

Youth Provision and Physical Activity – Report of the Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board

Report to Cabinet on 16 September 2025

Background

1. The Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board met on 23 July 2025 to consider the submitted report on youth provision and physical activity. Torbay on the Move is a strategic approach to promoting more physical activity across the board with the submitted report focussing on children and young people. It looked to build a shift in behaviour for children and young people linking to climate change and the environmental benefits from shift to active forms of travel in the future as well as seeing the benefits of physical and mental health from physical activity.
2. The Director of Active Devon - Louise Marshall and the Senior Partnerships Manager, Active Devon - Rebecca Skinner highlighted the work that Active Devon were involved with in supporting Torbay on the Move, which was a system and place based approach, recognising the partnerships in place and looking at the ways that more people could move around in their communities, as well as working with schools on ways to support people’s mental health using the benefits of physical activity.
3. The Divisional Director Children’s Services Transformation - Shaun Evans highlighted the links to the Youth Hub and work within Children’s Services and wider Council but acknowledged that we need to work more collaboratively and holistically to join up to help realise the benefits of physical activity on good physical health and mental health. The redesign of Children’s Services had enabled the Council to develop a Youth Offer which would be supported by the Youth Hub Manager and wider Team from 1 September 2025.
4. The Sub-Board asked questions in relation to the following:
 - the report refers to additional opportunities for early years and school readiness, was any work being done to get parents to ditch buggies and prams similar to previous initiatives around ditching pacifiers and how much work was being done with early years providers;
 - how many schools were involved in the Open Schools Programme work and did they work proactively with Active Devon;
 - there were lots of free activities during the Summer for young people, what would the offer look like in the winter months;

- of the 11-18 years olds that were surveyed only 54% think there were clean, safe spaces to hang out in Torbay, what has been done to drill down into this statistic;
- how do we replicate the good work in some schools across Torbay to encourage others to do the same e.g. opening up their sports fields more, using learning from the Open Schools Programme;
- what percentage of the HAF places were aimed at elected home educated (EHE) children;
- how were young people from deprived communities enabled to access sports and other activities, which may be prohibitive due to costs;
- were there gaps in provision, especially for people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND);
- the Council was reviewing its Play Park Strategy, was Torbay on the Move involved;
- was there anything in place for partners to lower the cost or provide free opportunities such as free taster days for young people to try different sports as previously provided; and
- was there anything to help children be able to swim and increase the use of leisure centres, beaches and pools and raise awareness of water safety, linked to UNICEF child friendly work.

5. Members received the following responses:

- The Public Health Lead for Early Years was looking at how to engage with Family Hubs around early skills development. There was a need to identify priorities which put children and young people high up on the list of work on physical activity and there were a number of proposed campaigns. This included working with the support workers for parents and children, practitioner training for those working in early years settings and child and parent clubs to learn and do things together. Active Devon are exploring opportunities with South West Early Years Stronger Practice hub to role out a programme such as Healthy Movers Devon wide, alongside an opportunity of funding from Torbay on the Move;
- Paignton Academy, Torquay Academy and Oldway Primary School were involved in the Open Schools Programme but it had now come to an end. The Paignton Academy gym was funded by the project and was continuing. There were new School Sports Partnerships and the Open Schools Programme may be rebranded in the future. There was varying participation from schools with the Programme for example Ellacombe Academy was not able to take part and Torquay Academy only took part in the first year and not years two and three. The importance of ensuring that Active Devon were talking to the right people within the school was highlighted;
- Appendix 1 just set out the additional offer during the Summer, the main report identified all the different activities available throughout the year. The HAF Programme also ran during Easter and in between Christmas and New Year;
- there had not been an opportunity to drill down into the statistic around young people feeling there were clean, safe spaces to hang out in Torbay and it was recognised that there was a need to gain a higher level of understanding about the young people's perception and what they were trying to convey and what they need or want and compare perception against reality. It was intended that further work would be done to drill down the responses further and how that could be translated into something positive that we could do with the young people. There were some discussions around how we may prioritise bringing

back play areas and other spaces to make them fit for purpose as well as physical work, working with communities and young people so that they could embrace the areas as theirs. Tanny Stobbart from Play Torbay highlighted the work they were doing in the communities running activities in their parks, working with Community Partnerships and various Council departments and other organisations such as the Greenspaces Partnership with three pilot areas being explored (Dart Park, Abbey Park and Victoria Park, Chelston). Play Torbay was keen to work with Torbay on the Move to see how they can work collaboratively to make the spaces safer and more accessible. The benefits of bringing young people and communities together highlighting their right to play and provide activities that work was endorsed by all. Part of the work of the Imagine This Partnership was to listen to children through their engagement groups. Members acknowledged the benefit of codesigning and partnership working to improve outcomes for young people;

- Torbay on the Move now have information, tools and resources from the Open Schools Programme that could be used to help other schools make their facilities open to the community outside of the school day;
- The eligibility for the HAF programme was based on free school meals, with 15% to target other young people, which may be children with disabilities who need opportunities for play activities during holiday time, this element was discretionary with the rest based on eligibility. EHE was one of the targeted areas where the Council was making progress, but there was a need to understand the reasons for EHE as this could be for a number of reasons, the biggest being due to social anxiety, sometimes HAF could be a hook to get the young people into social environments and get them involved in activities and slowly get them back into the school environment;
- part of the work of the Torbay on the Move was to look at lower socio-economic barriers, working in partnership to look at how we could make activities as accessible as possible. National programmes ensure they were as accessible as possible or free. There were two funds to support groups to apply for funding to make accessible opportunities, including Believe to Achieve to help those who can perform at County or national level. The Team was looking at how they could engage as many children and families as possible to design them to ensure that the facilities were right for them;
- Torbay on the Move identified SEND as a gap in provision and want to work with partnerships looking at what the provision was. There were some opportunities already but a gap in ensuring there was something for everyone. The VeloPark have adaptive cycles but they were not used, Torbay on the Move want to engage with Cycle Torbay and deliver regular adaptive cycle activities which could be supported by British Cycling and Limitless looking towards having something in place from Spring/Summer 2026. There was a need to ensure it was sustainable past an initial Stage. There was also a need to link up with wider statutory partners as well as the voluntary and community sector to join up all provisions and use existing resources smarter or together looking at the place and transport as well. Outdoor Partnership had identified Torbay as an area to identify more outdoor activities e.g. walking and water sports, with 50% funding available with a need to see how we could match the funding;
- Torbay on the Move had not been actively involved in the development of the revised Play Park Strategy but would welcome the opportunity to be involved; and
- Swimming was part of the schools' curriculum but there had been a gap with children who missed out due to Covid-19. There did not appear to be consistency across schools in terms of swimming and water safety. Some

schools took children to swimming pools or the beach whilst others did not. The cost of families taking children to swimming pools could be prohibitive for some people.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board welcomed and thanked colleagues for the report in relation to the overall transformation work on physical activity for young people and the Torbay on the Move work and requested that Tanny Stobbart provide an update to the next meeting on the work with the play parks and community as part of Action Tracker.
- 6.2 The Sub-Board reflected and debated the information provided to them, both verbal and written and formed the following recommendations to the Cabinet. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried unanimously.

7. Recommendations

7.1 That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. that Torbay on the Move and Councillors be recommended to engage with more schools to support them in opening up their facilities to the community outside of the normal school day;
2. that Torbay on the Move be recommended to engage with early years providers and family hubs as part of the joined-up partnership working to raise awareness of the importance of physical activity in early years development;
3. that the Director of Pride Place be recommended to engage with Torbay on the Move in the development of the Play Parks Strategy;
4. that opportunities be explored to provide free sports taster days for children and young people;
5. to provide targeted physical and sports activities to children and families in the deprived wards within Torbay; and
6. to explore why 46% of children and young people perceived that spaces were not safe or accessible and report back to a future meeting.

Background Papers

[Agenda for Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board on Wednesday, 23 July 2025, 3.00 pm](#)