TORBAY COUNCIL

Meeting: Cabinet **Date:** 24 November 2026

Wards affected: All wards

Report Title Torbay Area SEND Strategy 2026–2029

When does the decision need to be implemented? Immediately following approval.

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Cllr Nick Bye – Lead Cabinet Member Children's Services

Director Contact Details: Nancy Meehan Director of Children's Services, Hannah Baker Divisional Director SEND and Education

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report seeks Council approval of Torbay Area SEND Strategy 2026–2029, which sets out a shared vision and priorities for SEND across Torbay.

1.2 The Strategy sets out a clear vision for the SEND Local Area Partnership, focusing on six shared priorities with children, young people and their families at the heart of its approach. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) has confirmed its adoption of the Torbay Area SEND Strategy 2026–2029 as the strategic framework for Torbay. Approval of this report will demonstrate the Council's commitment to this collaborative Local Area approach and to the associated arrangements for implementation, governance and oversight.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

2.1.1 A shared strategic framework is needed so that the Local Area Partnership can align effort, strengthen collaboration and monitor progress consistently. The six priorities are Inclusive education, belonging and local communities; Early Identification, effective help and clear pathways; The right support, in the right place, at the right time; Joined-up education, health and care accountability: Preparation for adulthood, independence and a good life: Trust, confidence, communication and co-production. They have been coproduced from what our families have told us is the most important priorities for them.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

3.1.1 That the Torbay Area SEND Strategy 2026–2029, be approved; and

3.1.2 That the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, be given delegated authority to make minor presentational or factual amendments that do not change the substance of the Torbay Area SEND Strategy 2026-2029, if required.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1: Torbay Area SEND Strategy 2026–2029

5. Background Documents

- Torbay Area SEND Strategy 2026–2029

Supporting Information

6. Introduction

6.1.1 Developed as a Local Area Partnership strategy for Torbay, the Strategy sets out a message from Families in Torbay about want they want to see, our co-production approach, SEND pledge principles and the responsibilities of the Council and partners and in ensuring a collaborative model for delivery.

6.1.2 Progress will be overseen through the SEND Local area Improvement Board, supported by regular progress tracking and annual review. A new structure of multi-agency boards and meetings has been implemented, bringing together education, health and care partners with parents and carers to oversee local SEND arrangements and monitor progress towards our shared vision and goals.

7. Options under consideration

7.1.1 Approve the Strategy. This is the recommended option because it provides a shared direction, clear priorities and proportionate governance for collective delivery.

7.1.2 Do not approve the Strategy. This would leave no single agreed framework for coordinating the shared SEND priorities and monitoring collective progress.

8 Financial Opportunities and Implications

8.1.1 Approval of the Strategy does not, in itself, commit the Council to additional expenditure. Delivery will be undertaken through existing partnership arrangements and service planning. Any future proposals with additional financial implications will be considered through the Council's usual governance and budget processes.

9 Legal Implications

9.1.1 The Strategy supports the Council in meeting its education responsibilities, including its duties under section 13A of the Education Act 1996, current SEND Code of Practice (2015) and aligns with the new SEND Reform arrangements recently published, to promote high standards, fair access to education and training, and the fulfilment of learning potential. It also reflects the wider leadership responsibilities established by the Children Act 2004.

10 Engagement and Consultation

10.1 The Strategy has been shaped through collaborative work with all SEND Local Area Improvement Board partners, system leaders, and education settings, alongside engagement with children, young people and families. There has been specific coproduction events with families over the past two months to shape the key priorities in this Strategy. The resulting priorities reflect shared system challenges and opportunities. Engagement will continue through the Strategy's delivery and annual review arrangements.

11 Procurement Implications

11.1 There are no direct procurement implications arising from approval of the Strategy.

12 Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

12.1 The Strategy is not expected to have a direct adverse environmental impact. Delivery will make use of existing partnership and governance arrangements, including digital communication where appropriate. Any future projects arising from the Strategy will assess environmental impacts through the Council's established processes.

13 Associated Risks

13.1 The principal risk of not approving the Strategy is that partners would lack a single agreed framework for joint action and assurance. Delivery risks include inconsistent engagement, capacity pressures and limited progress against priorities. These will be managed through named accountability, shared progress tracking, termly oversight and annual review.

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	• 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 Strategy is intended to benefit children and young people across the 0–25 age range. Differing needs at each educational stage are recognised through priorities on early years, attendance, transitions and pathways. No adverse age-related impact is anticipated.	Use age-appropriate engagement and information; monitor access, participation and outcomes by age and phase; address any gaps through annual delivery planning.	Children's Services / Education and Health partners; throughout 2026–2029, reviewed annually.
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.	Young carers and children in families with caring responsibilities may experience barriers to attendance, participation and transitions. The Strategy's inclusion and belonging focus should support earlier identification and	Work with settings and relevant services to identify and support young carers; provide flexible and accessible engagement; monitor attendance, transitions	Children's Services / Education and Health partners; throughout 2026–2029,

		coordinated support. No adverse impact is anticipated.	and outcomes where data permits.	reviewed annually.
Care experienced	• As of January 2026, there were 277 former care experienced young people aged 18-24 in Torbay.	Cared for and care experienced children and young people can face poorer attendance, disrupted learning and transitions, and barriers to education, employment or training. The Strategy should have a positive impact by promoting belonging, stable transitions and inclusive pathways.	Apply corporate parenting principles; involve care experienced young people in delivery and review; use Virtual School and leaving-care insight; monitor attendance, attainment, transitions and post-16 destinations.	Children's Services, Virtual School and Education partners; throughout 2026–2029, reviewed annually.
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.	Disabled children and young people, including those with special educational needs, may face barriers to access, attendance, participation, transitions and suitable pathways. Inclusion is central to the Strategy and a positive impact is intended, but delivery must remain accessible and aligned with SEND duties.	Use accessible communication and reasonable adjustments; co-produce relevant activity; align all SEND improvement and SEND reform work; monitor attendance, exclusions, attainment, transitions and destinations for children with SEND.	Children's Services, SEND and Education partners and health partners; throughout 2026–2029, reviewed through SEND Local Area Improvement

				Board (SLAIP) governance arrangements as described in the strategy.
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 differential impact	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	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).	No differential impact	N/A.	N/A

Race	In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as the following: • 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.	Children from minority ethnic communities, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and those with English as an additional language, may experience unequal educational outcomes, discrimination or barriers to engagement. The Strategy provides an opportunity to improve inclusion and belonging.	Use culturally responsive engagement, interpretation and translation where needed; strengthen anti-racist and anti-bullying practice; monitor attendance, attainment, exclusions, transitions and destinations by ethnicity where data allows.	Children's Services, Health and Education partners; throughout 2026–2029, reviewed annually.
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 Buddist • 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	N/A	N/A

Sex	• 51.3% of Torbay's population are female. • 48.7% of Torbay's population are male.	Patterns of attainment, attendance, exclusions and progression can differ between girls and boys. The Strategy is intended to benefit all children and young people; delivery should avoid reinforcing stereotypes and respond to evidenced differences in outcomes.	Monitor key outcomes by sex; use targeted, evidence-led action where gaps are identified; ensure curriculum, careers information and participation opportunities challenge stereotypes.	Children's Services / Education and Health partners; throughout 2026–2029, reviewed annually.
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 differential Impact	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.	Children in Armed Forces families may experience mobility, interrupted learning and repeated transitions. The Strategy's focus on joined up education, health and care and on belonging should support continuity and inclusion. No adverse impact is anticipated.	Identify mobility and service-related needs early; share information promptly between settings and partners; use the Service Pupil Premium and specialist	Education settings, health services and Children's Services; throughout 2026–2029.

			guidance where applicable; monitor transitions and attendance.	
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.	Poverty, transport, digital access and the cost of participation can affect attendance, attainment and progression. The Strategy has potential for a positive impact through earlier support, stronger belonging and clearer pathways, but unequal access must be actively addressed.	Use deprivation and disadvantage data to target support; consider affordability, transport and digital access in delivery; maximise available funding and monitor attendance, attainment and destinations for disadvantaged cohorts.	Local Area Partners, Children's Services, and relevant Council services; throughout 2026–2029, reviewed annually.
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.	Educational participation, belonging and progression are linked to physical and emotional wellbeing. Improved attendance and inclusive pathways may have positive longer-term health impacts. Delivery should recognise mental health needs and health-related barriers to attendance.	Link delivery with early help, public health and mental health support; use trauma-informed and relational approaches; monitor wellbeing, attendance and exclusion indicators.	Local Area Partners, Children's Services, Public Health and Education settings; throughout 2026–2029.

Human Rights impacts	Relevant rights include the right to education, non-discrimination, respect for private and family life, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and children's right to have their views considered.	The Strategy is intended to advance access to inclusive education and participation. No adverse human rights impact is anticipated. Decisions made during delivery must remain lawful, necessary, proportionate and in the best interests of children and young people.	Embed children's rights and participation in delivery; provide accessible routes to express views and challenge decisions; consider rights impacts when developing actions and reviewing progress.	Local Area Partners, Children's Services / Education settings; throughout 2026–2029, reviewed annually.
Child Friendly	The Strategy directly affects children and young people across Torbay and has been informed by engagement with them and their families. Its priorities reflect children's experiences of readiness, reading, belonging, transitions and future pathways.	A positive impact is anticipated by making education more inclusive, connected and responsive. Delivery should continue to consider what matters to children and young people, including those whose voices are less often heard.	Use accessible and age-appropriate participation; involve a diverse range of children and young people in delivery and annual review; explain how their views have influenced action; close the feedback loop.	Local Area Partners, Children's Services / Education settings, Torbay Youth forum, SEND Family voice and participation leads; throughout 2026–2029, reviewed annually.

15 Cumulative Council Impact

15.1 No adverse cumulative Council impacts have been identified. The Strategy is intended to align with related work including Torbay Together Education strategy, Family First, Best Start in Life and the Council's wider priorities for children and young people.

16 Cumulative Community Impacts

16.1 No adverse cumulative community impacts have been identified. The collaborative approach is expected to improve coordination across education settings, families and partner organisations.