

Falls amongst older people are a common cause of injury and often preventable. As people age they are more likely to fall and this can happen recurrently. Approximately 1 in 3 people aged 65 and over and 1 in 2 aged 80 and over fall at least once a year. This can cause loss of independence, loss of confidence, pain, distress, injury and mortality. ([Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#) (OHID), 2022)

Multiple factors can increase the likelihood of an older person having a fall including: muscle weakness, balance problems, environmental hazards, visual impairment, frailty, taking multiple medications, taking certain medications, some medical conditions such as stroke and Parkinson's disease, low blood pressure, and having a history of falling.

Why is this important?



Falls can cause injury and lead to deterioration and frailty. As well as the impact on individuals it is costly to health and social care services.

What is the local context?



Torbay's rate of emergency hospital admissions for falls, aged 65+, has increased in the last 2 years (Fig 1) and is significantly higher than the England average in 2023/24.

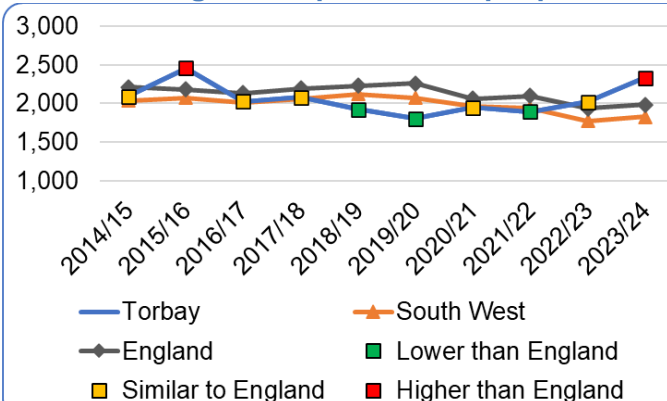
What should we do?



Raise awareness of how to reduce risk of falling such as: addressing hazards in the home, having regular eye tests, doing strength and balance exercises as appropriate.

Hospital admissions: Falls hospital admissions have been used as a proxy for the prevalence of falls injuries but they are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the health and wellbeing impact of falls. People may go to their GP or A&E and not become a hospital admission. ([OHID](#))

Fig 1: Rate of emergency hospital admissions due to falls, aged 65+, per 100,000 people



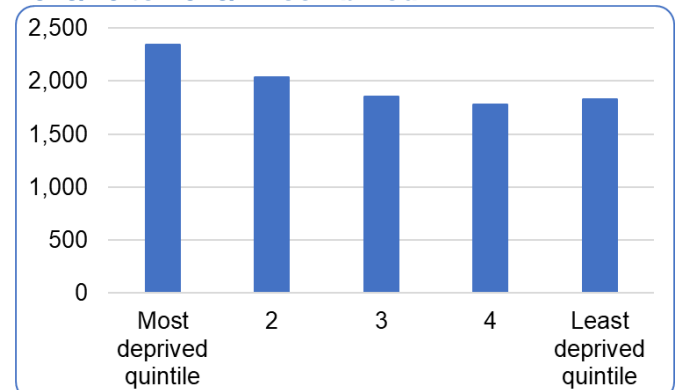
Source: OHID- [Public health profiles](#), age standardised rates

Torbay's rate of emergency hospital admissions due to falls amongst people aged 65+ has increased to become significantly higher than both the South West and England in 2023/24 (Fig 1). This is also the case in the 65 to 79 and the 80+ age groups. We await to see if this is the start of a rising trend. The rate equates to 945

admissions in 2023/24 (rounded to nearest 5) of people aged 65+, 2 in 3 admissions are aged 80+.

Deprivation: In terms of deprivation there are higher levels of emergency hospital admissions due to falls amongst people aged 65+ living in the most deprived areas- the most deprived quintile in Torbay has significantly higher rates than the other areas (Fig 2). This is for the 5 years of 2019/20 to 2023/24 combined.

Fig 2: Rates of emergency hospital admissions due to falls, aged 65+, per 100,000 people, split into deprivation quintiles, Torbay, 2019/20 to 2023/24 combined

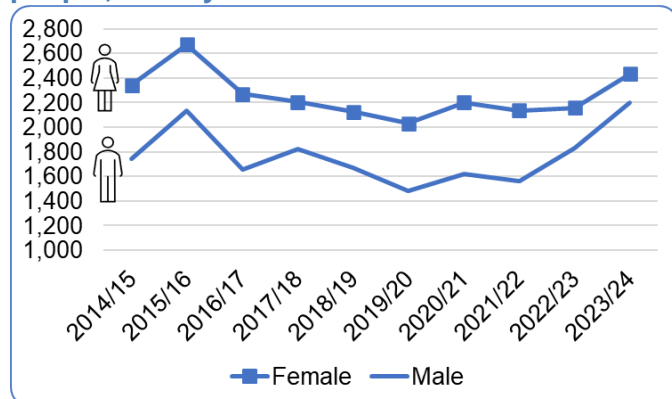


Source: NHS England- Hospital Episode Statistics, age standardised rates

There is a more marked decreasing gradient in deprivation in the 65 to 79 age group, with a higher rate amongst those living in the most deprived quintile decreasing to a lower rate in the least deprived quintile. Higher rates in more deprived areas are reflected nationally. Within the 80+ age group, however, there is no deprivation trend locally or nationally. Many will have a care home as their permanent address which may be in an area that in deprivation terms bears little resemblance to their previous area of residence.

Sex: Splitting Fig 1 by sex shows that amongst those aged 65+, more women than men are sustaining falls injuries that lead to emergency hospital admissions (Fig 3). The female rate is higher than the male rate in Torbay as in England. In Torbay the gap has narrowed with a sharper increase in the male rate in the last 2 years compared with females. England's gap between the sexes, however, has not narrowed.

Fig 3: Rate of emergency hospital admission due to falls, aged 65+, by sex, per 100,000 people, Torbay

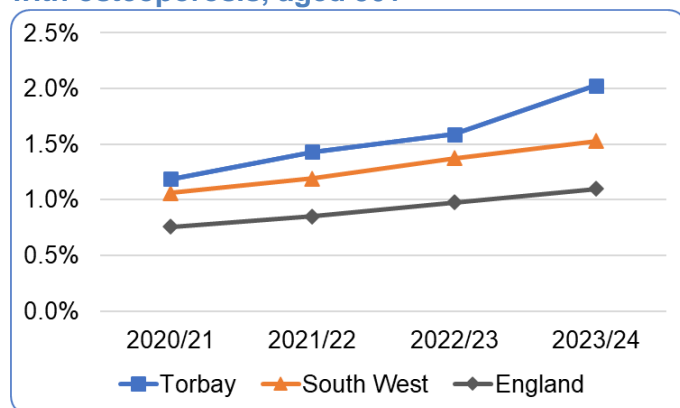


Source: OHID: [Public health profiles](#), age standardised rates

Osteoporosis: this is a condition that makes bones weaker, so fractures are more likely. All people lose bone strength as they age but women do so more quickly after the menopause so are at higher risk of the condition than men. Some other factors that can increase a person's risk are a family history of the condition, low weight, lack of exercise, smoking and high alcohol consumption.

Osteoporosis is recorded as part of the Quality and Outcomes Framework for GP patients aged 50 and over. Torbay is in the highest quintile in England and higher than England throughout (Fig 4). However, Torbay has an older than average population which may explain the higher numbers. Torbay, the South West and England are on increasing trends.

Fig 4: Percentage of GP patients diagnosed with osteoporosis, aged 50+



Source: OHID: [Public health profiles](#)

Hip fractures: The rate of emergency hospital admissions for hip fractures amongst Torbay residents aged 65+ has been similar to England for the last decade with no particular trend. In 2023/24 the rate was 535 per 100,000 equating to 220 admissions (rounded to nearest 5). Torbay's female rate is much higher than for males, as in England. (data from [OHID](#), age standardised rate)

Frailty: This is where a person 'is less able to cope and recover from accidents, physical illness or other stressful events. It should be treated as a long term condition throughout adult life'. ([NHS England](#)). Frailty is a risk factor for falling.

The NHS in England systematically identifies patients aged 65+ with moderate or severe frailty. This is carried out using the electronic Frailty Index (eFI) or other appropriate assessment tool. The eFI can identify if someone is likely to be fit or living with mild, moderate or severe frailty. Early identification and targeted support can help older people living with frailty to remain well and to live independently for as long as possible. Some key interventions including falls assessments are targeted at those most at risk. ([NHS England](#))

Mortality: Falls are a cause of mortality in older people. 234 deaths of Torbay residents aged 65+ were registered with an underlying cause of a fall in the 10 years from 2014 to 2023 (Fig 5). This has increased in the second half of the decade but the difference is not statistically significant.

Fig 5: Deaths with underlying cause of falls, Torbay residents aged 65+

10 year period	Number of deaths
2014 - 2023	234

Source: Primary Care Mortality Database

Further information on falls and on preventing them can be found below:

- NHS: [Falls](#)
- NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence): [Falls: assessment and prevention in older people and in people 50 and over at higher risk](#), NG249, April 2025. This updates and replaces the previous guideline CG161 on falls
- RoSPA: [Falls prevention in the home](#)
- Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust: [Falls, fracture prevention & bone health](#)

References:

NHS England: [Ageing well & supporting people living with frailty](#) and [Identifying frailty](#), accessed 6 May 2025

NHS England: Hospital Episode Statistics, accessed 11 April 2025

OHID: [Falls: applying All Our Health](#), updated Feb 2022, accessed 6 May 2025

OHID: Public health profiles. 2025 <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/> accessed 15 April 2025

Primary Care Mortality Database, accessed 6 May 2025