

The Bercow Report on SLCN (2018) shows system wide poor understanding of and insufficient resourcing for speech, language and communication needs. This means too many children and young people receive inadequate, ineffective and inequitable support, potentially impacting on their educational outcomes, their employability and their mental health. Some children find it difficult to listen, understand and communicate with others and may need support to develop those skills. Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) is the umbrella term used to describe these difficulties. Children with SLCN may have difficulty with one or a combination of speech, language or communication skills.

Difficulties with speech may include speech which is difficult for others to understand, problems hearing the difference between speech sounds and stammering or stuttering. With language difficulties this may include using sentence structures or grammar you would usually expect to hear from someone younger, problems learning and remembering new words and issues sequencing ideas and sentences leading to confusing explanations and stories. Difficulties with communication might include limited eye contact, poor turn taking skills in conversations and not being able to use language to compromise and negotiate in discussions together with difficulties in understanding verbal and non-verbal responses.

### Why is this important?



Communication is key to children's development; it's the foundation of relationships and is essential for learning and social interaction.

### What is the local context?



Rates of SLCN within Torbay are higher than regional and national rates for primary age pupils. Rates for secondary age pupils are lower.

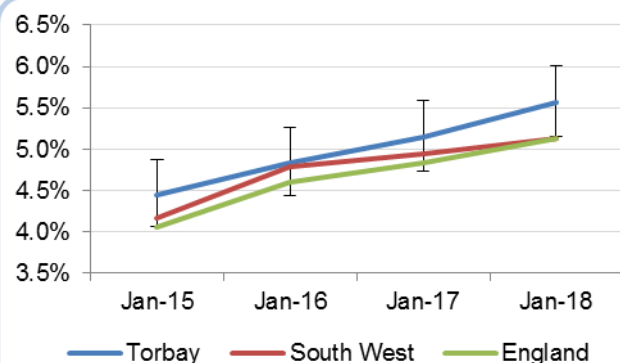
### What should we do?



Support children and their parents to access information and services in and out of school.

The percentage of pupils attending primary schools in Torbay who are recorded as having a primary need of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has been higher than primary schools in the South West and nationally over the previous four years (Fig 1). Taking the four years together the trend is significant. It should be noted that figures throughout the document relate only to primary need.

**Fig 1: Percentage of all primary school pupils with a Primary Need of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

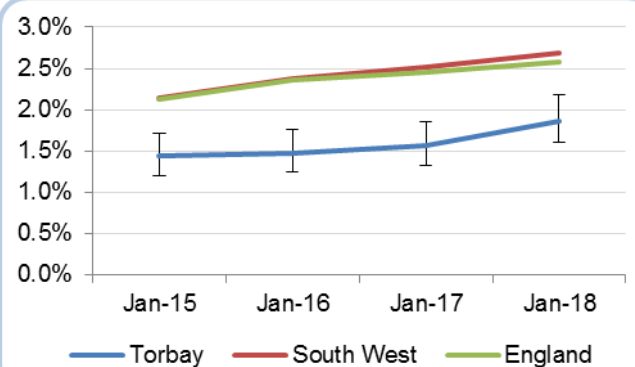


Source: School Census

The percentage of pupils attending secondary schools in Torbay who are recorded as having a primary need of SLCN or ASD has been significantly lower than primary schools in the South West and nationally over the previous four years (Fig 2).

It should be noted that compared to national and regional figures, a significantly lower percentage of those secondary school pupils who received a needs statement, Education, Health & Care (EHC) plan or special needs support have had their primary need recorded as SLCN or ASD (Torbay 10.3%, South West 19.3%, England 19.4%). Rates of SLCN & ASD at special schools are more in line with national and regional rates for special schools since January 2018. Rates at primary schools have been similar to national and regional figures throughout the period.

**Fig 2: Percentage of all secondary school pupils with a Primary Need of SLCN or ASD**



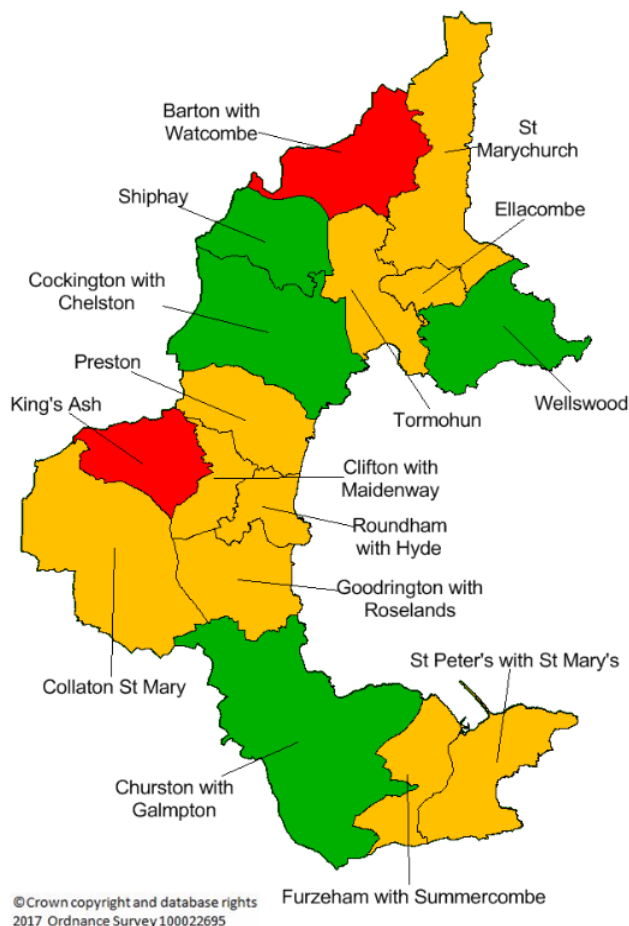
Source: School Census

Nationally, it is known that those children living in areas of higher deprivation are more likely to have special educational needs. This is reflected within Torbay data for the period 2016 to 2018, there was a link between the level of deprivation and the number of children recorded as having a

primary need of SLCN or ASD. Those who live in the most deprived quintile have significantly higher rates, there are also significantly higher rates in quintiles 2 & 3 when compared to quintiles 4 & 5 (Fig 4). This link is particularly prevalent in relation to SLCN. It should be noted that this data relates only to those children attending Torbay schools who also reside within Torbay.

The map below shows the wards with a significantly higher rate of children with SLCN and ASD, areas highlighted in red show those areas in which rates are significantly higher than the Torbay average (Fig 3).

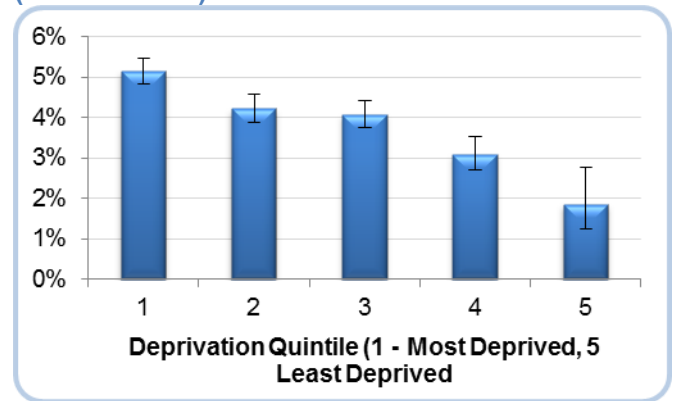
**Fig 3: Rate of all school pupils with a Primary Need of SLCN or ASD by Ward (New May 2019 Wards) – 2016 to 2018**



- Rate significantly higher than Torbay
- Rate not significantly different from Torbay
- Rate significantly lower than Torbay

Source: School Census

**Fig 4: Percentage of all pupils with a Primary Need of SLCN or ASD by deprivation quintile (2016 to 2018)**



Source: School Census

There is a pronounced difference between boys and girls in the numbers recognised as having a primary need of SLCN or ASD. For the period 2016 to 2018 across England, the School Census showed that 70% of those pupils identified as having a primary need of SLCN and 82% as having a primary need of ASD were boys.

There have been numerous studies that show that young offenders have SLCN rates significantly above that of the general population, many times these have been previously unrecognised (Language difficulties and criminal justice: the need for earlier identification – Bryan, Garvani, Gregory, Kilner. 2015). This points to not being fixated about increases in SLCN rates, rather we should be more concerned about those who have yet to be identified and offered support. For further information on support services in Torbay see

<https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/service/s/speech-and-language-therapy/>

### References and further information:

ICAN – the Children's Communication Charity  
<https://www.ican.org.uk/>

Bercow Report 10 years on  
<https://www.bercow10yearson.com/>

Torbay Language Consultant Verity Hyde  
Early Years and Childcare Advisory Service (EYCAS) Tel: 01803 208734 mobile: 07557 012709

Special Educational Needs Data  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-special-educational-needs-sen>