

Accountability Statement

2025/26

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Introduction

Accountability Agreements form part of the wider set of reforms set out in the Skills for Jobs White Paper (January 2021 - [Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth)) to transform the skills system so it better supports young people and adults to develop the skills they need to get a good job and ensuring a clearer focus on the delivery of outcomes.

Accountability Agreements were introduced for the first time in the 2023/24 academic year and consist of a 2-part document. The agreement sets out both the overall expectations, and what colleges, designated institutions and local authorities in scope will deliver, in return Department for Education (DfE) funding.

Part 1 of the agreement - the 'Accountability Framework' - sets out National Skills Priorities as well as the terms and conditions of funding to ensure the effective management and assurance of public funds, the protection of learners as well as requiring sound governance. This is developed by the Department for Education.

Part 2, the 'Annual Accountability Statement' - this document - sets how the Council are contributing to priorities outlined in Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) and to the National Skills Priorities. It also sets out how our Tailored (Community) Learning provision meets local skills needs.

Somerset Council is an in-scope Local Authority and is receipt of funding to deliver:

- Skills Bootcamps
- Tailored Learning (referred to as Community Learning)
- Free Courses for Jobs

All DfE funded adult education and skills activity, is managed by the Workforce and Skills Service within the Council's Economic Development, Skills and Climate Directorate.

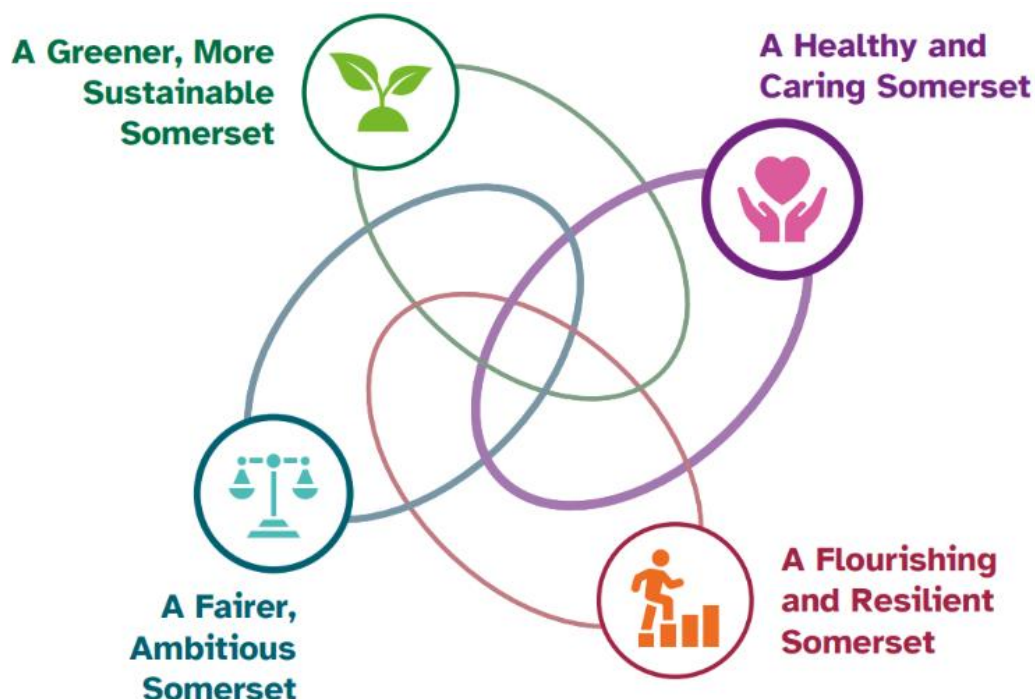
The Council also receives funding via the apprenticeship levy. Apprenticeships are managed and delivered by the Curriculum and Training Service (Somerset Centre for Integrated Learning) within the Council's Children and Young People Directorate.

Strategic Vision (2023 - 2027)

Somerset Council Plan

Somerset Council will build a fairer, greener, resilient, more flourishing Somerset that cares for the most vulnerable and listens to you.

The Council has developed its strategic Plan (2023-2027) which sets four priorities to make the vision clearer and more meaningful:



The Somerset Council Plan can be found here: [SCC - Public - Somerset Council - Council Plan.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Somerset Economic Strategy

Somerset's Economic Strategy (currently being finalised) has been developed with input from a range of public and private sector stakeholders to reflect local ambitions for the future. The vision is set out below:

Somerset will have a flourishing, fair and green economy building on our distinctive assets and opportunities for good growth, an economy that will:

- Capitalise on our distinctive assets and opportunities, leading the UK in low carbon energy, aerospace, high-value manufacturing, and digital and data

- Flourishing by supporting business dynamism and creativity and attracting high-value investment to improve productivity and to create growth and exciting opportunities for Somerset residents
- Be a fair economy where people and places fulfil their potential, have improved life chances and well-being and there are greater levels of social inclusion and social mobility
- Be a green economy that is de-carbonised, manages resources efficiently and enhances Somersets natural capital.

The strategy defines 5 priority themes:

1. **Distinctive Assets and Opportunities:** We will capitalise on our distinctive assets and opportunities for good growth, driving economic transformation in Somerset.
2. **People and Skills:** We will build an aspirational workforce that responds to the current and future needs of our economy, aligning skills provision and enabling all residents to access opportunities for education, training and employment to achieve their full potential and to thrive.
3. **Business Environment:** We will create an environment that stimulates and supports business start-up, scale up and investment, driving growth, innovation and productivity.
4. **Places and Communities:** We will help to shape flourishing rural, coastal and urban places which foster economic opportunity and well-being.
5. **Infrastructure:** We will enable delivery of the infrastructure needed to support economic inclusion and growth.

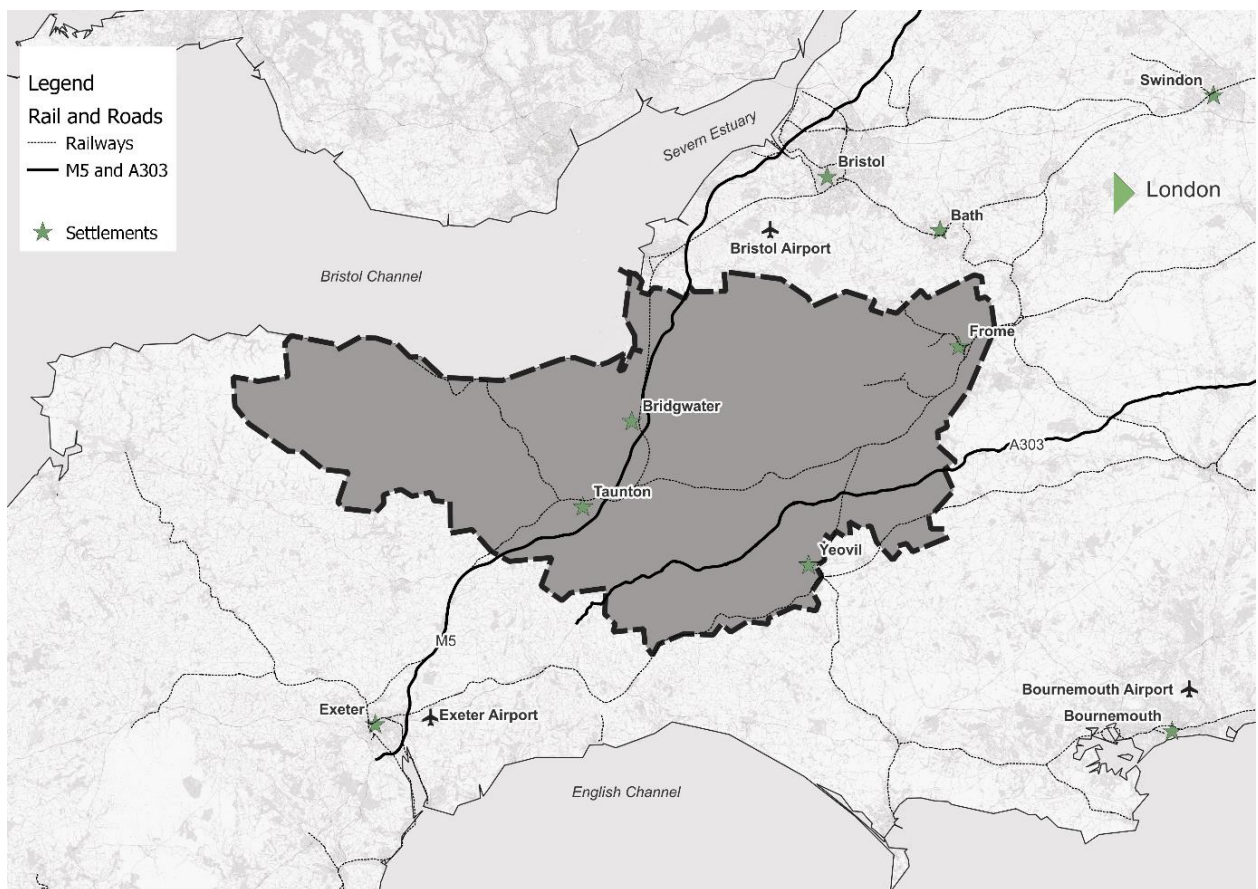
Adult education and skills activity primarily supports the People and Skills and the Places and Communities priorities; however, activities also support the other themes.

Context and Place

Somerset Council came into being on 1 April 2023. The new council brings together the previous County Council and the four District Councils (Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton, and South Somerset).

Covering an area of 1,610 miles, the administrative county of Somerset is in the southwest of England. It borders North Somerset and Bath & Northeast Somerset to the north, Wiltshire to the east, Dorset to the south-east and Devon to the south-west.

The county is distinctively rural and relies heavily on its market towns for employment and services. According to the ONS (2011) 48.2% of Somerset's population live in rural areas, making it one of the ten most rural authorities in England.



The M5 corridor creates strong links for the north of the county to Exeter and Plymouth in south-west, and Bristol to the north-east, with the main towns of Taunton and Bridgwater providing significant draws for the workforce in their surrounding areas. In the north of the county around Bridgwater, energy, manufacturing, and logistics are major activities, with investments at HPC and Gravity creating huge growth opportunities in low carbon energy and high-value manufacturing. In the west of the county, Taunton provides significant employment in health, public administration and professional services. These areas provide pulls for the west of the county too, for access to jobs, skills and key services.

In the southern half of the county, the A303 corridor creates links to Exeter and beyond in the west, but also strong linkages with Wiltshire, Dorset, and the English south coast in the east. High-value manufacturing is the biggest employer in this area, with Yeovil a key centre for the aerospace industry, drawing significant workforce numbers from neighbouring counties.

In the north-eastern part of the county, where the main settlements are smaller, the pull towards Somerset's biggest towns is smaller too, whereas there are notable draws across the border to Bristol and Bath. Agri-food is important in this area, and increasingly so are the creative industries, given growing linkages to the creative clusters of Bristol and Bath.

Somerset Data

Category	Details
Population	581,145 which is projected to increase to 593,272 by 2026. 48.9% of all ages is male and 51.1% is female.
Healthy Life Expectancy	Men: 66.76 years, Women: 63.39 years (2% better than England)
Population Age Distribution	Working Age (16-64): 58.2%, Aged 65+: 25.18%
Future Population Projection	By 2036 it is projected that one third of the population of Somerset will be over 65 years of age; ageing at a faster rate than the national average. The out-migration of younger people combined with an aging population and in-migration of older people is resulting in lower overall levels of economic activity alongside the increased costs of supporting an older population.
Qualification and Skills (16-64)	On par or slightly above national average, except Level 4: 43% (UK: 47%)
No Qualifications	5.3%
NEET (16-18)	7.2%
Employment Rate (16-64)	80% (National rate: 76%)
Unemployment Rate (16-64)	2.6% (National rate: 3.9%)
Economic Inactivity (16+)	37.8% (Females: 42.9%, Males: 32.2%)
Economic Inactivity (16-64)	18.2% (Females: 22%, Males: .3%)
Pathway to Achieve	Community Learning (CL)
Adult Obesity (18+)	26.4%
Child Obesity (Reception Age)	10.2%

Child Obesity (Age 10-11)	20.3%
Child Overweight (Reception Age)	13.9%
Child Overweight (Age 10-11)	14.7%

There are persistent and increasing levels of deprivation in several urban areas, as well as lower than average levels of social mobility across the county. The number of 'highly deprived' neighbourhoods in Somerset (categorised as being within the 20% most deprived in England) increased to 29 in IMD 2019, up from 25 at the time of IMD 2015. There are 9 LSOAs within the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England. Around 47,000 Somerset residents live in a neighbourhood (LSOA) identified as one of the 20% most deprived in England. Children in Somerset face greater income deprivation than older people.

Cumulative issues of isolation, health and well-being, money, debt, and housing together with the market failure of support service delivery and poor physical and digital connectivity impedes access to employment opportunities. This is exacerbated in more in rural and deprived areas in Somerset with West Somerset having the lowest social mobility in the country.

Somerset's bedrock industries (agriculture, food and drink and tourism) are especially important in rural areas and while providing high levels of economic output and employment, these are typically lower pay, low productivity industries.

At £34,973, the median gross annual full-time wage is lower than 7% lower than the nationally average. This gap increases if employment is part-time, of which there is a greater prevalence in Somerset. There is a significant difference in the median wages between female (£31,114) and male (£36,868) workers. At £22,789 the estimated disposable income is lower in Somerset than it is nationally. Within the county it is estimated that there are at least 50,000 unpaid carers.

Housing in Somerset is less affordable than it is nationally with a typical home in Somerset costing £283,000 compared to the rest of UK average of £271,415 (Feb 2025). In Somerset this equates to 8 times the typical annual wage compared to the national figure of 7 times. Private rental properties are increasingly expensive with average rents outstripping wage income coming in on average at £952 an increase of 5.9% on March 2024.

In 2021 Somerset's economy was worth almost £12.4bn in Gross Value-Added terms an improvement of 5.8% since 2020. At £33.20, the Gross Value Added per hour is 16% lower than the UK average. Between 2018-2023 the number of new businesses grew by 8.7% currently while business closures rose by 1.8% to 10.2%. The number of active businesses increased to 24,795 in 2024.

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. At 16.2% (44,700), self-employment in Somerset remains higher than the national average which stands at 13.4% (UK Labour Force Survey).

Somerset does not have a university or a wealth of research and development institutions/assets to support a culture of innovation resulting in many 20–30-year-olds leaving the county for education and work opportunities.

Somerset Adult Education and Skills Programmes

Strategic Leadership

The Council works collaboratively to identify, prioritise, and meet the learning and development needs of business and communities across Somerset as set out in our strategic priorities section. All activities, delivered through the Workforce and Skills service, are based on the principles of widening participation, are responsive and of high quality.

The Council has forged strong and effective partnerships with a range of stakeholders across Somerset. The knowledge gathered through these relationships, alongside Labour Market Intelligence and other data analysis, supports the understanding of need to help inform the adult learning offer whilst highlighting challenges and opportunities to learner engagement and participation.

The Council is in the process of establishing a partnership who will oversee relevant activities in relation work, health and skills. It is the intention that the Interim Advisory Group will become a sub-group of the partnership. Plans are underway to hold an inaugural meeting of the partnership in July.

Interim Community Learning Advisory Group

Whilst the Work, Health and Skills wider governance arrangements within Somerset finalised, the Council has established an interim Community Learning Advisory Group (CLAG) which serves as a forum for the open exchange of ideas, to collectively discuss the day-to-day operation of the Community Learning Agreements and to resolve any matters that require the attention of the Community Learning (CL) Partners. The purpose of the CLAG is to provide oversight of partnership agreements with the aim of:

- developing the Adult Learning Strategy
- placing learners' needs in the centre of the service provision
- supporting continuity of education for learners
- improving the sufficiency and efficiency of delivery of Community Learning services
- making the best use of Somerset Council and Advisory Group partners' resources, providing continuous improvement in the quality of CL

Members of CLAG come from a range of different organisations including social housing, the NHS, the DWP, Charis refugee and resettlement, Navigate money and debt charity, the Councils Stronger Community team, Education and Children Looked After Leaving Care, Children's Social Care. Collectively, the members have an extensive knowledge and experience of areas of need across Somerset to help inform the CL priorities.

To assist the CLAG to understand the scope of the CL service, each subcontracting partner will be invited to present and answer questions at meetings. Additionally, members will be encouraged to visit and experience the service delivery firsthand, culminating in a year-end celebration/networking event.

Partnerships

CL works closely with a range of partners to support the work the areas undertake. These partners include:

- Skill Up Somerset – an apprenticeship and skills advisory service offering impartial advice to employers on upskilling their workforce
- Community Employment Hubs - based in outreach locations, providing guidance on

opportunities for learning, training, work, links to volunteering and referrals to other support including IT, Citizen Advice, apprenticeships and positive mental health. The Hubs identify barriers raised by individuals that prevent their progression

- Somerset Employment Support Group - made up of organisations connected with employment, skills and training which actively inform on current and potential issues
- The Department for Work and Pensions and local Job Centre Plus
- Charis Refugee
- Subcontract partners - Somerset Skills and Learning and Community Learning Partners
- The NHS Somerset Foundation Trust delivering Sector Skills Work Academy Programmes in Somerset as first step towards working in the NHS
- Business Representative Organisations – such as Somerset Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Business who provide the employer voice
- Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector – to ensure economic and social inclusion
- Abri Social Housing
- Hinkley Point C Job Service visiting Employment Hubs to generate interest in working at Hinkley Point
- Other major projects, including through development of Local Labour Agreements, to ensure local, inclusive employment opportunities

The Council's Workforce and Skills Service forms an integral part of the Council working closely across many internal services including Economic Prosperity, Adults and Children's Services, Community Services (including Somerset Housing Tenancy, Somerset Independence Plus, Stronger Communities, Economic Development Libraries and the Resettlement team for Displaced People) and Public Health (including Connect Somerset).

Developing and Delivering our Programmes

National, regional and local priorities were analysed, and a range of information sources were used to inform our current Work and Skills programmes. These include:

- Somerset Council Plan
- Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy
- The Devon and Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan
- Consultative meetings with internal Council services and external stakeholders
- Ongoing analysis of national, regional and local data
- Somerset Economic Assessment (Somerset Trends)
- The Breaking Barriers: Economic Inactivity Research
- Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Somerset Intelligence
- The Governments 'Get Britain Working' strategy and emerging policy

To support the Councils strategic aims in connection to work and skills, four programmes have been developed. The Councils approach to DfE funded programmes is set out below.

Skills Bootcamps

Skills Bootcamps offer flexible training for adults (19+) for up to 16 weeks at level 2 or above for skills in demand by employers. The delivery plan for Skills Bootcamps is based on analysis of live vacancies and through proactive engagement with employers to define their skills needs.

Somerset Council, working with Dorset Council and Bournemouth and Poole Council, has been awarded £4.75 million for Wave 6 in 2025/2026. This will engage 1190 learners in a variety of sectors from Early Years, AI, Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Management as well as construction, engineering, hospitality, bus driving and HGV.

In addition, the council is managing Wave 5 where 91% of the individuals who have finished training have secured or received enhanced roles in employment. There are at least 132 employers who have benefitted from either a Skills Bootcamp or a graduate from the Skills Bootcamp.

The 'Wraparound Service' that was put in place in Wave 4 continues to work well and is part of the reason that the Skills Bootcamp programme has been able to grow.

'I completed an Electrical Inspection testing Skills Bootcamp and have gained hands on experience and practical knowledge to further my career in the industry. I recommend this course to anyone'

Multiply

Multiply offered numeracy awareness, confidence building and skills to adults (19+) who did not possess a Level 2 or equivalent maths qualification. Somerset received £2,485,000 to deliver the programme of activity over 3 years through to March 2025 when Government funding for the initiative finished.

The Councils Investment Plan was developed based on extensive consultation with communities to fully understand the need and demand. Somerset Skills & Learning (SS&L) were secured as our strategic partner to deliver the programme.

SS&L implemented a series of progressive courses aimed at integrating maths into practical activities such as budgeting, cooking, sewing, and family learning. The courses were taught by maths specialist teachers, vocational tutors, and community partners, making learning relevant to everyday life. The initiative also engaged local businesses to upskill their workforce, enhancing productivity. Additionally, fast-track learning options for functional skills qualifications were offered, providing flexible and practical maths education for employment and daily use. The project reached 2157 substantive learners and 3123 outreach learners, with 33 businesses engaged across Somerset.

Curriculum and Delivery

The curriculum offered by SS&L included first steps maths, help to manage money, maths skills for jobs, qualifications for parents' numeracy skills, and support for ex-offenders. These courses were delivered in partnership with community organisations and employers, ensuring a vocational approach. All services were fully funded, meaning they were delivered at no cost to learners. This comprehensive curriculum aimed to address various aspects of maths education, making it accessible and practical for different learner groups.

Key Contributions and Strategies

SS&L's approach emphasised teamwork and knowledge sharing, creativity and innovation, and outreach and community engagement. Personalised learner support was provided through focused one-on-one sessions and small group work, addressing unique learner needs in conjunction with ongoing communication and flexibility. Employer and business support were integral to the initiative, ensuring that the skills taught were relevant to the local workforce's needs.

Impact and Achievement

The project successfully increased outreach, connecting with a wide range of local businesses and learners. The adaptable approach led to the fine-tuning of interventions, enhancing their effectiveness. Through focused learner support, SS&L tutors were able to address the unique needs of each learner, contributing to the overall success of the initiative. The impact of these efforts is evident in the increased engagement and improved skills among the local workforce, demonstrating the project's significant contribution to economic prosperity in Somerset.

Alice is a Portuguese national who came to the UK not speaking any English. She attended Baby Bluebirds 123 Sing with Me starter, developer and enhancer course with her daughter. They previously engaged with the Bluebirds through our Community Learning courses at The Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton. Alice went on complete her level one in childcare with SSL because she wants to work with children as she used to do in Portugal. After the birth of her second child, Alice wants to progress onto the level 2 early years or as a TA apprentice.

'I learned a lot of special maths activities to do at home like how to do the division and multiplication; including making it fun for my children with the objects that I have at home and whilst outside that we do like the breakfast and the daily activities and to turn them more fun and to learn with the process'.

Apprenticeships

Somerset Centre for Integrated Learning (SCIL) offers apprenticeships, via levy funding, for team leaders and teachers. These programmes are designed to build confidence and enhance knowledge, skills, and understanding in specific work areas, including education.

Our Investment Plan was developed through extensive community consultation to fully understand the needs and demands.

SCIL's ambition is to create a leading training provision for aspiring teachers, eliminating the need to leave the county to attend university. The apprenticeship programmes focus on the progression of learners, helping them achieve their personal and professional goals, including advancing to higher-level qualifications as appropriate.

The delivery team offers a blended learning approach, combining face-to-face and virtual sessions to meet the diverse needs, incorporating the rurality of Somerset.

Team Leader/Supervisor November 2018 – April 2025	Total number to date 89	11 on programme 97% expected pass rate
Teacher August 2019-to April 2025	Total number to date 20	11 on programme 100% expected pass rate

Somerset Centre Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) in 3 words: “Inspirational, life-changing and enriching” SP 23-24

“As a more mature entrant to the profession, I'd had an interesting life and was no stranger to challenges: passing out of Sandhurst, exploratory ski-mountaineeing expeditions, an international business career. Mentally, emotionally my SCITT year was one of the hardest things I have ever done. Achieving QTS is also one of the things of which I'm most proud. You will be stretched. You will feel exhausted. You will feel it's almost impossible... ..but you will get through it... ..and you'll be very proud of yourself too!” JM 23-24

“My apprenticeship has boosted my confidence and knowledge; the training really helped me with getting a higher-grade role within the organisation and certainly helped me to clearly articulate answers to interview questions that would have had me fumbling previously!” Team Leader Apprenticeship CA

Community Learning

The Council does not directly deliver Community Learning (CL) and will continue to subcontract 100% of delivery in 2025/26. Plans are underway to build internal capacity and capability to deliver small elements of wrap-around support for Community Learning in-house. From August 2025 CL will employ an individual who will provide impartial pastoral support and guidance at initial engagement and careers education advice and guidance (CEIAG) to all learners on the programme. The post holder will also provide outreach engagement in some of the hardest to reach people living in deprived areas, attend job fairs and work with the community employment hubs. CL sub-contractors will “buy-into” this provision to ensure that all learners are receiving quality guidance from a suitably qualified and experienced advisor.

Additionally, for the latter part of the current year (2024/25) CL is piloting in house activity to deliver a Family Learning pilot for families of SEND young people and vulnerable families. The resources that will be created will support people who have difficulties in navigating and interacting positively with systems which are key to the success of their children. If this proves successful, CL aims to extend this delivery into 2025/26.

CL has identified a range of robust and challenging objectives based on local, regional and national priorities that has informed our Community Learning service. The Advisory Group has endorsed the priorities for the coming year which are summarised below:

Vision

To grow a flourishing Somerset where inclusive and inspiring community learning enables individuals to reach their aspirations.

Mission

To enrich lives through inclusive and inspirational adult learning that will assist people to make intelligent choices and succeed in their personal, social, and economic aspirational objectives and to enable them to contribute to the resilience, ambitions, wellbeing and growth of Somerset.

Intention

- 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

Aims

- Deliver Community Learning into our communities focusing particularly on the most marginalised and disadvantaged
- Support people who are furthest from the labour market by guiding them into education, training, and job opportunities.
- CL will ensure equitable access to learning opportunities and work to close equality gaps in outcomes.
- Provide a Community Learning Service that offers a positive learner-focused experience, with an emphasises on value for money, and ensures the responsible use of public funds.

Objectives

- Widen and increase participation across Somerset
- Increase learner engagement and progression
- Continuously improve the management of our sub-contractors

Priorities

Eight priorities have been identified which inform CL in Somerset. These will build on the economic and labour strengths of Somerset and work towards addressing the challenges set out earlier in this document. The priorities are:

1. Deliver a sustainable model of support for adult community-based learning that reaches the county's most vulnerable adults and provides high quality and responsive provision.
2. Prepare learners for future success in education, employment, or training through the provision of excellent impartial information, advice, and careers guidance.
3. Deliver pathways towards employment that support the skills needs of Somerset.
4. Improve digital inclusion and literacy and numeracy skills development to enable progression towards employment opportunities.
5. Increase social mobility and aspirations to succeed through community-based delivery of health and well-being and Family Learning.
6. Improve equity of health, social well-being and independence through widening participation and enhanced inclusion.

7. Support the integration of refugees, asylum seekers, ethnic minority communities and Ukrainian guests into Somerset and progression into employment.
8. Increase the financial acumen of our residents closing the revolving door on debt, poor mental health, and housing issues.

Planned outcomes:

- Positive progression into jobs and/or further learning leading to an increase in household incomes
- Qualitative and quantitative evidence from services, employers and data shaping a strategic and meaningful curriculum
- Wider participation and inclusivity with our communities creating stronger, healthier and more resilient communities

Through discussion with partners, within and outside the Council, and further to research and evidence, the following targeted curriculum areas have been identified for 2025/26 to support delivery of our priorities:

Curriculum	Targeted Area
Digital skills	Focus on West Somerset* and removing the barriers to digital inclusion
English/literacy	Working towards progression to qualifications
Maths	Continuation of the Multiply provision with progression to qualifications
ESOL	Support with practical everyday living. Progress to qualifications
Healthy eating	Tackling obesity in adults and children
Financial acumen	Helping people to become financially stable
Reducing Economic Inactivity	Working in partnership with Connect to work and Community Employment Hubs.
Delivery in deprived and rural areas	Residents living in one of the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in England and 30% living in rural areas.
Family Learning	Focus on West Somerset*
Preparation for employment	
Preparation for further learning	

*West Somerset is deeply rural and continues to be the lowest area of low social mobility in the country

Delivery of CL will continue to be separated into a 'core' service and targeted provision via community-based organisations. The existing contract with the CL single strategic partner to deliver the core programme will be extended for a further twelve months. Several community-based delivery partners will be procured via the Community Learning Partnership (CLP), to extend delivery to targeted areas. The CLPs will provide specialised provision across the county with an emphasis on targeting specific areas of need and engaging harder-to-reach people to encourage wider participation across our communities.

Provision across the county will continue to be varied, inspiring and stimulating encompassing the seven purposes of Community Learning including engaging families through environmental education and nature conservation, developing essential skills to promote inclusion for refugees, community enterprise, empowering socially excluded groups with the skills, knowledge and behaviours to enter employment or education.

The Cultivating Confidence course was the first one I attended, and it was just what I, and the attendees, needed. The difference in our social interaction between the beginning of the course to the end was astonishing. Sarah and Pia (BHT) were warm, funny, encouraging and supportive throughout. I left there with a new enthusiasm and the skills to continue with my search for my future career. I have also made a group of new friends who I have kept in contact with.

Delivery in 2024/25

In 2024/25, the decision was taken to focus on engaging individuals who are harder-to-reach and in our more deprived areas thereby reducing enrolment target levels in comparison to previous years. The Council plans to achieve 5,650 learner enrolments by the end of the 2024-25 academic year.

The table below contains a profile of anticipated learners against each of the 7 delivery strands:

Delivery Purpose	Community	Core	Total
<i>Engaging/building confidence</i>	400	500	900
<i>Preparation further learning</i>	200	300	500
<i>Preparation for employment</i>	300	500	800
<i>Essential skills including English, Maths, ESOL and Digital</i>	300	600	900
<i>Family learning</i>	500	350	850
<i>Health and wellbeing</i>	600	500	1100
<i>Developing stronger communities</i>	200	400	600
Total Enrolments	2500	3150	5650

Delivery in 2025/26

The approach to lower enrolment numbers but targeting higher needs learners will continue for 2025/26. The targets will also consider the national reduction (6% for Somerset) in funding for Community Learning and the increased staff costs (including the increase in National Insurance and the rise in minimum wage) experienced by our partners which is not recoverable which applies to Local Authorities and Further Education Colleges.

The table below contains a profile of anticipated learners against each of the 7 delivery strands:

Delivery Strand	Community	Core	Total
<i>Engaging/building confidence</i>	300	250	550
<i>Preparation further learning</i>	200	400	600
<i>Preparation for employment</i>	400	400	800
<i>Essential skills including English, Maths, ESOL and Digital</i>	500	550	1050
<i>Family learning</i>	300	400	700
<i>Health and wellbeing</i>	400	250	650
<i>Developing stronger communities</i>	200	250	450

Total Enrolments	2300	2500	4800
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Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ)

FCFJ provision offers targeted support for adults who are either unemployed or earning below a certain threshold. This programme provides fully funded Level 3 qualifications aimed at helping adult learners develop new skills and improve their job prospects.

In recognising the need to reduce the levels of economic inactivity, the changing economic situation and to support people who are unemployed, underemployed, or experiencing barriers to employment and education, the Council successfully applied for funding to deliver FCFJ aligned to the CL Programme and was subsequently awarded £45K for delivery in 2024/25 which will be extended into 2025/26. This funding will support the Council to achieve its strategic aims and objectives aligned to workforce and learning.

The contract has been awarded to the Council's core CL contractor, Somerset Skills & Learning, who have experience of delivering the eligible qualifications and already have a pipeline of learners along with a comprehensive marketing strategy.

Over delivery

As part of the 2024/25 Accountability Agreement the Council has been allowed to over deliver Adult Skills Fund funded qualifications by up to 10% of the grant value. In 2023-24 the Council's core delivery partner over delivered a small proportion of the grant value. During 2024/25 this has increased with an emphasis on Functional Skills effectively installing a pipeline for learners to progress from CL into qualification-based provision.

These qualifications are very valuable to many people providing the skills and knowledge in maths, English, English for Speakers for Other Languages (ESOL) and digital for progression into employment and for everyday use. This provision supports the Council's priority of 'A Flourishing and Resilient Somerset' and the following planned objectives of the CL programme:

- Improve digital inclusion, literacy and numeracy skills to enable progression towards employment opportunities.
- Increase the financial acumen of Somerset's residents closing the revolving door on debt, poor mental health, and housing issues
- Support the integration of refugees, asylum seekers, ethnic minority communities and Ukrainian guests into Somerset.

Currently, providers are waiting on confirmation from the DfE that over delivery will continue in 2025-2026.

Get Britain Working

The Get Britain Working White Paper, published by the UK Government, outlines a comprehensive plan to address economic inactivity and improve employment rates across the country. The key challenges set out within the document are

1. Too many people excluded from labour market – especially those with health conditions, caring responsibilities or lower skills
2. Too many young people leave school without essential skills or access to further learning or

support to find work

3. Too many people stuck in insecure, poor quality/low pay work contributing to a weaker economy and affecting their health and wellbeing
4. Too many women carers experience challenges to stay, and progress, in work
5. Employers cannot recruit due to labour and skills shortages
6. Significant disparity in labour market outcomes between different places and for different groups of people

As part of the Governments strategy to Get Britain Working, the Council is developing a delivery plan for Connect to Work (C2W). C2W, launched by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), will support economically inactive individuals with disabilities, long-term health conditions and other significant barriers into, or to stay in, work.

The Councils adult education provision will provide a vital conduit in assisting people to access C2W support and will offer progression routes through the range of courses available; from gaining confidence and improving health and wellbeing, leading to re-engagement in learning, improving essential skills and progressing to Functional Skills and Level 3 qualifications.

Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

The table below represents our CL Aims and Objectives and how they align to national and regional priorities:

Aims and Objectives	Impact and/or contribution towards, national, regional and local priorities for learning and skills	Priorities impacted and reason for objective
Enrich the stability, prosperity, and social cohesion of our communities.	The Council will aim to increase the number of CL courses in outreach venues across Somerset engaging with 25% of residents living in one of the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in England and 30% living in rural areas. The Council will support the integration of refugees, asylum seekers, ethnic minority communities and Ukrainian guests through targeted ESOL and preparation for employment programmes via outreach and in partnership with the Charis Welcome Hubs, the Councils Displaced people Service, and the Community Council for Somerset	Supports the national priority of Lifelong Learning and increases key capabilities and provides accessible routes towards learning. Supports national and regional priorities of labour force shortage. Supports the Councils Plan to create a fairer and more ambitious Somerset and helps people to integrate and contribute to their local economy and communities.
Empower the personal responsibility of individuals to become independent, healthy and maintain their own social well-being.	The Council will work to improve digital inclusion of Somerset's residents enabling them to access information and support on a range of services through the delivery of digital technology courses. The Council will support the development of financial independence of Somerset residents to help them make informed decisions and bypass the revolving door of debt, poor mental health and housing issues through interventions delivered via the Multiply programme. The Council will proactively participate in the C2W programme to decrease economic inactivity in Somerset and boost employment rates	Contributes to the national, regional (LEP and LSIP) and the Councils Plan priority to help people lead more fulfilling and independent lives and reducing the dependency on public sector services. Supports the national priority of improving numeracy levels to increase financial independence, increase opportunities in careers progression and support national, regional and local economic growth. Supports the Government Get Britain Working White Paper to reduce economic inactivity and achieve an 80% employment rate
Increase social mobility and aspirations based on an ethos of lifelong learning.	The Council will work to improve the social mobility and aspirations of Somerset's young people by delivering key programmes in West Somerset to	Underpins the local priority to improve the social mobility within West Somerset and the national priorities to increase

Aims and Objectives	Impact and/or contribution towards, national, regional and local priorities for learning and skills	Priorities impacted and reason for objective
	equip parents and carers to support children's learning. The Council take forward the good practice from the Multiply project and continue to deliver high quality initial engagement and progressive maths courses The Council will work in partnership with existing community-based organisations to set up employment support hubs to help learners to acquire skills to help them prepare for employment, training, employment or self-employment and become aware of further opportunities to help them progress. The Council will offer impartial Careers Education, Information, Advice, and Guidance (CEIAG) and clear referral routes to learners, helping them discover opportunities that will assist them to make informed decisions about their future steps.	widening participation and develop Lifelong Learning. Responds to the ESFA Community Learning objective and the national, regional and local priorities of labour market shortage. Supports the Government Get Britain Working White Paper to reduce economic inactivity and achieve an 80% employment rate
Support an inclusive, flourishing and resilient economy	The Council will assist residents to find and acquire suitable skills for new, sustainable, rewarding jobs by delivering Skills Bootcamps, Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJs), Apprenticeships and Functional Skills. The Council will support the resilience of Somersets economy by increasing employees' skills in the significant growth areas of energy, engineering and digital in through Bootcamp and FCFJs qualifications The Council will encourage parents and carers to return to work by increasing childcare resources through the successful Children and Young Peoples Workforce apprenticeship programme.	Contributes to the aim of the Somerset Growth and Recovery Plan and SC Plan. Supports the regional growth areas identified in the Devon and Somerset LSIP. Supports the SC Plan to create a greener, more sustainable Somerset. Supports national, regional and local priorities of labour force shortage. Supports regional (LSIP/LEP) and national priority Apprenticeship programme.

Contact Details

If you would like further information in respect of Somerset's Adult Education and Skills Programmes please get in touch via: communitylearning@somerset.gov.uk