

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

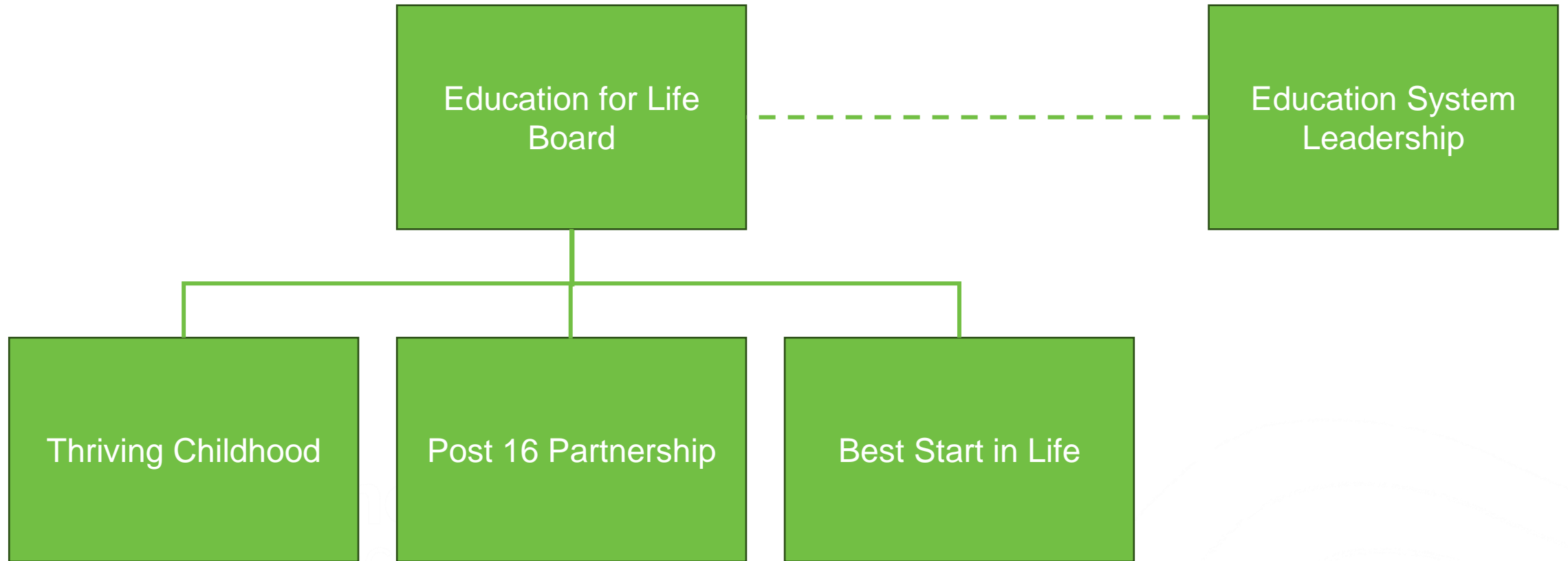
- Strong chairing is modelling system leadership
- Clearer action-focus and sharper decision-making from some statutory groups (e.g. Schools Forum, SACRE)
- Increase in perception of value of system governance, demonstrated by improvements in attendance and agendas
- Some instances of collaboration have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

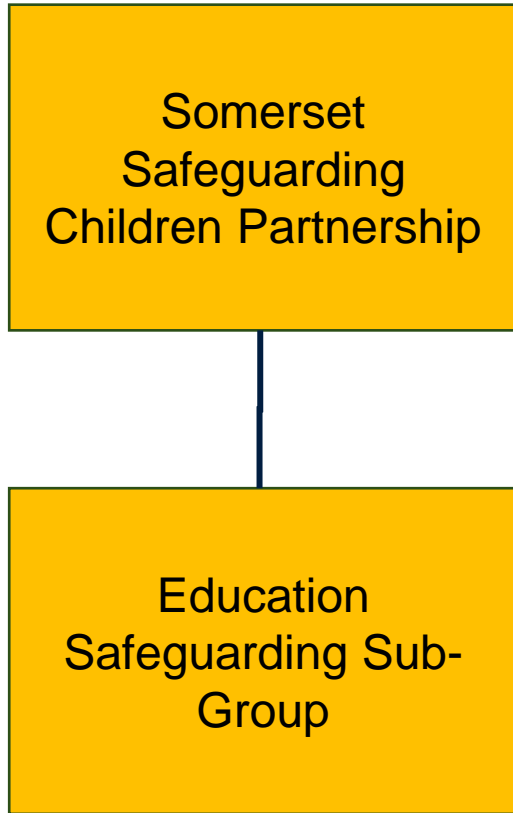
- Many groups are working in relative isolation with only LA officers connecting to the rest of the system
- There is no consensus on how to agree priorities or set shared direction to even a limited extent
- Critical decisions on issues such as finance are made without reference to senior education 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

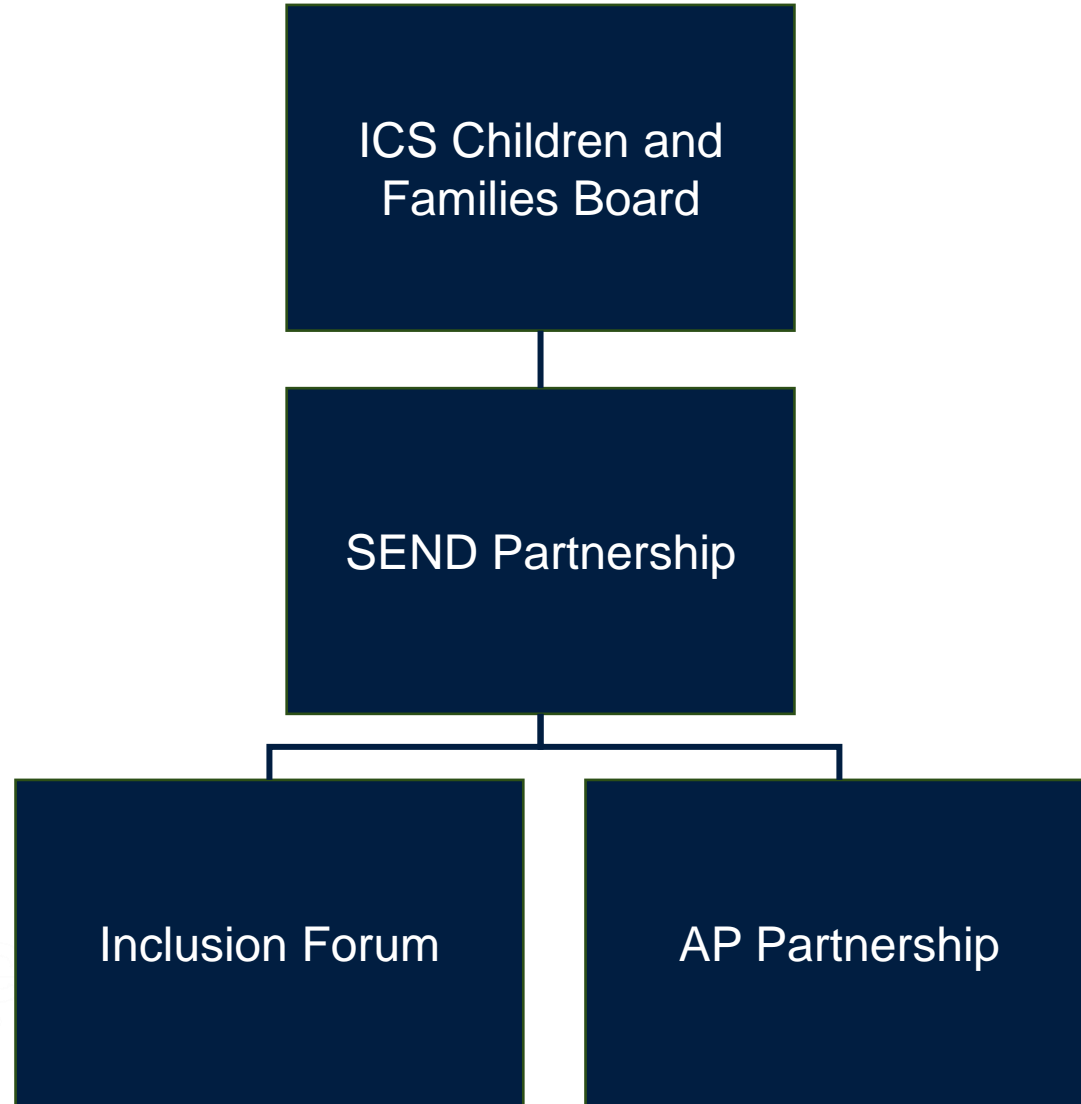
Current structure



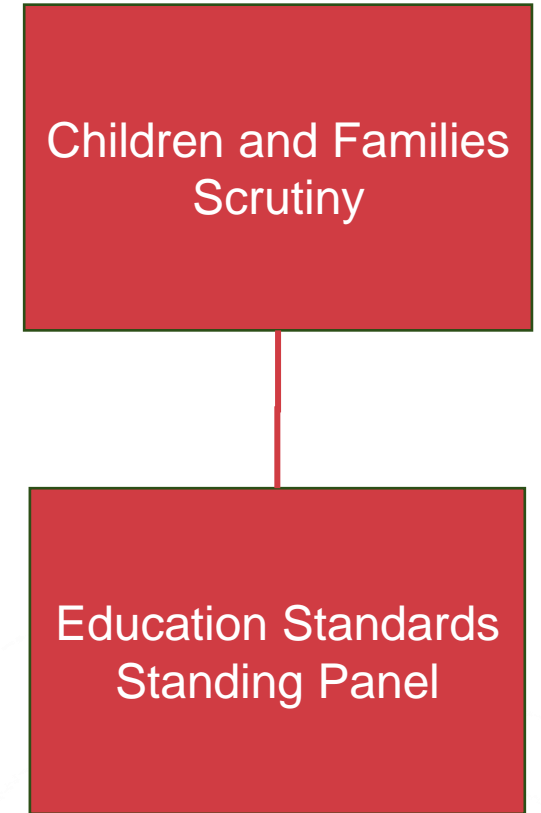
LA/Police/ Health/Education



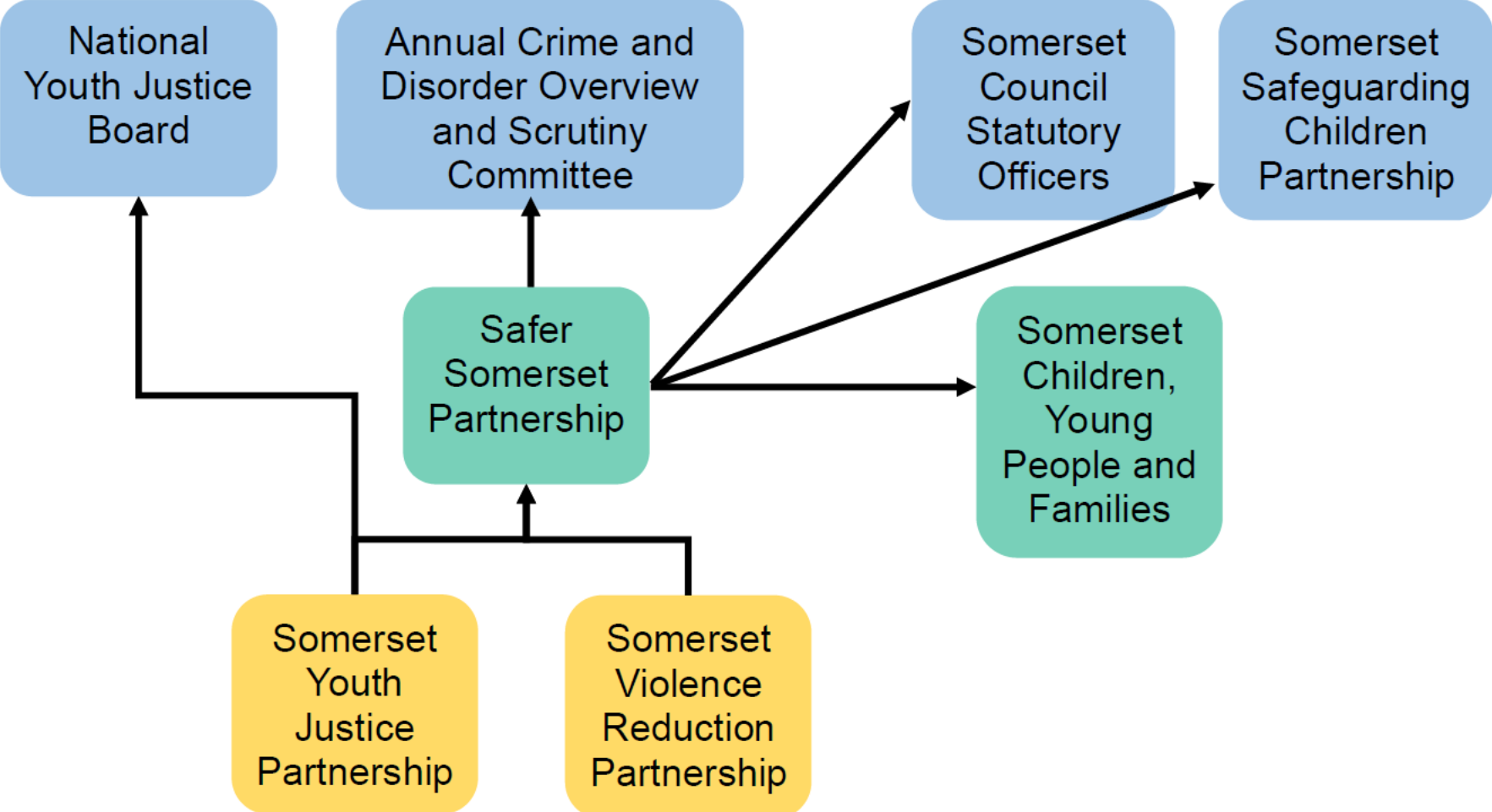
LA/Health-led



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

Education Business
Partnership

Economic Growth
Board

Connect Somerset
Board



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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