



# IMPROVING LIVES IN SOMERSET STRATEGY

Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board

2019-2028



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## Foreword



I'm delighted to introduce our new 'Improving Lives Strategy' that sets out how Somerset County Council and all its key partners will work together to improve the lives of our residents.

For me, this is the key – improving lives. It is what drove me into politics in the first place and what keeps me motivated and passionate about it now – making a difference to individuals and communities.

The Health and Wellbeing Board is made up of partners from all walks of life, all committed to working across the public, private and voluntary sectors to consider the health needs of the whole community, to look out for our vulnerable adults and children, and to help all our residents understand how they can help themselves to improve their own lives, their own prospects.

This strategy explains how, over the next ten years, we will work together to do that, to improve lives. For example, we are delighted with the progress made over recent years to increase rates of breastfeeding in Somerset, particularly in some of our more deprived areas. We have also made great strides in raising awareness of the support available to older people who might be feeling lonely. We will continue to work together on these and other, similar issues.

Health and wellbeing is paramount to each and every one of us. Keeping well, making sound choices and understanding our own personal health and wellbeing can make a real difference. Overall the health of people in Somerset is good, but some of our communities and groups experience poorer health than others.

We hope you will have full confidence in the strategy – the strategy will only be good if we have your help and input to deliver it.

Thank you,

*Christine,*

Cllr Christine Lawrence

Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board,  
Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing,  
Somerset County Council

## County Vision

We have a vision for Somerset. Over the next ten years, we want all organisations to work together as a partnership to create:

- A thriving and productive Somerset that is ambitious, confident and focused on improving people's lives
- A county of resilient, well-connected and safe and strong communities working to reduce inequalities
- A county infrastructure that supports affordable housing, economic prosperity and sustainable public services
- A county and environment where all partners, private and voluntary sector, focus on improving the health and wellbeing of all our communities

This vision is owned by all of us; it is not just for decision makers in health and social care services. We want to work together to improve the lives of our residents. We will only achieve this if we work with partners across the county, and with Somerset's residents and communities.

*We can achieve more collectively  
than we can individually.*

## What is the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board?

The Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board was established in 2013 to bring together key leaders from the local health and care system to work together to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. Current member organisations are:

- Somerset County Council
- Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group
- Healthwatch Somerset
- NHS England
- South Somerset District Council
- Mendip District Council
- West Somerset District Council
- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- Avon and Somerset Constabulary

The Health and Wellbeing Board has a statutory responsibility to understand current and future health and social care needs through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, to promote partnership working and integration, and to improve commissioning and delivery arrangements.

In 2013 the Board developed a Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Somerset which described the key priorities for the Board for the next five years to improve the health of the local population.

We are pleased to report that good progress has been made against the original priorities, including:

- Significant reductions in smoking at the time of delivery
- Development of a Somerset Housing Strategy
- Improvements in Delayed Transfers of Care from Hospital
- Adoption of the Somerset Prevention Charter by all key partners
- All partner organisations committing to being 'Dementia Friendly'

## Let's End Loneliness

Loneliness affects health and can have an equivalent impact of smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Somerset has a high number of residents aged 75 years or over who are at higher risk of loneliness. The 'Let's End Loneliness in Somerset' programme was launched in 2015 through District Councils and featured several local events, media campaigns and small grants to support local work. Local 'Let's End Loneliness' plans were developed and supported by the Somerset Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) forum.

## Somerset Housing Strategy

The Somerset Housing Strategy is prepared by the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership; a cross-sector partnership with representation from local housing authorities, housing associations, the County Council and public health. The process for updating the strategy has been underway since 2017 and has been supported by the development of local housing profiles, delivered as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Housing and Health is one of three key priorities.

## Smoking in pregnancy

Since 2014, Somerset has adopted a multi-agency approach to reducing smoking in pregnancy with great success. The service has input from the CCG, Trust midwifery services and the County Council stop smoking 'Mums2Be Smokefree' stop smoking service. It is estimated that the programme has seen over 1000 babies delivered to smokefree mums.

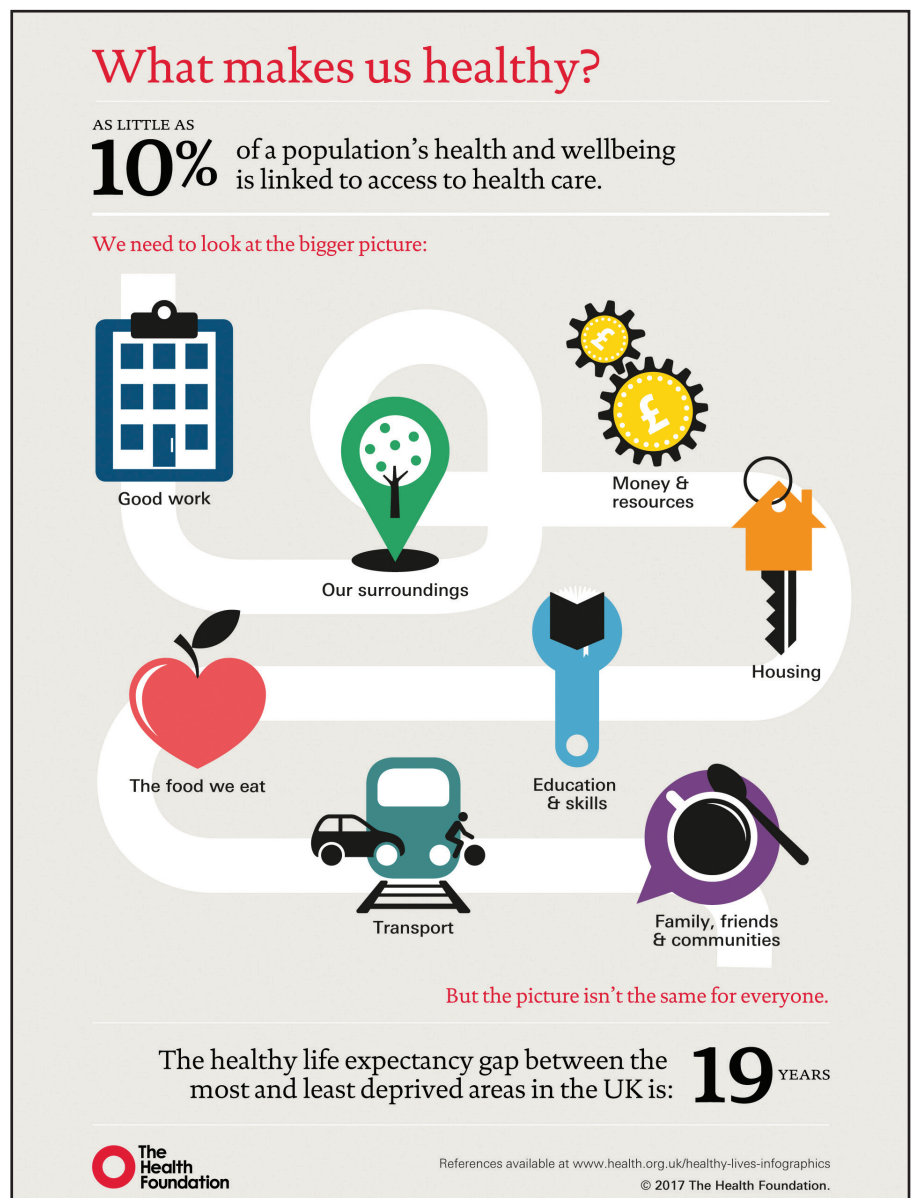
## Improving Lives... the next ten years

In the last five years we have seen a good deal of progress and development. However, there is still much to do. We are all in the business of improving lives and this strategy is about setting a common direction and galvanising local partners, organisations, groups and individuals towards that common goal.

The new strategy has a wide remit. Many different factors contribute to improving lives, meaning our challenge is to reflect the breadth of the agenda whilst being specific about the areas we need to focus on to make the biggest difference.

**If we are to truly make a difference to the lives of our population we need a radical upgrade in prevention, moving from a demand-driven system to one that prioritises prevention and early intervention.**

For many years we have focused on caring for people when they are ill, not keeping them healthy. We know that as little as 10% of a person's health and wellbeing is linked to health care – it is the environment, jobs, food, houses, education, social networks, families and local communities which affect health and wellbeing the most<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup>What makes us healthy? An introduction to the social determinants of health. The Health Foundation, March 2018. <http://reader.health.org.uk/what-makes-us-healthy>

A Prevention Charter for Somerset has been developed which supports all organisations to contribute effectively to the prevention agenda. The Improving Lives Strategy will build on this, committing all partner organisations to the vision and principles of prevention.

This time, we are taking a longer-term view, setting four strategic priorities which will inform the work we do for the next ten years. There is enormous capacity and potential available across this partnership which we need to harness to achieve the ambitious outcomes outlined in this strategy.

### Strategic Priorities:



**Priority One:** A county infrastructure that drives productivity, supports economic prosperity and sustainable public services



**Priority Two:** Safe, vibrant and well-balanced communities able to enjoy and benefit from the natural environment



**Priority Three:** Fairer life chances and opportunity for all



**Priority Four:** Improved health and wellbeing and more people living healthy and independent lives for longer

## How did we decide on our priorities?

The Improving Lives Strategy needs to reflect current priorities from elsewhere in the system whilst maintaining a local focus that is evidence based and reflects local people's views. The priorities in this strategy are backed by a strong evidence base considering the local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/jsna/>) which provides information about the local population and its current and future health and care needs.

The Improving Lives Strategy is not meant to cover everything. We are focused on the big issues in the population that can be tackled only through collective action and a willingness to continuously improve lives. These priorities have been chosen because they:

- Are issues that affect a lot of people in Somerset
- Are issues that will have even more impact in years to come
- Require strong leadership, consensus and a co-ordinated approach across organisations
- Will improve the lives of Somerset residents without disadvantaging specific groups

Stakeholder engagement events and formal consultations with local people, the voluntary and community sector, members of the Health and Wellbeing Board and key partners were undertaken throughout the development of this strategy. Feedback from these have been incorporated.

A full report of the results of the public consultation is available on:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/somerset-health-and-wellbeing-board/>

# Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

A more detailed profile of health and wellbeing in Somerset is described in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which can be read online here: <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/jsna/>

**healthy, safe and independent**

7.7% of adults on GP registers are recorded for depression  
The last 16 years of life are typically spent in ill health; dementia is set to double  
'Home First' has seen 35% fewer delayed hospital discharges

**strong and productive local economy**

Unemployment (3.9%) is consistently lower in England  
Somerset's productivity gap with the UK is about 1.3%  
Somerset average income is £20,636 p.a compared to £23,350 nationally

70% of adults volunteer at least once a year  
58% of internet connections are >10MB  
33,500 people aged 65 live on their own

9.1% of schools are good or better  
Breastfeeding rates are 19% lower in deprived communities  
421 households were accepted as homeless in 2016/17

**strong, vibrant, balanced communities**

**fairer life chances**

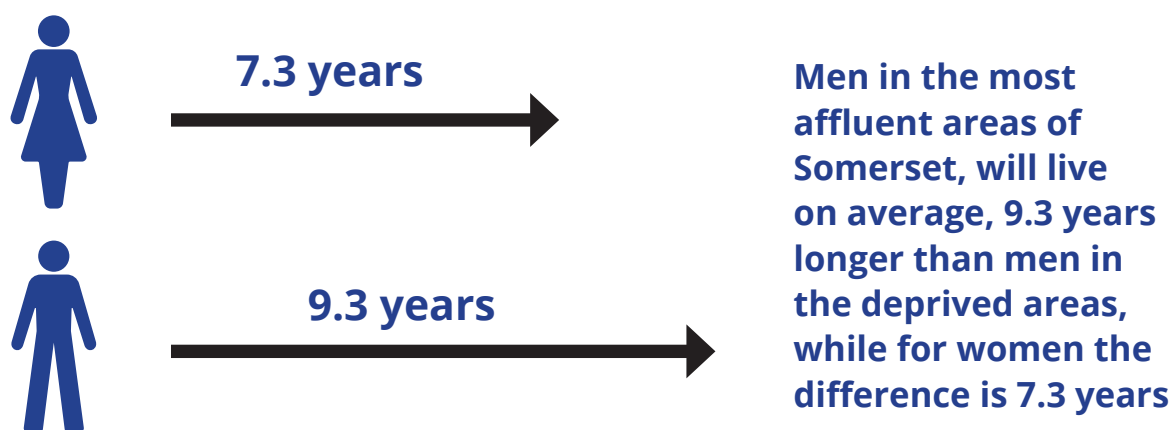
## Improving Lives



## What are we trying to achieve?

We want to improve the lives of people in Somerset. Over the next ten years we expect to achieve the following overarching outcomes for health and wellbeing:

1. Increased healthy life expectancy – taking account of the quality of life as well as the length of life
2. Reduced inequality in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between communities – achieved through greater improvements in more disadvantaged communities



## Delivering the Strategy

The Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board is responsible for the leadership and delivery of this strategy. However, to deliver our vision we need everyone who lives and works in Somerset to play an active role.

The Improving Lives Strategy has a wide remit. We have selected four key priority areas for action; however, delivery of the strategy will include close working with existing organisations and partnerships. We have identified several partnership boards who are already working to deliver aspects of the vision through existing plans and strategies (table 1). Implementation of these will be key to the delivery of the vision and outcomes of this strategy.

**Table 1. Lead Partnerships for delivery of the Improving Lives Priorities**

Priority Area	Lead Partnership(s) for delivery	Related strategy(s) or plan(s)
A county infrastructure that drives productivity, supports economic prosperity and sustainable public services	• Somerset Growth Board	Somerset Growth Plan (2017-2030) Heart of the South West Productivity Strategy (2018-2038)
Safe, vibrant and well-balanced communities able to enjoy and benefit from the natural environment	• Safer Somerset Partnership • Somerset Stronger Communities Board	Safer Somerset Partnership Plan (2017-2020) Stronger Communities Strategy
Fairer life chances and opportunity for all	• Children’s Trust Board	Children and Young People’s Plan (2016-2019) (undergoing refresh)
Improved health and wellbeing and more people living healthy and independent lives for longer	• Sustainability and Transformation Partnership	Fit for My Future (Health and Social Care Strategy)
<b>Cross-cutting: Somerset Housing Strategy</b>		

The Somerset Improving Lives Strategy does not replace existing strategies, commissioning plans and programmes, but influences them. As plans are refreshed and new plans are developed, the Health and Wellbeing Board will ensure they are aligned to priorities set out within this strategy and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

The Health and Wellbeing Board will provide system leadership across these partnerships, bringing together all the different parts of the system that impact on people’s lives and identifying issues where collaborative approaches are required. For the strategy to be effective we also need to galvanise the efforts of other partnerships and forums such as the Local Enterprise Partnership, Local Nature Partnership, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Strategic Forum, and all Town and Parish Councils.

## How will we know if we have been effective?

Ultimate responsibility for the monitoring of the implementation of the strategy lies with the Health and Wellbeing Board who are accountable to the public. A monitoring framework will be developed which will monitor progress against the statutory duties of the Board, vision, and strategic priorities.

Each of the partnership boards have their own performance dashboards which will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on an annual basis.

Every year the Health and Wellbeing Board will review the priorities, the progress made by the partnership boards, the local picture (JSNA) and any relevant national policy changes before setting a new annual action plan to drive work for the next 12 months. Partnership boards will be encouraged to identify 'wicked issues' – issues that are escalated for action where system leadership and unblocking are required.

## Our Approach

The strategy aims to improve the lives of all people who live and work in Somerset. However, to make the most of the resources available, all work contributing to this strategy will apply the following principles:

**Equity:** Provision of resources and services should be proportional to need and targeted to the areas, groups and individuals that need them the 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.

## The story behind the priorities

### Priority One: A county infrastructure that drives productivity, supports economic prosperity and sustainable public services

#### Why is this important?

- We know that to make the biggest change to improving lives we need to focus on the social and environmental factors that impact on people's lives. Education, employment, housing and connectedness all affect our mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- Good work offers stability, security and a regular income. Good work provides the opportunity for people to afford basic living standards and participate in community and social life.
- A healthy home is one that is affordable, warm and stable, and somewhere that helps connect people to community, work and services.
- People who are connected to the types of information and support they need are more likely to access support in a timely manner. Better digital and transport connections will also enable our businesses and communities to thrive.

#### What are the challenges?

- In Somerset we have lower unemployment rates than the national average. However, many people are employed in part-time and low-wage jobs and the average income for Somerset residents is lower than for the rest of England.
- There are not enough affordable homes for all the people that need them. The difference between average earnings and average house prices is higher in Somerset than seen nationally.
- Many of our residents live in rural areas, some of which have poor access to high speed broadband and mobile phone signal. There are also parts of the county where transport access is difficult which impacts on education, employment and business opportunities.
- Many of the public services in Somerset are facing financial challenges where levels of funding do not match the increasing demand.

**We want to see economic growth and development in Somerset. However, our priority as a partnership is to ensure that this growth benefits everyone and creates jobs and housing opportunities that are available to all.**

## Priority Two: Safe, vibrant and well-balanced communities able to enjoy and benefit from the natural environment

### Why is this important?

- We know that to make people feel happy, supported and able to access all the opportunities that can help to improve their lives, we need to create safe, strong and supportive communities. Good places, indoor and outdoor spaces and buildings help people to be more physically active, use facilities and services, socialise and play.
- Feeling safe and secure in the area they live and work has a significant impact on people's health and wellbeing.
- People who have access to green space and the natural environment have more opportunities to be physically active. Furthermore, increasing access and participation in green spaces has an important positive impact on mental health.
- A lack of social contact and feelings of isolation and loneliness can have a significant impact on mental health and wellbeing. Happy and positive friendships and feeling part of a community helps to reduce the impact of social isolation.
- The word community means different things to different people, but we know that people who feel part of a community enjoy a sense of belonging, have more opportunity to develop resilience and have the support necessary to deal with any challenges they may face.

### What are the challenges?

- Nearly half of our population live in rural areas. Many of these areas can be distant from services and can be cut off during periods of harsh weather. Global climate change is likely to increase the risk of severe weather in coming decades.
- Over 70% of adults in Somerset volunteer at least once a year. However, there are over 2800 charities to support and hundreds of community groups who require increasing voluntary and financial support.
- The population in Somerset is getting older and there are over 33,500 people aged over 65 years living alone. In some areas of the county there are high numbers of people experiencing social isolation and loneliness.
- Somerset has many environmental assets with a coastline, four Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 15 National Nature Reserves and Exmoor National Park. However, we need to make sure all our population have easy access to the benefits which nature and the natural environment can offer.

**As a partnership we want to make sure Somerset is a safe and healthy place to work, with healthy communities that are strong and resourceful and able to make the most of the natural and social assets that we have.**

## Priority Three: Fairer life chances and opportunity for all

### Why is this important?

- We know that what happens to us in childhood and adolescence is very important for the rest of our lives. Many of our health behaviours are formed from a very young age.
- Good education and lifelong skills can help to build the foundations for accessing good work, problem solving and feeling empowered and valued. Education also provides a basis for learning valuable healthy lifestyle skills such as healthy sexual behaviours, emotional resilience and healthy eating.
- A positive family life provides a child with the opportunity for a healthy life by creating the foundations for them to develop intellectual, social and emotional skills. Positive family life can also help children to develop healthy lifestyle habits and feel loved and valued.
- Enabling good mental health and wellbeing is vital for the educational and life chances of children and young people in Somerset. Early identification and access to effective support are essential to improve outcomes.

### What are the challenges?

- Most children and young people have access to high quality education with many of the schools in Somerset rated as good or better by OFSTED inspectors. Somerset does not have a university and fewer young people go into higher education than is seen nationally. Almost 6% of the adult population have no academic qualifications at all.
- There are some significant inequalities between communities in early life experiences. For example, breastfeeding rates are 19% lower in the most deprived communities compared to the least deprived. Furthermore, there is a gap in GCSE attainment between pupils who receive free school meals and those who do not.
- The numbers of young people in Somerset being admitted to hospital for self-harm or alcohol-specific conditions is higher than we would expect it to be compared to the rest of England.
- The West Somerset District was recently ranked as the lowest area nationally for social mobility, meaning that there are fewer education, employment and housing opportunities for deprived children and young people.

**Our priority as a partnership is to ensure every child in Somerset is happy, healthy and prepared for adulthood.**

## Priority Four: Improved health and wellbeing and more people living healthy and independent lives for longer

### Why is this important?

- We all have a role to play in maintaining and improving the health and wellbeing of ourselves, our families and our communities, by trying to live a healthier way of life. However, we also need access to the health and care services that we need when we need them.
- Joining up the different parts of our health and care system and enabling them to communicate effectively will allow us to best meet the needs of our population and ensure we do not miss opportunities for prevention and early intervention.
- We want people to feel supported to live the life they aspire to, by helping them earlier and more efficiently. Providing the necessary care and support at home and in communities can enable people to live independently for longer and reduce unnecessary admissions to hospital.
- People should feel supported to choose healthy and active lifestyles and improve their own physical and mental health and wellbeing. Some people will need more support than others but all partners should be doing what they can to provide the information and support for people to make positive lifestyle choices.

### What are the challenges?

- The life expectancy in Somerset has increased by around two years in the last 15 years, with men now expected to live until 80.5 years and women 84.1 years. This is higher than for the national average.
- As life expectancy increases, the time spent in ill health also increases. We now expect the last 16 years of life to be spent in ill health and in the next 20 years we may see a doubling in dementia rates.
- In some of our communities in Somerset, 20% of the adult population are living with a disability and over 7% of adults are recorded on GP registers for depression.
- The way health and social care services are currently delivered may become unsustainable if demand continues to increase and our population gets older, with more long-term conditions.

**Our priority as a partnership is to ensure we have a health and care system that is fit for purpose and can manage the challenges of increasing demand, support those with long-term conditions and help residents take responsibility for improving their own health outcomes.**

## How can you get involved?



### 1 Somerset Health & Wellbeing Board

- Provide system leadership and direction to help all partners achieve the four priorities
- Provide a public forum for decision making and engagement for all factors relating to improving lives
- Inspire and foster local action across the four priorities
- Enable all organisations and partners to move to a prevention - driven focus



### 2 Health and Care organisations in Somerset

- Provide and commission services which support the priorities of the Somerset Improving Lives Strategy
- Provide the best quality services possible, making effective use of the 'Somerset Pound' – our collective resource in the county
- Make plans with people, understanding their needs and designing joined up services around the needs of the population.



### 3 Other Boards and Groups

- Create and align plans and strategies which help deliver against the strategic priorities and outcomes of the Somerset Improving Lives Strategy
- Support the priorities of the Somerset Improving Lives Strategy
- Promote partnerships wherever possible, working as one organisation for Somerset



### 4 Individuals

- Take ownership and responsibility for promoting personal health and wellbeing
- Be proactive in accessing services which are available
- Get involved with influencing and making changes in Somerset



### 5 Local Communities

- Take ownership and responsibility for promoting community resilience  
Advocating for the needs of local people
- Make the best use of community assets and leadership to create local solutions
- Supporting the vulnerable members of the community to be healthy and have strong social connections



## What have people said about the strategy?

*There should be use of existing forums and established 'bodies' like Parish Councils, National Parks, etc. These should all be encouraged to act with 'one voice' and engage with local communities.*

*As a strategic voice, the Board Should be driving a commitment to bring everyone (all partner) organisations along the journey with them...they should be an advocate for change and improvement.*

*We need a joined up approach contributing to the priorities through the day to day work our organisation delivers.*

*I would like to be involved in building cross-sector relationships to ensure a coordinated approach to these four priorities, so that health, social care, education, voluntary sector and other partners are all involved.*

**You can find out more about Improving Lives in Somerset by visiting:**