

Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Somerset

2013 – 2018



Foreword



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Many things influence our health and wellbeing, the lifestyles we lead, our social contacts, the environment around us as well as the health and care services which support us.

Everyone in Somerset should have the right to enjoy good health and wellbeing but some groups and communities systematically experience poorer health than others. While this strategy aims to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the county, it focuses on making faster improvements for those who are most vulnerable and experience a poorer quality of life.

This is the first Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Somerset, led by a new Health and Wellbeing Board for the county. Many people and organisations have contributed to it so we have a shared vision for health and wellbeing for the county. We can't tackle everything that impacts on health and wellbeing at once, but together we have agreed three broad themes which we believe will make a significant difference to the lives of people across Somerset.

The Board will have particular actions to take forward for each theme but just as importantly, we are hoping that groups, parishes, communities and neighbourhoods are also inspired to take local action. Overwhelmingly, people have said to us that the most important thing that would improve health and wellbeing is for local people to be well connected. Local people knowing each other, socialising together, providing support to each other and joining up their efforts to make life easier for each other. Much is already going on, especially in some communities, but you have said to us that you really value that sense of community and you would like to develop it even more. The Board and local public organisations can help with this but it cannot be done without local people playing their part.

Our health and wellbeing is fundamental to how we live our lives and everyone has a role in improving it for ourselves and the people around us. Together we have agreed three things we want to focus our efforts on, we now have to ask ourselves what we could do to play our part, either as an individual, as part of a community or as part of a group or organisation?

Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Somerset

This strategy sets out a shared vision and three themes for improving health and wellbeing in Somerset. By agreeing these jointly, we can all work together, individuals, groups, communities and organisations making sure we are all pulling together in the same direction.

The strategy is not meant to cover everything that impacts on health and wellbeing. The three themes have been chosen because many people and organisations have said they are the most important things that would improve our health and wellbeing locally. Information and data that is available for Somerset and local areas has also been used to help us agree these priorities.

The boxes below show the vision and themes that we have agreed locally for the county.

Shared Vision for Health and Wellbeing in Somerset

People live healthy and independent lives, supported by thriving and connected communities with timely and easy access to high-quality and efficient public services when they need them.

Priorities

Theme 1: People, families and communities take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

Theme 2: Families and communities are thriving and resilient.

Theme 3: Somerset people are able to live independently.

Underlying Principles

The focus for this strategy is to improve health and wellbeing overall, but to make improvements faster for groups and communities that experience poorer health and quality of life.

To make the best use of resources the work contributing to this strategy will apply the following principles:

Equity

Provision of services should be proportional to need and targeted to the areas, groups and individuals that need them most.

Accessibility

Services should be accessible to all, with factors including geography, opening hours and physical access being considered.

Integration

Where the integration of services provides an easier system and better outcomes for people within the same overall cost, all relevant organisations should work together to maximise the local benefits.

Effectiveness

Activities and services should be evidence-based and provide value for money.

Sustainability

The work contributing to this strategy should be developed and delivered with due regard to the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability.

Diversity

Activities and services should have due regard to the specific needs of protected groups and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their duties.

Priority One

People, families and communities take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing

Why is this important?

We all have a role to play in maintaining and improving the health and wellbeing of ourselves and our families, by trying to live a healthier way of life.

We need to inspire and motivate individuals, families and communities to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and provide support to those who may need help to do so.

The lifestyles we lead play a significant part in our health and wellbeing. Heart disease and cancers remain the main causes of premature deaths and health inequalities in Somerset, but for the most part, these diseases are preventable by changing our everyday habits.

In Somerset it is thought that 18% of adults currently smoke and 18% of pregnant women continue to smoke throughout their pregnancy, one of the highest rates in the country. It is estimated that smoking costs the NHS in Somerset £25.9 million pounds a year.

Over three-quarters of adults in Somerset do not do enough physical activity to benefit their health, the worst rate in the south west. This, combined with high calorific food and large portion sizes, has contributed to an increase in overweight and obesity in the county. It is estimated that 41% of adults in Somerset are currently overweight and 26% obese. Similarly, 23.4% of 4-5 year olds and 30.5% of 10-11 year olds are overweight or obese.

Conditions associated with overweight and obesity are thought to cost the local NHS £138 million a year. This is predicted to increase as obesity-related conditions such as Type 2 diabetes rise.

Alcohol misuse undermines family and community life; it contributes significantly to anti-social behaviour, crime, domestic violence and family breakdown. The proportion of people drinking high levels of alcohol is increasing in Somerset. There were 9,276 alcohol-related hospital admissions in Somerset in 2010.

What would make a real difference?

Because the way we live our lives is largely shaped by the people around us and the neighbourhoods we live in, the most effective way of encouraging healthier lifestyles is through community-led action.

Making use of local opportunities, talents and facilities provides sustainable “built in” support and motivation provided by the people around us. Helping individuals and local professionals know what support is available within communities is key to successful joint action to encourage healthier lifestyles.

Action – Community action

The Health and Wellbeing Board will give greater support for community-led action to encourage healthier lifestyles. Examples of action include developing local health walks and other community action as well as developing a more joined-up approach to providing information about local opportunities.

The environment we live in does not always make the healthy choices the easiest ones. Often small changes to adapt the environment can make a significant difference to the lifestyles we lead. For example, where cycle paths or road crossings are placed, availability of space to grow food or providing safe places to play all have an impact on our lifestyles.

Action – Healthy planning and policy

The Health and Wellbeing Board will ensure that health and wellbeing is given due consideration in planning and other policy decisions to maximise the positive impact of our environment on healthy lifestyles. Examples of action could include identification of community food growing spaces and use of planning to influence the position of takeaways.

The Health and Wellbeing Board is keen to focus greater attention on preventing ill-health and will review key service areas to ensure there is a shift of resources towards prevention and that the effectiveness and efficiency of services is maximised through more integrated working.

Action – Prevention first

The Health and Wellbeing Board will be used alongside other impact assessments, when developing new local policy, taking significant decisions on services and during commissioning processes. It will help organisations give due consideration to how the work aligns and contributes to the themes within this strategy and give particular emphasis on focusing greater attention on prevention.

Priority Two

Families and communities are thriving and resilient

Why is this important?

People who live in thriving and resilient families and communities enjoy a sense of belonging, being cared for and valued. These feelings provide the foundations for better health and a sense of wellbeing and foster an environment which supports people to thrive and aspire to their potential. Unfortunately, not all people and families in Somerset experience these benefits; some are vulnerable and live fragile lives which are affected by even small changes to their circumstances.

Our mental health is an important indicator of our ability to cope with everyday life. It is thought that 70,000 people in Somerset have a mental health problem at any one time, often influenced by multiple things including low educational attainment, social isolation, unemployment and financial and relationship problems.

The social circumstances in which we live are complex, yet we often try and tackle one issue at a time, mainly in isolation from all the other things which affect our lives. Our aim should be to develop well-connected, vibrant and supportive communities, enhancing the way in which people live overall rather than focusing on specific issues.

Well-connected communities rely more on the products, assets, skills and facilities that are available within the immediate neighbourhood. This leads to greater environmental, social and economic sustainability. It also means that communities can be more resilient to outside factors such as an economic downturn and fuel and food price increases.

Educational attainment is important for longer-term resilience and is closely associated with health and wellbeing throughout life. In 2010-11, 57% of children in Somerset met the foundation stage requirements which are the measure used for school readiness. 57% of children in Somerset achieved five or more A*-C grades at GCSE (including maths and English). For children who receive free school meals, this reduces to 28.3%. Despite notable progress made in educational attainment locally, improvements have been slower than the national increase.

What would make a real difference?

We need to work together to develop well-connected, vibrant and supportive communities that encourage people to use local food, products and services where possible. Specific attention needs to be given to vulnerable or excluded individuals and groups who often experience poorer health and wellbeing and difficulties in engaging with local services and the people around them.

Planning regulations should support the increase of small local enterprise and local employment opportunities, underpinned by developing individual financial and work skills.

Communities should be supported and encouraged to use local facilities in creative ways, helping to reduce the need to travel and encouraging local action and more social interaction within communities.

Action – Well-connected, vibrant communities

There will be a much greater focus on supporting neighbourhoods and communities to take responsibility for shaping and transforming their own lives and their local services. Examples of action include the development of local forums which inform community and health services.

Educational attainment needs to continue to improve overall, but to reduce health inequalities over the longer term, faster progress needs to be made for children from more socially disadvantaged backgrounds or vulnerable groups.

Action – Improving educational attainment

The Health and Wellbeing Board will focus on continuing to improve educational attainment at GCSE and foundation level with particular emphasis given to the groups with lowest attainment. Examples of action include work to support families to prepare children for starting school.

Some families experience considerable difficulties simultaneously and have a high need for public services. Greater integration of these services, tailored to the needs of the family, would be more effective at achieving improved outcomes for these families and would minimise additional stress for the users.

Action – Supporting families and people with low resilience

There will be specific focus on working with the least resilient families and people in our communities and ensuring smooth access to relevant and tailored services. Examples of action include the development of a Troubled Families Programme and specific work with excluded and/or vulnerable groups.

Priority Three

Somerset people are able to live independently

Why is this important?

Between 2010 and 2035, the Somerset population is expected to grow by 12%. The largest increase is in people over the age of 75, where it is expected there will be a doubling of the population from 55,000 to 107,800; an increase of 2.7% per year.

Most people want to stay living independently for as long as possible and have strong emotional ties to their neighbourhoods. Having the right kind of accommodation in the right place is one of the major factors that determine our ability to maintain independence, particularly as we get older.

Moving house can be daunting and stressful at any time of life. Some older people will move for lifestyle reasons; however, many only move at a time of crisis, usually when their care needs have increased. More needs to be done to improve the availability and marketing of suitable homes that meet the longer-term needs of older people and enable them to enjoy a more independent life for longer.

In line with population changes, the proportion of people living with a long-term condition will increase. The number of people over 85 years of age living with a limiting long-term illness is predicted to increase by 15% between 2011 and 2015. Similarly, dementias currently affect 5% of people aged over 65 and 20% of those over 80 years. The changing age profile will result in significant increases in the number of people living with a dementia.

The role undertaken by carers will become even more crucial so that people are able to remain independent. Services for carers should be joined-up across organisations in the county to ensure that the most effective and efficient support is provided.

In 2010-11, those aged 85 and over accounted for 14,333 admissions to hospital, of which 8,172 were emergencies. Older people at risk of losing their independence following an illness or hospital admission currently receive care and support from a number of organisations, often experiencing several handovers between professionals. These services need to be more integrated with a focus throughout the system on regaining and promoting independence and, for as long as possible, working with people and the local community to help people remain in their own homes.

As well as rising house prices, young people are experiencing increasing rents and a credit squeeze. More young people will be pushed towards the private rented sector in 2020, reflecting the growing problems of accessing home ownership and the social rented sector.

What would make a real difference?

The local planning system needs to support a mix of housing developments. This must take into account the needs and preferences of the future population. In addition, older people need to be better informed of housing options at an early stage and more practical support needs to be available to help people with their housing needs in later life.

Action – Housing for independence

There needs to be an increased focus on the changing housing needs of the Somerset population, with particular emphasis given to widening the housing options for achieving and maintaining independent living. Examples of action include delivery of the Somerset Vision for Housing through a joined-up Somerset Housing Framework, which also considers issues of affordability, benefit changes and fuel poverty and housing conditions.

Timely and effective support for carers, which is joined-up between organisations and makes efficient use of available resources, is critical to supporting the vast number of voluntary carers in the county. In addition, well-connected neighbourhoods and communities can provide more informal support and opportunities for social engagement for carers.

Action – Support for carers

The Health and Wellbeing Board will ensure support for carers is integrated across health and social care. Examples of action include the setting up of a new universal service for carers in Somerset and establishing a Carers Partnership Board.

More integrated working between health and social care services can reduce the need for numerous assessments by different professionals and can provide a more complete picture of the individual's needs. Using the learning from a trial in the Taunton area, more integrated support services should be adopted across the county, centred specifically on the needs of the individual and developing and maintaining independence.

Action – Joining-up of support services

Integrated health and social care will be developed across the county to support people to regain and maintain their independence for as long as possible. Examples of action include extending Integrated Living Teams across the county.

How can we all work together?

What is the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board?

The Health and Wellbeing Board has a responsibility to consider the needs of Somerset and, with local partners and communities, develop a vision for health and wellbeing that we can all work towards. The Board does not have a budget. Its role is to influence how existing funding is spent and ensure that new and existing strategies reflect and complement a collaborative approach to health and wellbeing, enabling organisations to embed this way of working in all that we do.

The Board will have an annual work programme which will focus on particular issues that impact on health and wellbeing locally. It will work with existing groups and organisations to consider how we could approach complex issues differently, making best use of our joint resources.

What is the role of the local people, groups, communities?

The consultation on this strategy found that people felt very strongly that local action and responsibility was key to improved health and wellbeing. Having strong and vibrant communities with people knowing their neighbours and helping each other out was very important. The Board cannot deliver that; it can help inspire and foster local action but, by its very nature, it can only be done by local people, groups and communities getting involved and being local leaders. This involvement is central to the empowerment of communities in shaping their lives and so enabling local issues to be tackled more effectively.

Local people hold the key to success; they are willing and able to do more for themselves. We must nurture this greater capacity to meet people's needs and aspirations within their own communities.

What is the role of a local organisation?

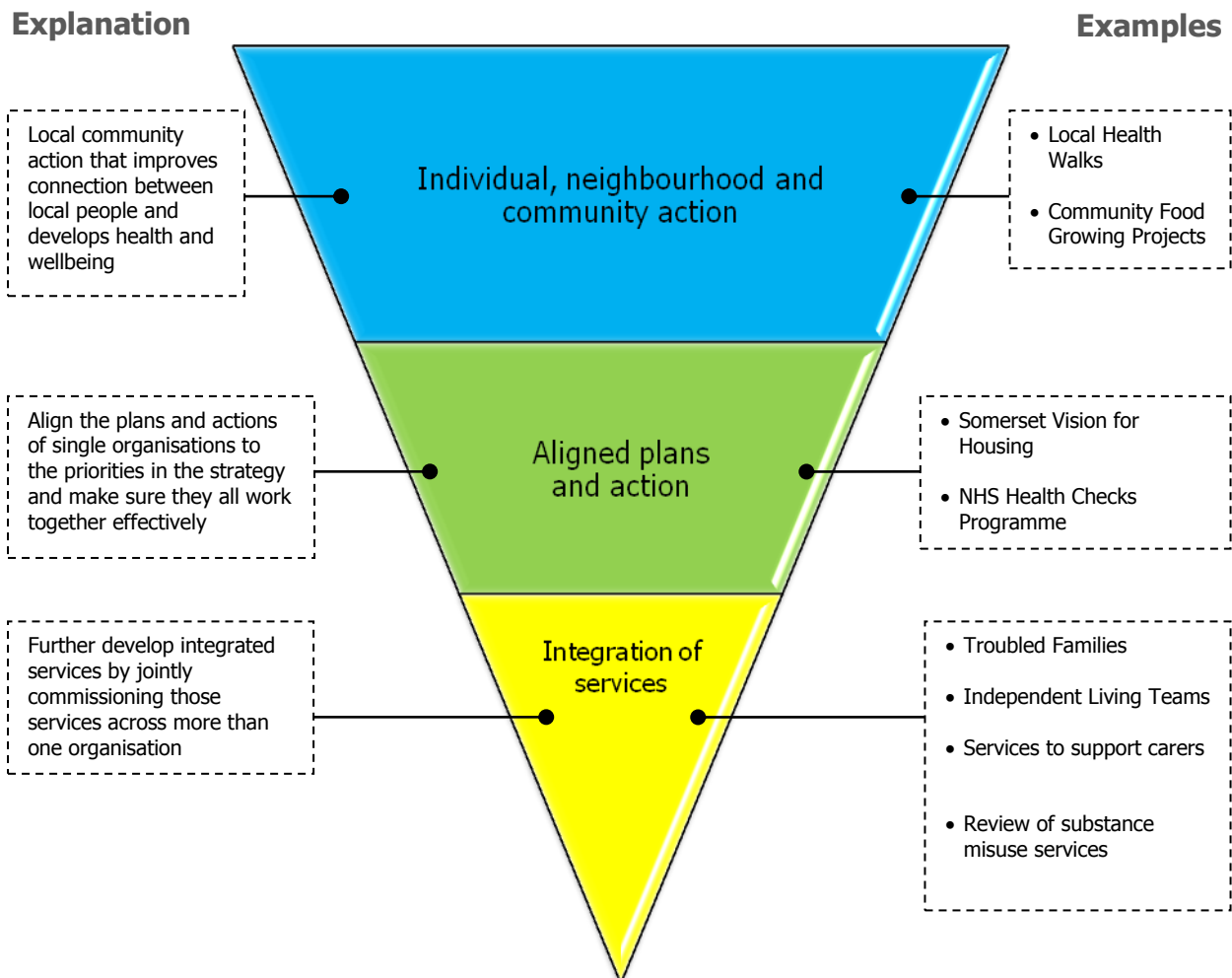
Local organisations have an important role to play and can act as brokers, bringing together people and groups who share a common interest to achieve the best outcomes for them.

The public sector, private, voluntary and community organisations have a development role, both working in a more integrated way and, even more importantly, in supporting local people to act as champions on relevant issues and become more actively involved in local services.

Opportunities for stronger community engagement, participation in volunteering and service delivery provision along with local assets being used more effectively and efficiently can enable organisations to look to the future and bring about the best results for, and with, local people.

Putting the Strategy into Action

The triangle below suggests the different types of action which will be needed, using some of the examples in the strategy.



This strategy sets the vision for Health and Wellbeing in Somerset and identifies three themes that have been agreed locally as the most important in improving health and wellbeing. An action plan will be agreed each year to drive the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.