




Impact Report

2025-2026

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Welcome To Young Somerset

Our Journey

Young Somerset was founded in 1997 as the Somerset Rural Youth Project, with a clear purpose: to support young people living in rural communities who often faced isolation and limited access to services. Since then, the organisation has grown significantly, evolving in response to the changing needs of children, young people, and families across Somerset.

In 2018, we rebranded as Young Somerset to reflect both our expanded reach and our ambition. Today, we operate across rural villages, market towns, coastal communities, and urban centres, ensuring that wherever young people live, learn, or grow, they can access the support they need.

Our journey has been defined by adaptation, collaboration, and a strong commitment to listening. By understanding local needs and responding with flexibility, we have developed a broad and responsive offer that continues to evolve alongside the communities we serve.



Our Mission

At Young Somerset, young people are at the centre of everything we do. Our mission is to support their personal, social, educational, and economic development through services that promote both mental and physical wellbeing.

We believe that early intervention, strong relationships, and accessible support are key to enabling positive outcomes. Through these approaches, we help young people better understand their mental health, build resilience, and take informed steps towards lasting change.

As Somerset's leading voluntary and community sector youth organisation, we work in partnership with statutory services, schools, and community organisations. This enables us to deliver joined-up, effective support that is both comprehensive and responsive to local need.

Our work spans a wide range of services, including youth work, mental health support, alternative education, and early years provision. Across all of these areas, we are committed to delivering high-quality, inclusive services that recognise the individuality of every young person.

Leadership Reflections

Welcome to Young Somerset's Impact Report for 2025–2026.

This year has once again demonstrated both the strengths of young people across Somerset and the challenges many continue to face. Issues such as mental health, education, family life, identity, and future opportunities remain significant, and demand for support continues to grow.

At Young Somerset, our role is clear. We meet young people where they are, listen carefully to their experiences, and provide the right support at the right time. Our approach is grounded in partnership—working with young people rather than doing things to or for them.

Throughout the year, we have focused on key priorities:

- Supporting mental health and wellbeing
- Building confidence and life skills
- Creating pathways into education, employment, and enterprise
- Amplifying the voices of young people

We have delivered this support through a wide range of services, including one-to-one interventions, group work, school-based provision, community programmes, and targeted support for those facing higher levels of need.

The impact outlined in this report reflects the collective effort of our staff, volunteers, trustees, partners, and supporters. Their dedication, professionalism, and commitment make this work possible.

Most importantly, I want to thank the young people who engage with our services. Their trust, feedback, and insight shape everything we do and ensure that our work remains relevant and effective.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to strengthening our services, deepening partnerships, and improving how we measure and understand our impact. We will continue to ensure that young people's voices are central to decision-making and service design.

Young Somerset exists because we believe in young people—and that belief continues to drive us forward.



Nik Harwood
Chief Executive

Leadership Reflections



David Elstone
Chair Of Trustees

The past year has been one of significant progress for Young Somerset, marked by growth in both scale and ambition.

We have expanded our reach, strengthened our partnerships, and continued to develop services that support young people to achieve their potential. This progress reflects not only organisational growth but also an increased confidence in our ability to respond to changing needs.

One of the most important milestones this year has been the acquisition of Chartfield House in Taunton. This investment provides a central, accessible base for our teams and supports the continued development of our services across the county. It represents a long-term commitment to the young people we serve.

We have also strengthened our leadership capacity, ensuring that the organisation is well-positioned to navigate a challenging funding environment while maintaining a focus on sustainability and impact.

Our success is the result of a collective effort. Staff, volunteers, trustees, and partners have worked together with dedication and resilience to ensure that more young people can access support and opportunities.

As we look to the future, we do so with confidence. The foundations we have built place us in a strong position to continue growing our impact and reaching more young people across Somerset.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who contributes to Young Somerset's work. In particular, I would like to recognise Julie Biggs, who retires this year after ten years of dedicated service as a trustee. Her contribution has been invaluable, and she leaves a lasting legacy within the organisation.

Our Impact at a Glance

This year, Young Somerset has continued to deliver a wide range of services that support children, young people, and families across the county.

Our work spans mental health support, youth work, alternative education, early years provision, and employment programmes. Across all areas, we have responded to increasing demand with flexibility, innovation, and a strong focus on outcomes.

Key highlights include:

- Supporting thousands of young people through mental health services
- Delivering targeted youth support and community-based programmes
- Expanding opportunities for education, employment, and skills development
- Strengthening partnerships with schools, health services, and community organisations

Behind every number is a young person with their own story, challenges, and aspirations. Our role is to provide the support, opportunities, and encouragement they need to move forward positively.



Our Impact in Numbers

Over the past year, Young Somerset has continued to expand both the reach and depth of its work. Through a combination of targeted interventions, early support, and community-based services, we have responded to increasing demand while maintaining a strong focus on quality and outcomes.

Our impact is reflected not only in the scale of delivery but in the meaningful changes experienced by the young people and families we support.



Key Figures from 2025–2026 include:

- **92** partnerships and collaborations across Somerset
- Mental Health Support Teams reached **3,762** children and young people.
- **930** young people supported through youth hubs and violence reduction work
- **196** children and young people supported through Targeted Youth Support services
- **Over 1,300 referrals** received by the Community Wellbeing Service
- **Nearly 4,000 referrals** received by the Mental Health Support Team
- **93%** of participants achieved goal-based outcomes through CWS interventions
- **85%** of participants achieved outcomes across wider MHST delivery
- **110 requests** received for Early Years support
- **12 interns** supported through structured employment programmes
- **30+** young people supported by Job Coaches
- **25 school-aged children** supported through work experience placements

These figures demonstrate the breadth of our work, but they also reflect a deeper story: increasing demand, growing trust in our services, and the importance of accessible, early intervention support.

Looking Ahead

The need for youth services continues to grow, and the challenges facing young people are becoming increasingly complex. In response, Young Somerset will continue to evolve, ensuring that our services remain accessible, effective, and responsive.

Our priorities for the coming year include:

- Expanding mental health support across more schools and communities
- Increasing access to early intervention services
- Strengthening pathways into education, employment, and training
- Continuing to embed youth voice across all areas of delivery
- Building long-term sustainability through diversified funding

We are committed to delivering meaningful, lasting impact—supporting young people not only to overcome challenges but to thrive.



The Role of Donations

Donations continue to play a vital role in enabling Young Somerset to deliver flexible, responsive support. While commissioned services form the majority of our income, unrestricted funding allows us to innovate, respond quickly to emerging needs, and invest in early intervention.

These contributions, from individuals, community groups, and local supporters, have directly enhanced our ability to support young people across Somerset.

Donations help fund:

- Mental health support through Community Wellbeing and MHST services
- Opportunities for young people through the STAR fund
- Skills development workshops and youth-led initiatives
- Early years programmes, including Pop-up Tots and transition support

Every contribution, regardless of size, helps create opportunities for young people to build confidence, develop skills, and access the support they need.

The Difference Donations Make

- **£10** can provide refreshments for a parent/carer and toddler group
- **£15** can fund ingredients for a group cooking session
- **£100** can support swimming lessons for a child
- **£100** can fund a week of work experience space in a pop-up shop
- **£2,500** can provide a full Jigsaw support programme for one young person
- **£5,000** can equip and maintain training facilities in our shop and café

These examples highlight how targeted funding can create tangible, meaningful outcomes for young people and families.

STAR

The STAR Opportunity Fund has been repurposed and revised this year with a deliberate focus on overcoming barriers to young people participating. It supports vulnerable and disadvantaged young people aged 0–25 by funding access to creative and recreational opportunities. Its main aim is to improve young people’s wellbeing, confidence, and life chances by helping them take part in activities that they might otherwise struggle to engage with.

STAR provides funding for a wide range of activities, including sports clubs, gym memberships, music lessons, art materials, and drama or dance classes. These opportunities help young people build social skills, resilience, and a sense of belonging.

The programme particularly focuses on those at risk of social exclusion, low self-esteem, or difficult life circumstances. By removing financial barriers, STAR enables young people to experience positive activities that support personal growth and development, ultimately helping them achieve a brighter and more confident future.

In the past 12 months STAR has supported 110 young People.

Purpose and Focus

The fund is designed to remove financial barriers that prevent young people from participating in positive activities. It focuses particularly on those at risk of:

- Social exclusion
- Low self-esteem
- Limited access to opportunities



What STAR Supports

Funding is available for a wide range of activities, including:

- Sports and physical activity
- Gym memberships
- Music lessons and creative arts
- Drama and dance
- Educational and developmental resources

These opportunities allow young people to:

- Build social connections
- Develop new skills
- Improve confidence and resilience
- Experience a sense of belonging

Impact

By enabling access to activities that might otherwise be out of reach, the STAR fund supports personal growth and helps young people build brighter, more confident futures.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is central to all aspects of Young Somerset's work. We are committed to ensuring that everyone who engages with our services is safe and supported.

Our Approach

- Strong safeguarding culture across all teams
- Regular monitoring and review of concerns
- Close partnership working with external agencies
- Immediate response to emerging risks

Impact

- **676 safeguarding concerns responded to** in the past year

Data is used to identify trends and inform service development. For example, increased concerns relating to home environments have led to expanded parenting support.

Frontline Practice

Safeguarding is embedded in daily practice:

- Dedicated staff involved in triage processes
- Close collaboration with schools and health services
- Support for young people who may not engage with other services

This ensures that concerns are identified early and responded to effectively.

Quality Assurance and Clinical Governance

Young Somerset has a strong governance framework in place to ensure that services are delivered safely, ethically and in line with national best practice. The organisation operates multiple layers of clinical governance, safeguarding oversight and professional leadership to ensure robust quality assurance across all services.

Clinical Governance Structure

Young Somerset maintains a comprehensive quality assurance framework designed to oversee practice quality, risk management and continuous service improvement. It operates two forums for consideration of topics under a quality assurance lens.

- **Practice Review** – The Practice Review Group provides oversight and collaborative development of clinical, youth work and employment support practice across the organisation. Representation from across the teams translates the framework into real action.
- **Quality Assurance** – The Quality Assurance Group provides higher-level oversight of service delivery and governance. Our Chair of Trustees is a core member of the group, as are our Senior Leadership Team.

Mental Health Support Team (MHST)

The Mental Health Support Team continues to be a cornerstone of Young Somerset's work, delivered in partnership with Somerset Foundation Trust NHS (CAMHS). Now in its sixth year, the service has grown significantly while remaining aligned with national policy and best practice.

Service Delivery and Reach

Over the past 12 months:

- **1,498 referrals** were supported
- **11,282 clinical interventions** were delivered
- **405 school consultations** were provided
- **35 group programmes** were delivered across 28 schools

This work reflects a strong commitment to early intervention, ensuring that young people receive support before challenges escalate.

Whole School Approach

A key element of MHST delivery is the Whole School Approach to mental health and wellbeing. This model supports schools to embed wellbeing across all aspects of their environment, benefiting students, staff, and families.

Through this approach, we have:

- Strengthened partnerships with school Mental Health Leads
- Supported the implementation of evidence-based wellbeing frameworks
- Contributed to improved attendance, behaviour, and attainment
- Promoted a greater sense of belonging within school communities



The Somerset Health and Wellbeing Framework audit remains a central tool in this work, enabling schools to assess and improve their provision.

Workforce Development

Investment in workforce development has been a significant focus this year. The introduction and expansion of Advanced Practitioner roles has strengthened the range and depth of interventions available.

Practitioners have completed advanced training, enabling them to deliver:

- Parent-led interventions for Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Adaptations for Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)
- Support for neurodivergent young people
- Trauma-informed approaches

This enhanced capability ensures that the service can respond to increasingly complex needs.

Pathway to Trainee

A new “Pathway to Trainee” role has been introduced to support workforce development. This initiative provides a structured route for individuals to progress into clinical roles, strengthening the long-term sustainability of the service.

Staff begin in non-clinical roles and are supported to develop their skills before progressing to formal training. This approach has:

- Increased accessibility into the profession
- Strengthened the workforce pipeline
- Supported the development of confident, skilled practitioners



Looking Ahead

The next phase of MHST development will focus on expansion. Coverage across Somerset is expected to increase from **53% to 77% of schools**, significantly extending access to support.

Alongside this growth, the service will continue to:

- Refine delivery models
- Maintain quality and consistency
- Strengthen partnerships
- Respond to emerging needs

Community Wellbeing Service

The Community Wellbeing Service plays a vital role in providing early intervention support for children and young people experiencing mild to moderate mental health challenges.

Service Delivery

Over the past 12 months:

- **1,793 referrals** were received and triaged
- **882 clinical interventions** were delivered
- **37 school consultations** took place
- **15 group programmes** supported **103 young people**

This work demonstrates the importance of accessible, community-based support that can respond quickly to need.

Service Model

The CWS operates through a blended model of school-based and community delivery. Referrals are accepted from young people, parents, carers, and professionals, ensuring accessibility and flexibility.

The service focuses on:

- Early intervention
- Low-intensity, evidence-based support
- Partnership working
- Clear pathways to additional services when needed



Innovative Practice: Nature-Based CBT

During 2025–2026, the service piloted Nature-Based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) in partnership with the Targeted Youth Team.

This approach allows young people to:

- Engage with therapeutic techniques in outdoor environments
- Develop problem-solving skills
- Explore thoughts and emotions in a practical, experiential way

Initial delivery focused on Year 6 pupils experiencing anxiety. Early feedback suggests strong engagement and positive outcomes, with plans to expand the model in the coming year.

Improving Access

Improving access to support remains a key priority. The service has strengthened partnerships and referral pathways to ensure young people can access help quickly and easily.

A key example is the collaboration with Frome Medical Centre, where practitioners contribute to a weekly young people's clinic. This multidisciplinary approach provides:

- Mental health advice and early intervention
- Sexual health support and guidance
- Information and signposting to local services

This integrated model ensures that young people can access holistic support in a familiar environment.

Targeted Support For Older Young People

The service has also begun developing targeted support for young people aged 16–19. This includes short-term interventions focused on:

- Exam stress
- Relationships
- Transitions beyond education

These sessions aim to prevent escalation and support young people during key transition points.

Impact Through Feedback

Feedback from families highlights the impact of the service:

"The difference it's made is phenomenal... He's so much more confident and happy. I feel like I have my child back."

This reflects the core aim of the service: delivering timely, effective support that creates real change in young people's lives.

Looking Ahead

Over the next 12 months, the Community Wellbeing Service will:

- Expand alternative delivery models such as Nature-Based CBT
- Increase access across schools and communities
- Strengthen partnerships and referral pathways
- Continue developing targeted early intervention support

The service remains committed to ensuring that young people receive the right support at the right time.

Early Years

Young Somerset's Early Years service provides timely, accessible support for children aged 0–5 and their families. Rooted in early intervention, the service focuses on strengthening relationships, building parental confidence, and supporting healthy emotional and social development during the most formative years of life.

Service Approach

The Early Years team delivers a blended model of support across homes, community settings, and early years environments. This includes both clinical and non-clinical interventions designed to meet the diverse needs of families.

Support includes:

- One-to-one therapeutic interventions such as Video Interaction Guidance
- Home-based coaching to strengthen parent–child relationships
- Group-based parenting programmes and peer support
- Targeted workshops and child-focused group sessions

By working with both children and the adults around them, the service takes a holistic, relationship-based approach. This ensures that support is not only responsive but also sustainable, helping families build the skills and confidence needed for long-term wellbeing.



Growing Demand and Impact

Demand for Early Years support has increased significantly. Between April 2025 and March 2026, the service experienced a **395% increase in one-to-one referrals**.

This rise reflects both:

- Increasing levels of need among families
- Greater awareness and accessibility of the service

Earlier engagement allows needs to be identified sooner, reducing the likelihood of escalation and enabling more effective support.

Key Outcomes

Over the past year:

- 308 referrals were received across all Early Years services
- 79 referrals were triaged for one-to-one support
- 92% progressed to assessment
- 1,730 sessions were delivered
- 86 group sessions took place
- 55 families regularly engaged in group provision

These figures demonstrate both the scale and consistency of delivery, as well as the strong engagement of families.



Looking Ahead

The Early Years team will continue to:

- Expand access to both group and one-to-one support
- Strengthen early intervention pathways
- Develop innovative approaches to family support
- Respond to increasing demand while maintaining quality

Early intervention remains one of the most effective ways to improve long-term outcomes, and this work will continue to be a key priority.

Youth Voice and Participation

Youth voice is central to Young Somerset's approach. We believe that young people should not only be heard but should actively shape the services and opportunities available to them.

Our Approach

Participation is embedded across all areas of delivery, ensuring that young people have meaningful opportunities to:

- Share their views and experiences
- Influence decision-making
- Develop confidence and leadership skills
- Contribute to service design and improvement

This approach ensures that services remain relevant, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of young people.

Participation Opportunities

A range of structured opportunities support youth voice, including:

- School Participation Offer: Enabling young people to co-produce improvements within services while building key skills
- Intern Group: Providing a platform for young people to influence organisational development and share lived experiences
- Under 25 Group (U25): Supporting young adults to contribute to strategic decision-making
- Participation Group (13–18): Offering a safe space for younger participants to build confidence and collaborate on projects

In addition, parent participation is supported through community-based engagement, ensuring that families are also involved in shaping services.

Impact

By embedding participation across all levels, Young Somerset ensures that:

- Young people feel valued and respected
- Services are shaped by real experiences
- Barriers to engagement are reduced
- Communities are strengthened

Participation is not a one-off activity—it is an ongoing process that underpins everything we do.

Alternative Education and Youth Work

Young Somerset provides targeted support for children and young people who face barriers to education, engagement, and opportunity.

Alternative Education Provision (AEP)

Our Alternative Education Provision supports young people who are disengaged from mainstream education through tailored programmes.

Support includes:

- Practical, hands-on learning (e.g. construction, digital skills, creative media)
- Work experience and careers guidance
- One-to-one mentoring and social communication support
- Accredited qualifications in employability and functional skills



Impact

- 101 young people supported through AEP
- 940 sessions delivered
- 78% attendance rate

Through this provision, young people re-engage with learning, build confidence, and develop the skills needed to transition into education, training, or employment.

Youth Work and Community Engagement

Youth work remains a core part of our delivery, providing safe, inclusive spaces where young people can connect, be heard, and access support.

Youth hubs are located in areas of identified need, including Bridgwater, Taunton, and Yeovil, with additional pop-up provision in Chard, Street, and Frome.

This work focuses on:

- Early intervention
- Safeguarding
- Building trusted relationships
- Supporting positive peer connections
- 2,789 young people engaged through youth hubs
- 3,734 youth work sessions delivered

This work has led to:

- Increased engagement with vulnerable young people
- Improved understanding of local needs
- Stronger safeguarding and service development

Holiday Activity Programmes

Targeted Youth Support programmes delivered during school holidays provide structured activities, meals, and safe spaces for young people.

Activities include:

- Arts and crafts
- Digital music
- Outdoor activities
- Cooking and life skills

Impact

- **238 young people engaged**

These programmes:

- Reduce social isolation
- Support wellbeing
- Promote positive relationships



Health-Based Youth Support

Jigsaw Programme

The Jigsaw service provides specialist one-to-one mentoring for young people aged 11–18 who have experienced significant self-harm or are managing long-term health conditions.

Delivered in partnership with NHS services, the programme provides consistent, trusted support within healthcare environments.

Impact

- 54 young people supported this year
- 400+ supported since launch
- Low readmission rates (9%)

This integrated approach improves wellbeing and reduces the need for acute interventions.

Function Forward

A new service launched in 2025 supports young people experiencing complex physical symptoms without a clear medical diagnosis.

Working within a multidisciplinary team, youth workers provide mentoring and advocacy, supporting young people to better manage their experiences.



Umbrella

Umbrella provides group-based support for young people experiencing emotional distress.

Impact:

- 52 young people supported this year
- 170 supported overall
- 30% increase in school attendance

The programme creates safe, supportive environments that encourage peer connection and positive change.

Employment, Enterprise and Skills

Bold & Brave Social Enterprise

The Bold & Brave model provides young people with real-world experience in retail, hospitality, and enterprise.

Shops

The Bold & Brave shops enables young people to design, create, and sell products, developing:

- Confidence
- Enterprise skills
- Financial awareness

Expansion into Bridgwater has increased access and opportunities.



Cafés

The Bold & Brave cafés provide hands-on experience in hospitality, including:

- Customer service
- Food preparation
- Stock management

The opening of a second café at Bridgwater Train Station marks a significant step in scaling the model.

Supported Employment

Young Somerset's Supported Employment programme provides tailored support for young people facing barriers to employment.



Impact

- **61 young people supported by Job Coaches**
- **17 progressed into paid employment**
- **10 interns completed programmes**
- **50% moved into employment, 50% into volunteering**

Support includes:

- CV development
- Interview preparation
- Work experience opportunities

This work helps young people build confidence, develop skills, and move towards independence.

Thank You

Young Somerset continues to play a vital role in supporting children, young people, and families across the county.

This year has demonstrated:

- Growing demand for services
- The importance of early intervention
- The value of strong partnerships
- The impact of listening to young people

Across all areas of delivery, our focus remains the same: putting young people first.

As we look ahead, we are committed to building on this work—expanding access, strengthening impact, and ensuring that every young person has the opportunity to thrive.

