



Local Community Network

Yearly Report 2023/2024

Taunton



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Local Community Networks (LCNs)

Purpose

“To be the focus for community development, engagement and partnership working at local level; improving the outcomes for residents through establishing strong connections between Somerset Council, our communities and partners.”

Map

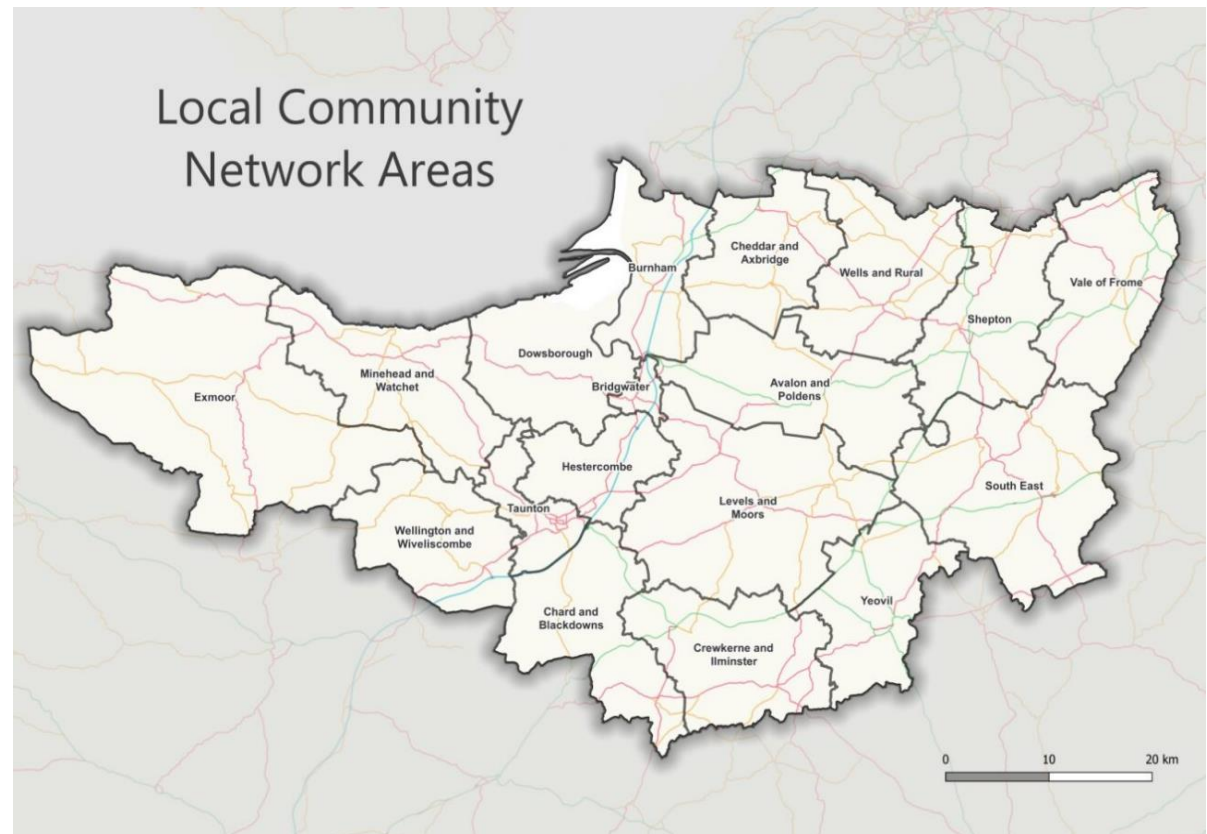
There are 18 LCNs in total.

They cover every city, town, and parish within the local authority area.

Full details of each LCN, including their demographics, characteristics, agendas, and meeting dates, can be found online.

Please visit the following webpages:

www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/



Taunton Area LCN

The Taunton Area LCN consists of seven Somerset Council electoral divisions. And there are seven parishes - Taunton, Bishops Hull, Bishops Lydeard, Cothelstone, Coford St. Luke, Norton Fitzwarren and Trull.

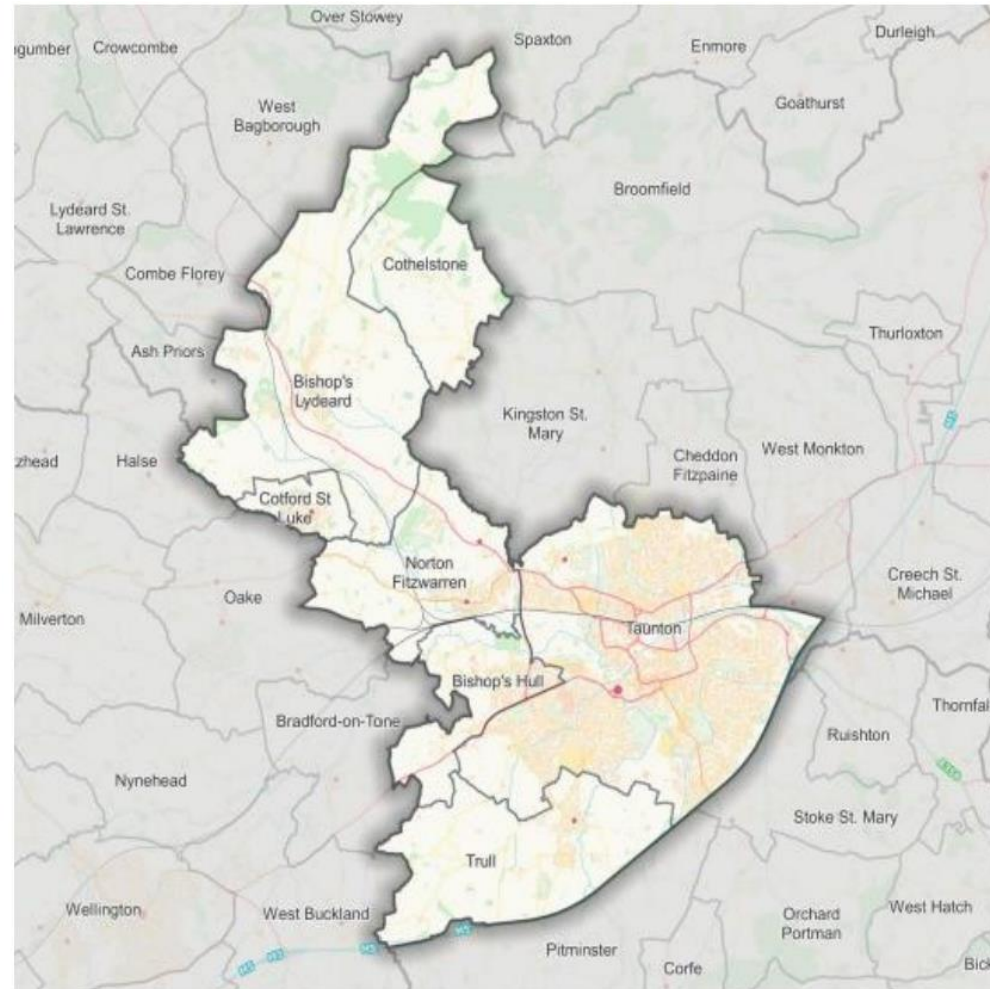
It has a population of 74,000.

The area is steeped in local history with thriving localities offering residents and visitors a variety of community hubs, special events and social support, often facilitated by volunteers.

The county town of Taunton hosts independent markets, vibrant festivals, and great theatre. It is home to Somerset County Cricket Ground and the Somerset Heritage Centre.

Neighbouring parishes feature a cluster of picturesque villages. You can take a ride on the West Somerset Railway, or enjoy a walk on the Quantocks to explore ancient parklands and enjoy views of West Somerset coast.

The cultural and environmental diversity of the Taunton LCN is to be celebrated.



Chair and Vice Chair



Chair: Taunton Area LCN

Cllr Dawn Johnson

Dawn is Somerset Councillor for the Comeytrove and Trull Division. She is the Vice-Chair of Scrutiny (Communities) and a member of the Constitution and Governance Committee.

Vice Chair: Taunton Area LCN

Cllr John Hunt

John is Somerset Councillor for the Bishop's Hull and Taunton West Division. He is a member of the Scrutiny Committee (Children and Families) and the Strategic Planning Committee. He is also a Parish Councillor for Bishops Hull.



Chair's Introduction

"It has been a great pleasure to chair the Taunton LCN.

With successful teamwork we have been able to achieve real positive change within the network, especially for our young people.

I want to thank all those who have engaged with the meetings and who have embraced the information that has been shared to benefit our communities.

I also want to thank John Hunt, the Vice Chair, and Bev Fernandes who has chaired the Young People's Working Group, for their hard work and support.

I'm really happy with achievements in this first year and excited for what future opportunities may emerge from the conversations taking place, the sharing of good practice and the learning that we all take from our meetings.

We can see the benefits of a working group targeted towards a particular aim and I look forward to setting up more working groups to allow opportunities for our communities with particular interests to drive forward improvements.

My aim is to continue listening to our communities and through partnership working to connect people who can help each other whether that be through funding, training, or sharing knowledge and experience.

I want to work towards more resident participation and to finding a platform for sharing the work we are doing with a wider population.

I hope you will all continue to find attending the meetings a very worthwhile experience and I thank you for all that you contribute."

Cllr Dawn Johnson
Chair, Taunton Area LCN

Priorities and Ambitions

The opening meeting of the Taunton Area LCN in July 2023, discussed priorities for the coming year and quickly developed an operating pattern of information seeking and discussion around a particular priority or issue for each meeting, agreeing actions where applicable.

The initial list of priorities and discussion points are set out below. The needs of young people was a top priority for many. It was agreed to set up a working group focussing on support for young people in the early meetings.

The LCN is considering setting up an additional working group for highways and transport.



LCN Meeting Highlights

July & August 2023

The first meeting of the Taunton Area LCN was held Deane House, Taunton. Attendance was high and there was a discussion to establish priorities and issues to focus on in the coming year. The Chair and Vice Chair were elected. A wide range of topics and priorities were discussed.

Support for children and young people was identified as a key priority and because the LCN were keen to make progress with this, a follow-up meeting was held in August at County Hall to further discuss and progress the support.

September 2023

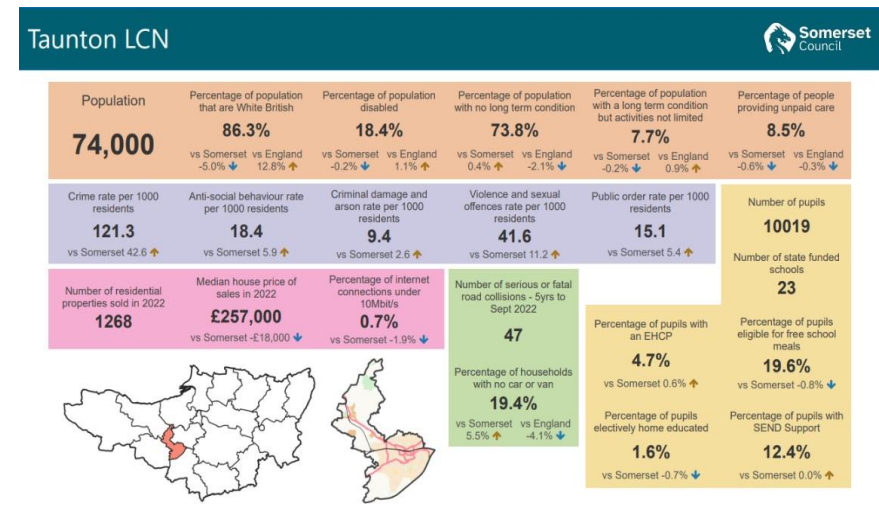
Held at the Deane House, discussions on the priorities for young people continued, and deepened.

There were presentations on the recent surveys of the views of young people, and the projects and services available from Bridgwater and Taunton College, the Creative Innovation Centre, and Somerset Council.

Representatives from Avon and Somerset Police gave an update on their work with young people.

A data overview of the LCN was considered and discussed (pictured right and at Appendix B).

As a result, a decision was taken to set up a Young People's Working Group.



LCN Meeting Highlights

November 2023

Held at Trull Memorial Hall, one of the main items for discussion was the financial crisis declared by Somerset Council. The LCN was advised the local authority was looking to work with our parishes to devolve some services and assets to tackle the budget gap. Plus there was a presentation from the Grand Weston Greenway Association on Local Active Travel plans and aspirations.

February 2024

Hosted at the Taunton Minister, the LCN received an update on Somerset Council's financial position.

Sustrans and Taunton Area Cycling Campaign representatives also attended. Sustrans, an active travel charity is assisting with the planned Kingston St. Mary to Taunton active travel route. The campaigners updated the meeting on funding received for the Otter Trail and for waymarking from Silk Mills to Taunton town centre.

The main agenda item was a presentation from Somerset Prepared on Community Resilience and Emergency Planning. Following discussion and questions, it was decided to hold a Community Resilience and Emergency Planning workshop that would support parishes and partners to write or update their plans. (This was held on 28th May 2024 at Deane House).



March 2024

Held at Deane House, the major agenda item was Support in the Community. There was a presentation about the Somerset Micro-Enterprise Project, the Blackdown Support Group and from Wivey Cares. The Lead Member for Adult Social Care at Somerset Council was also in attendance. The presentations generated much discussion, and we will return to the topics.

It was agreed to set up a meeting this summer with the Council's Highways team to discuss highways and transport issues. 9

Working Groups

Young People's Working Group

There have been four meetings of the Young People's Working Group, and its membership is growing at each meeting through recommendation and word of mouth. It is chaired by Cllr Bev Fernandes. In its first year, the networking group has supported each other with offers of free training, funding and facilitation of programmes and events

The initial meeting in November 2023 was held at the Taunton Town Football Club. There were introductions from all attendees and Charmaine Dyne from the Violence Reduction Partnership presented the results of a recently completed survey on Young People Crime / High Volume call outs by Avon & Somerset Police.



The second meeting was in January 2024 and held at the Taunton Brewhouse.

Rev. Tobie gave an overview of the Young People Hub Project in the grounds of the Minster.

Vickie Robbins, Executive Director of Taunton Brewhouse, spoke about the Young People Officer at the Theatre.

Jacob Jones gave a power point presentation on the new Safe Space Project for young people from MIND Somerset.

SASP offered funding for the Safe Space Project and the Somerset Youth Alliance offered free training to volunteers who work with Young People – Taunton Brewhouse and Taunton Creative Innovation Centre.

Working Groups

At the third meeting in March 2024, the group returned to the Taunton Town Football Club and there was a presentation from Paul Smith of Bridgwater and Taunton College on a new Digital Hub and current projects.

Young Somerset and the Violence Reduction Partnership gave an update on the new Young People Hubs in McDonalds, Taunton, and Coffee 1# Bridgwater, to address crime hot spots and offer support for young people.

The Knife Angel project was promoted and Pippa Hughes, the LCN Link Officer, volunteered to represent the Young People's Working Group at the Opening and Closing Ceremony.

Tash Scully, Director of Somerset Youth Work Alliance, SPARK Somerset said:

“It has been a privilege to be part of the Taunton Young People's working group, firmly basing itself in the community, it has successfully brought together a wide variety of youth providers, many of whom had not met before.

“This provided networking and conversations about more joined up working within the community and engaging wider partners to enable more young people to access the right support and services.”

The Working Group in conjunction with the Connect Somerset Champion, are holding an event on 18th June to showcase what is on offer for Education Providers and Young People Providers at Taunton Deane Partnership College from 3pm-5pm.

A huge **thank you** to all our partners in the Working Group who have hosted us at their venues during our first year.

Reflections

Taunton Area LCN has built strong relationships with its town and parish councils and other partners, both in the public and voluntary sectors over the past 12 months. It has explored several topics and priorities and established a Young People's Working Group.

It has also provided a regular opportunity for face-to-face dialogue for Somerset Council to update and discuss the financial emergency and its plans for sustainability with communities.

Progress in the first year is aptly described in the testimonial below.

Cllr Tom Deakin, Leader of Taunton Town Council, Somerset Councillor for Taunton North, and Associate Lead Member for Performance said:

“The Taunton Area LCN has been an amazing vehicle for bringing different strands of our community together. I often hear from a number of community groups about how valuable they have found the LCN and how helpful the support staff are.

I know for definite that a number of initiatives that have happened around the town in the past few months either wouldn't have been as successful as they were without the activity of the LCN, or possibly wouldn't have even happened at all!

Being driven by actions and outcomes through the creation of working groups with specific focus, the LCN has ensured that it is a forum to drive real change in our community. I look forward to being part of it as we move forward.”

Contacts

Email: Tauntonlcn@somerset.gov.uk Website: www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/

Taunton Area LCN: www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/lcn-areas/taunton/

Appendices

Appendix A – Core Membership

Parishes

Bishops Hull
Bishops Lydeard
Cothelstone
Cotford St Luke
Norton Fitzwarren
Taunton
Trull

Electoral Divisions

Bishop's Hull and Taunton
West
Trull
Lydeard
Rowbarton and
Staplegrove
Taunton East
Taunton North
Taunton South

Organisations

Avon and Somerset Police
NHS
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue
Education Partners
Spark Somerset
Society Local Council Clerks
Somerset Association Local Councils
Somerset Activity Sports Partnership
Community Council for Somerset
Citizens Advice
Department of Work and Pensions
Somerset Rivers Authority
Somerset Local Nature Partnership
Business Chamber
Quantock Hills AONB

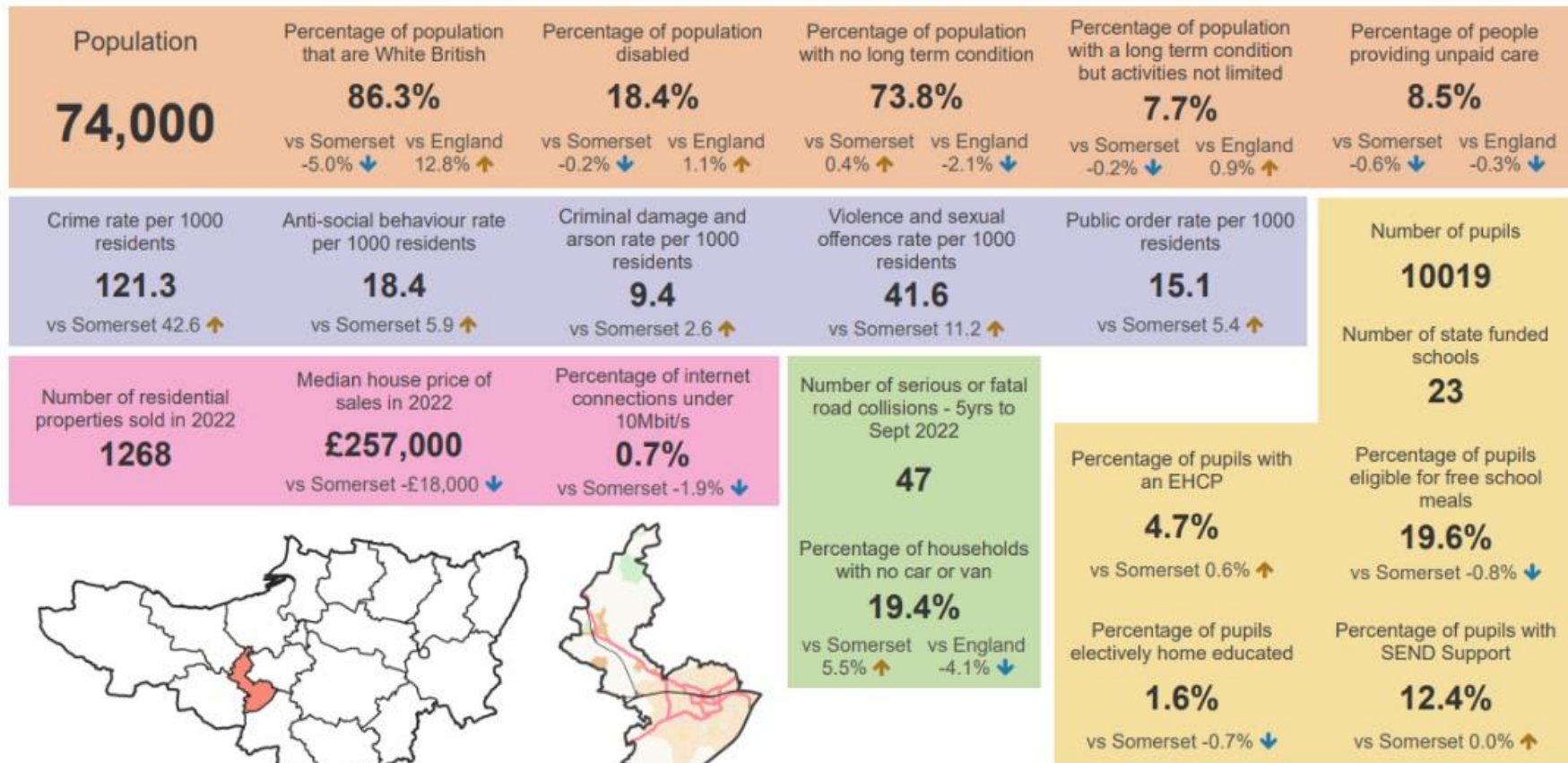
Appendix A continued - Partners and Stakeholders

Bishops Change Agenda
Brenda Weston
Bridgwater and Taunton College
Climate Action Taunton
Connect Somerset
Dulverton YMCA
Edventure
GameChanger
First Aid for Mental Health
HPC Community Fund
In The Mix Project
MIND Taunton
Quantock View Southside
Residents
and Bishops Change Agenda
Sentimental Care
Somerset Youth Alliance

Taunton Area Cycling Campaign
Taunton Brewhouse
Taunton Minster
Taunton Youth Culture Arts
Taunton Town Football Club
Taunton Youth for Christ Taunton
The Creative Innovation Centre
(Taunton)
The Onion Project
Somerset Youth Parliament
Somerset Youth Theatre
Streetlinkz / Fuse
Street Pastors
WellBe Link (adult mental health)
YMCA
Young Somerset
Youth Unlimited

Appendix B – Data

Taunton LCN

Appendix C – Meeting Dates and Agendas

Minutes for Taunton Area LCN can be found here:

<https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld>

July 23 – Inaugural Meeting

- To elect the Chair – Cllr Dawn Johnson
- To elect and appoint the Vice-Chair – Cllr John Hunt
- To determine priorities and areas of focus for the LCN in the next 12 months
 - **Young People**
 - **Highways**
 - **Environment**
 - **Planning and Enforcement**
 - **Flooding**
 - **Anti-Social Behaviour**
- To agree the frequency of meetings

28 September 23 – Meeting

- Introduction to Data for the Taunton LCN – Somerset Council
- Bridgwater & Taunton College – Young People
- Somerset Schools Survey – Somerset Council
- The One Teams - Excluded Young People
- Avon & Somerset Police – ASB/Young People
- Taunton CICIC – Young People Arts Hub
- The Onion Project – Exploitation Young People

30 November 23 Meeting

- Update on Somerset Council's current financial position – Somerset Council
- Grand Western Greenway Association – Active Travel
- Young People's Working Group feedback follow the inaugural workshop on 28 November 23

5 February 24 – Meeting

- Update on Somerset Council's current financial position – Service and Asset Devolution – Somerset Council
- Civil Contingency – Somerset Council
- Somerset Rivers Authority
- Taunton Minster
- Taunton Area Cycling Campaign
- Sustrans Active Travel Charity
- Avon & Somerset Police – Young People projects
- Feedback from the Young People's Working Group – 25 January 24

26 March 24 – Meeting

- Support in the Community – Somerset Council
- Wivey Cares (Voluntary Support Network)
- Blackdown Support Group (Voluntary Support Network)
- Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care
- Update on the Young People's Working Group – 21 March 24