



Somerset
Council

Adult Social Care Strategy 2023-26

Foreword

We have many things to be thankful for in Somerset: our skilled and dedicated workforce, excellent partners in NHS, care provider and voluntary organisations, and a strong sense of community in all corners of our county. We are very grateful for this chance to thank them and acknowledge how much we value them.

They also set us up well to meet the challenges we are all facing currently.

Councils in every part of the country are still learning to live with the longer-term effects of the pandemic and also the current financial and cost of living crisis.

Every local authority is facing a tough and competitive recruitment market.

Additionally, here in Somerset we have a thriving but aging population and we need to be creative and exacting to improve our services for those people.

We need now to be delivering our very best service in the most challenging of times.

This strategy sets out our principles and priorities, and most importantly how we will achieve them.

We do have some distinct opportunities at this particular time. With the formation of the new unitary council, for the first time in Somerset we will be working alongside our colleagues in housing and planning. Also we now have the newly formed Integrated Care System, in our case a very singular and simple landscape with one Integrated Care Partnership that aligns well with the one Health and Wellbeing Board, and now just one NHS Trust that incorporates the previous mental health and acute trusts.

We could not do what we do every day without our colleagues in care providers, hospitals and communities.

We could not do it without the people who draw on our services, their families and their carers.

We hope this strategy will help us to enable people to live their best lives and improve their health and wellbeing.

Cllr Heather Shearer
Lead Member for Adult Social Care
Somerset Council

What is Adult Social Care?

The scale of adult social care and support is vast, affecting the lives of over 10 million adults of all ages in England. People draw on care and support in different ways and at different stages of their life; some people will require support throughout their life whilst for others care needs develop suddenly or gradually. Some people may only use social care for a short period (for example after a hospital stay).

Social care affects adults of all ages – including young people moving into adulthood and those of working age – with a diverse range of needs (including autistic people, people with a learning disability or physical disability, people with mental health conditions, people with dementia, and other people with long term conditions).

Care and support covers a wide range of activities to promote people's wellbeing and support them to live independently, staying well and safe. It can include 'personal care' as well as wider personalised support to enable people to stay engaged in their communities and live their lives in the way they want.

Who provides adult social care?

Local authorities are responsible for assessing people's needs and, if individuals are eligible, funding their care. Our service in Somerset Council is made up of two functions: an operational service (made up of frontline social care teams), and an adult social care commissioning and quality service.

Most social care services are, however, delivered directly by independent care sector providers, which are mainly for-profit companies but also include some voluntary sector organisations. Many people will also have this care organised and purchased by their local authority, though many people with disabilities directly employ individuals ('personal assistants') to provide their care and support.

Our key Adult Social Care Statutory Duties under The Care Act 2014

- Provision of social care: *assessment of individuals' and carers' needs, provision of detailed care and support plans; duty to meet the needs of someone assessed as eligible for care and support; financial assessments*
- Provision of preventative services and information/advice: *reducing, preventing, delaying the need for care and support*
- Promotion of individual wellbeing
- Promotion of integration between health and social care services including integrated commissioning
- Safeguarding adults at risk and Safeguarding Adults Boards
- Market shaping: quality, choice, sufficiency of provision; provider failure contingencies

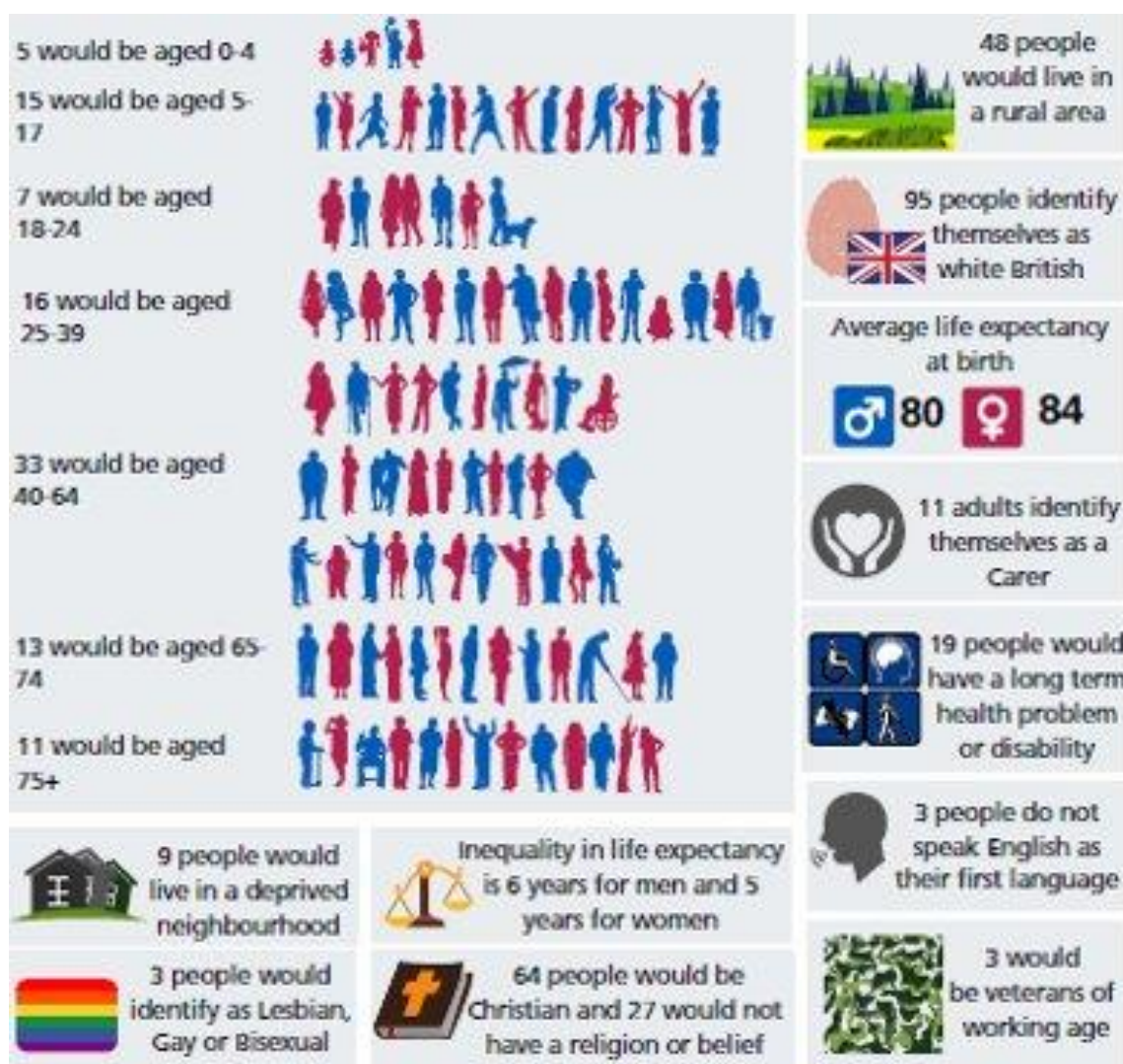
Our Place

Somerset has a resident population of 571,600. Our population is older than the national average. Over the next 25 years while the overall population will rise by 15%, we expect those over the age of 75 to double, resulting in a further significant rise in demand for health and care services.

As our population changes, the support people need from our local services is also changing.

People are living longer, and more people are living with long-term conditions. As a result, the Local Authority and our partners need to work differently, providing more care in people's homes and local communities, and working more effectively in partnership.

If Somerset was a village of 100 people:



In Somerset we benefit from:

- A new unitary authority (Somerset Council) as of April 2023
- An Integrated Care Board (ICB), into which the functions of the Somerset CCG were transferred from July 2022
- A Health & Wellbeing Board which closely aligns with the Integrated Care Partnership
- A single NHS Foundation Trust providing integrated Community Health, Mental Health and Acute Hospital services at Musgrove Park in Taunton and Yeovil Hospital as of April 2023
- 13 Primary Care Networks (PCNs) working over 12 neighbourhoods
- Strong relationships with local independent care providers and voluntary and community sector partners, and a thriving micro-provider market.

The current context

Social care is an essential part of the fabric of our society. At its best, it enables and transforms lives. It supports people to live the lives they want to lead, where they want to live them. There is enormous potential for social care to help people stay healthy, happy and independent through scaling up our preventative, person-centred, strengths-based approaches. This is what we hope to harness and achieve through this strategy.

However, it is a challenging time for local government. Years of austerity and growing demand has reduced the spending power and financial flexibility of all councils. The national cost-of-living crisis is hitting the council and partner organisations just as it is our residents. The cost of delivering services has dramatically increased due to rising energy costs, rising interest rates and increasing numbers of people who need our support.

The council is legally required to balance the budget: there is no overdraft facility that we can use. In recent years Somerset's councils have built up financial reserves but we cannot spend these monies all at once and risk leaving the savings account empty when there will undoubtedly be new challenges ahead. This means that we are going to have to be incredibly careful with taxpayers' money. We will have less to spend as our challenges grow and at the same time the challenges our residents face daily also grow. This will require us to be more creative about the way we support people. We need to work with partners in a wide range of organisations with similar goals to look broadly at the ways we currently use our expertise and money to see if, in collaboration with our communities, we can do something better. We will challenge the ways that we have historically delivered services and listen carefully in order to understand what works for those who use our services and what doesn't.

Public engagement and feedback

We asked members of the public what they thought of Adult Social Care in a survey launched in October 2022 and concluding in early January 2023.

Responses were gathered via an online form as well as in person at local public events.

In total **438 responses** were secured in relation to:

- How adult social care could be better, *and*
- What the biggest challenges facing social care were felt to be.

Key themes emerging from this engagement with local citizens included:

- Funding
- Recruitment and retention
- Information and accessibility
- Communication.

Analysis of our engagement with the public indicates:

- **There is recognition across the public of under-funding and challenges with staff recruitment and retention in social care, and a desire to address negative media coverage about social care roles.**
- **There is a sense that the digitisation of services has led to increased accessibility issues in receiving timely care and support.**
- **There is concern about isolation for the elderly, and people having fewer community-based opportunities and activities since the pandemic.**
- **There is an opportunity to improve wider communication and understanding of the social care support services available and how these can be accessed.**

Staff engagement and feedback

We ran a workforce for all staff members with the Director of Adult Social Services and service leads to inform the development of our Strategy in December 2022.

Themes from staff feedback included:

- The need to continue to develop our preventative offer and further shape our local care market
- More focus on staff retention and wellbeing
- Seeking opportunities to improve communication within the council as well as with the public to help raise awareness of adult social care
- Enhancing support and improving opportunities for young people and adults with learning disabilities
- Further improving opportunities for collaboration and joined-up working with other local services and departments

What are the most important areas for ASC to prioritise over the next three years?



What are the main factors that prevent us from delivering the right care in the right place and at the right time?



There is a clear ‘golden thread’ across key strategies in Somerset, demonstrating a shared commitment to:

- Improving people’s health and wellbeing.
- Focusing on prevention and early intervention.
- Investing in our communities and neighbourhoods.
- Promoting people’s independence whilst ensuring easy access to high quality support when required.
- Reducing inequalities and improving outcomes for those with more complex needs.
- Supporting the wider health and care workforce.

We want our residents to be able to say¹:

- “I have care and support that is co-ordinated, and everyone works well together and with me”.
- “I have care and support that enables me to live as I want to, seeing me as a unique person with skills, strengths and goals”.
- “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”.
- “I am supported to plan ahead for important changes in my life that I can anticipate”.
- “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”.
- “I feel safe and am supported to understand and manage any risks”.
- “Leaders work proactively to support staff and collaborate with partners to deliver safe, integrated, person-centred and sustainable care and to reduce inequalities”.

¹ [Six themes of Making it Real - About - Making it Real - Think Local Act Personal](#)

Our Vision:

'In Somerset, we want people to live healthy and independent lives, supported by thriving and connected communities, with timely and easy access to high quality and efficient support when they need it'.

Our Strategy sets out how we will work to deliver our vision in partnership to ensure we deliver the right kind of care and support for our communities, and the best possible outcomes within the resources available to us.

Our priorities:



Priority 1 – Prevention & early help

People in Somerset should be assisted to get information and advice about their health, care and support and how they can be as well as possible – physically, mentally and emotionally.

They should be supported to manage their health and wellbeing so they can maximise their independence, choice and control, live healthier lives and, where possible, reduce future needs for care and support.

We will:

- Continue to develop viable care alternatives and accessible housing to reduce and delay the need for long-term care.
- Invest in digital and community equipment to support and reduce demand for care, developing our assistive technology offer to enable people to remain as independent as possible within their own homes.
- Ensure unpaid carers are valued, recognised and supported to provide care in a way that supports their own health and wellbeing.
- Provide engaging, clear and easy to access information and support to people when and how they need it in order to stay healthy and well.
- Maintain an effective 'front door' service that adopts a person-centred, solution-focused approach, and enables earlier intervention and prevention.
- Utilise rich datasets to better inform our understanding of local need and enable more targeted approaches to address the health and wellbeing of our population.
- Work as part of Somerset's Integrated Care System to embrace more personalised approaches to health and care, investing in people's health and wellbeing when they are well and supporting them when they need it.

Priority 2 – Right support, right place, right time

People in Somerset should have care and support that is coordinated and enables them to live as they want to, being seen as a unique person with skills, strengths and goals.

We must work with people and our partners to maintain safe systems of care, ensuring continuity when people move between different services and making safeguarding personal by concentrating on improving people's lives.

In understanding the diverse health and care needs of our local communities, care should be joined-up, flexible and support choice and continuity.

We will:

- Develop and enhance adult social care support in local neighbourhood areas, bringing care and support closer to home.

- Invest in the development of voluntary and community enterprises, and align micro-provision with broader core provision of care at home.
- Promote quality and diversity in the provision of local services, and re-commission models of care to ensure services are localised, integrated, sustainable and best meet the changing needs of our population.
- Work in partnership with our care provider market to ensure there are sufficient nursing places available to meet future demand, particularly for people living with dementia and other cognitive impairments.
- Ensure people with care and support needs are assessed and reviewed in a timely and effective way, with their care and support reflecting their right to choice and control, and building on their strengths and assets.
- Promote direct payment options and improve the processes for doing so, enabling people to maximise their choice and control about how to meet their care and support needs.
- Work in partnership to prevent avoidable admissions to hospital, and support people to return home from hospital as soon as they are ready to do so.
- Develop and deliver high-quality reablement services, available to all, to support people to maximise their potential and return to their optimal independence.
- Continue to focus on ensuring safety, preventing abuse and neglect and identifying risk early through effective local safeguarding arrangements.
- Work with young people, their families and other involved services towards maximising their independence, drawing on young people's own aspirations for inclusion, education, employment and quality of life as part of 'preparing for adulthood' and effective transitional safeguarding.
- Improve the way people in Somerset receive support with their mental health as part of our Open Mental Health alliance.
- Support individuals with Learning Disabilities to live and/or work more independently within their community.
- Enhance our ability to source suitable, timely care and support.

Priority 3 – A supported, skilled & flexible workforce

It is vital that we understand our current and future internal workforce needs, and work in partnership to develop, support and promote a capable and effective workforce.

To support this, our environment and working conditions should assist and enable staff across our service to make the best use of their skills and release Somerset's capacity to care.

Our ambition is to have a vibrant, resilient and agile health and care sector which attracts, develops and retains talent in Somerset.

We will:

- Deliver our Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy and supporting action plan.
- Create the right environment and conditions for robust and effective strengths-based practice, including through our digital infrastructure.
- Re-structure our adult social care operational teams around Primary Care Network boundaries as part of our commitment to integrated working with partners at a neighbourhood level.
- Support effective performance management, ensuring our data and intelligence informs operational and commissioning decision-making.

Priority 4 – Future focused

We must continue to focus on continuous learning, innovation and quality improvement, sharing information with partners and collaborating for improvement.

Understanding and responding to the many changes and opportunities on the horizon for social care will support effective transformation and deliver the best possible sustainable outcomes within the resources available to us.

We must actively seek out and listen to information about local people, including those most likely to experience inequality in experience or outcomes, and tailor care, support and local services in response to this.

We will:

- Ensure that those who draw upon care and support are meaningfully involved in the ongoing design and implementation of our local care and support services.
- Contribute and respond to external assurance, assessment and sector-led improvement activities, nationally, regionally and locally.
- Embrace the opportunities that becoming a Unitary Council will offer adult social care and those we support.
- Increase and improve flexible, responsive housing options for older people and people with more complex needs, enabling people to live fuller, more independent lives for longer.
- Respond to and deliver national social care reform expectations and opportunities.
- Progress and contribute to the work of Somerset's Integrated Care Partnership.
- Maintain a clear focus on our financial position, ensuring we work with finance colleagues to monitor and support the effective delivery of our projects and ambitions.
- Strengthen our capacity and capability for transformation as an enabler for effective business change.



In Somerset, we want people to live healthy and independent lives, supported by thriving and connected communities, with timely and easy access to high quality and efficient support when they need it.

Our strategy sets out how we will work to deliver our vision in partnership to ensure we deliver the right kind of care and support for our communities and the best possible outcomes within the resources available to us.

Our priorities:



Title	Adult Social Care Strategy (2023-26)
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