



TORBAY SEND LOCAL AREA IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP BOARD (SLAIP)

PUBLISHED MINUTES – OCTOBER 2025

Date: 22 October 2025

Time: 1.00 – 3:00pm

Location: In person

1. Introduction and Apologies

- Date/time of Board meetings to be reviewed to ensure increased attendance

2. Minutes and Actions

Acceptance of DFE Letter & PIP:

- The board formally accepted the DFE letter and the requirements for the Priority Impact Plan (PIP), agreeing to publish and communicate.

3. SLAIP Forward Plan & Agenda:

- The board approved the order of agenda items and the forward plan, ensuring flexibility for urgent issues.

Actions Review:

- Majority of previous actions were marked as complete (green), with some in development (amber), and no outstanding actions (red).

Discussion and Action:

The partnership, in collaboration with SEND Family Voice Torbay (SFVT) has developed a communication plan and each organisation will also share information internally with colleagues and staff to help spread the message further.

4. Exception Reporting & Risk Register:

- A new impact reporting plan and risk register were discussed, with a focus on organisational resources and the need to address silo working across the priority areas.

- The risk register is in development, with current high-risk areas mainly related to organisational resources.

Discussion and Action:

Agreement that additional risks need to include; potential for silo working, communication and relationships with families, and the impact of government reorganisation on people and capacity. The board emphasised the need for clear mitigations and regular review, especially for risks that have not yet been fully scored or assessed.

There was a specific query about why the risk regarding government reorganisation was marked as medium when it might warrant a higher rating. Agreement to review before the next meeting.

Action – Programme lead to liaise with relevant colleagues to update risk register as indicated above.

Key updates:

- **Priority 1: Governance and Collaboration** –focus on strengthening partnership governance. Recent work includes exploring grant funding for family communication and liaison roles.
- **Priority 2: Commissioning Arrangements** –No specific update provided.
- **Priority 3: Multi-Agency Working and Access to Services** –Updates include a new locality-based structure, a new head of service for quality first teaching, successful DFE intervention grant for SIAG support, and ongoing work on neurodiversity mapping and educational psychology recruitment.
- **Priority 4: Waiting Times and Access to Health Services** – Positive developments reported: paediatric waiting times reduced, no waits over 40 weeks, and significant reductions in speech and language waitlists, especially for under-5s.
- **Priority 5: Preparation for Adulthood** –focus on transitions, supported internships, and NEET reduction. Successes in NEET figures and supported internships, but challenges remain for 16–18-year-olds and transition between children's and adult services.

Discussion and Action:

- A board member highlighted the importance of hearing about the delivery and progress of specific actions, such as sleep services and new life initiatives, and suggested that updates on these should be shared with the board soon.

- They noted that the learning disability (LD) pathway could offer a quick win and recommended reporting on its progress as well.
- A broader point was raised about the neurodiversity work, observing that activities in priorities 2 and 4 felt somewhat fragmented and emphasised the need to bring together the Devon-wide neurodiversity strategy and Torbay's implementation plan for better alignment.
- A member supported the idea of mapping services and closing gaps through partnership, especially in neurodiversity, and encouraged continued collaboration to ensure joined-up delivery.
- It was also suggested that the board should keep checking that improvement work is genuinely cross-partnership, co-produced, and well-communicated, to avoid siloed efforts.

Board to receive full copy of updated impact tracker for each meeting.

5. Quality Assurance Framework:

- The SEND QA framework was presented and discussed
- The Quality Assurance (QA) Framework for SEND is a revised and co-produced partnership document aimed at embedding continuous improvement across education, health, and social care.
- It emphasises placing children, young people, and families at the centre, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence to evaluate and improve services.
- The framework uses a five-step process: data analysis, audit activity, family feedback, practice improvement, and measurement of impact.
- It incorporates four lenses of quality: independent scrutiny, provider scrutiny, professional challenge, and citizen challenge.
- There is a focus on increasing family feedback, including new methods like QR codes and digital surveys.
- Key audit areas include EHC plans, annual reviews, SEN support plans, and statutory advice, with clear KPIs and grading criteria aligned to national standards.

Discussion and Action:

The board discussed the importance of tracking outcomes for children and young people, especially through annual reviews, and aligning QA priorities with statutory requirements and board assurance needs.

Training needs identified through audit will inform a partnership-wide training action plan, aiming for forward planning to align with school calendars.

New AP legislation was discussed, and it was agreed the framework will be updated to reflect new government guidance on alternative provision and ensure future proofing. It was agreed the reporting will be quarterly, aligned with the board's six-week meeting cycle and to include a forward plan for the board.

Governance: The board agreed to establish a Performance and QA subgroup for deeper scrutiny, action tracking, and ensuring audit findings lead to system improvements. This subgroup will include decision-makers to ensure audit recommendations are actioned. The subgroup will be chaired by the SLAIP chair and report back to the main board. The concern about capacity was raised and it was agreed to look carefully at membership.

6. Data Dashboard:

- Progress on a comprehensive data dashboard was shared, with ongoing alignment between health and local authority data.

Discussion and Action:

EHCNA requests in Torbay have decreased by 12%; nationally, they increased by 12%. EHCP numbers are rising locally, but at a slower rate than the national average. SEN support rates in Torbay are 13.1%, below the national figure of 14.2%, with the gap widening.

Permanent exclusions and suspensions for SEND pupils remain above national levels. Rates of Electively Home Educated (EHE) children in Torbay have increased faster than national figures.

The proportion of young people with EHCPs who are NEET is declining in Torbay, while national figures are rising.

As above – agreement for a 'Performance and Quality Assurance' subgroup

7. Voice of Children & Young People:

- Members of the SEND Youth Forum undertook a survey as they were concerned the SEND graduated response videos were not being used in schools.

- The survey results were shared with the board, which highlighted the low awareness of the videos amongst young people with EHCPs, or those starting the process

Discussion and Action:

Low awareness of SEND videos among young people was noted, with recommendations to boost communication and school involvement. It was recommended that the findings from the young people's survey is captured and monitored as part of the QA process.

7. Family Voice:

- The Chair of SEND Family Voice Torbay discussed the report produced by the forum in response to the recent changes in provision for those children and young people who are educated otherwise than at school (EOTAS)

Discussion and Action:

The board acknowledged the mixed experiences among families regarding EOTAS changes, and the negative impact the changes have had on some families.

EOTAS changes were made because the previous system relied on unregistered and unregulated alternative provision, which resulted in poor outcomes for young people and did not meet quality or regulatory standards. The new approach aims to ensure better outcomes through regulated provision, even though it means not all families get their preferred package. The team is focused on improving outcomes, monitoring progress, and learning from the process, while continuing to support families through the transition.

The board was given assurance that work with families and monitoring of the situation will be ongoing through half termly contract management reviews. The first monitoring report will be circulated to board members.

The board discussed the importance to reflect on how the process was undertaken and any lessons learned. It was proposed that a learning session is undertaken with the forum.

Preparation for Adulthood: Discussion and Actions

- Celebration of NEET Progress: The board noted significant improvement in NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) figures, with Torbay outperforming

statistical neighbours, attributed to targeted grants and increased supported internships.

- Supported Internships: Over two years, supported internships increased by more than 300%, showing positive impact for young people with SEND.
- Identified Gaps (16–18 Age Group): the gap in support for 16–18-year-olds was highlighted, especially those on SEN support but without EHCPs, as current funding and services often start at age 18.
- Sector Engagement: There is ongoing work to connect local sectors (e.g., tourism, fishing, tech, creative industries) with schools to inspire career pathways, but more can be done to embed employer engagement in the curriculum.
- Barriers to Transition: The group discussed systemic challenges, including differences in children’s and adults’ social care frameworks, legal complexities, and the risk of young people “falling through the cracks” during transition.
- Early Intervention: Several participants stressed that intervention should start earlier, ideally at age 14, to prepare young people for adulthood and prevent disengagement by age 16.
- Sufficiency and EHE Concerns: There is a rise in requests for EHCPs post-16, often because young people cannot access suitable provision without one, and some are electively home educated (EHE) out of necessity rather than choice.
- Need for Deeper Analysis: The board agreed on the importance of understanding specific barriers (e.g., transport, limited post-16 options, part-time courses) to inform future actions.
- Toolkit for Young People: There is no clear, accessible product or toolkit for young people outlining transition options; the board suggested developing one as a partnership.
- Quality Assurance Role: The QA subgroup should review the quality of transition planning in EHCPs, including when planning starts and how well it prepares young people for adulthood.

Actions

- Explore project ideas for supporting 16–18-year-olds at risk of NEET, including possible early intervention models.
- Board to conduct deeper analysis of barriers to post-16 participation and transition for young people with SEND.
- QA Subgroup to review transition planning quality in EHCPs and report findings.

- Partnership to consider developing a transition toolkit or guidance product for young people.
- Participation team to gather lived experience insights from young people to inform future planning

Communications Plan: The need for a co-produced communications plan was emphasised, with proactive, transparent, and authentic messaging as priorities.

- **Partnership Approach Needed:** It was emphasised that communications should reflect the partnership's shared culture and vision, not just be a corporate function. The plan should ensure transparency, authenticity, and timeliness.
- **Tools and Techniques:** The group discussed the need for practical tools and techniques to embed consistent communications across all organisations, ensuring frontline staff and leadership deliver unified messages.
- **Co-Produced Plan Requirement:** The PIP requires a co-produced communications plan, with family voices central to its development and delivery.
- **Sequencing and Forward Planning:** There was consensus on the importance of forward planning, aligning communications with key events and transitions in the SEND calendar (e.g., school transitions, exam periods).
- **Proactive vs. Reactive:** The plan should balance proactive communication (e.g., sharing successes, upcoming changes) with responsive updates to challenges or issues.
- **Preferred Channels:** The group noted the popularity of the SEND newsletter and the need to understand how families prefer to receive information (e.g., newsletters, videos, toolkits).
- **Consistency and Responsiveness:** Families want reliable responses to queries, clear points of contact, and consistent information from all professionals involved.
- **SEND Pledge Relaunch:** The planned relaunch event was postponed allowing for better sequencing and engagement.

Actions

- Development of the partnership communications plan, ensuring it is co-produced with families and aligns with the PIP.
- Board to agree on sequencing and forward planning for communications activities and events.

Commented [HA1]: @Willmott, Louise could you see what else is on the recording for these two items as these were the main agenda spotlights. It needs bullet points and then the discussion and action summary

- Partnership to gather feedback from families on preferred communication channels and incorporate findings into the plan.
- Co-ordinate the engagement of the right people to develop the communications plan development.
- SEND Pledge relaunch to be rescheduled with improved planning for better engagement.

Actions (Next Steps):

- Work with partners and comms to publish the PIP, as recommended by the parent carer forum.
- Chair to ensure representation for all priority areas at future board meetings.
- Continue to work on SEN support, EP recruitment, and intervention grant implementation.
- Chair to establish a Performance and Quality Assurance subgroup and clarify reporting/training arrangements.
- Colleagues to align and update the data dashboard for future meetings.
- Share findings from SEND video survey with QA to ensure triangulation.
- Organise a learning session for EOTAS changes and communicate outcomes to families.
- Develop a co-produced communications plan, sequencing events and toolkits with family input.