

Choice in Care and Support Strategy 2024-2025

Adult Social Services and Housing



A message from Hayley Verrico, Director of Adult Social Care and Housing.

Maximizing independence and well-being for our residents is a crucial part of our vision. It involves working in partnership with people to help them access the information, guidance, and support they need to lead fulfilling lives.

We have adopted some key approaches which are detailed in our [Practice Framework](#). As part of this, we are committed to:

- tailoring the information, advice and support we provide to meet the unique needs and preferences of each individual;
- working in partnership with people to identify the outcomes they want to achieve; and
- building effective working relationships with individuals, their families, and our partners. This includes the healthcare, and voluntary and community sectors. We do this to improve people's support networks and to develop person-centred care and support plans.

If we are arranging care and support on your behalf, we recognise that circumstances may change. We commit to reviewing and adapting care and support plans to reflect any changing needs and circumstances. This helps to maximise your well-being and independence on an ongoing basis.

Executive Summary

In 2022 [IMPACT](#), the UK-wide centre for implementing evidence in adult social care, set up a series of networks across the United Kingdom with the aim of making choice and control in adult social care a reality. These networks were set up in response to the adult social care white paper [People at the heart of care](#) and found that people drawing on care and support value being asked, being supported to make decisions, having good information, developing good relationships, and having transparent systems and clarity over budgets.

Taking inspiration from IMPACT's approach we asked both people drawing on care and support, and people who work in adult social services and housing, about how we can strengthen our approach to choice in care and support. We were told that people often do not know where to start when looking for information and advice, while others find that the volume of information available is overwhelming and poorly tailored to their own circumstances and communication needs. A lack of knowledge and understanding can result in people not realising what care and support is available, which may impact negatively upon their wellbeing as well as put further pressure on unpaid carers, affecting their health, wellbeing, employment, and ability to continue offering the same level of support.

Our Choice in Care and Support Strategy details how we will address challenges regarding choice in care and support using our four priorities approach of:

- give me clear and accessible information
- get to know me and my community
- make decisions with me and my family

- expand choice in care and support.

For everyone who draws on care and support – no matter their background or circumstances – achieving choice, control and independence starts with making sure that people are listened to, understood, and get the right care and support, in the right place and at the right time. Wherever possible, care and support will be personalised in line with people’s specific needs, their protected characteristics, and in line with our ‘strengths-based’ and ‘home first’ approach. This strategy will support us in our mission to understand and improve the journey people take when drawing on care and support from adult social services and housing.

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Introduction

About this strategy

The Choice in Care and Support Strategy (2024-2025) sets out our vision for facilitating informed choice in relation to care and support interventions in North Somerset, and the actions we will take to support this. One aspect of a prosperous North Somerset is the provision of the right level of support for all our residents, at the right time.

In the early stages of developing this strategy, we asked people with lived experience and people working in social services and housing, including social workers, occupational therapists and adult social care workers, what choice in care means to them, what we do well in relation to offering choice, and what we need to improve. People's views were meaningful and insightful. Many of the suggestions and comments have helped shape our strategic priorities.

The Choice in Care and Support Strategy will be monitored quarterly with the action plan being updated in line with our work to map and understand people's adult social service and

housing journeys. The strategy will be available online and we welcome comments throughout its lifespan. You can contact us at asshsstrategyandpolicyteam@n-somerset.gov.uk to share any comments and suggestions.

Why have a Choice in Care and Support strategy?

Local authorities operate with limited resources and so it is vital that there is a clear strategic direction in relation to how we provide choice in care and support. A strategy allows us to focus our efforts on agreed priorities, use our resources as effectively as possible, and co-ordinate with our partners to reach shared goals.

This strategy ties in with our overall ambitions for North Somerset, namely that 'our communities are caring, healthy and safe, where people help each other to live well'. This strategy seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents by working in partnership with NHS system partners, care and support providers, and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector (VCSE) partners to enable people to stay well, safe, and independent at home for longer. This strategy also aligns with our commitment to enabling people

to maximise their independence through a focus on empowering communities, information and advice, early intervention and technology enabled care. This strategy should be read alongside our [Commissioning Strategy 2024-2031](#).

Corporate Plan

Our vision is for North Somerset (NS) to be open, fair and green. Our core values are we: act with integrity; respect each other; innovate; care; and collaborate. Our four ambitions are:

1. Our children and young people are cared for, safe, supported and are given equality of opportunity to thrive.
2. Our communities are caring, healthy and safe, where people help each other to live well.
3. Our towns and villages are thriving and sustainable places to live, work and visit.
4. Our council delivers consistently good services and value for money to support our community.

We are also committed to contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. You can find more about our

Our vision

An Open, Fair, Green North Somerset



Our values



Corporate Plan and vision at [Organisational priorities | North Somerset Council \(n-somerset.gov.uk\)](#).

Adult Social Services Vision

Maximising independence and well-being for our residents is a crucial part of our adult social services vision. This involves working in partnership with people to help them access the information, guidance, and support they need to lead fulfilling lives.

To support us to achieve our vision we have adopted some key approaches which are detailed in our [Practice Framework](#). As part of this, we are committed to:

- tailoring the information, advice and support we provide to meet the unique needs and preferences of each individual;
- working in partnership with people to identify the outcomes they want to achieve; and
- building effective working relationships with individuals, their families, and our partners. This includes healthcare, commissioned care and support providers, and voluntary and community sectors. We do this to improve people's support networks and to develop person-centred care and support plans.

We know that some people want to arrange their own care but may need support to find the care and support options that will best meet their needs. To help with this, we will ensure that residents and their families have access to relevant information, advice and resources. We will provide this

information to enhance people's well-being and enable them to make their own informed choices.

Choice, control, and independence are not limited to those who draw on care and support. We know that families and unpaid carers must also be supported. [Please refer to our carers' strategy](#) for more information.

We are dedicated to doing the following:

- We will work closely with people who draw on care and support, and their networks, to help them achieve their goals. We will always support you to consider a range of options.
- We will help you access support from community and family networks where appropriate. We recognise that people are experts in their own lives. We will always work in partnership with people and communities to involve them in the decisions which affect them.
- We will work closely with a broad range of care providers to ensure that they are delivering good quality care and support options.

- We will promote the use of direct payments and self-directed support to maximise people's choice and control over how they receive care.

People in North Somerset can be confident that our vision will:

- promote personal wellbeing and independence
- help us create a support network through the use of community resources, family support networks, and commissioned care providers.

We will make sure that our vision is understood and practised by all our staff.

[Assessment framework for local authority assurance](#)

[The Care Quality Commission \(CQC\) use this framework to](#) assess how well we are performing against our duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. Our Choice in Care and Support Strategy evidences our alignment with the quality statements outlined below. Quality statements are written from the perspective of the local authority (we) and people drawing on care and support (I).

- I have care and support that is co-ordinated, and everyone works well together and with me.
- I have care and support that enables me to live as I want to, seeing me as a unique person with skills, strengths and goals.
- I can get information and advice about my health, care and support and how I can be as well as possible – physically, mentally and emotionally.
- I am supported to plan ahead for important changes in my life that I can anticipate.
- We understand our duty to collaborate and work in partnership, so our services work seamlessly for people. We share information and learning with partners and collaborate for improvement.
- We focus on continuous learning, innovation and improvement across our organisation and the local system. We encourage creative ways of delivering equality of experience, outcome and quality of life for people. We actively contribute to safe, effective practice and research.

Climate emergency

In 2019 we declared a climate emergency with the aim to become a net zero council and area by 2030. In November 2022 we developed a refreshed [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#), that sets out our key priorities. The way we commission care and support options has an important part to play in the way we do business, and our [Procurement Strategy](#) has climate action at its heart.

Wherever possible people working in adult social services and housing are encouraged to think of ways to reduce their carbon footprint and minimise climate impact. This may include using public transport, reducing journeys, and making use of digital resources and remote communication methods where appropriate and proportionate.

The strategic context

Association of Directors for Adult Social Services (ADASS)
Submission to Spring Budget Consultation (2024)

In their [Submission to the Spring Budget Consultation \(2024\)](#) the Association of Directors for Adult Social Services outlined how councils are struggling to balance their budgets. In 2022/23, 63% of councils overspent on their adult social care budgets. Of these councils the proportion using reserves as a source of funding to address their overspends increased from 37% in 2021/22 to 72% in 2022/23. In 2023/24, 83% of councils were projecting to overspend by an average of 3.5%. This is despite adult social care budgets having been increased by 8.6% for the year. This highlights the sharply rising demands on services and cost pressures within the sector. Nearly a third (29%) of Directors of Adult Social Services have been asked to make additional in-year savings to their budgets, totalling £83.7mn, whereas under a fifth (19%) had been required to do so the previous year.

People at the Heart of Care: Adult Social Care Reform White Paper

The [“People at the Heart of Care: Adult Social Care Reform White Paper”](#) (updated 2022) outlines a 10-year vision for transforming adult social care in England. It emphasises placing individuals and their families at the centre of care, offering choice and control, promoting independence, and recognising the value of unpaid carers.

The white paper states that gathering the views of experts by experience and frontline practitioners is crucial to placing people at the heart of care as it ensures that action is informed by practical, real-world insights and knowledge. Experts by experience bring a wealth of experience and understanding of the nuances and complexities involved in care, which can significantly enhance the effectiveness and relevance of social service strategies, policies, and services. Their input can lead to more personalised, empathetic, and efficient care solutions that are better suited to meet the unique needs of residents.

The Care Act (2014) and the well-being principle

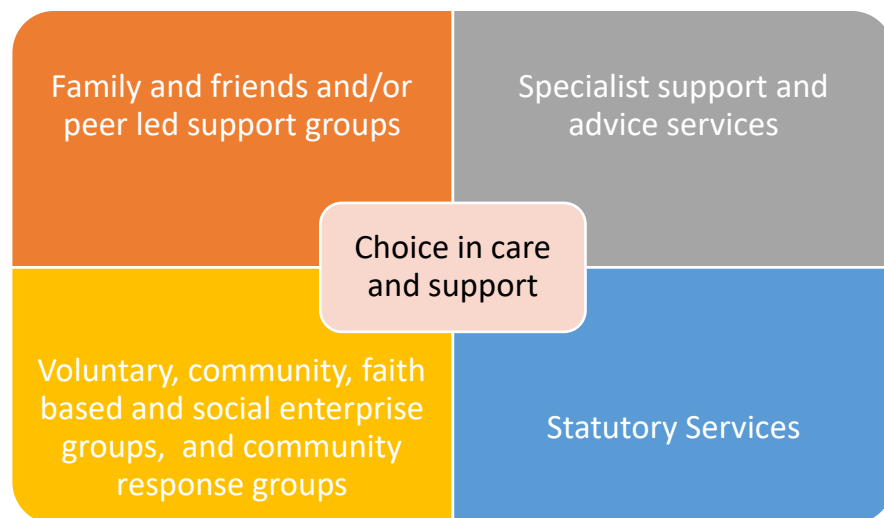
Under the Care Act (2014), which is the main piece of legislation for adult social care and support, local authorities have a general duty to promote an individual's well-being when considering their care and support needs. [Section 1\(2\) of the Care Act \(2014\)](#) lists a range of factors that local authorities must consider in relation to an individual's wellbeing, including personal dignity, control over day-to-day life, mental health, and emotional wellbeing.

Section 1(3) of the Care Act outlines a further set of factors that local authorities must have regard to. These include the individual's wishes, the importance of the individual participating as fully as possible in decisions about their social care, and the need to ensure decisions are made having regard to all of the individual's circumstances.

Choice in care and support

To place people and their families at the centre of adult social services, understanding choice in care and support is key. Choice in care and support involves knowing what type of support is needed, when it is needed, where to get it from, if it is available, and how to co-ordinate it.

What type of care and support is available in North Somerset?



When exercising choice and control it is first important to consider what support is needed for the circumstances. There are many forms of care and support residents can use including: family, friends and/or peer led support groups, specialist support and advice services, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise groups, community response groups, and statutory services. A combination of these may be helpful.

Family and friends and/or peer led support groups

Many people can draw upon the skills and strengths of family and friends who provide a familiar layer of practical and emotional care and support. They can also help with co-ordinating other forms of care and support.

A peer-led support group is an assembly of individuals who share similar experiences or challenges. These groups are typically facilitated by non-professionals who have undergone comparable situations, offering a unique perspective and empathy. The focus is on mutual aid and shared growth, providing a safe space for members to express themselves, exchange coping strategies, and foster a sense of community.

Specialist support and advice services

Specialist support and advice services offer targeted help for specific needs, often bringing professional expertise to complex situations, for example health and mental health partners.

Voluntary community faith and social enterprise groups, and community response groups (VCFSE)

The voluntary community faith and social enterprise sector and community response groups play a pivotal role in mobilising resources and fostering a sense of solidarity among members facing similar challenges.

We work in partnership with community groups such as [North Somerset Together](#) and the [Wellbeing Collective](#) to improve the wellbeing and health of people in North Somerset.

There are many places to search for specialist support and advice services, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise groups and community response groups including:

- [North Somerset Council Website](#)

- [aDoddle](#) – a connected community map focused on supporting people and communities.
- [Healthwatch](#)
- [North Somerset Online Directory](#)

Statutory Services

Statutory services are services provided by the Local Authority and/or the Integrated Care Board (ICB). Adult social services is an example of a statutory service provided by the Local Authority.

Adult social services is a statutory service which works alongside adults who need extra care and support to live well and to be as independent as possible. We also commission non-statutory services that support people. People may require support because of a disability, long-term illness, age, a learning disability, autism, mental health problems or being a carer. Adult social services work in partnership with a range of community organisations to help people to live independently and achieve their goals. Our first step is to provide information, advice, and guidance to help residents

access the support which is right for them. When required, we will arrange an assessment of your needs and help you to develop a care and support plan. Our aim is to draw from a range of resources to help you to live well. This might include building on your existing social networks, helping you find support groups and services in the community, commissioning care and support options, or allocating funding so you can purchase your own care and support.

Support can be provided in many different forms, including but not limited to;

- [occupational therapy](#)
- [the provision of equipment and living aids](#)
- [assistive technology](#)
- [wellness service](#)
- [handy person service](#)
- [day services](#)
- [technology enabled care and reablement intervention](#)
- [connecting lives](#)
- [direct payments and personal budgets](#)
- [personal assistants](#)
- [home care](#)
- [residential care](#)

- [extra care housing](#)
- [sheltered housing](#)
- [retirement properties](#)
- [advocacy](#)
- [support and advice for carers](#)

If you are partly or fully responsible for funding your own care, you can speak to one of our [care navigators](#) who can support you to make decisions about your care and support needs.

Choice, strengths, and eligible needs.

In adult social services we will support you, and/or your carers, to consider both your/their strengths and eligible care and support needs. We recognise that all people, regardless of the challenges in their lives, have a wide range of individual and collective strengths to draw upon. We look beyond the challenges people face; we see people with care and support needs as unique individuals who play an integral role in their families and communities, each with their own life history, abilities, and aspirations. We will discuss with you how your strengths and eligible needs relate to one another, and how this impacts upon the choices available to you. This is a collaborative process to identify the level of support needed.

This also supports us to weigh up how we use our budgets to meet the needs of everyone in our communities.

The aim is to work together to identify a range of support (drawing upon family and friends, peer led community groups, specialist support and advice services, VCFSE, and where required statutory services) that can meet eligible needs, prevent, and delay the development of care and support needs, and plan to adapt to your changing needs over time. This will ensure that each person receives the right level of care at the right time to suit their needs, preferences, their situation, and/or the level of risk.

We have a duty to spend public money wisely. We will always explore the most cost-effective solutions with you first, with the aim of meeting your eligible needs, improving your wellbeing and helping you to achieve the outcomes which matter to you most. This does not mean we are placing limitations on our ability to use our discretion; instead this approach highlights our commitment to weighing up how we use our limited budgets to meet the needs of everyone in our communities. We will always be open to discussing this with

you and we will consider your well-being, preferences, wishes and feelings as we coproduce your care and support plan.

Greater choice and control over how your eligible care and support needs are met can be achieved through direct payments (also called a DP). Direct payments are a sum of money we can give to you to pay for care and support. The aim is to give you greater flexibility, more choice, and control over the support you get. If you get a direct payment, you can decide how your needs will be met, by whom, and when, in line with our [Direct Payments Guidance](#).

Choice in care and care homes

[The Care and Support and Aftercare \(Choice of Accommodation\) Regulations \(2014\)](#) “set out the rights and responsibilities regarding the choice of placement in residential care and the right to choose a more expensive setting than the local authority would fund”. Individuals receiving adult social services’ funding can choose their accommodation if the following [conditions are met](#):

a) Their choice of accommodation will meet their needs:

The chosen accommodation is the same type of specified accommodation and will meet the individual's assessed and eligible needs. Individuals may still express a preference for a particular care home to live in, and this will be taken into account, but may not be offered depending on the other criteria described below.

b) Their choice of accommodation will cost no more than North Somerset Council would usually pay to meet eligible needs:

In the first instance the best value placement within the specified accommodation, available at the time, is identified and offered. If a person's needs could be met in more than one type of specified accommodation, then the cost of the best value type of accommodation will be offered. Should a person wish to choose a more expensive provision than the identified best value option, then a third-party payment will need to be arranged. Please refer to our webpage: [paying for your own care and support](#).

c) Their choice of accommodation is available:

The preferred choice of provision must be available and, where we are commissioning the support, the provider agrees to deliver the care under our usual terms and conditions.

We will always follow the Care Act Statutory Guidance when establishing the most appropriate care and support package. We will fully consider individuals' preferences, well-being, and the best value when identifying the setting for care and support to be delivered.

Paragraph 10.27 of the [Care and support statutory guidance](#) states that local authorities have a responsibility to consider their financial resources when meeting individual needs. We must ensure that our budget is adequate to support the entire community, balancing this with the obligation to fulfil the eligible needs of individuals. Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, considering the cost-effectiveness of different options without placing limitations on our freedom to act with discretion. The focus should be on achieving the best outcomes in the most cost-effective way, rather than simply opting for the least expensive solution. Compliance with public

law duties is essential throughout this process. As part of our decision-making process, we will consider the Wellbeing Principle and consider an individual's views, wishes, feelings and beliefs.

If an individual wants to meet their care and support needs in a way that is more expensive than best value, then an individual/third party may be required to fund the additional amount above cost of the provisions we offer. We will make placements in more expensive accommodation provided the person is able to demonstrate that a third party is able and willing to make-up the difference between the service providers rate and the personal budget ("top-up"). Individuals are advised to read our [care home and residential charging policy](#). The person paying the "top-up" will be required to enter into a formal agreement with us.

Consultation and Engagement

We value the expertise and experiences of both people with lived experience and frontline practitioners. To create a

meaningful and effective choice in care and support strategy we sought to understand how choice in care is understood and experienced by people with lived experiences and practitioners. Between June 2023 and November 2023 we completed six engagement activities, two with adult social services practitioners and four with people with lived experience.

What you told us

People told us that having choice is important as it supports independence, especially when it comes to care and support.

We understand how crucial it is to offer different options for care and support. To support people to make choices our staff ask people about their preferences, goals, and ambitions. We stress the importance of respecting individual preferences when planning care and are confident using formal mechanisms such as the Mental Capacity Act and Best Interest meetings to gather input from family and friends. When there are disagreements about a person's wishes, staff suggest appointing an advocate to better understand the person's thoughts and feelings.

For people who draw on care and support, having choice means that they can live a life where they feel included within the community. They said that they should be able to make decisions that impact their lives and improve their overall well-being as they are the experts of their lives and know what care and support will meet their needs best.

We understand that financial constraints in adult social services may restrict the choice available to people. We work hard to find a balance between quality care and cost. One concern is proportionality and the ability to ensure our budget can meet the needs of everyone who lives in North Somerset. This has, at times, resulted in very limited, or no, choice of care provider being presented to people with eligible care and support needs. Lack of autonomy and choice in relation to choosing care providers was a common concern for the people spoken with. People drawing on care and support expressed frustration at not being involved in decision-making processes and feeling powerless because decisions were often made for them.

People drawing on care and support said they should have the freedom to pick their care providers without others deciding for them. One person said that limited budgets and few options could discourage people from seeking help from us.

Despite these challenges, some individuals have found direct payments to be a positive option. However, some may still expect more choice.

People who draw on care and support appreciate it when social care practitioners are attentive, understanding, and accommodating. They appreciate it when their voices are heard, when they are actively involved in care planning and when care plans are tailored to their personality, preferences, and needs. The presence of caring social workers and occupational therapists is crucial as they listen and collaborate with individuals to deliver good care. A lack of person-centred planning and support left some people feeling as though they are being made to fit into criteria for services that may not be the best for them.

Both staff and people drawing on care and support identified areas where we could enhance and promote choice in care and support. People expressed a need for meaningful person-centred planning. This need has also been discussed by professionals in relation to the Autism strategy, which is currently in development. Care plans were described as generic, with no sense of the person and their likes, dislikes, and communication preferences.

People drawing on care and support want adult social services practitioners to provide clearer, more accessible, and up-to-date information and advice about what care and support they can access. They also want better guidance on what services offer and pricing when selecting care homes.

Experiences of engaging with us were described as traumatic and confusing by some, suggesting that there is a gap between intentions and actual support. Some people drawing on care and support reflected that they felt some social service practitioners did not understand their disabilities, and so did not understand how to meet their needs.

Priorities for the Choice in Care and Support Strategy

The priorities for the strategy are rooted in what both people drawing on care and support and practitioners told us, and the strategic context. This can be summarised in four priorities:

- give me clear and accessible information
- get to know me and my community
- make decisions with me and my family
- expand choice in care and control.

Give me clear and accessible information

- We should enhance availability and delivery of information, advice, and signposting, making it more accessible and current.
- Provide timely and accurate information. This includes updates to the website.
- When people don't have eligible care and support needs, we must ensure they have personalised information and advice to help prevent or delay eligible needs developing.
- Understand and promote advances in technology.

- Clear guidance on the adult social services pathway needs to be created and provided to people at the beginning of the process. This needs to be in a format that is widely accessible (such as a video with explanatory audio, and an easy read information sheet).

Get to know me and my community

- Get to know the people we are supporting, including any disabilities, and the communities they live in. If we don't know much about personalising care in relation to a certain disability or protected characteristic, we will find out.
- It is important that social care practitioners know what services are available in their local area, how people can access them, and how they can be combined to complement each other. This includes alternatives to commissioned care services.
- Increase our community visibility and engagement.

Make decisions with me and my family

- Get to know a person's strengths, uphold their rights, and support their goals to go beyond eligibility criteria to offer personal centred care and support options.
- Be open, honest and transparent which choice is limited.
- Adopt, understand, and embody the umbrella approaches outlined in the [North Somerset Council Adult Social Services Practice Framework](#)
- Give staff permission to dedicate more time to building relationships to foster trust that can support informed decision-making.
- Make assessments person-centred, beyond just ticking boxes.
- Co-create solutions to meeting need using diverse care and support options that are person-centred.
- Information, advice, and care plans should seek to encompass more than one type of support – such as statutory services, family and friends, and peer led

support groups. This should be based on people's strengths, preferences, and need.

- Consider the well-being principle when supporting people to make choices about care and support.

Expand choice in care and support

- Promote direct payments and personal assistant recruitment with clear guidance.
- Continue to work collaboratively with providers. Understand what they do and what they can offer and how this can be utilised.
- Co-design services with people with lived experience and partners. Creating services together is essential for better outcomes. A feedback and coproduction culture is crucial in adult social services for continuous improvement and relevance of care and support offered.
- Promote and enhance the profile, and use of, preventative services.

- Diversify the care market and engage in recruitment efforts.
- Consider care options in light of the climate emergency. These considerations should not seek to actively reduce choice in care and support.
- Proactively trial technologies and work with care providers and people receiving homecare on pilots and trials that optimise delivery of homecare (TEC)
- Invest in peer-led support groups.

Delivery, oversight, and the action plan

Delivery of this strategy is the responsibility of the Assistant Director of Adult Social Services and Housing (operations). The Assistant Director has been identified as the leader of efforts to promote choice in care and support in Adult Social Services and Housing. Our Assistant Director is also leading our work on understanding and improving people's journey through adult social services and housing.

The strategies action plan will be monitored through a standard reporting process at each meeting of wider DLT (Directorate Leadership Team). This will include progress against an outcomes framework which will measure different aspects of improvement across different timescales. As well as data, there will be feedback on how actions are progressing and how this is impacting upon the choice and control in care and support of those who have received new or additional support. Our action plan details how we will address challenges regarding choice in care and support using our

four priorities approach of; give me clear and accessible information, get to know me and my community, make decisions with me and my family, and expand choice in care and support.

Services and interventions included in the action plan will be guided by best practice and evidence. We will assess the action plans impact, how equitable it is, and its value for money.

Our indicative timeline indicates that we will deliver short-term, recurring, and longer-term initiatives that will meet objectives over the course of the strategy and beyond. Whilst this is a one-year strategy, it is still important to consider longer term goals. The longer-term goals will feed into future strategy developments. This strategies action plan will also inform our on-going work on understanding and improving people's journey through adult social services and housing. By focusing on a range of actions and using the four priorities approach, we will implement actions that will have the greatest impact on people drawing on care and support and/or their carers.

Action Plan

1. We will provide timely, accessible, and accurate information about what care and support is available in North Somerset.

Action:	We will complete the website update project. We will facilitate an evaluation of the website through the coproduction panel and North Somerset People First.
Lead Officer(s):	Engagement and Participation Officer
Outcomes:	The website will provide timely, accessible, and accurate information to residents of North Somerset. The co-production panel, and North Somerset People First, will report that the website is more informative, easy to navigate, and accessible.
Term:	1 year

Action:	We will complete the North Somerset Online Directory (NSOD) update project. We will facilitate an evaluation of the website through the coproduction panel and North Somerset People First.
Lead Officer(s):	Service Development Manager
Outcomes:	The new online directory will be keep updated to provide a central resource re: what services are available in North Somerset. The co-production panel, and North Somerset People First will report that NSOD is informative, easy to navigate, and accessible.
Term:	1 year
Action:	We will keep staff updated about what services are available to residents.
Lead Officer(s):	Principal Occupational Therapist

Outcomes: Establish a routine for regularly updating and sharing information about peer led support groups, specialist support and advise services, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise groups, community response groups, and statutory services.

Term: 1 year

Action: We will implement feedback systems to continually gather residents' experiences and suggestions for improving information delivery and accessibility.

Lead Officer(s): Engagement and Participation Officer

Outcomes: Feedback will inform how we can improve the accessibility and availability of information and advice about what is available in North Somerset.

People will feel more informed and will be able to take control of their care and support.

Term: 1 year

Action: We will provide comprehensive training for staff about our practice framework and how this supports our commitment to choice and control in care and support. This will link our practice framework to:

- Personalised care and coproduction
- Informed decision making
- Advocacy
- Our range of options
- Empowerment and autonomy
- Access to services and eliminating barriers

Lead Officer(s): Professional Development Leads and Strategy and Policy Development Officer (Operations)

Outcomes: Choice in Care and Support Practice Guidance will be developed to outline how to provide informed and up-to-date information and advice to residents.

A training module will be developed to outline the importance of choice and control in care and support, and how this can be effectively facilitated.

When staff are unsure of what services are available, they will pro-actively find out and provide the information in an accessible way.

Term: 2 years

Action: Continue to promote direct payments and personal assistant recruitment.

Build upon work completed by Jenny Monks.

Lead Officer(s): Whole workforce

Outcomes: Residents will have increased choice and control over their care and support.

Term: On-going

2. We are committed to ensuring that we meet the needs of our community through the delivery of service within our allocated budget

Action: We will seek to understand and improve peoples adult social service and housing journey.

Lead Officer(s): Customer Journey Project Manager

Outcomes: We will improve peoples adult social service journey.
The persons journey project will inform the review of our Choice in Care and Support Strategy.

Term: 1-2 years

Action: We will create clear guidance on our adult social services pathway to provide people with clear information and advice about what to expect if they do, and do not, have eligible needs. This needs to be in a format that is widely accessible (such as a video with explanatory audio, and an easy read information sheet).

Lead Officer(s): Principal Social Worker

Outcomes: Embody our vision of being open and fair.
All residents in North Somerset will be able to access information and advice and/or care and support relevant to their personal circumstances.
All residents will experience choice and control through a blend of support from family and friends, peer led support groups, specialist support and advice services, VCFSE, community response groups, and where appropriate TEC and statutory services. This should be based on people’s strengths, preferences, need, and well-being.

Term: 1 year

Action: When people don’t have eligible care and support needs, we will ensure they have personalised information and advice to help prevent or delay eligible needs developing.

Lead Officer(s): Principal Social Worker

Outcomes: All people making contact with adult social services and housing will receive, as a minimum, up to date, personal centred and accessible information and advice on how to utilise care and support from family and friends, peer led support groups, specialist support and advice services, VCFSE, community response groups, and where appropriate TEC

Where people require help and support to make initial contact with a non-statutory service/peer group etc, we will facilitate initial contact.

Term: 1 year

Action: Promote and enhance the profile, and use of, preventative services.

Lead Officer(s): Director of Adult Social Services and Housing

Outcomes:

- A commitment to the Local Government Associations seven principles for reform including:
- A person-centred and preventative model of social care, which promotes resilience in local public services and communities.
- A commissioning model that creates more person-centred services that help prevent, delay or reduce the need for more formal care services
- A commitment to the Care Act wellbeing principle and to improving people’s choice and control of the care and support they use to live their best life.

Term: 4 years

Action: Be open, honest and transparent when choice is limited.

Consider the creation of team level peer forums where staff can discuss alternatives to traditional care and support options. Discussions will be collaborative between teams across the directorate.

Lead Officer(s): Whole workforce

Outcomes:	Staff are comfortable and confident in having open and honest conversations. Staff are able to actively co-create, and advocate for creative alternatives to traditional care and support options.
Term:	1 year

3. We will understand and promote advances in Technology Enabled Care (TEC)

Action: We will complete and implement our TEC strategy.
We will proactively trial technologies alongside care providers, people drawing on care and support, and carers to optimise the delivery of TEC.

Lead Officer(s): Service Development Manager

Outcomes: The use of TEC will increase choice and control for people drawing on care and support.

Term: 4 year

4. We will fully adopt, understand, and embody the approaches outlined in the North Somerset Council Adult Social Services Practice Framework

Action: We will take an appropriate and proportionate amount of time to build a trusting relationship and understand people’s unique strengths, focussing on what matters to them and the goals they want to achieve.

Lead Officer(s): Whole workforce

Outcomes: Practitioners will recognise that each person’s situation is unique, multi-faceted and complex. They will take the time necessary to get to know people in the context of their disabilities, cultural background, communities, social networks, and past life experiences (including the impact of trauma on forming effective relationships).

Term: 1 year

Action: We will support people with care and support needs and their families to problem solve and coproduce care and support plans which go beyond eligible needs, and instead focus on strengths and outcomes.

Lead Officer(s): Whole workforce

Outcomes: The proportion of people who use services who have control over their daily life will improve.
Introduce Family groups conferences as a means to achieve this.

Term: 1 year

Action: We are committed to actively challenging racism and discrimination in all forms. We will take steps to ensure all services in North Somerset are accessible to all members of the community regardless of their background or individual characteristics

Lead Officer(s): Whole workforce

Outcomes: We will understand people's lived experiences and take all reasonable steps to make our support accessible and culturally responsive. This will increase choice and control for the people we support.

Term: 1 year

Action: We recognise that people with care and support needs must be at the heart of decision making. No decisions should be taken without fully involving the person affected in the decision-making process.

Lead Officer(s): Whole workforce

Outcomes: We will take positive risks to help people achieve their goals and aspirations in line with their expressed wishes and feelings. Our decision making will be guided by person-centred legal frameworks such as the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Care Act 2014.

We will have due regard for the well-being principle.

Improved satisfaction and well-being for those receiving care and support.

Term: 1 year

5. Promote choice and control for carers

Action: We will deliver the actions identified in the Carers Strategy

Lead Officer(s): Whole workforce
Carers Partnership Board

Outcomes: Carers strategy action plan to be coproduced, co-monitored, and co-reviewed.
Carer reported quality of life score is better than the national average.
All new carers are offered an assessment and all known carers offered reviews year on year

Term: 4 years

6. We will work collaboratively with partners, people who draw on care and support, and carers to promote and expand choice in care and support

Action: We will work collaboratively with providers, fully understanding what they do, what they can offer, and how this can be utilised creatively.

Lead Officer(s): Personalised commissioning Manager

Outcomes: Enhanced quality of care through shared best practices and shared resources.
Increased variety of care and support options available to individuals and carers.
Innovative approaches to care, inspired by diverse provider insights.

Term: 4 years

Action: We will strengthen our collaboration and co-production with Town and Parish Councils, the voluntary and the community sector to ensure we work well together to increase choice in care and support.

Lead Officer(s): Head of Strategy and Commissioning

Outcomes: Strengthened community ties and support networks.
More efficient use of resources leading to cost-effective care solutions.

Term: 4 years

Action: We will co-design services alongside people with lived experience and partners to increase choice in care and develop services rooted in the experiences and needs of the community.

Lead Officer(s): Head of Strategy and Commissioning

Outcomes: Better informed decision-making by all parties involved in care and support.

Term: 4 years

Action: We will diversify the care market and engage in recruitment efforts.

Lead Officer(s): Head of Strategy and Commissioning

Outcomes: Implement the [Commissioning Strategy Action Plan](#)

Enhanced variety of care and support options, allowing individuals to select the options that best fit their personal needs and preferences.

Increased satisfaction among service users due to more tailored care solutions.

A more robust care sector with a diverse range of providers.

Strengthened community ties through collaborative partnerships and shared goals in care provision.

Development of innovative care models and practices as a result of market diversification.

Term: 7 years

Action: We will consider care options in light of the climate emergency. These considerations will not seek to actively reduce choice in care and support, instead increasing environmental sustainability.

Lead Officer(s): Head of Strategy and Commissioning

Outcomes:

Integrate environmental sustainability into the strategic planning of social services and housing, ensuring that actions contribute to enhancing social justice and reducing carbon footprint.

Develop strategies that are adaptable to climate-related risks, such as drought, flooding, and extreme weather events, to maintain continuity of care.

Promote sustainable living within care services to improve the lives of those supported, while also achieving measurable reductions in carbon emissions.

Collaborate with partners and stakeholders to navigate the best routes for environmental protection without compromising care quality, choice and control or accessibility.

Term: 4 years

Council documents can be made available in large print, audio, easy read, and other formats. Documents on our website can also be emailed to you as plain text files.

Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.

For more information email: asshsstrategyandpolicyteam@n-somerset.gov.uk