

Torbay's Drug and Alcohol partnership

Annual update (September 2025 – August 2026)

Background

The Government's 10-year drugs strategy, *From Harm to Hope*, published in December 2021, continues to provide the national framework for addressing drug-related harm and improving outcomes for individuals, families and communities. The strategy was informed by Dame Carol Black's Independent Review of Drugs and set out a long-term, whole-system approach to tackling substance misuse and its wider social impacts.

The strategy is built around three overarching priorities:

- Breaking drug supply chains;
- Delivering a world-class treatment and recovery system; and
- Achieving a generational shift in the demand for drugs.

These priorities are supported by a range of commitments spanning prevention, enforcement, treatment, recovery, housing, employment, mental health, criminal justice and wider health services. Delivery of these commitments relies on strong partnership working across local authorities, health services, criminal justice agencies, education providers, voluntary sector organisations and people with lived experience.

The Government's *Guidance for Local Delivery Partners* established the expectation that local areas would develop robust partnership arrangements to coordinate delivery, monitor progress and drive improvement across the system. In response, local Combating Drugs Partnerships were established nationally to provide strategic oversight and accountability for delivery of the drug strategy at a local level.

In Torbay, partners agreed to adopt a broader substance misuse approach by incorporating alcohol within the partnership's remit, recognising the significant impact that both drug and alcohol-related harms have on local communities and public services. The Torbay Drug and Alcohol Partnership (TDAP) therefore provides the strategic forum through which partners collectively oversee local priorities, coordinate action and monitor progress against both national and local objectives.

The partnership brings together representatives from Public Health, healthcare services, treatment and recovery providers, criminal justice agencies, children's services, housing, community safety and the voluntary and community sector. Through this collaborative approach, TDAP seeks to reduce substance-related harm, improve health and wellbeing outcomes, support recovery, and contribute to safer and healthier communities across Torbay.

Unless otherwise stated, this report reflects activity undertaken between September 2025 and August 2026. Some performance indicators and programme reporting are presented using financial year reporting periods (2025/26) in line with national reporting requirements.

The Role of TDAP

Reducing drug and alcohol related harm requires a coordinated, whole-system approach. The Torbay Drug and Alcohol Partnership (TDAP) provides the strategic forum through which partners work together to understand local need, identify emerging challenges, and coordinate action across prevention, treatment, recovery, enforcement, housing, community safety and wider health and social care services.

The partnership is responsible for providing strategic leadership and oversight of Torbay's response to drug and alcohol related harms, ensuring that local activity supports both national policy objectives and local priorities. Through shared intelligence, performance monitoring and collaborative planning, the partnership seeks to improve outcomes for individuals, families and communities affected by substance use.

Key responsibilities of the partnership include:

- Overseeing delivery of Torbay's local drug and alcohol priorities and monitoring progress against national and local performance measures.
- Reviewing data, intelligence, research and lived experience evidence to understand emerging issues, unmet need and opportunities for improvement.
- Providing strategic challenge and support to partners to ensure services remain effective, accessible and responsive to local need.
- Influencing commissioning intentions, service development and wider organisational strategies that have the potential to impact substance-related outcomes.
- Identifying system risks, gaps and barriers to delivery, and escalating issues through appropriate governance arrangements where required.
- Promoting collaboration across agencies to ensure a coordinated response to drug and alcohol related harm.
- Supporting the development of evidence-based approaches that improve prevention, treatment, recovery and community safety outcomes.

As the partnership has matured, its focus has increasingly shifted from establishing governance arrangements and delivery plans to driving improvement through shared ownership of priorities, scrutiny of performance, and collective action to address areas of concern. This annual report provides an overview of progress made during the reporting period, key achievements, challenges and priorities for the year ahead.

Key Partnership Milestones (September 2025 - August 2026)

Over the past 12 months, the Torbay Drug and Alcohol Partnership has focused on strengthening strategic leadership, governance and partnership arrangements to support delivery of the national drug strategy and local priorities.

Key achievements have included improving oversight of strategic investment, using evidence and intelligence to inform decision-making, establishing shared partnership priorities, and strengthening collaboration across substance use, mental health and community safety agendas. Together, these developments have provided a stronger foundation for partnership working and future service improvement across the local treatment and recovery system

Strengthened strategic investment oversight

The Partnership collectively reviewed and agreed the allocation of Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Improvement Grant (DATRIG) funding. This provided a transparent and collaborative approach to investment decisions, ensuring resources were aligned to local need, national priorities, and agreed system objectives.

Evidence-led priority setting

A comprehensive review of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) was undertaken to identify gaps within the current treatment and support system. Findings from this review informed partnership discussions and helped shape future planning, commissioning intentions, and service development priorities.

Establishment of shared partnership priorities

Partners worked collectively to identify and agree a set of strategic priorities for the Partnership. To support delivery, dedicated task-and-finish and thematic sub-groups were established, creating greater ownership, accountability, and focus on key areas of improvement.

Enhanced oversight of mental health and substance use agendas

Recognising the importance of integrated responses to co-occurring need, the Partnership established an informal route through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to provide oversight of progress within the mental health arena. This has strengthened governance arrangements and improved opportunities for cross-system collaboration.

The following section provides an overview of progress against the three priorities set out within the Government's '*From Harm to Hope*' drugs strategy and highlights key achievements, challenges and areas of focus for the year ahead.

Progress against strategic Priorities

Priority 1: Break drug supply chains

County Lines Disruption, Enforcement and Safeguarding Activity.

A range of disruption and enforcement activity has been undertaken to address the County Lines threat. Operation Harbourlight, led by the Torquay Neighbourhood Team, has focused on disrupting drug dealing within Torquay, particularly around the Castle Circus area, resulting in five recorded disruptions during the past 12 months. In January 2026, officers disrupted a West Midlands-based County Line operating from an Airbnb property in Torquay. This operation resulted in the arrest of four individuals and the seizure of drugs with an estimated street value of £14,000, alongside approximately £10,000 in cash.

Further activity was delivered through the June 2026 Operation Scorpion intensification period, which focused on the "Pubs, Clubs Against Drugs" initiative within the Evening and Night-Time Economy. This resulted in a number of arrests and charges, drugs and weapon seizures and safeguarding visits where cuckooing was identified as a risk.

To further strengthen the local intelligence picture, a new County Line Intelligence Collection Matrix (CLICM) process has been introduced. Although still in its early stages, CLICM is designed to provide improved County Lines performance metrics, including the number of active County Lines, the number of exploited or trafficked children linked to County Lines activity, associated harm indicators, and the number of identified cuckooing victims.

As the process matures, it is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of harm, vulnerability, exploitation and safeguarding risks, supporting future operational and partnership assessments.

Restricting the supply of drugs into Prisons

During 2025/26, regional partnership working with prison services continued to strengthen intelligence-led approaches to tackling drug-related harm and organised crime. The Southwest Prison Drug and Alcohol Lead, working with NHS North Central London Commissioning Collaborative (NCLCC), delivered a regional event to upskill prison Security and Drug Strategy Leads in the use of prison intelligence alongside local intelligence systems to identify and disrupt county lines activity. This shared intelligence approach supports the identification and management of criminal exploitation networks and contributes to the disruption of organised crime groups (OCGs) both within prisons and through-the-gate into communities.

Prisons across the region have also been given opportunities to invest in enhanced trace detection technology. Subject to local budget availability, this equipment will strengthen the ability to identify routes of drug conveyance, including through mail, reception items and prison searches, improving the detection and prevention of illicit substances entering custodial settings.

In addition, prison services continue to work closely with police partners to reduce the risks associated with drone deliveries, throw-overs and the conveyance of drugs and other prohibited items through prison visits. These measures support wider efforts to reduce the supply of illicit substances, strengthen security and improve outcomes for individuals in custody and upon release.

Priority 2: Deliver a world class treatment and recovery system.

Service Performance and Outcomes

The treatment and recovery system has continued to support individuals with drug and alcohol treatment needs; however, performance across a number of key indicators declined during the reporting period. This includes reductions in the number of people in treatment across most treatment cohorts, alongside declines in measures of treatment progress and continuity of care. These challenges have occurred within the context of significant workforce instability, including high staff turnover and the recruitment of a new service manager.

A key priority for the service has been workforce stabilisation and rebuilding operational capacity to support sustainable improvement. Alongside this, targeted work has been undertaken to strengthen pathways with criminal justice partners and improve engagement with individuals transitioning from custody into the community. Through partnership working, the service has also invested in gathering insights from people both in and out of treatment to better understand barriers to engagement, retention and recovery. This learning is informing service improvement plans and helping to target operational activity towards areas with the greatest potential to improve outcomes and support recovery.

Investing in Treatment and Recovery Capacity

The Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Improvement Grant (DATRIG) has continued to provide an important opportunity to strengthen treatment and recovery pathways across Torbay. Supported by Drug and Alcohol Partnership partners, investment has been maintained in residential rehabilitation and inpatient treatment placements, ensuring access to intensive interventions for individuals with the most complex needs.

DATRIG funding has also provided the opportunity to widen the implementation of Buvidal, broadening the range of opioid substitution treatment options available and enabling a more flexible, person-centred treatment offer. In addition, funding has been used to develop a stronger understanding of barriers to treatment engagement among young adults, with insights from this work informing the exploration of alternative treatment models for the 18 to 25 age cohort and helping to shape future commissioning decisions.

Understanding need and shaping future services

Further insight activity has focused on housing and accommodation, with an options appraisal undertaken to better understand the current provision available, identify service gaps and explore the barriers individuals face in securing and sustaining accommodation in Torbay. The findings from both the 18-25 insights work and the housing insights work will support future service development and contribute to a more responsive and evidence-led treatment and recovery system

Improving Treatment Access and Delivering High-Quality Recovery Support

Following a TDAP prioritisation exercise in December 2025, members agreed two priority areas to shape the Partnership's delivery plan: reducing opiate unmet need and delivering integrated services. Positive progress has been made in establishing the Reducing Opiate Unmet Need workstream, which has completed an initial phase of system mapping, evidence review and insight gathering. This work has strengthened understanding of local need and is now informing the development of targeted priorities and actions to increase treatment engagement and improve outcomes for people using opiates.

Progressing the Delivering Integrated Services agenda has highlighted the importance of securing broad cross-system engagement to support sustainable change. While partner capacity has limited the establishment of a formal workstream during the reporting period, there remains strong recognition across the Partnership of the need to strengthen referral pathways, workforce development and wraparound support. A renewed programme of engagement will be undertaken during autumn 2026 to build momentum, strengthen ownership across partner organisations and establish a collaborative delivery approach that reflects shared priorities and available capacity.

Priority 3: Achieve a generational shift in the demand for drugs.

Supporting Young People and Families Most at Risk of Substance Misuse or Criminal Exploitation.

Progress towards achieving a generational shift in the demand for drugs has focused on strengthening early intervention, prevention, and support for vulnerable children, young people, and families. A significant development during the year has been the introduction of the new Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service and the implementation of an adapted place-based delivery model. This approach aims to increase the reach and accessibility of support by engaging young people in the settings and communities they already frequent, while also strengthening relationships with education providers and improving opportunities for early identification and intervention.

Two partnership working groups established to drive progress in this area, *Drug Education in Schools* and *Supporting Families and Young People Most at Risk of Substance Use*, have been temporarily stood down due to workforce pressures and changes in key roles across Children's Services. However, substantial scoping and mapping activity has been undertaken to better understand the current prevention landscape, identify existing strengths, and highlight remaining gaps. This work identified several established mechanisms that support the identification and

referral of vulnerable children and families, including child exploitation processes, education and youth justice referral pathways, as well as embedding the family hubs.

The scoping work highlighted opportunities to further strengthen the confidence, skills and capability of practitioners across Children's Services and substance use services to engage children, young people and families in conversations about drug and alcohol use. In response, a workforce development commission was undertaken, resulting in a series of recommendations to support a more integrated, whole-system approach to prevention, identification and early intervention. The proposal included a programme of workforce training and development designed to improve partnership working and build practitioner confidence across services.

While the commission has provided a clear framework for improvement, progress in implementing the recommendations and associated training plan has been affected by capacity challenges and competing service pressures. Nevertheless, the existing referral pathways and safeguarding structures, combined with the recommendations arising from the workforce development commission, provide a strong foundation for future delivery. These developments place the Partnership in a stronger position to improve prevention, support earlier identification of risk, and reduce the likelihood of future substance-related harm among children, young people and families.

Strategic Approach

The Partnership remains focused on reducing drug and alcohol-related harm through evidence-led service improvement, targeted investment and collaborative partnership working. During the year, activity has focused on strengthening governance, stabilising the treatment workforce, improving understanding of local need and maintaining investment in interventions that support prevention, treatment and recovery.

Over the coming year, priority will be given to improving treatment engagement, treatment progress and continuity of care outcomes, alongside increasing access to treatment for populations experiencing the greatest unmet need. The Partnership will continue to utilise DATRIG funding to support recovery pathways, widen access to evidence-based treatment options and inform future commissioning decisions. Delivery of the Reducing Opiate Unmet Need workstream will move into its implementation phase, while renewed engagement with partners will seek to progress the Delivering Integrated Services agenda through strengthened referral pathways, workforce development and wraparound support.

Recognising the limited focus on Priority 1 objectives through existing partnership structures, opportunities are being explored to establish a dedicated peninsula-wide Combating Drugs Partnership forum. This would provide greater strategic oversight of Priority 1 activity and strengthen collaboration across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay to address the wider drivers of drug-related harm.

While challenges remain, particularly in relation to treatment outcomes, partnership capacity and increasing complexity of need, the Partnership has strengthened its strategic foundations during the year and is well positioned to drive forward a focused programme of improvement aimed at reducing drug and alcohol-related harm and improving outcomes for Torbay residents.