



**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**Monday, 10 February 2025**

**10.00 am**

**Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY**

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA**

To: The members of the Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families

We are now able to enclose the following information which was unavailable when the agenda was published:

Agenda Item 9      Reviewing Education Systems Governance (Pages 3 - 16)

To receive a presentation.

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# Reviewing Education Systems Governance

## Childrens & Families Scrutiny Committee

10/02/25



**Somerset**  
Council

# Context

- Over the past two years, relationships between educational organisations and leaders in Somerset have improved and matured, albeit from a very low base
- The Department for Education has made it clear that it is a priority for this government to see better join up on the ground around children and families
- The recent Joint Thematic Area Inspection on Serious Youth Violence raised some concerns and questions about the effectiveness of governance in this critical area
- LA teams support a wide range of groups which vary widely in the extent to which they are action-focused and purposeful
- The extent of reform being signalled nationally suggests there may be an increased driver for local decision-making in relation to children, families and schools – good governance supports good decision-making

# What do we mean by governance in this context?

- More than one organisation
- Relevant to education
- Range of functions:
  - Statutory
  - Membership
  - Consultative
  - Decision-making
  - Accountability

# What is working well

- Strong chairing is modelling system leadership
- Clearer action-focus and sharper decision-making from some statutory groups (e.g. Schools Forum, SACRE)
- Increase in perception of value of system governance, demonstrated by improvements in attendance and agendas

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Some instances of collaboration have delivered value (e.g. health visiting and early years); broken down barriers (e.g. school to school support); and achieved national recognition (e.g. Risk of NEET indicators)

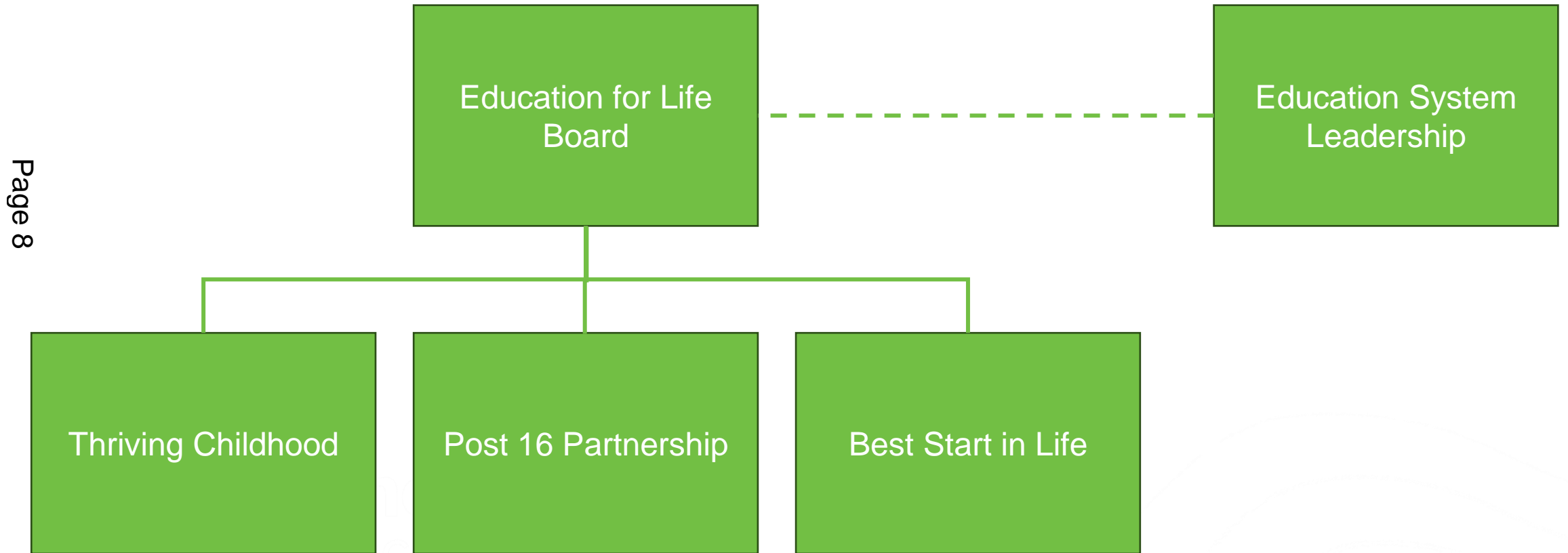
- Partners have worked positively to improve culture
- Somerset is at the vanguard nationally for democratic involvement in education

# What is working less well

- Many groups are working in relative isolation with only LA officers connecting to the rest of the system
- There is no consensus on how to agree priorities or set shared direction to even a limited extent
- Critical decisions on issues such as finance are made without reference to senior education leaders because national policy has not kept pace with changes in the education system
- Some groups reflect an era before the emergence of trusts
- Because no one is 'in charge' of the education system, it is unclear who is in a position to decide which groups should exist and how they should interact

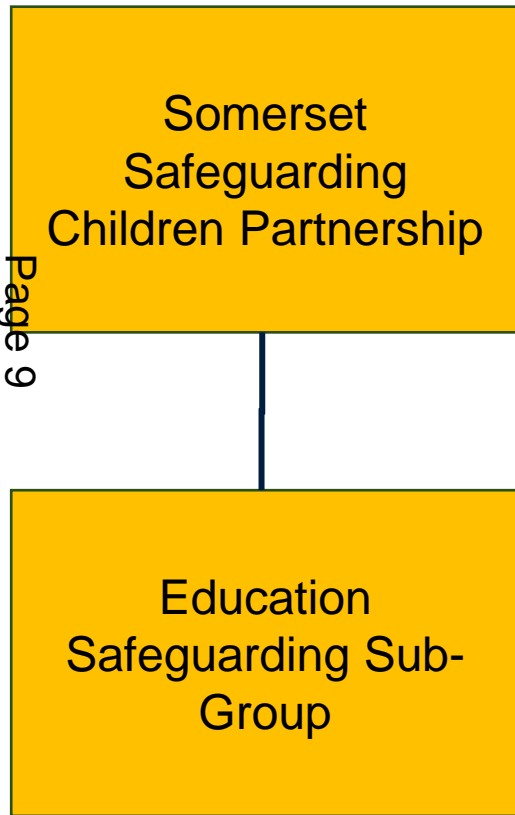
# Education for Life

## Current structure



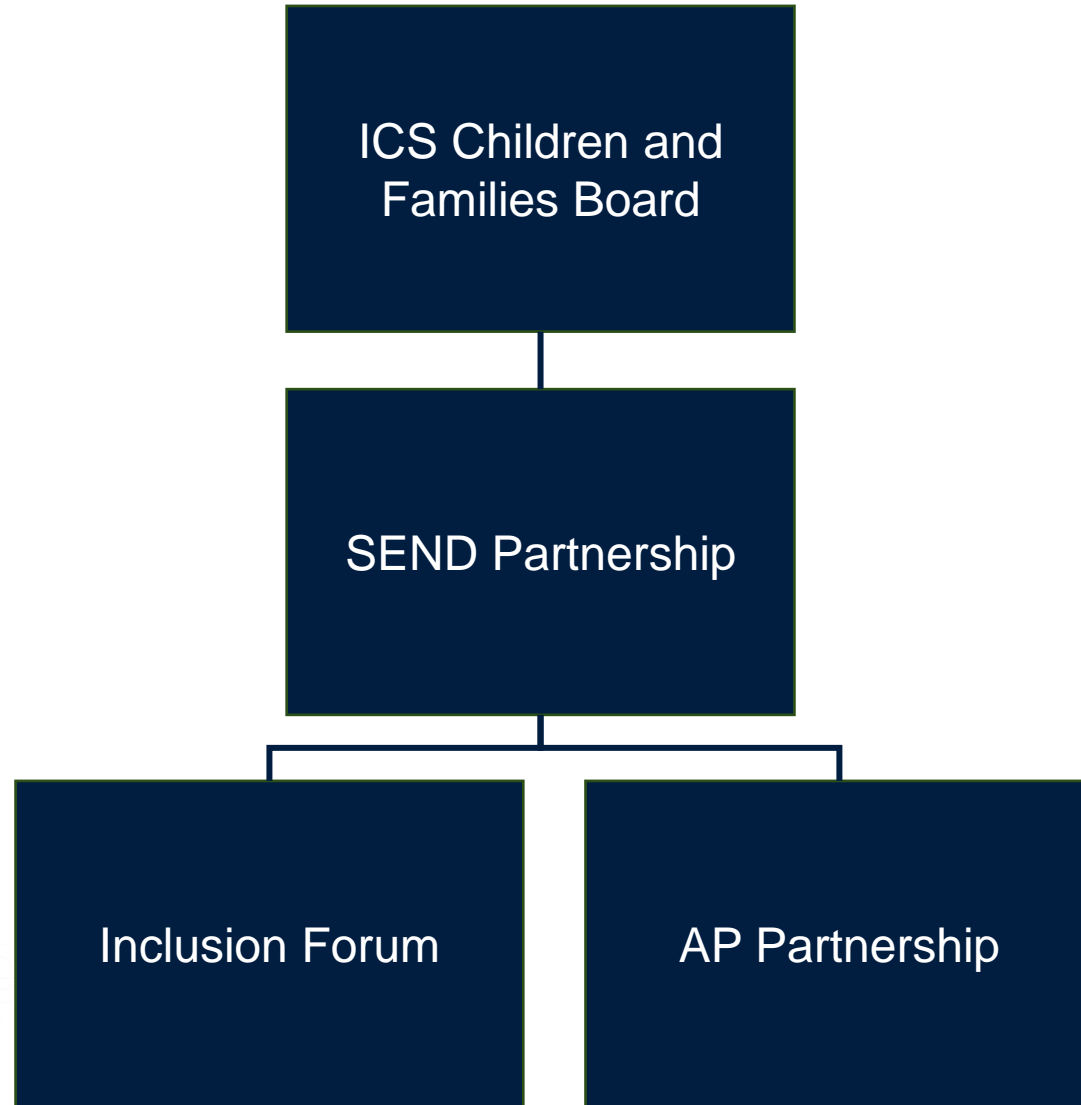


## LA/Police/ Health/Education

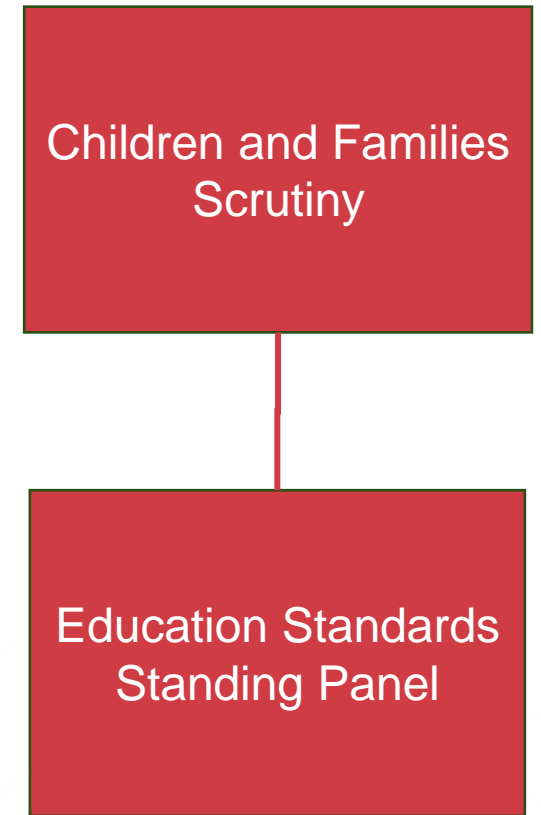


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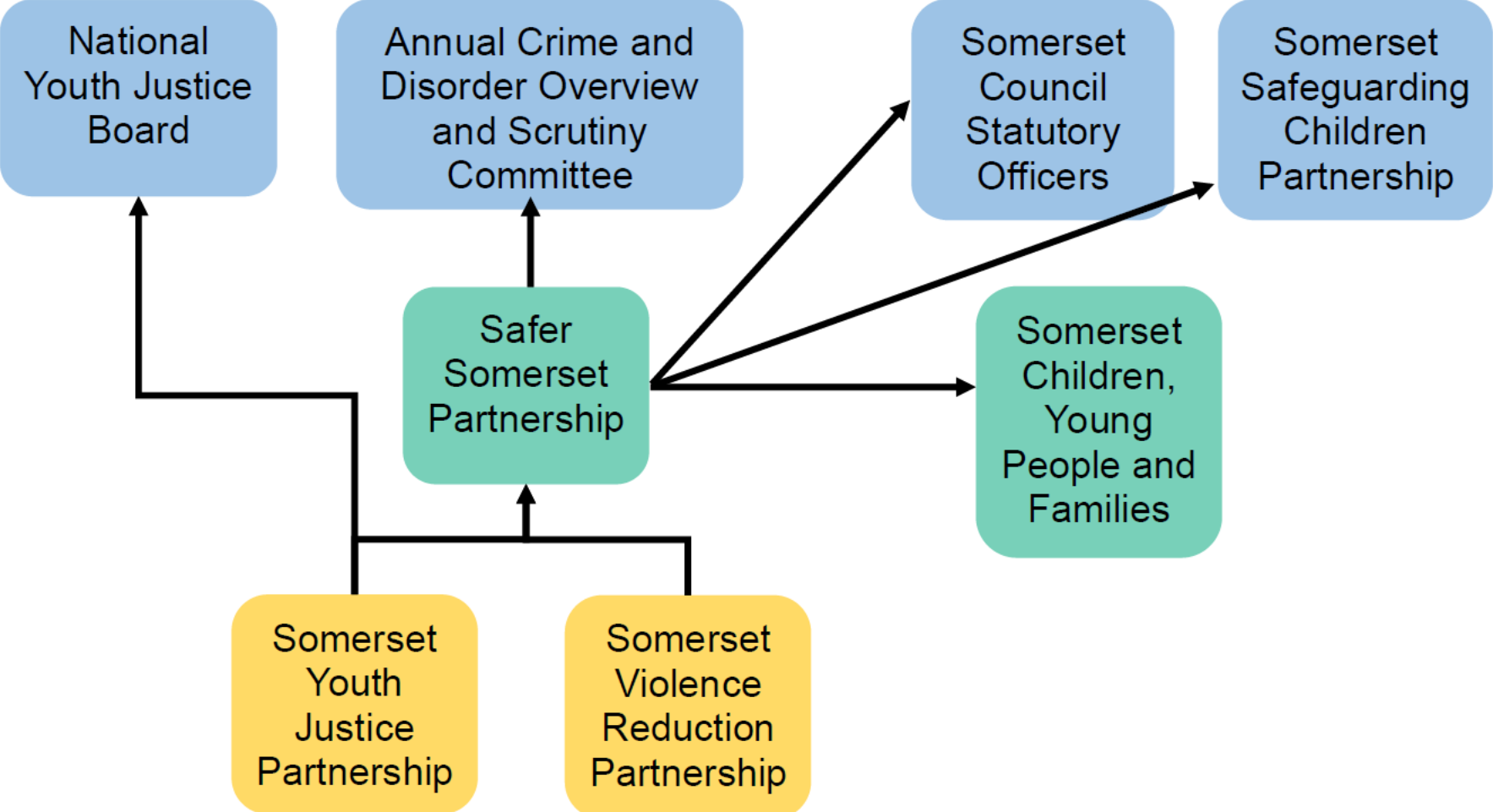
## LA/Health-led



## Democratic



# Crime and Justice



# Other groups relevant to Education

Schools Forum

MAT CEOs and  
College Principals

SAPH / SASH /  
SENSE

Children's Joint  
Consultative  
Committee

SACRE

Diocesan Trusts  
Group

Virtual School  
Governing Body

PRU Advisory Group

Early Years  
Partnership

Early Years / DSL /  
Headteacher  
Briefings

West Somerset and  
Frome Behaviour  
Partnerships

Parent Carer Forum

# Community and Economy

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Education Business Partnership

Economic Growth Board

Connect Somerset Board



# Key questions

- What is the experience of Scrutiny members of their attendance or participation in education groups?
- Do these groups and structures appear clear and efficient, or should action be taken to rationalise them?
- What should be the democratic considerations for education governance?

# Next steps

- We are seeking views from different parts of the system on governance and how agencies should work together
- Based on views we receive we will consider whether to devise proposals to bring forward for groups where the council is the decision maker
- For other groups we will consider whether to consult on proposals and try and find a consensus that partners and professionals agree on
- Formal proposals would then come back to Scrutiny for review and challenge

Somerset Council  
Scrutiny Committee  
Children’s & Families Scrutiny Committee – 10<sup>th</sup> February  
2025



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Reviewing Education Systems Governance  
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Division / Local Member:

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1.** Over the past two years, relationships between educational organisations and leaders in Somerset have improved and matured, albeit from a very low base. The Department for Education has made it clear that it is a priority for this government to see better join up on the ground around children and families.
- 1.2.** The recent Joint Thematic Area Inspection on Serious Youth Violence raised some concerns and questions about the effectiveness of governance in this critical area. LA teams support a wide range of groups which vary widely in the extent to which they are action-focused and purposeful. The extent of reform being signalled nationally suggests there may an increased driver for local decision-making in relation to children, families and schools – good governance supports good decision-making.
- 1.3.** This item closely relates to the priority of ‘A Fairer, Ambitious Somerset’ from the Somerset Council Plan (2023-2027).

“We need our children to get an excellent education and to aspire to achieve their goals in life. Education outcomes in Somerset are not good enough, especially for children from lower income homes or those with additional needs. All children need access to good schools, colleges, further education and higher education.”

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

- 2.1.** Children and Families Scrutiny is recommended to:
  - Take account of the briefing provided which gives a high-level overview of issues, in preparation for proposals coming to scrutiny for challenge prior to decision.
  - Provide challenge in relation to the current arrangements from an elected

member and stakeholder perspective, particularly with regard to democratic involvement in education governance.

**3. Background papers**

- 3.1.** Slide pack included with more detail in relation to this item.