

A learning disability is defined within [NHS England guidance](#) as having three core criteria: 'lower intellectual ability (usually defined as an Intelligence Quotient [IQ] of less than 70) or a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information; significant impairment of social or adaptive functioning; and onset in childhood'. This doesn't include specific difficulties with learning such as dyslexia.

There are varying degrees of learning disability- it can be classified as mild, moderate, severe or profound- and people may also have other conditions. The needs of people with a learning disability will therefore vary. The right support at the right times in life can be vital.

Why is this important?



People with a learning disability are likely to have poorer physical and mental health and to experience significant health inequalities ([OHID](#))

Their median (average) age at death is much lower than for the general population.

What is the local context?

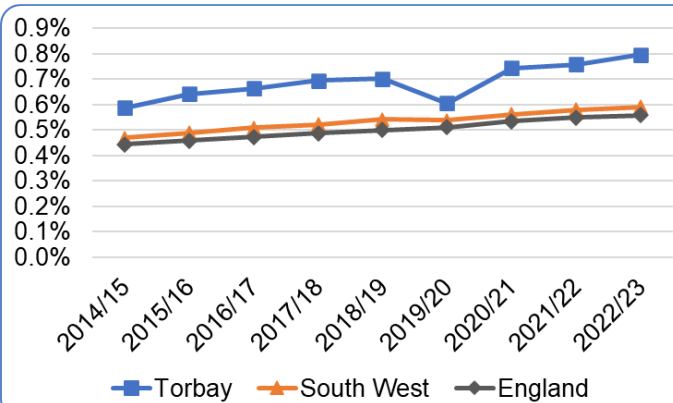


Compared to England, higher percentages of Torbay GP patients have a learning disability, and rates of Torbay working age people

claiming Personal Independent Payments with the main reason as learning disability are higher

GP registers: GPs record when patients have a learning disability. This equates to 1,185 people of all ages on Torbay GP registers in 2022/23 which is 0.8% of patients. This is significantly higher than the South West and England and has been for the nine years shown (Fig1). The three geographical areas are on an increasing trend. It should be noted that numbers are reliant on registers being kept up to date.

Fig 1: Percentage of GP patients with learning disabilities



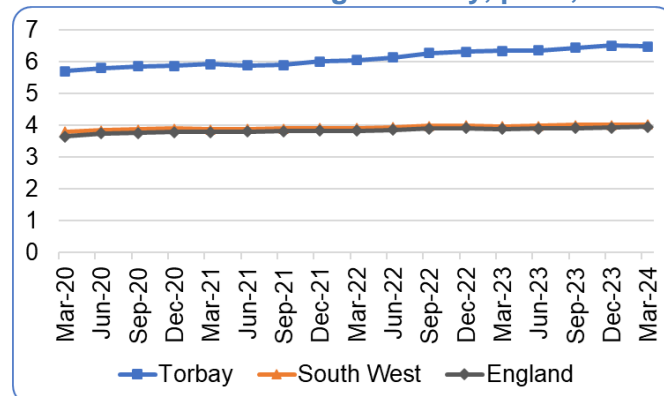
Source: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID): [Public health profiles](#)

SEND (Special educational needs and disabilities): This is where children are assessed as needing SEN support at school or, where SEN support is not enough, an Education, Health and Care Plan. A [Torbay needs assessment for SEND](#) combines the primary need categories of moderate/ severe/ profound and multiple/ specific learning difficulties into a 'learning needs'

group for 2019 to 2022 combined. This, however, will also include children with specific difficulties with learning such as dyslexia. Analysis shows:

- 9.3% of children at Torbay schools who were eligible for free school meals had learning needs compared to 4.2% of those not eligible
- Torbay's most deprived areas had the highest proportions with learning needs living in them, reducing steadily to the lowest proportions in the least deprived areas (Torbay school pupils who live in Torbay)

Fig 2: Rate of 16 to 64 year olds claiming Personal Independence Payments with the main reason as learning disability, per 1,000



Source: Department for Work & Pensions: [Stat-Xplore](#), Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-year population estimates

Personal Independence Payments help with some of the extra costs caused by long term ill health or a disability and started to replace the Disability Living Allowance from April 2013. Torbay's claimant rate of 16 to 64 year olds per 1,000 with the main reason as learning disability is far higher than the South West and England over the years (Fig 2). Torbay is on a steadily increasing trend whereas the South West and England are only slightly increasing.

Accommodation: In Torbay in 2022/23, 79.1% of 18 to 64 year olds with a learning disability known to the Council were classed as living in stable and appropriate accommodation ([OHID](#)). This is where the person has security of tenure in their usual accommodation or are part of a household whose head holds such security. This does not include residential care/nursing homes. 2022/23 is similar to the England average. Torbay and England are on gradually increasing trends.

Adult Social Care: Torbay's rate of 18 to 64 year olds receiving Adult Social Care long term support with a primary support reason of learning disability remains significantly higher than the South West and England rates and is on an increasing trend. For those aged 65+ however, the rate is decreasing (Figs 3 and 4).

Figs 3 and 4: Rate receiving Adult Social Care long term support with a primary support reason of learning disability, per 100,000

Fig 3: Aged 18 to 64

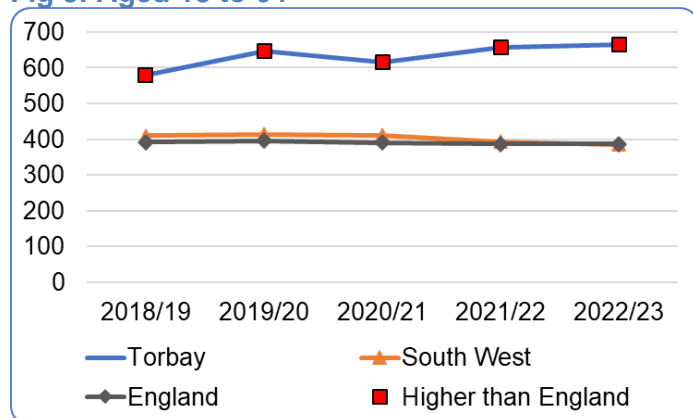
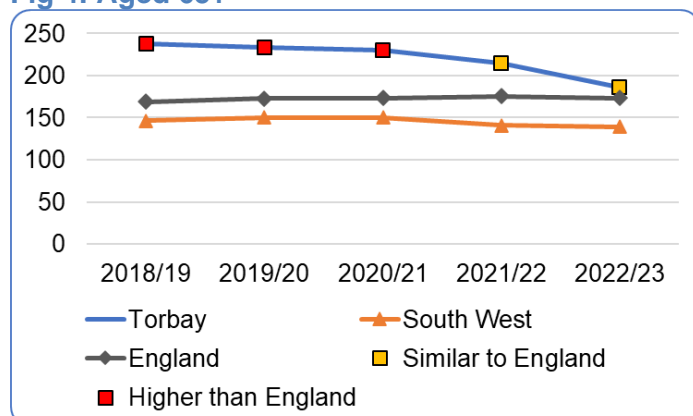


Fig 4: Aged 65+

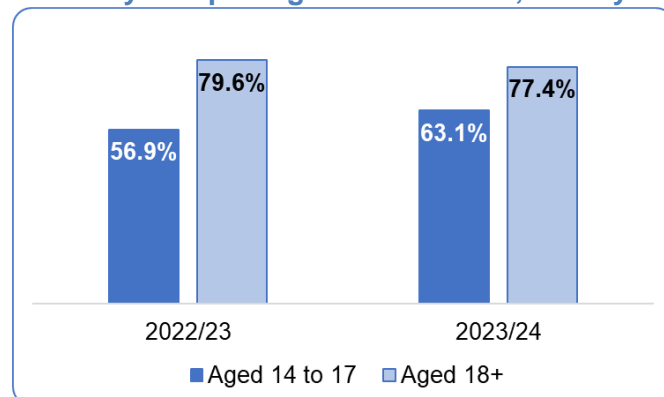


Source: NHS England: [Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report](#), ONS mid-year population estimates

Health and mortality: People with a learning disability are likely to have poorer mental and physical health than those without. They are less likely to be in work and more likely to be in poverty, be chronically lonely and to experience discrimination and bullying. ([OHID](#))

In 2022 the median age at death of people with a learning disability aged 18+ was 62.9 years; in 2018 it was 61.8 ([Learning from Lives and Deaths \(LeDeR\) report](#) for 2022). This is approximately two decades younger than for the general population. The report says that in 2022, 42% of adult deaths were considered avoidable and 50% the year before, compared to 22% for the general population. The LeDeR programme annually summarises the lives and deaths of people with a learning disability who died in England.

Fig 5: Percentage of patients with a learning disability completing a health check, Torbay



Source: NHS England: [Learning Disabilities Health Check Scheme](#)

GPs are encouraged to offer an annual health check to patients aged 14+ who have a learning disability. Fig 5 shows that in Torbay in 2022/23 and 2023/24 there were significantly higher percentages of those aged 18+ who have a health check compared to younger people aged 14 to 17. This is also the case in England. In both years Torbay is lower than England amongst 14 to 17 year olds (but not statistically significant) and similar to England amongst people aged 18+.

Population projections: The numbers of adults with a learning disability are projected up to the year 2040 by the [PANSI](#) (Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information) and [POPPI](#) (Projecting Older People Population Information System) website systems produced by Oxford Brookes University. These show baseline estimates and other estimates including numbers with moderate or severe learning disability and figures are split into age bands and by Local Authority area.

Local strategy: Part of Torbay's Adult Social Care Strategy is [The Big Plan for Learning Disabilities](#) (2023 to 2028). The Big Plan is split into six areas: Community and independence; Home; Health; Care and support; Safety; and Family, friends and carers.

References:

Kings College London: [LeDeR Annual Report Learning from Lives and Deaths: People with a Learning Disability and Autistic People for 2022, 2023](#)

NHS England: [Quality and Outcomes Framework guidance for 2022/23](#), Version 2, December 2022

OHID (was Public Health England): [Learning Disability - Applying All Our Health](#), Updated March 2023

Torbay Council: [Torbay Special Educational Needs Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#), 2023

References/links to data used are throughout the profile.