

# ANNUAL REVIEW

## 2024 - 2025



Cognus

No Limits on Learning

# FOREWORD

I am delighted to present Cognus' Annual Review for 2024-25.

This year has been one of innovation, collaboration, and continued commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people across Sutton. Demand for our services remains high, yet our teams have stepped up to the challenge of adapting whilst delivering impactful support that meets the evolving needs of families and education settings.

We have had a continued focus on school attendance, introducing a new formal framework for penalty notices and held over 190 targeted support meetings with schools and families, providing advice and guidance to strengthen attendance practices. Alongside this, the Inclusion team have continued to support schools and families by increasing the frequency of Inclusion Surgeries and expanding the number of Targeted Inclusion Support meetings, which have contributed to the 29% reduction we have seen in the number of permanent exclusions for 24/25.

Additionally, we celebrated the relaunch of our Sensory Impairment Team as the Hearing & Vision Education Service (HAVES), ensuring specialist support remains accessible and effective, do read on to find out more about the work the team do to support children with hearing and vision needs.

Our commitment to creating life-changing opportunities was evident through the Turing Scheme, which enabled Sutton Virtual to take ten children on a transformative trip to Canada, an experience that broadened horizons and built confidence.

Innovation has continued across our SEND services. The development of Infinity Support and the implementation of the SEND Support Advisory Partnership (SSAP) mark significant steps forward in providing multi-agency advice and guidance. Following a successful pilot, SSAP is now available to all schools, strengthening collaboration between education, health, and social care professionals.

While demand continues to rise, Cognus remains committed to evolving and innovating so that we can support children and young people now and in the future. This review highlights many more achievements and stories that demonstrate the impact of our work.

As always, we extend our sincere thanks to our partners –schools, education settings, the local authority, voluntary sector, and families –for their ongoing support and collaboration. Together, we are making a real difference. #cognusandproud



**JOANNA CASSEY**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR,  
COGNUS LIMITED



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# ATTENDANCE SUPPORT

The Attendance Support Team have had another busy year. August 2024 saw updates to the statutory guidance on attendance, including the introduction of the new national framework for penalty notices, one of the biggest changes to the use of penalty notices for over 10 years. The team worked hard to not only help schools prepare, but also make parents aware of the changes before they came into force.

We continue to host three network meetings a year, inviting all schools in Sutton to share good practice and gain peer support around their attendance challenges in school. This year we focused on the topics of family support, EBSA and implementing the updated guidance. We also welcomed speakers from the Family Hubs and the Educational Psychology Service.

Additional training was also offered to schools on the application of the register coding changes. The session was well attended with 19 members of secondary school staff and 24 members of primary school staff joining us.

The team continue to work closely with schools, providing advice and guidance and holding 190 Targeting support meetings over this year. During these meetings, we focus on the support that may be required for key cohorts of pupils and problem-solve any more complex cases.

To help inform the discussions we are having with schools, we are using a combination of the Department for Education View Your Education Data (VYED) platform and Studybugs. Together, they provide us with data on individual schools, in addition to highlighting patterns with attendance in the borough, informing and shaping our strategy to keep improving school attendance!



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# HEARING & VISION EDUCATION SERVICE (HAVES)

|In September 2024, we changed our name to the Hearing and Vision Education Services (HaVES) from Sensory Impairment Service to celebrate what our young people **have** while moving away from language with negative connotations and to reduce confusion with other services such as autism.

We have had success hosting events for our deaf children and young people (DCYP) offering opportunities for them to meet other DCYPs. Often our DCYPs can be isolated in their schools/nurseries, sometimes being the only student with a level of deafness. These events encompass the whole family, thus offering not only the DCYP a network of support but also the families too. We have held coffee mornings throughout the year, Saturday morning Family Sign sessions, a Christmas Party with Santa and our summer Deaflympics in the park. We will continue to host these events as they prove to be invaluable.

We are delighted with some of our DCYPs who have achieved their GCSEs/A-Levels to continue their life journey into adulthood,

either entering the world of work/apprenticeships or heading to university. We are so proud as this is not always an easy path; listening, processing, retaining and recalling in comparison to their hearing peers is hard work and overcoming these challenges is a success.

The HaVES team continue to advocate for our DCYP to raise deaf awareness, inclusion and understanding of what our DCYPs experience in a learning environment, and what access and adjustments they need to succeed. We have presented many trainings to settings, professionals and in the wider community (for example, Cub Scouts) with positive feedback and enthusiasm.

Notably, the team worked with Aberdour School to provide a series of lessons for their Year 5 cohort focused on deaf awareness and celebrating deaf role models. The children were also excited to learn some British Sign Language (BSL) and were eager to share with their friends what they had learnt! The teachers were also impressed and have invited the HaVES team back for the next academic year! We also delivered a guest speaker presentation to Canterbury Christchurch University's British Sign Language Society, focusing on the impact of deafness within the classroom, and hope to inspire the next generation of Teachers of the Deaf!





# MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM

Cognus' Mental Health Support Team works with wider partners across Sutton to improve mental health in dedicated schools, using a range of creative therapies such as art therapy and drama therapy.

The team has delivered direct therapy to 78 individual children and young people (either 1:1 or as part of a group), totalling 314 therapy sessions. Therapy involvements are usually between 6-10 sessions, but due to the complexity of need some young people complete a 1:1 intervention and then move onto a group, others complete an intervention more quickly.

Over the year:

- **18** young people engaged in Art Therapy
- **13** young people engaged in Drama Therapy
- **26** young people engaged in Art Therapy groups
- **6** young people engaged in EMDR
- **8** young people engaged in CBT
- **1** family engaged in VIG
- **1** family engaged in Managing Challenging Behaviour

Pupils in **Year 5** were the most commonly referred to the team, whereas for secondary schools, pupils in **Years 10 and 11** were referred more frequently than those in Key Stage 3. The majority of referrals made were for **female students**, with **anxiety** being the most commonly cited reason for referral into the team. For all students supported an **increase towards their goals** (identified at the start of therapy) was recorded.

The team were involved in 153 Whole School Approach events. This included:

- Over **40** staff case consultations
- Over **25** Service planning meetings
- Over **10** Staff Reflective Spaces
- Over **50** events for students

**43** contacts with parents were made by the team, including **14** parent work sessions and **25** parent drop-in sessions. This included parents directly involved in therapy (Dyadic or VIG) and parents who attended workshops or groups.



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# EARLY YEARS

The Early Years Team has continued to provide support to settings, children and families across Early Years settings and childminders this year, ensuring that children in Sutton receive a good early years education and that difficulties are identified early for those with additional needs. There are currently 107 early years settings in Sutton, and 163 childminders in Sutton.

Over the course of 24/25 the work of the team has included:

- 363 SEND visits with 482 children observed or discussed during these visits.
- 56 cohort visits to discuss groups of children with emerging or complex SEND needs.
- 152 visits made to childminders and 153 to Settings, to offer support and advice, including QA for EY funded places
- 2 childminders that were previously judged Inadequate and Requires Improvement received intensive support for grade improvement. Both been judged Good after reinspection.
- 4 settings which were previously judged as Requires Improvement; through bespoke training and advice have all achieved a Good grading from Ofsted.

The team has delivered a range of training sessions, network events and support opportunities which have all been very positively received. This has included training delivered by the team, sessions delivered by other local professionals and external speakers.

The team have refreshed the Early Years Graduated Response document to create 'Every child, every setting' which lays out the ordinarily available provision expected across all Early Years setting. This was launched during Early Years Week 2025, a celebration of all things Early Years, including shared information sessions and activities to promote early years services, Transfer Morning and much more, led jointly with LBS. The SEND Conference and Early Years conferences were also held during Early Years week. Kerry Murphy delivered sessions on Diverse Pathways of Development and Self-directed Play and Neurodiversity for the SEND conference, and Ruth Swailes delivered training on high quality play and its crucial role in early development to 84 Early Years colleagues from 65 schools and settings for the Early Years conference.

The work of the Early Years Operational Group (EYOG) continues to expand, now including Social Care representatives and Health Visiting on a consistent basis. The group devolves targeted and SENDIF funding to nursery and monitors its usage. Transition plans were additionally launched this year to provide a way for Early Years children with additional needs to continue receiving support on entry into Reception but without the requirement for an EHCP.



# PAVING THE WAY

During the year, Paving the Way (PTW) continued to deliver high-quality early intervention and emotional well-being support to children and families across Sutton. The service received 259 referrals, reflecting both the growing need for early help and the trust that families and professionals place in PTW's approach.

This year, 54 children participated in our Warriors and Mini Warriors groups. These small, carefully structured groups provided opportunities for children to share their experiences, explore challenges, and develop strategies to manage emotions, attention, and relationships. The sessions were tailored to the needs of each cohort, enabling staff to gain valuable insight into the children's strengths, personalities, and potential neurodivergence. These observations contributed to more individualised recommendations and ongoing support for both children and families.



In addition to group work, one-to-one sessions offered children personalised guidance to help them thrive. Through a combination of play, creative activities, and structured tasks, these sessions provided a secure space for children to explore their feelings and develop key emotional and social skills. Home visits further extended this individualised support, allowing practitioners to observe children in their familiar environments and to work collaboratively with parents and carers to manage behaviours and emotions effectively.

The Family Support Group, co-run with Limes College, continued to offer parents a safe and inclusive space to connect, share experiences, and learn new strategies for supporting their children's emotional wellbeing. Each term, parents reported increased confidence and empowerment in understanding their child's needs and applying practical strategies at home. Family workshops, held during the school holidays, provided further opportunities for families to learn and grow together. Topics such as self-esteem, friendships, transitions, emotional regulation, and sensory needs were explored through interactive activities, promoting positive relationships and greater understanding within the family unit.

Throughout the year, PTW has worked closely with schools, partner agencies, and the wider community to ensure that children and families receive the right support at the right time. The service's holistic and collaborative approach continues to make a measurable difference in children's lives, fostering resilience, confidence, and emotional growth.



# EDUCATION SAFEGUARDING

This year has seen remarkable progress in our commitment to safeguarding across the education sector. Our Education Safeguarding Team has continued to deliver high-quality support, training, and supervision to schools and colleges, ensuring that safeguarding remains a cornerstone of educational excellence.

One of the most significant developments was the re-launch of our Reflective Safeguarding Supervision offer in the summer term. This enhanced service now supports over 60 safeguarding leads across more than 45 schools and colleges, providing them with the guidance and professional reflection needed to navigate complex safeguarding responsibilities. As one Secondary Designated Safeguarding Lead shared in February 2025:

“Amazing team who are always there for us around the clock. I could not do my Designated Safeguarding Lead role without them.”

Our team also facilitated 20 comprehensive Safeguarding Reviews since September 2024, helping schools strengthen their policies, practices, and culture around child protection.

Training remains a key pillar of our work. Over the past year, we delivered 132 safeguarding training sessions, reaching 4,255 participants.

including students, school staff, parents, and governors. This widespread engagement reflects our dedication to building safer learning environments through education and awareness.

Outdoor education has also flourished. Schools successfully ran over 100 residential visits, including 35 overseas trips, offering students enriching experiences beyond the classroom. More than 4,000 students participated in adventurous activities, all carefully reviewed and approved by our Outdoor Education Adviser to ensure safety and educational value.

Feedback from our stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive. Our Annual Survey to Schools (2024–2025) received 69 responses, with 100% of respondents reporting they were either very satisfied (58) or satisfied (11) with our service. Similarly, our Annual Survey to Partners showed 100% satisfaction, with 23 out of 24 respondents rating the service as very satisfied.

These outcomes reflect the dedication, expertise, and collaborative spirit of our safeguarding team. As we look ahead, we remain committed to evolving our services and deepening our partnerships to ensure every child and young person is safe, supported, and empowered to thrive.



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# EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

This year, the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) has taken a pleasing step forward in extending its reach across Sutton. Notably, Assistant Educational Psychologists have been introduced into two schools that had not previously accessed EP support. By expanding the traded offer and embedding support into new settings, the EPS continues to demonstrate its commitment to meeting the diverse needs of the borough's schools. This development ensures that more children and young people benefit from psychological expertise.

To support this growth, the EPS has focused on strengthening its workforce and enhancing service quality. Three new colleagues joined the team in September 2025, and staff have been offered a range of professional development opportunities, including roles within Mental Health Support Teams, Autism Champion initiatives, and involvement in the Building Strong Foundations (BSF) programme. These efforts ensure the team remains skilled, motivated, and well-equipped to deliver high-quality psychological support.

The EPS has also played a key role in shaping strategic initiatives across the borough. Team members have led on SEND Transformation work, contributed to new guidance on Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) and Selective Mutism, and expanded training offers in response to emerging trends and feedback from schools. With a growing engagement beyond Sutton, the service is increasingly recognised as a dynamic and forward-thinking contributor to local education. Its work continues to align with Cognus' wider strategic priorities, helping to ensure that psychological support remains central to improving outcomes for children and families.





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# THERAPIES

Cognus Therapies Service has continued to go from strength to strength; here are some of our highlights:

- The Therapy team have supported over 2,900 children and young people with EHCPs to access their education in schools and settings through the use of Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy sessions, plus the use of resources and strategies.
- We have seen a slight increase in our target data, with 96% of children and young people achieving some, if not all, their targets.
- In addition, the team have supported children and young people who have been identified by their school and settings as requiring additional support, ensuring that provision is implemented at the earliest opportunity. This has included the development of our new Ordinarily Available Provision guidance documents for primary and secondary settings. These documents have been co-produced with SENCOs and Head teachers, Educational Psychology and Therapies from across Sutton schools and aim to set out expectations for the support and strategies that should be available across all Sutton schools for children and young people with SEND.
- The Therapies team have continued to develop the SEND Champion training in partnership with Educational Psychology, with now 104 SEND champions across our schools. This programme has received positive feedback and is in the process of being accredited as a nationally recognised best practice programme.
- Cognus Therapies has celebrated a fantastic year of parent training sessions delivered by our incredible team. Thanks to the time, passion, and expertise of our therapists, we supported 140 parents across six impactful sessions. The feedback we received from families has been overwhelmingly positive:
  - “I feel more supported knowing where to go and who to ask for help.”
  - “I’ve come away with a broader knowledge of emotional regulation and co-regulation.”
  - “Actually getting practical examples of how to regulate with my child – the instructors were extremely knowledgeable.”
- Finally, the team have secured capital funding bids for therapy resources, which have led to the development of our services for children accessing alternative provision, our Augmentative Alternative Communication resources and service, and therapy resources at the new Carew Academy School site.





# TRAVELLER EDUCATION SERVICE

The Traveller Education Service has enjoyed some real success stories this year.

Using our detailed knowledge of local provisions and existing relationships with staff, we were able to secure school and nursery places for five new-to-borough children (including a Child Missing Education pupil) within a week of their arrival.

We delivered 1:1 support for a range of pupils from Early Years to KS3 across numerous schools to improve attainment and educational outcomes.

Feedback from end of year pupil surveys was very positive:

- 25/25 pupils rated enjoyment of their 1:1 sessions as 5/5 stars. (100%)
- 24/25 pupils said they would like support again next year. (96%)

Additional feedback included:

- “I can read lots of new words and can write a lot of them too. It helps me when I do my writing in class.”
- “I enjoyed reading Traveller culture books and I am better at spelling.”

Transition was a key part of our service as always and 7/8 Traveller pupils successfully transitioned to secondary school. Our work included supporting a change of borough and 1:1 transition support for all Year 6s. Pupils fed back that they felt less anxious as a result of our help.



Through partnership working with schools, we enabled reasonable adjustments and support to be put in place which led to:

- fewer detentions
- increased attendance
- reduced anxiety
- improved reading
- more engaged pupils and parents

Working closely with professionals in Education, Health and Social Care, we were able to ensure that ongoing safeguarding concerns resulted in a Child Protection Plan and the necessary support being put in place for those children. We also supported another family to obtain a Special Guardianship Order meaning two of our very vulnerable Child Protection pupils remained safe and well looked after.

In collaboration with the other Inclusion teams in Cognus, we were able to reduce the number of pupils registered as Children Missing Education and gain evidence of Elective Home Education to ensure learning was suitable.

The team also gave a lot of advice and guidance - both in borough and nationally - and signposted to other key support services to help with, and resolve, more complex matters, including one serious case of school bullying.

We are always keen to promote cultural awareness and supplied schools with resources to celebrate Gypsy, Roma & Traveller History Month in June.

We also supported a parent to feel confident and secure to ascribe her children as Travellers, ensuring their ethnicity was represented and counted in school.

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# SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL

*Building Stronger Foundations* has now reached 44 Sutton schools. Schools that have been on the programme for more than one year are now reporting hard impact, such as reduction in suspension, exclusions, improvements in attendance, as well as capturing strong feedback from school staff and parents. We have now expanded *Building Stronger Foundations* to the first early year settings. With inclusion such a central focus for the new Ofsted Framework, we hope that the last remaining Sutton schools strongly consider taking up the offer for 2026/27.

Sutton Virtual School has expanded its training offer for designated teachers, social workers and families. The Sutton Virtual Conference 2025 was attended by 80 staff from across Sutton schools, and the voice of care and adoptive experienced adults shaped a day that focused on the theme *Communicating Belonging*.

In August, ten children looked after and five Cognus and Children's Services staff travelled to Canada for a two week trip through the Turing scheme. The young people took part in whale watching, canoeing, ziplining, mountain walking, gondola riding, mountain biking, forest bathing and camping. The young people learned to cook their own meals and prepare their own kit to support their preparation for adulthood.

We also hosted another successful summer fun day at the Quad for families linked to children social care. The petting zoo was back as well as the games wagon, the Virtual Schools own Laura Brightly bringing her DJing skills, inflatables, and arts activities. We have also taken children looked after to a water sports centre, activity centres and the panto.



# AUTISM SUPPORT

Cognus Autism Support have continued to empower Sutton schools, professionals, and families through a wide range of training, advice, and direct support.

Our team have delivered 12 workshops for Sutton's 64 Autism Leads, ensuring staff feel confident and equipped to create inclusive environments for autistic children and young people. Families and professionals have benefited from our Autism support surgeries, where our experienced Cognus Autism Champions offer tailored, practical, solution-focused advice.

Our support extends beyond schools, across children's social care, tuition providers, hospitals, and children's homes, ensuring that understanding and inclusion reach every environment where autistic children and young people learn and grow. We also work directly with young people through 1:1 sessions that help them understand and celebrate their autistic identities, with 49 young people supported last year alone!

We have been actively engaged in research, networking, and co-production, ensuring our practice reflects both professional insight and the voices of autistic children and their families. games!

Together, we celebrated key community events such as Neurodiversity Week and World Autism Acceptance Month, amplifying lived experience through creative projects, public campaigns and our very own Autism Family Fun Day, complete with music workshop, sensory activities and games!

We are very proud of the bespoke autism support that we offer across Sutton and beyond. Our work consistently receives exceptional feedback for being compassionate, responsive, and impactful, and it feels so good to make a difference!

We are anticipating another busy year and look forward to working with even more schools, professionals and young people. To explore how we can support your setting, staff, or families, please contact us at [theautismservice@cognus.org.uk](mailto:theautismservice@cognus.org.uk).



**COGNUS LIMITED PRESENTS...**

# AUTISM

## Family Event

Join us for a fun, family event to celebrate Autism Acceptance Month. Siblings and other family members welcome!

**FRIDAY 11 APRIL 1-3.30PM**

SCAN HERE

**BOOK NOW**

**Young people**

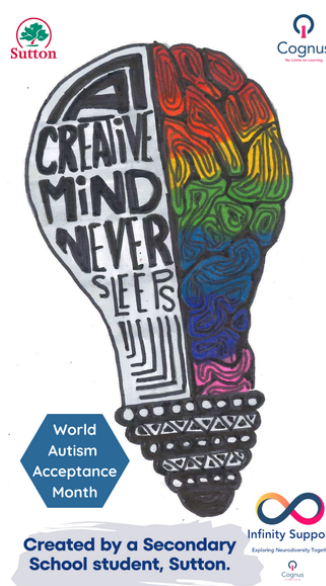
- Chilled activities e.g. decorating tote bags
- Sensory sessions
- Board games
- Calm room
- Musical activities
- Early years activities

**Parents & Carers**

- Chat to education professionals
- Advice and information
- Refreshments and a chance to sit down!

To attend, please complete the sign-up form

Cognus Limited, Cantium House, Railway Approach, Wallington, SM6 0DZ



**World Autism Acceptance Month**

**AI CREATIVE MIND NEVER SLEEPS**

Created by a Secondary School student, Sutton.

Infinity Support  
Empowering Neurodiversity Together



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# CHILD EMPLOYMENT

This year the Child Employment team has been working hard to ensure families, schools, and employers understand the rules around child employment and performance licensing. Children should be able to explore work and performance opportunities in a way that's safe, legal, and supportive of their education. Whether it's a weekend job or a role in a theatre production, every child deserves to be protected whilst gaining valuable experience.

Chaperones play a vital role in safeguarding children who take part in performances, especially when a parent or legal guardian is not present. In 2024–25, we trained and approved 88 chaperones, ensuring that every child performer had a trusted adult to oversee their welfare.

Child Performance Licences are needed for children working in entertainment, covering participation in television and film productions, theatre performances and modelling assignments. This year, we issued 263 Child Performance Licences, including 31 extension requests and 5 Body of Persons Approvals. These figures reflect Sutton's growing involvement in the creative industries and our commitment to safeguarding children in performance settings.

Child Employment Permits are needed for any children working part-time in industries such as retail, hospitality and administration in addition to jobs such as leaflet distribution. We issued 20 employment permits this year and are working to ensure that the need for permits and licenses is widely known.

# CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

In April 2025, Clinical Psychology's post diagnostic work *'The A Plan'* for autistic young people received a Practice Spotlight Recognition Letter from the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance.

The letter acknowledged the service's *"...dedication and impressive work to transform the lives of children, young people and families in London is inspirational. The impact of your work and ability to implement creative solutions in complex environments sets a high standard for services provided to London's children."*

The 'A' Plan has resulted in reduced suicidal ideation, increased positive social interactions, returning to school and attending university as well as psycho-education for parents.

Cognus are proud to deliver this vital post diagnostic service for autistic young people in Sutton.



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# SEND SUPPORT & THE SEND SUPPORT ADVISORY PARTNERSHIP

Over the summer term, we proudly piloted and launched the SEND Support Advisory Panel (SSAP), a significant and positive step forward in strengthening early support for children and young people with SEND in Sutton. The SSAP, is a multi-agency group that brings together professionals from education, health, and care to offer timely, targeted advice, resources, and, where appropriate, additional funding to help schools meet pupils' needs earlier.

Through the SSAP, schools can:

- Access expert advice and collaborative problem-solving support.
- Receive funding or commissioned services when existing resources have been exhausted.
- Engage in holistic, multi-disciplinary discussions to ensure well-rounded support.

The SSAP is designed to empower schools to meet a broader range of needs at the SEND Support stage, enabling earlier and more effective interventions. By offering timely support outside of the formal EHCNA process, the SSAP helps schools respond swiftly to emerging needs. This approach ensures that interventions are not only targeted but also sustainable, making a lasting difference in the lives of children and young people with SEND.

The SSAP has now replaced Next Steps Meetings, with the SEND Panel recommending referrals to the SSAP where suitable. This marks a transformative shift in how we collaborate to meet SEND needs earlier, more effectively, and with greater impact.



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# ASSISTED TRAVEL

This year, the Assisted Travel Team has made significant strides in improving service quality and upskilling, with a strong focus on enhancing the experience for service users and their families.

The beginning of this initiative is a newly developed Journey Planner. This captures the individual preferences and needs of each passenger, helping to ensure a more comfortable and supportive travel experience. From sensitivities to temperature and noise, to identifying potential behavioural triggers and strategies for mitigation, the planner provides a comprehensive overview tailored to each pupil. It also includes critical information such as allergies, all of which is gathered in collaboration with families and shared with transport operators. This ensures that every journey is not only safe but also as pleasant as possible for the children in our care.

The team has developed bespoke Autism training for operator management and road staff, designed to build awareness and understanding of Autism and equipping

Drivers and Passenger Assistants with practical tools to manage challenges that may arise during a journey. By empowering frontline staff to make informed, compassionate adjustments, we aim to reduce stress and improve outcomes for both pupils and staff.

Another key focus has been on optimising whole school transport arrangements. Our recent work with Sherwood Park School stands out as a major success. Through careful planning, we were able to reduce the number of transport routes from 22 to 16, resulting in significant efficiencies and, importantly, all pupils were accommodated appropriately, resulting in overwhelmingly positive feedback from parents. The optimisation also improved journey times and reduced congestion at drop-off and pick-up, allowing the school to transition pupils more efficiently.

These initiatives reflect the team's commitment to continuous improvement, collaboration, and putting the needs of our service users first. We're proud of the progress made and excited about the positive impact these changes are having across our transport services.







## SEND TEAM

Our SEND Service supports children and young people aged 0–25 who need additional help to learn, grow, and thrive. We work closely with families, schools, and professionals across education, health, and social care to ensure that each child receives the right support at the right time.

We know that navigating SEND support can sometimes feel complex, and we're committed to making it as clear and straightforward as possible. Our team provides practical guidance throughout every step of the process—from the time a request for an Education, Health and Social Care Needs Assessment (EHCA) is requested to the time the young person leaves the service.

A key resource for families is the Sutton Local Offer, an online hub bringing together information about education, health, leisure, social care, and support services across the borough. It's designed to help parents and carers find everything they need in one place, from short breaks and community activities to advice on preparing for adulthood.

We believe that the best outcomes for children come from partnership. That's why we work closely with families, schools, health professionals, and local organisations such as the Sutton SEND Forum. Together, we ensure that services are shaped by the experiences and insights of the families who use them.

We know how important it is for the processes to be completed in time and to a high quality; working in partnership we are therefore proud that our data this year puts Sutton above national on many areas:

- Decisions whether to assess within 6 weeks
- Sutton 95.8% / London 84.5% / National 84.8%
- EHCP issued within 20 weeks
- Sutton 76.5% / London 66.9% / National 46.4%
- Extraordinary success in actioning AR within timeframe
- Sutton 82.3% / London 39.6% / National 44.4%

We quality assure all our work and are in receipt of positive feedback from our families who co-produce their child's EHCP with us and feel that their child has been correctly portrayed and reflected in the EHCP.

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# SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

The School Admissions Team works as part of a pan-London admissions system, co-ordinating resident applications and also all applications for Sutton schools – a total of over 9,800 applications!

Outcomes for Sutton residents on primary and secondary National Offer Days were better than London averages; 72% of Sutton residents received their first preference secondary school (71.6% London average); 96.9% received a preference offer (94.8%). 91.6% received their first preference primary school offer (87.9% in London), and 99% received a preference offer (97.9). For a second year, no child was without a school offer on their respective National Offer Day.

The team also co-ordinates in-year admissions, and processed 2109 in-year applications for Sutton schools and tracked any new arrivals to Sutton into a school place. Where there are no suitable vacancies, the team place through a Fair Access Protocol, which ensures unplaced pupils are shared amongst local schools; in the 24/25 academic year, 26 primary school children and 143 secondary school children were placed through this, ensuring access to a local school place.

In the coming year, there is expected to be Department for Education consultation on a new School Admissions Code, which may change how the service operates some of its functions; the service will also be supporting discussions with schools about managing the fall in demand for primary school places and how capacity can reduce in the system.

# INFINITY SUPPORT

Infinity Support is Cognus' centralised platform where children, families and professionals can access all our resources, information, guidance, support and training on neurodivergence.

Infinity Support brings together Cognus' unique multi-disciplinary approach to improve accessibility of information and enable neurodivergent children and young people to thrive and achieve their full potential.

There is an interactive brochure available online which showcases Cognus' current range of fully funded/commissioned services and a traded offer to schools for further support of children, young people and families. We've also launched an exciting calendar of training and events that we will be adding to regularly.

Infinity Support is now entering its next phase, and so more will be added soon!

For more information visit:  
[www.cognus.org.uk/services/infinity-support](http://www.cognus.org.uk/services/infinity-support)



# SUTTON INFORMATION ADVICE & SUPPORT SERVICE (SIASS)

Sutton Information Advice and Support Service (SIASS) has experienced a transformative year, redefining how we support families and children and young people with special educational needs. At the heart of this change is a new service model focused on empowerment, ensuring that every individual we work with is equipped to make informed, confident decisions about their educational journey.

## Response Times

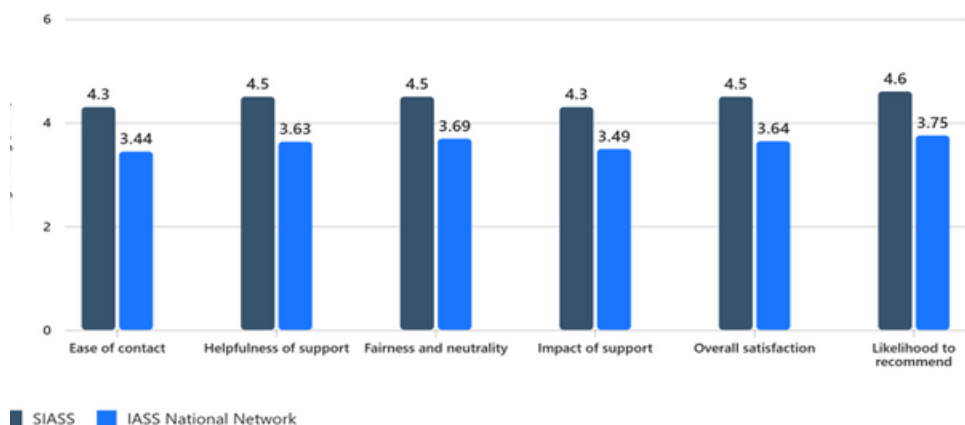
In just 12 months, SIASS has dramatically improved its response times from a 4-week turnaround to 2 working days. This is thanks to our triage approach, which tailors support based on the level of need: Information, Advice, or Support. As a result, around 70% of enquiries are now resolved during the initial contact, allowing families to move forward faster and with greater clarity.

## Growing Demand, Stronger Delivery

With a 60% increase in contact from families compared to last year, our adapted model has proven resilient and responsive. We continue to meet this growing demand with pragmatic, person-centred solutions that reflect the evolving needs of our community.

**Championing Young People’s Voices**  
We have revitalised our offer for children and young people, shifting our focus to work directly with them from around age 16. This ensures they have agency and a voice in shaping their educational experiences. The results show there is more direct engagement and an increase in positive outcomes that reflect the power of youth-led decision-making.

**What Families Say**  
This year has been one of adaptation - not just for SIASS, but for the families we support. While change can be challenging, feedback shows that our new approach is being understood and appreciated. We are proud to be building a service that is not only faster and more effective, but also more empowering and inclusive. Feedback shows SIASS consistently scores higher than the national average across all key areas:





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# INCLUSION

The past year has seen excellent multi-agency working and innovation across the local partnership to prevent school exclusions, resulting in a 29% reduction in academic year 2024/25 compared to the previous year.

One initiative contributing to this success is the expansion of the Inclusion Surgeries, where families and professionals can access support and guidance. The surgeries have now increased from once weekly to every Tuesday and Friday for schools, and from monthly to bi-weekly for families. These are well attended and feedback is very positive. The team have also expanded their offer of Targeted Inclusion Support meetings to now support four secondary schools and one primary school.

To ensure that inclusive practices are embedded across decision-making forums, the Inclusion Team are actively involved in the new Families First education working party, and are represented on the monthly Medical Panel, both Primary and Secondary

Vulnerable Pupil Panels (VPPs), the new SEN Support SSAP Panel, and the Helping Early Panel.

A recent example of impactful cross-team working involved the Inclusion Team Leader facilitating network meetings for several young people with additional needs (SEN/PCLA) at risk of permanent exclusion, successfully identifying alternative solutions and additional support, avoiding exclusion.

In partnership with Educational Psychology Services, Inclusion co-developed the revised Graduated Response Guidance for children and young people at risk of exclusion, ensuring a more coordinated and preventative approach.

Looking ahead, the team will be piloting training for school governors in selected schools. If successful, an offer will be developed and made available to all Sutton schools in the next academic year.





## ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION (EHE)

Elective Home Education (EHE) and EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) numbers have been rising nationally. This is reflected in Sutton, where cases have risen from 107 registrations in October 2021 to 307 in October 2025 (an increase of 187%). Last year alone saw 223 new registrations. The team are working with other agencies and schools to understand and respond to this change in demand.

Cognus' work with local partners and professionals means 80% of home-educated children in Sutton are receiving a suitable education, confirmed through the team's checking process.

The team have been promoting their offer of pre-EHE meetings to schools to ensure parents and guardians understand their responsibilities before making a final decision, and welcome invitations to support wherever needed.

In addition, the EHE team are ensuring that home, community and virtual visits are timely and helpful. They have completed over 200 visits and 88 door knocks since January!

# SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Sutton's schools continue to deliver exceptional outcomes and champion inclusion, as highlighted in the Annual School Improvement and Standards Report 2024–25. This success reflects a powerful partnership between schools, Cognus, and the Local Authority, driving improvement through collaboration and shared accountability.

## Collaboration in Action

This year, Cognus introduced the Engagement and Collaboration Model, pairing schools for reciprocal visits and joint professional dialogue. Piloted by Stanley Park Junior, Robin Hood Junior, Holy Trinity Junior, and St Mary's RC Junior, the initiative has been praised for promoting openness, reflection, and shared accountability. The model will expand further in 2025–26.

## Inspiring, Inclusive Classrooms

Across Sutton, schools are delivering creative, interactive curricula that empower pupils to lead their learning. Subject leaders are ensuring progression, while pupil voice thrives through eco-committees, playground mentors, and pupil parliaments. Collaboration with Cognus ensures timely EHCP reviews, effective SEND support, and inclusive practice in every classroom.

## Looking Ahead

"Sutton's strength lies in partnership. By aligning our collective expertise and learning from one another, we can ensure every child receives the best possible start in life."

For 2025–26, Cognus and Sutton schools will focus on five strategic priorities:

1. Attendance & Persistent Absence – tackling barriers early.
2. Inclusion & Early SEND Identification – embedding the SEND/AP Improvement Plan.
3. Standards & Curriculum Quality – strengthening subject leadership and closing gaps.
4. Safeguarding & Wellbeing – promoting resilience and mental health.
5. Parental & Community Engagement – deepening co-production with families.

A new developmental framework will align school visits with the updated Ofsted 2025 Framework, sustaining excellence in leadership, education quality, and inclusion.





