

Torbay Area SEND Strategy

2026-2029



TORBAY COUNCIL

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Foreword – A Message from Families

We hope this strategy will lead to positive and lasting change for children, young people and families across Torbay. Parents and carers know their children best, and children and young people understand their own lives and experiences. Their knowledge hopes and ideas should be listened to, respected and reflected in the decisions that affect them.

We can see that improvements are beginning to take effect across the SEND system, and we hope this progress will continue so that more families feel the difference in their everyday experience. Families are on this journey every day. They want professionals and services to work alongside them as genuine partners: listening with curiosity and kindness, being approachable and non-judgemental, and taking time to understand each child or young person as an individual.

We would like communication to be honest, clear and transparent. Families should be able to understand what support is available, how decisions are made and what will happen next. They should feel informed and empowered, with help to navigate the system without having to repeat their story.

Above all, we want everyone in Torbay to share high ambitions for children and young people with SEND. Every child and young person should feel valued, have opportunities and be supported to work towards their goals. We believe incredible things are possible when we work together—with understanding, fairness, clarity and care.

Torbay Parent Carers October 2026

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Introduction – A Message from the Torbay Local Area SEND Partnership

Every child and young person with SEND in Torbay deserves the opportunity to thrive, achieve their ambitions and get the right support when they need it. They should feel listened to, included and understood, while families should have confidence that services work together and value their views.

This SEND Strategy sets out our shared vision for the next three years. It describes the direction we want to take and the outcomes we are striving to achieve for children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 and their families across Torbay.

Since Torbay's Area SEND Inspection in 2025, partners across education, health, social care and the voluntary sector have worked together to strengthen the SEND system. Leadership, partnership working and shared accountability have improved, creating stronger foundations for long-term change. While progress has been made in many areas, we are still striving to achieve a high-quality system where every child and young person reaches their potential.

This strategy builds on the improvements already underway and sets a clear direction for the future. It aligns with the ongoing work of our local action plan and the national SEND Reform Plan, providing a shared roadmap for the next phase of development.

Over the next three years, we will focus on what our families have told us matters the most: identifying needs earlier, improving inclusion, strengthening local support and ensuring children, young people and families have a meaningful voice in shaping services. We will continue to work together to make the best use of our resources and deliver support where it can have the greatest impact.

This strategy belongs to the whole Torbay SEND partnership. It reflects the shared responsibility of education settings, health services, social care, community organisations, families and, most importantly, children and young people themselves. By working together and keeping children and families at the heart of our decisions, we can continue to improve experiences, opportunities and outcomes. We recognise that no single organisation can improve outcomes alone. Through the Torbay SEND Partnership, partners commit to shared priorities, shared accountability and joint decision-making. We will use our collective resources, intelligence and expertise to ensure children and young people receive the right support, in the right place and at the right time.

Where performance is not good enough, partners will work together to understand the causes, agree corrective action and monitor improvement.

We are proud of the progress made so far, honest about the challenges that remain and committed to delivering further change. This strategy sets out how we will work together to build a more inclusive, responsive and trusted SEND system for every child, young person and family in Torbay.

Councillor Nick Bye
Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Torbay Council

Nancy Meehan
Director
Children's Services, Torbay Council

Su Smart
Director of Allied Health Professionals & Nursing (Statutory Partnerships) NHS Cornwall, Isles of Scilly and NHS Devon

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Co-Chair
SEND Family Voice Torbay

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Understanding SEND Needs in Torbay: Our Starting Point

Introduction

Torbay is a place of significant strengths, opportunity and community spirit. However, many children and young people face barriers associated with deprivation, vulnerability, special educational needs, poor health outcomes and unequal life chances. **12 of the 16 local areas** with significantly higher SEND prevalence were among England's 20% most income-deprived areas for children.

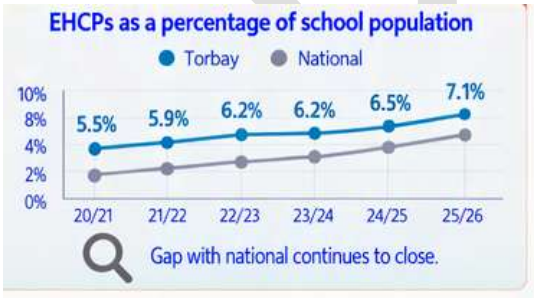


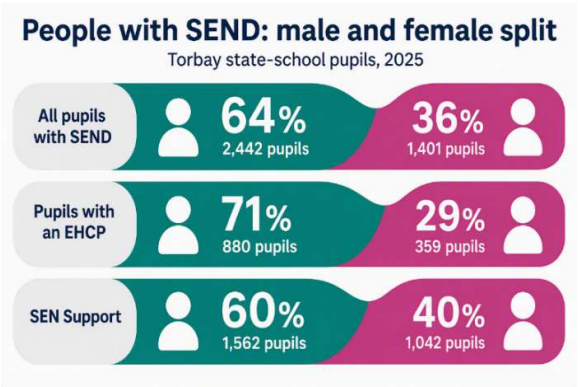
Torbay has three key towns, all with a very different make-up of SEND. Torbay has a great range of mainstream educational settings; most SEND need is met in mainstream settings. It has four special schools which serve the most complex children and young people in Torbay. At post16 our FE College serves the majority of young people with SEND, with some attending our two special school sixth form provisions.

What sort of SEND needs are prevalent in Torbay?

Torbay has around 2000 children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan. This has risen in recent years, in line with increases nationally. There are also around 3000 children and young people identified at SEN Support.





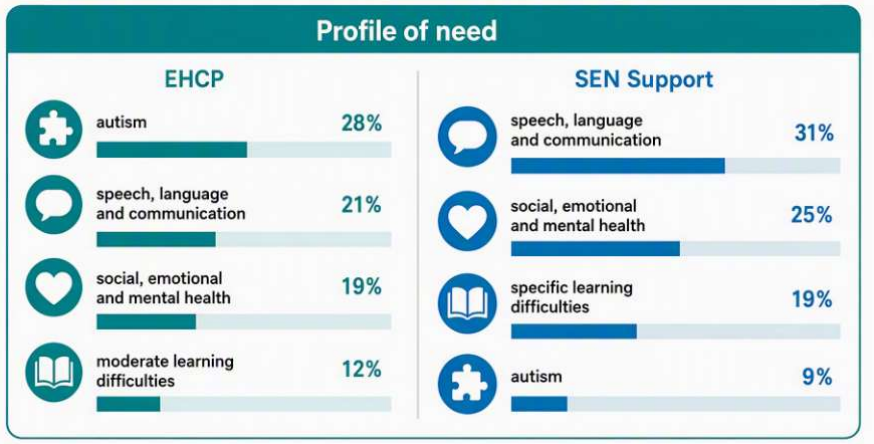


Around two-third's of children and young people with SEND are boys. The most prevalent recorded SEND needs are between the ages of 7-15.

Responding to Growth in Need

We recognise that the number of children and young people with SEND continues to increase and that demand for support is growing. The partnership will use shared intelligence, forecasting and needs analysis to understand future demand and ensure our workforce, provision and resources develop in a sustainable way. This will help more children and young people receive the right support earlier, reducing the need for specialist intervention wherever possible.

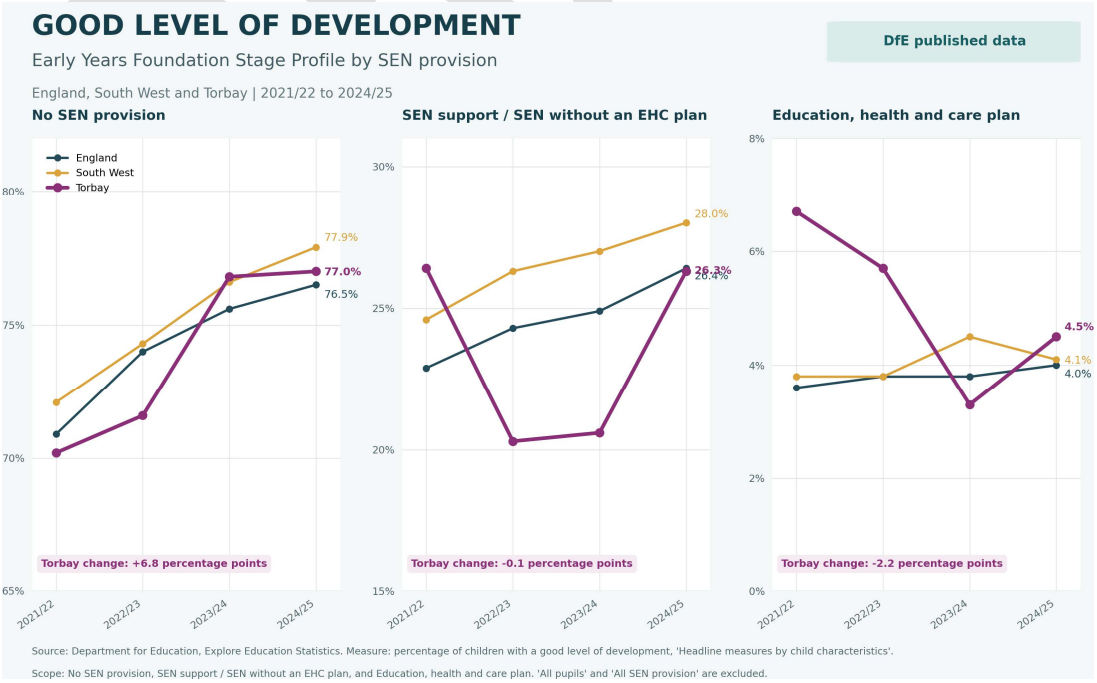
Which needs are the most common in Torbay?



Autism, speech, language and communication and Social, emotional and mental health needs are the most prevalent needs for children and young people.

What outcomes do children with SEND have?

For those in the **Early Years and Foundation Stage** the Good Level of Development (GLD) score has been slowly improving overall since 2023. The 2026 results have shown another improvement with a 7% increase for vulnerable children.



At the end of primary school, reading, writing and mathematics skills are tested. In Torbay all SEND children have shown and improvement in this combined score. Although still an improvement writing skills have been harder to improve; this is a focus area for our local area. These results show a real drive for inclusive practice in our primary settings.

Key Stage 2 | Combined RWM
2024/25 and 2025/26 (provisional)
Pupils meeting expected standard
Figures show 2024/25 → 2025/26

	England	South West	Torbay
All SEN provision	21% → 24%	24% → 26%	20% → 25%
Education, health and care plan	8% → 10%	10% → 10%	6% → 12%
SEN support / SEN without an EHC plan	26% → 29%	29% → 31%	25% → 30%
No SEN provision	72% → 74%	74% → 75%	77% → 77%
All pupils total	60% → 62%	63% → 63%	62% → 62%

Based on the supplied Key Stage 2 attainment data

Key Stage 4 | English and Maths (GCSE)
2024/25 and 2025/26 (provisional)
Percentage of pupils achieving grades 4 or above
Figures show 2024/25 → 2025/26

	England	South West	Torbay
All SEN provision	36.2% → 37.4%	30.3% → 32.0%	17.1% → 27.2%
Education, health and care plan	24.3% → 24.0%	20.8% → 20.7%	0.0% → 22.2%
SEN support / SEN without an EHC plan	39.2% → 41.1%	32.8% → 35.6%	19.1% → 28.6%
No SEN provision	72.8% → 73.1%	72.2% → 71.6%	68.0% → 73.3%
All pupils total	66.6% → 66.7%	64.5% → 64.2%	56.3% → 62.8%

Based on the supplied Key Stage 4 performance data

Over recent years **at the end of Secondary school** many young people with SEND don't do as well as we would wish for them overall, this is a key area for development in the local area.

However, in the last year there have been real improvements seen for all young people with SEND, which we hope to continue to build upon in future years.

At **Post16** in Torbay the partnership have worked hard to ensure all young people with SEND at post16 receive education, employment or training. This means our rate **for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)** are low for ages 16-18 and are better than regional and national rates. We know that young people with an EHCP who were previously NEET have reduced by 55% between January to May 2026 and this is an improvement we will continue to build upon.

Source: "Moving On" data for 2025.

The whole partnership know our children's needs and are determined to working together to support all our children and young people to reach their potential.

Our SEND Pledge

Children and young people with SEND have told us that they want to feel understood, included and supported to achieve their ambitions. Families have told us that they want services to work together, communicate openly and involve them as genuine partners. We have listened carefully to these experiences, and they shape this strategy and the commitments we make as a partnership.

Our approach will be guided by the **Our SEND pledge - Family Hub**, which sets out the experience that children, young people and families should expect wherever they access support. The pledge reflects what children and young people have told us matters most: being listened to, treated fairly, communicated with honestly and supported without unnecessary barriers.



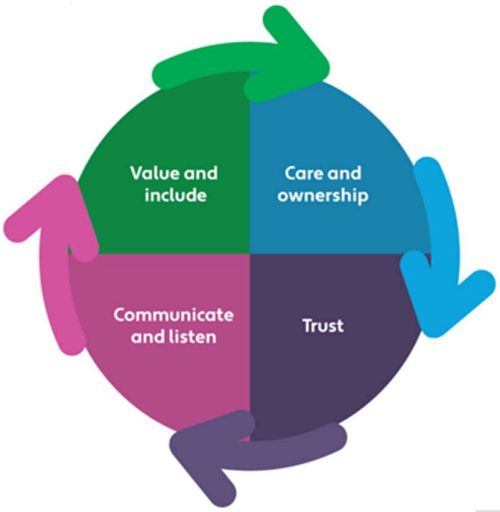
A diagram that sets out the SEND pledge principles: Be honest, Show you Care, Be thoughtful, Be fair, Be Kind, Be friendly.

We are committed to making these principles visible in everyday practice, not simply as statements of intent, but as behaviours that are consistently experienced across the whole system.



Our Coproduction Charter

We will continue to place co-production at the heart of our work. Children, young people and families are experts in their own lives, and their insights will help shape decisions about services, support and future priorities. We are committed to listening to feedback, acting on what we hear and being transparent about the changes that follow. Where improvements can be made, we will be open about the action being taken. Where there are challenges, we will work with families to find solutions together.



The Torbay **Our co-production charter - Family Hub** reflects our shared commitment to working together with children, young people and families to shape and improve SEND services. Developed jointly by parent carers and professionals from across the partnership, the charter is grounded in what local people told us matters most and is informed by the recognised principles of effective co-production. It sets out our commitment to building trusting relationships, respecting privacy, confidentiality and choice, and working in genuine partnership to influence decisions and drive improvement. Co-production is not a one-off activity but an ongoing journey, with everyone playing a role in embedding a culture where we do what we say we will do and where children, young people and families are active partners in creating better outcomes for the future.

We also recognise the importance of culture in shaping experiences. Through our shared commitment to restorative practice, we will work with children, young people and families in ways that build trust, strengthen relationships and support positive outcomes. We will seek to work with families, ensuring that respect, understanding and collaboration underpin our interactions.



Representatives from our SEND Youth Forum told us that professionals supporting them should:

"Be consistent"

"Keep your promises - don't promise things unless you can keep them"

"Trust is earned"

The Local Area partnership is committed to continue to listen to young people and family voices to keep improving the service and support on offer.

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Our Shared vision and goals

Our Vision and goals have been co-produced with our families, young people and professionals.



A diagram that shows our vision: a SEND system that us inclusive and ambitious, where children and young people with Send are valued and supported, receive the right support at the right time and gel they belong.

To achieve this, 5 overarching goals will guide delivery to 2029.



A diagram that shows our 5 goals to 2029 – better learning, more confidence in local support, working together, a smoother, kinder assessments process and using resources wisely.

Delivering Our Strategic Priorities Together

This strategy is built around six priorities that will guide our work over the next three years. Together, they turn our vision and goals into action and describe how children, young people and families should experience support in Torbay.

These priorities are shaped by what families, children and young people have told us matters most. They also reflect our shared commitment, through the SEND Pledge, to be honest, show we care, be thoughtful, be fair, be kind and be friendly in everything we do. Our ambition is that these values are not only reflected in policies and plans but are experienced every day by the people who rely on SEND services and support.

We know that improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND depends on all partners working together. Education settings, health services, social care, community organisations and families all have an important role to play. By working as one partnership, we can create a more joined up system that responds earlier to need, communicates more effectively and delivers support that makes a real difference.

The six priorities that follow set out where we will focus our efforts, the actions we will take and the difference we want to achieve. They also explain how we will measure progress and hold ourselves accountable for delivering change. Together, they provide the framework for continuous improvement and for ensuring that children and young people with SEND in Torbay are supported to achieve their potential, participate fully in their communities and enjoy the best possible opportunities in life.



A diagram that shows our 6 SEND priorities: inclusive education, early identification, the right support at the right time, joined up system, preparation for adulthood, and trust, confidence & co-production.

Priority 1: Inclusive education, belonging and local communities

Why is this a priority?

Every child and young person should feel welcome, included and supported in their local school and community. In Torbay, increasing numbers of children need SEND support, while families tell us that access to help can still be inconsistent. Children and young people with SEND are more likely to experience absence, exclusion and lower outcomes than their peers. We need to strengthen inclusion across all education settings and services so children get the right support earlier and closer to home.

What is working well?

Since the Area SEND Inspection, partners have made good progress. Schools have increased their focus on inclusion through programmes such as Belonging by Design, locality working has strengthened collaboration between schools, and specialist outreach support is helping more children remain in their local settings. Additional specialist provision has also been developed, creating more local options for children and families.

What will we do together?

- Build a shared understanding of what good inclusive practice looks like in every setting.
- Strengthen support available before needs escalate.
- Expand access to specialist advice through the Experts at Hand model and outreach services.
- Develop local provision so more children can have their needs met close to home.
- Reduce exclusions, absence and barriers to participation.
- Work with children, young people and families to shape services and support.

How will we know we are making a difference?

We will monitor:

- Educational Outcomes for children with SEND at each stage of their education.
- Attendance, exclusions and part-time timetables.
- The number of children educated in their local community.
- Access to SEN Support and early help.
- Family and young people's views about inclusion and belonging.
- Education setting's confidence in meeting a wide range of needs.

What will success look like?

Children and young people with SEND feel that they belong, attend regularly and are supported to achieve their goals in their local education setting. Families have confidence that help is available when it is needed and do not have to fight for support. Education settings are confident in meeting needs, supported by strong partnerships across education, health and care. Inclusion is the expected experience for every child and young person in Torbay.

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Priority 2: Early Identification, effective help and clear pathways

Why is this a priority?

Families consistently tell us that getting the right help can take too long and that pathways through services are not always clear. Delays in identifying needs can mean children do not receive support early enough, leading to increased difficulties and a greater need for specialist intervention later. We want children and young people to access the right support at the right time, with families understanding what help is available and how to access it.

What is working well?

Partners have strengthened arrangements for identifying needs earlier and improving access to support. Training, early intervention services and closer working between education, health and care professionals have helped build stronger foundations. The SEND Reform Programme has also established a shared commitment to improving pathways and reducing delays for children, young people and families.

What will we do together?

- Improve the early identification of emerging needs.
- Make support pathways easier for families and professionals to understand.
- Strengthen the help available through SEN Support and universal services.
- Improve coordination between education, health and care services.
- Health partners will continue to identify need, improve pathways, reduce waiting times where possible.
- Ensure assessments and support plans focus on what matters most to children and families.
- Provide clearer information about available services and support.

How will we know we are making a difference?

We will monitor:

- Waiting times for assessment and support services.
- Access to therapy services
- Timeliness of EHCP assessments and reviews.
- Access to early help and SEN Support.
- Family feedback on how easy it is to get advice and support.
- Children and young people's experiences of services and pathways.
- Reductions in needs escalating because support was not available early enough.

What will success look like?

Children's needs are recognised and understood as early as possible. Families know where to go for advice and feel confident accessing support. Services work together to provide joined-up help without unnecessary delays. Children and young people receive the right support at the right time, helping them make progress, participate fully in everyday life and achieve the best possible outcomes.

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Priority 3: The right support, in the right place, at the right time

Why is this a priority?

As the number of children and young people with SEND continues to grow, demand for specialist support is increasing. Families need confidence that support will be available when it is needed and that children can access the right provision without unnecessary delays or travelling long distances. We want more children and young people to have their needs met successfully in their local community, supported by a system that responds quickly and effectively. This is also part of our key vision for the Torbay SEND system; families told us this is so important that we have also made this a key priority.

What is working well?

Partners have increased local specialist provision, including additional specialist school places and enhanced support within mainstream education settings. Outreach services are helping more children remain in their local settings, while the development of the Experts at Hand model is creating opportunities for specialist knowledge to be shared more widely across education settings and services. Strong partnership working is providing a solid foundation for further improvement.

What will we do together?

- Expand the Experts at Hand model so specialist expertise is available earlier and more consistently.
- Increase the range and capacity of local SEND provision, including specialist school places.
- Strengthen outreach support to help children succeed in mainstream settings wherever appropriate.
- Improve planning for future demand so provision keeps pace with local need.
- Ensure children and families can access the right support without unnecessary delays or barriers.
- Improve transitions between services and stages of education.
- Partners will use shared intelligence, forecasting and engagement to jointly commission services that respond to local need.

How will we know we are making a difference?

We will monitor:

- The availability and use of local SEND provision.
- The number of children educated close to home.
- Access to specialist advice and support through Experts at Hand and outreach services.
- Waiting times for services and support.
- Family feedback about whether support is available when needed.
- Outcomes for children and young people accessing specialist and mainstream provision.

What will success look like?

Children and young people receive the support they need at the right time and in the setting that best meets their needs. Families can access help more easily, educational settings can access specialist expertise when needed, and more children are able to thrive in their local community with the confidence that the right support is available close to home.

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Priority 4: Joined-up education, health and care accountability

Why is this a priority?

Children, young people and families often rely on support from a range of services. When organisations do not work together effectively, families can experience delays, confusion and the need to repeat their story multiple times. We want education, health and care partners to share responsibility for improving outcomes, make decisions together and provide a more joined-up experience for families. We recognise that some children, young people and families face additional barriers because of poverty, vulnerability, ethnicity, health inequalities, care experience or other factors.

What is working well?

Partnership working has strengthened since the Area SEND Inspection, supported by the SEND Improvement Programme, stronger governance arrangements and a shared commitment to improvement. Education, health and care leaders are working more closely together, with clearer oversight of priorities, performance and improvement activity across the SEND system.

What will we do together?

- Strengthen joint leadership and accountability across education, health and care.
- Use shared information and performance data to drive improvement.
- Improve the way services work together around children, young people and families.
- Ensure children, young people and families help shape decisions and services.
- We will publish progress, celebrate improvement and be open about areas where further work is required.
- Partners will be jointly responsible for improving outcomes and addressing areas where performance is not strong enough.
- We will use data, engagement and lived experience to understand variation in outcomes and ensure support is targeted where it is needed most.

How will we know we are making a difference?

We will monitor:

- Progress against SEND strategy priorities.
- Feedback from children, young people and families.
- The quality and timeliness of joint decision-making.
- How effectively services work together to meet needs.
- Outcomes for children and young people across education, health and care.
- Delivery of actions from inspection and improvement plans.

What will success look like?

Families experience services as one joined-up system rather than separate organisations. Education, health and care partners work together effectively, make decisions quickly and take shared responsibility for improving outcomes. Leaders will routinely review performance, identify variation, remove barriers to improvement and ensure resources are targeted where need is greatest. Children and young people receive coordinated support that helps them thrive.

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Priority 5: Preparation for adulthood, independence and a good life

Why is this a priority?

Every young person with SEND should have the opportunity to develop independence, achieve their ambitions and live a fulfilling adult life. Families tell us they want clearer pathways into further education, employment, training, independent living and community participation. We need to ensure preparation for adulthood starts early and helps young people build the skills, confidence and support they need for the future.

What is working well?

Partners have strengthened their focus on preparation for adulthood, with closer working between education, health, social care and employment services. Young people have access to a growing range of opportunities to develop independence, plan for their future and prepare for the transition into adult life. The SEND partnership has also established a shared commitment to improving outcomes beyond school.

What will we do together?

- Start preparation for adulthood earlier and make it a focus of planning at every stage.
- Increase opportunities for employment, training and work experience.
- Support young people to develop independence and life skills.
- Improve transition planning between children's and adult services.
- Help young people access and contribute to their local communities.
- Ensure young people and families are involved in planning for the future.

How will we know we are making a difference?

We will monitor:

- Participation in education, employment and training.
- Destinations and outcomes after leaving education.
- Young people's independence and readiness for adulthood.
- The quality of transition planning.
- Feedback from young people and families.
- Young people's involvement in community life.

What will success look like?

Young people with SEND are supported to achieve their ambitions and lead fulfilling lives. They move into adulthood with the skills, confidence and support they need to continue learning, secure employment where appropriate, live as independently as possible and play an active role in their communities.

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Priority 6: Trust, confidence, communication and co-production

Why is this a priority?

Families, children and young people tell us that clear communication, meaningful involvement and trusting relationships are essential to a positive experience of SEND services. While there have been improvements, families do not always feel listened to or involved in decisions that affect them. We want to build a culture where families and professionals work together as equal partners to improve services and outcomes.

What is working well?

Children, young people and families are playing an increasingly important role in shaping SEND services and priorities. The Parent Carer Forum, participation groups and wider engagement activities are helping ensure lived experience influences decision-making. Partners have also strengthened their commitment to co-production and more open communication across the SEND system.

What will we do together?

- Improve communication with children, young people and families.
- Strengthen co-production at every level of the SEND system.
- Ensure feedback is listened to and used to drive improvement.
- Provide clearer information about services, support and decision-making.
- Build stronger relationships between families and professionals.
- Celebrate and share progress, learning and achievements.

How will we know we are making a difference?

We will monitor:

- Feedback from children, young people and families.
- Participation in co-production and engagement activities.
- Complaints, compliments and dispute resolution activity.
- Families' confidence in SEND services.
- How feedback has influenced service improvements.
- Satisfaction with communication and involvement in decision-making.
- We will routinely publish "Your Voice in Action" reports showing how feedback from children, young people and families has influenced decisions and service improvements.

What will success look like?

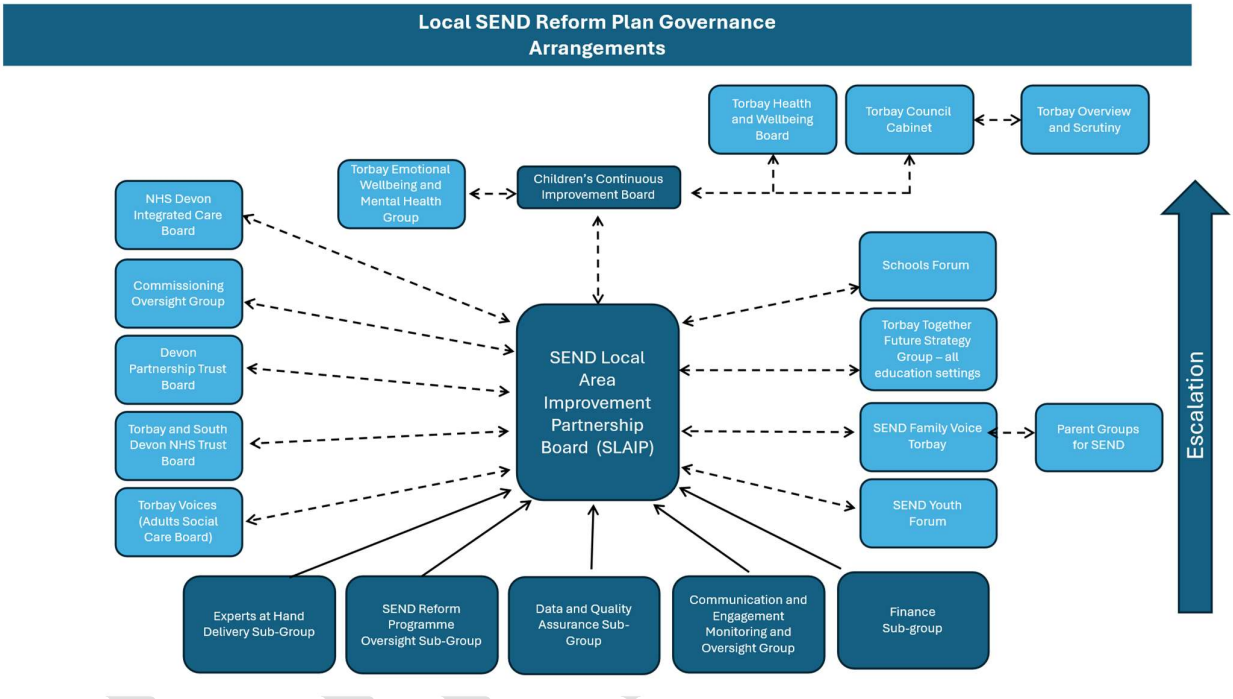
Children, young people and families feel listened to, valued and involved in decisions about their lives and support. Communication is open, honest and clear, and families have confidence in the SEND system. Trusting relationships between families and professionals help create better experiences and outcomes for children and young people.

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Who will oversee the strategy?

We will deliver this strategy through one joined-up partnership approach. The whole partnership will come together to work on each of these areas together through the SEND Local Area Improvement Partnership Board (SLAIP).

We have implemented a new structure of multi-agency boards and meetings where partners from education, health and care can come together with parents and carers to oversee our local SEND arrangements and monitor our progress towards our overall visions and goals. Our governance chart below shows all the connections we have made to



At these boards SEND Family Voice Torbay will feedback family voices to let us know how we are doing in each area. Our SEND Youth Forum will also keep feeding back their ideas on key issues. We will also look at key data and other information to show our progress over time.

Every year we will publish an impact report for families to show the progress we are making.

What Difference Will Families Notice?

- Families will know how to get help and support.
- Services work together around my child.
- Information will be clear and easy to find.
- My child's needs are understood earlier.
- Decisions will be explained.
- Families will feel listened to and involved.
- Children and Young people will experience the “Pledge” and be supported to achieve their ambitions and potential.

Glossary

Area SEND Inspection — An inspection of how education, health and care services work together to support children and young people with SEND in the local area.

Co-production — Children, young people, families and professionals working together as equal partners to design and improve support and services.

Early help — Support offered as soon as a need or difficulty is identified, before it becomes more serious.

Education Settings – By this we mean all forms of education from Early Years and Foundation Stage through to further education at post16.

EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) — A legal plan for a child or young person aged up to 25 who needs more support than is ordinarily available through SEN Support. It describes their needs, outcomes and the support they must receive.

Experts at Hand — Torbay's approach to making specialist advice and expertise available earlier to schools, settings, children and families.

Inclusion — Making sure every child and young person is welcomed, valued, able to take part and supported to learn and achieve.

Local Area SEND Partnership — The organisations and people in Torbay who share responsibility for SEND, including education, health, social care, community organisations, families, children and young people.

Local Offer — Information in one place about SEND services, support and activities available locally for children, young people and families.

Mainstream setting — A school, college or early years setting that supports children and young people with and without SEND.

Outreach support — Specialist advice and practical help brought into a child or young person's usual school or setting.

Parent Carer Forum — A group led by parent carers that represents families' experiences and helps shape local SEND services.

Preparation for adulthood — Planning and support that helps young people prepare for adult life, including education, employment, health, independence, housing and community participation.

SEN (Special Educational Needs) — Learning difficulties or disabilities that mean a child or young person needs additional or different educational support.

SEN Support — Additional or different help provided by a school or setting for a child or young person with SEN who does not need an EHCP.

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) — A term covering children and young people who have special educational needs, disabilities, or both.

Specialist provision — Education or support designed for children and young people with more complex or specific needs.

Transition — A move between services, schools or stages of education, including the move into adulthood.

Universal services — Services available to all children, young people and families, such as schools, early years settings, GPs and community services.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats.

For more information please contact ehcp@torbay.gov.uk

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