Public questions received for the Board meeting in public on 05 November 2026

Question from a member of the public: Does the Trust have any plans, proposals or options under consideration to reduce Torbay Hospital's role as an acute hospital?

Answer: No. The Trust does not have plans or proposals to reduce Torbay Hospital's role as an acute hospital, nor are we considering an option whose purpose would be to do so.

Torbay Hospital remains central to the provision of acute healthcare for the people of Torbay and South Devon. It will continue to provide services that can only be delivered in an acute hospital setting, alongside care provided by community, primary care, mental health, voluntary sector and social care services.

As part of our responsibility to plan for the future, we look ahead at the challenges and opportunities facing our individual services. Services may need to evolve over time because of changes in clinical evidence, technology, workforce availability or the needs of patients. Discussions about an individual service, or work to explore future options, should not be taken to mean that a wider decision has been made about the future role of Torbay Hospital.

Question from a member of the public: Has the Trust considered or discussed a future in which Torbay Hospital becomes a cottage hospital or loses a substantial proportion of its acute services?

Answer: No. The Trust is not planning or pursuing a future in which Torbay Hospital becomes a cottage hospital or loses a substantial proportion of its acute services.

We understand why some people have this concern. There have been public discussions about individual services, the age and condition of parts of our hospital estate, the development of more care in community settings and NHS organisations working together across Devon. It is understandable that people may look at these issues together and ask what they mean for Torbay Hospital.

We believe that Torbay Hospital will remain an important part of the local health and care system. At the same time, some care will continue to be provided closer to people's homes where it is safe, effective and right for patients. We will continue to need acute hospital services and strong community services.

Question from a member of the public: What is the Trust's current position on the future of cardiac services at Torbay, including emergency treatment and specialist cardiac procedures?

Answer: There are currently no proposals to move cardiology services provided at Torbay Hospital.

We continue to invest in local cardiac services. The refurbishment of our cardiac catheterisation laboratories is one of our major capital priorities for this year and next. These laboratories support the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease, including emergency cardiac care.

Our cardiology teams work closely with colleagues across Devon and the wider Peninsula so that people can access specialist expertise when they need it. Some highly specialised cardiac care is already provided through established clinical pathways outside of Torbay. NHS organisations working together, sharing expertise or planning services across a wider area does not automatically mean that services currently provided at Torbay Hospital are changing or moving.

Question from a member of the public: Are any acute services currently provided at Torbay being considered for transfer to Exeter or another hospital?

Answer: No acute services currently provided at Torbay Hospital are being considered for transfer to Exeter or another hospital outside of Torbay and South Devon.

We may sometimes need to make temporary changes to where some care is provided in response to operational pressures, workforce challenges, the condition of our buildings or patient safety requirements. This includes work to reduce the inpatient occupancy in the Tower Block at Torbay Hospital while essential fire safety improvements are carried out.

Any service moves arising from this work would be temporary. We are not closing the Tower Block, Torbay Hospital or any of the services based there. People will continue to have access to the same services, although some may temporarily be provided from a different location. Based on our current plans, services would continue to be provided within Torbay and South Devon, subject to Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service being satisfied that the arrangements we put in place meet the requirements of the Enforcement Notice.

More generally healthcare services are reviewed regularly and NHS organisations have a duty to work together to provide safe and effective care. Working together does not automatically mean that services are moving. It may involve sharing expertise, joint planning, mutual support during periods of high demand or shared digital systems.

Question from a member of the public: What services does the Trust expect Torbay Hospital to provide in the longer term, and where can the public find the supporting plans?

Answer: We expect Torbay Hospital to continue providing acute healthcare for the people of Torbay and South Devon. This includes urgent and emergency care,

planned treatment, diagnostics, maternity care, specialist services and care for people with serious and complex health needs.

You can find our organisational strategy on our website [insert hyperlink], along with our Board of Directors papers [insert hyperlink] and our latest annual report [insert hyperlink]. You can also find information on our website in our latest news and on our social media channels on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. The Listening to our Communities section of our website brings together answers to questions we hear regularly and is updated as work develops or new information becomes available [insert hyperlink].

We continue to make the case for the long-term investment needed to provide modern healthcare facilities for future generations and it remains part of the national New Hospital Programme. The programme has been reorganised into delivery waves, with Torbay and South Devon included in Wave 2 and a planned construction window between 2032 and 2035. We know that can feel a long way off, particularly because of the age and condition of some of our existing buildings.

While planning for the future hospital continues, we are investing in our existing hospital. Recent and current work at Torbay Hospital includes:

- the £14.2 million redevelopment of our Emergency Department
- expansion of our Same Day Emergency Care Services
- expanded maternity triage facilities and a new birthing pool suite
- refurbishment of our day theatres
- relocation of the Surgical Admission Unit
- expansion of the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery department
- improvements to the hospital's electrical infrastructure
- planned refurbishment of the cardiac catheterisation laboratories
- plans for a new aseptic pharmacy facility, which will support the preparation of treatments including chemotherapy.

This investment reflects our commitment to providing healthcare from Torbay Hospital now and in the future.

Question from a member of the public: How will the Trust ensure that the needs of Torbay's population, including people who may have difficulty travelling to Exeter, are properly considered?

Answer: The needs of local people must be properly understood whenever changes to services are considered.

We recognise that travel is not simply a question of the distance between two hospitals. People's ability to travel can be affected by public transport, cost, mobility, health, caring responsibilities and the support they need from family and friends. These issues can have a significant effect on people's experience of care and on whether services are genuinely accessible.

We provide care to people across Torbay and South Devon every day. We can bring local clinical knowledge, patient experience, feedback from our communities and an understanding of the particular needs of the people we serve into wider discussions. We would use this knowledge to make sure commissioners understand the potential effect of any proposal on local people, including those who may find it difficult to travel further for care.

Question from a member of the public: Will the Trust commit to informing the public and conducting appropriate engagement before significant changes to acute services are decided?

Answer: Yes. We are committed to being open and transparent.

The organisation responsible for a proposal is also responsible for ensuring that the appropriate engagement and, where required, formal consultation takes place. This means the precise process will depend on the nature of the proposal and which organisation is responsible for it.

For our part, if proposals are brought forward that would significantly change where people receive care or the care they receive, we will share information openly and explain how colleagues, patients, carers, governors and local people can have their say.

Question from a member of the public: Will you arrange for these questions to be considered at a public Trust Board meeting and explain how members of the public can submit questions or representations?

Answer: We will share your eight questions as public questions at our Board of Directors meeting in public on Thursday 05 November along with our response. We will ensure that members of our Board are made aware of your correspondence and the concerns you have raised.

Members of the public can submit questions to meetings of our Board of Directors in public – we issue a local press release and also post details of how to do this on our Facebook page ahead of each meeting. We also publish the questions and our responses on our website within 24 hours of the meeting. Details of upcoming meetings, Board papers and information about how to submit a question are available on the Board meetings section of our website: https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/about-us/board-meetings/

Local people can also contact our governors. Governors have an important role in representing the interests of Trust members and the public, and details of our Council of Governors and how to contact individual governors are published on our website.

Question from a member of the public: Who looks after fire safety across the Trust?

Answer: The Trust Board has overall accountability for fire safety with clear senior leadership arrangements in place to ensure that fire safety receives appropriate oversight, attention and investment.

The Director of Estates and Facilities Management leads fire safety at director level as part of their wider responsibilities and currently acts as the Trust's Fire Safety Manager. The Director provides assurance to the Board, directs improvement activity and brings together the teams responsible for managing fire safety risks across the Trust.

The Director is supported by a multidisciplinary safety team, with expertise in fire safety, health and safety, evacuation planning, emergency preparedness and the development of effective safety management systems. The Trust also uses external specialist advisers where additional technical or independent expertise is required.

Fire safety is a shared responsibility. Fire safety specialists work with managers and teams to identify and manage risks, strengthen evacuation arrangements and support staff training. Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff understand the arrangements in their areas, complete local checks and raise concerns promptly.

This is backed up by practical measures across our buildings, including fire risk assessments, regular checks and inspections, staff training and evacuation exercises, and the testing and maintenance of fire alarms, emergency lighting, fire doors and other fire safety systems.

We are strengthening these existing arrangements by growing our specialist fire safety team, adding to the expertise we already have in place. The additional roles will increase our leadership, technical expertise and additional capacity for fire risk assessments, training and the fire safety improvement work taking place across the Trust.

There is a particular focus on the Tower Block at Torbay Hospital, where we know significant fire safety improvements are underway. Alongside the work to improve the building itself, we have carried out detailed fire risk assessments, fire and evacuation modelling and practical evacuation exercises, and strengthened staff training and local emergency plans. These measures help us manage the risks while improvements to the building are carried out.

We continue to work closely with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, sharing information about our buildings, fire safety arrangements and evacuation plans and involving them in our ongoing work.

Question from a governor: In the light of recent changes to the New Health Bill what action or proposal is TSDNHSFT going to take to retain a full Council of Governors.

Answer: The Health Bill proposes removing the statutory requirement for NHS foundation trusts to have members and a Council of Governors. If those provisions become law, NHS foundation trusts, including Torbay and South Devon, will no longer be able to retain those arrangements.

Our governors and members have played an important role in bringing the views of local people in our work and helping us stay connected to the communities we serve. We are grateful for the time, commitment and experience they have given and continue to give.

As the current arrangements would no longer exist in law, our focus is on developing what should follow them. Our priority is to make sure we continue to listen to patients, staff and local communities and provide meaningful opportunities for them to inform our work.

Current governors, alongside service users, carers, staff, community representatives and partners, will be involved in shaping that future approach. We want to build on what has worked well and make sure local people continue to have a meaningful voice in our work.

Question from a governor: Also if FT status is removed will there still be a need for Non Executive Directors?

Answer: Yes. Non-Executive Directors will continue to have an important role on NHS trust boards, providing independent oversight and constructive challenge.

The Health Bill proposes changes to the foundation trust model and to some of the current governance arrangements, but it does not remove the role of Non-Executive Directors. NEDs will continue to provide independent oversight and challenge as members of the Board. The main change proposed by the Bill is to how they are appointed and held to account.

At present, our Council of Governors appoints the Chair and Non-Executive Directors and holds the NEDs to account for the performance of the Board. If the relevant provisions of the Bill become law, those statutory governor responsibilities will end, with the responsibility for the appointment and removal of Chairs and Non-Executive Directors transferring to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Question from Steve Darling MP: Can they provide an update on Gadeon House, and any potential service moves out of Torbay Hospital?

Answer: Work continues to progress the proposed relocation of Cellular Pathology from Torbay Hospital to Gadeon House, through the development of the business case. This is in response to significant estates and infrastructure challenges with the

current laboratory accommodation and is focused on providing a safe, sustainable and resilient future for Cellular Pathology services.
The proposed move relates to where routine Cellular Pathology laboratory work is carried out. It does not change where patients receive their care, and the urgent and time-critical pathology services needed to support patient care at Torbay Hospital will remain on the hospital site.

Alongside this, we have been working with colleagues at Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to explore whether locating some pathology activity together at Gadeon House could create opportunities for future collaboration across Cellular Pathology, Blood Sciences and Microbiology. This is exploratory work. The work is testing the clinical, operational and financial case for any future joint working.

Question from Steve Darling MP: How are staff and patients being supported through temporary service changes relating to the Tower Block fire notices?

Answer: The temporary service changes are being carefully planned with the clinical and operational teams affected, with patient safety at the centre of that work.

For patients, services will continue while the temporary arrangements are put in place. Patients do not need to do anything differently unless the service caring for them contacts them. Where a change affects a patient's appointment or where they receive their care, the individual service will contact them directly with the information they need.

For colleagues, teams are being involved in planning the changes and managers are having individual conversations with staff affected by the temporary moves so that they understand what the changes mean for them and can raise any questions or concerns.

This is supported by the wider fire safety arrangements already in place, including fire safety training, evacuation exercises and local emergency and evacuation plans.