

# Annual Review 2021-22

#cognusandproud



# Foreword

I'm delighted to introduce our latest Annual Review covering the 2021-22 academic year. The case studies, facts and evidence of impact included are testament to the whole team of motivated, empathetic and highly skilled professionals I have the privilege to call colleagues every day.

Together with our partners across schools, settings and the local community, we have delivered a range of education support services and opportunities for Sutton's children and young people – from helping young people understand an autism diagnosis, to securing high quality post-16 destinations for our Children Looked After (CLA) and showcasing the DJing talents of our sensory impaired children. Fantastic!

Of course, our families and young people remain front and centre of all our work. I'd like to thank those families that provide feedback on our services, both the positive comments and help in identifying areas we need to adapt. Thank you also to those involved in Cognus Family Voice, our service user focus groups that run regularly and are an opportunity for parents and carers to shape our services in the local area – if you would like to be involved, please do get in touch.

We face many challenges in the coming year, but I am a firm believer in collaboration as the vehicle for driving improvement. Never complacent, we welcome the opportunity to work closely with partners across the local area and you will read just some examples of this approach in this year's Annual Review.

I am proud to share this with you and hope we give you a sense of the fantastic, ambitious work that our teams deliver day in, day out. Good luck with the current academic year.

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*Joanna*

Joanna Cassey  
Managing Director



## Sutton Music Service & Sensory Impairment collaborate on DJ Performance

In May 2022, Cognus' Sutton Music Service held a concert at The Sound Lounge in Sutton, where pupils with sensory impairment performed their DJ sets to a full capacity audience. The performance was part of a programme run by Sutton Music Service and Youth Music, securing support for children with hearing and visual impairments to engage with music.

Since the start of the project, the Music Service has gained a strong understanding of these pupils' challenges and how we can adapt our teaching to ensure that all students have access to outstanding musical opportunities. 25 young people in Key Stage 2 have worked with the Music Service's expert DJ tutor to learn the essential techniques: mixing songs, using turntables, and building a set from scratch. To ensure that the pupils could access the lessons, we had to evolve our teaching practice, often with simple adaptations that allowed them to make progress and showcase their potential.

We are so proud of how far the pupils have come over the past 12 months. A great outcome was the opportunity for pupils with sensory impairments to meet others. Many of the parents shared their appreciation, saying their children have thrived and confidence has grown.

"It was really emotional seeing him on the stage and doing so well. You showed him that nothing can stop him from achieving his wildest dreams, and I will be thankful forever."  
Parent



"I am so impressed at how well they were able to teach something as technical as DJing to our children, and I am so proud of how well they did. I hope Sutton continues to back these programmes; our children deserve to live with no education or career limitations."  
Parent



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## **ASD Young people receive improved support with Emotional Regulation**

A small team of therapists at Bandon Hill Oak Field School ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) Base has worked collaboratively this year to provide Emotional Regulation programmes and training for the children, parents and staff. This combined a range of leading edge approaches to support the children and adults surrounding them, and address Speech, Language and Occupational Therapy areas of development.

The Therapies Team reviewed existing confidence from staff across different developmental areas, approaches and strategies. The survey results indicated that staff required further training and support in the area of Emotional Regulation – the ability to manage your emotions. The team researched, prepared and ran Emotional Regulation training sessions in October with teaching staff and the Senior Leadership Teams from two schools, Oak Field and Rainbow ASD Unit. The training was interactive and experiential and aimed to improve the following:

- Understanding of Emotional Regulation and ASD
- Familiarity with three different types of emotional regulation strategy
- Knowledge of the types of strategies suitable for different levels of communication development in addition to sensory strategies
- Practical application of the information with case study discussions and Q&A.

The impact of this transdisciplinary work and training has increased staff confidence in supporting children with their emotional regulation. Oak Field SENDCo Claire Worthy said: “Following the emotional regulation training I got some brilliant feedback from staff – the team had brilliant ideas, super reinforcers and a training session everyone should attend. The delivery by them all was super smooth and informative.”

## **Education Safeguarding Team ensure successful back to school period**

The start of a new school year is always exciting but challenging at the same time. In the first 10 days of the autumn term, Cognus' Education Safeguarding Adviser received 42 calls for advice – close to a 40% increase on previous years. There were 18 Children Missing Education (CME) referrals received and 230 emails sent into the CME inbox.

As well as offering general support and advice during September, the Education Safeguarding Team delivered an extensive training package to schools in Sutton to support with the return to school.

Alongside a Safeguarding Awareness Refresher video and slide deck that was sent out to all schools, the team led 16 training sessions, which reached 709 members of staff and 63 children. The sessions included safeguarding refresher training, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) refresher training, DSL supervision, online safety and Prevent awareness.

The training had great feedback, with one Primary DSL saying “You present in a way that is factual but easy to follow and understand. Sometimes the guidance can be overwhelming, but this really helped to make things clearer.”

Each half-term, the Education Safeguarding Team continues to produce bitesize training content, based on current themes and trends, which schools can use to enhance staff CPD and ultimately safeguard the borough's children and young people effectively.

## Helping young people and families understand autism diagnosis

The Cognus Autism Service Team deliver free one-off 'Understanding Autism Diagnosis' sessions to children and young people in Primary, Secondary and Sixth Form Schools with an autism diagnosis.

The aim of these sessions is to support their understanding of autism, as many children and young people are often left with questions, queries and a lack of understanding when diagnosed, which can impact their self-esteem and wellbeing. These sessions are a fantastic way of being able to have open and honest conversations with children and young people, where they can ask questions, reflect on their experiences and learn through videos and seeing other people with autism, who have achieved amazing things!

We often have parents or carers in the sessions, to enhance holistic understanding and learning about their child or young person's additional needs.

Recently, a session was run with a parent, who had limited understanding of what autism meant for their child. She felt confused and shocked at the diagnosis given.

After discussing elements of autism and how it can present differently, we were gradually able to build rapport with mum. She was able to reflect and realise that there are elements that her young person found challenging, but equally, recognised the fantastic strengths of her young person.



## The 'A' Plan personalises pathways for Sutton's autistic young people

Clinical Psychology Cognus won a £115,000 bid from the South West London Clinical Commissioning Group for the new 3-year The 'A' Plan (The Autism Plan) initiative. The 'A' Plan improves and streamlines the post-diagnostic pathway and support for autistic young people within Sutton, using the insights gathered from the autism assessment. It provides a personalised plan for every young person who has been diagnosed by Clinical Psychology (Cognus) as an autistic person, provides mental health interventions and reduces the emphasis on Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) as the only method of accessing support for autistic young people.

Over the past year, the team's other successes include:

- Eliminating our backlog of autism assessments resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and reduction of waiting times for autism assessments
- Adapting service provision during the pandemic and lockdowns to ensure the needs of the Sutton population continue to be met.
- Increasing the number of staff to improve our service provision
- Continuing to provide consultation to other mental health and community professionals
- Establishing a room within Cognus offices dedicated to seeing young people and their families. The aim was to create a space which is welcoming and comfortable without being too overwhelming for those with sensory needs.

The highly skilled team has also received positive feedback from parents:

"I want you to know that your candidness with me just over 2 years ago completely changed my life - for the better. I know that, at the time you were unsure about whether to share your suspicion that I might also be on the spectrum. However, I'm so grateful that you did, as it means that we can both now understand ourselves, and how we view the world, from a much better perspective."

## A summer to remember for Sutton's Children Looked After

Sutton's Children Looked After (CLA) enjoyed a summer term of wide-ranging learning experiences, giving them opportunities to gain new knowledge, build social skills and challenge themselves to the edge of their comfort zones.

A 'Day in the Alps' at Hemel Hempstead Snow Centre saw our young people learn skiing, snowboarding and experience the ringo slide. The progress made throughout the day and the sense of pride shown was amazing with all completing the snowboarding slope by the end day. All the young people were buzzing with excitement about the trip and were immediately asking their carers to take them back for another visit.

Our post-16 young people visited St George's University for a Widening Participation day, learning about student finance, day-to-day life of a student and touring the site. St George's has a healthcare focus, and the young people were shown how to create a prosthetic finger! It's great to see Sutton's CLA seeking to progress onto post-18 Further and Higher education.



Sutton Virtual School also secured 6 weeks of lessons for all ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students at the end of term and provided four weeks of ESOL summer school activities. Each session included a morning of ESOL learning linked to the themed afternoon activity. Activities included Top Golf, West End theatre performance, Go Karting and a Thorpe Park visit.



## Diverse services drive inclusion in education

Cognus' Inclusion team had several highlights this year including:

### **SIASS (Sutton Information, Advice & Support Service)**

Over the last few months, SIASS has visited several young people at home to gather their views directly and amplify their voice in professional meetings as part of their SEN process. Many of these young people struggle with anxiety and other mental health conditions which make leaving their home or connecting virtually difficult, but these challenges should not limit their access to appropriate information, advice, and support.

### **Traveller Education**

Our wonderful Traveller pupils created some truly amazing pieces of art for our Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month (GRTHM) art competition to reflect and express why they are proud to be of Traveller heritage. Cognus judges had the difficult task of choosing winners and gave feedback to every child who entered. Winners were presented with awards in their school assemblies and their art work sits proudly in the Cognus' office reception!

### **Elective Home Education**

In March, the Elective Home Education Service sent out their annual survey to all home educating families - 273 children registered at time of sending. This has continued to rise year on year, despite the pandemic easing. 92% of respondees said they were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with support from the service. We also received an average of 4.12 out of 5 for the helpfulness of information, advice and support received from us.

### **Paving the Way**

Stanley Park Junior reporters in Y3 presented their newspaper *'The Paving the Way Post'* to the Inclusion Team in March. Paving the Way is an early identification and intervention service to support children with social and emotional difficulties. The talented group delivered a detailed presentation about their involvement in the creation of the new online newspaper - created by children for children.

## Working in partnership to enhance our Local Offer

Sutton's Local Offer provides information on the education, health and social care support services available in the borough for children, young people and adults (aged 0-25 years old) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Sutton Local Offer has joined a network of other local offers to share ideas and support each other, so that we can provide the best information and guidance to young people and families.

Recent discussions have included how to include young people in producing the Local Offer, how to use social media to better engage with the community and how to be more accessible to all families in the borough.

The network also works with the Council for Disabled Children and KIDS, a national charity that provides a wide range of services to disabled children, young people and their families. Both organisations provide advice and support to Sutton's Local Offer in raising awareness of young people's participation with educational opportunity in the local area.

Watch this space in 2022-23 for upcoming opportunities including work experience, Preparing for Adulthood events and opportunities for SEND families to input into consultations and research around areas such as Down Syndrome and adjustments to healthcare for SEND young people. Join the Local Offer Facebook page – Sutton Local Offer, or visit [www.sutton.gov.uk/sutton-s-local-offer](http://www.sutton.gov.uk/sutton-s-local-offer) #Suttonlocaloffer



## Case study: Local SEN partnership secures school placement

Cognus' SEN Service co-ordinate the statutory SEND process in partnership with other professionals and agencies. This is achieved by knowing the individual and their family's views, wishes and goals.

A child attending one of our Sutton schools started slowing down in the progress against her outcomes and the gap between her and her peers started widening. Following a Review of her Education & Health Care Plan (EHCP) and through discussion with her parent, the service felt her needs would be best met in a special school.

The parent initially preferred two independent specialist placements which had no available spaces. However, through speaking to other schools in the borough and other members of the SEND team, we knew a place had recently become available in one of Sutton's specialist bases within a mainstream school. The EHCP Coordinator spoke with the SENCO at the base and this was discussed with the parent; following some reassuring conversations to address particular concerns and an arranged visit, the parent adored the base and felt this was the right place for her child.

The child has now been attending the specialist base for a few months and is thriving. A positive relationship was maintained with the previous school, and now between new school, parent and SEND Team. This has been achieved through strong, open and honest conversations and partnership working, with the main focus always on the best interest of the child, how best to meet her needs and help her reach her potential. Updated local knowledge of our schools was key. This is maintained by EHCP Coordinators and is a wider benefit of the multi-service environment at Cognus.

## List of Cognus Services

- Admissions
- Assisted Travel
- Attendance
- Autism Service
- Children Missing Education
- Early Career Teachers
- Early Years
- Educational Psychology
- Education Safeguarding
- Education Other Than At School
- Elective Home Education
- Inclusion
- Licensing, Chaperones & Permits
- Local Offer
- Paving The Way
- Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
- School Improvement
- SEN Finance
- SEND & Tribunals Service
- Sensory Impairment
- Sutton Information, Advice & Support Service (SIASS)
- Sutton Music Service
- Therapies (Speech & Language Therapy & Occupational Therapy)
- Traveller Education
- Virtual School for Children Looked After (CLA)

### Parent Feedback on our services

“It was lovely to see the bond you have with the children and to hear first-hand from the Teaching Assistants how your sessions have been having a positive impact on pupils.”

“He is becoming more confident with himself and getting there socially with others. He is more aware of his emotions and able to empathise with others in a few scenarios. This is helping him to sort out communication problems with teachers and how to do this in the correct way.”

“Thank you again for the meeting - we truly felt 'heard' for the first time from anyone outside our families and circles of friends - it was such a relief to us after everything we have been facing.”

## Contact Us

We look forward to working with you and welcome opportunities to share and improve our knowledge, meet our wider team and show you our work across Sutton.

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# Cognus

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