our SOMERSET
Together we care

Somerset CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S Plan

2024-30

What children and young people say

6,000 children and young people in Somerset have chosen their priorities.

This plan amplifies the voices of Somerset's children and young people – representing everyone from pre-birth to adulthood (0 to 24 years) and their families.

We need to hear what it's like growing up in Somerset, and what priorities are most important to children and young people.

At the end of the plan is a section about how we need to work together to support children, young people and their families – and what all professionals in the public sector and communities can do to help.

Our Vision

"There should be a bettter tie-up between physical and mental health"

"School is a really big factor, it's all of your education and socialisation. It's one of the most important things in young people's lives"

"Sometimes it's impossible to have healthy relationships there is too much pressure."

Our shared vision is that Somerset's children and young people grow up in a safe, child friendly county that supports them to be happy, healthy and prepared for adulthood.

"It is really difficult to find any job prospects in Somerset. You do end up moving out of the county to go to university. In terms of finding employment with SEND on top is significantly more difficult."

"I think it's hard to know how to stay healthy from what we learn at school. Usually teachers just tell you to 'exercise' or 'have a good diet' but they don't really give any advice beyond that."

"Wouldn't it be cool if street lights knew you were there and got brighter as you walked under them - that would help you to feel safe and seen"

"Train staff to advocate for those who struggle to voice their opinions"

What young people said

School Survey

14 Focus Groups

Make Your Mark Vote

Over **6,000** Children and young people's voices heard

Countywide Survey

In collaboration with SOMERSET YOUTH WORK ALLIANCE

Thank you to the following organisations who held focus groups

YOUTH FORUM

Somerset YOUTH PARLIAMENT & advisory group

Somerset Care Councils

THE Unstoppables

It's ok 2BU 2bu-somerset.co.uk

2ARK

TAUNTON BREWHOUSE

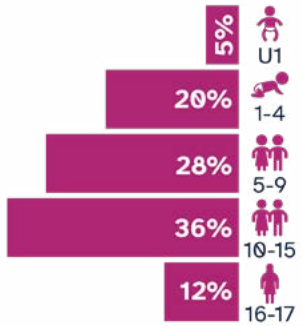
Somerset children and young people a snapshot 23-24

19.2% Children and young people (0-17 years) as a percentage of the total population *(ONS 2022 mid-year estimate)*

110,512 Children and young people in Somerset, aged 0-17 years *(ONS 2022 mid-year estimate)*

4.5% Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) 16-17 year olds *(May-Jul 2023 3-month average (CSW))*

Children and young people by age band* *(ONS 2022)*



11% Children and young people (0-17 years) who are non-'White British' *(2021 census)*

72,603 Children and young people attending state-funded schools *(Jan 2023 school census)*

18% Children and young people in low income families/poverty *(DWP 2022)*

12,058 Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) in schools *(Jan 2023 school census)*

43 Youth Offending Service (YOS) caseload *(as of Feb 2024)*

1,611 Educated at Home pupils *(Somerset Council Sep 2023)*

591 Children Looked After (CLA) *(Somerset Council Jan 2024)*

21.8% Pupils classed as persistent absentees: ***Primary 15% | Secondary 28.3%*** *(SC 2022/23)*

5,374 Children and young people with with Education and Health Care Plans *(Somerset Council Nov 2023)*

389 Care Leavers aged 18-25 *(as of Feb 2024)*

Having the Best Experience in Education

Children and young people have asked that schools, colleges and education help students to feel more included and supported.

They told us that in order to improve attendance and attainment there should be less disruptive behaviour in classrooms and more quiet spaces in schools and colleges.

Who will lead on this?

Education for Life Board (*Education for Life Strategy*), Public Health (*School Survey and Somerset Wellbeing Framework*)

How will we measure what is working better?

Identifying children's needs early, better attendance, fewer suspensions, fewer exclusions, improved achievement

Young People will commit to

Undertaking an audit of quiet spaces in schools and colleges

"Allocate safe spaces for children and young people to go to for support or some classes if they are struggling"

Leading Healthy Lives

Children and young people want to be supported to lead healthier lives in Somerset.

They told us that they need better access to healthy sport and leisure activities, improved advice and better contact with health professionals.

Who will lead on this?

Connect Somerset, Healthy Weight Alliance, Public Health (*Somerset Wellbeing Framework*) and Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (*Somerset Moves Strategy*)

How will we measure what is working better?

Breast feeding initiation, access to dentists, school food standards, 90% of school age children achieve daily recommendations of physical activity

Young People will commit to

Auditing quality of school food, and schools that are role models for the daily recommendations of physical activity

"I would like to be more aware of balanced diets and portion control. It's quite difficult to access health information and care as a young person"

Good Mental Health and Wellbeing

Children and young people want support to lead happy lives and help in their schools, colleges and communities if their mental health deteriorates.

They told us that they need better support for self-injury, better training of staff in schools and colleges and faster access to the right support.

Who will lead on this?

Our Somerset (*Mental Health, Autism and Learning Disabilities Programme Board*), Trauma Informed Steering Group

How will we measure what is working better?

Trauma informed environments, support resulting from presentation at A&E, mental health training in schools

Young People will commit to

Undertaking an audit of available support

"More free mental health services in youth centres, sports clubs and other organisations - not just in school and college"

Living in Safe Communities

Children and young people have told us that they want to live in safe communities where streets and parks feel safe at night.

They told us that they want fewer children and young people involved in county lines and fewer incidents of violence.

Who will lead on this?

Safer Somerset Partnership Board (*Community Safety Plan*)

How will we measure what is working better?

Early identification of children most at risk of exploitation, reduced number of young people in the Youth Justice system

Young People will commit to

Producing community safety resources for schools and colleges

"Not many interesting things to do with friends currently, mostly just going into town or possibly the cinema"

Building Great Relationships

Children and young people want support to build better relationships with their family and friends.

They told us that they need to know what's available in their local communities to meet and make new friends; and where to get advice on relationships and sexual health

Who will lead on this?
Connect Somerset, Public Health, Thriving Childhood Steering Group

How will we measure what is working better?
SWISH key performance indicators, Best Start in Life outcomes. Increased use of digital directories of local activities

Young People will commit to
Mystery Shop clubs and activities and developing a young person friendly directory

"Young people want better areas to do things in, so that they wouldn't be hanging around on street corners"

Well Prepared for Adulthood

Children and young people told us that they need cradle to career support to become independent and prepared for adulthood.

They want life skills to be taught in schools and colleges and help to find jobs, apprenticeships and supported employment.

Who will lead on this?

Education for Life Board (*Education for Life Strategy*) and Somerset Education Business Partnership (*Families Guide*)

How will we measure what is working better?

Increase percentage of children and young people in Employment Education or Training in Somerset, number of job opportunities promoted

Young People will commit to

Auditing what life skills young people want or are already accessing

"My dad made me use the bus at the end of year 6 ready to be able to get to secondary school"

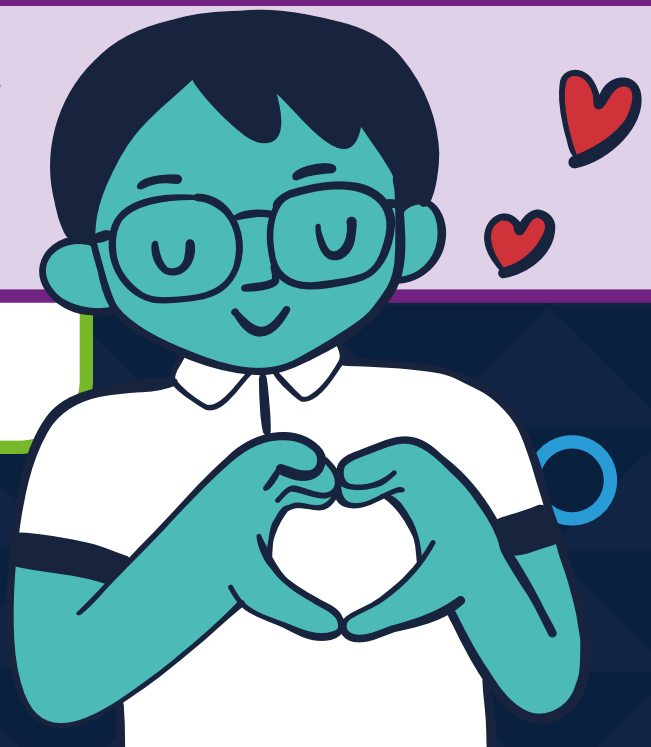
So what's next?

Because of national challenges, all Somerset services are under pressure – whether you are in a school or a voluntary sector organisation, the police or social care, GP surgery or community group.

That's why we need to work together and with communities – to help children and young people as early as possible, and to wrap around families.

Together, this Children and Young People's Plan, and our Connect Somerset Blueprint form our Early Help Strategy

www.connectsomerset.org.uk



What can professionals do?

1. We focus on **strengthening relationships** between professionals and with children and families. People, processes and systems are caring.

2. We **listen to families** – to understand what matters for them, to build on what is already working well and to design services, based on what we learn from individuals and their communities.

3. We do **less time on diagnosis**, assessments and referrals – and **more time on helping** when people need it, stepping outside of our comfort zone.

4. We use **relationship based** and **trauma aware practice**, **personalised support** (personalised care) and **whole family working**. Everyone can be a **key worker** for a family.

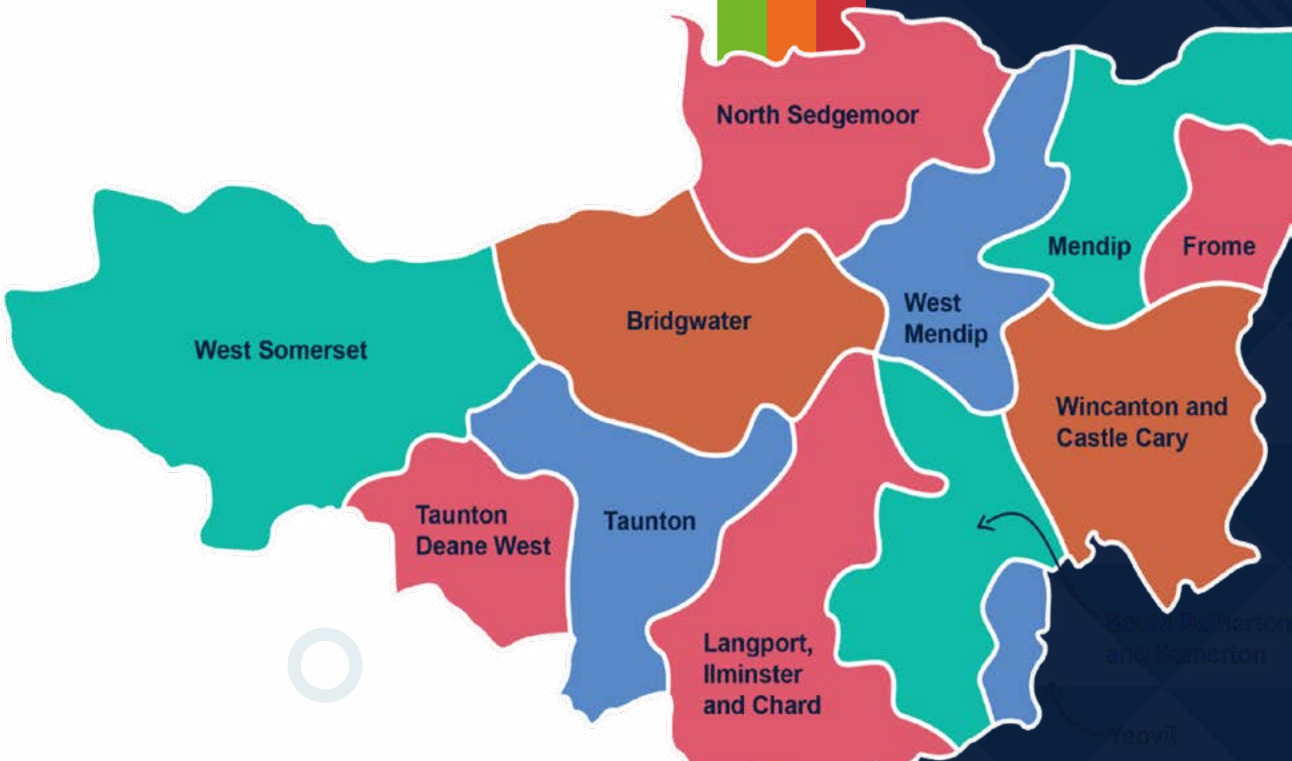
What can professionals do?

5. Support and services will increasingly be based in **neighbourhoods** and **community hubs** – we work together across geographic and professional boundaries and with communities, recognising the challenges of **rurality**.

6. We recognise that **communities have different strengths** and **needs** and work flexibly to support both individuals and communities.

7. We **share data** and **intelligence** so we can offer more help to those most in need, and children don't slip through the net.

8. As a system by **supporting earlier**, the need for acute services will reduce over time, offering more investment early in communities and reducing inequalities across Somerset.



How will we know that we are making progress?

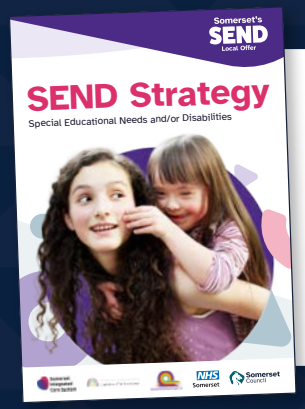
Ways we will measure the progress of this plan:

- Hear the voices of children and young people telling us if their experience is changing or improving
- Regularly measure the Key Performance Indicators set by the leads of each priority
- Regularly publish friendly infographics illustrating progress on social media and websites
- Ensure that new strategies and policies in Somerset reflect the priorities of the Plan
- Challenge the pace of progress through the Integrated Care System Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board
- Annual update to the Somerset Board

What's Changed Since the Last Plan?

Local Government Reorganisation

Somerset Council



Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Strategy

An Education for Life Strategy for Somerset

Three Year Delivery Plan for Maternity and Neonatal Services

Integrated Care Board

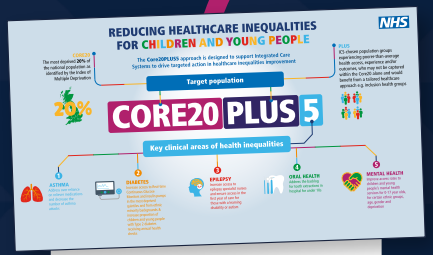
our SOMERSET Together we care

Connect Somerset

Connect Somerset

Youth Work Alliance

SOMERSET YOUTH WORK ALLIANCE



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#Help4All

Everyone needs a bit of extra help sometimes.

Somerset partners have listed a selection of free support and advice that every family should know about.

If you know someone who needs extra help, please introduce them to these services and local early help.

For links, simply scan the QR code or visit:
www.ConnectSomerset.org.uk/Help4All

Acknowledgements

This plan was produced with support from:

- Youth Forum
- Somerset in Care and Leaving Care Councils (SiCC and SLCC)
- The Unstoppables
- Youth Parliament
- Youth Work Alliance
- The Participation Workers Network
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