Building Strength Through Joy: Thriving Families

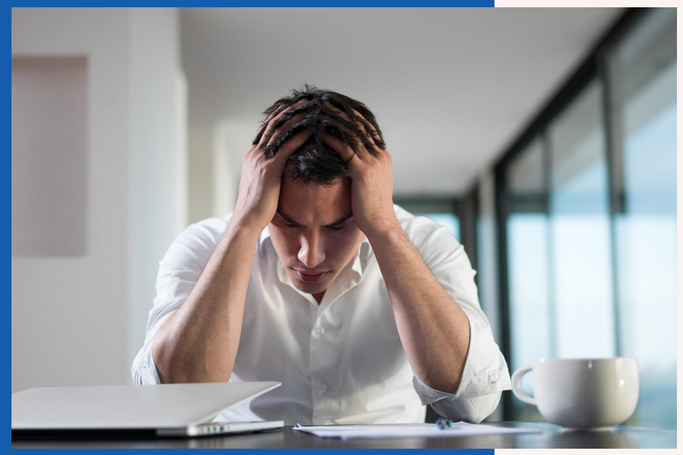
Creating a way of working together that puts relationships at the centre, builds on the strengths of our communities, and helps people access support in a way that feels human, local and connected.

THE NELSON TRUST

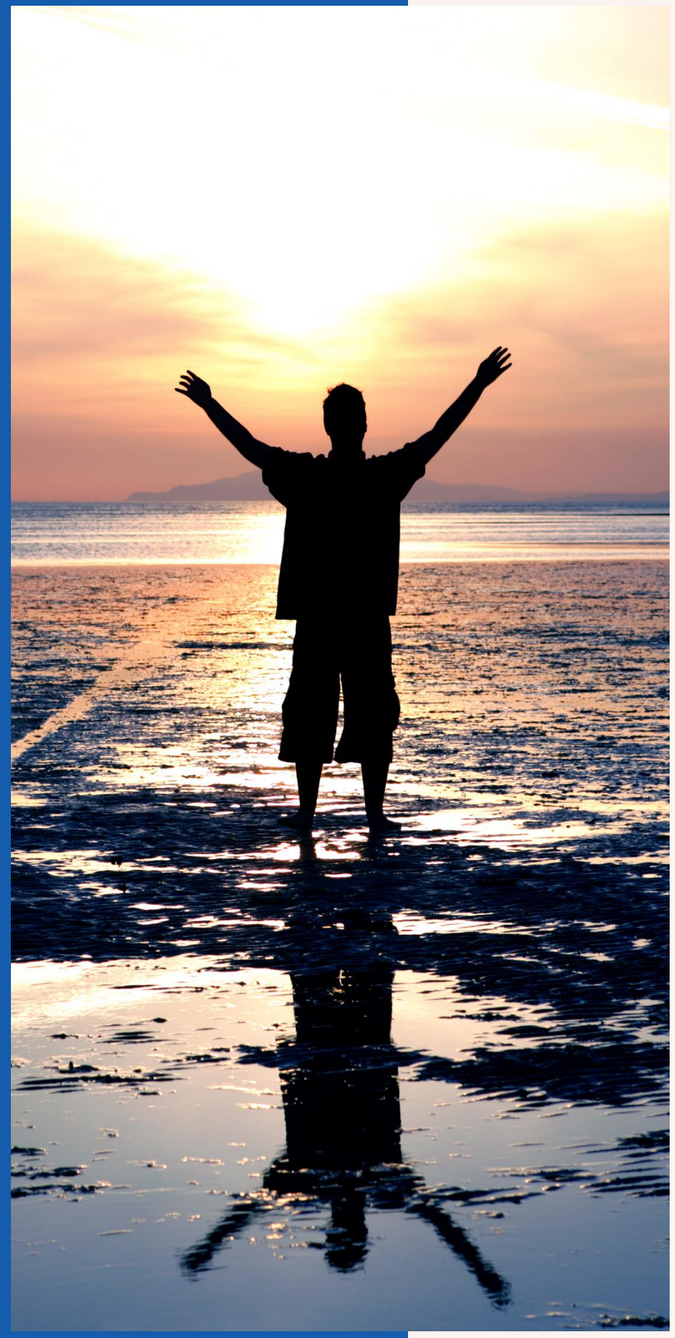
sasp Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership

thrive making somerset stronger

IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE FAMILIES ARE NOT RESTRICTED BY MEETING CRITERIA



HOW MANY FAMILIES DO YOU KNOW THAT FEEL “LET DOWN BY THE SYSTEM”



NOW IMAGINE PARENT AND CARERS FEELING EMPOWERED

LET'S NOW WALK ALONGSIDE FAMILIES

THE NELSON TRUST

sasp Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership

thrive making somerset stronger

Building Strength Through Joy: Thriving Families

Why We Are Together

We all saw families feeling overwhelmed and “done to,” and wanted a more human, dignified, strengths-based way of working.

How It Has Come About

Sport England’s Somerset Coastal Place Partnership investment created the space to test a new, community-led, relationship-centred approach.

What We Are Trying to Do

Build trust, grow capability, and co-create support with families so that life feels more connected, hopeful and possible.

“Joy is not a luxury, it’s a source of strength”

What is joy?

Psychologist Brené Brown describes joy as

“An intense feeling of deep spiritual connection, pleasure, and appreciation.”

Activity

Think of a moment in your work when you felt joy, not just happiness, but a deep sense of meaning, connection, or uplift. What was happening? Who was involved? What made it joyful?

THE NELSON TRUST

sasp Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership

thrive making somerset stronger

Mosaic of Joy

THE NELSON TRUST

sasp Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership

thrive making somerset stronger

System Behaviours

- How do your services behave in the system?
- What scripts/narratives do we fall into? What do we hear ourselves saying or doing because of long-established behaviours? “Computer says no!”
- What influences how your services behave in the system?
- How easy is it to do things differently? What needs to happen for your service to behave differently?

Healthy System Behaviours

Perspective

- People view themselves as part of an interconnected whole
- People are viewed as resourceful and bringing strengths
- People share a vision

Power

- Power is shared, and equality of voice actively promoted
- Decision-making is devolved
- Accountability is mutual

Participation

- Open, trusting relationships enable effective dialogue
- Leadership is collaborative and promoted at every level
- Feedback and collective learning drive adaptation

THE NELSON TRUST sasp Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership thrive making somerset stronger

Why this works

1. Families who have been through a lot of services and interventions

- Often juggling multiple challenges, housing, health, money, school.
- Have felt “done to” not “worked with.”
- Many have lost trust in services.

2. Traditional support hasn’t always worked

- Focused on managing problems, not growing strengths.
- Short-term fixes, not lasting change.
- Families rarely in the driving seat.

3. We are changing the story

- From referrals to invitations
- From fixing to listening and co-creating
- From services doing for to families leading with

4. Our shared ambition

- Rebuild trust and confidence.
- Help families imagine and plan a “good life.”
- Learn what it really takes to shift systems through relationships.

1. Invitation to Participate

Families are invited, not referred, to join: “Would you like to work with us?”

Families gradually open up and begin sharing their challenges

Early focus on building trust, confidence, and relationships

From the start, we explore what a "good life" means to families, including where (if at all) being active currently features. This gives us a baseline understanding of mindsets and frames of reference around activity.

THE NELSON TRUST

sasp Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership

thrive making somerset stronger

2. Family Futures – Plan Making

Once relationships are established, the focus shifts to family futures: “Help me to help myself make things better and live my life.”

Each plan includes practical steps that families commit to trying.

Within this, explore how being active might connect to their aspirations (e.g., walking to meet friends, joining a club, being well enough for work).

Plans are co-created stories, diagrams, and visions owned by families — not case-file interventions.

Use the capability framework to ask families where they stand in relation to:

- Work & learning
- Health (including self-worth and wellbeing)
- Community participation
- Relationships (within and beyond family)

THE NELSON TRUST

sasp Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership

thrive making somerset stronger

3. Building Capabilities

Families start working towards their aspirations e.g., a dream job requiring IT skills, confidence for interviews, or connecting into community networks.

Focus is on capability-building, not dependency: we can't "give" people relationships or confidence, but we can support them in building these themselves.

Notice where opportunities for activity naturally emerge in this stage (e.g., using active travel, joining sports groups, walking in community spaces). Capture stories of when/why people begin to see activity as valuable or possible in their lives.

4. Graduating the Programme – Sustaining Futures

1

Families transition out of the programme with stronger networks, confidence, and a sense of purpose.

2

Focus shifts to sustaining progress through community connections, school, work, and participation.

3

Capture whether families' frames of reference have shifted — are they more open to or engaged in activity? Did activity play a role in their journey towards a good life? Insight gathered here feeds directly into Sport England's learning about what drives long-term change.

THE NELSON TRUST

sasp Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership

thrive making somerset stronger

Activity - In Your Tables Discuss the Following

1. What's already happening in your work that feels relational, human or joyful?
2. Where could joy be invited in more often?
3. (Small moments of connection, creativity, playfulness, ease.)
4. What would doing things differently look like in your context or team?
5. What support or conditions would help you work this way?
6. If you'd like to be part of this work, what might that look like?

THE NELSON TRUST sasp Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership thrive making somerset stronger