

An Overview of Community Learning Provision in Somerset 2023

1.Context

1.1 Context and place

- Somerset's population is ageing at a faster rate than the national average with predictions suggesting that by 2036 one third of the population will be over 65 while the working age population is set to decrease.
- Almost half of the population live in rural areas (top 10 in the country) causing infrastructure and connectivity challenges which are associated with issues of rural isolationism, and in places social mobility with West Somerset having the lowest social mobility in the country.
- There are lower levels of productivity and 99.73% of businesses have less than 250 employees with 89.78% of these employing less than 10 people.
- Employment stands at 77.8% compared to national rate of 75.5%. but at £28,676, the median gross annual full-time wage is lower than the national (£31,285). This gap increases if part-time, of which there is a greater prevalence. There is a significant difference in the median wages between female (£18,579) and male (£28,549) workers. The rate of economically inactive stands at 19.8% of which 26% are females and 13.7% are males. Housing in Somerset is less affordable than it is nationally with a typical home (average £263,000) costing more than 9 times the typical annual wage.
- 2019 Indices of Deprivation reveals Somerset to be 92nd out of 151 top tier authorities in terms of deprivation especially in respect of services to housing and services. There are 9 LSOAs within the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England and 29 in the most deprived 20%. There has been a fall in the number of children in absolute poverty (10,500 in 2021 compared to 13,800 in 2016).
- Somerset residents perform on a par or slightly above the national average on qualification and skills apart from Level 4 (35.70% compared to the rest of the UK of 43%). 9% of the working population are thought to have no qualifications compared to the national average of 6.6%. Approximately 8.8% of 16-18 year olds are classed at NEET (not in education, employment or training).

1.2 Somerset statistics

Population	
Total population (2021)	573,119
Living in rural area (2021)	48.2%
Under 16	16.8%
Between 16-64	58.2%
Over 65	24.9%
LSOA within the most deprived 20% nationally	29 (47,000 people)
LSOA within the most deprived 10% nationally	9
Employment	
Employed males	83.3%
Employed females	72.1%
16-64 year olds employed (2022)	77.8%
16-64 unemployed	3.1%
Economically inactive of working age (Labour Force Survey 2022)	19.8%
Females economically inactive	26%
Males economically inactive	13.7%
Attainment levels	
No qualifications	9%
NVQ 1	87.70%
NVQ 2	76.10%
NVQ 3	57.40%
NVQ 4	35.70%
Earnings	
Median wage (FT and PT) male and female	£23,266
Median wage males	£28,549
Business	
Less than 250 employees	99.73%
Less than 10 employees	89.73%

2. Community Learning

2.1 Purpose of Community Learning

'Develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds in order to:

- progress towards formal learning or employment and/or
- improve their health and well-being, including mental health and/or
- develop stronger communities'

2.2 Objectives of Community Learning

The list of objectives includes:

- focusing public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including in rural areas and people on low incomes with low skills
- collecting fee income from people who can afford to pay and use where possible to extend provision to those who cannot.
- widen participation and transform people’s destinies by supporting progression relevant to personal circumstances
- develop stronger communities, with more self-sufficient, connected and proactive citizens
- commission, deliver and support learning in ways that contribute directly to these objectives,

Full details can be found at [ESFA funded adult education budget: funding rules 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/esfa-funded-adult-education-budget-funding-rules-2023-to-2024)

2.3 Targeted groups

Groups of people who have barriers to reaching their learning and career aspirations. These may include, but are not limited to:

People on a low income (less than £20,000 per annum)	Adults with low levels of English and Maths skills
Rurally isolated individuals	Adults with a below level 2 qualification
Residents living in deprived wards	People with a history of drug/alcohol abuse
Volunteers	Ex-offenders
Parents / families who need additional support	People who have experienced domestic abuse
People who have experience of mental ill health	Unemployed people
Travellers	Homeless people
Adults with learning difficulties	Adults with disabilities
Older isolated learners	Migrant workers
Refugee and asylum seekers	individuals from black & minority ethnic groups

NOTE: From 1st August 2023 CL courses will be reported under the following strands:

- ACL1 - Engaging and/or building confidence
- ACL2 - Preparation for further learning
- ACL3 - Preparation for employment

- ACL4 - Improving essential skills including English, ESOL, Maths and Digital
- ACL5 - Equipping parents/carers to support children's learning
- ACL6 - Health and well-being
- ACL7 - Developing stronger communities

2.4 Benefits of Community Learning

The benefits to those participating in community learning (CL) have been well documented and include an increase in self-confidence; meeting new people and making new friends and consequently understanding other people and cultures; a feeling that they feel they have more control of their life and enjoying learning more and that they feel more confident at work as a result.

The Adult Participation in Learning Study 2019 by the Learning and Work Institute ([Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2019 - Learning and Work Institute](#)) found that the most commonly cited barriers to learning for adults who have not taken part in learning for at least three years is a lack of interest, work or other time pressures and feeling too old and many confirm that nothing is preventing them from taking part in learning in the next three years. There is a need not only removing barriers to learning, but actively promoting the benefits of learning and encouraging participation.

3 Community Learning Delivery in Somerset

3.1 Background

For the previous 8 years Somerset Skills & Learning (SS&L) has been awarded the funding from DfE to deliver Community Learning (CL) in Somerset in partnership with 19 smaller, community-based organisations. Localised delivery is especially important in some of our more rural areas and among the harder to reach population to ensure a wider participation reach for our communities delivering tailored, flexible support and provision which is responsive to individual learner needs.

3.2 Overview of current SS&L CL provision

SS&L Community Based Partners – 19 including

Oak Partnership - [Oak Partnership - Somerset Skills & Learning: SS&L \(sslcourses.co.uk\)](#)

Preston C of E Primary [Preston C of E Primary - Somerset Skills & Learning: SS&L \(sslcourses.co.uk\)](#)

Migrant Communities Inspired Together [MC Inspired Together - Somerset Skills & Learning: SS&L \(sslcourses.co.uk\)](#)

Heads Up [Heads Up - Somerset Skills & Learning: SS&L \(sslcourses.co.uk\)](#)

Elim Connect [Elim Connect Centre - Somerset Skills & Learning: SS&L \(sslcourses.co.uk\)](#)

SASP [Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership \(SASP\) - Somerset Skills & Learning: SS&L \(sslcourses.co.uk\)](#)

MIND in Somerset [Mind in Somerset - Somerset Skills & Learning: SS&L \(sslcourses.co.uk\)](#)

Chard WATCH [Chard WATCH CIC - Somerset Skills & Learning: SS&L \(sslcourses.co.uk\)](#)

ARK at Egwood [ARK at Egwood - Somerset Skills & Learning: SS&L \(sslcourses.co.uk\)](#)

Enrolment figures by provision type - SS&L plus SS&L community delivery partners

Academic Year	Family English Maths and Language	Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Areas	Personal and Community Development Learning	Wider Family Learning	Total
2019-2020	325	1977	1774	916	4992

2020-2021	327	591	2891	504	4313
2021-2022	307	974	4188	437	5969
2022-2023	357	582	5013	568	5520
2023-2024 (target enrolment)					6167

*15% of all SS&L CL learners lived in one of the 20% most deprived communities in the England with many in the 10% most deprived (IMD 2019)

SS&L staffing: 98 staff (62FTEs) plus a pool of freelance and specialist staff to meet specific requirements.

Delivery options include remote workshops using platforms such as Zoom & VLE platforms such as Moodle. Face-to-face sessions and flexible timetable including evenings & drop-in workshops.

3.3 Changes to Community Learning funding in Somerset 2023-2024

To bring CL funding in line with other local authorities Somerset Council (SC) was approached by the Department for Education (DfE) in November 2022 to discuss the Community Learning Grant (CLG) being grant funded through SC for the 2023/24 academic year.

4.Planning

4.1 2023-2024

During the academic year 2023/24 SC will be putting in place arrangements where SS&L will continue to deliver the CL programme in Somerset. They will continue to work with a range of local delivery partners through the Community Learning Partnership arrangements.

Throughout this period SC will put in place the knowledge and resources to take over the direct management and administration of the programme and identify a range of robust and challenging objectives based on local, regional and national priorities that will inform the Community Learning programme from August 2024.

Connecting with the priorities of the SC Plan, the objectives will include:

- Enrich the stability, prosperity, and social cohesion of our communities.

- Empower the personal responsibility of individuals to become independent, healthy and maintain their own social well-being
- Increase social mobility and aspirations based on an ethos of lifelong learning
- Support an inclusive, flourishing and resilient economy.

5.Reports

5.1 [Playing the Ace: A plan to unleash the potential of adult community education and bolster economic growth - The Centre for Social Justice](#)