



Torbay SEND Strategy

2023

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Foreword

Torbay’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out a vision ‘to create a healthy, happy Torbay where individuals and communities can thrive’.

Children and young people are our future and our ambition of achieving this vision must start with them. Getting a good start in life and childhood, building resilience and getting maximum benefit from education are important markers for good health and wellbeing throughout life. Offering support to all children, young people and their families, as well as focusing on those who need help the most, reduces inequalities and improves health outcomes.

We know we must do better when it comes to delivering services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families – and we are firmly committed to doing so. Placing children, young people, and their families at the heart of this work is key to achieving this and the principles of co-design and co-production will underpin everything we do.

Partners across the local area in Torbay are committed to working in partnership with SEND Family Voice Torbay as well as children, young people, parents, carers and partner organisations to radically improve support for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities within Torbay so they have the very best life chances.

This SEND Strategy sets out our ambitions and the priorities upon which we will focus to achieve them. As we measure our progress against our priorities, we will continually ask ourselves, as well as our children and young people, and their parents and carers, “what difference have we made?”

We are committed to:

- Working determinedly for a child friendly Torbay where children and young people with SEND and their families experience a well-planned continuum of provision from birth to 25 and beyond.
- Aiming high so that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities can reach their full potential, receive the right support, at the right time, with choice and control so that they can lead fulfilling lives.
- Aligning our resources to drive sustained improvement.

We are determined to work together to ensure an improvement in the quality of outcomes for those children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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Introduction

This strategy sets out a vision and direction of travel for children and young people 0 – 25 years, with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Torbay. It is intended to cover the 'local area' of Torbay and can only be achieved through effective partnership between children, young people, parent and carers and our local system; the local authority, Integrated Care System (ICS) (health), public health, NHS England for specialist services, early years settings, schools, further education provisions and the voluntary and community sector.

The legal definitions outlined in the Equality Act 2010, Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice 2015 are used in this strategy to provide our framework for delivery and identify what we mean by children and young people with SEND.

This strategy has been produced in partnership and represents a marked shift in our local area. It builds upon the current lived experience and expertise of our children, young people and their parents/carers and sets out an ambitious goal for making sure that SEND becomes 'everybody's business' through pro-active inclusion, improving the experience at every opportunity.

The strategy was produced together with key partners and draws upon the following information:

- Feedback from children, young people and their parents/carers
- Feedback from professionals and front-line workers
- Feedback from education settings
- Data from health, social care and other key agencies through our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
- SEND peer review (2021)
- Torbay local area SEND inspection and subsequent Written Statement of Action
- Participation Survey (2022)

This strategy covers the key areas that will help us to make cultural change, keep up momentum and be more responsive to the need across our local area. The strategy cannot be considered in isolation and acknowledges that there are interdependencies with the development of Family Hubs, Child Friendly Torbay and the development of the Integrated Care System for Devon.

A Shared Vision

The shared vision for the strategy was produced with representatives from across the local area. The shared vision is:

- **SEND is everybody's business** - embedding the vision and values into the practice of everyone who works with children and families from 0-25 years.
- **Identify and respond to needs early** - in ways that value lived experience and expertise, offering personalised care and support.
- **Deliver in the right place at the right time** - always asking 'so what difference are we making in the life of this child or young person?'

Our vision will be delivered through five priority areas:

- Priority 1: SEND is everyone's business - embedding our values through education, health and social care, changing culture and reforming our workforce.
- Priority 2: Identify and act on children's needs at the earliest opportunity, through valuing lived experience and expertise.
- Priority 3: Understand the needs of our children, young people and families and make sure joint commissioning supports service delivery and we make best use of all resources
- Priority 4: Make sure that all early years providers and mainstream educational settings support an inclusive approach to education
- Priority 5: Improve transition planning for young people moving into adulthood.

To achieve this vision, young people, parents, carers, professionals and services across the local area have agreed to adopt a set of principles that have been set out in a partnership pledge. We know that the success of our strategy depends on cultural change. The commitments that we expect everyone to adopt and sign up to have been defined by our children and young people.

Our Pledge

- **Be honest**
We will tell you the truth, we will listen and work with you to plan and explain what is possible and why things may need to change or happen
- **Show you we care**
We will listen carefully and make sure that we build a plan of support around your aspirations, hopes and goals
- **Be thoughtful**
We will treat you as the expert, build our professional knowledge of your needs and what is available to help you
- **Be fair**
We will treat you and your family with respect
- **Be kind**
We will listen carefully and ask you how you want to receive your support

- **Be friendly**

We will take time to find out lots about you, we will celebrate with you when things go well and help you when things are difficult

Restorative Practice

We will underpin our strategy by continuing to adopt Restorative Practice. Restorative Practice is about putting strong, meaningful and trusting relationships at the heart of how we work with children and families. It means we will offer supportive relationships combined with clear goals that are focussed on the needs of children. It also places emphasis on family led decision making to how we solve problems. Our strategy is underpinned by the principles of listening and working “with” rather than doing things “for” or “to”.

Our Statement of Commitment

We are committed to working with children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities and their families.

- We commit to working together, in partnership with you, to improve the support you receive. We want you to have the very best opportunities now and in the future.
- We will make sure you are able to have your say in what happens to you, in a way that suits you. We will value what you say.
- We will use what you tell us to help us make plans and decisions, as well as in our day-to-day work.
- We want to work with as many local people, groups, organisations and experts as possible to make our services the best they can be. We will do our best to not leave anyone out.
- We know we might not get it right every time, but we will learn from our mistakes and improve as we go along.



Priority 1: SEND is everyone's business – embedding our values through education, health and social care, changing culture and reforming our workforce

Children and young people have told us what they would like to see for this priority:

“SEND needs should be treated as equally important across all areas and services”

1.1 What have children, young people and families told us about this priority area?

- “We have to fight/battle to get what we need”.
- “Not all professionals understand enough or feel confident enough to make children, young people and families feel safe and heard”.
- “There are a lot of unmet promises and people are not always honest”.
- “It can be difficult to be believed”.
- “The processes are complicated, there is built in jargon, and it can be hard to understand”.

1.2 Why is this a priority?

Changing culture is at the heart of providing high quality services across the local area. Experiencing positive values, behaviours and responses is essential to be able to identify need, provide support and high-quality responses for our children and young people with SEND and their families. For everybody working with or providing support to children and young people, interaction matters and can set the trajectory of travel for the young person. If this is conducted with a biased opinion, without good knowledge, or through misguided information it can lead to further concern and distress.

“Culture” can seem like an ambiguous term; how is it valued or is it measured? It is hard to quantify, but if it is not right, the result can be a poor lived experience. One of the definitions of culture is: “It’s the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves” and the stories are based on our experiences based on our behaviours. Our strategy wants to bring consistency and change to the habits and behaviours of everyone that is involved in SEND. We want our different behaviours and habits to lead to different stories.

1.3 How will we implement this?

- We will create, develop and promote a shared expectation of responsibility across all our service providers who come into contact with children and young people with SEND.
- We will make sure that working together (co-production) is at the heart of our practice, always striving to work together from the outset.

- We will make sure that every service is signed up to the SEND pledge including all education, health, social care and voluntary and community sector settings.
- We will hold each other to account on the experiences that are received by children, young people and families.
- Each organisation will have oversight and responsibility for implementing the pledge and for undertaking all that is needed is in place to make sure that at every level the values are delivered.
- We will make sure that we develop our workforce to build knowledge, skills and shared practice. We will make sure that this is created with parents and carers and, where possible, we will facilitate shared training opportunities.
- We will make sure that our systems and processes are further aligned, reviewing how we share information, produce meaningful content and hold people to account on its delivery.
- We will deliver and embed a rigorous quality assurance framework, learning from what works well and seeking evidence of how things can be improved.

1.4 What will children, young people and their families see?

- Children, young people, parents and carers will report increased confidence in their experiences.
- Our annual participation survey will show evidence of year-on-year improvements, demonstrating a change in the lived experience of the system and professionals.
- All partners will know the Local Offer and what the contribution of their service and other services should be.
- Children, young people, parents and carers will know how to seek support and can navigate the system with greater understanding and ease.

Priority 2: Identify and act on children's needs at the earliest opportunity, through valuing lived experience and expertise

Children have told us what they would like to see for this priority:

“Treat all young people as a priority, not just those that have the highest needs”

2.1 What have children, young people and families told us about this priority area?

- “We want to be listened to and heard; we don't want to have to repeat our story again and again”
- “You have made promises to us that haven't been kept”
- “We have to battle for our children, to get them what they need”
- “We want you to be honest with us”
- “We know our children and understand that their needs change as they get older”
- “We want to be treated with respect”

2.2 Why is this a priority?

A child's life is full of opportunities to learn and develop, to foster a whole set of personal strengths and skills that will prepare them for their life ahead. When we work together with families, we can provide the right conditions to maximise these opportunities through:

- Preventing problems from occurring
- Identifying problems and challenges early
- Tackling things head on before problems become worse

“While some have argued that early intervention may have its strongest impact when offered during the first few years of life, the best evidence shows that effective interventions can improve children's life chances at any point during childhood and adolescence.” (Early Intervention Foundation)

For children, young people and parents and carers this means valuing their lived experience and expertise. This matters because it is only those who have had direct experience who will truly understand the nuances and complexities of that experience and what it will mean for their lives.

2.3 How will we implement this?

- Each organisation will have oversight and responsibility for making sure that lived experience and expertise is the ‘Golden Thread’ running through all workforce

development plans so that children and families are valued as partners in care and support.

- We will promote an inclusive, timely and graduated response to improve confidence, capacity and trust in local support.
- We will make sure that everyone is able to identify and respond to needs early, from pre-birth to 25 years, from the earliest point of contact, for example, including health visitors, social workers, early help teams, midwifery, hospital staff, GP and early years.
- We will achieve a consistent and cohesive Local Offer of early support through family hubs, schools and settings voluntary and community sector that is easy to understand
- We make sure that all organisations and services measure the outcomes of their work with families and capture this so that there is continuous improvement in the way services are delivered to meet need.

2.4 What will children, young people and their families see?

- Children, young people, parents and carers will feel listened to and heard within the local area.
- Staff in early help services, schools and settings will feel confident about their role in providing support early and in identifying when a child or young person has needs which extend beyond their scope of practice
- Young people, parents and carers and workers across the local area will know how to get support at for all levels of need.
- Children, young people, parents and carers will report that they feel like partners in the decisions made about their support plans, including the choices available and any limitations in that choice.
- As a local area, we will be able to understand how well outcomes for children and young people are being improved and how things might need to change to make a greater impact.

Priority 3: Understand the needs of our children, young people and families and make sure joint commissioning supports service delivery and we make best use of all resources

Children have told us what they would like to see for this priority:

“We are stronger together”

3.1 What have children, young people and families told us about this priority area?

- “Professionals are working in silos”
- “Navigating the system is confusing”
- “Please recognise we grow and change – build on our strengths”
- “Don’t underestimate me”
- “The ‘system’ is built around professionals not the child”

3.2 Why is this a priority?

The SEND Review: Right support Right place Right time (DFE, March 2022) sets out a robust case for a change in the way we understand our population needs and commission services to meet them:

“We are clear that, in an effective and sustainable SEND system that delivers great outcomes for children and young people, the vast majority of children and young people should be able to access the support they need to thrive without the need for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or a specialist or alternative provision place. This is because their needs would be identified promptly, and appropriate support would be put in place at the earliest opportunity before needs can escalate. Those children and young people who require an EHCP or specialist placement would be able to access it with minimal bureaucracy. To shift the dial, we are setting out proposals for an inclusive system, starting with improved mainstream provision that is built on early and accurate identification of needs, high-quality teaching of a knowledge-rich curriculum, and prompt access to targeted support where it is needed. Alongside that, we need a strong specialist sector that has a clear purpose to support those children and young people with more complex needs who require specialist or alternative provision. We need a system where decision-making is based on the needs of children and young people, not on location. This must be underpinned by strong co-production and accountability at every level, and improved data collection to give a timely picture of how the system is performing so that issues can be addressed promptly.

“The Review has heard the need to align system incentives and accountabilities to reduce perverse behaviours that drive poor outcomes and high costs in the current system. Where local systems work more effectively, they are often too reliant on good will and relationships and this is the exception rather than the norm. We need every partner to be clear on their responsibilities in the system, have the right incentives and levers to fulfil those responsibilities and be held accountable for their role in delivery.”

3.3 How will we implement this?

- We will understand the needs of our children and families by always listening to them and using information and data in the best way.
- Together we will decide our commissioning priorities and deliver our joint commissioning strategy.
- We will work with all services throughout our local area to make the best of the resources for our children and young people to be supported locally.
- We will make sure families feel confident that there is a good and an appropriate local choice option for children and young people in all but the most exceptional cases
- We will address the issues arising from the growth in demand and population, particularly the 16 years plus age group
- We will focus all local resources (health, education and social care) to improve the total provision so that children and young people can be supported locally
- We will review and re-model our resources so that they are sufficient to meet current and future need
- We will work together to make sure best value is achieved for our public resources.

3.4 What will children, young people and their families see?

- A dynamic and live Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) will support our commissioning, transformation and resource management.
- Families will be able to access support earlier preventing problems from becoming worse and resulting in higher levels of need.
- Families will be involved in the co-design of new services and in the reshaping of resources.
- Budgets across education, health and care will be understood by the local area to enable and inform the reshaping of resources.
- There will be a reduction in the higher needs block spend.

Priority 4: Make sure that all early years providers and mainstream educational settings support an inclusive approach to education

Children have told us what they would like to see for this priority:

“Give opportunities to attend relevant training to support with SEND needs”

4.1 What have children, young people and families told us about this priority area?

- “We feel underestimated and not understood.”
- “There is inconsistency, what you can get from one school isn’t available another school.”
- “You are not always told the truth; some adults really care but others do not show this.”
- “My school changes things all of the time and it is hard to understand this.”
- “Professionals are not always transparent about the plans in place for me.”
- “We want people to be fair and not always think we are in the wrong.”
- “I am not able speak to the appropriate person to discuss my child or young person.”

4.2 Why is this a priority?

In a disjointed setting of schools and education provision, there is an inconsistency in our ability to meet children and young people’s needs. The school system is independent in decision making and where good practice emerges this may not be repeated across the system. The experience of children and young people with SEND is variable.

Experiences of Torbay’s families are aligned with the SEND Green Paper March 2022.

“It is not clear to families what they should reasonably expect from their local mainstream settings, and they lose confidence that these settings can meet their child’s needs. As a result, education health and care plans (EHCPs) and, in some cases, specialist provision, are seen as the only means of guaranteeing the right and appropriate support”. (SEND Green Paper 2022)

For many children with SEND they have poor attendance, are subject to repeated suspensions and are more likely to get excluded from a Torbay school than when compared to statistical and national comparators. For some schools excellent practice exists where needs are identified at SEN K and support is offered consistently and with impact, for others there is an over reliance on the need for Education Health and Care Plans to meet needs.

For the vast majority of our children and young people with SEND, access to education should be provided through mainstream education, our schools and colleges, with high quality identified support. Specialist and alternative provisions should be retained for those with clearly identified and complex needs.

Excellent teaching is the bedrock of strong mainstream provision. Research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) found that teacher strategies, additional teaching and positive interactions with teachers are important factors for improving the outcomes of children and young people with SEND.

4.3 How will we implement this?

- We will rewrite our response and make sure that this is delivered consistently across all education provisions.
- We will help with the joint commissioning of services within school networks, to support the creation of equal resources and opportunities.
- We will set up a clear inclusion framework and dashboard, recognising good practice and addressing less inclusive practice.
- We will establish a workforce development programme that will make sure that all education provisions become attachment and trauma informed institutions
- We will build the confidence of our teachers to be able to meet needs in the classroom. We will make sure that schools have accredited training through the Autism Education Trust and Speech and Language UK organisations.
- We will use our family hubs to make sure that education practitioners are able to work with professionals at a prevention level, helping to unlock specialist advice and support at an early opportunity.
- We will deliver additional enhanced resource bases for children and young people with social emotional and mental health needs based within mainstream education.
- We will use our SEND capital money to make sure that we are driving mainstream inclusion, providing schools with vital resources to make necessary changes and adaptations.
- We will set out and deliver an agreed strategy for reducing suspensions and exclusions.
- We will reduce the reliance on an Education Health and Care Plans to be able to meet need, improving confidence in educational settings to support children and young people at SEN K, in time freeing up resources to be used differently.
- We will deliver our new attendance strategy, which will support SEND learners.

4.4 What will children, young people and their families see?

- Children and young people with SEND will report that they feel supported and can trust the adults around them.
- Children and young people with SEND will be taught predominately in mainstream education alongside their peers.
- Children and young people with SEND will have high attendance rates.

- Children and young people with SEND will have reduced suspensions and exclusions year on year.
- Provision across the education system will demonstrate a greater inclusive practice, equality of opportunity and consistency.

Priority 5: Improve transition planning for young people moving into adulthood

Children have told us what they would like to see for this priority:

“We want to increase the services and awareness of what services are available for supporting young adults.”

5.1 What have children, young people and families told us about this priority area?

- “We change and get older, so it will be our choices and our ideas, not our parents.”
- “We want to be listened to; my perspective of my needs may not be the same as others.”
- “I need to know what is happening and what changes will take place for me.”
- “I feel I face a cliff edge at 18.”
- “There is not enough choice in the provision that is available to me as I get older.”

5.2 Why is this a priority?

The tragic fact is that on all indicators, people with disability fare much worse than their peers in the general population. However, research has shown that young people with SEND say they want the same opportunities as all young people, so that they could have the same life outcomes. This includes:

- Paid employment and access to higher education
- Housing options and independent living
- Good health
- Friends, relationships, community inclusion
- Choice and control over their lives and support

(Source: Council for Disabled Children)

Young people will need our support and encouragement to get ready for the challenges and increased independence of adult life. They need us to help plan ahead, providing opportunities to share aspirations and hopes and building meaningful and well produced plans that can become a reality over a period of time. Professionals need to know what part they play in helping to plan for the future and have confidence and knowledge of the system to make sure that this can be delivered and maintained into adulthood.

For young people and their families, preparation for adulthood should be well planned and understood. For many young people there will be a marked change to greater independence, however for some young people there needs to be a continuum of provision. We need to make sure that moving between children's social care services to adult social care services is a seamless process.

5.3 How will we implement this?

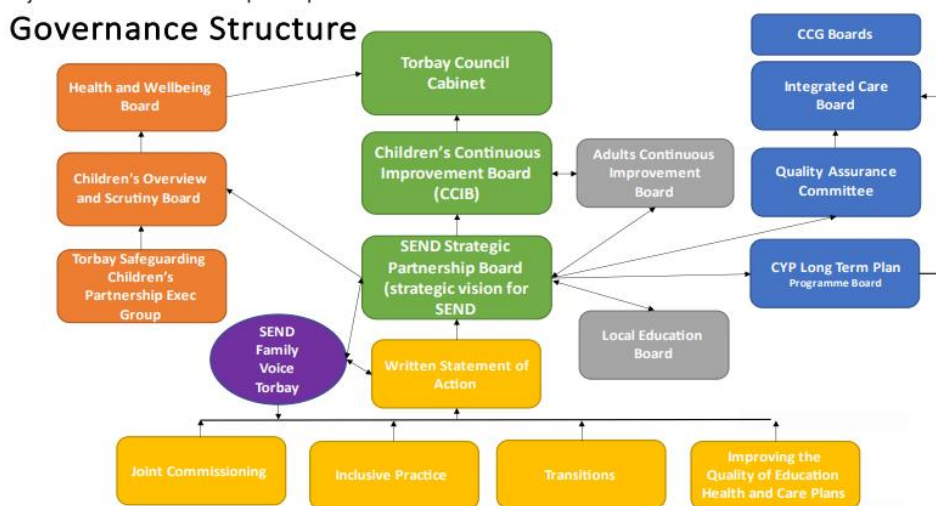
- We will deliver our strategy for multi-agency working from year 9. This includes a protocol for professionals to work together, including when and how the Care Act transition assessment will take place and how support and provision contributes to the achievement and development of outcomes.
- We will make sure that our Education Health and Care Plans include co-produced, preparing for adulthood outcomes in section E and there is evidence of a alignment from aspirations to outcomes.
- We will make sure that our Local Offer has a comprehensive range of options that enable young people and their carers to know what is available locally.
- We will make sure that our commissioned services are mapped, gaps are identified and post 16 is delivered as a commissioning priority.
- We will make sure that all young people with SEND from the age of 16 are on study programmes, this includes work experience.
- We will make sure that across the partnership organisations we directly offer pathways to work experience and employment for young people with SEND.
- We will promote and offer personal budgets.

5.4 What will children, young people and their families see?

- Our young people will experience a transition to adulthood that enables them to achieve their aspirations and goals.
- Our young people will tell us they have choice and feel well supported.
- There will be detailed Preparing for Adulthood outcomes in place for all young people.
- Young people will talk confidently about the future and be able to articulate the agreed plan.

Who will oversee the strategy?

We will have robust governance in place to make sure we deliver our commitment to improved services for children and young people with SEND and their families. The SEND Strategic Board, which includes representatives from SEND Family Voice, Department for Education, NHS England Advisors, reports into our Children’s Continuous Improvement Board (CCIB) making sure that our work around SEND is embedded in a broader approach to improvement and securing the very best outcomes for children and young people with SEND.



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