

Meeting: Children's Overview and Scrutiny Board **Date:** 28th September 2026

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Update on the Children's Continuous Improvement Board and Reforms

When does the decision need to be implemented?

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1. Purpose of Report

This report provides the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update on Torbay's Children's Continuous Improvement Plan 2026–2029, approved by the Children's Continuous Improvement Board (CCIB) in June 2026, and on the national reforms affecting children's services.

Members are invited to note the partnership's priorities, governance arrangements, current direction of travel and the implications for children, young people and families in Torbay.

2. Background Documents

Torbay Children's Continuous Improvement Plan 2026–2029; Children's Social Care Reset and Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026: Reform Programme, Timeframes and Partnership Implications.

Supporting Information

3. Introduction

Children's Continuous Improvement Plan 2026–2029

The Plan was developed following the January 2026 inspection of local authority children's services, which again judged Torbay's children's services to be Good, and in response to the changing national policy and legislative context. It provides a single partnership framework for continued improvement while retaining a clear focus on children's lived experience and outcomes.

The Plan is owned by the CCIB, a partnership board attended by the Council's Chief Executive and comprising representatives from the Council, elected Members, education, health, police and the voluntary and community sector. It is structured around three ambitions:

- **Delivering Best Practice** – assuring and challenging the quality and impact of services, including information sharing, repeat referrals, assessment timeliness and outcomes for vulnerable learners.
- **Developing a Child Friendly Torbay** – ensuring children and young people are valued, listened to and able to thrive, with priorities including housing and youth homelessness, locality-based understanding of need, education inclusion and SEND.
- **Transformative Developments** – identifying and responding to system change, including neglect, exploitation and missing children, health equity for children in care, youth justice, education, employment and training, and wider system reforms.

The Plan is a live document. Progress is monitored through three annual deep dives, concise exception reporting and oversight of performance and quality assurance information. New legislation, statutory guidance and findings from national reviews are considered for inclusion so that the partnership remains focused on contemporary risks and opportunities without duplicating work undertaken through other boards.

National reform update

The Children's Social Care Reset and the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 set a substantial programme of reform to be introduced in phases between 2026 and 2029. The overall direction is towards earlier and more joined-up help, stronger family networks, clearer multi-agency safeguarding, improved support for cared for and care experienced children and young people, and stronger shared leadership across local partnerships.

Key areas include:

- an integrated Family Help model bringing early help and child in need support together;
- stronger multi-agency child protection arrangements and information sharing;
- a statutory offer of family group decision making at pre-proceedings where this is in the child's best interests;
- greater support for kinship care, including a clear local offer;
- strengthened care leaver support, particularly housing, financial support and preparation for adulthood;
- stronger and wider corporate parenting responsibilities;
- increased focus on education, attendance, inclusion and wellbeing; and
- reforms to sufficiency, fostering, commissioning and regional care arrangements.

Many of these priorities are already reflected in Torbay's improvement activity, including Family Help, kinship care, family decision making, care leaver support, sufficiency, corporate parenting, safeguarding, education, attendance and wellbeing. The CCIB is therefore overseeing reform through existing arrangements rather than creating a separate programme. Corporate parenting matters remain under the Corporate Parenting Board, while statutory safeguarding responsibilities remain with the Torbay Safeguarding Children Partnership.

National guidance and commencement dates continue to develop. Current indicative milestones include Family Help, family group decision making and kinship arrangements during 2026; information-sharing and care leaver changes from autumn 2026; further safeguarding and education reforms during 2027; and wider corporate parenting duties for relevant public bodies expected from autumn 2027. Oversight will focus on readiness, impact, risks and cross-partnership barriers.

If implemented well, the reforms should mean earlier help, fewer service handovers, stronger family and community connections, improved stability for children in care, better support into adulthood and a stronger focus on education and wellbeing. Key risks include workforce and partnership capacity, delays in national guidance, inconsistent understanding, financial and sufficiency pressures, data quality and the risk of activity becoming process-led rather than focused on children's lived experience.

4. Options under consideration

N/A

5. Financial Opportunities and Implications

This report is for information and does not seek approval for additional expenditure. Individual reform requirements may have workforce, commissioning, sufficiency, data and financial implications. These will be assessed through the relevant governance and budget processes as national guidance and local delivery plans are developed.

6. Legal Implications

The Children's Improvement Plan supports the Council and its partners to maintain oversight of existing and emerging statutory duties for children. The national reforms introduce or strengthen duties relating to family group decision making, information sharing, kinship care, care leaver support, safeguarding, education and corporate parenting. Specific legal implications will be considered as provisions commence and further statutory guidance is published.

7. Engagement and Consultation

The Plan was developed and agreed through the CCIB partnership. It commits the Board to systematically seek and use the views and lived experience of children and young people when testing progress and shaping future priorities. Relevant local offers, including kinship care and care leaver support, will be informed by engagement with children, young people, families, carers, practitioners and partners.

8. Procurement Implications

There are no direct procurement implications arising from this information report. Any future procurement or commissioning activity required to implement reforms will be considered through

the Council's established governance and procurement arrangements, including social value requirements.

9. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

This is an information report and has no direct environmental or climate impact. Environmental considerations will be addressed through the appropriate assessment process where future reform activity involves service redesign, commissioning, property, transport or other material changes.

10. Associated Risks

The principal risk is that national reform requirements are not implemented in a sufficiently coordinated or timely way across the partnership. This could lead to gaps or duplication in governance, inconsistent practice, capacity pressures and limited evidence that changes are improving children's experiences and outcomes.

These risks are mitigated through CCIB oversight, clear allocation of responsibilities across existing boards, deep dives, exception reporting, performance and quality assurance information, and escalation of significant partnership barriers. Particular attention will be given to workforce, finance, data, sufficiency, statutory compliance and the voice of children and young people.

11. 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	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.	The Plan is expected to benefit children and young people across all age groups. Delivery will recognise that needs change from early childhood through adolescence and into adulthood, with particular attention to smooth transitions between services and support for care experienced young people.	Use age-disaggregated performance and quality assurance information where needed; test impact through children and young people's feedback;	Children's Services - Ongoing through 2026–2029, with annual review and exception reporting.
Carers	- 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.	Positive impacts are expected for unpaid carers, including kinship carers and young carers, through earlier help, stronger family network approaches and improved local offers.	Co-produce and review relevant offers with carers; provide clear and accessible information, monitor feedback	Children's Services, Adult Social Care and partners. During implementation of Family Help, kinship and

				local offer reforms; reviewed annually.
Care experienced	As of January 2026, there were 277 former care experienced young people aged 18-24 in Torbay.	Care experienced children and young people are expected to benefit from strengthened corporate parenting, improved placement stability and enhanced support for housing, health, education, employment and preparation for adulthood. Partnership oversight will help ensure support is joined up and transitions are well planned.	Use the Corporate Parenting Board and care leaver Local Offer to monitor outcomes and barriers; involve care experienced young people in design and assurance.	Children's Services, Corporate Parenting Board and partner agencies. Ongoing, with key Local Offer changes during 2026 and wider duties expected from autumn 2027.
Disability	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.	Positive impacts are expected through the focus on SEND, inclusion, early help, health and transitions. Information, engagement opportunities and support will be designed to be accessible, with reasonable adjustments made to reflect individual needs.	Apply accessible information and communication standards; make reasonable adjustments; offer different ways to participate;	Children's Services, Throughout implementation and reviewed through performance

				and quality assurance.
Gender reassignment	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.	No specific unequal impact is anticipated.	N/A	N/A
Marriage and civil partnership	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 is anticipated from this information report.	N/A	N/A
Pregnancy and maternity	- 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).	Positive impacts are expected from earlier, coordinated support for parents and babies.	Coordinate support and ensure plans are strengths-based and responsive to individual needs.	Children's Services, Public Health, Health and Education partners. Ongoing through Family Help and safeguarding implementation.
Race	In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as the following:	No Differential Impact - Locality-based planning and earlier support are	N/A	N/A

	• 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. • 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.	expected to benefit children and families across all communities.		
Religion and belief	The 2021 Census showed that the residents in Torbay identify their religion and/or belief as the following; • 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 specific unequal impact is anticipated.	N/A	N/A
Sex	• 51.3% of Torbay's population are female.	The Plan is intended to benefit all children and young people.	N/A	N/A

	48.7% of Torbay's population are male.			
Sexual orientation	In the 2021 Census, residents described their sexuality as follows; 89% as Straight or Heterosexual 1.7% as Gay or Lesbian 1.1% as Bisexual 0.1% as Pansexual 0.1% described their sexuality another way 7.4% of people didn't answer the question	No specific unequal impact is anticipated.	N/A	N/A
Armed Forces Community	- 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	N/A	N/A
Additional considerations				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)	Torbay is ranked as the 39th most deprived upper tier local authority in England in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025.	Earlier help, housing support, locality planning and improved care leaver provision are expected to support children and families experiencing financial hardship. Service design will take account of practical access issues such as cost, transport, housing and	Use locality and deprivation data to target improvement activity and service design; monitor access and outcomes for disadvantaged cohorts.	Children's Services, Public Health, Housing, Education and partner agencies.

		digital access, and will seek to maximise available entitlements and support.		Ongoing, with annual review through existing governance.
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)	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.	The Plan and reforms are expected to support better health and wellbeing through earlier help, stronger safeguarding, improved access to health services and greater attention to the needs of children in care and care experienced young people. Partnership monitoring will help identify where outcomes or access differ between communities.	Maintain strong links between Children's Services, Public Health and health partners; monitor access and outcomes; use local data and lived experience to shape prevention and early support; address identified barriers through relevant partnership boards.	Children's Services, Public Health, Health and partner agencies. Ongoing throughout 2026–2029.
Human Rights impacts	Relevant considerations include children's rights to safety, family life, education, participation and freedom from discrimination, alongside lawful and proportionate safeguarding responsibilities.	The Plan supports a rights-based and child-centred approach.	N/A	N/A
Child Friendly	The Plan is explicitly focused on children's lived experience	A positive impact is expected through stronger participation, earlier help,	Use child-friendly information and a range	Children's Services and

	and commits the partnership to listening to and acting on the views of children and young people.	inclusive services and clearer accountability for outcomes. Engagement should be meaningful, accessible and followed by feedback showing children and young people how their views have influenced decisions.	of participation methods; involve children and young people in design and assurance; report back on action taken; monitor whether participation includes children with different needs and experiences.	partner agencies. Ongoing throughout the life of the Plan.
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12. Cumulative Council Impact

The reform programme has cross-Council implications, particularly for housing, education, finance, commissioning, workforce, data and wider corporate parenting responsibilities. These dependencies will be mapped and managed through existing governance arrangements.

13. Cumulative Community Impacts

The reforms require a whole-system response from the Council, education, health, police, housing and voluntary and community sector partners. Coordinated implementation should strengthen earlier help, safeguarding, family stability, education, health and preparation for adulthood. CCIB will maintain oversight of cross-partnership dependencies and escalate barriers where required.

14. Recommendation

Members are asked to note the Children's Continuous Improvement Plan 2026–2029, the current national reform programme and Torbay's approach to oversight through existing partnership governance arrangements.