



CCS

people • place • enterprise

BUILDING THRIVING COMMUNITIES

STRATEGY 2024/2029



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Our vision for 2029

Our work will support communities in Somerset to thrive.

That means:

More resilient communities that are stronger, and better able to withstand external crises. They will have better resources and everyone will have access to the support that they need to meet their basic needs in food, fuel, transport and health.

Better connected communities where community organisations and public services work more collaboratively and efficiently and people can access the amenities and opportunities they need.

Amplifying the voice of communities; listening to the needs of people in Somerset and sharing those insights with local, regional and national change makers to inform policy.

We will do this through an evidence-based approach, using insights from our own impact measurement and data gathered on the ground to establish needs within communities, and raising these with strategic partners, locally and nationally. Working within communities we will model localised community solutions to meet health, transport, food and housing needs in Somerset.



OUR VISION

Supporting Somerset's communities to thrive

OUR MISSION

To enable change by listening, responding to need and building connections between people and communities

OUR VALUES

We are kind and compassionate
We act with honesty and integrity
We value equality and inclusion

How we developed our strategy

We have been on a journey since May 2023.

Our aim was to use the insights and ideas across our team to inform our process. At the beginning we developed principles to guide our strategy. We decided:

- it would be aspirational
- we would be inclusive and welcome all ideas and perspectives
- challenge is important, and we would always seek to question
- we would create a shared vision, mission, set of values and strategy that everyone in CCS can own and will advocate for.

Our strategy is a strategy forged through consensus

We have consulted internally through a number of “2 minute questions” and externally through our stakeholder survey, and conversations with partners and key stakeholders in the county. External testing was an important part of the process.

We have held four Vision, Mission and Values sessions, five Theory of Change sessions (we arranged a fifth when we realised that colleagues were reaching out, asking for further opportunities to attend), a SWOT session, a Trustee Strategy Day and a Strategy Day for the Senior Leadership, Trustees and representatives of the Working Group – a cross section of our whole team. Out of the 110 people, employees and volunteers, involved in CCS, only a handful have been unable to engage at all.

Two minute questions



Stakeholder survey



Partner conversations



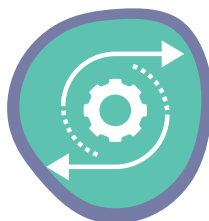
External testing



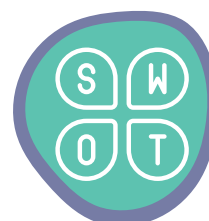
Vision, Mission, Value session



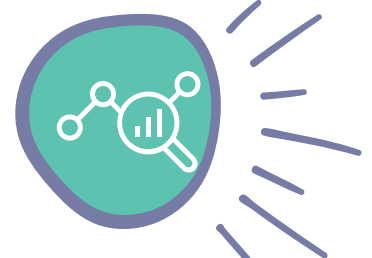
Theory of Change session



SWOT analysis



Trustee strategy days



Our Somerset in 2024

As we launched our strategy journey we looked at internal and external data that explore some of the challenges that characterise Somerset, and provide the context for our strategic goals.


It was important for us to challenge our assumptions and make evidence-based decisions about our priorities, triangulating this intelligence with the insights we gain from our work on the ground within our communities.

Somerset is a rural county. Population density is 1.5 people per hectare, compared to 4.1 people in England as a whole. Just under half of residents live in rural areas. Our towns are small. According to the 2021 census, no town has a population beyond 62,000 (for local comparison, Weston-Super-Mare is 84,628). Within a national context where rural issues are overshadowed by a levelling up agenda in the north of the country, this is important.

One of our best known towns, Glastonbury, has a population of just 8,297 (apart from two days of the year where this grows substantially).

Yet, according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation of 2019 parts of Somerset are within the most deprived places in the country. Glastonbury is within the most deprived 10% nationally. Twenty nine other areas in Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil and Highbridge are within the most deprived 20% in the country. Thirteen of these places are in Sedgemoor.

Rural deprivation was far harder to classify, there is no national measure and conclusions can only be drawn from putting together the patchwork of other evidence - poor transport, lack of access to services, housing poverty and digital exclusion.



**30 areas in Somerset
fall within the 20%
most deprived places
in the United
Kingdom.**



Access to housing and services

Lack of access to housing and services is a major indicator of deprivation in rural areas in the county. In this, Somerset ranks 57 out of 151 in the country (when 151 is least deprived). This is in stark comparison to income, where Somerset is 101 out of 151.

Lack of access to services is partly down to the transport issues communities face. 88% of Somerset's roads are classified as 'rural'. The 2021 census tells us that people travel further in Somerset on average to get to work or college, yet 14% of residents have no access to a vehicle. And, if you are a one car family in a rural area such as on Exmoor or the Levels then part of that family is, to all intents and purposes, stuck.

Older women are less likely to own a car than any other demographic group, and isolation for older women who have been widowed or lost a partner is a significant issue.

Cutting across all of this is digital poverty, which, post-pandemic, continues to exclude a significant part of the population. According to Spark Somerset, 1 in 5 people in Somerset are estimated to be digitally excluded, either through lack of skills, lack of device, or lack of data or connectivity. And unfortunately, Somerset will wait until 2035 for fibre broadband throughout. In rural areas, lack of connectivity and the cost of data are both significant barriers, particularly when your nearest free Wifi is at McDonalds in Minehead, a 40 minute drive away, and there is no public transport.

Somerset

Deprivation rank

57 out of 151 in the country
(where 151 is least deprived)

Income rank

101 out of 151 in the country

Transport issues

88% of Somerset's roads are rural

No access to a vehicle

14% of Somerset residents

Digitally excluded

1 in 5 residents



Factors such as these combine to highlight the unique needs of our rural and coastal communities, and the challenges for organisations in supporting change.

Our population



Somerset has an older population. Nearly 25% of residents are over 65, 21% are aged between 50-65. As with many rural counties, the beauty of Somerset attracts people in retirement, but this brings its own challenges for health services in the long term.

We are also a changing population, 8.5% of residents were born outside the UK. Economic developments such as Hinkley Point C, and Gravity attract people, be that to jobs on site, or jobs that need to be backfilled.

Only a small percentage (3.6%) are from non-white ethnic groups, but people from black ethnic backgrounds have more than doubled since 2011.

Increased diversity, although small scale, is exciting, but brings its own challenges for communities. Hate crime continues to rise, and consultation with diverse communities tells us that they do not always feel welcome or protected.

Increased diversity, although small scale, is exciting, but brings its own challenges for communities.



Health



Our stretched health service was spoken about at every strategy session, and during every consultation.

Nearly 1 in 5 residents in Somerset have a disability or long-term health condition that limits day to day activities. 8% have a long-term health condition which does not limit activities.

All of these still need care. Our care system is at breaking point. Village Agents speak daily of the struggles in securing trusted micro-providers, or providers to support in the evening or at weekends.

We have parts of our community who we support that remain very much hidden; adults with learning difficulties, and people who are homeless have seen increased referrals to the Village Agent service over the last two years.

Unpaid carers are often unseen, old and young. DfE data suggests that there are just 197 known young carers in Somerset - how many more are flying under the radar?

Nearly 1 in 5 residents in Somerset have a disability or long-term health condition that limits day to day activities.



Income

In income terms, Somerset ranks 101 out of 151 in the country (where 151 is least deprived). How then do we have such poverty?

1 in 5 children in Somerset are eligible for free school meals, an indicator of low income. This has increased from 1 in 6 in 2020 (pre-covid).

1 in 10 of the people we help are struggling to heat their homes or put food on the table.

Previously, where Village Agents were supporting vulnerable members of the community, they are now supporting them, and their families.

Food banks are oversubscribed. We are anticipating a hard winter in 2024 with fuel poverty needs increasing, both for families and older people.

The cost-of-living crisis has hit communities hard, knocking financial resilience and creating a growing number of working poor.

Our Theory of Change

We have developed our theory of change as part of the strategy process and our strategic goals reflect our priorities for short term change; whilst the framework sets out how we believe we will move from short to medium to long term outcomes, to achieve our vision.

Whilst some of the indicators we use in the strategy are the same, the theory of change is a more detailed road map for our programmes and should be read in conjunction with this strategy.

Like the strategy, it is also a live document, which will be reviewed regularly. Neither of these organisational tools will be left on the shelf.

A tool to help identify what we will measure to understand whether change is happening, how it is happening and for whom.



THEORY OF

SHORT TERM



PEOPLE ARE CONFIDENT TO CONNECT



NEW SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES



NEW IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

LOCAL & NATIONAL GOVERNMENT UNDERSTAND FUEL POVERTY CHALLENGES



VULNERABLE PEOPLE RECEIVE SUPPORT IMMEDIATELY



PEOPLE SHARE THEIR LOVE OF GROWING FOOD



PEOPLE ARE HAPPY TO ASK FOR HELP



HOUSING NEEDS ARE ON LOCAL & NATIONAL AGENDA

ORGANISATIONS WORK TOGETHER



CHANGE

MID TERM



ACTIVITIES
AVAILABLE FOR
EVERYONE



ACCESSIBLE
& AFFORDABLE
TRANSPORT



PEOPLE ABLE
TO MAKE
BETTER CHOICES
ABOUT ENERGY



WHOLE
COMMUNITY
GROWS AND
SHARES FOOD



FIT & PROPER
HOUSING FOR ALL



HEALTH SERVICES
FOR ALL

LONG TERM

NO ONE WITHIN
ANY COMMUNITY
FEELS ISOLATED



PEOPLE CAN ACCESS
TRANSPORT,
FOOD, AND
HEAT THEIR HOMES



PEOPLE ARE ABLE
TO LIVE SECURELY IN
THE PLACES THEY CHOOSE



PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO
ACCESS THE HEALTH CARE
SERVICES THEY NEED

Cross cutting themes

There are several key themes that kept coming up throughout our strategy.

We know that the challenges facing our community are interconnected and complex. But these are played out on the background of wider, societal changes that will influence everything.

The climate emergency, the technological revolution, and resulting digital poverty and exclusion, and systematic issues within equality, diversity and inclusion, must be looked at as weaving through everything we aim to do over the next five years.

The approaches we take, the decisions we make and the changes we fight for, must all take this into account.

Although they may not feature in this high level strategy document, these cross-cutting themes will play a large part in our operational planning and organisational development, and we will ensure they are explored annually as part of our strategy review process.

We will hold ourselves accountable for supporting our Somerset communities to manage these global changes and our response to the Sustainable Development Goals.

A word about language

Communities

In this strategy we have used 'communities' to mean both geographical communities and communities of interest.

Partners

Similarly, when we talk about 'partners', we may not have a signed partnership agreement with organisations, but we work closely with them in a variety of ways.

Acronyms

We know that acronyms can become an IQ test, so we have tried to avoid using them. We do use the acronym VCFSE though when we talk about not for profit organisations in Somerset. This stands for Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector. We don't want anyone to feel left out however, and are more than happy to work with arts and heritage organisations too.

Our strategic goals

- 1** **Somerset communities are resilient and thriving**
- 2** **We collaborate effectively with others**
- 3** **We inform and influence policy to drive change**
- 4** **People understand who we are and why we exist**
- 5** **A financially sustainable organisation**
- 6** **An agile, skilled and confident organisation**

Somerset communities are resilient and thriving

We understand that loneliness is affecting more and more people in our communities.

The 2021 census showed that almost a third of our households are single person households.

An ageing population, and a rural county with inadequate transport networks means that isolation is a growing challenge.

The combined impact of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis means, in the words of many who responded to our consultation exercise, that “the ‘just about managings’ are not managing any more”.

Food and fuel poverty have increased, and health services are increasingly stretched and harder to access.

The increasing unpredictability of the weather, and the impacts of the climate emergency add additional challenges for communities already under pressure. There is greater need than ever for strong communities to meet these challenges. Resilient and vibrant communities both change, and save, lives.



We will:

- 1 Ensure that more people have the confidence to access opportunities to connect with their communities and feel less isolated and alone.
- 2 Take opportunities to support individuals and communities in establishing social groups and initiatives.
- 3 Support more communities to develop and maintain solutions to transport, isolation, fuel, food and health challenges by 2029.
- 4 Help more vulnerable people meet their immediate health, food and fuel needs.

To achieve our objectives we must:

- Upskill colleagues in delivering behaviour change
- Protect Village Agent time dedicated to community development
- Retain capacity in the Village Agent service to maintain a client case load
- Signpost well and know our community resources
- Invest and develop resources for new initiatives and programmes

How we'll know we've succeeded

By 2029, 90% of people accessing the relevant programmes will report an increase in confidence and motivation to participate in social activities.

By 2025, 100 community initiatives will have been launched and run for a minimum of 6 months (with a 10% increase each year by 2029).

Each year 10% more people presenting with food and fuel needs will be able to access the support they need.

30 regular Health Talking Cafes will be established in rural communities each year.

Five community health hubs will be established in rural communities by 2029, bringing together critical clinical health services.

By 2029, 90% of people who have accessed our relevant programmes will say their wellbeing has increased.

We collaborate effectively with others

We know from our stakeholder consultation that we work with organisations of different sizes the length and breadth of the county. From cafes who provide hot meals to clients, to county wide organisations such as Citizen’s Advice and Age UK Somerset, and networks such as the Dementia Alliance or Open Mental Health; we work with others to deliver change in Somerset.

We have our own networks, such as the Community Buildings network or the organisations Somerset Diverse Communities work so effectively with to support people of different ethnicities and backgrounds.



We will:

- 1 Develop and share access to a robust network of grassroots community connections by 2029.
- 2 Work strategically with public, private and VCFSE sector colleagues to increase whole system effectiveness.
- 3 Be generous leaders in the VCFSE sector in Somerset.

To achieve our objectives we must:

- Develop relationships operationally and strategically across all sectors and communities through a stakeholder management plan
- Have a strong monitoring and evaluation framework that enables us to be insight-led and measure impact at individual, programmatic and system levels
- Be brave; invest in and support communities to try new and different solutions through annual programmes plans linked to our fundraising strategy
- Nurture strategic relationships with VCFSE and public sector leaders to influence and develop the system in which we all operate

How we'll know we've succeeded

By 2029, transport pathways will be embedded in 75% of the most deprived rural and urban areas of Somerset.

A cohesive, county wide network of grassroots community transport, social, health, food and fuel initiatives is shared and utilised across Somerset by 2029.

By 2029, connections are developed between food providers, community organisations and communities to enable easier access to food in 75% of the most deprived rural and urban areas of Somerset.

By 2029 50% of Village Agent time is focused on community development work.

By 2029, the number of VCFSE organisations that we actively work with across the sector will increase by 60%.

Colleagues at all levels share information and resource with other organisations across Somerset each year.

By the end of 2025, we will identify a measurement to use to understand our contribution to the health and wellbeing system in Somerset.

Informing and influencing policy to drive change

We are lucky to collect a large volume of data from all of our programmes. It provides insights into the needs of our communities, and we talk to thousands and thousands of people each year.

We want to amplify these voices, to tell their stories and share the trends we are finding that show what communities need.

Times are hard. We hear of food poverty, fuel poverty, housing poverty, emotional poverty, transport poverty, bringing to mind a many headed hydra of need that picks us off one by one.



Yet, every statistic has a story, every number a face. We are in the privileged position of being able to bring those stories in front of the change makers - and ask them what they are going to do about it. In these challenging times, this is perhaps one of the most important roles we will play over the next five years.

We will:

- 1 Use insights from our programmes in housing, health, fuel and transport to inform local, regional and national conversations by the end of 2027.
- 2 Develop relationships with key decision makers and agencies across all programme areas of our strategy by 2029.
- 3 Make sure community needs in Somerset are taken into account by local and national stakeholders by 2029.

To achieve our objectives we must:

- Change our communications to focus on community issues and insights from our programmes, and produce four briefing papers a year by 2027 which are led by data and impact measurement
- Develop our media presence through a strong communications approach
- Focus on key strategic partnerships as part of our stakeholder management plan
- Build our strategic presence within decision making forums, and amplify community voices

How we'll know we've succeeded

Citations evidence that our regular briefing papers and accompanying communications are recognised, identified and discussed by others.

We are invited to make specific contribution to policy discussions addressing housing, health, fuel, transport and community social needs based on our grassroots knowledge and insight.

We are the 'go to' organisation for expressing community needs in Somerset.



People understand who we are and why we exist

Both our internal and external consultation confirmed that the many programmes CCS delivers can sometimes be confusing, or have a higher profile than the charity itself.

We have many different social media channels and our website is not always easy to navigate. We do not tend to talk about the difference we make to people's lives, but focus on what we're doing – such as trainings or events. This can mean that people feel confused about our purpose and what we want to achieve.

We understand this and during the first two years of our strategy, will tackle this, head on.



We will:

- 1 Be able to better articulate our mission, values and programmes by the end of 2024.
- 2 Be more consistent in our messaging and presentation of our organisation and our programmes by March 2025.
- 3 Make sure that all colleagues are confident advocates for our values, vision and programmes by the end of 2024.

To achieve our objectives we must:

- Undertake a rebranding exercise in 2024, including reviewing our name
- Develop a new website and presence across communication platforms
- Deliver strong internal communications
- Invest in marketing capacity

How we'll know we've succeeded

By 2029, 85% of people will recognise our brand and identity.

By 2029, 90% of people will understand our impact as well as what events and activities we host.

Employee surveys will show that colleagues feel more confident in presenting our charitable vision and values externally.



A financially sustainable organisation

We recognise the importance of diversifying our funding base to increase our sustainability.

We also recognise the powerful stories we collect every day, and that we have never shared them with people in Somerset and asked for support.

Investing in our fundraising and marketing capacity is key to the success of this strategy, and is what will enable us to provide the support we want to our communities.



We will:

- 1 Increase unrestricted, un-commissioned income to £250,000 per year by 2029.
- 2 Reflect the real costs and capacity needs of the organisation within all budgeting exercises.
- 3 Align income generation to our mission and strategy.

To achieve our objectives we must:

- Seek to raise funds through individual, community, corporate and legacy fundraising as set out in our fundraising strategy, in addition to other earned income opportunities
- Develop trusts and foundation support for our programmes
- Shift our communications towards 'storytelling', raising awareness of issues in our communities and what we are doing to change them
- Have robust financial processes that enable us to be open and transparent and understand organisational overhead need
- Invest in fundraising capacity

How we'll know we've succeeded

We will be able to invest strategically in five new initiatives and programmes each year, piloting new ideas and delivering our vision.

We will not deliver commissioned services that are not fully funded beyond 2028.

We will maintain a level of reserves that protects us against unexpected costs or losses in income and enables us to deliver our mission.

We will have diverse income generation streams by 2029.

We will understand the social value of our other programmes and our commissioned services by 2029.

Agile, skilled and confident organisation

We are an ambitious organisation but we are aware that underpinning our programmes has to be sufficient capacity in our core team to provide the scaffolding for our work. We also need the resource to do this effectively in the 21st century, ensuring that we keep pace with technological change.



At the heart of everything we do is our team. Their development and wellbeing is vital to delivering our theory of change. We wish to invest in a team that is skilled in meeting the challenges they find in our communities, and confident in taking a leading role. Mapping these competencies across the organisation is fundamental to our commitment to quality assurance.

At the technological core will be an investment in a new data management system to both deliver our programmes, measure our impact, and manage our fundraising and communications. Ensuring our systems and processes are able to support our work will be important to the first few years of this strategy.

We are committed to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation, and this strategy marks the first step of a strategic approach that draws together a shared ethos and creates tangible system change.

We will:

- 1 Embed a learning culture in the organisation by 2026.
- 2 Develop and embed robust processes and systems, embracing technological changes, by the end of 2025.
- 3 Further develop our processes in change management, project management capacity and quality assurance by 2025.
- 4 Continue to nurture a culture where all colleagues feel valued and that their wellbeing is prioritised.
- 5 Create robust measurement systems to capture and utilise impact internally and externally.
- 6 Reflect the communities we serve.

To achieve our objectives we must:

- Have a robust competency framework that maps all roles throughout the organisation
- Implement a learning and development plan that builds skills into all we do
- Celebrate learning; share knowledge internally and externally – and welcome the use of it to drive change
- Invest in a new CRM by 2025
- Utilise new technologies and methodologies to build processes and systems that enable our work to be delivered
- Develop an organisational Equity, Diversity and Inclusion approach that cuts across all that we do by December 2024
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework that measures and monitors our impact in communities and delivers our Theory of Change by December 2024
- Review and refine IT support capacity in 2024



How we'll know we've succeeded

All colleagues are confident in how they can progress within the organisation by 2025.

The number of colleagues who develop their leadership skills increases annually.

There is an increase of examples of where colleagues share best practice, through connecting with others locally, regionally and nationally, and seek to implement change on the basis of their learning.

Productivity is measured through SMART objectives for employees.

Processes and procedures are efficient, robust and fit for the future by 2025.

We'll have greater diversity at all levels throughout the organisation.

Each year, our employee surveys show a happy, engaged and supported team.

Data and insights drive change and development internally and externally.





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