



SOMERSET COUNCIL WELLBEING STRATEGY



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Introduction

This wellbeing strategy sets out our vision, aims and approach to employee wellbeing at Somerset Council and highlights key areas of focus and how we will measure success.

At Somerset Council we believe that employee wellbeing is much more than just mental health. We take the view that there are many aspects which contribute to organisational, team and individual health and wellbeing. As they are all interconnected, we are taking a person-centred approach and believe that this will lead to increased organisational resilience. A healthy, positive, and resilient workforce is vital to achieve the organisation objectives, particularly in times of change and reorganisation.

This Wellbeing Strategy has been shaped collaboratively by representatives from all the previous Somerset Councils via a Wellbeing Workstream (part of the Local Government Reform programme).

Why have a wellbeing strategy?

Wellbeing, both emotional and physical, is now firmly front and centre when it comes to employees' priorities. It features heavily when attracting talent to an organisation and is a key factor in retaining employees. The reputation of an organisation is directly linked to the perception of how employees are cared for and valued.

Somerset Council has a fundamental and legal duty to our workforce in caring for the health, safety, and wellbeing of our employees. We recognise the need to foster a culture where employee wellbeing is a high priority and intrinsic to our People Strategy which positions employee wellbeing at the heart of its philosophy. By prioritising the wellbeing of all our people, we will create a healthy organisation where employees not only feel a personal commitment to achieving organisational objectives but also enjoy a sense of personal satisfaction and high levels of engagement. This extends beyond the workplace and our aim is to empower people to make informed choices and engage in positive wellbeing behaviours so that they thrive at Somerset Council and beyond.

Employee wellbeing is at the heart of any people related organisational decisions. Data insights from both an organisational perspective and individual service areas will outline the needs of different areas and allow us to identify themes and changing priorities. By using appropriate methods of data gathering and ongoing analysis of this data, we will be able to establish a baseline for each area and adapt Wellbeing programmes accordingly. These insights will come from many sources for example, staff surveys, focus groups, Q&As which will be collected at regular intervals.

Please see Appendix A for some of the recent wellbeing statistics which have informed this strategy.

Benefits of a Wellbeing Strategy

“An integrated approach to health and wellbeing can nurture heightened levels of employee engagement while fostering a workforce where people are committed to achieving organisational success” CIPD 2022

A well thought out, structured and comprehensive wellbeing strategy will benefit an organisation by supporting the following people objectives:

- Attract new people to the organisation and retain existing employees
- Improve employee engagement by demonstrating that employees’ needs are put first
- Motivate, inspire, and develop employees leading to greater retention
- Create a healthier and more inclusive culture where differences matter
- Lower sickness absence
- Improve performance and development
- Improve productivity and success
- Provide an agile working environment where people are trusted and encouraged to be their best selves

Our wellbeing strategy supports our People Strategy and is closely linked to our priorities for health and wellbeing in Somerset. For example, our work at Somerset Council will support the new Somerset Arts & Culture Strategy which emphasises the importance of wellbeing. By focusing on our own employees’ health and wellbeing and partnering with Public Health, we can input directly into the key priorities outlined by the Somerset Health & Wellbeing Board. These include the need to improve health and wellbeing and ensure that more people are living healthy and independent lives for longer.

Our Wellbeing Vision

Here at Somerset Council, our wellbeing vision for our organisation and our employees is:

“To listen to our employees’ views and put their health and wellbeing at the heart of our organisational culture. We will achieve this by establishing the right environment, behaviours, and support within the organisation to encourage and motivate people to work to the best of their ability. By creating a healthy, resilient, and productive workforce supported by an open, trusting, and inclusive organisation, wellbeing will be embedded into everything we do”

Our Wellbeing Aims

- A positive culture of trust, respect, and authenticity.
- Wellbeing to be seen as the golden thread running through everything we do.
- Emphasising the importance of openness and honesty around mental health issues.

- Clear signposting to help and support.
- Encouraging people to make informed and appropriate choices about their mental and physical wellbeing.
- Highlighting fairness, equality and inclusion in all recruitment and development activity.
- Using a person centric approach which celebrates differences and promotes collaboration.
- Providing a caring, empathetic, and nurturing environment.

Our Approach

The purpose of outlining a strategic approach for wellbeing is to ensure that it is recognised by internal and external stakeholders as being essential to the success of the new Somerset Council.

The following approach will enable us to build and maintain a healthy, happy, and resilient workforce whilst creating a culture that fosters collaboration and development:

- Prevention
- Listening ethos
- Collaboration
- Promotion & Signposting
- Leadership & Management
- Culture & Values

Prevention

We will:

- Put wellbeing at the heart of our business as usual
- Help employees to make good choices and manage their personal wellbeing
- Offer wellbeing programmes and initiatives which are appropriate to different groups of people

Listening ethos

We will:

- Analyse results of targeted surveys and questionnaires to identify themes for improvement that have been highlighted by employees
- Champion the importance of wellbeing conversations at all levels of the organisation and take action where appropriate
- Review and evaluate all feedback from wellbeing programmes, initiatives and exit interviews taking action where appropriate

- Encourage open dialogue but provide time and space for confidential conversations

Leadership & Management

We will:

- Improve leadership and management training to incorporate links between wellbeing and other core areas such as performance and development
- Improve the visibility of the senior leadership team and ensure that they are 'walking the talk' around wellbeing
- Train managers to recognise signs of potential wellbeing issues in their teams/individuals and provide appropriate support to ensure a positive outcome
- Focus on the wellbeing responsibilities associated with leadership/management roles ensuring that expectations are fully understood and met

Collaboration & Impact

We will:

- Establish suitable two-way feedback loops
- Encourage the sharing of best practice to foster collaboration
- Sense check proposals with appropriate employee groups before implementing within the wider organisation
- Improve our data collection and analysis methods to track trends and provide robust evidence for future improvements
- Review and track wellbeing action plans, measure success and report back to employees

Promotion & Signposting

We will:

- Establish and communicate a new wellbeing brand building on the success of the previous Working Well brand
- Have a clear, well planned and differentiated communications strategy to ensure all employees are aware of our wellbeing offer
- Provide different methods of signposting to internal and external support which caters to the needs of all audiences
- Increase the visibility of our wellbeing brand and offer by making it exciting and accessible

Culture & Values

We will:

- Ensure that the wellbeing of the organisation, teams and individuals is recognised as one of Somerset Council's core values

- Ensure that wellbeing is integrated within all people procedures, policies and working practices
- Ensure that statutory obligations are understood and adhered to
- Align the wellbeing strategy with other appropriate corporate strategies
- Promote a shared understanding of good working practices and behaviours whilst also encouraging individual style, creativity, and fresh thinking

Somerset Council's '4 foundations of wellbeing'

Mental Wellbeing

Understanding, managing, and sustaining your mental wellbeing to meet the demands of everyday life and be able to thrive.

- Create a culture which openly recognises psychological safety and is based on trust, collaboration and support and encourages open discussion around mental health and stress.
- Assist individuals to understand their psychological wellbeing and how this impacts personal resilience.
- Provide signposting to support, advice and guidance.
- Encourage individuals to realise their own potential by taking responsibility for personal learning and growth.
- Provide and promote opportunities for self-development.

Physical Wellbeing

Recognising the importance of a healthy lifestyle including physical activity, good nutrition, balanced sleep, nurturing physical health.

- Support individuals and teams to take care of themselves and make positive steps towards physical health.
- Establish specific support programmes where evidence shows there is a need for improvement.
- Highlight and communicate appropriate links to healthy living groups, sites, and activities across Somerset.
- Encourage and support corporate team activities leading to increased collaboration and sharing of healthy lifestyles.

Financial Wellbeing

Educating and empowering employees to become aware of their finances and make positive choices.

- Establish specific support programmes in line with societal pressures.
- Signpost to support, advice, and guidance on financial topics.

- Promote employment practices which offer fair pay, reasonable contracts and job security whilst also meeting organisational requirements.
- Ensure reward, recognition and benefits are relevant and appropriate to employees at all stages of their lives.

Social Wellbeing & Work Environment

Creating a working environment that supports wellbeing and encourages people to discover a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives.

- Promote 5 Ways to Wellbeing
- Encourage individuals and teams to create a workspace which allows them to maintain a good work/life balance.
- Empower individuals to build and maintain relationships based on trust, autonomy, and collaboration.
- Provide tools and workspaces which suit the needs of different job roles.
- Foster an environment where people feel safe, included, and empowered.
- Supporting individuals to develop a sense of connection, belonging and social.
- Build communities within the workforce based on collaborative, nurturing and supportive relationships.
- Encourage engagement with the wider communities of Somerset to create strong links and lead towards a representative workforce.

Our Integrated Model – image to be added by design team

Measuring success

Success can be measured in a variety of ways and means different things to different people. Our approach to measuring the success of our Wellbeing Strategy will follow a process of continual collaboration, reflection, review, evaluation, and improvement.

The metrics used to measure success need to be both hard and soft to properly understand the impact that initiatives have had and where improvements can be made.

Hard outcomes

- Reduced sickness absence
- Reduced grievances related to wellbeing issues
- Monitoring of employee engagement scores
- Results of annual surveys producing themes and recommendations e.g., Health and Wellbeing Survey
- Results of pulse surveys – dashboards
- Recruitment and retention rates

- Benchmarking results with other local authorities
- Self-reported wellbeing scores and mood tests
- Further investigation into areas where data reports improvement needed
- Monitoring and robustly evaluating initiatives
- Relevant wellbeing information gathered from exit interviews
- Updated action plans

Soft outcomes

- Ongoing feedback – internally from services, activities, EAP, OH
- Enhanced reputation scores from external providers e.g., Glassdoor
- Reported improved productivity, performance, and employee satisfaction
- Improved relationships and collaboration between teams and individuals
- Uptake, monitoring and evaluation of wellbeing initiatives
- Employee support networks – what can we learn from employees
- Turnover – reasons for exit interviews
- Analysis of sickness absence reasons and resulting themes

Appendix A - Equality Impact Assessment



Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer

Organisation prepared for	Somerset Council		
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Version	V3	Date Completed	01.02.2023
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Description of what is being impact assessed

This Wellbeing Strategy sets out our vision, aims and approach to employee wellbeing at Somerset Council and highlights key areas of focus and how we will measure success.

At Somerset Council we believe that employee wellbeing is much more than just mental health. We take the view that there are many aspects which contribute to organisational, team and individual health and wellbeing. As they are all interconnected, we are taking a person-centred approach and believe that this will lead to increased organisational resilience.

A positive and resilient workforce is vital to achieve the organisation objectives, particularly in times of change and reorganisation.

This Wellbeing Strategy has been shaped collaboratively by representatives from all the previous Somerset Councils via a Wellbeing and Ways of Working Workstream (part of the Local Government Reform programme).

A draft action plan is being developed and will be finalised once budgets have been agreed and the Wellbeing Strategy has been signed off.

Wellbeing, both emotional and physical, is now firmly front and centre when it comes to employees' priorities. It features heavily when attracting talent to an organisation and is a key factor in retaining employees. The reputation of an organisation is directly linked to the perception of how employees are cared for and valued.

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#),, should be detailed here

Data held on SAP and other payroll systems - Somerset Council workforce will be an amalgamation of Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council, and new employees. Therefore, we will predominantly be drawing on the existing workforce data of these groups. Data held by Somerset Intelligence Partnership and Data from all organisations Staff Surveys.

We have used equalities data from across the five organisations to illustrate the employee demographic and potential for impacts. 18.8% of residents in Somerset reported a long-term health condition or disability, and of combined workforce, approx. 6.5-7% have declared a disability.

Females represent a greater proportion of the workforce in all but one of the Councils, but this is more pronounced in Somerset County Council (72%) and Mendip (77%). Sedgemoor District Council have a higher proportion of males (59%) to females.

11% of the population of Somerset identify as unpaid Carers. Of a sample 55% of Somerset County Council workforce (excluding Schools) who answered the 2021 Staff Survey 22% of respondents indicated that they provide care for someone who has a disability, long or terminal illness.

48% of the population of Somerset live in areas classed as rural. Of a sample 55% of Somerset County Council workforce (excluding Schools) who answered the 2021 Staff Survey 32 % of respondents stated they did not live in a town or city.

Please note, not all Councils hold data for all protected characteristics. For the full data available, please see the reports attached.

We intend to consider the impact of and include data from the Health and Wellbeing Survey pilot that took place in Nov/Dec 2022 once this has been collated.

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

HR Colleagues from LGR Ways of Working & Wellbeing Workstream & Cross Cutting Group - Property, FM, ICT, Customers & Partners. Equality & Inclusion Workstream, All People Workstream Leads. TU Representatives, SCC Employment Equalities Officer, Peer Support Networks – Working Well Together, Culture Navigators

Other workstream leads, staff bodies (Networks) are being consulted and the Strategy and EIA will be amended accordingly

We have consulted with employees on their health and wellbeing by undertaking a Health and Wellbeing survey during Nov/Dec 2022 across all five organisations. All staff were able to complete this Survey, but participation is voluntary. We will use the data from this to shape the new organisations wellbeing programme to ensure that we are meeting the needs and expectations of our employees. **Insight from this data will be added once it is available**

Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some professional terminology may not be familiar with by younger workers. Younger workers starting their careers may be on lower salaries than other council colleagues and may benefit from increased budgeting and financial advice. As would older workers considering flexible retirement. A percentage of the workforce will be at retirement age and may 	☒	☐	☐

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
	<p>experience more anxiety around learning new skills and adapting to change. They will also need advice on financial planning when taking retirement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees in higher age groups may have increased risk of age-related health conditions such as back pain, diabetes, respiratory or arthritis etc. and therefore access to physical wellness campaigns could be compromised. 			
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some staff with physical disabilities may struggle to participate in some of our wellness campaigns that involve physical activity such as Tour de Somerset. Neurodiverse employees may struggle with language used. A period of unease such as change and restructure within the new organisation could add additional anxiety to those with existing mental, or physical health conditions. 	☒	☐	☐
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees who are transitioning may feel additional anxiety whilst going through the transition process and a change of manager change of work location, or job role may add to this. 	☒	☐	☐
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a number of married and civil partnership couples who work across the Council who's wellbeing could be impacted by the change process due to restructures, possible changes in income, conflicts of interest, or change in work locations. Unable to have confidential conversations (such as EAP) as married couples or civil partners could be working in the same location (i.e. home office). 	☒	☐	☐

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff may be feeling anxious in taking time for maternity/paternity leave and also those returning to the workplace after taking leave. Staff may need financial support if they are taking maternity/paternity leave or returning to work and reducing their hours. 	☒	☐	☒
Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The data concerning staff accessing training & support through the Enhanced Occupational Health & Wellbeing Board initiatives suggest that staff from BME group were less likely to use these resources. This may mean that staff from BME groups are less likely to engage with other Wellbeing offers in the workplace. Some people from BME groups are disproportionately affected by some health conditions. For example, high blood pressure, Sickle Cell disease & diabetes. 	☒	☐	☐
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual wellbeing could be impacted if allowances are not made to practice beliefs, or respect cultural holidays. 	☒	☐	☐
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where Wellbeing initiatives are not presented as inclusive this may negatively impact upon an individual's or group's wellbeing. 	☒	☐	☐
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of understanding of how employees identify. Members of this group have higher incidents of mental health illness and may face barriers to accessing support. 	☒	☐	☐
Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees with caring responsibilities may have heightened anxiety. Low-income earners are likely to be impacted by the rise in cost of living 	☒	☐	☐

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
rurality/isolation, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolation can impact on personal wellbeing and access to support. Rurality – access to Broadband and public transport will present access challenges for some. Those joining the Council from the Armed Forces may need time to readjust to civilian life and may also suffer with PTSD. 			

Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
Actions that support each of the protected groups are				
Ensure the following reports are reviewed quarterly to identify any necessary actions. Reports include OH, EAP, wellbeing data, sickness absence data and turnover.	Quarterly ongoing	Wellbeing Lead	Health and safety steering group meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
To produce a comms plan to ensure promotion of staff networks and the wellbeing offer is regularly promoted to all staff. This plan will be reviewed updated quarterly.	Quarterly commencing from 01/04/23	Wellbeing Lead/ Comms Officer	Through quarterly review	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide Lunch & Learn opportunities around Wellbeing and ED&I matters. ...	Ongoing	Wellbeing Lead & Equality in Employment Lead	Review uptake and feedback data	<input type="checkbox"/>

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
Continued provision of employee support services including EAP, Occupational Health & Rapid Access to Physio	Ongoing	OD Service Manager & Policy Team	Through review and analysis of the providers quarterly reports	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continued provision of financial support for all staff which will include information and support around budgeting, retirement, pensions and link to My Staff Shop & Salary Finance.	Ongoing	HRAP Strategic Manager & Comms Officer	Quarterly reporting Staff feedback, attendance numbers	<input type="checkbox"/>
The inclusion of wellbeing in the Young People's Strategy.	01/01/2023	OD Service Manager	Strategy review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that the Wellbeing Ambassadors are representative of the workforce.	Ongoing	Wellbeing Lead	Monitoring Equalities data	<input type="checkbox"/>
To ensure all resources and comms are accessible, are written in plain English and are inclusive	Ongoing	Wellbeing Lead & Comms Officer	Employee feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>
To promote and encourage managers to have open conversations around wellbeing in all 1-2-1s and supervisions	Ongoing	Wellbeing Lead, HR Advisory & Comms officer	Feedback from HR Advisory, Annual appraisals and	<input type="checkbox"/>

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
			survey data Staff network feedback	
To provide an offer of bespoke training to managers and teams around wellbeing matters	Ongoing	Wellbeing Lead	Quarterly review or wellbeing training data	<input type="checkbox"/>
To encourage teams to hold regular team meetings	Ongoing	Wellbeing Lead/Comms Officer	Monitor employee feedback from staff surveys, appraisals, and focus groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>
To ensure that support resources are available in different formats and take account that some staff do not have IT access.	Ongoing	Wellbeing Lead	Quarterly analysis of training take-up data	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure we have an up to date New and Expectant Mothers at Work Policy and risk assessment.	Select date	Health & Safety Manager	Policy review schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>
To provide support for parents returning to work. This includes staff returning back from adoption and fostering leave.	Select date	Wellbeing Lead/Managers	Parents peer support network feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
			HRO feedback	
The provision and delivery of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training for all staff.	Ongoing	Equality Leads	Feedback and data collection from training	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managers should be flexible in supporting staff with requests around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.	Ongoing	Equality Lead/HR Advisory and Line Managers	Staff network feedback, HRO feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>
The provision of a quiet room in each main office hub that can be used for reflection, meditation, prayer or quiet time away from the office	28/02/2023	Facilities Management	Monthly meetings arranged to review progress	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continuation of Men's Health & Women's Health Networks. Review the current offer of employee health groups to ensure inclusion of staff identifying as non-binary	Ongoing By the end of March 2023	Wellbeing Lead Wellbeing & EDI sub workstreams	Monitor membership numbers and activities of the group Through regular existing sub workstream meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
<p>To continue the Fostering Friendly Accreditation scheme</p> <p>Continue to offer the guaranteed interviews for carers scheme.</p>	Ongoing	HR Policy team	Monitored annually	
	Ongoing	Recruitment team/ recruiting managers	Annual Equalities data capture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>To continue to provide guaranteed interviews for veterans who meet the minimum criteria for a role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Military Peer Support Group and Military Covenant with a view to working towards and achieving gold status once we are invited to do so. 	Ongoing	Recruitment Team	<p>Annual Equalities data capture</p> <p>Staff network feedback</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide both face to face and online training to meet the needs of staff 	Ongoing	WOW task force	<p>Collect feedback from attendees of training and review.</p> <p>Assess the training need by holding focus groups.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.</p>				

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
Completed by:	Sophie Chivers			
Date	19.01.23			
Signed off by:	Amanda Kotvics			
Date	19.01.23			
Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:	Michelle Anderson 01/02/2023			
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	Sophie Chivers			
Review date:	20.02.23 – Feedback from JNF held on 08.02.23 27.02.23 – Feedback from HR Committee held on 21.02.23			

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