

Promoting positive communities

Preparing the next Children and Young
People's Plan



Somerset
Council



Promoting positive communities

Context

Youth Forum met over Teams on Wednesday 7th February to discuss this topic. They looked at:

- What do you see in your community that helps children and young people to not get involved in dangerous or illegal activities?
- In your schools/colleges what do you see to help children and young people to attend school?
- In your local community give a good example where children & young people can play safely, enjoy their free time and experience the arts and culture.



The Somerset Children and Young People's Plan

This session directly addresses one of the priorities of the Somerset Children and Young People's Plan, looking at the views and opinions of Somerset's young people on this priority.



Reduce bullying and promote positive communities

Improving young people's emotional health and wellbeing by creating positive educational settings and communities to tackle bullying and promote positive behaviours.

Supporting all children and young people to enjoy their learning and have high aspirations for their future.

What do you see in your community that helps children and young people to not get involved in dangerous or illegal activities?

- There is a diverse range of activities and clubs available for young people across the county, however for those in rural areas or with SEND or additional needs these activities can be difficult to get to.
- Clubs that focus on more active activities, like sport or skating, are a good way for young people to use up excess energy. Having the activities coached helps create support and a trusted adult figure to look to.
- There are assemblies and presentations warning of the dangers of drugs and violence, but the delivery is one size fits all and often inappropriate to the audience.
- Most of these clubs and activities already existed and were not put in place to help young people not get involved with illegal or dangerous activities.

In your local community what do you see that helps children and young people to not get involved in dangerous or illegal activities?

Good role models

Sports

Connect centres

Youth clubs

Local skate parks open (minehead eye)

Performing arts groups

Operation Topaz

PSHE lessons (not always effective though)

Events at the library, extended as far as study/reading groups

Council run Youth Clubs

Cadets

Youth clubs

My school is pretty epic clubs wise (100+ clubs)

Boxing

Easily accessible activities - no signing up

More things to do

Coaching

Negative

Not enough education around violence

Lack of adult interest/ leadership

Not much :(

Not enough for Young People with SEND

Poor drugs education

Positive

Quotes

“There’s a couple of local youth clubs, but there’s a huge issue with understaffing. So it causes an issue of young people not being able to do much.”

“Young people wanted better areas to do things in, so that they wouldn’t be hanging around on street corners. More bins, because on the way to school there are no bins, so kids are coming out of school with nowhere to put wrappers and just dump it in the streets.”

“Today I tried to speak to two senior leaders, and both senior leaders palmed me off because they weren’t interested.”

“The only interaction I’ve ever had with PCSOs has been negative and I don’t think that’s down to them, I think it’s the organisation.”

“You can put energy into sports, something like competitive boxing. Skating is a big one that comes to mind as I know a lot of people my age that will go to skate parks, local sports, basketball. Giving them more of those opportunities, especially opportunities where they are coached or supported in some way, giving them a figure to look to is quite helpful.”

“In small towns, young people especially with a SEND point of view struggle to engage to the point where one person on my placement doesn’t go out at all. Partly down to their mum having agoraphobia, but also really lacking any support at all from an outside agency. So they just sit in their room and do nothing.”

Quotes

“There’s not really anything to do, so people just loiter, and they end up meeting people that are doing the wrong things and they get wrapped up in it. There’s nothing to do other than hang around. Quite often we’ll go out and get Nando’s or some food and then go to a park and play football.”

“We have a fairly generic presentation from somebody from Avon and Somerset Police on Operation Topaz – on county lines – which in some instances works really well. But in recent instances it hasn’t worked really well at all, nobody knew what it was beforehand and nobody bothered to explain what it was or why we were doing it. We were dragged into a lecture theatre and told to watch it.”

“The only thing I can think of is a drama group and I know that the people that run it are really supportive and try to help. But that’s also just a couple of people alone, so I’m not sure how much of an impact that’s making to anyone outside of the club. In my session there’s about 15, but there are younger groups, where I think they have about 30 young people. There is a cost, but they try to keep the cost down as I know there are some more expensive groups around.”

“I’m an air cadet, on squadron we have about 35 cadets and ranked under 18s. It’s very cost effective, something like £10-£12 a month and your uniform is provided for you with a deposit.”

Quotes

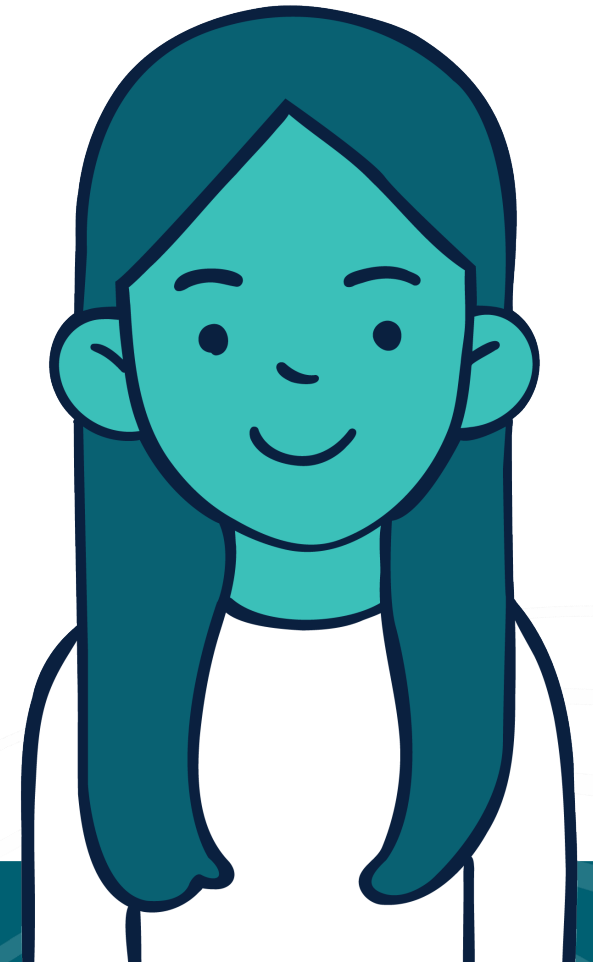
“I don’t think there’s anything specifically going on to help. There are things in general in our community that are available to young people. I just don’t think it’s necessarily to prevent bad behaviours. It’s just what’s already there.”

“I was talking to my tutor and they were saying ‘as tutors we’re banged on about all these things we have to do in tutorial, all these activities and all these talks, but when it comes down to it senior leaders never follow it up anyway’. So when you raise an issue it’s never followed up, but you still need to be told about all these different presentations and all these ways and means of dealing with certain things and it feels pointless.”

“It’s quite common in schools to run presentations that tell us where to find drugs, tell us what all the drugs are, what they do and then tell us not to do any of them. So you know all of the details to just go ahead and try to do so without getting the context and there’s no real conversation besides a little fearmongering. I think it would help to open the discussion up, but not in a way that interrogates you about what drugs you’ve done. If it’s done in a smaller space not big assemblies, like in tutor sessions or tutors opening up about back when they were a teenager and what they used to do, that sort of thing. They never talk about support services or where you can go if you’re stuck in addiction of any form.”

In your schools/colleges what do you see to help children and young people to attend school/college?

- Schools aim for 95%+ attendance, some will offer incentives like 100% attendance trips or certificates.
- If attendance dips below a certain percentage young people can be penalised, though this doesn't take into account individual circumstances, such as transport or illness.
- There is generally mental health and wellbeing support in schools, in the shape of people to talk to, Exit Cards, etc. however this support isn't present at all schools or colleges.
- Schools will warn of consequences to bad behaviour or low attendance, but it is not always followed through on.



In your schools/colleges what do you see to help children and young people to attend school/college?

Wellbeing centres in schools

Specific learning support places for those with learning differences

The 100 club - trips for people with 100% attendance

Tutor emphasis on attendance

Dependent on good teachers

The Wellbeing Hub

Some travel passes are available to physically get in

Exit cards to leave the classroom

The ONLY gap in my school is exit cards!! Also groups of strange people come in to school 1 hour late but they're challenged

Assemblies from colleges, showing what courses can be done with good GCSEs

Positive

Negative

No because the wellbeing is gone

False threats or consequences

Difficulty getting travel bursaries

Nothing

There's a lot of penalization for not attending, but not a lot of incentive to stay

Nothing at college though

More incentives needed

Strict on 95% attendance

Not enough emotional health support in school

Exit cards but only allowed for those permitted to have them

Lack of pastoral staff

Empty threats

Quotes

“There used to be support, but there isn’t any more. They’ve just had a staff restructure and they’ve just gotten rid of the entire wellbeing team.”

“The staff that are there are really good. I have a core team I can go to if I have an issue. But outside of that there’s very little as they’re at the bottom of the pile in terms of seniority. So they have to go through the next person, then the next person and it doesn’t really go anywhere.”

“We were sick for a week and my dad called on the first day to say that I was sick, and they called every single weekday to ask the same question again and again.”

“My college want 95% attendance form every student. It can alter your ability to get into things like trips and you have a tutor meeting every time it drops below that point. My attendance is at 80% - not because I am slacking in any way, it’s because I live so rurally that my access to college is hindered by transport. But, after a good conversation with my tutor, the trip that they weren’t going to let me on because of my attendance, I am now allowed to go on. So, they’re lenient enough on distance but only distance, as I’ve spoken to people when it comes to mental health it isn’t as much of a subject unless it’s the severe kind. So, if it’s something like burnout it’s all dependent on your tutor.”

Quotes

“They have this PowerPoint they show at the beginning of term, that says ‘this is what happens if your attendance gets low’, they say your grade’ll drop. They don’t actually give out any consequences. They say they’ll put you on report, but they never fill it out. So it’s false threats.”

“At my school we have this thing called the wellbeing hub. I think it’s a really good thing for people to go to. But sometimes it’s hard for people to go in as they have to get a slip from their teacher. Which isn’t always easy to get and very limiting as there are some people that would like to go to the hub but they just can’t.”

“There isn’t something for everyone, if you aren’t expected to need help during the day then there’s nowhere you can go.”

“We have this thing called Exit Cards, where you can leave the room for ten minutes if you’re feeling really stressed. But, people use the system when they don’t really need them. So, when homework’s being asked about they’ll use the exit card. There’s a lot to encourage people to attend, especially clubs, but there’s not too much focus on going into school anyway. If you get a 99% attendance, you get a certificate and at the end of the day it’s going to go in the bin at home as no one really cares about the certificate. So they could do some better incentives.”

In your local community give a good example where children & young people can play safely, enjoy their free time and/or experience the arts and culture

- Local communities provide a real variety of activities where young people can participate.
- However, for those with SEND, additional needs or who live in rural settings activities are often quite a distance away, so young people will either have to rely on public transport or their parents/carers to drive them.
- There isn't always easily accessible information about local clubs and activities.



In your local community give a good example where children & young people can play safely, enjoy their free time and/or experience the arts and culture

Skate park **Village hall expensive** **Wildlife activities**
Library clubs **Sports clubs halls** **Board game groups**
Sports clubs **Book clubs** **Railway line** **Connect centre**
Youth club **River** **Cadets** **Out of village clubs**
Parks **Bands** **Woodland**
Film club **Study groups** **Art clubs** **Park**
Sailing club **Crochet clubs**
Forest schools **FA Ability counts league**
Theatre groups

Quotes

“I referee in the Ability Counts League, which is run by the Somerset FA, which is all for people with additional needs and SEND.”

“A lot of the SEND specific stuff and a lot of the accessible stuff tends to be all to one side of the county. So I find myself travelling to Exeter, Frome or Bristol just to get involved in something I can actually do that’s not targeted at someone with a learning disability or a younger or older age group.”

“The only real clubs in our village are hard to find out about as there’s only a village newsletter but that’s about it.”

“Most of the clubs that people do in my village are a 10 minute drive away. So that’s excluding people whose parents don’t have flexible hours, they won’t be able to join some clubs.”

Conclusions

- There is a diverse selection of activities and clubs that young people can participate in across Somerset, however many of these activities can be difficult to reach for young people, especially for those who live rurally or have SEND or other additional needs.
- Schools and colleges try to provide support for young people, but that support is stretched or not adequate for the audience.
- Support is often provided using stock presentations to a large group, in a way that doesn't connect with the audience. Young people have said that a more personal approach from the worker is more beneficial.
- Both incentives and punishments need to be relevant to young people and enforced.
- Having honest and open lines of dialogue with young people has the biggest impact.