

TSCP Quality Assurance Group Multi-Agency Case Audit: Understanding Children and Young People's Mental Health needs in Torbay

The audit took place on 5th March 2025 and reviewed 10 case files of children living in Torbay. The Terms of Reference explaining the key lines of enquiry can be found here along with the Executive Summary. [Quality Assurance Group - Torbay Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

The purpose of the MACA was to understand the availability and effectiveness of services available for children whose emotional health and wellbeing needs fall within the 'Getting Help and Getting More Help' needs base quadrants. The audit specifically considered the availability and effectiveness of services for children educated at home, and those waiting for assessments for autism

Audit demographics

Five of the young people were male and five females. Their ages ranged between 15yrs and 17yrs.

Four of the children were educated at home, one educated other than in school, one in an alternative provision and four in mainstream school.

Three children were recorded as having SEN(K), four awaiting ASD assessment and one diagnosed with ASD.

What are we worried about?

The MACA found that across the partnership there is a lack of understanding of the differences between mental health / illness and emotional wellbeing, especially where there is trauma informed practice required.

There is often a strong focus on parental need impacting on the ability to remain child focused.

There remains a professional bias towards parent-led information, discussions and communication.

There is an apparent reliance on the GP to make referrals to a paediatrician for ADHD, often as a result of an outcome led virtual contact with parents, thus missing an opportunity to understand the child's view and the impact for them.

GPs may not be aware when/if a child becomes educated at home.

It was not clear how well children were involved in decision to home educate.

There was a notable disparity between professionals about where children are on the pathway or waiting list. For some children, the GP reported an assessment had been completed and diagnosis made, whilst other professionals believed the child was still waiting.

There is a lack of health attendance/support to Early Help Panels for children who are awaiting ASD assessments, often due to inability to meet short notice deadlines.

What good practice did we see?

- Examples of robust supervision offer for 0 to 19 service, Early Help and Primary Care.
- Primary Care improving quality of coding to enable easier identification of documentation shared.
- Example of Early Help practitioners working over and above to facilitate positive engagement from parents.
- Joint funded role for social prescriber focusing on children with mental health/anxiety issues and poor school attendance.
- Child in Need and Early Help plans have robust managerial oversight in place.

What does the audit tell us about how children are heard and responded to?

- Speech and Language practitioners are working hard to ensure one off appointments provide an environment where children can express feelings/hopes/emotions
- Alternative provision and effective collaboration between practitioners positively impacted upon opportunities for post 16 education
- Example of robust transitional information sharing between Primary and Secondary schools – enabled child's voice and wishes to be heard and responded to
- Some parents exercised their right for their child not to be seen during the statutory EHE visit, and therefore their views are not recorded first hand.
- Tools, approaches and knowledge of historical information by practitioners kept the child at the centre of decision making.
- Examples of practitioner acceptance that the child 'chooses not to engage' rather than adopting a restorative approach to support effective engagement

Additional resources:

[Self harm and suicidal behaviour](#)
[Child mental health - Torbay Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

[CFHD Pathways](#)

[Supervision and support are critical in improving outcomes for young people](#)

[One minute read Improving children and young people's mental health services | The Health Foundation](#)

Themes for Learning

- The TSCP should support CFHD to promote pathways available and referral mechanisms into those pathways across the Partnership.
- CFHD should provide guidance on best practice for quality referrals into their pathways which provide the most holistic overview and achieve the best outcome for the child.
- The TSCP should review the training offer for staff to improve understanding of emotional well-being and ill mental health in children.
- Consideration should be given to understanding whether the finding that there is professional bias towards parent-led information is reflective of Partnership practice, or isolated to audit examples.
- GPs should be informed, with consent, when the decision is made for a child to be home educated.
- Consideration should be given to ensuring there is an identified lead when the decision is made for a child to be educated at home.
- Consideration must be given to how children are included in the decision for them to be educated at home.
- Consideration should be given to how children are empowered to be involved in home visits when they are educated at home.
- Consideration should be given to how the communication between practitioners supporting all children awaiting ASD/autism assessments can be improved.
- A proposal for this could be the creation of a single point of contact (lead professional). The creation of a single point of contact will ensure a holistic view of the child's needs, support identification of gaps, and promote effective coordination of all interventions being provided.

"The time and collective input given to this MACA would have been better spent directly with the young person concerned earlier in the process"

- There is benefit in reviewing the MACA process to be more aligned with neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnerships.

Next Steps

- The Torbay Children and Young People's Emotional Well-being and Mental Health Group should consider how staff can be appropriately skilled to support children where thresholds are not met, or there is a delay in accessing CFHD pathways
- The TSCP Quality Assurance Group will lead on the themes for learning outlined above. Those will be transferred to an action plan for Partners to progress in the coming months.
- The audit will be revisited in 2026 to understand the impact of the learning for children and young people in Torbay.