

ANNUAL REVIEW

23-24



Cognus

No Limits on Learning

FOREWORD

I am delighted to present Cognus' Annual Review 2023-24.

It has been another busy year in the education sector with many of our 28 services experiencing record numbers of enquiries and casework in line with the national picture. This context has informed our close partnership with local area schools and education settings, working together to support the lived experience of our children, young people and their families, including those for whom accessing mainstream education is a challenge.

As always, Cognus continues to deliver a range of high quality, child-centred professional support for Sutton families and schools, and ahead of you reading the report I wanted to highlight just a few recent activities here.

Cognus has continued to lead on Sutton's attendance strategy with all core duties of the new legislation successfully in place prior to August 2024 when they became statutory as a result of the partnership work across the local area. We have also worked with education settings and partner agencies to reduce permanent exclusions by 35% overall, with a 56% reduction for those with an EHCP this year.

In the last academic year, the School Admissions Team successfully placed 151 Sutton children for whom there was no school vacancy through the Fair Access Protocol, and our rates of confirmed parental preference are higher than London and national averages.

This summer, 96% of Sutton's Children Looked After in Year 11 secured a positive education, employment or training destination to start Year 12, which provides a great platform as they approach adulthood; it was positive to see 30% of the GCSE cohort achieve 5 or more GCSEs, many of these at grade 4 and above.

Finally, Sutton Music Trust is now established as a separate charity subsidiary and thriving in its ongoing ability to deliver music education for young people across Sutton. We look forward to the opportunities this will bring!

There are many more success stories in this report, which I'd encourage you to read and share with colleagues. As always, I and the rest of the Cognus team would like to extend our ongoing thanks to our partners across schools, education settings, local authority, voluntary sector and families who support our work.

#cognusandproud



JOANNA CASSEY
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
COGNUS LIMITED

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT

This year has been another busy year for the team, implementing all the changes and expectations set out in the government guidance. This includes creating our own Graduated Response to support schools and the wider professional network to develop their approach to school attendance. Cognus and partners also refreshed the Borough's policy for 'Educating children with emotional, wellbeing and health related needs who cannot attend school'.

We have hosted three network meetings this year, inviting all schools in Sutton to share practice and gain peer support around their attendance challenges in school. We have welcomed speakers from other support teams in the Borough including Early Help and School Nursing to help schools navigate the changing world of school attendance locally and nationally.

Our sessions have been well attended from a variety of schools; we welcomed 48 attendees at our meeting in March and 97%

of participants felt that it had a positive impact on their role, with 83% scoring the session 4 out of 5 or higher. We also ran additional legal intervention training for schools this year, attended by 36 staff members from Sutton schools to find out more about the process, plus how and when it can be used to support a pupil's school attendance.

For more complex cases, the team also provided 127 Targeting Support meetings with schools in Sutton to support them with attendance, including independent schools. Schools have fed back about the usefulness of the meetings and the additional support provided for problem-solving more challenging cases collaboratively.

Finally, we have improved oversight and understanding of attendance at a child, school and local area level due to the implementation of Studybugs, attendance tracking software, with 94% of schools signed up. This enables us to have strategic conversations, develop thematic responses that feed in to the local area attendance strategy and have targeted conversations with schools.



HEARING & VISION EDUCATION SERVICE (HAVES)

We have changed our name to Hearing and Vision Education Services (HaVES) from Sensory Impairment Service to celebrate what our young people *have* while moving away from negative language and confusion with sensory and autism.

We have had success hosting events for our deaf children and young people (DCYP) offering opportunities for them to meet other DCYP. Often our DCYPs can be isolated in their schools/nurseries, either being the only one with a level of deafness or in such a large school unaware of other DCYPs. These events encompass the whole family, thus offering not only the DCYP a network of support but also the families too. We have had 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 an easy path for our youngsters; 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 DCYP experience in a learning environment to succeed. We have presented many trainings to settings, professionals and in the wider community (for example Cub Scouts) with positive feedback and enthusiasm. Recently, we have 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 hoping 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 83 individual children and young people (either 1:1 or as part of a group). 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.

Twelve student workshops have been delivered to whole classes, and in some case whole year groups focused on a particular difficulty that has been identified across the whole cohort, such as friendship skills or exam stress.

There were a total of six groups run during this year which included four art therapy groups, one Tree of Life group and one Kintsugi group. The focus of groups has mainly been on psychotherapeutic creative intervention, picking up on needs related to anxiety, self-esteem and identity. In the majority of cases

'meaningful improvement' (and a significant increase in the pre and post measure scores) has been achieved.

Thirteen families have been engaged with a course of therapy and four parents/carers have been directly supported themselves. Two families have undergone a course of Dyadic Therapy which is an intense programme of support delivered to the parent and child together to improve the quality of their relationship.

At least 44 parents/carers have attended drop-in sessions or booked consultations to discuss concerns that they have at home with a member of the team.

In total 49 parents/carers have participated in parent groups or workshops. Groups which parents have attended include an anxiety workshop at Carshalton High School for Girls and one at St Philomena's. St Mary's Junior and Infants School also requested a Building Resilience workshop which was attended by 22 parents.



EARLY YEARS

During the academic year 23-24 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, 436 children each month offering SEN Support across all settings. At its peak the team were supporting settings with 616 children in one month.
- 502 SEN Support visits and 22 cohort visits over the year.
- 141 Quality, advice and support visits to settings and 142 to childminders.

With the support in place from the EY Team during the year, 97% of settings 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; ADHD Foundation training for parents/carers; and running the annual Early Years Transfer Morning during the Summer term, which was attended by 100% of pre-schools and almost all schools.

The broader network of professionals in Sutton supporting children and families in the EY is strong and the work of the Early Years Operational Group (EYOG) continues to expand, now including Social Care representatives and Health Visiting on a consistent basis. A total of 209 children were referred into the group between April 2023 and August 2024. £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.



PAVING THE WAY

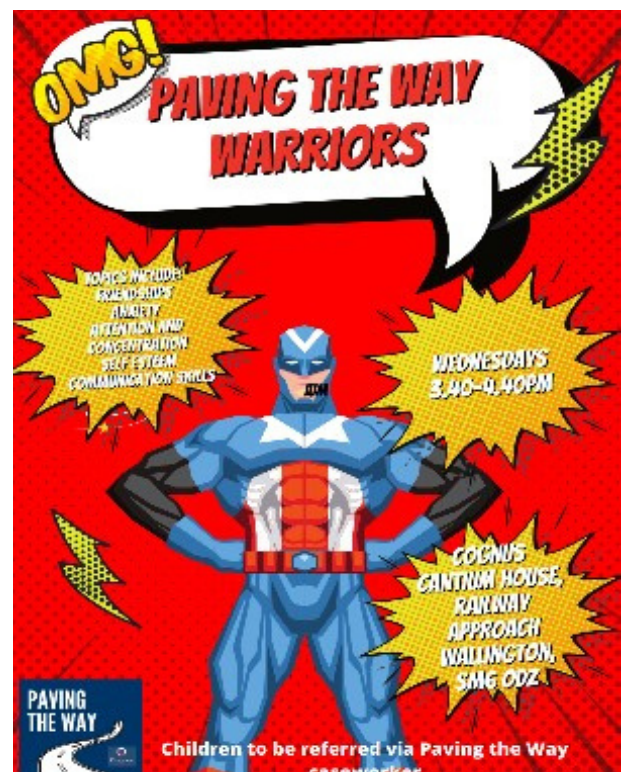
Over the past year, Paving the Way has made significant strides in fostering family engagement and support within the community. The programme's core initiatives - parent coffee mornings, the family support group, embedding and improving the weekly panel and a series of five family workshops - have been instrumental in creating a strong foundation for parent involvement and well-being.

The Parent Coffee Morning held at St.Cecelia's School provided a welcoming space for parents to connect, share experiences, and receive guidance on navigating various challenges. This informal gathering fostered a sense of community among parents, encouraging open dialogue about topics like mental health, school-life balance, and strategies for supporting their children.

The Family Support group, meeting weekly, offer a more focused environment for parents to receive emotional and practical support. Facilitated in partnership with The Limes College these sessions empowered parents with coping strategies and resources, enhancing their ability to manage both personal stress and their children's needs. The event received 100% positive feedback, with just one parent saying: "I will be more confident that my parenting style is good enough, I will understand my kids needs better, also I will be able to protect and support them better."

Throughout the year, Paving the Way also hosted five family workshops, each targeting a specific area of need, such as growth mindset and teamwork. These workshops were highly interactive, providing parents with practical tools to better support their children's development and well-being.

Overall, Paving the Way has strengthened family ties and equipped parents with the knowledge and skills necessary to foster a supportive home environment for their children's success.



EDUCATION SAFEGUARDING

In June 2024, the Education Safeguarding Team held a Primary to Secondary transfer of safeguarding information event at the Chaucer Centre. When sharing safeguarding information, it is important to do this before the child or young person starts at the new school so that the necessary support can be put in place.

In total 38 primary schools and 14 secondary schools attended. For those that were unable to make it, follow up meetings to share the safeguarding files were arranged.

PC Chris Hamilton joined the event throughout the morning, so that Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) were able to raise concerns and make bookings for him to visit their schools if required.

One Secondary DSL in attendance said: “The whole morning is invaluable. The discussions, the sharing of information and the networking – I feel like I have been at a wellbeing event”

Another Primary DSL said: “The event was well organised, and I left the building feeling that I had shared the relevant information. You build relationships with these pupils over the years, and you want to make sure they get the best support in their new school.”

EHE & EOTAS

Elective Home Education (EHE) and EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) have been rising nationally. Since Sept 2020, Sutton has had 834 new registrations and 453 leavers. This is a 202% increase in active EHE comparing July 2019 to 2024! Cognus’ work with local partners and professionals means 82% of home educated children in Sutton are receiving a suitable education, with the balance going through the checking process.

We have also quality assured 17 tutor provisions over the course of the last academic year. There is a robust quality assurance check that requires multi-level sign off to gain approval. This ensures provision is of a required standard in terms of learning and safeguarding.

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

This service has seen a number of highlights and successes this year, including:

- 100% of schools surveyed were satisfied overall with the service from Cognus' Educational Psychology Service (EPS). 88% were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the positive impact that has resulted from Educational Psychologist (EP) involvement.
- New packages of work have been introduced to schools including 'Understanding ADHD' diagnosis sessions, PATH meetings for organisational change and therapeutic play.
- The service has continued to deliver training for schools and settings through centre-based, fully funded training, sessions commissioned by the Borough and other traded sessions including ELSA, Lego Therapy, Precision Teaching and more!
- Parent workshops have been held in five schools, and several EPs have attended parent groups run out of Sutton Family Hubs.
- There are now over 120 Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) receiving supervision from the service every year.
- The Building Stronger Foundations (BSF) project involved link EPs and supported schools in beginning to understand and embed trauma-informed policies and practice.
- The team contributed to just over 440 Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (ECHNAs), with over 80 of these children already being known to the team. On average just under 90% of advice reports were submitted within six weeks.
- Team members have a dedicated focus on anti-racist practice and have researched this area in Sutton schools. This has impacted the wider EPS to become an anti-racist and more inclusive service.
- The Cognus website has been updated to include a range of support materials for school staff as well as parent/carers.
- The EPS has continued to trade with nearly all Sutton schools and has increased the number of hours it delivers through traded work. In total the team delivered 3,926 hours of traded time, generating income which will be reinvested into the service.



THERAPIES

Cognus' Therapies provision has continued to go from strength to strength; here are just some of our highlights

- The therapy team have supported over 2,500 children and young people to access their education in schools and settings through the use of Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy sessions, plus use of resources and strategies. 85% of children and young people are achieving some, if not all, their targets.
- Following on from the SEND Champion training delivered to 59 members of school staff across 28 schools in Sutton, we extended this to Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) and teachers in November 2023, representing 17 education provisions across the London Borough of Sutton. Our workshops have helped these professionals extend their learning related to the Cognus Therapies' Graduated Response.
- Cognus' Post 16 Assessment clinic continues to grow, from having 18 slots in 2022-23 to 25 in the academic year 2023-24. 100% of young people and families who accessed the clinic were satisfied with the therapists' communication and the assessment on the day. One parent said: "We felt the therapists were adapting the session based on M's responses and how she was presenting. They were brilliant in engaging M in the assessment". Assessments are completed in line with the local Preparation for Adulthood agenda to support young people as they transition from education to the workplace and adulthood.
- Cognus Therapies supported 10 university placements for Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy this year. Cognus is delighted that some have come back to us for permanent positions once they qualified, developing and future-proofing our staff and talent pipeline. We have also provided work experience opportunities for local students who are considering careers in therapies.



TRAVELLER EDUCATION SERVICE

Cognus' Traveller Education Service celebrated Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month (GRTHM) in June, recognising the diversity and richness of these communities and sharing their history.

We encouraged schools to join in by sharing resources via our website and delivered assemblies in schools to help promote awareness of Travellers. We also asked the children and families we work with about their own histories.

This year, we also arranged and supported several bespoke transition visits to secondary schools for our most vulnerable pupils/families and supported them to get help with purchasing uniform in an effort to remove any barriers to starting secondary in September.

We also supported one family that left the Borough to ensure school places were secured in a new local authority. The school in question have lots of Travellers in the school and other families who need support and are very jealous that they don't have a Traveller Education Service, as they thought our service was wonderful!

In other feedback, 100% of respondents rated the professionalism of the Traveller Education Service as 'Outstanding'; 100% of respondents also rated how well the pupil support was delivered as 'Outstanding'.

Feedback from children and young people has been equally positive, with one young person saying: "It's helped me a lot, because I'm getting better and better at learning and reading. You helped me to write neatly and when I was being a bit naughty in class and being silly about coming into class you talked to me about it nicely and now I don't do it anymore, so you helped me with that too."



SUTTON VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Over the last year, Sutton Virtual School ran a pilot programme, Building Stronger Foundations, to support schools to extend relational, trauma-informed practice across their settings. Six schools participated in the first year and all schools achieved an ARC (Attachment, Regulation and Competency) accreditation, having audited provision, addressed areas of development, and undertaken a range of trauma training and staff CPD to develop practice.

Over 250 staff across the six schools completed trauma training and in a feedback survey, all schools stated that Sutton Virtual School was effective in promoting a relational approach, with 83% of respondents rating us as 'very effective'. All schools reported improvement to practice in their setting and all reported an improvement in their audit reviews, highlighting how the package of support aided the extension of relational practice in their school.

Two of our Building Stronger Foundations schools also presented workshops at the London and South-East ARC conference, sharing their journey towards embedding relational practice with colleagues from across London and the South-East.

We have now extended Building Stronger Foundations to provide existing schools a second year of participation to support the embedding of trauma-informed practice, and we have also onboarded 16 new schools for the 2024-25 academic year.

Other highlights include our Summer Fun Day at the Quad, an even bigger success this year, with well over 100 children attending with their families. The children loved the inflatables, the petting zoo, games wagon and the range of arts activities on offer. With the sun coming out, the children enjoyed an ice cream, pizza and refreshments and the sense of partnership and community was strongly felt by all. The event was organised by Sutton Virtual School in partnership with Children's Social Care.



INCLUSION

Over the past year we have seen excellent multi-agency working and innovation across the local partnership to prevent school exclusions. This work is paying dividends with a 35% reduction in the number of exclusions in academic year 2023/24 compared to the previous year. We have also seen a 56% reduction in the number of children excluded with an EHCP and a 32% reduction for children with SEND support needs.

A range of support and initiatives have supported this outcome, including Early Help Integrated Youth Support allocated to specific secondary schools, development of alternative provision in partnership with London Borough of Sutton and Limes College, and weekly Inclusion surgeries for schools, with these held monthly for parents.

In addition, Cognus has worked with three Sutton Secondary schools to pilot targeted inclusion support meetings, with the aim of reducing exclusions and suspensions. The impact of these meetings has been incredible; Sarah Westall, Inclusion Team Leader, said: “These meetings have enhanced our ability to identify and address the needs of all students that are referred, especially those facing additional challenges. By bringing together key professionals, we’ve fostered a collaborative environment where the young people’s needs are considered holistically.”

All schools involved shared that the quality of the advice and guidance provided is excellent and that there is a significant positive impact to the school. One school commented that this work “complements the way we run our internal inclusion management team and adds another layer of support”, with another saying, “The Inclusion Coordinator goes above and beyond and is also challenging when needed- it’s a very helpful working relationship”. Due to the success of the pilot, Cognus are rolling out the approach to a further two schools over the 24-25 academic year.

INFINITY SUPPORT

We are delighted to introduce Cognus’ Infinity Support, designed to enable neurodivergent children and young people to thrive and achieve their full potential.

Infinity Support is a centralised online platform where children, families and professionals can access all our resources, information, guidance, support and training on neurodivergent conditions, such as social communication and autism. Infinity Support brings together Cognus’ unique multi-disciplinary approach to improve accessibility of information and support in one place.

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.

For more information visit:
www.cognus.org.uk/services/infinity-support



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