

# Torbay SEND Improvement

## Priority Action 2: Delivery and Impact

### *Commissioning arrangements, sufficiency and access to support*

The Task and Finish Group is asked to:

- note the progress made in moving from reactive responses to evidence-led, jointly governed commissioning; *The SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, education needs analysis and Commissioning Oversight Group provide a clearer route from need and risk to priority decisions*
- recognise the measurable impact that is emerging across autism capacity, speech, language and communication needs, alternative provision and access to support
- comment and advise on the next phase of work, particularly the need to evidence whether strengthened commissioning is consistently improving access, inclusion and outcomes for children, young people and families.

### 1. Executive summary

This paper sets out the Torbay Local Area Partnership response to the March 2025 Area SEND inspection findings relevant to Priority Action 2 (PA2).

**Overall judgement;** Commissioning has moved from a reactive response to service gaps towards an evidence-led, jointly governed and impact-focused model.

- The SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, education needs analysis and Commissioning Oversight Group provide a clearer route from need and risk to priority decisions.
- The SEND JSNA and Easy Read summary were published in May 2026. Quarterly commissioning review is embedded and priority evidence is considered across early years, autism, neurodiversity, SLCN, EOTAS and alternative provision, learning disability and mental health.
- Forty additional specialist autism places were created at Coombe Pafford School for September 2026, exceeding the Priority Impact Plan target of 25 places.
- The reported 'mean' waiting position for under-five SLCN reduced from 45 in April 2025 to 25 in April 2026. A new specialist EOTAS curriculum, provider quality assurance and termly contract monitoring are in place.
- Access indicators are beginning to improve. MyWay became operational in April 2026 and supports more than 2,000 children and young people; Lumi Nova monthly sign-ups increased from 33 to 150 by April 2026. The draft evidence notes that some reporting dates and baselines still require validation before external use.
- The central challenge is now to convert stronger structures and additional capacity into consistent evidence of better access, attendance, inclusion, family confidence and longer-term outcomes.

### 2. Purpose and context

The Area SEND inspection took place from 17 to 21 March 2025. Priority Action 2 requires the partnership to strengthen commissioning arrangements so identified needs are met and the JSNA is used to identify and manage risk when service gaps arise.

*“The local area partnership must strengthen its commissioning arrangements to meet the identified needs of children and young people with SEND in Torbay. This includes strengthening the way that the joint strategic needs assessment is used to accurately identify and effectively manage risks when service gaps are identified across the partnership.”*

This paper is structured around the inspection findings and the commissioning themes. For each quote from the inspection it sets out the inspection baseline, the partnership response, evidence of delivery and emerging impact, and the next test of effectiveness.

### 3. Inspection finding: joint commissioning and use of shared intelligence

*“At the time of the inspection, joint commissioning was in flux.”*

The inspection finding described an unstable commissioning context and limited evidence that shared intelligence was routinely translated into jointly owned priorities and measurable impact.

| Inspection baseline                                                                                                                                            | Delivery since inspection                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Impact evidenced                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Next test                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Shared evidence of SEND need, provision gaps and risk was not consistently brought together. Gap response was reactive and impact was not evidenced routinely. | The SEND needs analysis and education needs analysis were completed. A workshop on 27 January 2026 identified data gaps, lived-experience evidence and areas for deeper review. The SEND JSNA and Easy Read summary were published in May 2026. A Commissioning Oversight Group now reviews data, risks, priorities and gaps quarterly. | The partnership now has a single evidence-to-action cycle: understand need, share intelligence, prioritise gaps, commission together and test impact. Evidence is guiding work across early years, autism, neurodiversity, SLCN, EOTAS/AP, learning disability and mental health. | Keep the JSNA live; record the commissioning decision arising from each priority review; link decisions to access, inclusion, experience and outcome measures. |

### 4. Inspection finding: specialist capacity and sufficiency

The inspection identified gaps in provision and the need for commissioning and sufficiency planning to respond more effectively to the profile of need, including autism and specialist placements.

| Inspection baseline                                      | Delivery since inspection                                     | Impact evidenced                                                              | Next test                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Local specialist capacity did not fully match identified | The significant-change proposal for Coombe Pafford School was | Additional local capacity is in place. Attendance and outcomes for the autism | Track placement stability, attendance, |

|                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| need, creating pressure on placements and increasing the risk of children and young people being supported away from their local communities. | approved and transition planning implemented. Forty additional specialist autism places were created for September 2026, exceeding the PIP target of 25. Core, enhanced and bespoke offers were designed to meet a range of need.                                                                                 | enhanced resource provision are reported as improving, and the parent-confidence measure increased to 50% from 22%. Curriculum development and staff CPD have been completed, with the service-level agreement being finalised. | inclusion, progress, exclusion, parental confidence and avoided out-of-area placements across the expanded capacity.                                          |
| Sufficiency planning needed a clearer evidence base and longer-term trajectory.                                                               | A specialist placements sufficiency plan and capital trajectory now identify further proposed capacity, including 12 secondary SEMH places, 12 places at Barton Primary and 24 at Watcombe Primary for September 2027, alongside a £1m allocation for support bases across 10 primary and five secondary schools. | A defined future programme is in place, but the effect on access and outcomes is not yet available because delivery is future-facing.                                                                                           | Report delivery against milestones and evidence whether new capacity reduces delay, travel, placement breakdown and reliance on high-cost external provision. |

## 5. Inspection finding: learning disability pathways and health access

*“There is currently no commissioned learning disability pathway.”*

The inspection highlighted the absence of a clear commissioned pathway and the need for children, young people and families to experience coordinated, understandable and accessible support.

| Inspection baseline                                                                                                                   | Delivery since inspection                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Impact evidenced                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Next test                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The learning-disability pathway was not clearly commissioned or visible to families, and evidence of access and outcomes was limited. | The learning-disability offer has been shared through Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny and SLAIP. Pathway evidence is being assembled and family feedback is reported as positive. Annual health-check uptake is now included in the PA2 evidence base. | At November 2025, annual health-check uptake is improving. The partnership has clearer visibility of the offer, although the draft scorecard still requires a complete pathway baseline and repeatable outcome measures. | Confirm pathway coverage, referral-to-support measures, family experience, annual health-check uptake and transition outcomes, with clear ownership across children's and adult services. |

## 6. Inspection finding: earlier support, SLCN and neurodiversity

The commissioning response has focused on earlier identification and support, reducing avoidable waiting and strengthening capacity in mainstream settings.

| Inspection baseline                                                                                                                                                | Delivery since inspection                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Impact evidenced                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Next test                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Children, families and settings did not consistently experience timely, equitable access to targeted support, and the evidence base for early need was fragmented. | The SLCN locality pilot was evaluated and has informed geographical cluster working. New SLCN training and resources are live. PiNS evaluation, autism baselines, attendance monitoring and staff-confidence frameworks are developing across targeted schools. Future Experts at Hand offers are intended to continue expertise into settings. | The reported under-five mean wait reduced from 45 in April 2025 to 25 in April 2026. The SLCN work is reported to have enabled more than £1m of capital improvements by more effectively evidencing need. Early PiNS evaluation is positive, although coverage and sustained outcome measures remain incomplete. | Demonstrate earlier identification, equitable coverage, improved staff confidence and reduced escalation to specialist provision; validate waiting-time definitions and reporting periods. |

## 7. Inspection finding: alternative provision and EOTAS oversight

Inspection evidence required stronger commissioning oversight, quality assurance and impact information for alternative provision and education otherwise than at school.

| Inspection baseline                                                                                                                                        | Delivery since inspection                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Impact evidenced                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Next test                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Quality, accreditation, attendance, engagement and longer-term outcomes were not consistently visible across commissioned alternative provision and EOTAS. | A new specialist EOTAS curriculum now combines key-skills teaching, tuition, vocational development and therapeutic support. Providers used by the local authority have been quality assured. Termly contract management and outcome monitoring are embedded, and an AP strategy and impact framework are being co-produced. | Student engagement and attendance is reported by providers as improving. A new monitoring service provides a stronger basis for oversight. However, the number and findings of QA reviews, accreditation status and sustained outcome evidence are not yet complete in the scorecard. | Publish provider coverage and QA findings; track attendance, engagement, qualifications, destinations and family experience; demonstrate fewer EOTAS placements caused by unmet commissioning gaps. |

## 8. Before inspection and now: summary view

| Inspection baseline                                                         | Delivery since inspection                                                                                                                                             | Impact evidenced                                                                                                | Next test                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Shared commissioning intelligence was fragmented and gap response reactive. | SEND JSNA, education needs analysis and quarterly Commissioning Oversight Group are established, attended by children's, adults, public health and ICB commissioners. | Priority decisions are increasingly evidence-led across key service gaps.                                       | Show the decision-to-impact line for every priority.                     |
| Specialist autism capacity did not fully match need.                        | Forty additional autism places were created for September 2026.                                                                                                       | Capacity exceeds the PIP target; attendance, outcomes and parent confidence are reported as improving.          | Demonstrate sustained placement and outcome gains.                       |
| SLCN and early-support access were inconsistent.                            | Locality and cluster approaches, training and resources are in place.                                                                                                 | Reported under-five mean wait reduced from 45 to 25.                                                            | Validate and sustain access and outcome measures.                        |
| AP/EOTAS assurance and outcome evidence were inconsistent.                  | Specialist curriculum, provider QA, monitoring and termly contract management are embedded.                                                                           | Engagement and attendance are reported as improving.                                                            | Complete accreditation, QA and sustained outcome evidence.               |
| Learning-disability pathway visibility and measurement were weak.           | The offer has been shared and pathway evidence is being assembled.                                                                                                    | Health-check uptake and positive family feedback are now visible.                                               | Confirm commissioned pathway coverage and repeatable outcome measures.   |
| Mental-health access evidence was fragmented.                               | MyWay and Lumi Nova are operational; draft evidence also reports a reduction in MERS waits.                                                                           | MyWay supports more than 2,000 children and young people; Lumi sign-ups increased from 33 to 150 by April 2026. | Validate dates and connect access indicators to outcomes and experience. |

## 9. Conclusion

- Torbay has made clear progress in strengthening PA2 commissioning infrastructure. The partnership now has a shared needs assessment, a routine oversight forum and a more explicit evidence-to-action cycle.

- Delivery is visible through additional autism capacity, reduced reported SLCN waits, stronger EOTAS and alternative-provision assurance, clearer learning-disability pathway evidence and improved access to mental-health support.
- The evidence does not yet demonstrate consistent, sustained impact across every commissioning theme. Several baselines, reporting dates and measures remain incomplete, particularly for PiNS coverage, AP accreditation and QA, learning-disability pathways, health checks, MHST coverage, social-care sufficiency and Preparing for Adulthood.
- The next phase should focus less on whether structures and services exist and more on whether children, young people and families experience timely access, improved attendance and inclusion, better outcomes and greater confidence in the local SEND system.

#### **Evidence base used**

- Torbay Area SEND full inspection report, March 2025.
- PA2 Commissioning Impact Statement preparation pack, September 2026.
- DRAFT PA2 Scorecard – Commissioning, August 2026.
- PIP Progress Tracker, August/September 2026 position.
- PA1 Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish paper used as the structural and formatting model.