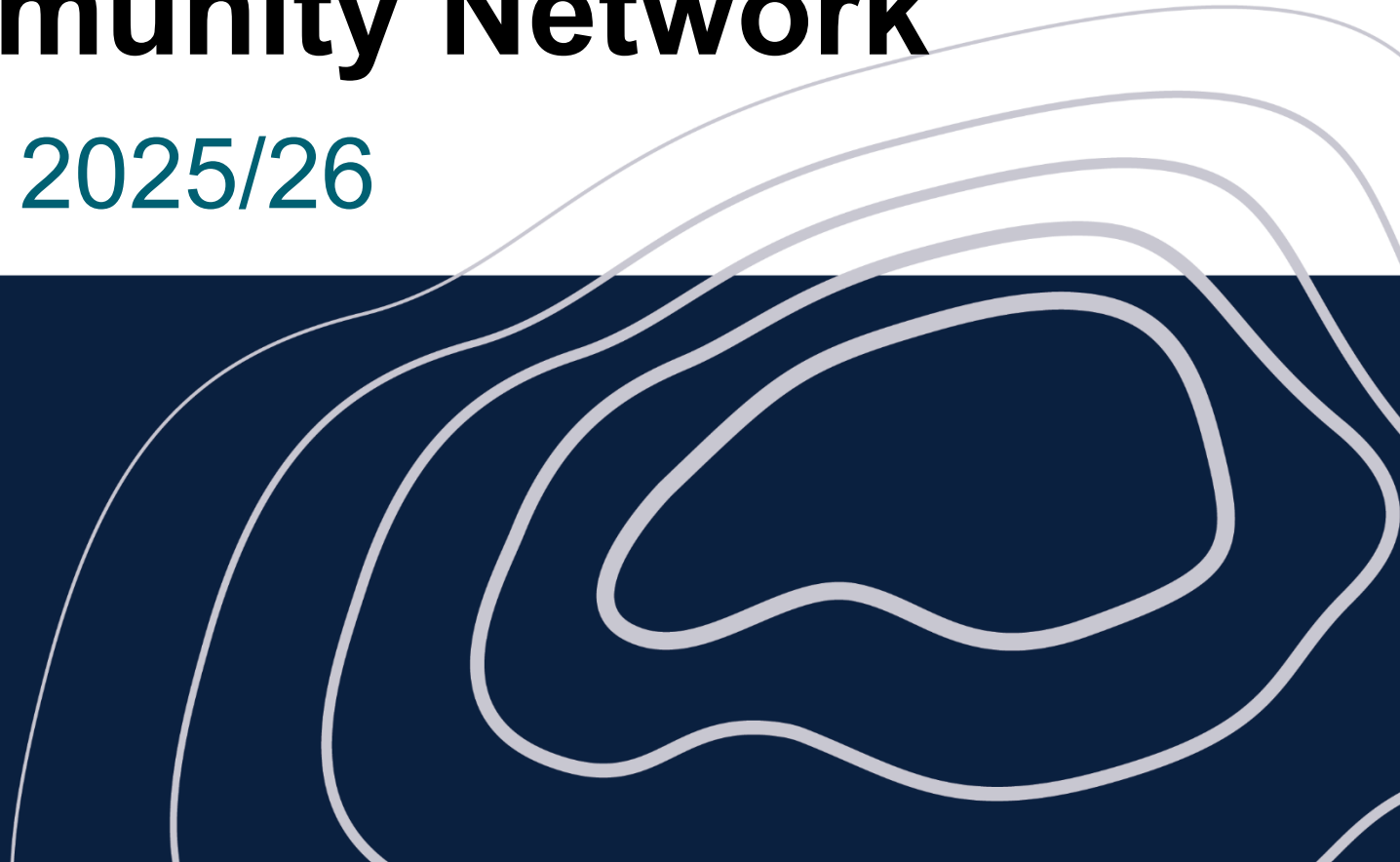




Avalon and Poldens

Local Community Network

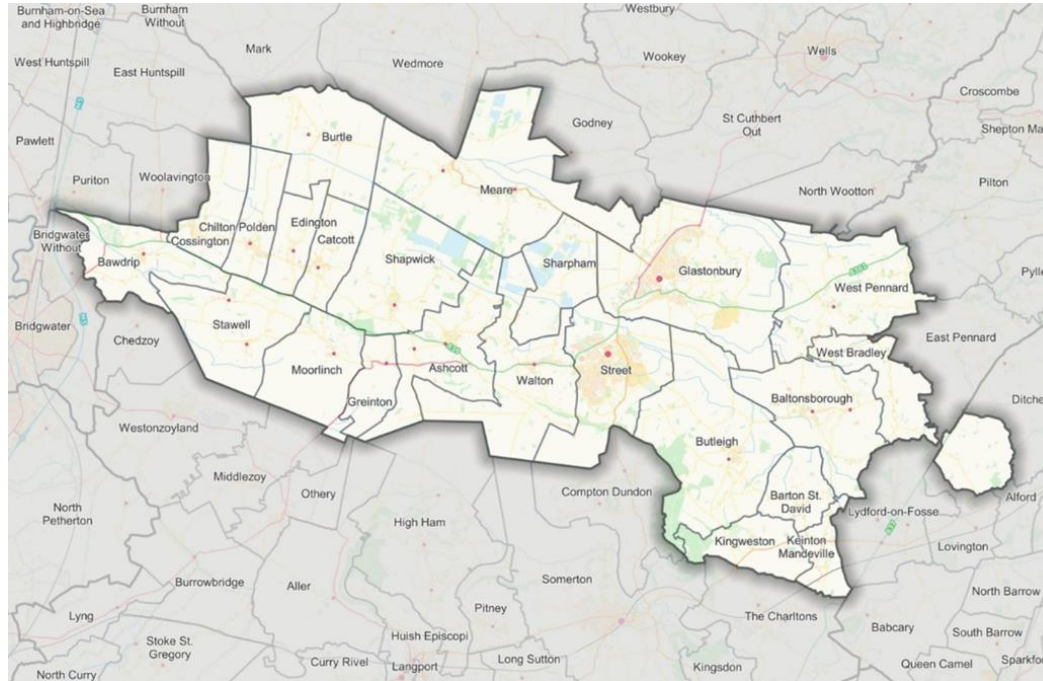
Annual Report 2025/26



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Avalon and Poldens LCN



Parishes	23
LCN Co-Vice Chair	Cllr Stephen Page (Somerset Council/Keinton Mandeville Parish Council)
LCN Co-Vice Chair	Cllr Chris Bennetts (Meare & Westhay Parish Council)
Link Officer	Charlotte Griffin
Contact	avalonandpoldenslcn@somerset.gov.uk
Previous Meeting Minutes	https://lcn.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/lcn-past-meeting-archive/

Introduction

The Avalon and Poldens Local Community Network (LCN) represents a strategically important mixed rural and semi-urban geography within Somerset, comprising 23 parishes and a population of approximately 34,800. The area's spatial character is defined by the Polden Hills ridge and the Somerset Levels, alongside key settlements including Street and Glastonbury, creating a diverse landscape that combines dispersed rural communities with high-footfall economic centres. This results in a locality that must balance the needs of rural service delivery, infrastructure connectivity and a significant visitor economy.

From an economic perspective, the area is underpinned by agriculture, tourism, retail and hospitality, with Street acting as a major economic anchor, attracting over four million visitors annually. The presence of strategic transport routes such as the A39 further reinforces the area's role as a connector across neighbouring communities and economies. Collectively, these factors position the Avalon and Poldens LCN as both a locally distinctive rural network and a contributor to wider Somerset economic activity.

Given its geographic spread and varied settlement pattern, the area faces structural challenges relating to access to services, transport, and community connectivity, which are typical of rural and peri-urban environments. In this context, the LCN provides a critical mechanism for coordinated, place-based working, enabling Somerset Council, parish councils, statutory agencies and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector to align priorities, share intelligence and respond more effectively to locally identified need.

Activity across the LCN demonstrates a clear shift towards strategic partnership delivery, with established working groups focusing on Health and Wellbeing and Highways as core thematic priorities. These provide a structured platform for addressing cross-cutting issues such as population health, transport and accessibility, community resilience and safety, while also supporting alignment with wider system initiatives, including programmes linked to community health integration and active travel. Engagement activity has also prioritised strengthening communication pathways, improving visibility of local services, and enhancing collaboration between statutory and community partners, ensuring that insight from local areas informs both operational delivery and strategic planning.

Overall, the Avalon and Poldens LCN operates as a key delivery interface between Somerset Council and its communities, supporting the transition towards a more integrated, neighbourhood-focused model of service delivery. Its strategic value lies in its ability to translate local priorities into coordinated action, foster cross-sector collaboration, and contribute to improved outcomes for residents while supporting the Council's wider ambitions for community-focused, preventative and partnership-led working.

Co-Vice Chair's Reflections



It has been another busy year for the Avalon & Polden LCN. There have been many engaging and productive meeting where Councillors and other interested parties have discussed various challenges and shared good practice and possible solutions. There have also been a series of interesting presentations including emergency planning, flood prevention and advice from the Devedon & Somerset Fire Service. There have also been active sub groups including Highways, Health and Wellbeing and Step, Ride, Thrive.

There is ongoing review of the role, function and future of the LCN Network across Somerset and this will report in the Autumn 2026. However, we should be proud of the work completed by the Avalon & Polden LCN and everyone looks forward to serving our local residents and communities in 2026-27.

Regards,

Stephen Page

Somerset Unitary Councillor - Somerton Division

Co Vice-Chair of the Avalon and Poldens LCN

Link Officer's Reflections

It has been a pleasure to support the Avalon and Poldens Local Community Network since taking on the Link Officer role in late August 2025. Over this period, I have valued the opportunity to get to know the area, its parish representatives, Somerset Councillors, community partners and wider stakeholders.

Since starting in the role in August 2025, the LCN has continued to provide an important space for local discussion, partnership working and information sharing. Main meetings have brought together a range of voices and have included valuable presentations and updates on topics such as adult social care, flood resilience, fire safety, highways, health and wellbeing, and active travel.

Alongside the formal main meetings, much of my role has focused on the important work that takes place between meetings. This has included building relationships with parish councils, Somerset Council colleagues, statutory partners and voluntary and community organisations, as well as creating links between partners so that local issues can be better understood and responded to collectively. I have also supported communities and partners during periods of flooding, helping to share information, strengthen communication routes and connect local representatives with relevant services and support. In addition, I have attended Health Determinants Research Collaboration training, which has helped to strengthen my understanding of how evidence, data and wider determinants of health can inform place-based working and support more preventative approaches across the LCN.

Looking ahead to 2026–2027, there is a strong foundation to build on. The priorities raised through the LCN demonstrate the importance of continued partnership working around highways, health and wellbeing, housing and opportunities for young people. I look forward to continuing to support the Avalon and Poldens LCN as it develops.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has been engaged with and supported the LCN this year – I could not possibly name everyone! A special thank you to Cllr Chris Bennetts (Meare PC) and Cllr Stephen Page (Somerset Council/Keinton Mandeville PC) for Co-Vice Chairing the LCN and to Cllr Graham Croucher (Shapwick PC) for Chairing and facilitating the Highways Working Group.

Charlotte Griffin, LCN Link Officer

Highways Working Group

The Highways Working Group has been established to provide a structured, partnership-led forum for addressing transport, traffic and infrastructure priorities identified across the Avalon and Poldens LCN. It enables coordinated engagement between parish representatives and Somerset Council Highways officers and Avon and Somerset Police, fostering shared understanding, joint prioritisation and local influence over highways decision-making.

Topics covered have included:

- Enhanced Highways Maintenance Scheme
- Highways Volunteer Training
- The use of agricultural vehicles on roads (also a presentation delivered by Dan Cox, Avon and Somerset Police)
- LCN collision data
- Public Information Portal
- Somerset Highways Annual Works Map
- Report It function

Finally, a massive thank you to Graham Croucher, Shapwick Parish Council, for his commitment and enthusiasm in chairing the working group.

Surface Dressing Traffic Lights
Officers Resurfacing
Evidence Gullies
Crossing Data Signs
Agricultural Vehicles
Highways
SIDS A39
Avon and Somerset Police
Enhanced Highways Maintenance
Mirrors Lining
Potholes Speeding

Health and Wellbeing Working Group

The Health and Wellbeing Working Group has evolved significantly over the past year, transitioning from a project-focused forum into a more strategic, prevention-led partnership. Early activity during 2025 and into 2026 was largely centred on delivery of the Step, Ride, Thrive initiative; however, in January 2026 the group undertook a purposeful reset, separating this programme into a dedicated workstream and refocusing on wider neighbourhood health priorities. This shift enabled stronger alignment with the NHS 10-year plan, particularly the emphasis on prevention, community-based care, and reducing reliance on acute services.

Earlier in the year we were delivered a presentation by Jacqui Cross (PCN) and Councillor Ewan Cameron on the NHS 10 year plan. The group then met to discuss local areas of focus and how we could influence these.

On 1st July the group agreed on the following areas of focus:

- Communication of Services

Communication of health and wellbeing services is important because residents can only benefit from support if they know it exists, understand what it offers, and feel able to access it. For the LCN, this is especially relevant because Avalon and Poldens includes rural and dispersed communities where people may face barriers such as transport, digital exclusion, limited awareness of services, or uncertainty about where to go for help. The group is focusing on ensuring digital inclusion as there is a lot of online resources available but many who are not digitally literate.

- Community Transport

Community transport directly affects whether residents can access the services, support and opportunities they need to live well. In rural and dispersed areas such as Avalon and Poldens, limited public transport, distance from key services, and reliance on private cars can create barriers for older people, young people, people with disabilities, those on lower incomes, and residents without access to transport. The group is currently in the scoping phase, identifying where the gaps are and will then work towards addressing these.

Step, Ride, Thrive Steering Group



The Step, Ride, Thrive Steering Group was established in January 2026 to provide a dedicated partnership forum to guide and support the delivery of the Step, Ride, Thrive initiative within the Avalon and Poldens LCN area.

The Step, Ride, Thrive project was a pilot that came from a successful grant application to Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) to improve active travel across the Avalon and Poldens LCN. This came from early discussions within the LCN about improving access to nature and active travel routes and to act as a springboard for greater partnership working.

Following reflection on the project's achievements and consideration of future priorities, an extraordinary LN meeting was held on 3rd June 2026. In line with the terms of the grant agreement Glastonbury Town Council has agreed an extension with SALC and parishes and other partners are encouraged to continue to work with GTC and the project manager.

The LCN will now focus it's time and the resource of the Link Officer on building on the learning from this project to explore other opportunities to work collaboratively to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of residents across the A&P area.

Key outcomes of the project include:

- 19 bike repair and education sessions delivered by On Your Bike (over 250 bikes have been repaired)
- Level 1 Somerset Activity and Sports Partnerships (SASP) walk launched. An affiliated Level 3 walk has also started nearby.
- Nature connection workshop held for walk leaders, volunteers and VCFSE organisations delivered in partnership with Somerset Wildlife Trust.
- 277 passengers are estimated to have used the bus between April 2025 and May 2026.
- Delivery of a successful Discover Nature fortnight from 18th-31st May 2026.
 - 130 people took part
 - Six evening talks were held on biodiversity, rewilding, eels, butterflies, the Honeygar trackway and The Strawberry Line.
 - 47 images received for the photography competition



Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care in Somerset plays a critical role in supporting adults with a wide range of needs—including older people, those living with disabilities, mental health conditions, and long-term illness—to live safe, independent and fulfilling lives.

Priority setting for 2025-2026 included Adult Social Care as a focus. The LCN wanted to find out more about the service and help available to be able to signpost and support residents in their community.

Becky Collins, Service Manager Neighbourhoods East, Adult Social Care (ASC) at Somerset Council attended two of the Avalon and Poldens LCN Main Meetings and outlined the structure of adult social care in Somerset, providing contact details for herself and other service managers.

Some of the areas learnt about were:

- Main services available
- Mental health and social work teams
- Safeguarding
- Transitions for adults with learning disabilities
- Hospital interface teams
- Intermediate care pathways
- Somerset Independent Living Centres (SILC)

Resources were offered to the group and at a later date Meare Parish Council contacted Somerset Council for more resources to share with their community.



Flood Resilience

Flooding is a priority for Somerset due to the county's inherent geographical vulnerability, increasing climate-driven risk, and the significant impacts on communities, infrastructure and the local economy.

At the October 2025 LCN Main Meeting Paul Elliston (Engagement Officer from Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA)) delivered a presentation on the necessity of community emergency plans, citing the increasing frequency of high-intensity rainfall events, limited resources of emergency responders, and the benefits of coordinated local action to minimise impacts and speed recovery.

We subsequently invited the councils to a free workshops facilitated by the SRA to help council's develop emergency plans, using a template and a participatory approach to identify risks, resources, key contacts, and deployment strategies, with the option for follow-up exercises to test plans. One of these workshops was held on the 9th March 2026 where 21 people from serval councils attended (pictured below).



SPARK Somerset Youth Alliance

The LCN has recognised the importance of strengthening support for young people across the Avalon and Poldens area. Earlier discussions within the LCN highlighted concerns around access to services, rural isolation, transport barriers, wellbeing, and the need for clearer communication about the support already available to children, young people and families. These conversations reflected the wider role of the LCN in bringing partners together to understand local need, improve signposting, and support more preventative, community-based approaches.

SPARK Somerset Youth Alliance was invited to deliver a presentation at the January LCN meeting to help members better understand the youth sector landscape across Somerset and to explore how local organisations, parish councils and statutory partners could work more closely together to improve outcomes for young people. The presentation provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the role of the Youth Alliance, share insight into existing provision and gaps, and consider how the LCN could support improved connections between community-based youth support, wider health and wellbeing priorities, and local decision-making.



Connect Somerset

Connect Somerset was also invited to present to the LCN as part of this wider conversation about improving support for children, young people and families. Earlier discussions had identified the importance of strengthening early help, improving awareness of local support, and ensuring that communities are better connected to services before issues escalate. The presentation helped members understand the role of Connect Somerset as a partnership approach focused on bringing services together around local communities, supporting earlier intervention, and making it easier for families and professionals to access the right advice, guidance and support.

The invitation reflected the LCN's role in creating stronger links between parish councils, Somerset Council, health partners, schools, voluntary sector organisations and wider community networks. By hearing directly from Connect Somerset, members were able to consider how local knowledge and community relationships could contribute to a more coordinated, preventative model of support. This aligned closely with the LCN's wider priorities around health and wellbeing, rural access, community resilience and effective signposting, particularly for families who may experience barriers to accessing services in a dispersed rural area.



Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service also attended the April 2026 Avalon and Poldens LCN meeting to provide an update focused on community safety, prevention and local resilience.

The presentation helped raise awareness of the support available to residents and parish councils, including practical fire safety advice, prevention messaging and the importance of identifying vulnerable residents who may benefit from additional guidance or signposting.

This provided a valuable opportunity for the LCN to strengthen links with emergency service partners and consider how local networks can help share key safety messages across communities.

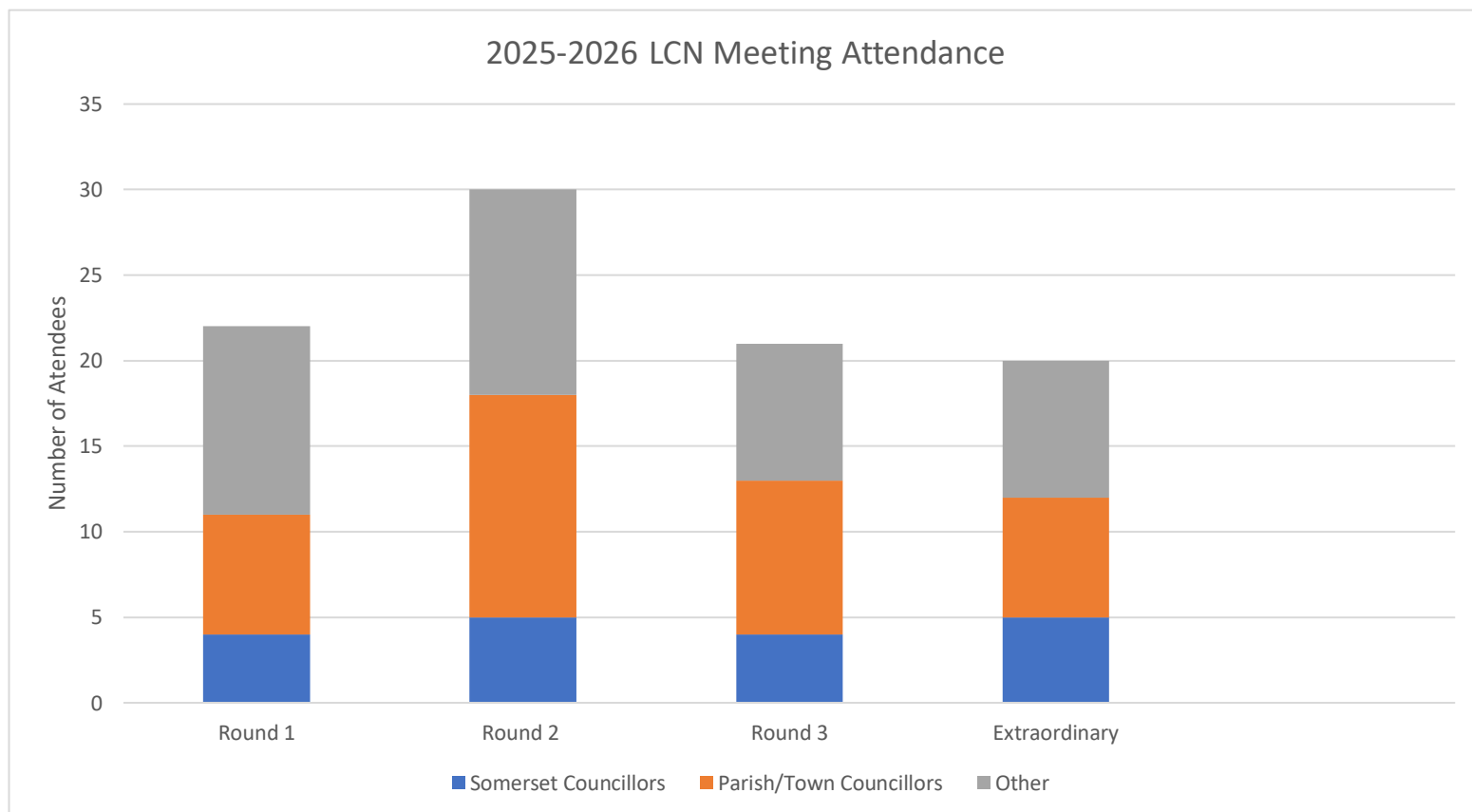
The session complemented wider LCN priorities around resilience, prevention and partnership working, reinforcing the role of the LCN as a forum for connecting statutory services with local communities.



**DEVON &
SOMERSET**
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Main Meeting Attendance

All previous and upcoming agendas and notes can be found through this link: [Local Community Network Meetings](#)



Looking Ahead 2026-2027

The Annual General Meeting is due to take place in on 2nd July 2026. We will be joined by Police and Crime Commissioner, Clare Moody, which links to discussions around resilience, road safety, rural crime and the importance of partnership working to address local concerns across the Avalon and Poldens area.

The Avalon and Poldens LCN enters 2026–2027 with a strong foundation as a strategically important, partnership-led forum for coordinating local priorities across a diverse rural and semi-urban area. Over the past year, the LCN has matured into a key delivery interface between Somerset Council, parish councils, and community partners, enabling place-based responses to complex challenges such as transport, health inequalities, and community connectivity.

Looking ahead the Avalon and Poldens LCN is well positioned to build on its progress as a mature, partnership-led delivery forum. The LCN has demonstrated a clear shift towards strategic coordination, prevention-focused working and strengthened collaboration across sectors, with established working groups providing a structured approach to addressing complex local issues.

