ANNUAL REVIEW 2025-2026

10

YEARS

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS



Cognus

No Limits on Learning

FOREWORD

AS I REFLECT ON THE PAST YEAR, I AM IMMENSELY PROUD OF WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED TOGETHER AT COGNUS. DESPITE A CHALLENGING AND RAPIDLY CHANGING LANDSCAPE ACROSS EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE SERVICES, OUR TEAMS HAVE REMAINED STEADFAST IN THEIR COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES.

THIS YEAR HAS BEEN CHARACTERISED BY BOTH GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION. ACROSS ALL OUR SERVICES, WE HAVE CONTINUED TO PLACE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO, WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SCHOOLS, LOCAL AUTHORITIES, HEALTH COLLEAGUES AND FAMILIES TO DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY, RESPONSIVE SUPPORT. OUR FOCUS ON INCLUSION, EARLY INTERVENTION AND INNOVATION HAS ENABLED US TO MEET INCREASING DEMAND WHILST MAINTAINING OUR COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE.

I AM PARTICULARLY GRATEFUL TO OUR DEDICATED COLLEAGUES WHOSE PROFESSIONALISM, EXPERTISE AND COMPASSION MAKE A TANGIBLE DIFFERENCE EVERY DAY. THEIR UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO OUR VALUES HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN DELIVERING POSITIVE OUTCOMES AND ENSURING THAT COGNUS REMAINS A TRUSTED PARTNER WITHIN THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE.
WE HAVE ALSO CONTINUED TO STRENGTHEN OUR ORGANISATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, INVESTING IN OUR PEOPLE, SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES TO ENSURE WE ARE WELL POSITIONED FOR THE FUTURE.
THROUGH OUR BUSINESS PLAN, WE HAVE SET AN AMBITIOUS DIRECTION FOR THE YEARS AHEAD, BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS WHILE IDENTIFYING NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE OUR IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY.

THE DEMAND FOR SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES CONTINUES TO GROW NATIONALLY. IN RESPONSE, WE HAVE WORKED CLOSELY WITH OUR PARTNERS TO DEVELOP INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AND ENSURE THAT SERVICES REMAIN FOCUSED ON DELIVERING THE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOMES FOR THOSE WHO NEED THEM MOST.

LOOKING AHEAD, WE REMAIN AMBITIOUS FOR COGNUS AND FOR THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES WE SUPPORT. WHILE CHALLENGES REMAIN, I AM CONFIDENT THAT OUR TALENTED WORKFORCE, STRONG PARTNERSHIPS AND CLEAR STRATEGIC VISION WILL ENABLE US TO CONTINUE MAKING A MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR STAFF, BOARD MEMBERS, PARTNERS, COMMISSIONERS, SCHOOLS, SETTINGS, AND FAMILIES FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT. TOGETHER, WE ARE CREATING OPPORTUNITIES, REMOVING BARRIERS AND HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO THRIVE.



JOANNA CASSEY
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
COGNUS LIMITED

10

YEARS

INFRASTRUCTURE & INTERNAL SERVICES

- BUSINESS SUPPORT
- FINANCE
- HUMAN RESOURCES
- IT
- SEN FINANCE TEAM

BUSINESS SUPPORT

The business support team at Cognus is often seen as the invisible backbone that keeps the organisation running smoothly, supporting in excess of 30 of our services. While customer-facing teams and leadership tend to get the spotlight, it is the back office functions that handle the essential groundwork — managing administration of various panel meetings, coordinating logistics, processing referrals, resolving operational hiccups, and ensuring that resources, systems and communication flow efficiently across all of our teams.

Without the team, even the most talented professionals would struggle to focus on their core work, as we act as a connective layer, bridging communication between departments, ensuring compliance with policies and procedures. We are often seen as the first line of contact for families and professionals.

Ultimately, their contribution — though sometimes underappreciated — directly impacts organisational efficiency, employee satisfaction, and customer experience, making them a critical driver of the long-term business success of Cognus.

FINANCE

The Finance Team plays a vital role in ensuring Cognus remains financially sustainable, well-governed and able to invest in services that support children, young people and families. Throughout the year, the team has delivered budgeting, forecasting, payroll oversight, statutory reporting, audit support and financial management across both Cognus and Sutton Music Trust.

Despite increasing demands, the team has continued to strengthen financial controls, improve reporting processes and provide financial insight to support effective decision-making across the organisation. Their work helps ensure resources are managed efficiently, risks are controlled and funding is directed towards achieving the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

Looking ahead, the team remains committed to continuous improvement, embracing technology and new ways of working to enhance efficiency, strengthen resilience and support Cognus' future ambitions.

HUMAN RESOURCES

This year has marked strong progress for our HR and Health & Safety functions as we continue to strengthen the foundations that support our people , our greatest asset, and the communities we serve.

At Cognus, we believe that when people feel valued, supported, and safe, they can deliver their best. As Richard Branson said, “If you look after your staff, they will look after your customers.” This principle underpins our approach, ensuring colleagues are empowered to thrive.

A key milestone was welcoming WorkNest into the Cognus family, bringing enhanced expertise in Employment Law, HR Administration, and Health & Safety. This has strengthened our ability to provide responsive, high-quality support.

We also successfully transitioned to a new HR system, migrating tens of thousands of records and improving efficiency. All line managers were trained, enabling more consistent and effective people management.

To support colleagues, we launched our first Cognus HR Handbook, alongside practical ‘How to Guides’ and our HR Round Up newsletter, helping managers stay informed and confident.

In Health & Safety, we introduced a new incident reporting process and enhanced our HR and H&S compliance reporting, improving visibility and organisational learning.

Our partnership with WorkNest has delivered clear value:

- 75 cases supported
- 85+ hours of advice
- 615+ emails
- 28 calls

This has strengthened our ability to manage complex issues while ensuring fairness and consistency.

Importantly, a recent Health & Safety compliance visit confirmed Cognus as a low-risk organisation, validating our commitment to a safe working environment.

Looking Ahead

We remain committed to putting people first. By investing in systems, expertise, and support, we are creating an environment where colleagues feel valued, safe, and able to succeed , enabling the best outcomes for those we serve.

IT

The focus of the IT service over this year has been:

- maintaining our annual Cyberessentials certification
- replacing non-compliant devices and older devices which are no longer functioning and beyond economical repair
- supporting EE implementing new remote management softeware to help ensure all our devices recive the appropriate security updates in atimely way
- establishing a successful capital funding bid to renew training and meeting room technology (due to be fitted over this summer)
- recruiting and onboarding a new IT support Officer
- leading a project alongside the SEND Finance & Data team to refresh SEND workflows in Case Management to aid our reporting and SEN2 capabilities, and ensuring all key staff have refresher training

We are supporting the wider orgnaisation with the use of AI in the workplace, through a consistent use of Co-Pilot and providing enhanced licensing to key staff who have expressed an interest in investing time in looking at how our usage can be enhanced and expanded across our teams. This is a piece of work that will continue to build over the next year.

SEN FINANCE & DATA TEAM

The SEN Finance & Data team has continued to provide essential support to young people across the borough, working collaboratively with multiple service areas including SEN, Assisted Travel and Early Years. This support has included processing payments, maintaining accurate records and analysing data to inform effective decision-making. During 2025/26, the team processed approximately £75,800,000 in total.

The team is currently supporting and monitoring 2,678 learners, ensuring they receive the appropriate educational financial support while also tracking their pathways and school placements throughout the year. In addition, approximately 1,400 finance forms have been reviewed, recorded and actioned, reflecting the ongoing volume of funding changes managed by the team.

The team also completed the SEN2 return one month ahead of the statutory deadline, representing an improvement on previous years. This required the coordination and submission of 211,752 individual data items relating to learners with EHCPs.
The Data team has continued to deliver a wide range of statutory, operational and systems-related responsibilities in support of Cognus services. During the spring and summer terms, the team successfully completed key statutory returns, including AP Census, School Census, Early Years Census, EYFSP and Phonics. This included the introduction of the new Early Years Summer Census collection, further strengthening the organisation's ability to meet evolving statutory reporting requirements.

In addition to statutory reporting, the team has provided ongoing support to schools, early years providers and internal services, particularly in relation to data quality, submissions and reporting. This has included support for early years census activity, summer assessment processes and additional requests for school census data from LIIA.
The team has also continued to develop and enhance reporting capability through the creation and refinement of SQL reports, alongside the ongoing management of the SEND dashboard. Further progress has been made within Case Management through the delivery of new forms and workflows, supporting more efficient processes and improved service delivery as well as upskilling through Access Group sessions and internal knowledge-sharing.

Improvements to knowledge management have also been delivered through the creation of the FOI library (144 FOIs received since Jan 2025) and the continued development of documentation, guidance and process notes. This has helped to improve consistency, strengthen internal resilience and support wider access to key information across services.



CHILDREN, FAMILIES & SETTINGS SERVICES

A DECADE OF IMPACT.
A FUTURE OF POSSIBILITY.

ADMISSIONS

The School Admissions Team has undergone some key staff changes over the last year, but they have successfully recruited permanently into these roles and have continued to deliver the service to statutory and pan-London deadlines, whilst also maintaining 91% satisfaction through a parent survey.

Some key data from activity through the year:

- 9,705 applications processed for normal admissions rounds, coordinated with 65 local authorities in London and beyond
- 2,076 in-year applications processed
- 152 children without a school placed through the Fair Access Protocol
- 25,500 emails handled

The key activity for children starting school in Reception and those transferring to secondary school in Year 7 continues to operate smoothly and with fantastic outcomes for Sutton families. The tables below show outcomes for Sutton compare to London averages:

Measure	Sutton Secondary	London Secondary	Sutton Primary	London Primary
Offered 1st preference	72.0%	70.5%	92.1%	88.4%
Offered one of top 3 preferences	91.8%	89.6%	99.2%	97.0%
Offered any preference school	96.9%	94.3%	99.7%	98.3%

We continue to be a strong partner within the London admissions network. Operationally, we lead a range of London-wide practices to ensure data accuracy. Strategically, we contribute to policy development through the region's Management Group and represent London on the Department for Education's National Admissions Group.

The year ahead will see some key changes following the Children's Wellbeing & Schools Act, with a consultation on a new School Admissions Code in the autumn (with implementation some time in 2027) and the impact this has on local and London practice.

ATTENDANCE

Improving school attendance continues to be a major focus in the borough, and the Attendance Support Team continue to drive the support provided to professionals.

Through Department for Education data, including the View Your Education Data platform, and Studybugs we are able to analyse our attendance data and provide schools with summaries of the current picture, identifying potential patterns and trends to inform their strategic work.

Key highlights for this year include:

- Providing communication and advice to 69 schools, including primary, secondary, special, independent and alternative provisions
- Delivering 211 Targeting Support Meetings with schools; focusing on key cohorts and complex cases at individual school level
- Delivering 6 networking meetings for primary secondary and special school attendance leads.
- Enablng networking and advice for attendance officers in schools through designated sessions; supporting better implementation of attendance and absence codes
- Joint working with Virtual School on education consultations
- Providing advice and guidance to the wider professional network in Sutton through attendance at panels, pods and cross-team events.

Feedback from schools :

“The Sutton Attendance Team are always very supportive and approachable.”

“Working together to make sure that attendance at our school keeps on track and is moving in the right direction.”

“We are very pleased with the support that we get from the service and are confident that all advice given is useful, well researched and appropriate…”

“Collaborative conversations including strategic and operational, open to a range of roles and professional criticism”

“The support is excellent, thank you for answering all of my questions!”

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 team has developed bespoke Autism training for operator management and road staff, designed to build awareness and understanding of autism, while 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.

Our approved operator service handbook has been revised to provide greater clarity and more detailed guidance on standard procedures. Further structure to our service monitoring aims to improve customer experience and target frequent areas of concern so that parents have more peace of mind in the capabilities of our external operators. Our parent feedback is already positive but we always strive to build on this further.

The introduction of our new finance software, PAX Finance integrates into our route and mapping software to identify areas for review and better analysis for future route changes. This software provides greater insight into route performance and forecasting, enabling us to optimise services effectively while avoiding significant changes for children and young people who use the Assisted Travel Service.

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.



COGNUS AUTISM SUPPORT

Strengthening Inclusion for Autistic Students Across Sutton
Creating more inclusive schools, confident families and empowered young people

In 2025–26, our service strengthened inclusion for autistic students across Sutton schools by building professional expertise, empowering families and supporting young people to better understand themselves and advocate for their needs.

Our Impact

69 Families supported through pre- and post-diagnosis workshops, parent sessions and our Autism Family Day.

47 Young people supported through individual observations and personalised one-to-one interventions.

38 School Autism Leads participating in ongoing professional development and collaborative practice networks.

33 Schools and families receiving specialist advice through Autism Support surgery sessions.

+ Staff knowledge increased (on average) from 2.7/5 to 4.4/5 following our CPD

Building Capacity Across Schools

We continued to invest in developing autism-informed practice across Sutton. Our half-termly Autism Lead network explored current research and practical strategies on topics including:

- Gestalt Language Processing
- Anxiety and emotional regulation
- Neuroaffirming approaches
- Technology and AI
- Developing positive autistic identity

We also created opportunities for primary and secondary staff to observe practice across settings, helping schools better understand the challenges autistic pupils experience at key transition points.

Empowering Young People

Our interventions focused on helping young people:

- Understand their autistic identity
- Develop self-advocacy skills
- Improve emotional wellbeing
- Build confidence in educational settings

By adopting a personalised and neuroaffirming approach, we supported young people to feel understood, valued and better able to communicate their needs.



Feedback

Young people

”It was helpful getting to learn about my autism and how to make things easier.”
“The sessions have made me feel comfortable and like a safe space.”
“It's been a very good journey. It's been fun.”

Families

"It was a lovely opportunity for children to be seen and catered for in a thoughtful way."
"This has been the best SEN session that we've been to this Easter holiday so far!"
“They provided excellent practical advice and strategies to use with our son. Her advice about reframing our language and managing his confrontational behaviour was invaluable.
"Knowing that there is support out there and how to access it for our children (and us!) was incredibly valuable. Everyone is always so helpful, approachable and supportive."

Schools

“During the Autism Leads session I was able to unpick what was going on for this dysregulated pupil, go back and suggest alternative activities which have made a real difference.”
“We used the classroom peer observation tool as the basis of staff appraisal targets to ensure all staff are developing their expertise and provision for autistic students.”

CUSTOMER CARE

This has been a challenging year for the service, with increases in complaints and member enquiries, as growing awareness of, and concern about, SEND Reform has heightened anxiety around securing appropriate provision at an early stage.

A total of 34 new complaints were received in the business year, up 48%. However, our rate of escalations has improved with 20% escalated to stage 2 compared to 61% in 2024/25.

The team implemented a new complaints policy and process form April 2026, to comply with the new Local Government and Social Care Ombudsmen Code of Conduct. We have aligned our policy with the London Borough of Sutton to ensure residents receive a consistent approach to complaints handling, regardless of which service they are accessing.

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman issues an annual letter to Local Authorities outlining their activity on complaints that have escalated to them over the year. For Sutton (council as a whole - not just education) they had 83 complaints of which most were assessed and closed and 8 were upheld following investigation. They measure this as a rate per 100,000 residents to compare against other Council areas. Our rate was 3.7, placing Sutton third best in London.

This highlights good compliance in statutory functions, early resolution to avoid formal complaints, and low escalation of complaints.

Member enquiries remained high at a similar level to last year, with 113 received, 20% more than in 2023/24. 97% were responded to within a 10 working day target.

The team coordinates a database of positive feedback from schools and parents, and a monthly highlights summary is provided in our Cognus staff newsletter to help spread positive messaging across the organisation.

CHILD EMPLOYMENT

Children should be able to explore work and performance opportunities in a way that is safe, legal and supportive of their education - whether it is a weekend job role or a theatre production, every child deserves to be protected whilst gaining valuable experience. The child employment service has continued their work this year providing the range of permits and licences required to keep children safe when working. We have provided advice and guidance to employers, schools, parents and those working in the arts to ensure their understanding of the rules around child employment and performance licencing.

This year we issued 262 performance licences which enabled children to work in entertainment, covering participation in television and film productions, theatre performances and modelling assignments. In addition to these we issued 6 ‘Body of Persons’ approvals enabling events, including dance school performances, to showcase their children’s achievements to a wider audience safely. This cleared the way for 186 children to perform within Sutton!

Child employment permits are needed for any children working part-time in industries such as retail, hospitality and administration, and are even required for occasional jobs such as leaflet distribution. This year we ensured that 30 additional children working in the borough were kept safe through the conditions set out in their permits.

Chaperones continue to play a vital role in safeguarding children who take part in performances, often taking on this role when a parent or guardian is not present. This year we have vetted, trained and approved 78 Sutton chaperones through our rolling application process and monthly training opportunities, helping to ensure that every child performer has a trusted adult to oversee their welfare and prevent exploitation.



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

Our service continues to provide assessments of the highest quality and expertise, using assessment tools recommended by NICE Guidelines. During assessments, we continue to listen the experiences of young people and their families and, based on evidence gathered, arrive at outcomes which inform future intervention and support. Equally as important, our work empowers young people and families to connect with and understand an important part of who they are.



EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

This year, the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) has continued to extend its reach across Sutton, enabling more children, young people and schools to benefit from psychological expertise. A key part of this growth has been the expansion of our Assistant Educational Psychologist workforce, increasing from three posts two years ago to seven from September 2026. This has enabled the service to deploy Assistant EPs into schools that had not previously accessed EP support, further strengthening the reach and impact of the service across the borough.

Alongside this expansion, the EPS has continued to invest in its workforce and the quality of its offer. Two newly qualified Educational Psychologists will join the service in September 2026, while existing staff have benefited from a range of professional development opportunities. These have included training in supervision, roles within Mental Health Support Teams, Autism Champion initiatives and involvement in the Building Strong Foundations (BSF) programme. This investment supports the development of a skilled, reflective and adaptable workforce, well equipped to respond to the changing needs of Sutton's children, families and schools.

The service has also continued to strengthen its multi-agency work, developing closer links with colleagues across education, health and safeguarding. This includes working alongside safeguarding colleagues to deliver reflective supervision for Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs), an area of work that has continued to expand in response to increasing demand. This work demonstrates the broader contribution that Educational Psychologists can make in supporting the professionals and systems around children and young people, particularly where needs are complex.

The EPS has also continued to make an important contribution to strategic developments across the borough. Team members have led and contributed to SEND Transformation work, supported the development of new guidance on Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), Masking and Selective Mutism, and expanded the service's training offer in response to emerging needs and feedback from schools. The service is also developing a growing profile beyond Sutton, reflecting its reputation as a dynamic and forward-thinking Educational Psychology Service. This work remains closely aligned with Cognus' wider strategic priorities, ensuring that psychological expertise continues to play a central role in improving outcomes for children, young people and families.



EDUCATION SAFEGUARDING & OUTDOOR EDUCATION

This year has seen remarkable progress in our commitment to safeguarding across the education sector.

Our Education Safeguarding Team, which expanded from a team of 4 to a team of 5 in November, has continued to deliver high-quality support, training, and supervision to early years settings, schools and colleges, ensuring that safeguarding remains a cornerstone of educational excellence.

Our Reflective Safeguarding Supervision offer has gone from strength to strength. This enhanced service now supports safeguarding leads across more than 55 schools and colleges, both within and beyond the borough, providing them with the guidance and professional reflection needed to navigate complex safeguarding responsibilities. In 2025/26, we facilitated 302 supervision sessions, reaching 122 staff members.

'I want to thank you from every ounce of my soul for the kindness and support you have offered me. I was in a dark place before I started the supervision sessions, and you listened and guided without judgement and made me believe in myself and my abilities again' (DSL – Out of Borough).

As one Primary Designated Safeguarding Lead shared in February 2026:
'The team are responsive and non-judgemental when offering advice.
Every member of the Safeguarding team provides the best support, with the quickest response time and genuinely want to help'.

Our team facilitated 20 comprehensive Safeguarding Reviews since September 2025, helping schools strengthen their policies, practices, and culture around child protection.

A crucial responsibility within the team is taking calls and offering advice in often complex and time-intensive situations, giving clear and accurate next steps and signposting. This requires not only keeping abreast of all guidance and legislation but also working in dynamic circumstances liaising with other agencies when required to reduce and limit risk.

Training remains a key pillar of our work. Over the past year, we have delivered 76 safeguarding training sessions, reaching 4,724 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 110 residential visits, including 38 overseas trips, offering students enriching experiences beyond the classroom.

More than 4,500 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 (2025/2026) received 61 responses, with 100% of respondents reporting they were either very satisfied or satisfied with our service. Similarly, our Annual Survey to Partners showed 100% satisfaction, with 24 out of 25 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.



ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION (EHE)

Elective Home Education (EHE) numbers have been rising within Sutton, which reflects the national picture. Cases have risen from 108 children being electively home educated in June 2021 to 385 in June 2026 - an increase of 257%. 2025 saw 279 new registrations.

The team have been working to meet the demand by increasing capacity and streamlining processes. A key part of the work has also been prioritising cases for assessment and review, to ensure that children with additional vulnerabilities are overseen as soon as they de-register from the school.

The EHE team are ensuring that home, community and virtual visits are timely and helpful. They have completed over 394 visits and 131 door knocks since January 2025!

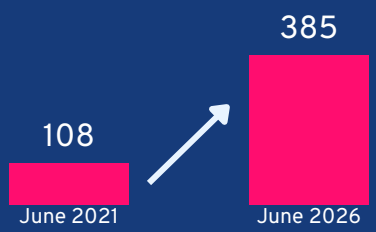
Safeguarding EHE learners is a shared responsibility, and we have worked closely with schools this year to increase pre-EHE meetings with families; ensuring they know the responsibilities associated with home educating before making their final decision.

We have also worked closely with partners in social care to hold multi-agency meetings where children with social workers are considering or have opted to home educate to ensure shared understanding of support needs.

The team are continuously learning from our work, and have jointly held reflective sessions with our partners in social care, SEND and education to further develop joint working protocols.

As part of ensuring a shared understanding of the challenges being faced in this area, the team have provided support and training to SENCos, DSLs, individual schools and partners in SEN and social care. Headteachers and educational forums have been regularly briefed as to the challenges faced and our response.

Cognus' work with local partners and professionals means 83% of home-educated children in Sutton are receiving a suitable education. This is a number we continuously aim to improve upon. However, it is equally important that we recognise where learning is not meeting the needs of children, and we work closely with colleagues in Attendance and VPP to return children to school where concerns have been identified.



257% increase in children being electively home educated in Sutton!

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

During the academic year, 25/26 Cognus' Early Years (EY) Team have supported many children, settings and families through individual work, cohort meetings and staff training and development. This has included:
The EY SEND team supported, on average, 445 children each month offering SEN Support across all settings.

To date, 373 SEN Support cohort visits have been carried out to discuss and observe children across all provisions. In the autumn term 100% of schools received a visit in the Autumn Term to discuss Reception and Nursery cohorts. Spring term data shows that the profile of need in Early Years continues to be heavily weighted towards communication and interaction needs. Children with social communication needs, including autism, make up 54% of the cohort, representing a 34% increase since the autumn term. Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) account for a further 28%, an increase of 25%. This data is consistent with previous years and emphasises the importance of language development, early communication and autism-inclusive practice across early years and primary settings.

141 Quality, advice and support visits to settings and 162 to childminders.
With the support from the EY Team throughout the year, 99% of group care settings and 100% of childminders were judged Good or better by 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 bespoke safeguarding training from the Cognus Safeguarding and EY team and running the annual Early Years Transfer Morning during the Summer term, which was attended by 100% of pre-schools and schools.

The team have supported the roll out of Building Stronger Foundations (BSF) to a small pilot group of early years settings, supporting them to develop their trauma informed practice and work towards an accredited award with the Attachment Research Community (ARC) London.

The wider network of professionals supporting children and families in the early years remains strong, and the work of the Early Years Operational Group (EYOG) continues to expand, now including Educational Psychologists, Home Start, Social Care representatives and Health Visiting on a consistent basis. A total of **209** children were referred into the group between April 2025 and August 2026. **£206k of targeted funding for 80 children and five settings for group** targeted support was agreed through EYOG for use in the last academic year, and **£331k** was distributed to EY settings (including school nurseries) through the SEND Inclusion Fund to support children with emerging needs

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Cognus took over a traded Free School Meal (FSM) checking service from the London Borough of Sutton in October 2025. Alongside this, a traded service has been offered to implement 'auto-enrolment', a process which identifies families who may be eligible for FSM based upon government welfare benefits records, and conducts a check - with consent - without a full application being required.

In our first year, schools have bought in the following services:

	Traded Services		
Phase	FSM checking only	Auto-Enrolment registration only	FSM & Auto-Enrolment registration
Primary	5	1	23
Secondary	0	5	10
Special/PRU	0	2	3

The government has also implemented a change to FSM eligibility from the summer of 2026, which is involving thousands of-rechecks and new applications being validated, as well as lots of advice and guidance to schools.

Auto-enrolment has been a particularly satisfying piece of work, which has found 309 additional children eligible for FSM who would otherwise have missed out on a free meal and/or associated benefits such as access to HAF activities and additional support through over £400k generated in Pupil Premium funding for schools, most of which will continue to be payable for at least a further 6 years.

This has not only supported some low-income families access a free, nutritious meal for their child(ren), but also provided funding that is targeted at this group of children to help narrow the attainment gap and improve access to school life and activities e.g. support with school uniform costs, subsidised school trips, provision of necessary stationery, teaching support and other help.

The team are about to embark on a pan-London project aimed at gaining cross-borough benefits of auto-enrolment, as well as building auto-enrolment into business as usual as a monthly exercise.

We are aiming to secure sufficient school buy-in to continue auto-enrolment work beyond September 2026.

One amazing piece of feedback from a school - which typifies why we are doing some of this work: "*Thank you for your help and support with this, one parent was incredibly grateful to be contacted, saying she felt too embarrassed to ask. This will hopefully ensure families who are most in need receive the support they often desperately need.*"

GOVERNORS

Building Strong Governance for Sutton's Future
A Year of Transformation

In 2025, senior leaders across the London Borough of Sutton and Cognus recognised that traditional governance arrangements were no longer fit for a modern education system. With only 22 maintained schools, Sutton required a more sustainable, innovative and strategic approach to governance—one that moved beyond compliance to strengthen safeguarding, inclusion, school improvement and leadership actively.
During the year, Sutton Governor Services designed an ambitious Strategic Governance Partnership Programme, creating a modern governance model that combines statutory support with professional development, governance assurance, strategic intelligence and collaborative networking. This work has been both exciting and challenging and has been shaped through extensive collaboration with school leaders, governors and national experts. We are particularly grateful for the expertise of Matt Miller (MBE) and the National Governance Association, whose advice has helped create a governance offer that reflects national best practice while responding to Sutton's local priorities. Matt will continue supporting the programme throughout 2026/27.

What We've Created
A new Strategic Governance Partnership Programme
Strategic governance intelligence bulletins and legislative updates
Chairs', Clerks', Safeguarding and SEND Governor Networks
Governance Health Checks and External Reviews
Annual Governance Conference and leadership development programme
A sustainable traded service supporting maintained schools, academy trusts and wider partners. There could also be opportunities for Governors to access an accredited pathway once the statutory model is in place
Delivering Value

The statutory governance service provides every maintained school with high-quality governance advice, safeguarding guidance and constitutional support for approximately £971 per school per year. For just an additional £136 per school, the enhanced partnership programme delivers strategic leadership development, governance assurance, networking opportunities and nationally recognised professional learning, creating a model that is both financially sustainable and capable of generating future traded income.

Looking Ahead
The Strategic Governance Partnership Programme places governance at the heart of Sutton's ambition for excellent education. By investing in stronger governance, safeguarding, inclusion and leadership, we are creating confident governing boards that provide effective challenge, strategic oversight and improved outcomes for children and young people.

HaVES

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2025–26

10 YEARS of Impact
2016–2026

Impact • Innovation • Inclusion



Massimo delivering BSL Week
Building skills, confidence and inclusion in schools across Sutton.



Sign Language Week
Celebrating communication, culture and community.

459 Children & Young People Supported across Sutton

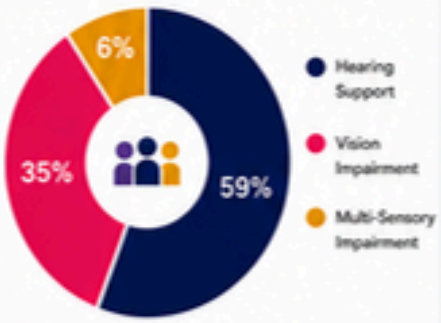
273 Hearing Support

164 Vision Impairment

22 Multi-Sensory Impairment

30–35 Specialist Visits Each Week

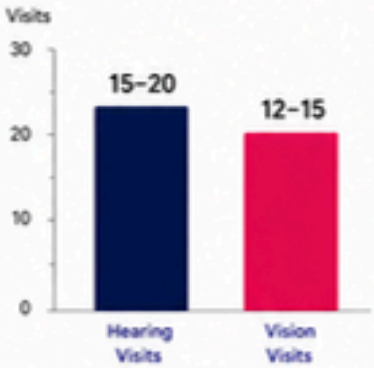
1. CASELOAD DISTRIBUTION



Our caseload reflects the diverse needs of deaf and visually impaired children and young people across Sutton.

2. WEEKLY DELIVERY

Specialist visits delivered each week



Consistent, targeted support delivered in schools, early years settings and in homes.

3. GROWING DEMAND FOR HAVES

Caseload growth across the three specialist service areas.



Increasing need drives our commitment to expand capacity and expertise.

DELIVERING IMPACT

- Improved access to learning
- Better communication
- Greater independence
- Reduced waiting times

INNOVATION

- BSL Curriculum
- Deaf Studies
- BSL Club
- Improved data systems

WORKING TOGETHER

- Merton partnership
- Chloe & Sophie's Fund
- Community BSL training
- Family engagement

GROWING OUR SERVICE

- 1.0 QToD
- 0.5 Habilitation Specialist
- Deaf Specialist SaLT
- QTMSI support

LOOKING AHEAD: OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2026–27

NATSIP Review
Complete review to shape future provision.

→ **Expand BSL**
Grow BSL learning across more schools and settings.

→ **Increase Workforce**
Build our workforce to meet growing demand.

→ **Preparation for Adulthood**
Develop pathways for independence and life beyond school.

→ **Stronger Partnerships**
Work together for children and families. Stronger outcomes.

"HaVES is improving outcomes for deaf and visually impairled children and young across Sutton."

INCLUSION

The past year has been challenging in terms of exclusions, as we have seen permanent exclusions amongst certain cohorts begin to rise, and supported a number of complex cases. The Inclusion Team has responded to this by increasing support to schools and families. The expansion of Inclusion Surgeries, where professionals, schools and families can now access support and guidance weekly and bi-weekly respectively has proved successful.

Inclusion Co-ordinators are leading more Team around the Child and Team around the School meetings than ever before; developing plans in support of children at risk of exclusion. In addition, surgeries/consultations are held jointly with the virtual school, where children have a social worker and this has resulted in a multi-agency plan being developed so that plans are not developed in isolation.

The team have also expanded their offer of Targeted Inclusion Support meetings to now support four secondary schools, 2 primary schools and a special school – more than doubling the number of schools supported compared to last year.

The team are co-ordinating multi-agency meetings to look at contextual risks and support for schools with the greatest need in this area; recognising that schools cannot face certain challenges without the wider network.

The Inclusion Team provide support and guidance through a variety of forums and panels, including the Vulnerable Pupil Panels (medical, primary and secondary), SSAP, Helping Early, Placement Breakdown Prevention in addition to the CME Pod.

In partnership with Educational Psychology Services, Inclusion co-developed the revised Graduated Response Guidance for children and young people at risk of exclusion, which we have been promoting and embedding to ensure all avenues of support have been explored.

The team developed and piloted training for school governors, to ensure they feel confident to participate in exclusion review panels. This will now be rolled out more widely.



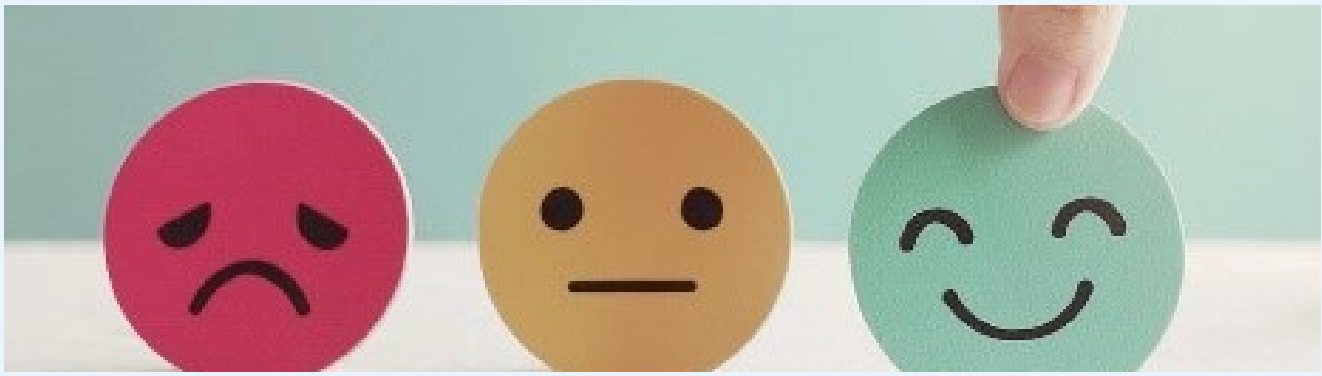
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM

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, cognitive behaviour therapy, dyadic therapy and drama therapy.
The team has delivered direct therapy to 62 individual children and young people (either 1:1 or as part of a group), totalling 373 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:
2 therapeutic groups were run
73 teacher support meetings were held
15 parent work interventions were run
109 staff attended staff workshops
30 parents attended drop in sessions

Referrals were received for a range of presenting concerns, including anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), low mood, and co-occurring low mood and anxiety though anxiety was the most cited concern across referrals. The MHPs offered a range of therapeutic interventions, including art therapy, drama therapy, EMDR, and CBT to address symptoms of low mood and anxiety. They also delivered group work to build social skills, resilience, and positive coping strategies.

Females accounted for the majority of referrals to the service, representing approximately 60% of all referrals, while males accounted for around 40%. This is consistent with national evidence indicating higher levels of engagement with mental health services among females. Overall, the service supported young people across a broad age range
though young people aged 12 to 15 years accounted for approximately half of all referrals, with the highest proportion coming from 13-year-olds.

This is consistent with national evidence showing increased demand for mental health support during early to mid-adolescence, when many mental health difficulties first emerge and emotional, social, and educational pressures can become more pronounced.



PARTICIPATION

The Participation Service is dedicated to empowering Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers by ensuring their voices, experiences, and views directly shape the services that affect them. The service works to bridge the gap between young people and decision-makers, while simultaneously providing life-enriching opportunities. Since its launch in January, the service has achieved significant milestones across strategy, personal development, and outdoor enrichment:

Strategy & Youth Voice Mechanisms

- Youth Voice Mechanisms: Established formal mechanisms to capture youth voice, including the creation of a participation strategy and a year-long event calendar to provide a clear structure for young people's voices to be heard.
- Digital Voice Mechanisms: Completed essential updates to the website to improve navigation and accessibility, ensuring all information regarding the Participation Service is accurate and easy to find with Corporate Parenting minutes available along with surveys and contact details for feedback submissions.

Trips & Holiday Activities

- North Wales Residential: Successfully delivered a residential trip to Wales for 7 CLA, which featured adventurous outdoor activities including gorge walking, cliff climbing, and wild swimming.
- Blackland Farm Residentials: Completed a successful 3-night residential trip for CLA featuring archery and crate stacking, alongside an additional trip involving raft building, climbing, kayaking, and an expedition.
- Easter Holiday Provision: Delivered a variety of holiday activities across Sutton, collaborating with local partners such as Sutton Museums and the Sutton Music Trust.

Sports & Personal Development

- London Mini Marathon: Supported 8 children looked after in participating in the London Mini Marathon on April 25th, achieving impressive results, including a 6th-place finish out of 1,000 runners.
- Personal Enrichment Programme: Developed and launched a pilot scheme working directly with young people to help them set goals and organise enrichment activities.



PAVING THE WAY

Paving the Way (PTW) has continued to provide early intervention and emotional wellbeing support to children and families across Sutton; helping children build confidence, resilience, and positive emotional health.

One of the service's key achievements this year has been reducing waiting times to approximately three months - enabling children and families to access support more quickly when they need it most.

During the year, 77 children attended our Warriors and Mini Warriors groups. These programmes supported children to better understand their emotions, develop coping strategies, strengthen social skills, and build self-esteem in a supportive group environment.

PTW also delivered one-to-one interventions and home visits, providing tailored support for children and their families. These sessions helped identify individual strengths and needs, while equipping parents and carers with practical strategies to support their child's emotional wellbeing.

In partnership with Limes College, the Family Support Group continued to offer a valuable space for parents to connect, share experiences, and gain greater confidence in supporting their children. A further six family workshops were delivered throughout the year, with 62 families attending. Covering topics such as emotional regulation, friendships, transitions, and sensory needs, these workshops provided families with practical tools and opportunities to learn together.

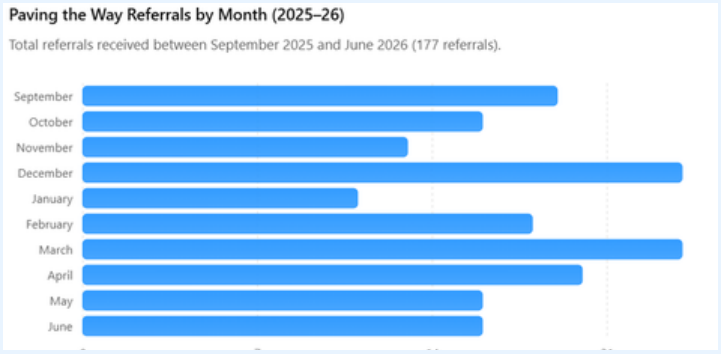
Through strong partnerships with schools and other agencies, PTW has continued to deliver effective, family-focused support that promotes positive outcomes for children and helps families feel understood, empowered, and supported.



Schools:
Outstanding service, very knowledgeable, and offers excellent advice for schools and parents."
"Families felt they were heard, and where 1:1 support was needed it was offered which really helped the child."

Parents and Carers:
"The support my son has received has made a very positive difference to him… he has learned tools to help him cope."
"Great advice. I feel hope that we are heading in the right direction."

Children and Young People:
"I feel more confident to talk to people."
"I have learnt to control my emotions."
"I made new friends, and the group helped me with my feelings."
"I don't bottle up my feelings anymore."



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND STANDARDS REPORT 2025–2026

SUMMARY

A year of collaboration, inclusive improvement and educational excellence.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

22	100%	11	Above National	3
Schools Supported	Schools visited through Engagement & Collaboration	Ofsted Inspections No school less than Good	Outcomes in EYFS, Phonics KS2, GCSE and A Level	Schools receiving targeted support

OUR COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT



OFSTED OUTCOMES 2025–2026

11	Inspections completed
5	Outstanding (45%)
6	Good (55%)
0	Requires Improvement
0	Inadequate

Another exceptional year for our schools.

STANDARDS & ACHIEVEMENT 2025–2026

EARLY YEARS & KS2

- Early Years (GLD) 69.7% – Above national
- Phonics (Y1) 82.9% – Above national
- KS2 (RWM Expected) 71.7% – Above national

GCSE 2025

Attainment 8
59.1 – Above national
English & Maths (Grade 4+)
82.4% – Above national
English & Maths (Grade 5+)
68.0% – Above national

A LEVEL 2025

A Level Pass Rate (A*-E)
97.6% – Above national
A Level A*-B
56.3% – Above national

Sustained and above national performance across all key stages.

MODERATION & QUALITY ASSURANCE

- KS2 Writing moderation completed across 12 schools.
- EYFS moderation and professional dialogue strengthened.
- High quality professional development well received.
- Consistent judgement and positive feedback.

Ensuring accuracy, consistency and confidence in teacher assessment.

LOOKING AHEAD: PRIORITIES 2026–2027

- Continue Engagement & Collaboration programme
- Expand school partnerships and sharing of expertise
- Strengthen SEND and inclusive practice
- Improve attendance and reduce persistent absence
- Raise curriculum quality, especially reading and writing
- Develop leadership at all levels
- Implement new Ofsted Framework
- Share excellent practice system-wide.

SEND LOCAL OFFER

The SEND Local Offer is a thriving, co-produced hub bringing together services, support and opportunities for children and young people with SEND and their families. Over the past year, it has grown in reach, strengthened partnerships, and continued to evolve through the voices and experiences of the Sutton community.

Growing Access & Reach

- Over 2,100 users accessing the Local Offer, with increasing engagement
- Continued development of the Sutton Information Hub as a trusted, central platform
- Improved navigation and content to make support easier to find

Putting Families First

- Shaped by ongoing feedback from parents, carers and young people
- Strong commitment to co-production and “You said, we did”
- Closer partnership working across education, health and care

Continuous Improvement

- Regular updates to keep information relevant, accessible and up to date
- Data and user insights driving meaningful improvements
- Ongoing focus on inclusion, quality and better outcomes for SEND families

Preparation for Adulthood Event

- 250+ children, young people and families attended the annual PfA event
- 42 stallholders offering support across employment, independence, health and community life
- Most attended event to date, giving young people hands-on opportunities to explore their future
- Created space for young people to ask questions, build confidence and plan next steps into adulthood





SEND SERVICE

The SEND service continues to support children and young people with the most complex needs through high-quality Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and timely statutory processes. This is a significant achievement in the context of the substantial increase in requests for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs), the rising number of EHCPs and annual reviews, as well as a growth in appeals, mediations, and demand for specialist school placements.

We have successfully managed this increasing demand by fostering strong partnerships with families, colleagues in health, social care, and education. We proactively welcome new families into the service each September and engage with them in advance of key stage transition processes to ensure a smooth and well-informed experience.

In addition, we continuously review and refine our service delivery in response to legislative changes, case law, and feedback from families, young people, and professional partners. This ensures that our approach remains responsive, collaborative, and focused on achieving the best outcomes for children and young people..

Feedback from families s 2025/26 - Year 10 and 5 Surveys.pptx

Statutory data 2025 (SEN2 return)

- **20 week process - 95.6%** despite an increase in the number of EHCNA requests of 8.4%*
- **100%** compliance with 15th February statutory deadline
- **100%** compliance with 31st March statutory deadline
- **AR indicative data**
  - **89%** of reviews of EHCP actioned within 4 weeks of the review meeting
  - **93%** of reviews of EHCP agreed to amend completed within statutory timescale
- **Number of residential placements –** maintained at 7 despite pressures

Total Active EHCPs as at Census Day: 2708

New plans issued: 251

Plans ceased: 243
- Transferred to another LA: 122 (50%)
- No longer needs plan: 30 (12%)
- Employment (non-apprenticeship): 18 (7%)
- Higher Education: 17 (7%)
- No longer in education/training: 41 (17%)

Apprenticeships: 9 (up from 2)
Supported Internships: 8 (up from 5)
Traineeships: 1 (down from 2)

SEND TRIBUNALS TEAM

The SEND Tribunal Team have received a high volume of appeals in 2026 (110 registered as of end of June, compared to 140 for the whole of 2025) this is in line with the national picture and is partly due to the SEND reforms which are currently being introduced by central government. Due to the increase in numbers the Tribunal Team are currently recruiting for an extra officer to enable us to continue offering a person centred and proactive service to all families who register an appeal.

As of the end of June, 3 appeals had been decided in the Local Authority's favour for this calendar year. This is broadly in line with national performance expectations. In the same period the Tribunal Team had resolved 18 appeals via consent order. This is in line with our aspiration to work constructively and proactively with families wherever possible to achieve outcomes that work for all parties.

The Tribunal Service also coordinate SEND mediations, where our numbers have been slightly lower in 2026 than in previous years (54 as of end of June, compared to 127 for the whole of 2025)

SEND SUPPORT & THE SEND SUPPORT ADVISORY PARTNERSHIP (SSAP)

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.



SUTTON INFORMATION, ADVICE & SUPPORT SERVICE (SIASS)

This year, SIASS strengthened and expanded its service model so that families, children and young people with SEND can access support in ways that work for them. Our focus has been on increasing choice, improving accessibility and building trust through a consistent, visible presence in local settings.

Key Achievements

- Increased SIASS visibility by attending Family Hubs, the PfA Hub, the ND Hub and school coffee mornings - making the service easier to approach.
- Introduced online bookable appointments, offering families and young people greater choice and flexibility in how they access support.
- Embedded direct work with young people, enabling them to understand their rights and express their views more confidently.
- Strengthened support for children with social workers
- Maintained high responsiveness and service quality despite significant growth in demand.

Impact

Bookable online appointments have been particularly well received, showing that when families are offered flexible and accessible options, their engagement increases. Our presence in local hubs and school settings has helped build trust and made SIASS more approachable for families who may not naturally seek out an opt in service. Young people are choosing to work with us directly, and we see the difference when they feel heard: increased confidence, clearer understanding of their rights and stronger participation in decisions about their education. Improved multi agency working has also strengthened support for vulnerable CYP, including those open to social care.

At a Glance

- 66% increase in enquiries
- 100% of enquiries responded to within 2 working days
- 70% of all enquiries resolved at first contact
- 11% of CYP supported via casework were/had been open to social care
- Regular presence in Family Hubs, PfA Hub, ND Hub and school coffee mornings

Looking Ahead

2026/27 SIASS will strengthen its digital offer, and expand tailored pathways for young people, families and professionals. We will continue to build strong links with Social Care and stay informed on SEND reform to ensure families receive accurate and up to date information.

THERAPIES

During the academic year, Cognus Therapies has continued to deliver high-quality, child-centred services, improving outcomes for children and young people across the local area.

In occupational therapy, we supported over 1,500 children and young people (approximately 1,300 Sutton residents). In speech and language therapy, we supported over 1,811 children and young people (approximately 1,600 Sutton residents). We worked with 69 Sutton settings this year and increased our reach through commissioning agreements with out-of-borough settings and Post-16 work at NESCOT.

Over 85% of children and young people made progress against their targets and outcomes. Our standardised outcome measure (TOMS) demonstrates positive impact on impairment, activity, participation and wellbeing, with improvements noted across all areas.

One of our greatest strengths is our centre of excellence. We have 54 Speech and Language Therapists, 46 Occupational Therapists and 10 Senior Therapy Assistants. We have excellent staff retention, with multiple staff receiving long-service awards this year, and strong recruitment success with staff transitioning to permanent contracts — enabling continuity of care for the children, young people and families we work with.

First OT apprenticeship successfully completed, another started in January 2026 and a further OT and a SaLT apprenticeship being applied for. A great way of growing our own staff.

Key developments this year include launching our accredited SEND Champion programme (having previously trained 131 staff across 53 settings), creating an AAC pathway, redesigning our therapy packages and launching the Verbo platform across the local area. Primary and Secondary Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) was co-developed with the Cognus Educational Psychology team and local schools, launching in September 2026.

Looking ahead, we will increase the universal and targeted support offered by settings in Sutton through OAP and Experts at Hand, enabling earlier intervention, improved outcomes at a younger age and sustainable skills embedded across all settings.

Our parent workshops have continued to be well attended over the last two academic years. View last year's parent training feedback

Traded Income - £1,000,000 secured with monies being reinvested back inot the local area

TRAVELLER EDUCATION SERVICE

The Traveller Education Service works collaboratively with other services in Cognus, schools and national Traveller networks to promote and support the engagement, inclusion and achievement of Traveller children and young people. Our expertise and advice was also sought by families and other professionals from all over the country.

We have continued to support the Elective Home Education team to secure evidence from a number of our families registered as educating at home in order to assess the suitability of the learning. We also worked closely with the CME team to close cases by locating the families and establishing whether they are in education or not.

We assisted a number of families to complete applications and secure school places from nursery up to secondary school.

In addition, the demand for 1:1 support from the service for Traveller pupils in schools increased by 15% from last year.

Feedback from end of year surveys undertaken with pupils who received 1:1 support was very positive - 25/25 pupils rated enjoyment of their 1:1 sessions as 5/5 stars (100%).
Pupils gave the following feedback regarding how sessions with the TES had helped them:

- *“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 know how to read and spell most of them now, because I did really well in my test this week.”*
- *“I enjoyed reading Traveller culture books and I am better at spelling”*

The team also received some really positive feedback from parents about the impact of support for their children:

- *“I just wanted to say thank you so much for all the support you’ve given to xxxx and xxxx, and the weekly support they’ve been receiving. We’ve noticed such a positive difference in both of them, and we really appreciate everything you’ve done."*
- *“XXX has now left school and will be starting a supported internship this month. I would like to thank you all involved with our family for all your support over the years I couldn’t have got through it all without you all.”*
- *"My son doesn’t take to just anyone. You make him feel like a safe space like he can be and do anything and “it’s ok” even when he gets things wrong “it’s ok” his not really feeling his best “it’s ok”. Gratitude given where it’s deserved and I am grateful for you being a part of all my children’s school memory - everyone has that one person when they grow up they never forget how they shaped their school years and I think you will be that person"*

VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Building Stronger Foundations

Approximately two thirds of all Sutton schools are participating in Building Stronger Foundations, our programme supporting schools to extend and embed relational, trauma-informed approaches. We work in close partnership with the Educational Psychology Service, who have delivered training to over 1,700 staff across Sutton through the programme. To date, schools have reported:

- 95% of staff report feeling confident to use relational practice
- all schools feel there is more inclusive practice
- 81% of schools report improved alternatives to isolation or exclusion, with two thirds of schools who have been on the programme for over a year reporting a reduction in suspensions or behaviour incidents.
- 86% reported improved pupil regulation
- almost half for all schools reviewed their behaviour policy

We have a strong partnership with the Attachment and Research Community and are one of the leading London local authorities in developing borough-wide relational practice through the programme. Sutton's practice is being showcased in regional events such as the London Southeast ARC conference and VRU events.

Advice and support for professionals working with children known to social care

Since September 2025, we have provided information, guidance or advice for over 440 cases of children under the remit of the Virtual School, mostly around concerns and requests for advice about supporting children with attendance or SEMH difficulties that impact their education. We also run weekly education consultations in collaboration with the EPS and Attendance team, providing schools and social workers a strong multi-agency forum to explore children's education barriers and generate ideas to support them.

THANK YOU



FOR 10 INCREDIBLE YEARS

Here's to the next chapter.

Sutton