongoing to improve conversion rates through a personalised, relationship-based approach, although some referrals were not always appropriate;

- All referrals were followed up. While performance measures focused on structured treatment, wider engagement remained important, with the service maintaining contact and keeping pathways open, including through peer mentoring;
- Reporting was provided on a quarterly basis, enabling comparison and ongoing monitoring;
- This was explored further with health partners to better understand referral pathways. Consideration was also given to refining performance measures to distinguish between referral routes;
- Future updates included additional detail on alternative pathways and how these operated;
- Peer mentoring was being developed as a key approach. Young people helped shape the service, including developing harm reduction materials and digital content, although challenges remained in reaching those outside established access points;
- Where Education, Health and Care Plans were in place, these were reviewed and treatment approaches were adapted to meet individual needs; and
- Substance use could act as a coping mechanism for some neurodivergent young people. The service focused on prevention and worked with partners to address underlying factors affecting wellbeing.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board note the Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service report;
2. that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny sub-board request that the Director of Children's Services formally write to NHS Devon to seek clarification as to why referrals are not being consistently received by drug and alcohol services for children and young people who present at Accident and Emergency departments under the influence of substances;
3. that future six-monthly updates to the Sub-Board include detailed information on any proposed or implemented alternative referral pathways for children and young people being influenced by drugs and/or alcohol, including what these pathways would look like in practice, the roles of partner agencies, and how outcomes will be measured and monitored; and
4. that for future reporting for the Youth Justice Team, that Key performance data, information be detailed into the young people who are accessing as part of drug prevention order compared to those accessing through the Prevent Service.

5. Torbay Youth Justice Plan 2026-27

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services – Councillor Bye, Director of Children's Services – Nancy Meehan and Head of Service, Torbay Youth Justice Services – Jon Ralph provided an overview of the submitted report on Torbay Youth Justice Plan 2026 – 27. Key points included:

- Key objectives include:
 - ensuring children were accessing appropriate education provision;
 - reducing the use of rolling targets;
 - lowering reoffending rates;
 - tackling criminal exploitation of children in Torbay; and
 - increasing support for victims.
- The plan was due to be presented to Cabinet in June and must be submitted to Government by the end of June 2026 as part of a statutory requirement.
- There are already positive outcomes from existing work, although challenges remain, particularly in bringing some facilities or services into full use.
- First-time entrants into the justice system continue to be an area of concern, with offending rates fluctuating.
- The “Child First” approach was being embedded, reflecting a national initiative to treat children as children, avoid criminalisation, and focus on keeping them in education.
- Work was ongoing with education providers and children’s services to support school engagement and prevent exclusion.
- Additional funding had been secured through community sources to support a summer activity programme for young people.

Members asked questions in respect of the following:

- What impact did children not in education, including those who are home educated, have on the service?
- To what extent were children excluded from schools, prior to becoming home educated and what opportunities exist for reintegration into schools?
- How effectively did schools engage with the Youth Justice Service?
- How would the Town Centre Manager role support the management of anti-social behaviour?
- How were services responding to the high levels of child poverty among those children known to the service?
- What evidence was there that demonstrated that current interventions were reducing offending and associated risks? and
- What learning had been taken from other areas in reducing first-time entrants and addressing exploitation.

The following responses were received:

- The number of home-educated children was relatively small locally, although this is a national issue;
- Pilot schemes with specialist placements were supporting children at risk of exclusion, with a view to reintegration into mainstream education;
- Dedicated support was in place to work with schools and re-engage young people in education;
- The Town Centre Manager would work with partners to improve safety in key areas, although the impact is not yet known;
- High levels of child poverty were influencing service delivery, with increased focus on basic needs and wellbeing;
- Offending patterns, including theft and shoplifting, had been linked in some cases to lack of access to food or unstable home environments;

- Initiatives such as cooking programmes, youth hubs and partnerships with local organisations were supporting young people with life skills and access to food;
- Work was ongoing with partners to address exploitation, including targeted interventions and case reviews; and
- Learning from other areas and detailed reviews of high-risk cases had informed future approaches to reducing offending and exploitation.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board noted the and recommended Cabinet to approve the Youth Justice Plan for 2026-27.

6. Early Years Sufficiency Update

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board.

7. Child Friendly Programme Update

This item was deferred and a written update to be provided by the Corporate Parenting Lead on the Child Friendly Programme.

8. Draft Work Programme Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board 2026/2027

The Chair presented the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2026/27 and Members noted that it had been devised with input from Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet Members, partners and Senior Officers. The Work Programme was designed to help shape how the meetings of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board would operate, and the Work Programme would be flexible to accommodate additional topics that may require scrutinising throughout the year.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the initial Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Work Programme for 2026/27 as presented be approved: and
2. that the Work Programme will be kept under review by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board and the Senior Democratic Services and Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

9. Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker

The Sub-Board noted the contents of the submitted action tracker.

Chair

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