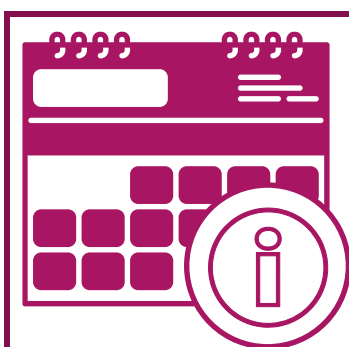


Welcome hut, [Ark at Egwood](#), Merriott

June 2026

## May 2026 in numbers

A short summary of team achievements in May.



- **One** delivery of Enter and View training to another Healthwatch
- **Two** requests for our volunteer Readers Panel to review NHS documentation
- **18** Events
- **47** Meetings
- **121** direct engagements with people

These figures may be higher because it can be hard to record every contact and all feedback.

## Supporting you across the county



On Monday 18 May we were at the Glastonbury Community Appointment Day for people with musculo skeletal (MSK) issues. Organised by Somerset NHS Foundation Trust physiotherapy team, patients have a booked appointment with a physiotherapist and are then able to access a variety of community stalls giving information about health and care.

These events take place across the county and help both patients and health and care organisations.

## Devices and digital help available locally

Many people still find it hard to use online services because they do not have a device, internet access, or confidence with technology. This makes it harder to use services like the NHS App or book appointments online, especially for older people, carers and people on low incomes.

There is help available in Somerset. **SIMPai** provides free mobile phones, SIM cards, and connectivity for people who need them. The National Device Bank, run by the **Good Things Foundation**, works with local organisations across the UK to provide donated devices. They do not give devices directly, so you may need to **contact a local organisation** to check if support is available.



You can also get support from local libraries, community hubs, and digital groups. They can help you set up devices, create an email account, and learn how to use online services safely.

## Have your say on Somerset Council's priorities



Somerset Council is asking people across the county what matters most to them as it starts planning its 2027/28 budget. This is an early chance for residents, businesses and community groups to help shape the council's priorities before more detailed proposals are developed later in the year.

The council provides services that many people rely on every day, including adult and children's social care, public health, waste and recycling, highways, libraries, education, and community services. Because of ongoing financial pressures, the council wants to understand which services matter most to local people.

We know that decisions about local services can affect people's health, wellbeing, and daily lives. That is why it is important that everyone has the opportunity to have their say, especially people whose voices are not always heard.

You can take part in the **Somerset Council's Summer Budget Consultation** online. The consultation is open to everyone and closes on Monday 27 July.

# Improving cancer care across our region

The **Somerset, Wiltshire, Avon, and Gloucestershire (SWAG) Cancer Alliance** is working to deliver the ambitions set out in the new **National Cancer Plan for England**.

This national plan aims to ensure that by 2035, three in four people diagnosed with cancer will be living well five years after diagnosis.

Across our region, around 50,000 people are diagnosed with cancer each year, so improving services is vital.

**Earlier diagnosis and faster care** are key priorities. More cancers are now being diagnosed at an early stage, when treatment is more likely to be successful. In the SWAG area, early diagnosis rates are already higher than the national average.

Work is also taking place to reduce waiting times and speed up access to tests and treatment. For example, new ways of working, like checking skin conditions using photos (**tele dermatology**), are helping people get quicker answers and avoid unnecessary trips to hospital.

**Innovation is playing an important role.** Local projects include **digital self-referral services**, which allow people with concerns (such as breast symptoms) to refer themselves directly for checks, helping them access care sooner.

The Alliance is also supporting national improvements such as better use of technology, more personalised care, and new treatments based on genetic testing.

## Helping you find the right cancer support

If you or someone you care for needs cancer support, it can be hard to know where to start. At Healthwatch, we're here to help you find the right service and information quickly and with confidence.

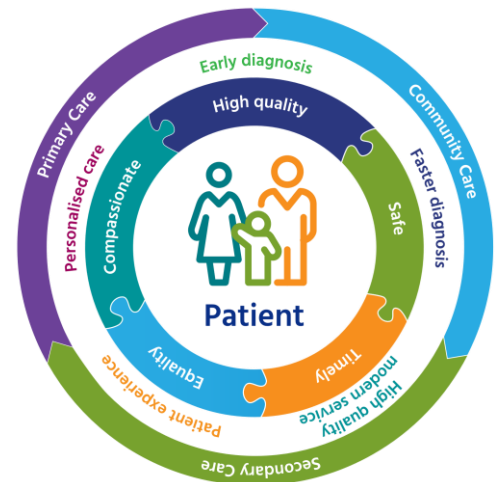
We are proud to be a **Macmillan Affiliate Member**. This gives us access to trusted training and clear, up-to-date resources, so we can support people before, during and after a cancer diagnosis.



We can guide you to reliable information and connect you with other local support, including **Cancer Awareness and Support Cafés** (CASC) and other community services.

Whether you're unsure about services or where to turn next, we can help you understand your options and navigate the care you're entitled to.

Get in touch with us for free, independent support. **You don't have to figure it out alone.**



©Thank you to SWAG Cancer Alliance for use of their image

# Outstanding Care, Still Going Strong

A care home in **Burnham-on-Sea** is celebrating nearly a decade of top-quality care after once again being **rated outstanding** by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

**Frith House**, which supports people living with dementia as well as those needing residential or respite care, has held this highest rating **since 2017**. The latest inspection highlighted a calm and welcoming environment where people are treated with dignity, kindness and respect.



Inspectors found that **compassionate staff** make a real difference to residents' lives, helping to improve wellbeing, reduce distress and build **meaningful relationships**. Residents said they feel safe and cared for, describing the home as having a strong sense of family and belonging.

## One family member shared:



**There is a generally good atmosphere in the home, staff upbeat and smiling. Activities are appropriate, and they keep me updated on how he's been during the day.**

The team was also praised for helping people stay independent and involved, creating a positive culture where individuals feel valued.

## Kerry Stevens, Head of Residential and Nursing Services at Somerset Care, says:

**“** I am so proud of the Frith House team for retaining their outstanding rating at their latest CQC inspection. This is testament to the determination of each and every colleague to provide the highest standards of care for their residents, whilst also offering compassionate support for their loved ones. **”**



Experiences like these **show us what good care** looks like in practice: people being listened to, treated with respect and supported to live the life they choose.

© Images kindly provided by **Somerset care**

# Bold & Brave: Helping Young People Build Confidence for Work

**Bold & Brave** is a supported employment programme run by **Young Somerset**. It helps young people gain the skills, confidence and experience they need to move towards work.

Through a shop and café, **young people learn practical skills** such as customer service, food preparation and running a business.



## Emmie's story

Emmie, age 20, joined the programme in September 2024. She lives with several conditions, including autism and anxiety, which affect her daily life.



Before joining Bold & Brave, Emmie found it hard to speak to others and lacked confidence. College was a difficult time, and **everyday tasks often felt overwhelming**.

When she started her internship, Emmie felt nervous and unsure. At first, she kept to herself. Over time, with support and real work experience, **she began to grow in confidence**. She learned to communicate more, share her ideas and connect with others.

At the end of the internship, Emmie was **offered a job as an Enterprise Assistant**. She accepted and now works at Bold & Brave, while also volunteering in a charity shop.

Emmie says the experience has helped her build confidence, develop friendships, and **feel more hopeful about the future**.

**She still faces challenges**, especially in busy or unfamiliar situations, but feels more able to manage them. With **clear routines and support**, she continues to grow in confidence and independence.

Emmie's journey shows how the right support can help young people overcome barriers and reach their potential.

© Images kindly provided by Young Somerset.

# Somerset adult social care ‘requires improvement’ – what people told inspectors



The **Care Quality Commission (CQC)** has published its [latest assessment of Somerset Council’s adult social care](#). Overall, the council is rated “[requires improvement](#).”

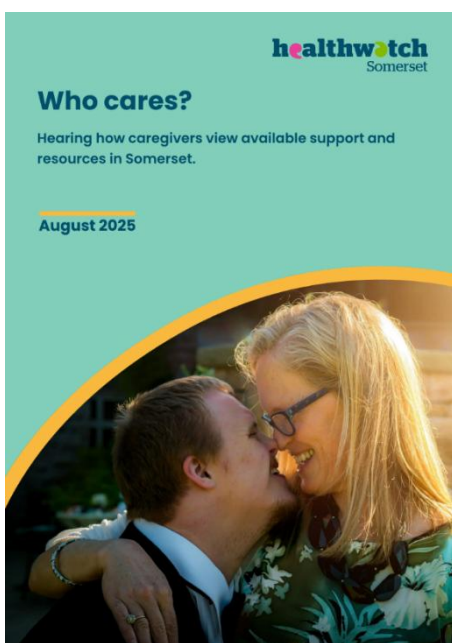
People shared **both positive and negative** experiences. Some said support had improved over time, and **many valued community-based services** such as village agents, who help people access information and connect with local support. There is also **evidence of stronger partnership working and committed staff**, with leaders taking steps to improve how services are managed and delivered.

However, not everyone is getting the support they need when they need it. Some people said it was **hard to contact the council** or felt they had to fit around services instead of getting care that works for them. **Delays are a key concern**, including long waits for assessments, reviews, and equipment.

Unpaid carers also reported challenges. Inspectors heard that carers are not always aware of their right to an assessment, and some experience delays or a lack of support planning.

## What this means for people in Somerset

This report reflects a system that is improving but still under pressure. There are positive examples of joined up working and community support, but people do not always receive prompt, consistent, or personalised care.



## What we are hearing locally

These findings **echo what we heard in our “[Who Cares?](#)” [report](#). Carers told us they often **struggle to find clear, consistent information**, and face delays when trying to access support. Many also described **feeling overlooked** and not fully involved in decisions about care.**

## Our view

There are **encouraging signs of progress**, but more needs to be done to make sure everyone can access the right support at the right time. **Listening to people and carers**, improving communication and reducing delays **will help services** work better for local communities.

# Young people's creativity celebrated in Somerset

A recent exhibition at County Hall warmly celebrated the creativity, experiences and voices of children and young people from across Somerset. The artwork was created by members of Somerset Council's youth participation groups, including the Unstoppables, Somerset in Care and Leaving Care Councils, and Somerset Youth Parliament.



© Apples for all by Ellie



©Aurora and Mountains by Holly

The collection brought together paintings, poetry, photography, printing, collage and even a papier-mâché whale shark. Through their work, young people shared what mattered to them – from friendship and joy to climate change, care experience, youth voice and feeling connected to the world around them.

This exhibition is a powerful reminder that young people have important things to say, and creative ways to say them.

You can view the artwork online through the [virtual exhibition page](#), making it easier for more people to see and celebrate young people's work. © Images kindly provided by [Somerset Council Engagement Participation Team](#)

## Help make work fair for unpaid carers

Unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting family, friends and communities, but many struggle to balance caring with work.

A new government consultation is exploring how employment rights could be improved, including extended leave, better job protection and paid time off.

The proposals also look at support for parents of seriously ill children, recognising the impact this can have on family life and work.

Current rights, like unpaid carer's leave and flexible working, don't always go far enough, and many people find it hard to access clear information or support.

This is your chance to share your experience and help shape future policy.

[Find out more and take part online](#). The consultation is open until **1 September 2026**.



# Join us in July

Come and talk to us about your experiences or for information and advice about health and care services in Somerset.

Date and times	Details
July 4, 2026 10:00am to 6:00pm	<b>Somerset Armed Forces Day</b> Vivary Park, Upper High Street, Taunton, TA1 3SX
July 5, 2026 12:00pm to 5:00pm	<b>Yeovil Together</b> at Westlands Entertainment Venue, Westbourne Close, Yeovil, BA20 2DD
July 7, 2026 11:00am to 12:30am	<b>Taunton Library</b> Paul St, Taunton, TA1 3XZ
July 8, 2026 10:00am to 12:00pm	<b>Morland Community Hub</b> Pearce Drive, Highbridge, TA9 3FU
July 14, 2026 10:00am to 2:00pm	<b>The Care Show for Somerset</b> Wellsprings Leisure Centre, Cheddon Road, Taunton, TA2 7QP
July 16, 2026 1:00m to 3:00pm	<b>Brean Talking Café</b> Brean Village Hall, Church Road, Brean, TA8 2SF
July 22, 2026 10:30am to 12:30pm	<b>Carers Information Day</b> at Taunton Town Football Club Wordsworth Drive, Taunton, TA1 2HG
July 28, 2026 10:00am to 12:00pm	<b>Waffle over waffles</b> at The Waffle Hub Community Café Methodist Church, 35A College St, Burnham-on-Sea, TA8 1AS
July 29, 2026 10:00am to 11:30am	<b>Glastonbury Library</b> 1 Orchard Court, Glastonbury, BA6 9JB

## Other important dates

Date	What	Find out more
<b>6 to 12 July</b>	Alcohol Awareness Week	<a href="https://alcoholchange.org.uk/">https://alcoholchange.org.uk/</a>
<b>24 July</b>	Samaritans Awareness Day	<a href="https://www.samaritans.org/">https://www.samaritans.org/</a>
<b>24 July</b>	International Self Care Day	<a href="https://isfglobal.org/">https://isfglobal.org/</a>
<b>28 July</b>	World Hepatitis Day	<a href="https://www.worldhepatitisday.org/">https://www.worldhepatitisday.org/</a>
<b>30 July</b>	International Day of Friendship	<a href="https://www.un.org/en/observances/friendship-day">https://www.un.org/en/observances/friendship-day</a>
<b>1 to 31 July</b>	Sarcoma Awareness Month	<a href="https://sarcoma.org.uk/">https://sarcoma.org.uk/</a>
<b>1 to 31 July</b>	Good Care Month	<a href="https://nationaltoday.com/good-care-month/">https://nationaltoday.com/good-care-month/</a>
<b>1 to 31 July</b>	Disability Pride month	<a href="https://www.scope.org.uk/disability-pride-month">https://www.scope.org.uk/disability-pride-month</a>

# Want us to share your news?



Do you have any **health and care news or events** you would like us to include in our **July 2026** newsletter? If so, please send us your text with an accompanying image to [info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk) **before Friday 17 July 2026**.

## Get in touch

**Share your experiences** of health and care services in Somerset so we can help influence change and make services better.

**Have your say** using our website contact form, or call us free on **0800 999 1286**.

Do you **have questions** about health and care 'jargon'? **We can help**, email your enquiries to [info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk) or call us free on **0800 999 1286**.

## Our website

Visit our [website](#) to:

Find out what we do in a variety of accessible formats	<a href="https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/about-us">https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/about-us</a>
Read our news and reports	<a href="https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/newsandreports">https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/newsandreports</a>
Volunteer with us	<a href="https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/volunteer">https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/volunteer</a>
Contact us	<a href="https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/contact-us">https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/contact-us</a>

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If you have been sent this newsletter and would like to join our mailing list, please follow this [sign up to our newsletter](#) link.

Healthwatch Somerset, Suite 12, Wellworthys Business Centre, Parrett Way, Colley Lane, Bridgwater, TA6 5LB

The Healthwatch Somerset service is run by [The Advocacy People](#), an independent charity – Charity No. 1080679 limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales with Company No. 3963421. The registered office is at PO Box 375, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 9HU

