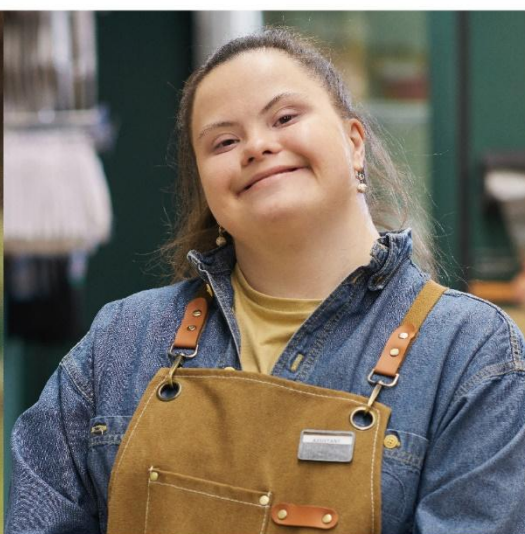
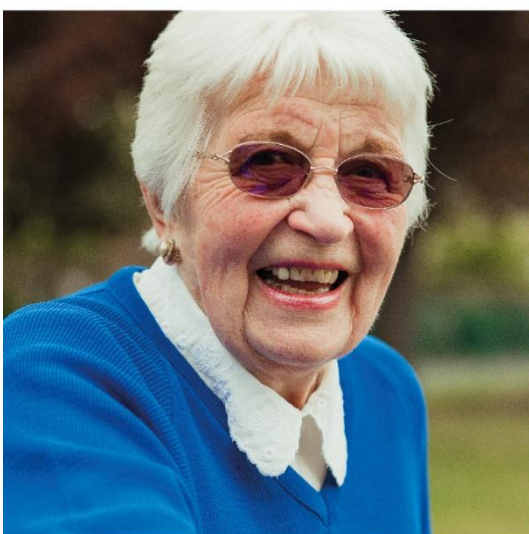


Our Self-Assessment

May 2025



Our Self-Assessment

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Our county of Somerset

Somerset is a largely rural county covering 1,610 square miles, from the Mendip Hills in the east to the Quantock Hills further west but has a population density of only 62 people per square mile. We are a county with caring and committed communities and volunteers eager to help and support people to live happier and healthier lives, the way they want to.

Somerset is already home to world leading business at iAero, Hinkley Point, and the Gravity Smart Campus. As part of the Great Southwest Partnership, we will continue to work with these and other businesses to unlock opportunities for clean and green growth, playing a prominent role alongside tourism and culture.

Promoting Somerset as a destination on the national and global stage will support the existing economy. Somerset already offers the largest greenfield music and performing arts festival in the world, the Glastonbury Festival, the spectacular Bridgwater Carnival procession and the tranquillity of the Exmoor Dark Skies festival.

The county's wonderful diverse landscapes should be celebrated and accessible to everyone and as the self-sufficiency encouraged by farming and food production are also an important part of our local economy, we want to work with people and our partners to continue to build resilience in all areas.



Somerset in numbers

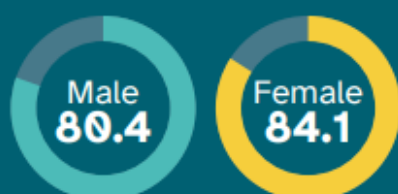
Population

571,600 (2021)

2026 Projected - 593,272



Life expectancy



Children living in poverty

2018
11,950



Unpaid carers

58,300



Population aged 65+

2021
25.18%



Projected 2040 - 32.77%
(UK 18.5%)

People of working age

58.2%
of Somerset
population

(UK 62.9%)



CO₂ emissions

(Tonnes per person)



Education

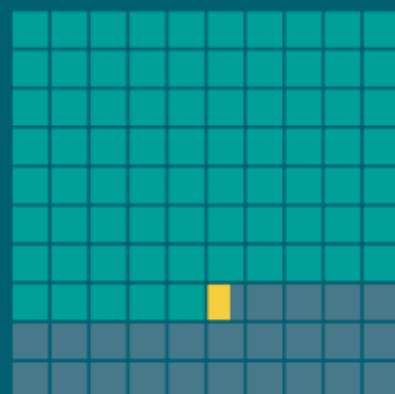


35.7%

People of working
age (16-64) **with
qualifications at
NVQ4+**

UK (43%)

Employment



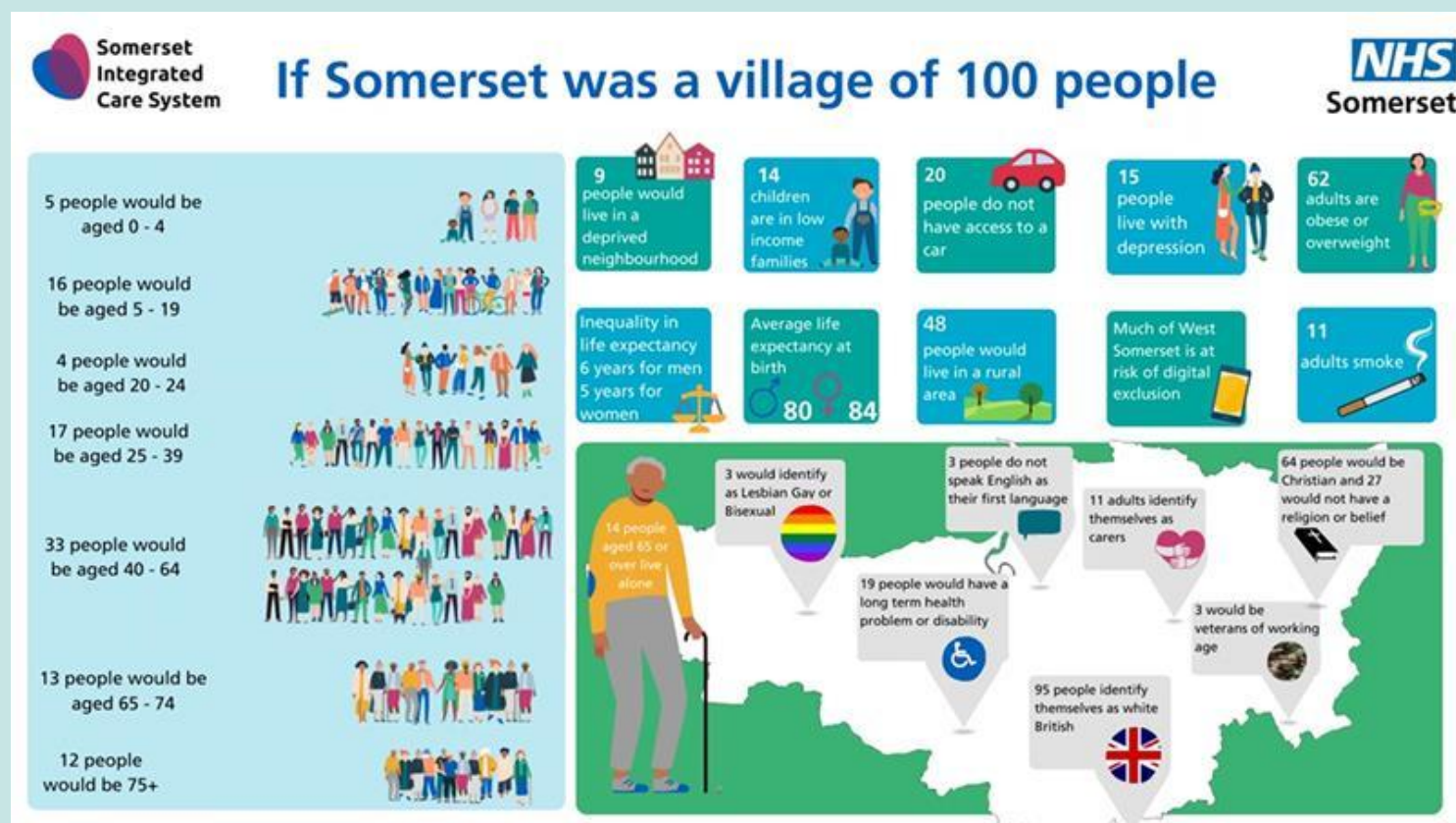
Employment - 75.2%
(UK - 74.3%)

Unemployment - 3.8%
(UK - 5.19%)

Over the next 25 years the county expects a significant rise in its older population...

...with a doubling in the proportion of those over 75, compared with an overall population rise of 15%.

We know from the data that people are living longer, and more people are living with long-term conditions. As a result, we are working with our partners to provide more care and preventative support in people's homes and local communities.



Our vision

Somerset Council was formed on 1 April 2023 from 4 District Councils (Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset, Somerset West and Taunton) and Somerset County Council. The political administration of Somerset Council is Liberal Democrat. Somerset Council is located within the Somerset Integrated Care System.

Our [Target Operating Model](#) (TOM) sets out how we will challenge ourselves to deliver our vision and priorities across five thematic areas: governance and decision making, people and skills, digital and technology, service and process design, and data and insight. Our Design Principles and Values and Behaviours have been used to design the TOM and are all intrinsically linked throughout the themes.

Priorities

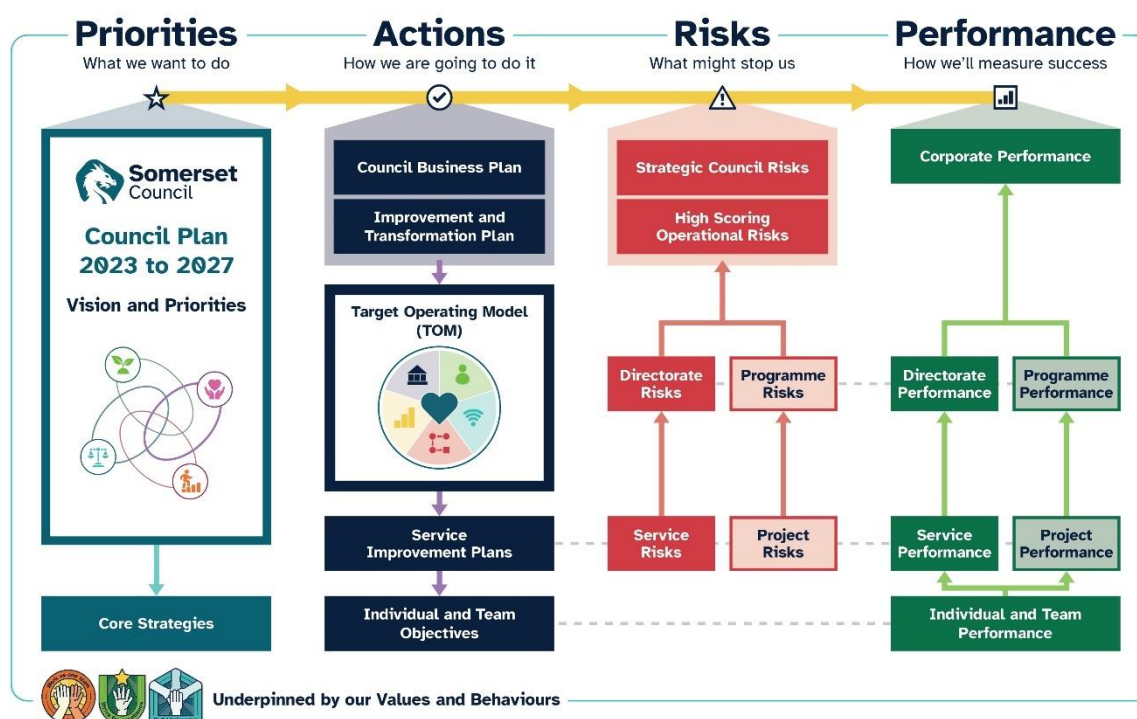
The priorities are underpinned by a set of core principles that guide all our work and daily interactions. We will be:

	A responsible council that acts with integrity
	A listening, empowering council
	A council with evidence based and open decision making
	A collaborative council
	An enterprising council

Somerset Council's vision and priorities are set out in the Council Plan (2023-27)

This dynamic vision puts all the people of Somerset at the heart of everything we do. We will be a Council that will do our best to be there whenever our residents need us. The way in which we deliver our services may change, but we are committed to making interactions with the Council easier and build trust over the coming years, with our core values being part of everything we do.

Golden Thread



In Somerset's Improving Lives Strategy (2019-2028) we set out how we collaborate to improve the lives of our residents, recognising that health and wellbeing is paramount to all. For Somerset to be flourishing and resilient we need to have well balanced communities. As Somerset has an older and ageing population, we also recognise that we need to work hard to attract and keep young people, young families and working age adults in the county. Whilst at the same time recognising that older people represent the lifeblood of volunteering, offering their time and skills, transportation, and impacting the well-being and independence of older people in the area.

We want to reduce health and social inequalities in Somerset and will continue to work closely with our Public Health colleagues, other partners and stakeholders to deliver the improvements in health outlined in the Improving Lives Strategy.

As an Integrated Care Partnership, we have set out how we are working together to meet the needs of our population through an [Integrated Health and Care Strategy](#). This strategy covers social care, primary, community and hospital care, physical and mental health, and health related services across the whole population regardless of age.

Our co-produced 2023-26 [Adult Social Care Strategy](#) was published in the summer of 2023, and was informed by feedback from the public and our staff. It sets out how our Adult Social Care service will contribute towards the delivery of our Council Plan and the Integrated Strategy and will work to deliver the right kind of care and support for our communities, and the best possible outcomes within the resources available to us.



**Prevention
and early
help**



**Right
support,
right place,
right time**



**A supported,
skilled and
flexible
workforce**



**Future
focused**

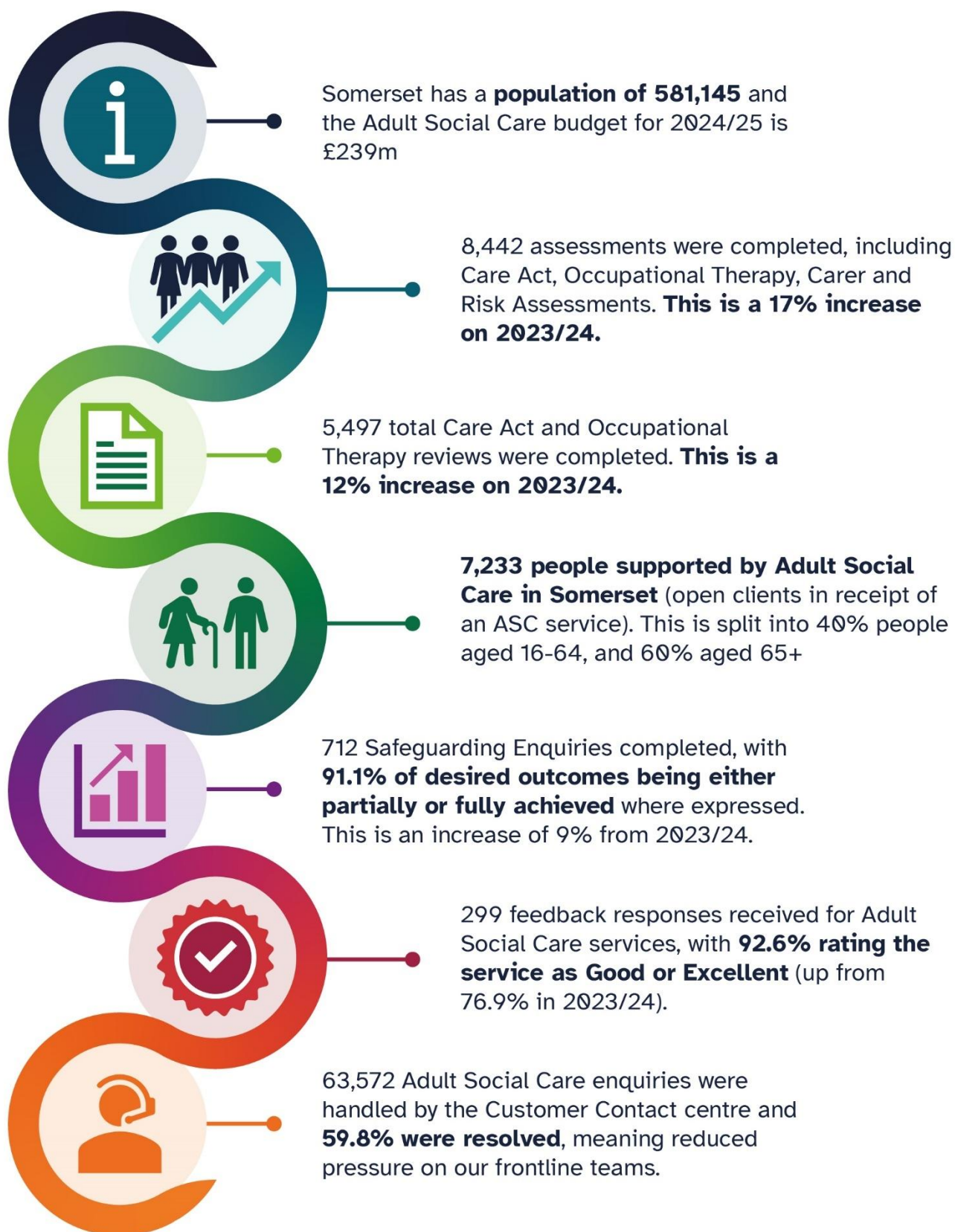
Our [Digital Strategy](#) sets out several digital principles to shape and assess our work so that we provide the best outcomes for our customers and staff.

This is part of a constant drive to put Somerset at the front of innovation. Empowering our communities to self-serve and self-help, is key to becoming a sustainable Council, protecting our resources for the most vulnerable and connecting people with the support they need as quickly as possible. This includes the testing of new and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) automation.

It is vital that we listen to those who are the future of Somerset. Our [Children and Young People's Plan](#) has been co-produced with children and young people and strategic partners. It sets out a shared vision to keep them safe and ensure they can grow up in a child friendly county that supports them to be happy, healthy and prepared for adulthood.



Our performance





2024 was a year to celebrate.....

9,372 places were used by young people attending the SASP 'Holiday Activity & Food' programme

The CCS Somerset Carers Service has supported **628** unpaid carers

£956,750 funded to **95** community hubs to bolster capacity during the winter

530 ICS professionals attended Connect Somerset neighbourhood meetings

1,400 users across the early help partnership accessing Transform Family View

Our sensory loss providers, DeafPLUS & Somerset Sight supported **6,632** people in the community

163,072 households supported through the Household Support Fund

21 early help partnership organisations are sharing their data into the Transform data lake

Champions are in active engagement and dialogue with **92%** of the schools in Somerset



2024 was a year to celebrate.....

35,600 professionals have accessed the Connect Somerset website **124,000** times

146,000 visitors to the Local Offer website sourcing information and advice to self serve

£7,770,301 of funding distributed to VCFSE partners across Somerset

758 registered users on #Learn4love, the universal parenting offer

Red Cross and CCS Village Agents have supported **5,013** people by providing the best solution to support discharge safely home from hospital

£616,000 to support community grassroots organisations to increase capacity to care

100 School pastoral staff attended training focusing on Trauma Informed approaches and good practice

4,967 individual children searched on Transform Family View since the 'go live' date of June 24

CCS Village Agents have supported **15,528** people to resolve or improve social, emotional, situational and practical issues affecting their health, wellbeing and independence

Our key themes



Theme 1
Working with people



Theme 2
Providing support in Somerset



Theme 3
Ensuring safety within the system



Theme 4
Leadership



Theme 1 - Working with people

Assessing needs, Planning and Reviewing Care, Arrangements for Direct Payments and charging, Supporting People to live healthier lives, Prevention, Wellbeing, Information and advice, Understanding and removing inequalities in care and support, Peoples experiences and outcomes from care

“We maximise the effectiveness of people’s care and treatment by assessing and reviewing their health, care and wellbeing and communication needs with them.”

Morris’ story – Morris wanted to return home from a period in hospital. Morris was keen to identify some clear goals to improve his independence and aid his discharge home. A new goal scoring system has been implemented on our Rio system that continuously tracks an individual’s progress. Morris had a goal to independently shower using a stool and to safely prepare a hot drink and breakfast within 2 weeks. Morris successfully achieved these goals, and progress was clearly documented providing concrete evidence of his independence. As a result, Morris’ enabler was able to have informed conversations with him about reducing support, leading to a more efficient and evidence-based decision-making process and a faster discharge from the service.

We support people to manage their health and wellbeing so they can maximise their independence, choices and control. We support them to live healthier lives and where possible, reduce future needs for care and support.

Michael and Dot’s story – Since 2018 Dot has been experiencing symptoms of dementia and poor eyesight. Micheal was previously her main support but has recently experienced dementia symptoms of his own and a couple of falls. The couple’s children arranged privately funded PA visits to provide support with personal care but had been concerned about their parents and had indicated that residential support might be needed. But Michael and Dot wished to remain at home. The worker attended Peer Forum to try and find a way to best support them. At the Peer Forum the OT recommended a joint assessment where it was determined that Michael and Dot could be supported with more regular care visits to help with household tasks and allow Michael to continue spending time in the community, visiting the local café with his PA.

We actively seek out and listen to people who are most likely to experience inequality in experience and outcomes. We tailor the care, support and treatment in response to this.

Pauline's story - Pauline is a 66-year-old lady who lives in a rented 3-bedroom property in Somerset but is now required to find alternative accommodation. Pauline is receiving day and night support and has a diagnoses of learning disability, anxiety and borderline diabetes - these have a significant on her well-being and requires support all the time.

Pauline was deemed to lack capacity to make decisions around her care and support needs and accommodation and lacks capacity to make decisions around signing of her tenancy agreement. Pauline is being supported by an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate through our commissioned Advocacy Service. Through this support, Pauline was able to identify a new home and is now being supported to finalise the tenancy agreement. (**SWAN Advocacy**)

Statements	How we achieve this
I have care and support that is co-ordinated, and everyone works well together and with me	People with care and support needs and unpaid carers are supported to have the best possible outcomes. We achieve this through co-produced assessments, care and support plans, and reviews with support that is co-ordinated with everyone involved.
I have care and support that enables me to live as well as I want to, seeing me as a unique person with strengths and goals.	Our Somerset Practice Quality Framework sets out what good, personalised care and support planning looks like. We embed Practice Quality Standards into practice through monthly reflective practice groups in every operational team. Practice improvements can be seen through Practice Quality Audits.
I can get information and advice about my health, care and support and how I can be as well as possible – physically, mentally and emotionally	Within Somerset we proactively work with people, partners and our local communities to promote independence and wellbeing to prevent, reduce or delay the need for care and support. Examples of this can be seen within our use of Connect Somerset approach, our Open Mental Health Service, our Somerset Independent Living Centres all designed and supported to provide high quality information and advice that is accessible.

I am supported to plan for important changes in my life that I can anticipate	We support our communities to be well informed not only through our Talking Cafes, drop ins and various information events around Somerset. In February 2025 we also launched a series of online webinars to help individuals plan care and support needs for themselves or those they care for. These aimed to provide valuable insights and practical advice on navigating the complexities of care planning.
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What we are proud of

Our workforce

At Somerset Council, we are incredibly proud of our passionate, experienced and committed staff focused on providing good outcomes for those we support. When surveyed in 2024, 90% of Adult Social Care staff felt that their work really did make a positive difference to the people they were supporting.

Our approach to strengths-based practice

Our approach to strength-based practice is evident from the very first point of contact with approximately 60% of our calls being resolved by our award-winning customer contact centre with no additional support required by Somerset Council.

Where people are supported to access information, advice, and guidance, the customer contact centre follows up one week later to check this met their outcomes; this was recognised by our LGA March 2024 Assurance peer challenge as good practice, recognising how outcomes are being achieved through community solutions and no barriers regarding eligibility.

We have developed a Practice Quality Framework (PQF) which is aligned to our Strategy and sets out clear expectations for the Adult Social Care workforce. It compliments professional standards for registered professionals and forms a clear 'Somerset' framework for Adult Social Care, including occupational therapy and social work, and forms an important part of our approach to social care governance and quality assurance.

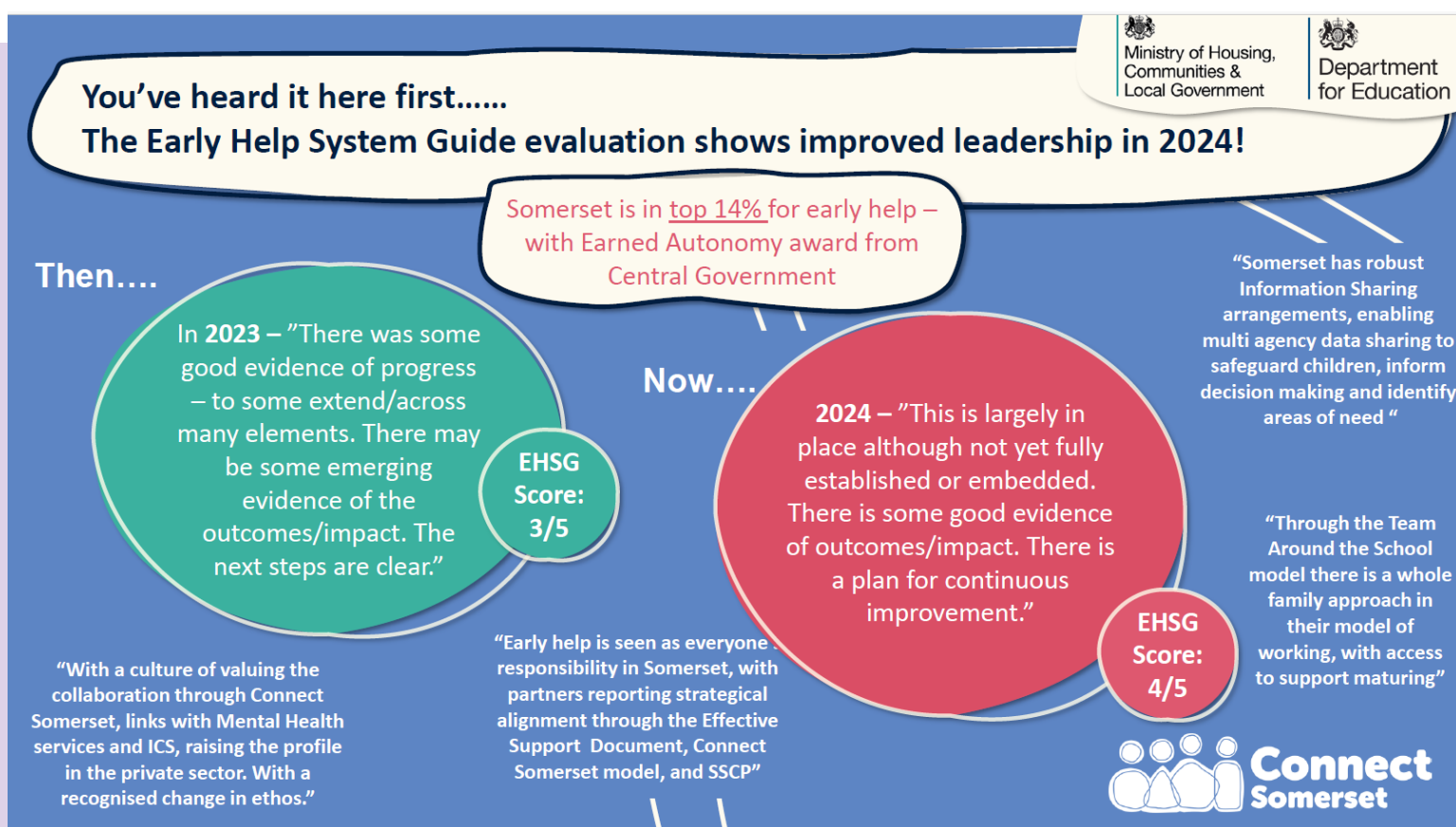
The PQF has been co-designed with people and carers with lived experience. Our practice standards have also been informed by the 'Think Local Act Personal – Making it real "I" statements' of people who draw on services, to ensure we keep people and their wellbeing at the heart of our work.

Our early help and prevention offer

Getting support in Somerset doesn't always depend on meeting criteria ensuring all our communities gain the right support at the right time. We have a thriving and well-established multi-agency approach to community based early help that is supporting our communities to live healthier more independent lives. These include a universal service offer that is free for our residents as well as advice on costed options, particularly around home adaptations. Information is provided for those that fund their own care and support arrangements.

Somerset is very proud of its collaborative, early help and prevention-focused work, and our long-standing investment in, and commitment to, supporting individuals in accessing care and support services within their local area with the support of a range of voluntary and community services.

This has been recognised through Local Government Association Assurance Peer Challenge in March 2024 as a particular strength for Somerset.



Keeping our communities informed

We continue to provide a programme of events and webinars to help our communities understand the work that we do and provide opportunities for them to get information and advice to support them and effectively plan for their future.

To date sessions have been delivered on [Carers Assessments and support](#), care and support planning and a series of webinars including financial assessments for care funding. Watch some feedback [here](#).

Our Care Choices [webpage](#) and Social Care and Support directory gives comprehensive information to our communities regarding services in Somerset along with guidance on paying for care and support.

Carers' Champion Conference 2024



Free drop-in events for Somerset's unpaid carers

Our partnership with the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector (VCFSE)

In September 2023 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Somerset Council, NHS Somerset and voluntary sector representatives. This clearly sets out how we will engage and collaborate with the sector to deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes for the people who live here. A Somerset VCFSE Partnership event took place in April 2024 to explore further ways we can support health and wellbeing in Somerset and the VCFSE Collaborative has continued to meet.

We also work closely with Spark Somerset to facilitate greater join up and support for Somerset's voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector. In our new structure, as a unitary authority, Partnerships and Localities are responsible for the Council's approach to strategic engagement with the VCFSE; community development and engagement; parish development and devolution of assets and services.



We have co-designed an ethos of early help called Connect Somerset, which demonstrates a commitment to ways of working with our partners to improve our prevention offer. We know that Somerset's families and residents are going through challenging times and that Somerset's services are finding it difficult to meet demand. Connect Somerset is a strong partnership that includes Somerset Council, Somerset NHS, VCFSE organisations, schools, colleges and early years settings, and more. Together we have developed an early help system that works well across all communities that need it.



The [Blueprint for Connect Somerset](#) outlines the culture that we have adopted across Adults and Children's services, ensuring our communities get more help, personalising care and enabling a more efficient way to manage increased demand and complexity of needs.



Help4All is part of our universal offer with easy to access information about how to get free advice and support.

Somerset families and residents who are struggling during the cost-of-living crisis could be eligible for support. This support could also include funding towards the cost of food, energy, water and other essentials over the coming months.

Some of our communities will need a bit more help to identify the right support to meet their needs. We therefore commission a Community and Village Agents Service through the Community Council for Somerset (CCS) that works directly with our Adult Social Care service and are based within communities to help people find community solutions.



CCS Village Agents - our community hero's.....



A Village Agent supported Lottie to become debt free and to receive the care and support she needed. [Read more.](#)

In-person [Talking Cafes](#), run by CCS Village and Community Agents, operate across Somerset and provide invaluable free advice and support to the public.

A Village Agent Jerry met at a Talking Café helped him to get back on his feet again after a period of homelessness. [Read more.](#)

Our Micro-provider market

The development of [Micro-providers](#) has increased the number and variety of flexible, personalised options to keep people well at home in their community or out of hospital.

Somerset is lucky to have a vibrant Micro-provider market, with over 1000 individuals to support those with low level needs and domestic services. We continue to see a significant increase in community organisations providing support to people. Wincanton Cares and Wivey Cares have a particularly strong evidence base for the impact of community led approaches to care and support which has contributed to Somerset being a national leader around self-directed support. Through opportunities, including external funding such as the Accelerating Reform Fund, we will be offering targeted support and investment to these hyper-local structures to scale and spread their impact, and enhance and diversify their offers.

Promoting independence

Our community occupational therapy services focus on assisting individuals to alleviate barriers that hinder everyday activities. They conduct assessments to identify strengths, delay the development of care and support needs and promote independence, including provision of equipment or adaptations—whether minor or significant—to support independence. Their primary aim is to help individuals achieve the outcomes that matter most to them.

Somerset Council has established three [Independent Living Centres](#) (SILCs) – operating in Wellington, Shepton Mallet and Yeovil. Our SILCs provide a one stop shop help people find equipment / technology and solutions to stay active, independent and make life easier. Our SILCs are therapy-led services with a focus on prevention and early intervention. They offer practical advice and help guide people through options that best suit their needs. SILC intervention is estimated to have delayed 77,750 home care packages in 2023/24, costing £1.59m.

In 2024/25 our Occupational Therapists supported 321 households to adapt their properties by using 3.5 million pounds of Disabled Facility Grant funding, delaying or reducing the need for ongoing care and support. In addition, the installation of 323 stairlifts, reduced falls and provided access to bedroom and bathroom facilities.

A Disabled Facilities Grant allowed David to adapt his home so that he can live more independently. [Read more.](#)

In line with our overarching commissioning strategy, we take a whole life approach to how people use technology to support all aspects of their lives – managing health conditions, reducing falls, supporting daily tasks such as preparing a meal or reducing social isolation by working in partnership to improve digital poverty.

Technology Enabled Care (TEC) enables people to use their strengths and assets to maximise their independence, staying safe and well in their own homes, as well as remaining connected within their communities. User led design is always at the heart of our intentions and we applied this when scoping and planning our new TEC service, [engaging with residents of Somerset](#) to explore their opinions and needs, utilising their feedback on how TEC could help them live safely and independently.

We have aligned our values, principles, and practice with the 7 success measures for digital working in Adult Social Care services under the Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services' "What Good Looks Like" digital framework.

The 2024 regional analysis across the Southwest region revealed Somerset to be progressing very well in this space, with a 'strong foundation on digital leadership', 'safe practice' and 'healthy foundations'.

A Somerset Occupational Therapist supported Betty to connect with her family again after dementia affected her ability to communicate. [Read more.](#)



Occupational Therapist Claire and 'Silcy' the robo-cat at the BBC Radio Somerset studio in Taunton.

We also benefit from the expertise and support of 4 Housing Occupational Therapists (OT) covering our county, who deliver vital work in the assessment and delivery of housing options and adaptations, and the promotion of people's independence.

"I can't put into words how thankful I am for all you have done for me. This move has changed my life and I haven't been so happy in a long time." – [Read Janet's story here.](#)

Our mental health services

Our award winning Open Mental Health offer is a collaboration of local voluntary organisations, the NHS, social care, Somerset Council, and individuals with lived experience of mental health illness. By working together in partnership, the Alliance promotes a 'no wrong door' for anyone who needs help. The shared ambition is to ensure that people living with mental health problems get the right support at the right time.

The Somerset Dementia Wellbeing Service supports people to live a full life, by enabling access to specialist mental health services, housing support, debt and employment advice, volunteering opportunities, peer support, community activities and physical exercise, to help support and improve their wellbeing and quality of life. The collaboration has already helped remove many of the barriers to support and thresholds for treatment, reducing waiting times and giving early access to primary care assessments and interventions.

Our mental health social work teams participate in regular network and interface meetings with Open Mental Health partners, signposting and sharing relevant information to ensure individuals receive support from the most appropriate services.

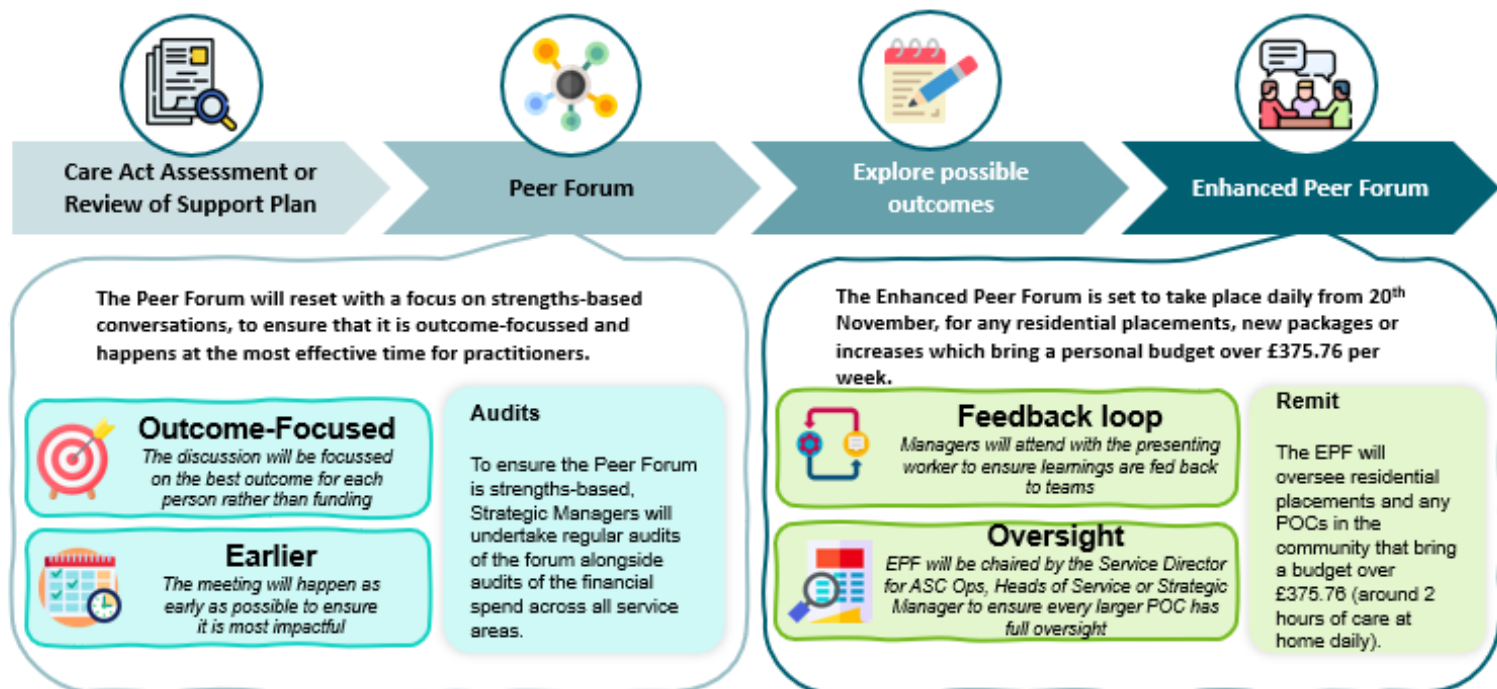
Open Mental Health colleagues are invited to join peer forums, ensuring that people in need of support are connected to their local communities and support networks.

Designing creative solutions by putting people first

In Somerset we aim to develop creative solutions for our communities through exploring person-centred approaches at our multi-disciplinary Peer Forums and Enhanced Peer Forums.

Our Peer Forums and Enhanced Peer Forums ensure we have the right decision making based on strength-based practice with clear consideration of our legal frameworks. Our forums are there to support our workforce surrounding complex decision making, further promote our strength-based practice and ensure we have robust financial oversight our budget. Peer Forums are designed to enable robust critical friend discussions with all members contributing on an equal footing. The Peer Forum is a multi-disciplinary meeting with valued input from all professionals and community representatives. The role of Peer Forum is to critically discuss and develop creative solutions for individuals requiring community-based support from Adult Social Care.

ASC Peer Forum and Enhanced Peer Forum



The development of these forums has seen an impact in the number of people we are able to support at home where possible. We have seen a change of trajectory with fifty fewer residential placement starts between January and July 2024 based on our historical rate.

We have also introduced joint peer forums across our Health Interface Service (HIS) and Intermediate Care, supporting staff to discuss discharge options and situations together, sharing knowledge and delivering transparency and continuity to a person's journey through Somerset's health and care system. Our Financial management and decision-making guidance were enhanced during 2024 to support this process.

Professionals at a Learning Disability Peer Forum used their varied experience to support Stacey to connect with her community. [Read more.](#)

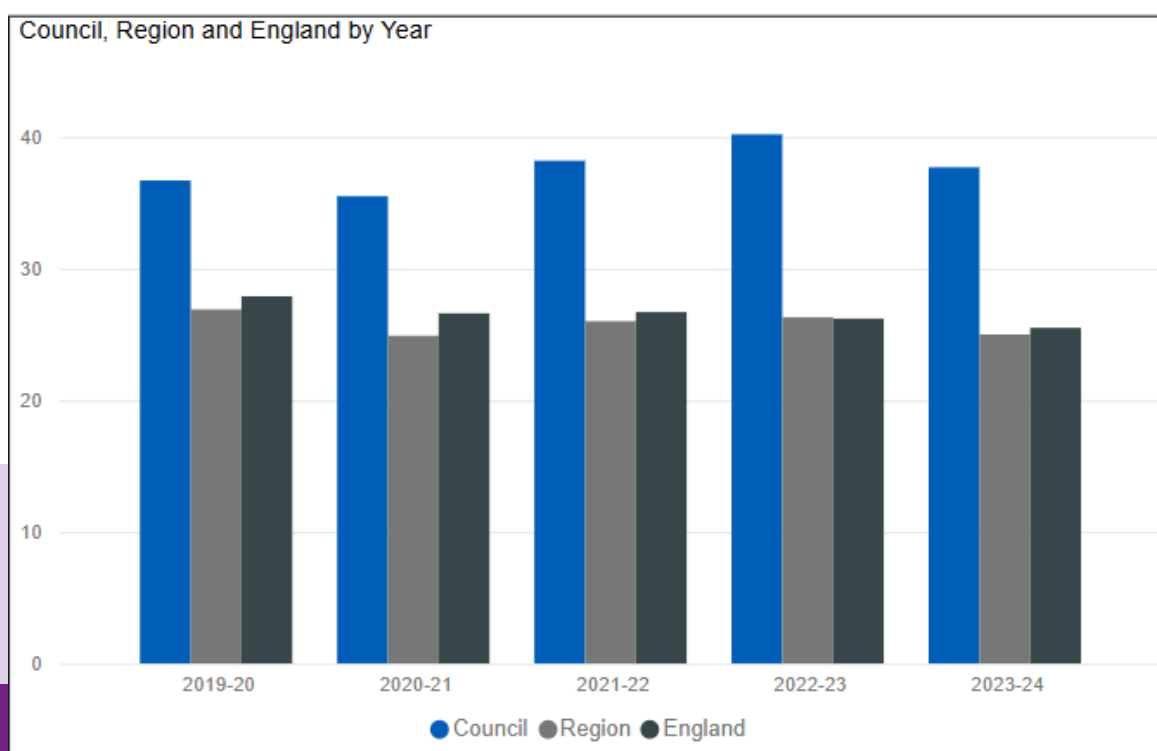
Our Mental Health and Learning Disability teams benefit from their own specialised peer forums with significant input and attendance from health colleagues and representatives from Open Mental Health services. In collaboration with our Health colleagues our Joint Enhanced Peer Forum for complex Mental Health and Section 117 responsibilities was further developed. With recognition that early collaborative decision-making between services leads to better outcomes for individuals.

Giving choice and control to our communities

We have a clear and transparent framework for assessing and charging adults for care and support and promote the availability of Direct Payments as part of our "Money Matters" information sheets.

Our use of Direct Payments exceeds the national average and helps people exercise independence through greater autonomy, choice and control.

ASCOF 3D2a: Proportion of people using social care who receive direct payments:



Since 1 April 2023, Somerset has run a [Direct Payment Plus Project](#) provided by Enham Trust, which provides options for people who want to exercise strong influence over their support but who cannot manage the responsibilities that comes with a Direct Payment themselves and have no one available to support them. We have 28 people benefitting from this service, with more personalised outcomes being achieved due to the bespoke nature of the support found for these people.

One person has already achieved independence within 12 months and no longer has support from Somerset Council. Previously housebound for over 2 years, due to high anxiety this person now attends regular art classes and is looking for a maths course to enable them to return to work. They described the pilot as '**life changing**'. Another is Gail, Gail quotes that having a Direct Payment has brought '**Joy**' back into her life. Watch Gail's story [here](#).

Home First (Intermediate Care)

Somerset's Intermediate Care services are run jointly by local NHS Trusts and Somerset Council, and bring together other providers including Care Homes, domiciliary care agencies and voluntary services. In partnership, we support acute hospital discharges and prevent admissions.

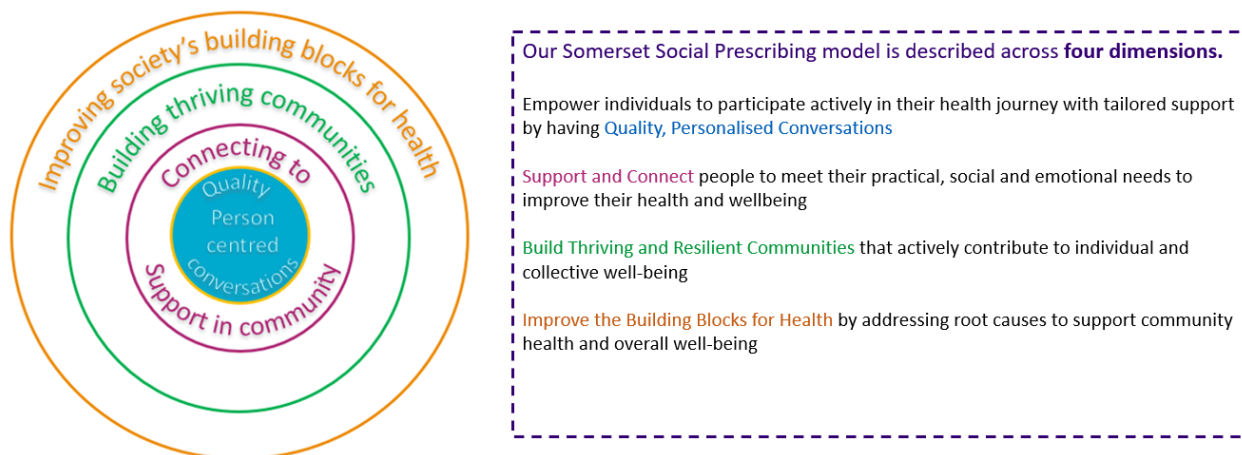
Centred on a 'home is best' ethos, our service offers people varying levels of support with the aim of getting them back home as soon as they are well enough, and back to their normal standard of independence as soon as possible. All partners are focused on joint working and shared practice.

Supported discharge decisions are made by multi-disciplinary teams away from wards and assessments are carried out in a person's home, or an intermediate care rehabilitation or reablement unit. Decisions around pathways and bedded placements are made with a clear picture of the person's wants and needs and involves input from all relevant disciplines.

Our Village and Community Agent Service is part of a wider integrated service of social prescribing, delivered by CCS. This links into a network of social prescribing roles that includes an Intermediate Care Community SPOC (Single Point of Contact) Service (with the Red Cross), Agents within Public Health, Social Prescribing Link Workers and Health Coaches in primary care.

Understanding the importance of social connections and community support was the key to enabling a Somerset Village Agent to support Derek after he had a bad fall. [Read more](#).

In Somerset, Social Prescribing is delivered by the Community and Village Agents which helps people to improve and maintain their health and wellbeing by connecting them to local community services.



One example of how we use this, is by having dedicated workers within our acute hospitals, working alongside professionals on the wards, in emergency departments and in the Transfer of Care Hubs. We know that people who have no medical need for an admission have better outcomes when they are not admitted to hospital and outcomes are further improved when they can return home.

A new countywide Transfer of Care Hub operating model was launched in February integrating with the intermediate care community teams, creating a single hub that manages all supported discharges in Somerset, supporting the “home is best” ethos.

The diversion work within our Adult Social Care Health Interface Service (HIS), is an exciting part of the streamlined HIS service, and social care has become an integrated part of the team of people working together to turn people, who do not need an admission, around at the front door of the acute hospital and get them back home as quickly as possible.

Supporting our unpaid carers in Somerset

To provide a better quality of life for unpaid carers in Somerset we renewed our joint [Commitment to Carers](#) in March 2024. The Commitment was co-created with unpaid carers and demonstrates how we can work with our partners to enhance the quality of life of carers and those that they care for by enabling, supporting and empowering them to be able to access information, advice, support, education and training to support them while they carry out their vital unpaid caring role.

We also are committed to ensuring access to health, care and respite services so that carers can live healthier lives themselves. Carers identified priorities within the

plan to ensure that services continue to meet their needs. This is being monitored through our multidisciplinary Carers Partnership Board.

We estimate to have over 53,000 unpaid carers living in our County. We recognise and greatly value the contributions that carers make to our communities and want to ensure we are supporting them to carry out their caring role and still achieve their aims and ambitions. We worked with carers to co-produce a service specification for the jointly commissioned Somerset Carers' Support Service that we fund with NHS Somerset's Integrated Care Board. Carers can now access the service via a single point of contact. There is a focus on early help and prevention, with the service helping carers to find support within their local communities. It supports approximately 4,000 carers directly per annum. Watch Katrina's story [here](#).

Taking time out and meeting others who really understand their situation is very important for unpaid carers' health and mental well-being. Carers Groups across the county are therefore supported through this contract with on-line groups as well. Some groups run with the carer and the cared for person being able to attend too but cared for separately.

Carers are making a huge difference to how we provide services in Somerset. This has included improvements to how carers are involved in the admission and discharge process at our acutes. This has resulted in identifying within our Yeovil District Hospital Health Interface Service, Carers Champions who lead on the development of practice that delivers outcomes for carers, through involving carers in sharing their lived experience and making changes based on the learning. Watch a case study [here](#).

Somerset Council also contributes towards the provision of a mental health Carers Support service. The Service is provided by the Somerset NHS Foundation Trust to provide support to carers of adults with mental health conditions where the client is registered with Somerset NHS Foundation Trust secondary mental health services.

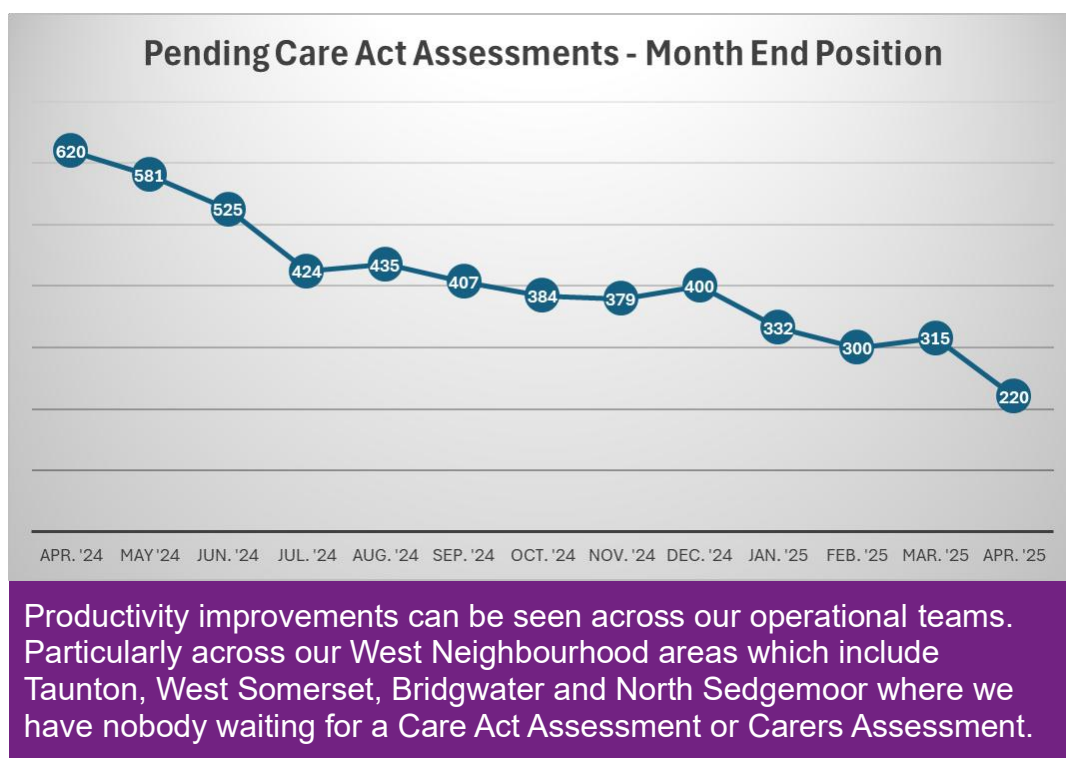
Our latest Carers Survey submission return is evidencing some positive improvements showing a rise in the number of carers satisfied with the support from the Council and an increase in the number of carers who have said that they can easily find information about services. We are dedicated to supporting all unpaid carers including young carers and young adult carers in Somerset.

Our Family Intervention Service conducts statutory assessments of young carers, provides advice, and directs them to local support resources, we have commissioned local YMCAs, Minehead EYE, and The Pod Charity to run dedicated support groups for young carers across the county.

Continuous Improvement

Waiting well and Informed

Significant work has been undertaken to address the waiting times for assessments and reviews in Somerset, ensuring that our practice is robust and consistent across our frontline operational teams. We have focused on improving data interrogation by managers, and on improving productivity across our teams. We operate a monthly Operational Oversight Meetings across Neighbourhoods, Learning Disability and Mental Health teams to develop and monitor a consistent set of indicators to track waiting lists and waiting times. We also hold weekly work plan meetings that monitor team productivity and throughput of individual practitioners.



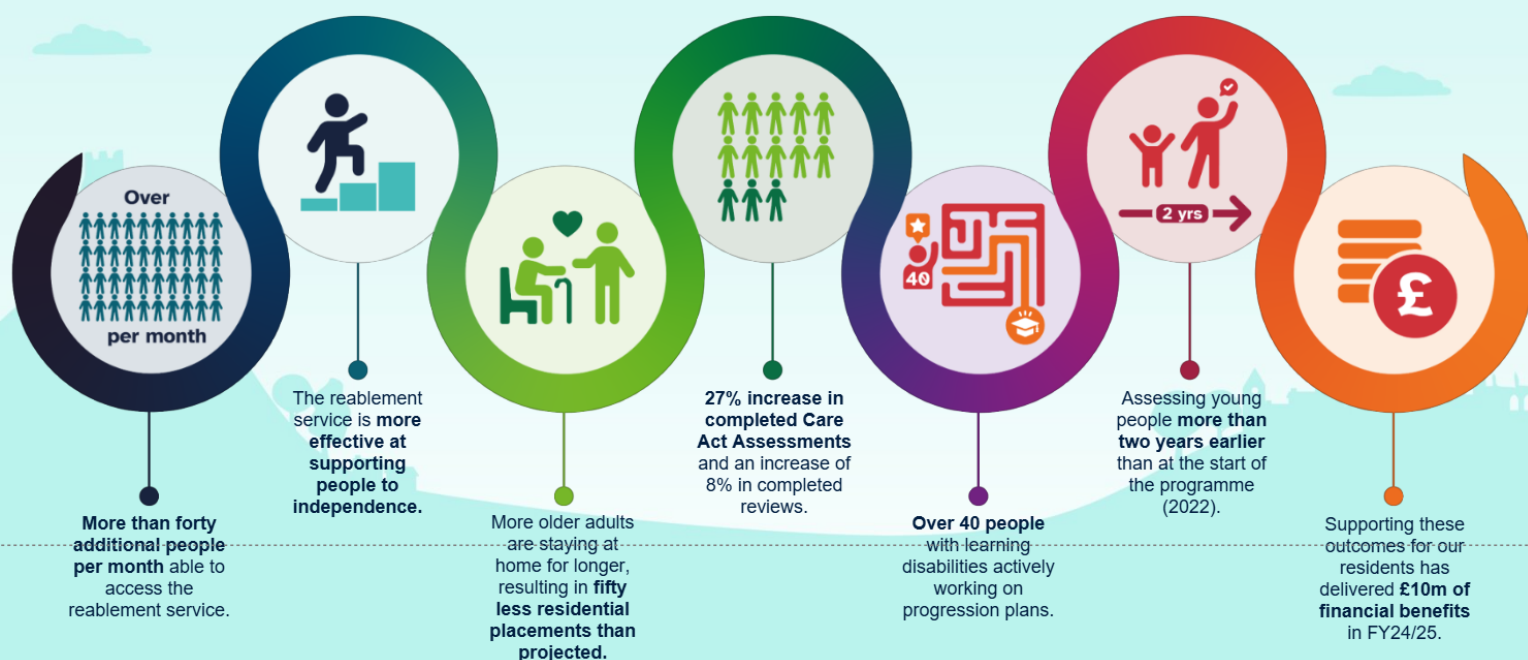
Working with the Primary Care Networks, we are broadening the application of the Brave AI to identify people at risk of admission to hospital or ambulance callouts. This is leading-edge work through health and care technology. Through jointly triaging these individuals with health colleagues we have identified those most at risk. This is now being expanded further with our Proactive Care Team colleagues joining Adult Social Care for our 'waiting informed' dedicated days where we ensure those referred to our service are risk prioritised holistically taking into consideration the knowledge of our clinical teams across the networks.

The work of our 'My Life, My Future' transformation programme includes as one of its key priorities a focus on designing and implementing an improved reablement model for Somerset. Reablement is a short-term service that aims to support people to recover skills, confidence and live more independently in the long-term. Some encouraging results are already evident.

A reablement package which focused on helping Hannah achieve her goals of increased independence helped reduce her care package from two carers visiting her per day to one. [Read more.](#)

During 2023/24, we supported 83% of individuals aged 65 and over to be discharged back home from hospital each month - over 24,100 people.

The impact



We are further enhancing the opportunities we can offer to our communities to shape and influence our practice and our services in Somerset. This includes participation through our Working Together Board.

Our Working Together Board was established in November 2023 we co-produced our Mission Statement to be *'A community led collaboration of stakeholders, taking a critical friend approach to reshape the role and delivery of Adult Social Care in Somerset in order to support people to live the lives they choose.'*

The Working Together Board meets on a quarterly basis co-chaired by the Executive Director for Adults Services in Somerset, and an Expert by Experience elected from the membership of the board. We have established three subgroups which include – Co-designing our Adult Social Care website, Practice Quality Board and our Learning Disability and Preparing for Adulthood Strategic Co-Production Steering Group.

Adult Social Care Working Together Governance



Acronyms

ASC – Adult Social Care

LD – Learning Disabilities

PFA – Preparing For Adulthood

We also have identified opportunities through Experts by Experience Leaders to work as equal partners in Open Mental Health to transform the way the whole system works and hopefully leading to better outcomes for people. This is a trailblazing model of working which means that the voice of lived experience is central to decision making. This is exciting and dynamic and gives those Leaders a great experience and transferrable skills as well as steering system wide decisions. To help our communities that need an advocate to express their views and support, in April 2025 we will have issued a new contract to continue to provide Advocacy support in Somerset. A new service specification has been developed using

feedback gathered from existing users of the service and professionals. Our Somerset Advocacy service will provide independent advocacy to empower people to express their personal needs and assist to them to achieve their rights and entitlements.

We have also an active research project with Open Storytellers, funded through a community grant scheme to support people with learning disabilities and autism in Somerset. The project is trying different approaches to promoting self-advocacy around Somerset to identify what works well. Open Storytellers have begun by setting up a project team and the 'Our Self Advocacy' brand. They have also launched 'The Big Somerset Self-Advocacy survey' (to map current activity, connect with others and identify what is important to the learning disability community in Somerset).

We are also working to re-establish our Learning Disability Partnership Board, taking a ground-up approach that includes the work being undertaken to rebuild our self-advocacy support for people with learning disabilities.



Reducing inequalities within our communities

Our Council benefits from a Business Intelligence Unit with a corresponding website to support its work. The range of local, regional and national data and demographic profiles supports the development of annual [Joint Strategic Needs Assessments](#) and feeds into a variety of supportive information used to inform our equalities impact assessments, strategic planning and other key documentation and research.

We also work with the Health Determinants Research Collaboration. These are local government-based centres of research excellence funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). They aim to enhance research capacity within local authorities, build evidence, and improve decision-making related to health and wellbeing.

The Council took the opportunity in its first year of operation to put Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at the heart of the work of the Council by agreeing to undertake an Equality Framework for Local Government Peer Challenge and an Internal Race Audit. Both pieces of work are supporting the Council's EDI delivery for our residents and staff by progressing and improving areas identified as requiring further development.

The Objectives, Equality Framework for the Local Government Equality Peer Challenge Feedback Report and our response were presented to the Council Executive on 15th January 2024. The Peer Challenge Final Report references 'good practice in Adult Social Care e.g. Carnival of Practice; use of micro-providers in social prescribing' and acknowledges 'EDI being a golden thread throughout all learning and development activity in Adult and Children's Social Care'.

A Somerset Equality Partnership was created to provide a central forum for public bodies (Police, Fire Service, Health Service and Local Authority) and equality VCFSE organisations to come together and look collectively at how we can progress equality within Somerset.

We actively work with several organisations to support communities in Somerset that includes Somerset Diverse Communities who engage with different race communities, while Diversity Voice helps to understand and support these communities. The faiths and beliefs present in Somerset are becoming more and more diverse and we want to hear from those communities. Somerset Interfaith and Belief Network gives opportunities for communities to come together to talk about what is important for them.

The Community Council for Somerset (CCS) are delighted to welcome Diversity Voice into their family. This is a positive step for both organisations, rooted in shared values and a shared mission: to support people facing disadvantages and help communities thrive.

Diversity Voice brings deep experience working with people from migrant, refugee and ethnic minority backgrounds – supporting them with language services, advocacy, access to education and employment, and much more

Reducing isolation and digital exclusion

We live in a very rural county with a significant proportion of our population living in rural areas and at risk of isolation. To help combat this we contribute funding towards the delivery of Talking Cafés which are a social prescribing offer that appear to be unique to Somerset. They aim to enable people to remain independent and to make the most of support available in their community. Staff from Somerset adult social care and Plymouth University have researched how the Talking Cafés in Somerset contribute towards reducing isolation and combating digital exclusion, through being in locations where we know there is high levels of need and poor health.

Integrated Neighbourhood Working

As part of the ICS in Somerset we are developing our Integrated Neighbourhood Working our neighbourhood priorities include, developing a common understanding of integrated neighbourhood working, aligning resources, implementing tests of change, and developing an approach to measurement.

Taking a collaborative approach across our system is crucial, we have identified Frailty as a priority area for the Somerset System and an opportunity to co-design an Integrated Neighbourhood Working Frailty Model. Some of the drivers for the frailty model include, reducing complexity, preventing and reversing frailty, holistically addressing frailty, and providing the workforce with the necessary skills. As part of the steering group, we have identified a series of workshops to collaborate with more stakeholders and people with lived experience to co-develop solutions. Following completion of the workshops our action plan will be created.

Our Workforce

The Council's employee support networks reflect the diverse nature of our workforce. These include an Equality and Diversity Forum, an Armed Forces Network, RISE Network (for ethnic minority employees), a Carers Network, Disability Network, Rainbow Network – LGBTQIA+, and more.

Our Adult Social Care Workforce Board completed a detailed Equalities Impact Assessment relating to our workforce strategy to assess the impact of the intent and focus of our ambitions on our staff and invited a Social Worker recruited from overseas to share their experience of moving to, and working in, Somerset.



Learning from this feedback has helped enhance our induction offer to better reflect topics such as diversity, emotional intelligence, resilience, housing options, LGBTQ+ awareness, and UK Culture.

A series of Culture Workshops are being delivered ensuring authenticity and relatability for the delegates, while nurturing connections. Culture Workshops aim to provide an efficient and effective solution that not only supports the integration of cultural differences but also enhances the overall wellbeing and confidence of our workforce, positioning Somerset as the leading employer of choice.

Working with Public Health

Public Health and Adult Social Care share many priorities for health and wellbeing, and we currently work jointly to influence system programmes on integrated neighbourhood working, social prescribing, personalised care plans and community-based health.

Through the Integrated Care Board, we are jointly working on population health management on complex care (renamed Proactive Care). The Public Health team facilitated a social care pilot for a new approach in South Somerset where complex care teams support both health and social care objectives and ensure a more person-centred approach.

The holistic approach can help reduce falls, address medication issues and potentially streamline packages of care and support required.

Working with Housing colleagues

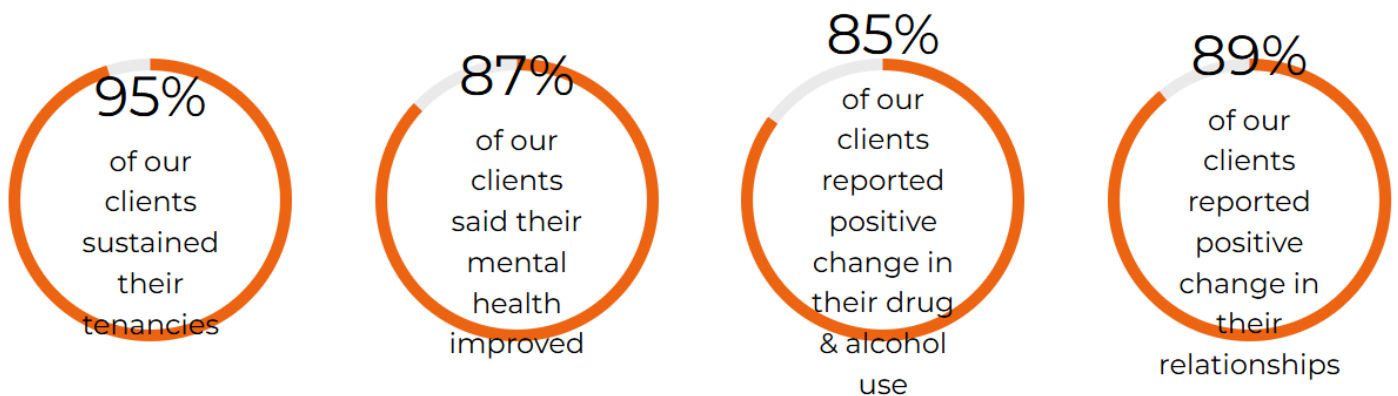
We recognise housing as being a fundamental building block of health and care. We are part of groups supporting those with severe multiple disadvantage. We are actively building on strengthening links and relationships between Housing and Adult Social Care following the move to being a Unitary Council and the agreement to bring housing within the adult's structure to further support close alignment.

Somerset Council commissions the Creative Solutions for Complex Adults service. The service is known in Somerset as the Step-Together service. The service supports a cohort of people with multiple disadvantages and exclusions who find themselves as a result homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.



Our impact

Between September 2023 and 2024, Step Together supported **197** clients. During this time:



Overall, **78%** of our clients who moved on from Step Together did so in a planned way, highlighting our approach to building strong relationships and the consistent support we provide to help clients reengage with the service if they face challenges along the way.

Louise avoided homelessness thanks to the tailored support she received from the Council and the VCFSE sector. [Read more.](#)

To further support our work in this area we are recruiting two social workers to work within the Housing Services and work alongside our Rough Sleeper and Homeless service. By the teams working closely together our assessment and intervention process will involve building trust, focusing on broader goals, and applying trauma-informed strategies to understand the complex health and social care issues faced by the individuals.

Supporting our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community

We have nearly 800 people in Somerset that selected their ethnic group as Gypsy or Irish Traveller. We have 3 permanent Gypsy and Traveller site. We benefit from having dedicated Gypsy Liaison Officers (GLOs) in place as part of Somerset's Gypsy Liaison Project. Adult Social Care staff can access Cultural Awareness Training from the officers to help our staff understand the needs and some of the barriers to accessing support for this community and the Officers support our Community Mental Health teams on understanding cultural identity and traditional ways of life that many families still adhere to.

The team builds and maintains trust and positive working relations within the gypsy and traveller community through site and home visits, and support work to prevent and reduce barriers, where required.

They also undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) to understand the current accommodation needs and set pitch targets to address the likely permanent and transit site accommodation needs of travellers in Somerset. This will enable us to positively plan for the provision of accommodation and help to inform policies on housing/accommodation, homelessness and health.

Supporting people with Sensory Loss

Our Sensory Loss teams recently became part of the Somerset Independent Living Centre (SILC), which is overseen by the Principal Occupational Therapist. This has strengthened our preventative and therapy-led services. Our Sensory Loss teams offer an opportunity to make a real difference by identifying simple but life-changing solutions through signposting, equipment provision, and technology-based solutions for people experiencing sight, hearing and dual sensory loss - described recently as **“opening up the world again!”**.

The Team works closely with our customer contact centre to ensure the right information and advice is given at point of contact and that those who are eligible to apply for a certificate of visual impairment (CVI) are supported to do so. The team along with customer services ensure we identify people who are deafblind in our area and maintain a register of their needs. Our current contracts for support for Sensory Loss are delivered by Somerset Sight and DeafPLUS. The service empowers all people with sensory loss (including dual sensory loss) to take control of their health and wellbeing by giving people time to focus on ‘what matters to me’ and take a holistic approach to an individual’s health and wellbeing. The wider Council also has access to translation and interpretation services through our contract with Word360.

Somerset's Adult Social Care team helped April to increase her independence by prescribing equipment that was right for her, referring her to the correct support in the community, and by assisting her in applying for more suitable accommodation.

[Read more.](#)

An individual discussing their needs at a Talking Café with an interpreter



Supporting refugees

We have been working alongside United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Home Office, regional Migration Partnership, and district partners since 2015. This is when we committed to take part in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). This scheme was a UK Government initiative to resettle 20,000 people impacted by the Syrian conflict in the UK by 2020.

The first refugee family was welcomed to Somerset in 2016. Since then, we have committed to take part in subsequent government resettlement programs. With the help of local services, charities, and generous offers from the community we have supported many people to safely resettle here. More recently, our service has worked closer with our VCFSE colleagues to support those living in Somerset who are seeking Asylum. We have one contingency hotel accommodating families seeking asylum, in addition to several Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). We work closely with our partners to ensure these individuals can access essential services such as healthcare, meaningful activity through activities and access to benefits and employment advice.

We have also successfully commissioned and set up Welcome Hubs across the county to provide support to any displaced person in the county.

Our Independent Living Officers

Targeted improvement in the quality of people's homes can contribute to reducing health inequalities for the residents of Somerset.

Every year hazards in the home result in unnecessary injuries, episodes of ill health, and harm to mental health. In many cases, the occupiers do not link the poor condition of their homes with a potential negative impact on their health. Our Independent Living Officers (ILOs) are a team that supports residents in maintaining independent living by carrying out home safety inspections, assessing hazards, and helping access funding for repairs to meet decent homes standards. ILOs also work with people struggling with hoarding, helping them reduce clutter and make their homes safer. They work with clients at their own pace, using a multi-disciplinary approach and linking them with other services and organisations.

During 2023/4 we issued 240 Disabled Facilities Grants for customers to improve and adapt their homes to enable them to live more independently. By making people's homes safe, secure, warm, healthier and easier to manage we prevent hospital admission, support rapid hospital discharge, reduce the need for care (formal and informal) and prevent admission to residential care homes.



Theme 2 – Providing Support in Somerset

Market shaping, Commissioning, Workforce capacity and capability, Integration, Partnership Working

We understand the diverse health and care needs of people and our local communities, so care is joined up, flexible and supports choice and continuity.

Roger's Story – Roger spent 3 years in a psychiatric ward and wanted to return home. There were various unsuccessful discharges which raised questions about how to best address Roger's needs. These needs, which stem from significant childhood trauma, are complex. A multi-disciplinary team consisting of Health, Social Care, Advocacy, a specialist mental health provider, and a social landlord collaborated with Roger, who took an active role in designing his discharge plan. A 'less is more' approach was supported by the professionals involved. The social landlord, confident in 'the wrap around' support plan, facilitated its implementation. Roger has been out of the hospital for 4 months (the longest period since his first admission) and receives support only during the day. The social worker, community nurse, and specialist provider continue to meet weekly to manage various challenges and assist Roger in building on his strengths.

We understand our duty to collaborate and work in partnership, so our services work seamlessly for people. We share information and learning with partners and collaborate for improvement.

Richard's Story – Richard experienced a breakdown in his housing situation in December 2023, leading to a period of rough sleeping and increased vulnerability. Supported by a multi-disciplinary team including Homeless GP, Homeless Housing team, Social Workers, and a Step-Together recovery coach, concerns arose regarding his health. In January 2024, Richard was found unconscious due to hypothermia. After recovering physically, Richard's mental health deteriorated, resulting in his sectioning on a psychiatric ward. Professionals ensured Richard's voice and wishes to remain 'among nature' was captured in the discharge planning. They assisted Richard in acquiring a caravan, his first home, with plans for a temporary campsite arrangement. Richard declined the need for support but valued the weekly welfare visits from the recovery coach and 'light touch' approach'.

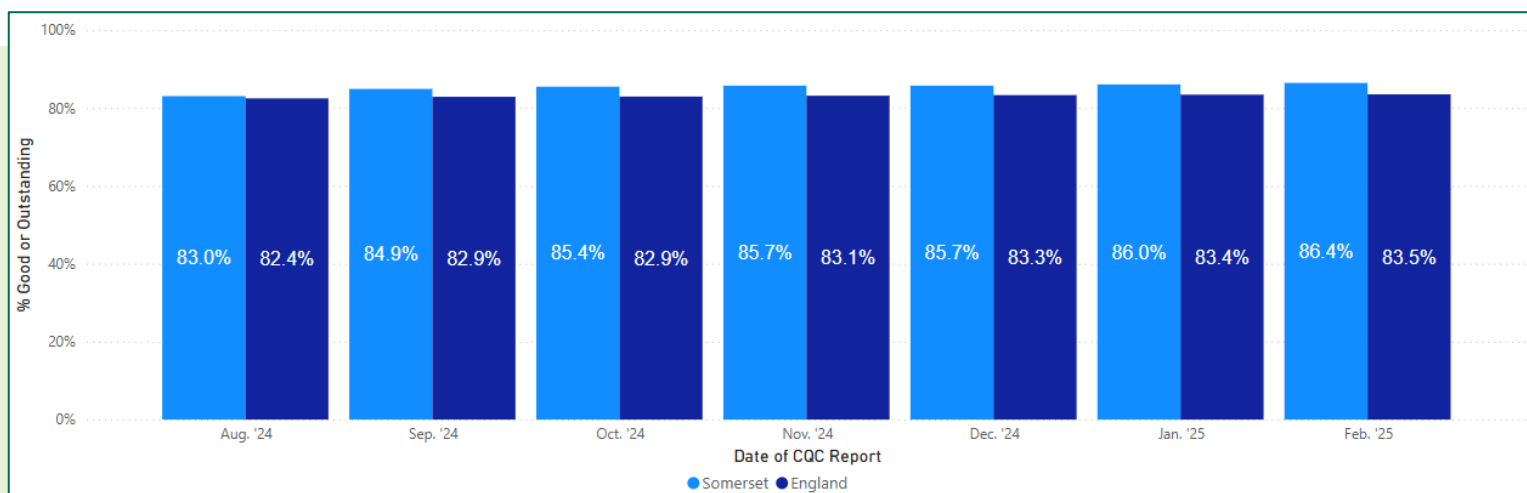


As the end of this arrangement approached and the commissioning team was contacted to support a way forward, efforts were made to ensure Richard could continue living in his caravan. This ultimately leading to a positive response from an Adult Social Care provider who had access to a plot of land and the necessary facilities to support a viable relocation. The collaborative effort highlights the importance of a person-centred approach and multi-disciplinary work in addressing Richard's needs and ensuring his well-being.

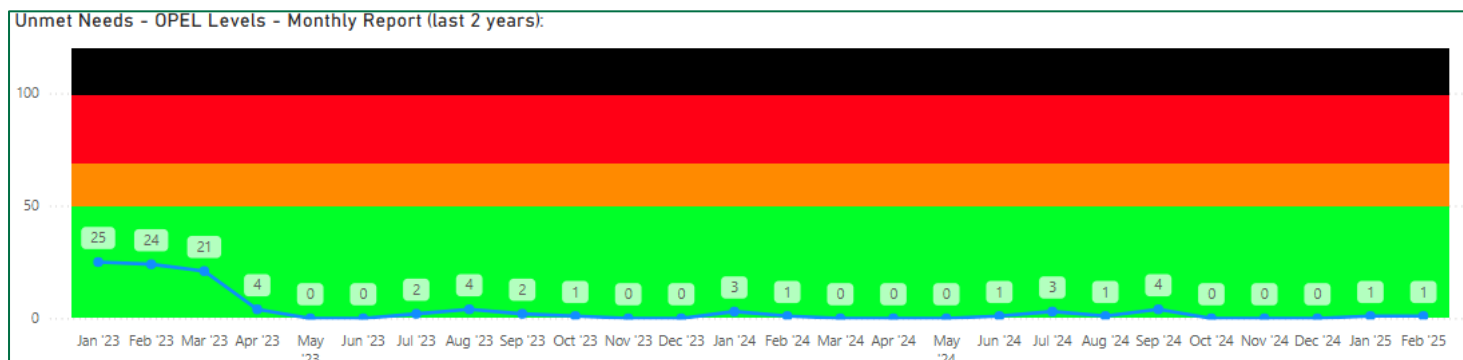
Statement	Evidence
I have care and support that is coordinated, and everyone works well together and with me	The person is at the heart of everything we do. We co-design services with people, our workforce, partners and stakeholders to ensure that they are person centred and focussed on the delivery of individual's outcomes. Our new Care and Support at Home contract and Extra Care Housing contract shows how through partnership working we will continuously improve those services.

Our performance

CQC inspection ratings (Community and Residential):



Sourcing Care Unmet Needs (Care and support at Home):



What we are proud of

Our Commissioning Strategies

Our Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy (2024-29) brings together our ambitions and approach under three central themes:

1. **Prevention and early help,**
2. **Care and support,**
3. **Specialist care and support.**

This strategy outlines our vision and approach to commissioning Adult Social Care services in Somerset. It aims to meet the care needs of our population and facilitate the co-production of services. Our strategy is built on the principles of collaboration, partnership and a shared and informed understanding of future population needs.

Somerset has a commitment to and culture of collaboration with numerous examples of how we work effectively in partnership across Somerset to deliver shared objectives or commission effective models of care and support that meet the needs of our population.

Under the **Connect Somerset** umbrella Adult Social Care and VCFSE partners increased the amount of early help that is there for residents - connecting the most vulnerable adults, older people, children and families to local community resources.

Age UK Somerset have supported **25,032** older people with advice, free tailored support or regular social interaction manifest in **66,774** contacts. A further **15,136** unpaid carer interactions were supported with virtual meet-ups, signposting and respite.



Red Cross and Community Agents have supported **5,065** people by providing the best solution to support discharge safely home from hospital.

Our **sensory loss** partners, **DeafPLUS, SENSE** and **Somerset**

Sight supported **4,243** people in over 40 locations in the community with **sight and/or hearing loss**.

25,898 new users accessing **Community Connect** website for information and advice, resulting in **115,740** page views.

Community partners have administered **£207,000** small grants for emergencies/crisis intervention/a "last resort"/to **alleviate immediate need**.

4,538 people have been supported at one of **33** **Talking Cafes** around Somerset.

The **Somerset Carers Service** has supported **2,464** **unpaid carers** throughout Somerset. This included **1,152** friends / family who were new to caring.

Community and Village Agents have supported **14,887** people to resolve or improve social, emotional, situational and practical issues affecting their **health, wellbeing and independence**.

A further example includes our work with our health colleagues to deliver a **Community Equipment and Wheelchair** service to help people live more independently.

The integrated service allows people to use one portal to access wheelchairs and a range of community equipment, saving time and making it easier for people to access the equipment they need. This service is a great example of the deepening partnership between health and social care to jointly deliver services for the benefit of the people of Somerset. We also offer an [online assessment tool](#) giving people free impartial advice about all types of equipment to make daily living easier.

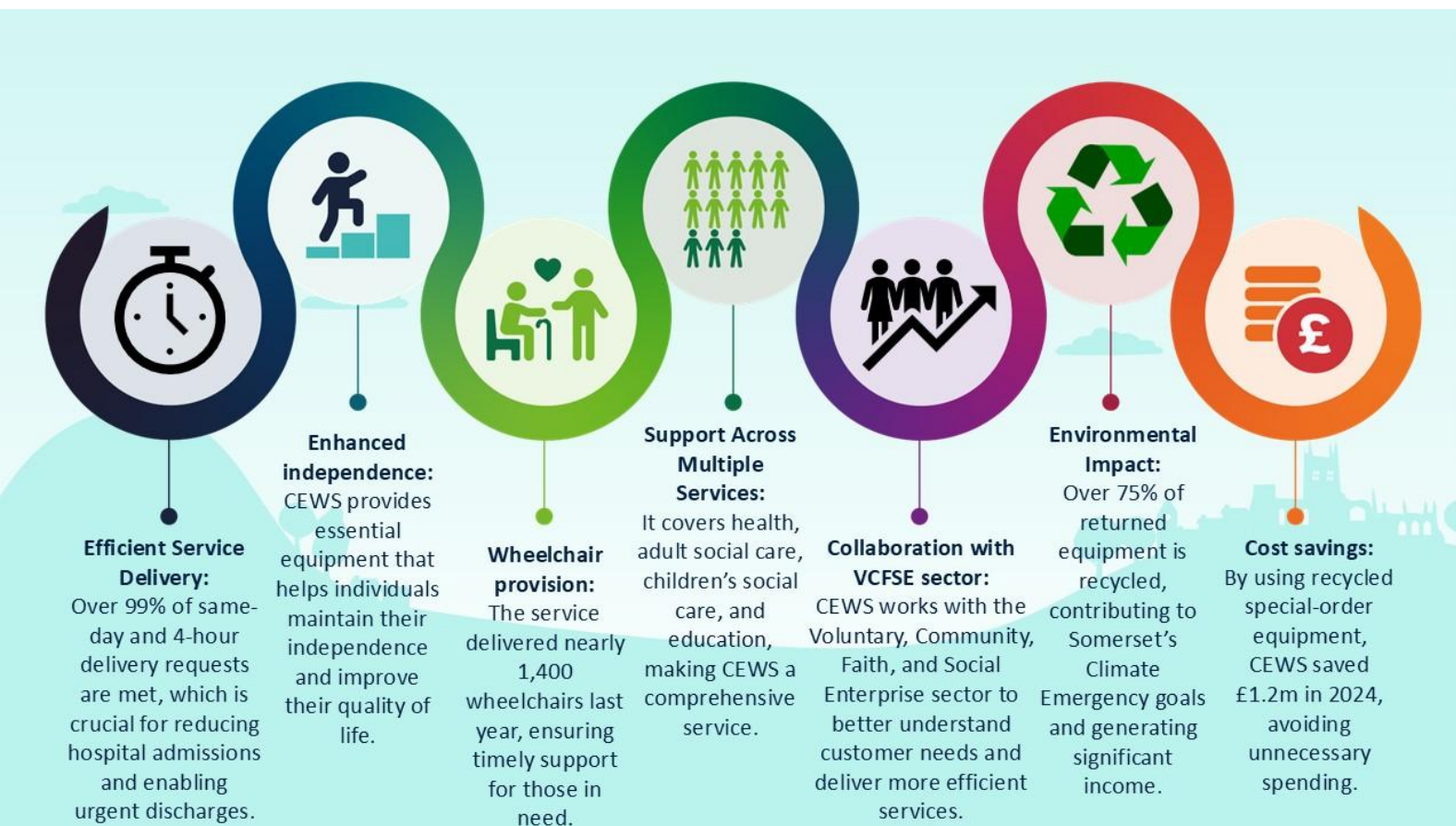


Our Somerset Health and Care Joint Commissioning Steering Group provide overall strategic oversight and direction to the joint commissioning arrangements in Somerset. The Steering Group agreed shared commissioning priorities for Somerset Council and NHS Somerset based on where a partnership approach will improve outcomes and promote greater efficiencies.

This includes taking a collaborative approach to the utilisation of the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund and Better Care Fund. We know that bringing health and care together in a way that is sustainable, while also making improvements to how we deliver services is a priority, and we will do this to help build stronger communities and services which support people to live happy, healthy lives.

Our Better Care Fund schemes sit within a range of system responses to help people to live independently. The Trusted Assessor programme with registered social workers or nurses is supported through the Registered Care Providers Association. The team are based across our acute hospitals with the overarching outcome to reduce bed delays. The service completes assessments and supports a discharge within 5 days. They have reduced the length of stay for 612 people to date and completed over 1000 assessments on behalf of providers.

We will largely use the Discharge Fund to drive improvements in intermediate care by enhancing community-based support ensuring that more people can be discharged home with the right level of care.



Managing our marketplace

Alongside our Commissioning Strategy we also produce a [Market Position Statement](#) (MPS). Rather than publish this as a single document we have taken the decision from 2025 onwards to provide this in the form of a microsite that will enable information for different sections market to be updated independently of each other as and when it changes, and no less than six-monthly, and also link to key notices that are we are required by the Public Procurement Act (2023).

To support our external care workforce, we have enhanced our communication channels and forums that includes a monthly care provider briefing containing updates and developments from the health and care system both locally and nationally and created a dedicated care provider webpage. Care providers had told us how much they valued the improved engagement.

We recognised how overseas recruitment has supported workforce capacity across the country, and wanted to ensure our local care market was supported adequately in this space, as well as to reduce risks associated with business failure impacting people, provision and hospital flow. This includes information on recognising labour exploitation and modern slavery.

Somerset is contributing to regional international recruitment work to benefit from the Department of Health & Social Care's International Recruitment Fund for the Adult Social Care sector. This will involve working to establish and make available specialist and local support to overseas workers who have been displaced and / or affected by unethical recruitment practice.

Driving quality in Somerset

There are very clear and robust arrangements in place to monitor the quality of local services, take effective action where concerns are identified, and support improvement activity. There is a joined-up and unified approach with the NHS, and a mutually supportive approach in place which allows effective sharing and acting on information and the avoiding of duplication.

This was recognised by the Local Government Association's Assurance Peer Challenge team as being an important contributory factor in the comparatively high levels of good or better CQC-rated active social care services locally, with local performance exceeding national averages. There is currently no inadequate-rated provision, and arrangements are in place to ensure placements are managed or temporarily ceased pending quality or safety improvements being progressed

Together with NHS Somerset ICB, we have invested in PAMMS (Provider Assessment and Market Management Solutions) technology as a mechanism to



support a consistent approach to quality monitoring. Quarterly returns are also gathered from across the different provider registration types to help us monitor performance trends and risks and provide a partnership response to mitigate or address these.

Our multi-agency Commissioning and Quality Board, which includes membership from the Care Quality Commission, meets on a quarterly basis to monitor the state of the Somerset care market through latest data and intelligence, and to make evidence-based decisions where we have any providers of concern. We also regularly monitor the feedback we receive from our communities to drive continuous improvement across all our services.

Working Age Adults

Together with the Council's Network and Newton Research Programme we can transform the lives of working age and lifelong disabled adults. The Programme puts the individuals at the centre of the conversation about the key topics and issues that will make a meaningful difference to their lives.

One example of how we do this is through working with partners to support people with learning disabilities into employment utilising internships such as EDF Energy (Hinkley) and Project Search. These are widely recognised as the most effective approach to support people to achieve sustainable employment.

Care and support at home

We have recently recommissioned the contracts for care at home in Somerset from April 2024, and as part of this we are committed to working with local home care companies. This has led to a stable market of providers who understand Somerset and protect the market from further excess capacity that could impact the financial sustainability of all.

We anticipate demand for care at home will grow and need to have a thriving home care market to meet this future demand. 100% of the care commissioned through our contract is at Somerset Council's set fee rate and therefore is affordable. The delivery of care is also aligned to our neighbourhoods that reduce the need to travel and therefore mitigate impacts on our environment.

From April 2025 our new contracts for the provision of care and support services within Extra Care Housing will deliver a new service that was co-designed with our communities. The new service specification is much more outcomes focussed and emphasises on enabling people to remain as independent as possible with their own front door and care and support when they need it.



Delivery is very much based on a partnership approach with Adult Social Care, housing and care providers. Continuous improvement will be driven by the partners based on feedback received from those living in Extra Care.

Extra Care Housing was the solution when Geoff had found himself in hospital for several months after suffering with extreme self-neglect. [Read more.](#)

Having listened to care provider feedback about our previous procurement framework, we have also introduced a more robust process to support the sourcing and monitoring of specialist services as part of the implementation of a new Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) from April 2024. This offers us greater transparency about care delivery locally, supports us with effective contract management, and informs analysis of market gaps or need.

Connecting our Caring Communities

Listening to our communities and giving real influence is fundamental to our commissioning process. As part of the work to implement the new DPS we co-produced a Charter that included a set of quality standards that would be embedded within the new commissioning arrangements.

In Somerset we promote and offer the Shared Lives Scheme. The scheme provides family-based support for adults with learning or physical disabilities, or mental health difficulties. We are growing this initiative as part of our wider community offer through a £616K fund via the Department for Health and Social Care's Accelerated Reform Fund. This fund has also enabled targeted investment in grassroots organisations to design support for unpaid carers and to build care capacity, support 16 hyper local associations, mobilised 16 communities to think how they can make their areas good places to grow old or to live with disabilities, supported the creation of 100's of new associations and increased the menu of support in communities.

Connecting our Caring Community....

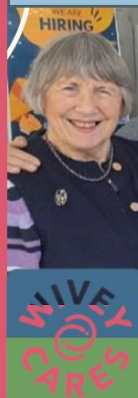
Community Rooted Solutions to support Adult Social Care



The £616k fund via the Department for Health and Social Care Accelerated Reform Fund has enabled targeted investment in grassroots organisations to design support for unpaid carers and to build care capacity.....

Support and investment in **16** hyper local associations have:

- Mobilised 16 communities to think how they can make their areas good places to grow old or to live with disabilities.
- Supported the creation of 100's of new associations, supports or services, increasing the menu of supports for people with a direct payment or who self fund their care
- Developed parish and neighbourhood information sharing networks so that people get in the information and support they need to live the lives they want



Somerset Council has also been leading the way regionally on Optimal Handed Care (OHC), setting up a Southwest Network. OHC is being implemented across the Somerset Health and Social Care system and has recently been recognised nationally for this work as part of the [RCOT Conference](#) in June 2024. The main driver of this was to ensure that people maintained their independence using the least restrictive options, giving back their lives and dignity.

The delivery of fully disable adapted properties are developed by working with Somerset Councils Affordable Housing Delivery Partners on a range of development opportunities. The housing need, design requirements and allocations are all considered through the close working internal relationships between the Affordable Housing Service, Adults and Children's Services and the Planning team.

Providing long term care for those that need it

The number of people living in Somerset with dementia is now likely to double by 2035 to around 18,000. In a substantive effort to meet the challenges posed by these demographics and a commitment to foster sustainability in our provider market, our adult social commissioners (in collaboration with system partners including health and third sector colleagues) have designed and implemented a range of interventions to meet the needs of our ageing population and specifically those living with a dementia.

Our new model of therapeutic care, which we have called OPMH+ is where more specialised interventions can be delivered. The service is underpinned by the Newcastle Model, a tried and tested, evidence-based intervention to improve outcomes for people presenting with complex behaviours as a result of their dementia. We commissioned Reminiscence Learning, a community sector provider, to deliver 12 months of intensive training to five providers to support them to deliver more specialised dementia support. The training also included a year of mentorship to support each carer to fully imbed their new practice and inform their organisational culture. Watch Brian's story [here](#).

This initiative was tremendously successful. From March 2023 to March 2024 Reminiscence Learning trained 97 members of care staff across 5 Older People's Mental Health Nursing Homes, yielding many excellent examples of fantastic care.



Continuous Improvement

Working with our Housing colleagues

We are seizing the opportunities presented from becoming a Unitary Council and the wider ongoing Council re-structure that includes integrated working with housing and Adults. We have worked together to commission a service for homeless complex adults, in conjunction with the voluntary sector, we have developed an intensive support provision, focused on a trauma informed approach, that reduces the length of homelessness and brings agencies together to find creative solutions. We are also working with housing development colleagues to take forward the redevelopment of two former care home sites as mixed-use developments, including Specialised Supported Housing for adults with care and support needs.

By aligning our commissioning activity, we can support people to achieve better outcomes and prevent the duplication of service input. It allows Adults and Housing to reduce costs for the Council whilst meeting the needs of the most complex in society. We are working closely together with Homes in Somerset and our Affordable Housing Team to develop two outdated care home sites to meet the growing need for higher support general needs housing.



Theme 3 – Ensuring safety within the system

Section 42 Safeguarding enquiries, Reviews, Safe systems, Continuity of care

We work with people and our partners to establish and maintain safe systems of care, in which safety is managed, monitored and assured. We ensure continuity of care, including when people move between different services.

Darren's Story – Darren is an 18-year-old who was homeless and wanted support to find accommodation. Darren has experienced significant trauma, has attachment needs and difficulties with emotional regulation. Our Safeguarding Service, Mental Health Social Care Teams and Housing colleagues with Darren through a multi-agency team. Following a Mental Capacity Assessment, a support plan was co-designed that reduced the risks associated with him being homeless and enabled further assessments to take place. Due to the rapid partnership response Darren is now being supported by a housing provider to reduce the risk of becoming homeless again.

We work with people to understand what being safe means to them as well as with our partners on the best way to achieve this. We concentrate on improving people's lives while protecting their right to live in safety, free from bullying, harassment, abuse, discrimination, avoidable harm and neglect. We make sure we share concerns quickly and appropriately.

Sarah's story - Sarah told her care provider that she wanted to make fundamental changes in the way she lived her life. Since acquiring her disability around 12 years ago all decision-making had been taken over by a family member. She had no control over any decision in any aspect of her life, large or small. It was clear that Sarah felt this was an abuse of her right to determine matters for herself and was recognised as being an adult safeguarding matter as determined by the Care Act 2014. With the support of her care provider and Registered Manager of her respite provider, Sarah made a plan to take back control. This was put into place following a full reassessment of her care and support needs. 24-hour live-in care was commissioned. Work took place with the DWP and Sarah's bank to enable her to regain control of her finances. Sarah was supported to communicate the changes to the family member. Sarah has expressed satisfaction with what she has been supported to achieve and how she had been supported to achieve it. The emotional and psychological abuse Sarah had experienced has been effectively ended.

Statement	Evidence
When I move between services, settings or areas, there is a plan for what happens next and who will do what, and all the practical arrangements are in place.	We recognise that transitions between services and settings can increase risks for people and their families. Good communication within and across services, and effective planning is prioritised with the person at the centre. Collaboration with other services outside Adult Social Care is integral to our approach. Our expectations for transitions within Adult Social Care are set out in 'Safe Transitions Between Adult Social Care Teams' which highlights the importance of accurate record keeping.
I feel safe and am supported to understand and manage my risks	We work with people to enable them to achieve the outcomes that matter to them alongside taking a collaborative approach to assessing and managing risk. Our approach positions the person at the centre of all we do, alongside collaboration and triangulation with the people who matter to them and other professionals. We consider risk with people in the context of their own lives, work creatively to support people to understand risk and positive risk management, and aim to empower people to take control of managing risk.

What we are proud of

The Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB)

We have an effective and ambitious Safeguarding Adults Board, led by an experienced independent Chair and providing a range of communication channels and approaches to promote awareness of abuse and neglect. It is well informed by detailed performance analysis and regular self-assessment at both Board and organisational-member level.

The work of the Board's sub-groups is regularly monitored through the Executive. This meets quarterly to ensure that assurance reports, requested by the Board, are on track, to monitor the development and impact of policies, such as the procedures for multi-agency risk management meetings, and to take forward learning from assurance reports and reviews.

The Board has a SAB [strategic plan](#) and publishes an [Annual Report](#) which includes details of a stakeholder survey that shows how effective its work has been each year. This is shared with the Council's Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee each autumn. The Board also holds regular 'development days' to inform its ongoing learning and strategic focus.

We have begun to hold learning events that focus on the impact and outcomes of the findings and recommendations from previously completed reviews. We have held two such events, focusing on what has changed and what further practice development and/or service improvement is required.

The Board expects to sign off a thematic review on homelessness in May 2025.

The Board contributes to the Homelessness Reduction Board, has encouraged the development of homelessness fatality reviews, and has responded fully to the joint ministerial letter on homelessness and rough sleeping. The Board is supporting the development of services following the integration of housing with Adult Social Care.

After a traumatic childhood, Michael spent 20 years living in uncertainty with nowhere to call home. A referral to Housing First helped him to find long-term accommodation that was right for him. [Read more.](#)

Our Safeguarding Service

We have a centralised Safeguarding Service. The aim of the service is to stop and prevent abuse and neglect for adults who cannot protect themselves through both statutory and non-statutory enquiries. Making Safeguarding Personal, relationship-based practice and multi-agency collaboration are central to practice within the service.

The Safeguarding Service works in partnership with agencies across the system including the ICB, Somerset Foundation Trust, the police, ambulance service, CQC and providers. We are a key partner for the quarterly multi-agency Safeguarding Forum which enables safeguarding leads from across the Somerset system to share practice and process updates, learning and build and maintain effective working relationships, participate in a weekly intelligence call with partners and actively contribute to Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board workstreams and the development of guidance. Community-based provider events have been held by the Safeguarding Service to build relationships and understanding about safeguarding.

Our Safeguarding alerts are received by our Customer Contact Centre; 'live' advice and guidance is provided by the Adult Social Care Safeguarding Service. Daily oversight of triage is provided by an Advanced Practitioner to ensure robust, defensible decision-making following alerts within 48 hours. The service works closely with our Quality Assurance Team and collaborates to ensure a joined-up response to concerns. A Responsible Safeguarding Coordinator is allocated for S.42 enquiries that have been tasked to providers to complete. This role includes quality assurance of the report and conclusion of the enquiry.

Advocacy plays a crucial role in safeguarding adults by ensuring that their voices are heard and their rights protected. Advocacy is particularly important for adults at risk who lack capacity to make their own decisions, as it helps them weigh up their options and make their own decisions. The latest Safeguarding Adults Collect data submission demonstrates that 96.7% of adults at risk who lacked capacity were supported by either family, friends or another advocate, which is significantly higher than the national and regional average.

Advocacy support helped Matilda have a voice when choosing where she wanted to live. [Read more.](#)

Our Practice Quality Framework

The Somerset Practice Quality Framework (PQF) sets out what good looks like and the standards we strive to meet across Adult Social Care.

It was co-produced with people with lived expertise, compliments professional standards for registered professionals and forms a clear 'Somerset' framework for Adult Social Care. The Framework forms an important part of our approach to social care governance and quality assurance.

Quality assurance is the responsibility of all who work in Adult Social Care. All operational services hold 10 reflective practice sessions each year that are aligned to Practice Quality Framework Standards to promote and embed a culture of learning, promote critical thinking and professional curiosity. Obtaining the voice of the person or their representative is central to the reflective practice sessions and provides triangulation ahead of the subsequent audit which is completed by group facilitators. Improving the percentage of audits where contact is made with the person, or their representative is an area for improvement that Practice Development Advanced Practitioners are actively working on within their services.

Practice Quality Framework Audits 24/25 – end of month submissions	Sept	Oct	Nov	Jan	Feb
Total number of audits completed across ASC	30	33	32	26	22
% of audits where contact was made with the person / their representative	60%	27.3%	34.4%	30.8%	45.6%

The first annual review of our Practice Quality Framework took place in August 2024, to consider the learning and feedback received. As a result, reflective practice groups were launched for every operational team to promote more meaningful engagement with audit and improvement processes.

Learning from Serious Incidents

Our Learning from Serious Incidents policy ensures that incidents are reviewed, and that learning is identified and embedded into practice.

We are continuing to train Advanced Practitioners, Practice Development Advanced Practitioners and Service Managers to carry out high quality reviews that identify the good practice we want to see more of, as well as areas for improvement. The training and completion of reviews has been positioned at this level of to promote learning within services.

Draft reviews are discussed at The Practice Quality Board Subgroup. The group provides a safe learning space to review and analyse emerging learning from incident reviews, to formulate actions and how learning will be shared and embedded, prior to presentation at our Practice Quality Board.

Community Safety

In Somerset, we take a public health approach to our community safety work. This is because the risk of being involved in crime, and the impacts crime can have, is a population wide concern. Crime and the fear of crime impacts on people's physical and mental health.

Preventing crime or risk of victimisation or perpetration should be seen in the wider context of tackling health inequalities. The wider factors of health can impact the risk of victimisation and perpetration of crime. The way that the council discharges a lot of its community safety functions is by working in partnership with other local organisations. In Somerset, this is through the **Safer Somerset Partnership**.

Providing safe services in Somerset

We are fortunate to benefit from an effective safeguarding and care provider quality assurance offer locally that helps to monitor and support good quality, safe services and seeks the feedback of residents or clients as part of this approach. Both were recognised as areas of positive practice in the Local Government Association Assurance Peer Challenge of March 2024.



We also have strong evidence of our ability to effectively respond to unplanned events or emergencies in the care market to minimise potential risks of people's safety or wellbeing.

Our process includes very effective multi-agency working aligned to our robust and well-tested business failure/closure policy which is led by our Care Provider Quality Assurance team. Effective communication is maintained with all affected stakeholders during these difficult situations, including local Councillors, health colleagues as well as residents, families and staff, with the team receiving positive feedback about our support and intervention. We have recently enhanced our policy and approach to strengthen effective practice when there are care provider transfers locally.

Continuous Improvement

Working across Adult's and Children's services

Whilst our policies and processes promote awareness of modern slavery, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and other forms of exploitation, we have recognised there are further opportunities for us to promote understanding and awareness of exploitation and exploitation risks. The partner organisations consisting of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP), Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB), Somerset Corporate Parenting Board (SCPB) and the Safer Somerset Partnership (SSP) have re-established a partnership and are committed to working together at every level to keep Somerset people safe from harm and improve their health and wellbeing. The Group is progressing work to help collectively tackle the exploitation of both children and adults in Somerset during 2024 via the development of a 'through-life exploitation strategy'.

Supporting young people earlier

We have reviewed and re-focussed the remit of our Countywide Preparing for Adulthood team, which now sits within the Learning Disability Service. The service receives referrals for young people from 14yrs+ who may require support from Adult Social Care in adulthood and ensures assessments and support planning is completed in a timely way to enable any required services are in place ready for when the young person turns 18yrs. Currently, all young people aged 17yrs+ or 16yrs with very complex needs are allocated to a worker; and we are increasing allocation from an earlier age as capacity within our team improves.

'Preparing for Adulthood' is one of Adult Social Care's 'My Life, My Future' transformation programme workstreams. As part of this we are focused on achieving positive outcomes for young people transitioning into adulthood. Significant improvements have been made across the service to establish more efficient processes and improve information sharing across Children's and Adults' services, enabling earlier identification and ensuring a greater understanding of the needs of young people transitioning to adulthood.

A more joined up and collaborative approach with key partners across Children's Social Care, Education and Health services, is enabling a smoother transition into Adults Services and improving the experiences of young people and their families. Examples of this include our Young People's charter, joint visits, joint commissioning /funding of services and Area transition meetings with attendance from key partners across all children's services, to discuss the needs of the young people coming through and consider appropriate adult services and agree any require actions.

Preparing for Adulthood



The Preparing for Adulthood team started conversations early so that Tom could transition seamlessly from Children's to Adult's Social Care without any disruption to his ongoing care package. [Read more.](#)

Transitional Safeguarding

Our focus is to safeguard young people from adolescence into adulthood, recognising transition is a journey, not an event, and that every young person will experience this journey differently. It is not simply transition planning from moving from Children's to Adult Social Care services, emphasising a needs-led, personalised approach.

Our area Preparing for Adulthood Transition Meetings support the early identification of young people moving into adulthood and share information surrounding young people who may have identified risk factors. These meetings are a useful environment to support and create opportunities for mutual learning within children's safeguarding colleagues and share expertise surrounding rights-based and person-centred practice.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and Mental Capacity Act (MCA)

We have a dedicated centralised DoLS Team which completed 749 assessments in the 12-month period up to 12 February 2025. In addition to qualified Best Interest Assessors within the DoLS Team, there are qualified Best Interest Assessors working primarily within other roles in Adult Social Care. This enables other operational teams to benefit from the additional qualifications and knowledge held by these practitioners. Our approach to prioritisation of applications and assessment is consistent with the ADASS DoLS Priority Tool.

Most applications are made via our electronic system. The system contains questions designed to assist with the prioritisation of applications. An algorithm screens the applications into low priority and high priority categories. The system is weighted so that any indication of matters that indicate priority will trigger 'High'. Magic Notes have been introduced to support the team with making efficiencies, improving productivity and ensuring best use of our time. The expectation is that this will reduce our waiting times.

We have a high proportion of DoLS authorisations being challenged in the Court of Protection under Section 21A of the MCA (44 as of 10 April 2025). This is a positive indicator that people who lack capacity are being well supported to access their rights, primarily by their advocate representatives. Usually, people are challenging being kept in a location they have not chosen – often a care home.

A Mental Capacity Audit was carried out in Quarter 4 of 2024. This has resulted in targeted advice and guidance for some workers and improvements to the mental capacity assessment template on our electronic records system (Eclipse).

The Somerset DoLS team has a good working relationship with the Advocacy Service provider. The current advocacy contract incorporates the DoLS representative role. Independent advocates are appointed as representatives in about 75% of Standard Authorisations. We have a policy of spot purchasing additional advocacy time for representatives to act as Litigation Friends in cases which are taken to the Court of Protection. Although this is not a statutory obligation upon the local authority, this approach has the effect of shortening court proceedings and reducing costs overall.

Continuing Healthcare

We are ensuring that there is a fair decision-making process for Continuing Healthcare and compliance with National guidance. We are working together with ICB colleagues to further develop and embed collaborative approaches to care solutions, ensuring referrals for CHC are appropriate and timely, while individuals continue to have their needs met until a well-informed CHC assessment can be undertaken.

Additionally, we participate in national and regional professional networks, attending national and regional forum meetings to exchange knowledge, resources, and information about CHC developments and best practices. This helps develop the CHC Lead leadership role and contributes to the development of national policy and expectations about high-quality practice.

Embedding Learning

Our [Practice Quality Board](#) (PQB) has oversight of learning. The Board is sighted on learning outcomes from statutory and non-statutory reviews, as well as audits. It monitors actions using a tracker and seeks assurance that learning has been embedded into practice. In early 2025, new members with lived expertise became Practice Quality Board members. The first joint ASC and housing review using the Learning from Serious Incidents Policy also took place in early 2025. Learning from this process will help inform how learning is embedded across ASC and Housing.

Practice Development Advanced Practitioners (PDAPs) have a central role for the embedding of learning across ASC. They support the Principal Social Worker in providing an interface between the Practice Quality Board and operational teams. Incident Review Training has been recommissioned for PDAPs, APs and service managers.

The Principal Social Worker is a member of the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board and Subgroup, and the Domestic Abuse Board enabling depth of learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews to be shared and taken forward through the Practice Quality Board. A new process is being developed to enhance links between LeDeR and the Practice Quality Board.

We continue to create more opportunities for the sharing of learning arising from Safeguarding Adult Reviews and embedding the developing the evidence-base from reviews into practice.

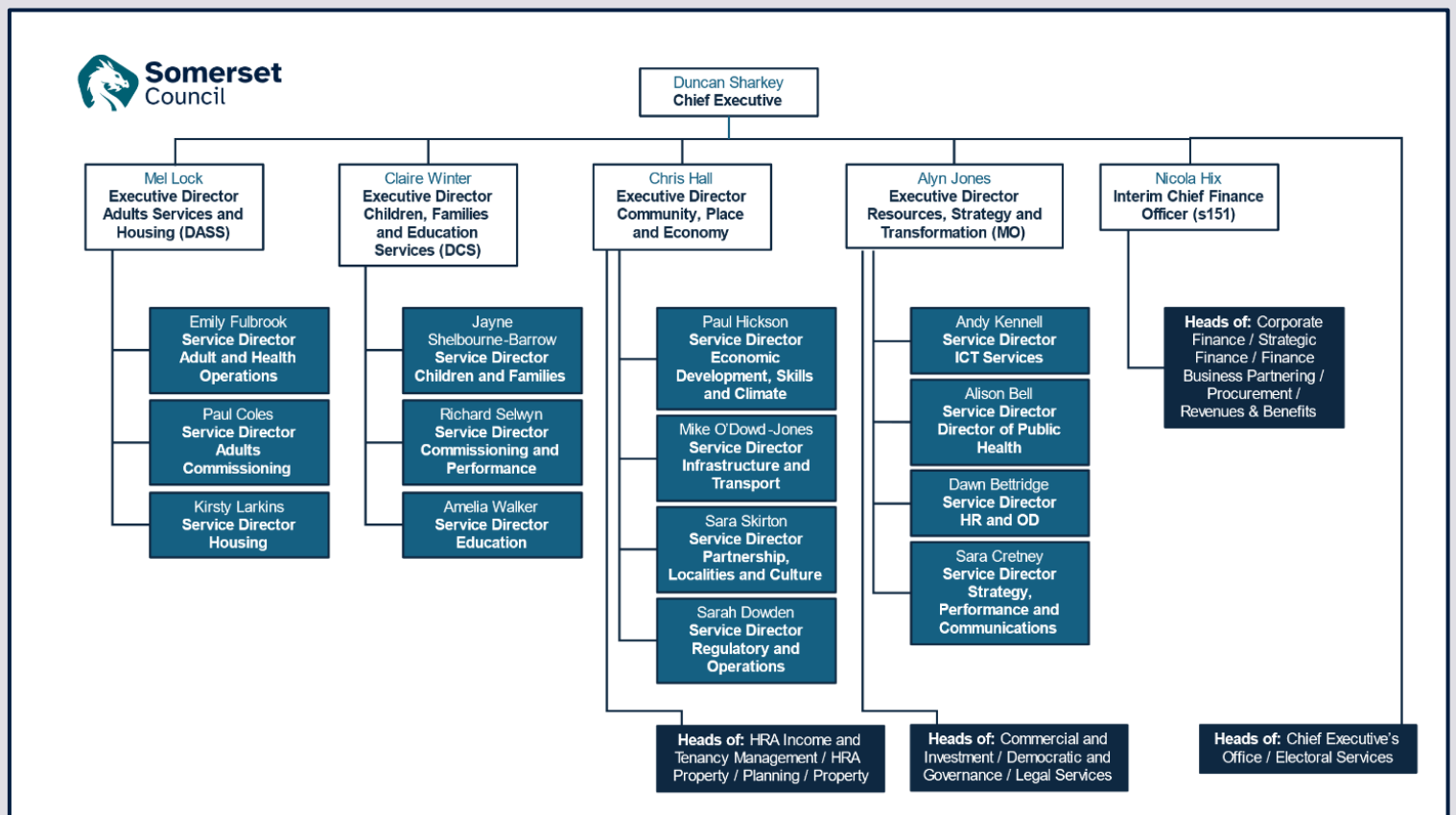


Theme 4 - Leadership

Strategic planning, Learning, Improvement, Innovation, Governance, Management, Sustainability

We have clear responsibilities, roles, systems of accountability and good governance. We use these to manage and deliver good quality, sustainable care, treatment and support. We act on the best information about risk, performance and outcomes, and we share this securely with others when appropriate.

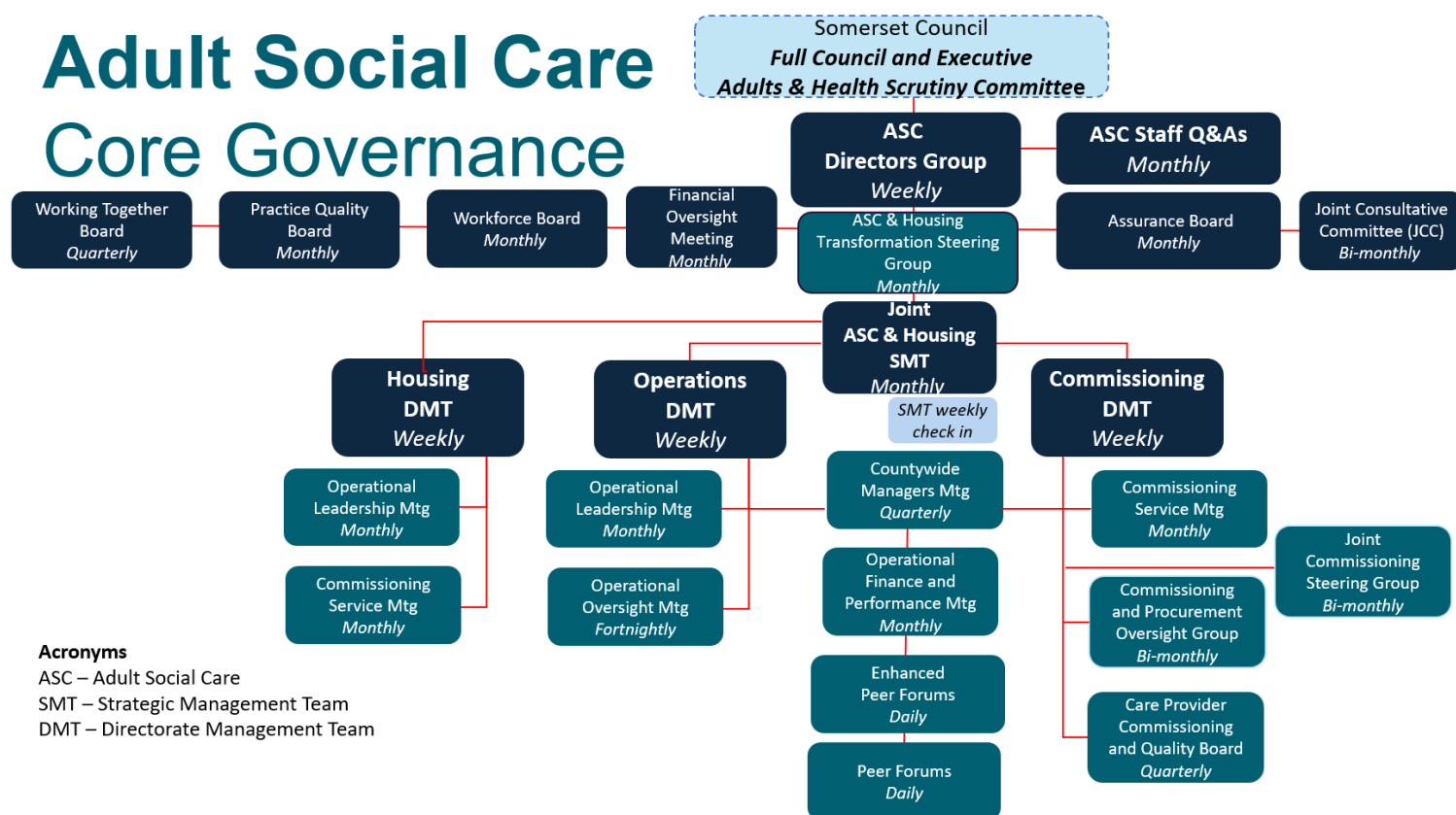
We focus on continuous learning, innovation and improvement across our organisation and the local system. We encourage creative ways of delivering equality of experience, outcome and quality of life for people. We actively contribute to safe effective practice and research.



What we are proud of

Our Governance and Leadership

Adult Social Care Core Governance



In Somerset we are very proud of our well-engaged political leadership, with Councillors well-informed about Adult Social Care risks and a positive culture of challenge and support.

Somerset Council engages well at both the political and officer level in the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Integrated Care System (ICS) space. The Somerset Board is a single high-level partnership board for health, care and well-being for the county and is where the Improving Care Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board for Somerset come together. The potential impact of this Board is enhanced by the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Unitary Council being co-terminus and has the potential to build on existing effective relations across the health landscape to support Somerset residents.

The Board identifies and unifies strategic action to tackle some of the significant challenges facing the county over the medium and longer term.

It has senior leaders from across the local health and wellbeing system. It was recognised as a good model within the Corporate Peer Challenge 2024.

The government plans to merge NHS England back into the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to streamline operations will involve a shift towards more community-based care, prevention, and digital technology, aiming to make the service more "fit for the future".

In Somerset, the collaborative efforts between Somerset Council, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, and Somerset Integrated Care Board (ICB) have fostered a robust and integrated health and social care system. This partnership leverages the strengths of all organisations, including shared expertise, resources, and a unified approach to strategy and planning. By working together, we have been able to address health inequalities more effectively, streamline services, and provide comprehensive care that meets the diverse needs of our community.

Our joint initiatives have led to significant improvements in people's outcomes, including, enhanced community-based care, and better support for vulnerable populations. This integrated approach has facilitated smoother transitions between different levels of care, ensuring that people receive timely and appropriate interventions.

Additionally, our collaborative efforts have strengthened the support network for carers and families, providing them with the resources and assistance they need to manage health conditions effectively at home.

We benefit from a stable Adult Social Care leadership team, who have worked within and through the service for many years. The LGA Peer Challenge Team noted that the Director of Adult Social Services "provides strong, positive, visible leadership for the service" and that "more widely, the challenge team found passionate, experienced and committed staff and senior leadership".

Our Somerset People Strategy

Our organisation and our people have been through significant change and challenge in the lead up to and post formation of our new Council. We recognise the impact this has had but also understand that they are further challenges to come. But with this, comes the opportunity to do things differently and ultimately better. The Somerset People Strategy clearly sets out our ambitions as an employer, the culture we want to create and the workforce we want to build. It describes how we intend to create the right conditions to deliver our ambitions and be a great place to work.



Our Workforce Strategy

We recognise the vital importance of having a supported, skilled and flexible workforce, with the service publishing a revised Workforce Strategy for 2024-26. In common with many local authorities, we face ongoing challenges in recruiting Social Workers and Occupational Therapists so remain very focused on recruiting and retaining and developing and training our staff.

How we learn and develop

We participate in the Local Government Association Annual Health Check. Key outcomes from this in 2024/5 were the development of a training dashboard for managers to enable team compliance with mandatory training to be checked quickly and the introduction of a new induction framework which was launched in early 2025.

We have an extensive learning and development offer which includes training, CPD events, drop-in sessions, podcasts and qualifications. The second cohort for Post-Qualifying Standards for social work supervisors is currently in progress in Somerset.

Our Learning and Development team undertook the second Learning Needs Analysis in early 2025. This work seeks views from across ASC in relation to training. Learning needs identified through the Practice Quality Board also informed the analysis. In 2024, outcomes from the Learning Needs Analysis included a review of ASC mandatory training, the launch of learning plans with a tiered approach to training and Learning and Development drop-in sessions.

Learning and Development runs an annual Carnival of Practice which coincides with carnival season in Somerset. In 2024, 20 events were held during Carnival week focused on the theme of communication. Participation is high across Adult Social Care with some events attracting over 100 attendees.



Adult's and Children's Social Workers at the Council office in Mendip.

Clear competency frameworks support the development and career progression of our workforce. Following the launch of a new approach to supervision and appraisal, which was developed by the Principal Practice Leads with representatives from the workforce, we have seen improvements in the delivery and experience of supervision, evidenced by findings from the most recent supervision audit undertaken in 2024. The Principal Social Worker will be leading a project across operations and commissioning later in 2025, to develop trauma-informed approaches. Initial Introduction to Trauma-Informed Practice sessions have been delivered by the Principal Social Worker.

How we engage with our workforce

Regular opportunities exist for our staff to engage with and hear from the senior leadership team, including Q&A sessions with the Chief Executive and with Adult Social Care Directors. We also produce detailed monthly Highlight Reports to support effective communication and transparency of updates and key development with our staff, elected members and the Council's executive leadership team. This is in addition to our Adult Social Care online newsletter for our staff ('The Loop') which communicates news and key updates.

Feedback from staff is sought and gathered on a regular basis and is used to inform strategic planning and response activity. Quarterly countywide meetings are held between Managers across Commissioning, Quality and Adult Social Care services. We continue to participate in the annual LGA Health Check. We have made improvements that include better induction for new starters, better availability of training data for managers, and the opportunity for the workforce to submit questions in advance for the monthly Adult Social Care Staff Q&A.

What our stakeholders are saying

We regularly gather feedback from the organisations we work with to monitor the effectiveness of our pathways and processes to ensure that our communities are safe and are achieving their desired outcomes.

We seek stakeholder feedback to generate more frequent opportunities to learn from the experience of those using our services, beyond the more formal compliments/complaints approach in place corporately. We have been delighted to see this approach embed and increasingly add value since its implementation, with staff actively promoting the link within email signatures, in documents and through discussion.



210 (77%) rated the overall service received from our staff as either 'Good' or 'Excellent' during 2023/24 (our target is 75%+). Latest performance for 2024/25 (through to end of February 2025) is 90.5%.

Given the demand, workforce and financial pressures on our Council and the wider health and care sector, it is testament to the hard work and commitment of our staff teams that more than three quarters of feedback we receive is overwhelmingly positive. Latest data for Quarter 3 2024/25 is showing that 210 of 217 pieces of stakeholder feedback submitted is rating the service we've provided as Good or Excellent (92.6%).

The feedback we receive continues to offer us valuable insights into the experience of people who use services and carers, our partner colleagues and other key stakeholders, providing opportunities for learning or improvement, reducing risks of complaints escalating, and enabling celebratory monthly 'staff shoutouts' and greater recognition based on independent feedback.

Continuous Improvement

Empowering our workforce

We also regularly gather feedback through our staff using a variety of methods to understand their views about the safe delivery of services.

We will be enhancing existing mechanisms to hear from and respond to the needs and wants of our workforce through the development of a 'Future Focussed Group'. Our Somerset Workforce Board will be inviting our staff to shape and design the Group of volunteers across Adult Social Care services who will be involved in influencing and shaping our Adult Social Care Strategy and our Workforce Strategy, as well as driving continuous improvement and exploring new ways of working across Adult Social Care.

Empowering our communities

Adult Social Care, and the Council as a whole, is committed to improving opportunities for effective and meaningful co-production. Co-production means working with people who use services and carers as equal partners in the design, development, commissioning, delivery and review of the Council's services. It is central to achieving the personalisation of services and increasing choice and control for people who use services and carers.



We have established 18 [Local Community Networks](#) (LCNs) to act as the 'voice' of our communities. They are about engagement and improving outcomes for residents through establishing strong connections between Somerset Council, our communities, businesses, and our partners. There is a '[Customer Panel](#)' made up of volunteers to provide feedback about the Council and its services.

We work closely with Healthwatch Somerset who is our countywide independent health and care champion. It exists to ensure that people are at the heart of care. Healthwatch Somerset is hosted by The Advocacy People. Dedicated teams of staff and volunteers listen to what people like about local health services, and what could be improved. These views are then shared with the decision-making organisations informing improvement and commissioning plans. Healthwatch Somerset additional duty is to support people to find the information they need about health and care services in their area.

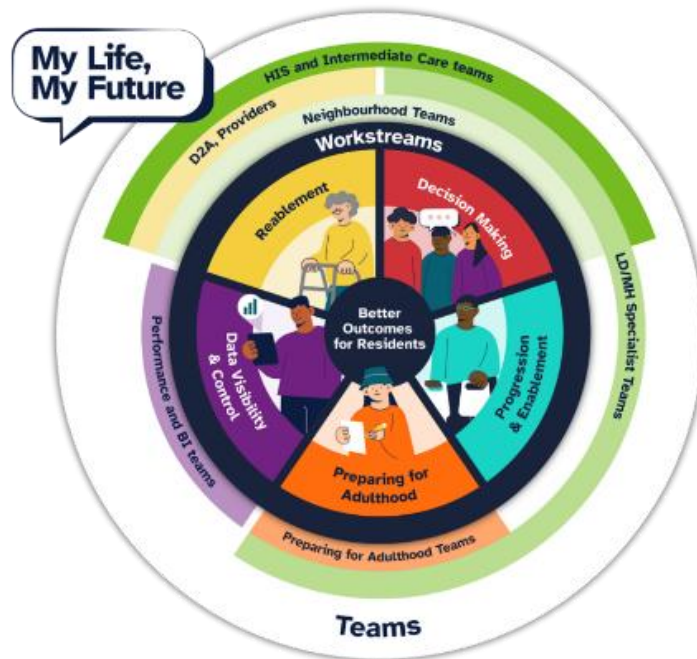
Healthwatch in Somerset is a jointly commissioned service between Somerset Council and NHS Somerset. Such funding arrangement is unique in England and has created much interest from Healthwatch England and other local authorities. Our Healthwatch Manager Chairs the Somerset Carers Partnership Board and is a member of our Working Together Board and Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board.

Our Transformation approach

We have a long-standing approach to seek out and invite external expertise and guidance to support local improvement efforts, with an ambitious Transformation programme in place to improve outcomes for people using our services. We have had successful applicants to each of the last two cohorts of the ADASS Accelerate programme – the participants have used this programme to kick start two new transformation programmes within the service.

We are proud to have been shortlisted in the LGC Awards 2025 for our 'My Life, My Future' Transformation Programme within Adult Social Care. In 2022, our Adult Social Care service faced significant pressures, including a projected £13m overspend. To address this, we launched the 'My Life, My Future' programme, focusing on improvement through data-driven decision-making. This programme has significantly improved outcomes for residents, improved satisfaction for staff, and is delivering substantial financial savings.





Our 'My Life, My Future' Transformation Programme set out to improve outcomes for the people we support by enabling people to maintain or increase their level of independence wherever possible. This included supporting them to regain skills and confidence after a crisis through an improved short-term service, using new ways of working to keep someone at home rather than moving them to a residential placement, or by supporting someone to learn new skills and abilities to do more things for themselves. This focus on independence for people aimed to enable people to live the lives they want to but also reduce or avoid increases in the level of long-term care provision and support required from the local authority.

Programme results have been strong, with significant operational improvements seen in all workstreams. These improvements will support more residents to better outcomes that increase or maintain their independence – reducing or mitigating increases in commissioned care spend.

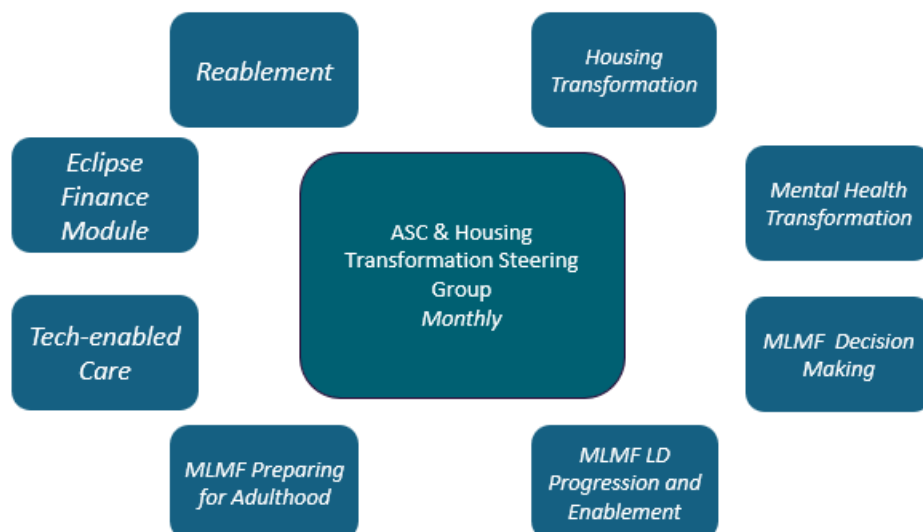
- We are now supporting over forty additional people per month to access the reablement service (an increase of 30%) meaning more people can live safely in their own home. This performance sustained over the Winter period, supporting flow from our acute hospitals.
- We have also seen the effectiveness of the service increase. Setting and tracking against clear reablement goals for users of the service has led to a 17% increase in effectiveness, enabling people to regain more of their independence and consequently reduce our long-term commissioned spend on care at home for these individuals by an additional hour per person.
- We have seen more individuals maintaining their independence at home for as long as possible. Alongside this, improving visibility of team activity through dashboards for managers has supported a renewed focus on productivity, seeing people who need us sooner and preventing crises.

- Comparing the first six months of 2024 to the last six months of 2023, Care Act Assessment throughput has increased by 27%, and review throughput by 8%. This performance continues into 2025.
- Even with this increase in productivity, we have seen more independent outcomes for adults receiving support from our services. The average non-reablement homecare package size resulting from an assessment or review has reduced compared to our baseline.
- We are also supporting more people at home where possible. When adjusting for the increase in productivity, we have seen fifty fewer residential placement starts between January and July 2024 than we would have expected to see given our historical rate of placement decisions.
- The Programme has also worked to upskill our teams in their confidence using data to make decisions – providing a key element of sustainability. Dashboards can be viewed at a service, cohort, or team level to allow oversight and action across all levels of the service.
- Young people transitioning from Children's to Adult Social Care are now on average assessed before they are 18 for the first time since at least 2021, leading to better planning and a £500 per week approximate reduction in required support
- Since forming our specialist Learning Disability teams, peer forums and increased focus on review quality and outcomes, our average cost change at each review is almost half of what it was previously

The programme is now in the 'sustain' phase and dedicated programme capacity has ramped down. The new ways of working are being maintained as 'business as usual' within our Adult Social Care teams who are regularly reviewing "sustainability matrices" to assess suitability of progress against what good looks like to drive ongoing improvement and ensure new ways of working are sustained. The My Life, My Future transformation programme will continue and develop as we continue to transform Adult Social Care in Somerset.

Adult Social Care's transformation activity, including the 'My Life, My Future' Programme directly supports the vision and priorities of Somerset Council, as outlined in the 2023-2027 Council Plan, especially those aligned to ensuring we are a 'healthy and caring Somerset'. Ongoing monitoring of our Transformation Activity is managed through our Monthly Steering Group chaired by Service Directors across Adult Social Care and Housing.

Transformation Steering Group



Our integration with Housing

Combining Housing and Adults Services into one directorate within Somerset Council will and has started to enhance coordination and communication, leading to improved support for individuals. The approach fosters a holistic service delivery model, optimizes resource allocation, and facilitates strategic planning, resulting in better outcomes for individuals accessing the services.

Managing our budget more effectively

We are enhancing our ability to track live performance to manage our Adult Social Care budget and spend.

Our Adult Social Care Performance Leads work closely with corporate Business Intelligence colleagues. Together they possess a very strong knowledge and understanding of our data reporting and statutory national returns and maintain a detailed suite of performance reports designed to support our workforce. They actively contribute to supporting sector-led improvement as part of the South West ADASS Performance Leads group and benchmark performance both regionally and nationally as part of our performance framework.

A key strand of our 'My Life, My Future' programme has centred on 'Data Visibility and Control', with work focused on enhancing proactive performance management and establishing clearer links between operational teams, their decisions and finance data. It has also concentrated on fostering a culture of performance and improvement through data-driven behaviours and evidence-based decision-making.

Looking forward to 2025 and beyond

We continue to learn and improve through listening to and working with our communities to deliver robust and innovative Adult Social Care services in Somerset to live the lives they choose. We have begun our next transformation phase which focuses on working age adults.





Mel Lock
Executive Director, Adults and Health



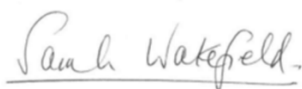
Emily Fulbrook
Service Director, Adults and Health Operations



Paul Coles
Service Director, Adults Commissioning



Kirsty Larkins
Service Director, Housing



Cllr Sarah Wakefield
Lead Member for Adults Services, Housing and Homelessness



Richard Hobbs
Co-Chair, Working Together Board