

Somerset County Council  
Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee 19  
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## **West Somerset Opportunity Area**

Lead Officer: Julia Ridge

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Cabinet Member: Frances Nicholson; Children and Families

Division and Local Members: Cllr Mandy Chilcott – Minehead; Cllr Hugh Davies – Watchet and Stogursey; Cllr Frances Nicholson - Dulverton and Exmoor and Cllr Christine Lawrence - Dunster

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1. The Opportunity Area Programme is a key part of the Education Secretary's priority of tackling social mobility, and improving opportunities for young people across the country. Twelve areas with both poor social mobility and schools that face challenges, will receive a share of £72 million to boost opportunities for young people in these communities.
- 1.2. The areas chosen were amongst the weakest in both the 2016 Social Mobility Commission's index, and the Department for Education's data on school standards and capacity to improve. West Somerset was 324<sup>th</sup> out of 324 Council areas in the social mobility index in both 2016 and 2017.
- 1.3. The original plan was published in October 2017 by the DFE working across business, education and community to create and maintain more opportunity for our young people. It is important that this is a community wide initiative, supported by Early Years providers, Schools, Colleges, Businesses, The Voluntary Sector, Health, Council services, and most importantly young people and their families. The programme runs to March 2020, with a detailed delivery plan for 2018/19.
- 1.4 This paper reviews the first year of the opportunity area and the plans going forward for 18/19.

### **2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider and comment on the activities undertaken by the West Somerset Opportunity area from October 2017 to July 2018 alongside the 3 case studies.
- 2.2 Members are asked to consider and comment on the performance of the West Somerset Opportunity Area in 2017 and provisionally for 2018.
- 2.3 Members are asked to comment on the West Somerset Opportunity Area 2018/19 delivery plan and associated funding in line with the plan.
- 2.4 Members are asked to comment on the proposed high-level performance indicator for the West Somerset Opportunity Area and funding is following in line with the plan.

### **3. Background**

#### **3.2 Review of the West Somerset Opportunity Area 2017/18**

Appendix one details the work undertaken by the 4 priority groups during 2017/18 to design and start delivering the West Somerset Opportunity Area plan. In addition to the 4 priority groups the opportunity area added 4 cross cutting themes which included Mental Health, extra-curricular activities, Special Educational Needs and Access to Services including Child care, transport and digital connectivity.

Appendix two provides details of performance in the start year of 2017 with provisional data for 2018. The historic data from 2015 shows how services have moved since the area was first identified as having issues with social mobility.

Appendix three provides 3 case studies of activities undertaken during the first year.

#### **3.3 2018/19 Academic Year West Somerset Opportunity Area Plan.**

In consultation with the priority groups the DfE have coordinated a delivery plan for the 2018/19 Academic year. Appendix four is the proposed plan written by the DfE and agreed by the West Somerset Opportunity Area Programme Board.

#### **3.4 High Level Performance indicators and Funding**

The DfE commissioned two separate evaluation research projects for the West Somerset Opportunity Area.

- a process evaluation which tracked the first year of the programme
- an impact evaluation project

##### **Evaluation of the Process**

DfE commissioned the process evaluation in January 2017 and was carried out by NfER who tracked the first year of the programme. It involved a series of interviews with key stakeholders across the OAs alongside observations at key meetings. A key aim of the process evaluation is to provide regular internal reporting to ensure lessons are learned and good practice shared. This evaluation identifies: what has worked well within and across OAs, where improvements can be made, how the OA strategy and DfE's approach could be refined to improve future delivery

The NFER has conducted telephone interviews with several partnership board members and attended at least one partnership board meeting.

The process evaluation report is due to be published in mid-October. It will provide a synthesised account of the set up and first year across all OAs, identifying key themes. It will not report on individual OAs. Once published, partnership board members may wish to review learning for the West Somerset programme and address priority issues.

##### **Impact evaluation report**

DfE commissioned the impact evaluation in the spring of 2018. A consortium of organisations led by York Consulting has been appointed to carry out this work.

The impact evaluation will draw on measures of overall impact, the qualitative difference the OA programme has made on the ground particularly in relation to systemic change, the impact of a sample of specific interventions, the implementation and sustainability of the OA programme and an analysis of the costs and benefits of the programme. A robust evaluation framework has been set up to achieve this.

The impact evaluation framework will draw on a range of measures. One of these is a set of progress indicators, which will be collected locally over the lifetime of the programme. These include indicators such as: levels of participation in OA activities and feedback from participants on the lines of 'how much has participation in X helped you to develop your practice'. The final set of measures is pending a consistency check within DfE as part of cross programme monitoring work and will be shared with partnership board members as soon as possible with a request to endorse.

Once agreed it will be West Somerset OA will be responsible to collect data relevant to the West Somerset progress indicators.

Appendix 5 details the suggested high-level performance indicators proposed by the DfE. (to be provided by the DfE)

#### **4. Consultations Undertaken**

- 4.1** The DfE & Somerset County Council have worked with West Somerset District Council, early year's providers, schools, colleges, employers, the voluntary sector, and the LEP to draw together plans for the West Somerset Opportunity Area. Each Priority is overseen by a Priority Group made up of key stakeholders to ensure relevance and delivery.
- 4.2** The DfE have committed to making sure that young people are at the heart of the work. The DfE will be consulting with young people building on research already commissioned from the Somerset Rural Youth Project which will examine the experiences and expectations of young people living in rural parts of West Somerset along with on line pulse surveys.
- 4.3** There are a number of surveys including one to understand the barriers facing women returning to work in West Somerset. There are also surveys for pupils and staff to monitor the impact of the work undertaken as part of the West Somerset Opportunity Area.
- 4.4** The West Somerset Opportunity Area has a website <https://westsomersetopportunityares.co.uk> and twitter feed @westsomersetoa

#### **5. Implications**

- 5.1** The activities within the plan will be funded by the DfE through a grant to Somerset County Council. The grant will be held by Somerset County Council and subject to Somerset County Council procurement rules. Somerset County Council will report to the DfE.
- 5.2** Each priority has a number of targets which the opportunity area has to achieve

to improve outcomes for all learners from West Somerset Schools.

## 6. Background Papers

### 6.1 The West Somerset Opportunity plan can be found at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/650231/Social\\_Mobility\\_Delivery\\_Plan\\_West\\_Somerset.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650231/Social_Mobility_Delivery_Plan_West_Somerset.pdf)

### 6.2 Data References

Here is the social mobility data for Somerset

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/social-mobility.html>

### 6.3 Data on all areas:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-index>

### 6.4

#### Digital inclusion data for Somerset

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/digital-inclusion/>

### 6.5 West Somerset Opportunity Area Newsletter May 2018

attached

#### West Somerset Opportunity Area Priority 1 Early Years Newsletter

attached

### 6.6 Note:

For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

#### Appendix 1

Report on the activities of the West Somerset Opportunity Area 2017/2018 (to be provided)

#### Appendix 2

Report on the performance of the West Somerset Opportunity Area - attached

#### Appendix 3

3 Story Boards - attached

#### Appendix 4

Proposed DFE plan for 2018/19 delivery - attached

#### Appendix 5

High level performance data for the West Somerset Opportunity Area - attached