

## People Committee



**Thursday, 25 September 2025, 7.00 pm**

**at the Civic Offices - St Nicholas Way, Sutton, SM1 1EA**

To all members of the People Committee:-

- Chair: Councillor Marian James
- Vice-Chairs: Councillor Rob Beck and Councillor Paul Cole
- Councillors: Qasim Esak, Cryss Mennaceur, Gemma Munday, Cumar Sahathevan, Colin Stears, Moira Butt, Tom Drummond, Mike Dwyer, Jane Pascoe and Jillian Green
- Co-Optees: Andrew Theobald (Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark) and Gwynn Bassan (Anglican Diocese of Southwark)
- Substitutes: Councillors Isabel Araujo, Ruth Dombey, Edward Joyce, Sam Martin, Jayne McCoy, Lisa Webster, Bryony Lindsay-Charlton, Jonathan Pearce, Vanessa Udall, Wendy Clark, Catherine Gray, Param Nandha, Tim Foster and Nick Matthey

This is a Council meeting held in public. Additional representations are at the invitation of the Chair of the Committee. If you are a relevant organisation and you wish to submit representations on a proposal contained within the reports to this agenda please submit a request via Committee Services three working days before the meeting date.

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**This meeting will be recorded and made available on the Council's website.**

**PLEASE NOTE:** Any decision taken at this meeting does not become definitive until 10am on the third working day after the meeting. Any four members of the Council may notify the Chief Executive by then if they require a decision to be reviewed by the appropriate committee at its next meeting. Please contact the Committee Services representative shown on the front page for further information.

Helen Bailey  
Chief Executive  
Monday, 15 September 2025

Enquiries to: Committee Services Tel: 020 8770 4990, Email: [committee.services@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@sutton.gov.uk)

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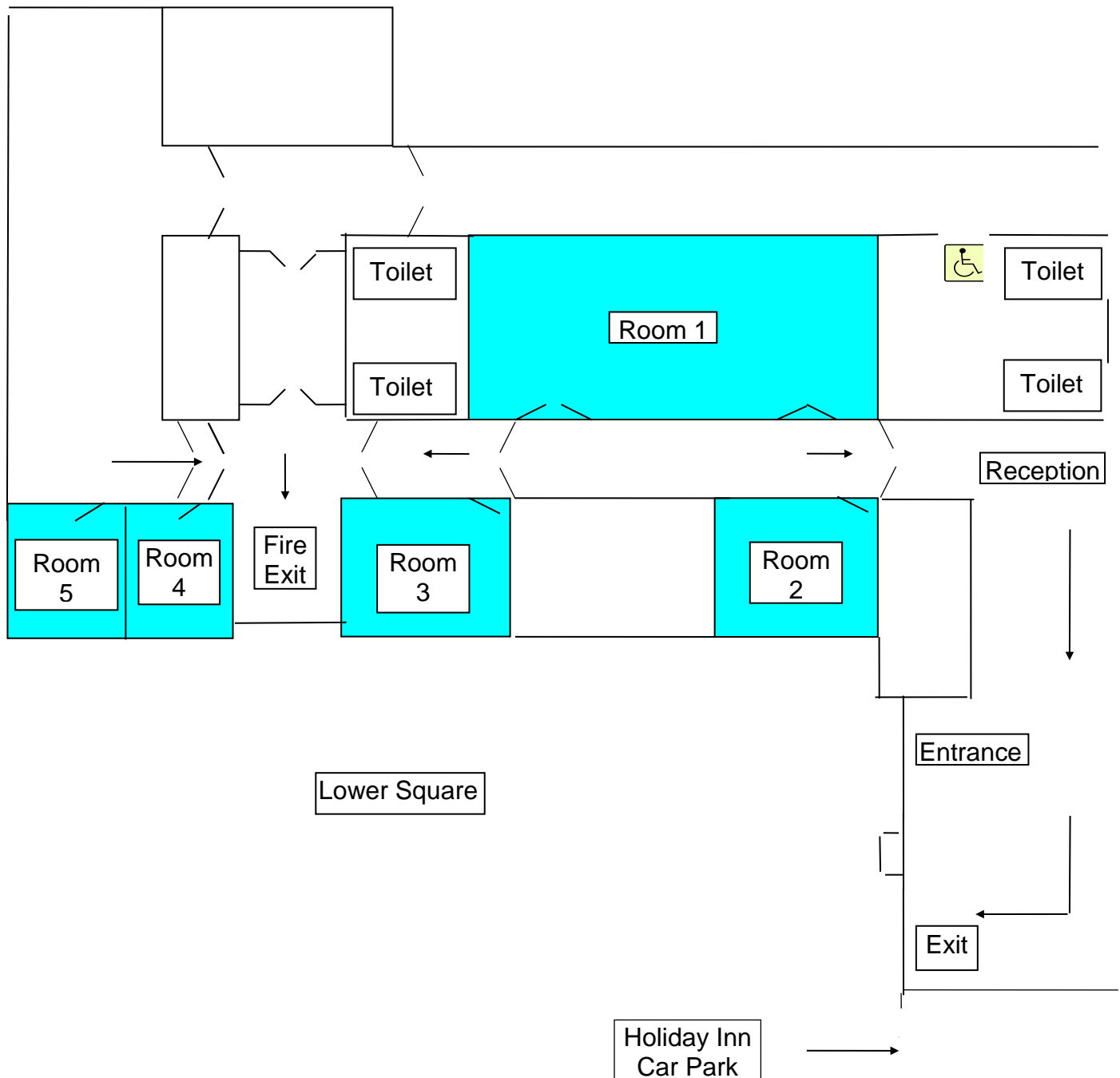
# A G E N D A

1. **Welcome and Introductions**
2. **Apologies for absence**
3. **Declarations of interest**
4. **Minutes of the previous meeting** 5 - 6  
  
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2025.
5. **Any urgent business**  
  
To consider any items which, in the view of the Chair, should be dealt with as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances (*in accordance with S100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972*).
6. **Special Educational Needs/ Disabilities and Alternative Provision Strategy 2024/27** 7 - 60  
  
To provide an update to the Committee on the following:  
(i) Progress made against the Special Educational Needs / Disabilities and Alternative Provision Strategy 2024/27 agreed by the Committee, September 2024  
  
(ii) A summary of the SEN2 published performance data and how Sutton compares to other local areas  
  
(iii) an update on the current financial pressures and position on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) including actions being taken to mitigate those budget pressures.
7. **Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services 2025** 61 - 124  
  
An inspection of Local Authority Children's Services completed by Ofsted in Sutton 2025.
8. **People Committee In Year Performance Report** 125 -134  
  
To enhance the scrutiny work of standing committees and governance around the provision of Social Care, we provide twice-yearly performance data for the committee to be able to provide challenge, explore performance issues, and agree actions to improve performance.
9. **Homecare Update** 135 -142  
  
An update on the implementation of the new Homecare Commissioning Arrangements.

**CIVIC OFFICES, SUTTON  
GROUND FLOOR MEETING ROOMS**

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### **Reminder – Declaration of Interests**

Members should consider the following interests and whether they have any they should declare.

#### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Where you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any business of the Authority at this meeting and you have either declared it beforehand in the Register of Members' Interests or to the Monitoring Officer for entry in the Register you must state at this meeting that you have such an interest and then withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting is being held whilst that business is considered.

Where you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any business of the Authority at this meeting and have not previously declared it you must declare the nature of that interest at this meeting and then withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting is being held whilst that business is considered.

#### **Other Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

Where you have any other pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any business at this meeting you must declare that interest, but may continue to speak and vote on the matter. However, if the interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest then you should declare the interest and withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting is being held whilst that business is considered.

Further information on these matters can be found in the Council's Code of Conduct and Constitution. If you are in any doubt as to whether you have an interest you should seek advice **before** the committee meeting from Alexa Coates.

If, during the course of the committee meeting, you consider you may have an interest you should always declare it.

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**People Committee****5 June 2025****PEOPLE COMMITTEE****5 June 2025 at 7.00 pm**

**MEMBERS:** Councillor Marian James (Chair), Councillor Rob Beck (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Paul Cole (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Qasim Esak, Cryss Mennaceur, Gemma Munday, Cumar Sahathevan, Colin Stears, Moira Butt, Tom Drummond, Mike Dwyer, Jane Pascoe and Jillian Green

**ABSENT** Andrew Theobald and Gwynn Bassan

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair Councillor Marian James welcomed those present and those watching on the live stream.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Gwynn Bassan and Andrew Theobald, and for lateness from Councillor Qasim Esak.

Councillor Qasim Esak arrived at 19.01pm

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING****5. RESOLVED:**

1. that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2025 be agreed as an accurate record.

**5. ANY URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

**6. UPDATE ON SUTTON'S LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAMME**

The Chair welcomed members of Speak Up Sutton and Advocacy for All, and thanked them for attending.

The Health and Care Integration Programme Lead presented the report.

The Speak Up Sutton Members answered questions from the Committee which explained support and input they had provided in preparation of the report.

Resolved:

- 1. The progress against delivering Sutton’s Learning Disabilities Strategy 2022-2027 be noted

**7. WILLOW RISE INSPECTION OUTCOME**

The Service Manager, Willow Rise Residential Services presented the report.

Resolved:

- 1. The outcome of the first full Ofsted inspection for Willow Rise Residential Services and the overall “Good” judgement received be noted

**8. DELIVERING AMBITIOUS FOR SUTTON: PEOPLE COMMITTEE**

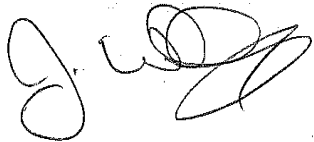
The Strategic Director, People introduced the report.

Resolved:

- 1. The role and remit of the People Committee as set out in the report be noted

The meeting ended at 9.14 pm

Chair: .....  
Date: .....

<b>Report Title</b>	Special Education Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision Strategy 2024/27		
<b>Committee</b>	People Committee		
<b>Committee Date</b>	25 September 2025		
<b>Committee Chair</b>	Councillor Marian James		
<b>Report From</b>	Jonathan Williams, Director of Children's Services		
<b>Report Author</b>	Kieran Holliday, Director, Education, Integrated Support and Safer Communities		
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All Wards		
<b>Ambitious for Sutton priorities</b>	An inclusive place for everyone		
<b>Open/Exempt</b>	Open		
<b>Signed</b>		<b>Date</b>	12.9.2025

## 1 Summary

- 1.1 A priority in Sutton Council's Ambitious for Sutton Corporate Plan 2022-2027 is to create an inclusive place for everyone where people from all backgrounds feel included, with support for young people, families, older people and vulnerable residents.
- 1.2 The Council's vision is that *"we are collectively ambitious for our children and young people. Together we want to provide them with the best chances to achieve their best outcomes in life, whatever their starting point, and to prepare them effectively for adulthood"*.
- 1.3 A central part of this ambition is to ensure that young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and those attending Alternative Provision (AP) in the Borough are well supported and receive high-quality education services within the resources the Council has available.
- 1.4 With this in mind, each year the committee receives a report that focuses on SEND learners in the Borough and the work that is done by the local area partnership to support their needs. In addition to this report, Appendix A provides further information on the progress that has been made against the Council's SEND and AP strategy. Appendix B

provides information on how well the Council's SEND services are performing in comparison to other local areas. Appendix C provides the latest draft self evaluation which provides information on the impact local area services have on children and young people with SEND.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note progress against the Special Education Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision Strategy 2024/27.
- 2.2 To note the 'SEN2' data published by the Government in June and how Sutton's SEND data compares to other local areas.
- 2.3 To note the latest financial position of the local area and the forecast deficit on the High Needs Block, as well as the actions that are underway in the Council's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) management plan.
- 2.4 To note the latest draft Local Area self evaluation against the Local Area SEND inspection framework.

## 3 Background and Key Information

### Sutton's SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2024/27

- 3.1 The People Committee agreed on the priorities for the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy in September 2024. The 5 key priorities agreed were based on the assessed strengths and areas for development in the local area last year and are set out below:

1	<b>Earlier Identification and more timely support</b> for children and young people with SEND and additional needs so that their needs don't escalate
2	<b>Embed joined-up and relational practice</b> - so parents and young people receive more coordinated support when they need it
3	<b>Strengthen access to education for vulnerable pupils</b> to ensure a sufficiency of high-quality specialist and Alternative Provision in the Borough
4	<b>Grow the voice and influence of children and young people / parents</b> and improve the way we listen and act on feedback
5.	A more <b>financially sustainable system</b> so we live within our means and prioritise resources on those children and young people that need them most

- 3.2 The SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy is a three year programme overseen by the [Sutton SEND and AP Strategic Partnership](#), which is a non-statutory board responsible

for overseeing the programme of work in the local area to improve the experiences of young people with SEND and additional needs. This Board is jointly chaired by the Council's Director for Children's Services and the Place Director, South West London Integrated Care Board (ICB).

3.3 Appendix A provides a summary of the good progress that has been made against the action plan that underpins the strategy. Each of the developments below contribute to creating a more inclusive education system in the Borough. Key developments include:

- The introduction of a new Playwise Support Passport to improve the experience of transitions for children and young people (and their parent/carers) with complex SEND/Medical needs.
- The development of "Every Child Every School" guidance co-produced with educational settings across Early Years, Primary and Secondary phases to articulate what provision is expected to be 'ordinarily available' in our mainstream schools to support children with SEND.
- Sutton has formally signed up to the London Inclusion Charter (January 2025) and has secured funding for five primary schools trained in the 'Talk Matters' programme (dialogic teaching and talk boost), with 96% of the 444 participating pupils narrowing the communication gap with their peers after 10 weeks of the programme. A new programme called 'Difference Matters' aimed at supporting neurodivergent young people in mainstream secondary schools starts in September 2025.
- A local multidisciplinary AP taskforce is now fully operational at the Limes College to better coordinate specialist support to young people with additional needs and at risk of exclusion.
- Additional Alternative Provision has been developed at Sunningdale Road, opening in September 2025, offering vocational training opportunities for young people at risk of exclusion.
- Opening of brand new purpose-built special school (Carew Academy) on the Sheen Way site for children and young people with autism and complex needs - May 2025
- Construction work underway for a Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) hub at the Sutton Life Centre - October 2025 opening, along with a new 72-place Orchard Hill College Provision for young people aged 16 and above with complex additional needs.
- A new Parent Carer Forum has been established in the local area - Sutton SEND Forum.
- Expansion of Sherwood Park onto the former Carew Manor site, creating additional local specialist provision.
- Confirmation from the DfE that Angel Hill special school will be built on the Rosehill site for September 2027.
- The creation of a new Secondary resource base for children with autism needs at the Overton Grange School.

3.4 Although not explicitly part of the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy, the recent 'Good' Ofsted outcome for Sutton College should also be noted in any report about how well learners with SEND are supported in the Borough. The inspection recently praised the high-quality education provided to apprentices, learners on English language courses

and people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). A fuller report will be brought back to the People Committee in December on this outcome.

- 3.5 The priorities and actions in the SEND and AP Strategy will contribute to the Council's wider ambition of creating an inclusive learning environment for all learners in Sutton and the strategy will continue to guide the work of the local area partnership over the next two years. However, it will span a time period where significant changes may be made at a national level to address the increasingly unsustainable financial challenges that the national SEND system faces. A schools white paper focussing on SEND reform is expected to be published later in the year or early next year which is likely to have significant implications for how SEND services are delivered in the future. Where necessary the local area strategy summarised above will need to adapt and respond to that national reform agenda.

#### SEN2 Data and what it tells us about SEND in Sutton

- 3.6 Each year the Department for Education collects data from local authorities about Education, Health and Care Plans - this dataset is known as 'SEN2 data'. This is the third year that the SEN2 return has provided pupil-level data and each year the People Committee is provided with a summary of how Sutton compares to the national and regional picture. The latest published dataset covers the calendar year 2024.
- 3.7 There has been one main change since last year's collection, which is that Local Authorities were asked to voluntarily share information regarding Annual Reviews (this data return will be mandatory for 2025).
- 3.8 Appendix B provides a summary of the data submitted for Sutton and shows that the Council performs well against London and national averages against most of the metrics recorded in the dataset. The following observations can be made from the data:
- EHCPs continue to increase based upon the number of requests for assessment (EHCNA); this increase is above national and London averages.
  - The number of requests for assessment was slightly higher in 2024 than in 2023, though the percentage increase has significantly slowed to 2.5% (28.7% in 2023).
  - 95.8% of decisions on whether to assess are made within the 6-week deadline; this is both an improvement on last year and above regional and national figures.
  - Decisions not to assess are above the national averages and last year's percentage. Key reasons for this include an increase in requests for an EHCNA without prior Educational Psychologist advice being sought (65% in 2023, 74% in 2024). An additional factor relates to a high rate (25%) of all requests being submitted directly by parents rather than schools. This being relevant given that parent requests have a higher rate of refusal (approximately 70% against 30% for school requests).
  - Where there is a decision not to assess, families have historically been offered a 'Next Steps Meeting' to discuss, in partnership with the school, how a child's needs can be met at SEN Support level, or other actions to resubmit requests. To



strengthen support available, this has been replaced with cases being referred to an SEND Support Advisory Partnership, a multi-agency partnership that provides advice, resources, interventions, and, where appropriate, additional funding to support next steps (a pilot has been completed in the summer term with a view to full roll-out in September 2025).

- Despite the increase in the number of EHCPs being maintained, 20-week timeliness continues to be well above the national average. There has been a reduction in timeliness in 2024 over 2023 due to continued growth in the number of EHCPs and associated casework, including the Annual Review process where staffing resources have not grown in a commensurate way.
- Where EHCPs have been issued late, this is predominantly the result of late advice from professionals (68% of cases); this links to capacity pressures for Educational Psychologists and therapists in light of increased statutory work. Cognus Ltd's focus on recruitment and retention, alongside a review of the operating model, has enabled Sutton to maintain a sufficient level of permanent staffing to help mitigate this. 22% can be attributed to staff capacity, which links to the increased number of EHCPs and casework, as well as the impact of staff turnover (i.e. impact on vacancy factors whilst recruiting and then the training period before effectively managing a full caseload; 11 staff were recruited and onboarded through 2024).
- The rate of decisions not to issue EHCPs has decreased against a London and national increase.
- The SEND Tribunal rate is not part of the SEN2 data return; instead, the Ministry of Justice publishes this information using SEN2 data in its calculation. Sutton's rate has increased by 0.3% to 3.2% (representing an increase from 73 to 90 appeals lodged); this is in line with the national rate, which rose by 0.7% to 3.2%.
- Mediations remain a focus for Sutton, and these continue to have strong outcomes; 62% of cases where families access mediation do not proceed with their appeal through the First-Tier Tribunal.
- Annual Review data is statutory for the first time this year; the data shows Sutton outperforms London and national figures in this area, significantly so for providing a decision to families within 4 weeks of a review meeting taking place.

- 3.9 In summary, Sutton's data compares positively in the context of a national system that is under significant pressure. The timeliness in completing EHCPs within statutory timeframes remains strong when compared to the national picture and is a credit to the dedicated staff that work in the service and in the context of recruitment challenges in SEND teams, as well as well-documented national pressures in the availability of Educational Psychologists (highlighted by the National Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman).

#### Sutton's latest High Needs Block Position

- 3.10 Priority 5 of the Sutton SEND Strategy is to create a more financially sustainable system. This forms one of the four LBS financial sustainability programmes alongside Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care, Housing and Temporary Accommodation.

- 3.11 This is a priority because the Financial Year (FY) 2024/25 outturn position on the Council's Dedicated Schools Grant position was an overspend of £9.2m. The deficit carried forward from FY2023/24 was £1.4m, giving an overall deficit carried forward to FY2025/26 of £10.6m. Given that demand for EHCPs continues to grow, the forecast position for this year is an overspend of circa £12.6m, which will increase the deficit position to circa £23.2m at the end of this financial year. This is largely a result of the funding that is received from the Government over the last few years increasing at a rate that is less than the costs of supporting a growing number of children with EHCPs in the borough.
- 3.12 Work has been underway this year to try and mitigate the ongoing pressures in the High Needs Block through the development of a DSG Management Plan. The plan was presented and endorsed by the Schools Forum in February 2025. A summary of the plan is set out in Appendix A under priority 5, with key highlights set out below:
- Ordinarily Available Provision for early years, primary and secondary schools guidance (co-produced with schools) has been developed and is in the process of being launched across the local area.
  - A SEND Support Advisory Partnership (SSAP) pilot has been completed, and a rollout to all Sutton schools is planned for September to provide multidisciplinary advice, support and funding for pupils at SEND Support.
  - A new process of transition plans and associated funding allocated to high-needs children moving into Reception classes to provide additional funding outside of an EHCP has been implemented.
  - Additional specialist and alternative provision (AP) places have also been created across existing special schools and mainstream school bases, from September 2025, to increase the sufficiency of state-funded specialist provision to reduce reliance on Non-Maintained and Independent (NMI) placements.
  - A focus on analysis of NMI placements via a dedicated post has resulted in the SEND team implementing a strategy to reduce NMI costs, which is projected to have saved c.£700,000 at the point of Key Stage transfer in September 2025.
- 3.13 Whilst considerable efforts are ongoing, given the ongoing growth in EHCPs, the DSG Management Plan will not address the structural deficit in the High Needs Block. Instead the aim is to reduce the rate of increase in the overspend over time. Sutton is not alone in experiencing significant financial pressure on the High Needs Block, with the national High Needs Block expected to rise to £5bn at the end of FY25/26 and £8bn by FY26/27. In a recent survey by the Local Government Association (February 2025), over 50% of all Local Authorities responding to the survey stated that they would be insolvent at the end of March 2026 if the 'statutory override' was removed by the Government.
- 3.14 Given national pressures on the SEND system, the Government announced in May 2025 an extension to the 'statutory override' to March 2028. Since 2019, councils have been able to keep high needs deficits off their main revenue accounts using a method called the 'statutory override', meaning that local authorities do not have to address these

deficits when balancing their yearly budgets. It was previously extended to March 2026 and has now been further extended.

- 3.15 In addition, the Government has announced that national reforms of the SEND system (together with other education reforms) will be published in the autumn 2025. The reforms aim to 'make the system more inclusive and improve outcomes for all children and young people'. Alongside the white paper, the Government is expected to set out further details on how local authorities will be supported to transition towards a reformed system as part of the upcoming local government funding reform consultation.
- 3.16 It should also be noted that the white paper will be published at a time when the Integrated Care Board and health providers are also going through a period of significant structural change following the announcements from the Secretary of State for Health and Care in March 2025. The current proposals indicate a very different role for the Integrated Care Board in the commissioning and delivery of SEND-related services, including Children's Therapies, Paediatrics and mental health services. Given the crucial role that health services play in the effective operation of a local area SEND system, developments in this area will need to be carefully considered alongside wider education reforms.

#### Local Area Self-Evaluation

- 3.17 In February 2024, the People Committee reviewed the local area self-evaluation for SEND services in the Borough. The self evaluation looks at (i) the impact of the local area partnership's SEND/AP arrangements on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND and additional needs, (ii) how the local area partners work together to plan, evaluate and develop the SEND and AP system and (iii) plans to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND and additional needs in the borough in the future.
- 3.18 Much of the self-evaluation presented in February 2024 remains the same, but an updated version has been written to take account of developments in the local area since it was last presented. A copy of the self-evaluation can be found in Appendix C and is a draft document that will continue to be developed through the year.

## **4 Benefits to Sutton and its Residents**

- 4.1 Sutton's SEN2 data and self-evaluation indicate that children, young people and residents benefit from the effective SEND provision that is in place, and there are strong foundations to build on for the future (and in the context of national reform across both health and education sectors).
- 4.2 The Council, Cognus Limited, Sutton's schools / education settings and other local area partners remain committed to maintaining this effective provision and continue to do what they can to support children and young people with SEND in the borough in line with our vision to prepare every young person for future independence and adulthood.

## **5 Implications**

### Equalities Implications

- 5.1 Ambitious for Sutton - the Council's corporate plan, sets out how the Council will ensure Sutton is an inclusive place for everyone: A place where everyone feels welcome and proud to be who they are.
- 5.2 Sutton's ambition is to continue to promote equality and inclusion, making Sutton a great place for our diverse communities. The LBS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework sets out the Council's commitments and how the Council will uphold its legal duties, objectives and priorities, addressing discrimination and harassment, key roles and responsibilities, governance and monitoring
- 5.3 Given the breadth of the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy, it is not possible to conduct an Equalities Implication Assessment (EIA) on the whole strategy. As such, EIAs will be conducted where appropriate for individual actions throughout the ongoing delivery of the Strategy where appropriate.

### Climate Implications

- 5.4 There are no specific climate-related implications of this report.

## **6 Finance and Legal Commentary**

### Finance Comment

- 6.1 Funding to provide support for children with SEND is provided via the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), one of four blocks of DSG funding. The DSG is currently reporting an in-year deficit in 2025/26 of £12.6m, and the High Needs Block is reporting an in-year deficit of £12.9m. The DSG deficit carried forward from FY2024/25 was £10.6m and therefore the forecast cumulative deficit at 31/03/26 is £23.2m.
- 6.2 More detail about the financial situation is contained in the main report.

### Finance Risks

- 6.3 The overspend on the DSG represents a significant risk given the underlying position of the Council's current and projected financial position and low level of reserves. The statutory override extending to March 2028 provides some time, but does not address the structural deficit in the High Needs Block.
- 6.4 Whilst the statutory override means that the deficit does not have a direct impact on the council's overall financial position. However, given the deficit size, it is now causing the

council real treasury implications, which by the end of the year are estimated to cost the council in the region of £1m per year in lost interest income or additional borrowing costs.

6.5 The Council has previously agreed various actions with the Schools Forum to mitigate the pressures over and above the deficit recovery planning work summarised above:

- Transfer circa £1m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to support growth in this part of the budget
- 0% increase in top-up funding for specialist provision for FY2025/26 (where the LA is responsible for setting the 'top-up value') in line with the DfE's Minimum Funding Guarantee
- 0% uplifts in hourly rates paid for support staff in schools for FY2025/26
- Creating additional local specialist capacity in the borough to reduce reliance on more costly non-maintained or independent provision
- Working with the South West London Consortium to negotiate value for money placements costs in the non-maintained and independent sector.

#### Legal Comment

6.6 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. The Council has duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 to assess and make special educational provision for children and young people with special educational needs whose needs may not be met by provision generally available in mainstream schools and colleges. Where the Council maintains an Education, Health and Care Plan for a child or young person, the Council has a duty to secure the special educational provision specified in the Plan and to pay any fees payable in respect of education or training provided for the child or young person at the school or other place of education named in the EHC Plan. There are general statutory duties under the Children and Families Act to support and involve children and young people; to promote the integration of educational provision and training provision with health care provision and social care provision; to make joint commissioning arrangements and to cooperate with partners; and to keep education and care provision in the authority's area under review and consider the extent to which it is sufficient.

6.7 Special educational provision by the Council for children and young people with High Needs is funded by the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Council is required to use the DSG only for the Schools' Budget and in accordance with conditions published by the Secretary of State. The DSG conditions of grant include that any local authority that has an overall deficit on its DSG account at the end of the financial year, or whose DSG surplus has substantially reduced during the year, must cooperate with the Department for Education in planning for how that deficit can be managed.

#### Legal Risks

6.8 Whilst there are no specific legal risks or implications arising out of this report, the general pressure of delivering all of the above within the budgetary constraints described above

may result in a greater prevalence of legal challenges as the legal framework for delivering services remains, but the resources to deliver those services reduce over time.

## 7 Appendices and Background Documents

### 7.1 Appendices

Appendix Letter	Appendix Title
A	Sutton Local Area SEND and AP Strategy - Year One Update
B	SEN2 Data Overview
C	Local Area SEND Self Evaluation 2025

### 7.2 Background Documents

Date of Expiry	Background Document
N/A	N/A

## 8 Consultations

Consultees	Yes/No	Officer	Date of Comments
Finance	Yes	Victoria Goddard Director of Finance	04/09/2025
Legal	Yes	Meera Leavey South London Legal Partnership	14/08/2025
Commercial and Procurement	No	N/A	N/A
Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)	No	N/A	N/A
Climate Impact Assessment (CIA)	No	N/A	N/A

## Appendix A

# Our priorities for the next three years (2024 - 2027)

Following on from our self evaluation, the Local Area has identified 5 strategic priorities to focus on over the next three years:

1	<b>Earlier identification and more timely support</b> for children and young people with SEND and additional needs so that their needs don't escalate
2	<b>Embed joined up and relational practice</b> - so parents and young people receive more coordinated support when they need it
3	<b>Strengthen access to education for vulnerable pupils</b> to ensure a sufficiency of high quality specialist and Alternative Provision in the Borough
4	<b>Grow the voice and influence of children and young people / parents</b> and improve the way we listen and act on feedback
5	A more <b>financially sustainable system</b> so we live within our means and prioritise resources on those children and young people that need them most

The [Sutton SEND/AP Partnership \(SSP\)](#) will be responsible for the delivery of these priorities. The SSP is made up of partners from across the Local Authority, education settings, the voluntary and community sector, health and social care.



PRIORITY 1: Earlier identification and more timely support		
Ref	Activity description	Year One Update
1.1	To provide training for health visitors and early years practitioners who work with preschools and nurseries in order to improve school readiness and to identify emerging needs sooner through the Early Years Operational Group (between 2-5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community nursery nurses have now been allocated to each of the council's pre-schools which will support with early identification of children's needs.</li> <li>A community nurse also now sits on the Early Years Panel to help provide additional support to EY CYP that would benefit.</li> <li>Attendance from a community nurse at drop in developmental sessions with Play Wise and Early Year's practitioners.</li> </ul>
1.2	Create an integrated universal offer for children with SEND in the early years encompassing EY SEND Advisory Service, portage and family hubs to support more families at a universal level providing self help strategies and better screening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Years Operational Group meets monthly with health notifications now coming through the operational group.</li> <li>Specific funding identified to support with transition from EY settings into primary school.</li> <li>Sept to Feb 2025 - 487 children with SEND have received additional funding, 25 Children received 12 weeks of Portage Intervention Plus, 67 settings have received 'cohort level' funding, 13 Health Notifications have been received and followed up on, 89 children have been brought to EYOPGRP for multi-agency problem-solving discussions</li> <li>Positive feedback from EY settings about the funding changes</li> <li>69 Children have accessed the Speech and Language groups. 53 families have accessed the SEND stay and play groups in Family Hubs.</li> </ul>
1.3	Pilot the use of 'Support Passports' for EY children and young people with complex SEND/Medical needs. Introduction of support passports within medical settings (ESH initially then considered passports at school entry (reception) and transition from primary to secondary school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">PlayWise Support Passport</a> (PSP) has been shared with schools/pre-school provision in Sutton. Sherwood Hill/ Park have reported that the document has worked well / provides a holistic profile on the child/ YP.</li> <li>This has been rolled out through the PlayWise network of parents and regularly shared on social media. Parents/ carers report the document has ensured a smoother transition from nursery to school.</li> <li>Recent parent comment "This is a game changer for me as I can never remember to tell the TA or SLT everything about my child - but I took my time to complete the PSP and now everyone has the full picture of 'J' and I don't need to keep repeating myself every time I meet someone new'.</li> <li>Playwise have engaged with St Helier and Paediatricians who are sharing it with parents if they are not using it actively currently.</li> </ul>



1.4	<p>Over the next three years SWL ICB will work with Sutton Alliance and health providers ( ESH and SWL St George's Mental Health Trust ) to:</p> <p>(i) review service pathways for families with neurodevelopmental concerns that enables better management of presenting needs</p> <p>(ii) review systemic intervention/ support for provision for families of CYP with emotional well being and mental health needs in Sutton</p>	<p>(i) South West London and St Georges is working with partners in Sutton (LBS, Cognus, Education and VCS including Playwise and Sutton Carer's Centre) as part of a Neurodevelopmental (ND) Needs Based Model Steering Group established to design and pilot an offer that helps to meet the needs of families and CYP with neurodevelopmental related concerns earlier. The pilot offer will not be dependent on a diagnosis or being on a provider pathway. This is work in progress and will report back in year 2 or year 3.</p> <p>(ii) Not started</p>
1.5	<p>Parents and providers tell us that:</p> <p>(i) we need to make our pathway for children with Autism / ADHD / neuro-diversity across the local area clearer;</p> <p>(ii) that we need to strengthen the post diagnosis support for families of children with autism</p> <p>(iii) Commission more 'parent led' support programmes for parents of children and young people diagnosed with Autism</p>	<p>(i) )Cognus <u>Infinity Support</u> has been developed to bring experts on neurodiversity under one umbrella, supporting parent carers to access information from a range of Cognus services in one place, including training and events, resources, services (A plan, PTW, Autism, EP etc) as well as news and updates.</p> <p>(ii) Epsom and St Helier and South West London and St Georges have improved information and resources for families to support them while they wait for their appointment. For example, the ESH website now includes resources for patients, including cost of living support and ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) resources, which are accessible to the public. There remains further work to do in this area in Year 1 and Year 2.</p> <p>(iii) Investment in the Parenting service to increase peer led parenting support for families of children with Autism has led to 127 parents accessing support since 22/23. 96% of parents reported they felt more confident in meeting their child with Autism's need.</p>
1.6	<p>(i) Develop effective strategies to provide timely social care related advice / assessment for children and young people with SEND</p> <p>(ii) Develop our Annual review framework learning from best practice</p>	<p><b>(i) Timely social care related advice / assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new process was established last year to ensure that social care advice is in place for all children known and not known to social care. Some evidence of impact with 2 internal audits identifying clear progression in outcomes following identified themes.</li> <li>• To date for 25/26, 79% of requests for advice are provided on time</li> <li>• Joint workshops held with Cognus and Social Care on how to improve social care advice and what works well and EHCNA practice guidance is being developed to be shared across children's and adults social care and locality teams.</li> <li>• New EHCP mechanism is on mosaic to help identify to a worker that the child has an EHCP - these need to be further developed in terms of receiving the copy of the EHCP's from Cognus</li> </ul> <p><b>(ii) Develop our Annual Review framework learning from best practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CYPDS pilot to attend ALL Annual Reviews at Sherwood Park / Hill campus in Summer 2025 term undertaken</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CYPDS and wider social care colleagues attend all annual reviews for children aged 16+ to contribute to transition planning</li> <li>● New inbox has been developed for all EHCNA/EHCP/Annual Reviews enquiries within CSC - still to be launched</li> </ul>
<b>1.7</b>	<p>(i) Develop effective strategies to provide timely and quality health advice / assessment for children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>(ii) Develop our Annual review framework learning from best practice.</p> <p>(iii) Embedding effective approaches to PfA through PfA Delivery Group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Audit of health advice in EHCNA's completed. Services audited included Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Dietetics.</li> <li>● Recent audit work has evidenced a good standard of health advice provided by Children's Therapies service.</li> <li>● Timeliness of Health Advice Children's Therapies achieved a consistent /positive compliance rate between 89% and 100% in meeting the six-week statutory deadline for health advice during Q4 of 2024/25.</li> </ul>
<b>1.8</b>	Develop and deliver a borough wide CPD and school improvement programme to support all our educational settings to provide Quality First Teaching (QFT) and an effective graduated response to meet more complex needs within mainstream settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School aged Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) 'Every child, every school' documents are being drafted: <a href="#">Primary version</a> and <a href="#">Secondary version</a>. <a href="#">Early Years OAP</a> guidance complete. SENCO collaboration to complete these documents has led to initial discussions with schools to try and standardise and improve QFT in place.</li> <li>● Centralised training programmed in development to bring together CPD from Cognus, academies and LBS.</li> </ul>
<b>1.9</b>	A SEND Graduated Response focusing on Ordinarily Available Provision for KS 1 - 5 incorporating Educational Psychology, Therapies, SEND Support and Sensory. There will be separate Graduated Response for Inclusion (Exclusion) and Attendance, Primary, Secondary and Early Years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This action has been subsumed into the action plan above and will be removed from future versions of the SEND and AP strategy</li> </ul>
<b>1.10</b>	Support schools to support pupils with EBSA (emotional school based avoidance) needs across the local area (Develop a Training and CPD offer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Updated <a href="#">EBSA Guidance</a> has been shared with schools.</li> <li>● 2 EBSA networking events have taken place with a third planned for Autumn Term with positive feedback from schools who attended the network events.</li> <li>● Training offered through traded work as well as fully funded through LBS SEND programme. Sessions held for Attendance leads through network events.</li> <li>● SEND Champion training delivered for parents led by Cognus Therapies team.</li> </ul>
<b>1.11</b>	To deliver a more 'embedded approach' to the provision of therapies in Sutton schools - i.e. a more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cognus Therapy Services are introducing a tiered offer with universal, targeted and specialist levels of support.</li> </ul>

	holistic model of support involving teachers/TAs and parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Therapies working group has been developing a universal and targeted core offer for settings (bases and special schools) will be trialled from the autumn term 2025, and this group are also looking at how to group pupils based on need, to offer more group based therapy sessions.</li> <li>A project lead role has been recruited to and a benchmarking review is being undertaken to see how our offer compares to practice elsewhere.</li> <li>Progress to be reported back Year 2/3</li> </ul>
<b>1.12</b>	Explore opportunities to jointly commission children's therapies in the Borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On hold following Government announcements in relation to ICB / health restructure (March 2025)</li> </ul>
<b>1.13</b>	Work with 5 pilot schools to deliver the 'Talk Matters Programme' to strengthen approaches to oracy and language development in primary schools in the Borough - to consider how we embed some of this learning back into the Early Years settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first year of the Talk Matters Programme has nearly concluded with successful delivery to the first cohort of 5 primary schools.</li> <li>5 schools have been trained in a universal whole school intervention (dialogic teaching) and a targeted intervention (Talk Boost) as well as receiving a wellbeing offer for families delivered by Jigsaw4U.</li> <li>Based on preliminary feedback at a programme level, school staff report they feel more confident in supporting speech needs, and pupils are showing improved communication skills, confidence, and classroom participation. The targeted 'Talk Boost' intervention has been particularly impactful, with 96% of the 444 participating pupils narrowing the communication gap with their peers after 10 weeks.</li> </ul>

PRIORITY 2: Embed joined up and relational practice		
Ref	Activity description	Year One Update
<b>2.1</b>	To codesign a simple directory for both professionals in schools as well as parents that summarises, simplifies and explains the SEND and early help offer in Sutton based around the Supporting Families Framework and to map the above onto the Local Offer / Sutton Information Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team Around the School (Internal) Directory has been published and shared with schools.</li> <li>A <a href="#">directory of Support for Families</a> on the <a href="#">Local Offer website</a> is live. This aims to make it easier for schools and families to find information that is available in the local area to support children and families with SEND and additional needs.</li> </ul>
<b>2.2</b>	(i) To create a local multidisciplinary AP taskforce at the Limes College to better coordinate support to young people with additional needs at risk of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The taskforce was introduced at Limes College from the start of September 2024 including Speech and Language Therapists (SALT), Mental Health team, Educational Psychologist (AEP), SENCO, Post 16 Transition worker SLT, Strategic Safeguarding Lead,</li> </ul>

	<p>exclusion</p> <p>(ii) To research and pilot a 'team around the school practice model in the Academic Year 2024/25 in 2 pilot schools and how this might be extended to other secondary schools</p>	<p>Outreach Mentors and links to Community Safety Team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Emotional school based avoidance (EBSA) pathway developed working with Assistant Education Psychologists (AEPs) developing bespoke interventions.</li> <li>• Initial outcomes include (i) increased attendance for cohort, (ii) restraints and violent incidents are down, (iii) suspensions are down, (iv) 30 children have accessed mental health support immediately to prevent escalation or crisis.</li> <li>• Team around the school work was piloted in two secondary schools - outcomes from this work did not demonstrate sufficient benefit for rolling out the model wider and any future developments will be considered as part of the Family First Programme.</li> </ul>
<b>2.3</b>	<p>Embed the <a href="#">Building Stronger Foundations</a> programme in all schools in the Borough to better support young people with a social worker</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Building Stronger Foundations programme has been extended to 22 schools participating with an additional 13 schools (including bases) and 5 Early Years settings to join from September 2025. Each school / setting will have whole school trauma-informed training, direct support and advice from Sutton Virtual School and Cognus Educational Psychology Service, funded EP hours, bespoke follow up training with staff on relational practice, consultation meetings with all settings, membership and access to the National Attachment Research Community and conference.</li> <li>• So far 15 members of staff have completed the TIS training diploma on trauma informed practice.</li> </ul>
<b>2.4</b>	<p>To work in partnership with Orchard Hill Academy Trust College and other local partners, to convert Sutton Life Centre into a Post 16 SEND college, short breaks and Preparation for Adulthood hub.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PFA hub is on track for a full launch in November 2025.</li> <li>• Cafe provider which is a non profit training employees with learning disabilities and providing work experience is confirmed.</li> <li>• A 2nd provider event is taking place in September 2025 to confirm the operational arrangements of the PFA Hub which will be held in an operating manual.</li> <li>• Furniture is about to be ordered and comms are planned.</li> </ul>
<b>2.5</b>	<p>To co-produce and prepare a business case for the development of a SEND focussed family hub focussing on EY and school readiness,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feasibility study to be completed into the viability of using 3 Robin Hood Lane as a community asset for a family hub and help service in alignment with the aims of the Families First programme.</li> <li>• T and F Group being finalised</li> </ul>
<b>2.6</b>	<p>To set up and implement the recommendations of a task and finish group to improve the way that the Local Area places and then supports young people with SEND who are transitioning from primary into secondary school settings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Secondary Transfer Panel has now been set up and will be held in January 2026. All Head Teachers and SENCOs from non-selective Secondary schools have been invited.</li> <li>• Data will be shared along with the EHCPs and full list of unplaced CYP in December 2025.</li> </ul>
<b>2.7</b>	<p>Develop a refreshed SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy and agree the scope of future funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On hold following Government announcements in relation to ICB / health restructure</li> </ul>

	arrangements.	(March 2025)
<b>2.8</b>	To review existing tripartite funding panel to develop more effective joint working/funding arrangements between education, health and social care for young people with multiple complex needs including children and young people with disabilities who might require both health and education input. Consider merging related panels into one effective tripartite funded panel .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tripartite funding panel has been reviewed - there is now a 'Child Focused Panel', which has been meeting monthly focussing on children's placements with the tripartite funding panel meeting to discuss joint funding arrangements for the most complex cases.</li> <li>• Partnership attendance has been good.</li> <li>• DSCO responsible for confirming funding arrangements between the cycle of meetings.</li> <li>• Work ongoing to clarify Health pathways as not all funding is via Continuing Health Care.</li> </ul>
<b>2.9</b>	Improving the experience of young people and their families that transition from Children's Social Care to Adults Social Care by increasing the number of 16 and 17 yrs old who have an allocated worker from both children's and adults services to ensure a smooth handover of the packages of care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Local Area <a href="#">Transition to Adulthood Protocol</a> has been updated. Changes have been made to adult social care criteria for the Transition Team which means the experience is the same for all young people likely to be eligible for adult social care regardless of need.</li> <li>• A pathway for care leavers has also been created.</li> <li>• September 2024 - 90% - 9 out of 10 children jointly allocated.</li> </ul>
<b>2.10</b>	To develop and embed our SEND/AP data inclusion dashboard to include key performance data across health related services and strengthen reporting of SEND activities and outcomes through to the SSP and ICB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A template dashboard has been produced - <a href="#">example dashboard</a>.</li> <li>• Work remains ongoing in the ICB to create SWL london approach to SEND data reporting</li> </ul>
<b>2.11</b>	To deliver 2024/25 PfA priorities to further strengthen approach to Preparation for Adulthood in the local area - including PfA events, training, information and guidance and EHCP planning and growing the number of supported internships in the Borough through the DFN Project Search programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a monthly PfA Delivery Group which updates on the PfA priorities action plan.</li> <li>• Work delivered has included Delivery of PfA event, Vocational Profile training, Supported internship information sessions. Local Offer PfA updates are now ongoing, development of e-book for professionals and parent/carers. A working group has also been established looking at if and when educational EHCPs should be ceased when educational provision has been completed.</li> <li>• PfA outcomes to be updated over the summer to reflect the four PfA outcomes for young people.</li> </ul>
<b>2.12</b>	Develop and monitor the local area work experience offer through local post 16 colleges and training providers and increase the number of placements available to students with SEND. This includes championing supported internships across the local area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sutton is part of the DfE funded Internships Work programme, supporting the development of Supported Internships in the borough.</li> <li>• September 2024 we had 15 young people in placements across Project Search, Nescot and Mencap.</li> <li>• Termly Sutton SEND Employment Forum, with Action Plan developed with the NDTi</li> </ul>
<b>PRIORITY 3: Strengthen access to education for vulnerable pupils</b>		

Ref	Activity description	Year One Update
3.1	Develop additional vocational provision in the Borough for those that struggle to access a mainstream curriculum and may be at risk of exclusion (focussing on Key Stage 4).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New satellite for the Limes College to operate from Sunningdale Road with 20 additional places for young people at risk of exclusion set up from September 2025.</li> <li>• School financial contributions secured.</li> <li>• Offer established and provision statement provided.</li> <li>• 20 places secured at NESCOL college for September 2025 to provide a dual registered vocational offer.</li> <li>• Published exclusions data has shown a 29% reduction in Permanent Exclusions in 24/25 (34 pupils) compared to 23/24 (48 pupils). Further building on a 40% reduction of exclusions comparing 22/23 (80pupils) to 23/24 data.</li> </ul>
3.2	Implement the recommendations from our review of medical PRU (STARS) provision in the Borough to clarify referral pathways, improve reintegration planning with schools and update our medical needs policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new operating model has been introduced with decision making on medical placements now through the Vulnerable Pupils' Panel (VPP).</li> <li>• Established individual learner pathways aimed at either reintegration into school or preparation for independent adulthood.</li> <li>• A Family Support Service has been established which provides support to pupils and their family, initially in the family home.</li> <li>• Initial reintegration data appears positive - 27 pupils have completed a 12 week placement at STARS and of these 9 pupils have re-integrated into their original mainstream school, 5 pupils have been placed in a new school, 8 year 11 pupils have remained at STARS, 1 pupil is receiving Elective Home Education (EHE) and 4 pupils' placements have been extended.</li> </ul>
3.3	Ensure a sufficiency of high quality school places (bases in mainstream schools and special schools) in line with our SEND commissioning strategy	<p>Creating additional provision at Carew Manor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional 25 spaces at Sherwood Hill, Carew site have been agreed by Schools Forum</li> <li>• Contractors started on site 16 June 2025.</li> <li>• Proposal agreed with schools forum to expand the provision annually to grow to 84 places long term, where needed.</li> </ul> <p>Expanding Oakfield Base from 56 to 84 places:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital investment agreed through the Special Provision Capital Fund (SPCF) programme.</li> <li>• Refurbishment works scheduled for summer holiday period ready for September 2025 opening</li> </ul> <p>Creating additional secondary bases within mainstream settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New SEND resource base at Overton High School confirmed for September 2025</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional base places agreed at 5 places each year (growing from Sept onwards).</li> <li>• Capital funding agreed, minor works to take place over summer holiday period.</li> </ul>
<b>3.4</b>	Invest our Special Provision Capital Funding on developing inclusive environments in mainstream schools, Alternative provision and specialist provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 2020 and 2024, 211 grants totaling over £15 million have been awarded. As of May 2025, £5,903,206 of this total had been claimed. Reasons for unclaimed grants include timing issues, delays in contractor appointment or delivery, other changes within schools, and issues related to funding release or communication of outcomes.</li> <li>• The primary purposes for which SPCF funding was utilised were building or refurbishing facilities for pupils with SEND (73.7% to 75% of projects surveyed) and creating new spaces such as sensory rooms and therapy rooms (78.9% to 81.3% of projects surveyed). Other uses included improving accessibility and upgrading existing resources</li> <li>• Feedback indicates that the SPCF has been highly effective in meeting the needs of students with SEND, with 100% of respondents rating the overall effectiveness as "Very effective" or "Effective".</li> </ul>
<b>3.5</b>	Build on the 'Fish Bowl' activities to further develop effective approaches to special school outreach in the Borough to support mainstream settings to develop inclusive practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link School outreach service being designed to support up to 14 learners with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs, to support access to mainstream education, to avoid Non Maintained Independent.</li> <li>• NESOT 14-16 provision supported by Secondary Heads subject to comments about reintegration - this has now been agreed to support 20 concurrent learners on a 2-day/week offer</li> <li>• Further work required to develop outreach offer - Year 2 and Year 3</li> </ul>
<b>3.6</b>	Sign up to the London Inclusion Charter and work with primary and secondary heads networks to develop and embed approaches to reducing exclusions in the Borough, particularly for children and young people with SEND.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sutton signed up to the <a href="#">London Inclusion Charter</a> following endorsement from schools in the Borough in February 2025</li> </ul>
<b>3.7</b>	Introduce StudyBugs attendance platform across all schools to: (i) gain live suspensions and exclusions data to support monitoring and oversight for thematic actions to be considered. (ii) record / oversee the use of part time timetables in order to analyse and respond to patterns and make recommendations to relevant partners.	<p>(i) Studybugs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study bugs has been rolled out across all but one school in the Borough and well embedded in local systems</li> <li>• Social care staff now have access to the platform so that they understand school attendance and suspensions data based on live data.</li> <li>• The Inclusion Team proactively reviews suspension data and engages in targeted conversations with schools to offer support, guidance, and advice as well as termly attendance meetings with schools, helping to guide interventions and improve pupil attendance.</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latest published DfE report shows a significant improvement in the reduction of exclusion and suspensions for 23/24 compared to 22/23.</li> <li>• Attendance data in Sutton for 24/25 was above national average Primary (Sutton 95.3% National 94.8%), Secondary (Sutton 93.4% National 91.5%). Special (Sutton 86.2% National 87.1%)</li> <li>• Children's social care status is updated in Studybugs each week so that Sutton Virtual School staff can monitor attendance / suspensions of CIN/CP cohorts.</li> </ul> <p>(ii) Timetable Data Collection and Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manual reduced timetable data returns have been introduced across secondary, primary, special, and PRU schools, with analysis and reporting shared back with schools.</li> </ul>
<b>3.8</b>	Implement the changes to our Home to School Assisted Travel Policy agreed by People Committee in February 2024 and grow the numbers of young people accessing independent travel training and personal travel budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised policy implemented from September 2024</li> <li>• Significant increase in the number of Personal Travel Budgets (30 now issued)</li> <li>• 15 young people supported to travel independently through Travel Training</li> <li>• Preparation for a new ITT contract will be in place by April 2026. As part of the re-procurement exercise, a business case is being put forward to broaden the eligibility of criteria and increase the capacity of the Independent Travel Training contract. This will enable more young people to access ITT and reduce reliance on travel assistance.</li> </ul>
<b>3.9</b>	Develop our Wraparound provision offer for children and young people with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been an increase in wraparound provision for all children by 190 spaces and by September 2025, 98% of mainstream schools will offer wraparound provision.</li> <li>• SEND wraparound provision has been developed at Westcroft Leisure Centre in 2025 - further SEND wrap around provision to be looked at more specifically in Year 2 and Year 3</li> <li>• Support given to a new organisation to set up and support new wraparound provision at Carew starting from September 2025.</li> <li>• From September 2025, training on wraparound care will be given to all providers including mandatory inclusive environment training.</li> </ul>
<b>3.10</b>	Review our approach for monitoring post 16 learners who are at risk of not in employment, education or training (NEET).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New protocol signed off and published here - <a href="#">Sutton Local Safeguarding Children Partnership - LSCP Protocols</a></li> <li>• Belnspired has been commissioned to undertake direct work with pupils that are not known to Children's Social Care or the Virtual School (benefitting a wider cohort of young people including SEND)</li> </ul>
<b>3.11</b>	Increase choice, and pathways into post 16 provision for young people with SEND so that employability levels rise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-16 specialist provision places have been increased, particularly with regards to access to post-16 FE provision.</li> <li>• Additional 30 places created at the Life Centre, that opens September 2025</li> <li>• Further work Year 2 and Year 3 required</li> </ul>



3.12	Review our Short Breaks Offer for Children with additional needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following a review of the short breaks offer, it was agreed that no changes would be made to the existing policy at this stage. The decision reflects the need to focus on fully embedding and delivering the current policy to ensure it achieves its intended outcomes before considering any further amendments.</li> </ul>
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PRIORITY 4: Grow the voice and influence of children and young people		
Ref	Activity Description	Year One Update
4.1	To establish a new and independent Parent Carer Forum in Sutton to support the ongoing development of the local SEND and AP system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Sutton SEND Forum (SSF) has been set up.</li> <li><a href="#">Partnership Agreement</a> signed which outlines the intent of LBS and the SSF to work collaboratively in support of the SEND community in Sutton and in line with our SEND Charter.</li> <li>SSF are regular attendees at the Sutton SEND Partnership meetings and have been involved with the recommissioning of our short breaks provision.</li> </ul>
4.2	(i) Produce a Voice and Influence framework and engagement toolkit with children and young people and their advocates, and with professionals across education, social care and health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voice and Influence framework agreed in principle but to be launched at the Youth Summit in November 2025.</li> <li>Voluntary organisations, professionals across education, social care and health and the LSCP sub-group have been involved.</li> <li>Logo and name 'Youth Matters' developed by Youth Board.</li> <li>Youth Matters Communications plan and tools to be completed by October 2025, including documentation and presentations in various formats.</li> </ul>
4.3	(i) Ensure that children and young people with SEND are included in the youth engagement framework through the Action Voices/Speak Up Sutton groups.  (ii) Align our children and young people voice and influence SEND priorities with the Advocacy for All commissioned service delivery plan and review on an annual basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy for All included in the Task and Finish Groups</li> <li>Advocacy for All easy read training for Youth Leads Network completed in place in August 2025</li> <li>Advocacy for All and Action Voices have worked with young people with SEND. alongside the adult group, Speak up Sutton. The aims of the groups are for people to gain confidence, learn speaking up skills, make friends and speak up about the important issues in their lives. They liaise with the council, the NHS and other services who want to hear the views of people with learning disabilities and autism.</li> <li>Action voices involved in consultancy for the PfA hub.</li> </ul>
4.4	To create an action plan to respond to the recommendations from Barnardos generated by the voice of CYP with SEND in the ' <a href="#">Your Voice Matters</a> ' report and feedback to CYP through the youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft Action Plan created with young people and partnership agencies, aligned with LSCP CYP Delivery plan.</li> <li>Young people with SEND will join the Youth Board - to be facilitated in late 2025</li> </ul>

	engagement framework	<p>with the focus on young people with additional needs and disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Youth Matters - You Matter film being created by CYP with SEND to be launched at Youth Summit.</li> <li>• A 'We Said, You Did' template, (in various formats) being developed to improve how we feed back information to CYP, including those with SEND. Completion date- October following feedback from CYP</li> </ul>
4.5	Listening to the experience of families, to encourage greater use of mediation as a route to redress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents of Year 5 and Year 10 are invited to meet their EHCP Coordinators yearly to explain the Key Stage Transfer process and the decision making process , creating a direct line of communication and avoiding dehumanising the LA in the parents' perceptions.</li> </ul>

PRIORITY 5: A more financially sustainable system		
Ref	Activity Description	Year One Update
5.1	To produce a deficit recovery plan on the High Needs Block by February 2025 in agreement with Schools Forum	<p>The DSG Management Plan was considered and endorsed by Schools Forum in February 2025.</p> <p>On the current trajectory and based on current forecasts, it will be challenging to fully balance the High Needs Block without wider system reform and therefore at this stage, work is focussed on reducing the rate of increase in the overspend on the high needs block.</p>
5.1.1	Managing the demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and increasing support for inclusion in mainstream settings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>“Every Child Every School” guidance (Ordinarily Available Provision) completed:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Early Years, Primary</a> and <a href="#">Secondary</a> - documents have been drafted coproduced with representative SENCOs, with headteachers agreeing a ‘statement of intent’ for inclusion to sit alongside this</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Set up and establish the SEND Support Advisory Partnership:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new approach multi-professional problem-solving and resource provision was piloted in the summer and is being rolled out from September to provide stronger support for pupils at the SEND Support level.</li> <li>• The panel will provide targeted SEND support funding, support where ‘no to assess’ and ‘no to issue’ decisions from SEND Panel will go (replacing Next Steps Meetings)</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Creating a Local Area School Inclusion Dashboard:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A local area School Inclusion Dashboard has been drafted and is currently being considered by a group of representative schools for feedback.</li> <li>• The intention is to share this data regularly at headteacher and SENCo forums to increase</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

		<p>accountability for inclusion in the local system</p> <p><b>4. Early Years:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Years Transition plans have been piloted over summer/autumn terms</li> <li>• Scoping of outreach model to replace specialist nursery ongoing with setting</li> <li>• Work with Early Years SEND to transform statutory processes ongoing and being scoped</li> </ul>
5.1.2	Specialist commissioning to reduce reliance on Non-Maintained and Independent (NMI) provision	<p>Creating additional provision at Carew Manor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional 25 spaces at Sherwood Hill, Carew site have been agreed by Schools Forum</li> <li>• Contractors started on site 16 June.</li> <li>• Proposal agreed with schools forum to expand the provision annually to grow to 84 places long term, where needed.</li> </ul> <p>Expanding Oakfield Base from 56 to 84 places:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oakfield places confirmed</li> <li>• Additional places now agreed - 6 per year</li> <li>• Capital investment agreed through the Special Provision Capital Fund (SPCF) programme.</li> <li>• Refurbishment works scheduled for summer holiday period</li> </ul> <p>Creating additional secondary bases within mainstream settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overton base confirmed, opened Sep 2025</li> <li>• Additional base places agreed at 5 places each year.</li> <li>• Capital funding agreed, minor works to take place over summer holiday period.</li> </ul> <p>Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) Specialist Provision - increasing provision within Sutton including outreach offers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New satellite for the Limes College to operate from Sunningdale Road with 20 additional places for young people at risk of exclusion set up from September 2025.</li> <li>• NESOT 14-16 provision supported by Secondary Heads subject to comments about reintegration - this has now been agreed to support 20 concurrent learners on a 2-day/week offer</li> <li>• SPCF round 9 with a focus on supporting mainstream schools with inclusion hubs to support learners with SEMH needs</li> </ul> <p>Re-commissioning of specialist outreach offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link School outreach service being designed to support up to 14 learners with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs, to support access to mainstream education, to avoid Non Maintained</li> </ul>

		<p>Independent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping exercise underway regarding outreach support for mainstream schools; this will include support with key stage transitions</li> </ul>
5.1.3	Review of SEND Funding Levels, Processes, and Governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New secondary transfer panel has been established meeting in January 2026 to ensure children requiring placements in mainstream settings are fairly distributed across secondary setting and to ensure placements within Sutton schools and not Non Maintained Independents (NMI).</li> <li>Improvements made to the way we collect information from other Local Authorities in relation to the pupils placed in Sutton's schools</li> <li>NMI Officer appointed to look at all NMI placements to ensure placements remain appropriate and costs are scrutinised and mapped against individual EHCPs and CYPs needs.</li> <li>Health and Commissioning Tracker developed to help understand health funding contributions and track progress of individual cases.</li> </ul>

**SEN2 Data briefing note – June 2025**

The Department for Education published the annual Education, Health & Care Plan statistics in June 2025; this dataset is collated from an annual Local Authority data collection (known as 'SEN2') and relates to activity on Education, Health & Care Plans in the calendar year 2024.

This is the third year that the SEN2 return has provided pupil level data, rather than summary data. This meant that the DfE's methodology for some statistics changed, which makes longer term trend analysis difficult for some data entries. As was the case in previous reports, a one year comparative analysis has been provided below.

To note that the published data is subject to change as Local Authorities notice errors in the publication which then get remedied by DfE, therefore comparative data is not final; last year's data received further updates later in the year, which impacted London and National statistics. The DfE published further SEN data – taken from the January 2025 School Census – in June 2025; this provides statistical information and comparative data about SEN within our local area schools.

<b>Key Headline Statistics</b>	<b>2024</b>	London 2024	National 2024	<b>2023</b>	London 2023	National 2023
Numbers of EHCPs on census date	<b>2582</b>	99,116	638,745	<b>2304</b>	93,539	576,474
Increase in number of EHCPs	<b>12.1%</b>	6.0%	10.8%	<b>6.5%</b>	9.2%	11.4%
Requests for EHC Needs Assessments	<b>607</b>	21,583	154,489	<b>592</b>	19,488	138,242
Increase in requests for EHC Needs Assessments	<b>2.5%</b>	10.8%	11.8%	<b>28.7%</b>	15.1%	20.8%
% decision whether to assess within 6 weeks	<b>95.8%</b>	84.5%	84.8%	<b>89.4%</b>	86.7%	84.8%
% decision not to assess at first request	<b>36.4%</b>	23.4%	25.2%	<b>25.8%</b>	25.2%	24.0%
Number of EHCNAs	<b>397</b>	15,184	105,340	<b>398</b>	13,625	91,023
Increase in numbers of assessments completed	<b>-0.3%</b>	11.4%	15.7%	<b>19.5%</b>	18.6%	24.5%
Number of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks	<b>280</b>	8,390	39,407	<b>327</b>	8,068	38,471
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks	<b>76.5%</b>	66.9%	46.4%	<b>92.9%</b>	70.0%	50.3%
Number of EHCNAs with a decision not to issue a Plan	<b>29</b>	616	6,404	<b>31</b>	451	4,614
% of EHCNAs with a decision not to issue a Plan	<b>7.3%</b>	4.1%	6.1%	<b>7.8%</b>	3.3%	5.1%

SEND Tribunal appeal rate	<b>3.2%</b>	2.3%	3.2%	<b>2.90%</b>	1.9%	2.5%
Annual review meetings recorded	<b>97.8%</b>	80.6%*	86.5%*	Not collected		
Annual reviews 4 week decision on time	<b>82.3%</b>	39.6%*	44.4%*	Not collected		

Note: not all LAs have yet submitted this data; London and national figures are subject to change

# Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) in Sutton - Our Self Evaluation 2025 DRAFT/WIP







# Context of the Local Area

## Introduction

**Our Self Evaluation of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP)** in Sutton provides an overview of the work that is being delivered across the Local Area including key areas of strength and areas of development. It has been written and agreed by partners from across the Local Area.

It is broken down into two main themes:

- How the local area SEND partnership arrangements impact on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people; and
- How the local area SEND partnership works together to plan, evaluate, understand and develop the SEND system, SEND services and alternative provision in Sutton.

The self evaluation informs our [SEND and AP inclusion Plan 2024 - 2027](#) which is overseen by the multi-agency Sutton SEND/AP Partnership.

**The self evaluation was co-produced through a series of workshops, discussions and submissions from the relevant SEND/AP stakeholders from across the Local Area Partnership (LAP) in 2023/24 with ‘updates’ provided annually through the Sutton SEND Partnership and People Committee.**

### Local Context

The London Borough of Sutton is a community where people thrive. We’ve built strong relationships across public and community sectors and are proud of our stable, committed workforce who are ambitious for our children.

An LGA Corporate Peer Challenge praised Sutton as a “well-performing council” with a “good record of delivery”, and “engaged workforce”, and a healthy organisational culture. The report highlighted our strong relationships between staff and leadership as a critical factor for success.

Read more here:

- [Position Statement](#)
- [Feedback report](#)

Our commitment to residents is what drives us, and we are proud to have recently received a ‘good’ rating across the board for our Children’s Services in our latest ILAC inspection.

We know ourselves well and are defined by our friendly, open culture.

# Context of the Local Area



**214,525 residents, 62,120 children and young people 0-24 - our under 15 population has significantly increased in the last 10 years (16%)**



**80 different languages, 28.2% residents from Asian/Black/Mixed ethnic backgrounds**



**2,673 children and young people with an education health and care plan (EHCP)**



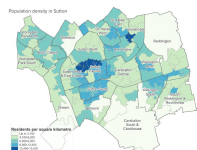
**608 children open to short breaks at Tier 2 and a further 71 children are accessing short breaks at Tier 3 or 4.\***



**17.8% of primary school aged pupils are eligible for Free School Meals, whilst 18.4% of secondary school aged pupils are eligible for Free School Meals**



**29% of children with education health and care plans receive travel assistance in Sutton**



**76% of resident children with SEND attend a setting in the Borough**



**280 children and young people are electively home educated (6% EHCP or SEN support)**

# Context of the Local Area



56 mainstream schools, 4 special schools, 2 AP providers, 2 x FE colleges, 316 early years settings, 1 Adult College



98% of schools in Sutton Good or Outstanding



40% of children with an EHCP attend mainstream provision



1,300 Specialist / AP school places - 40% increase since 2015



7 Children's Centres, 4 Family Hubs across the Local Area



Over 90 parks  
8 Libraries



1 x acute hospital 1 x specialist Cancer Hospital, 1 x Integrated Community Provider



21 GP practices working in 4 Primary Care Networks

# Local Area SEND Partnership

Our [Vision Statement and Charter](#) reflects our commitment to children and young people with SEND and their families and states:

“We are **collectively ambitious** for our children and young people. Together we want to provide them with the best chances **to achieve their best outcomes in life**, whatever their starting point, and to **prepare them effectively for adulthood.**”

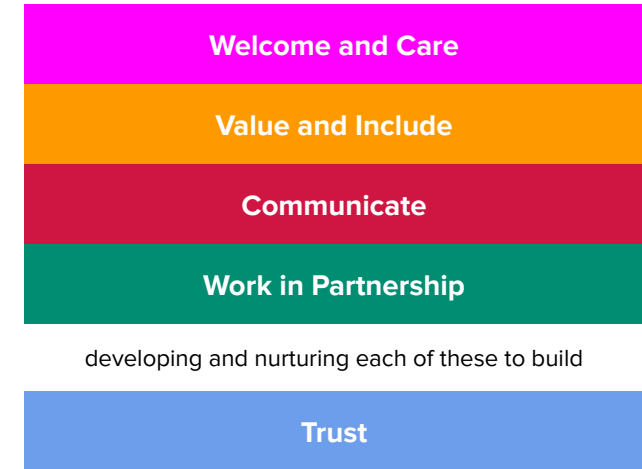
Sutton Council commission [Cognus](#) Limited to provide [28 statutory and non statutory education services in Sutton](#) including the SEND service. Cognus Limited is a ‘Local Authority Trading Company’ that was established in 2016. The company trades services and reinvests surpluses back into education services in the borough. It is governed by an independent board with a diverse skillset including headteacher reps.

Our (2020-2023) [Ambitious for SEND](#) priorities were updated in 2024 with a new [SEND and AP Strategy 2024/27](#) approved by the People Committee and Sutton Place Partnership Board in September 2024.

SEND has played a key role in the Start Well/Live Well programmes of the [Sutton Health and Care Plan 2022-2024](#). The Health and Wellbeing Board have commissioned a refresh of the Plan (2025-2028) to include SEND as a dedicated chapter with three overarching priorities - (i) local offer - improving awareness, and the experience, of accessing support (ii) children’s therapies - supporting timely and easier access to the right services and (iii) neurodevelopmental pathway pilot - moving towards a needs led rather than a diagnostic led model.

The Sutton Place Partnership Board, (via the Transformation and Delivery Group) and the People Committee have oversight of arrangements and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and holds the Sutton SEND Partnership to account for the local area SEND Strategy (refresh currently in development).

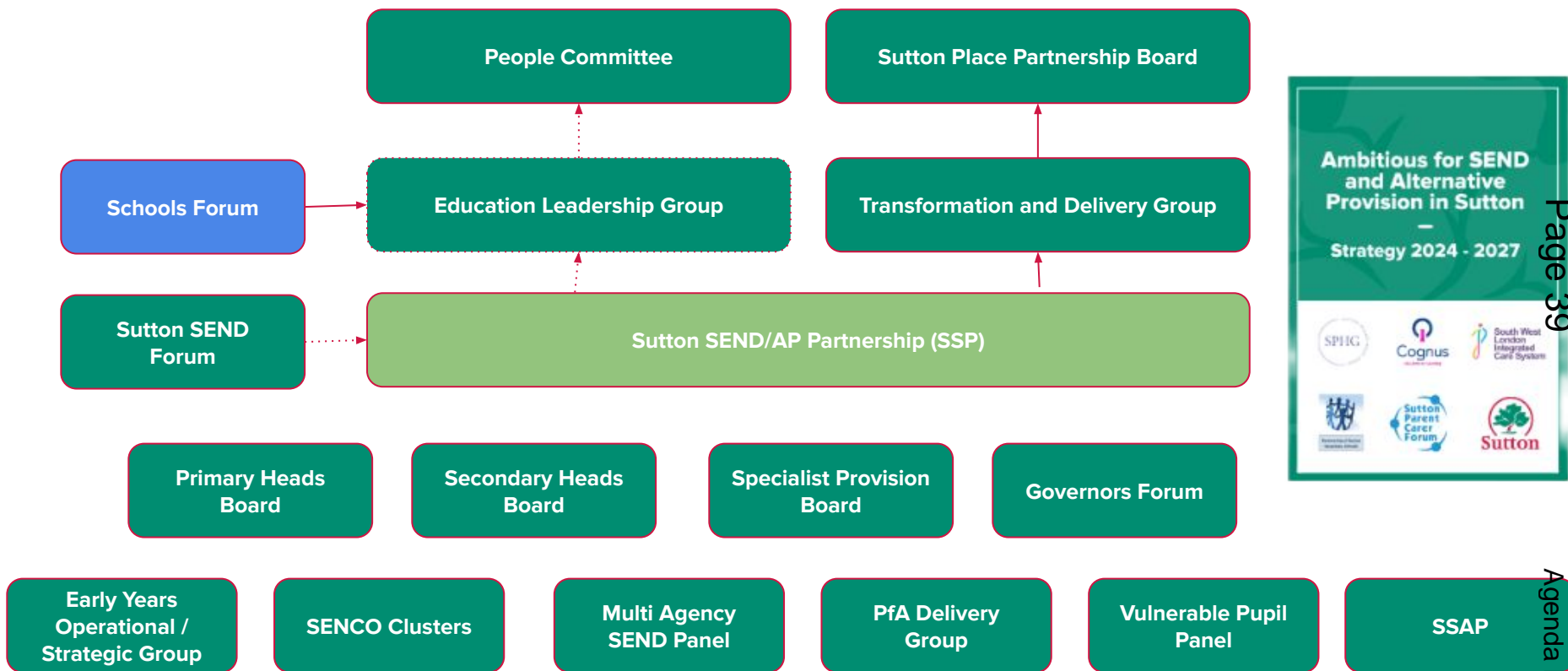
Our SEND Charter Principles are that we



# Local Area SEND Governance

The local area Governance for SEND is summarised in this [Governance Map](#)

## Sutton SEND/AP Governance



# Our financial context



## Overview

- Sutton's high needs system is currently financially unsustainable (in line with the national position)
- Sutton's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) went into deficit at the end of 2022/23 - almost entirely due to pressures on the High Needs Block.
- The rate of increase in EHCPs maintained has been driving overspends - Sutton maintained 2000 EHCPs in March 2022 - this increased to 2580 in March 2025 - a 29% increase

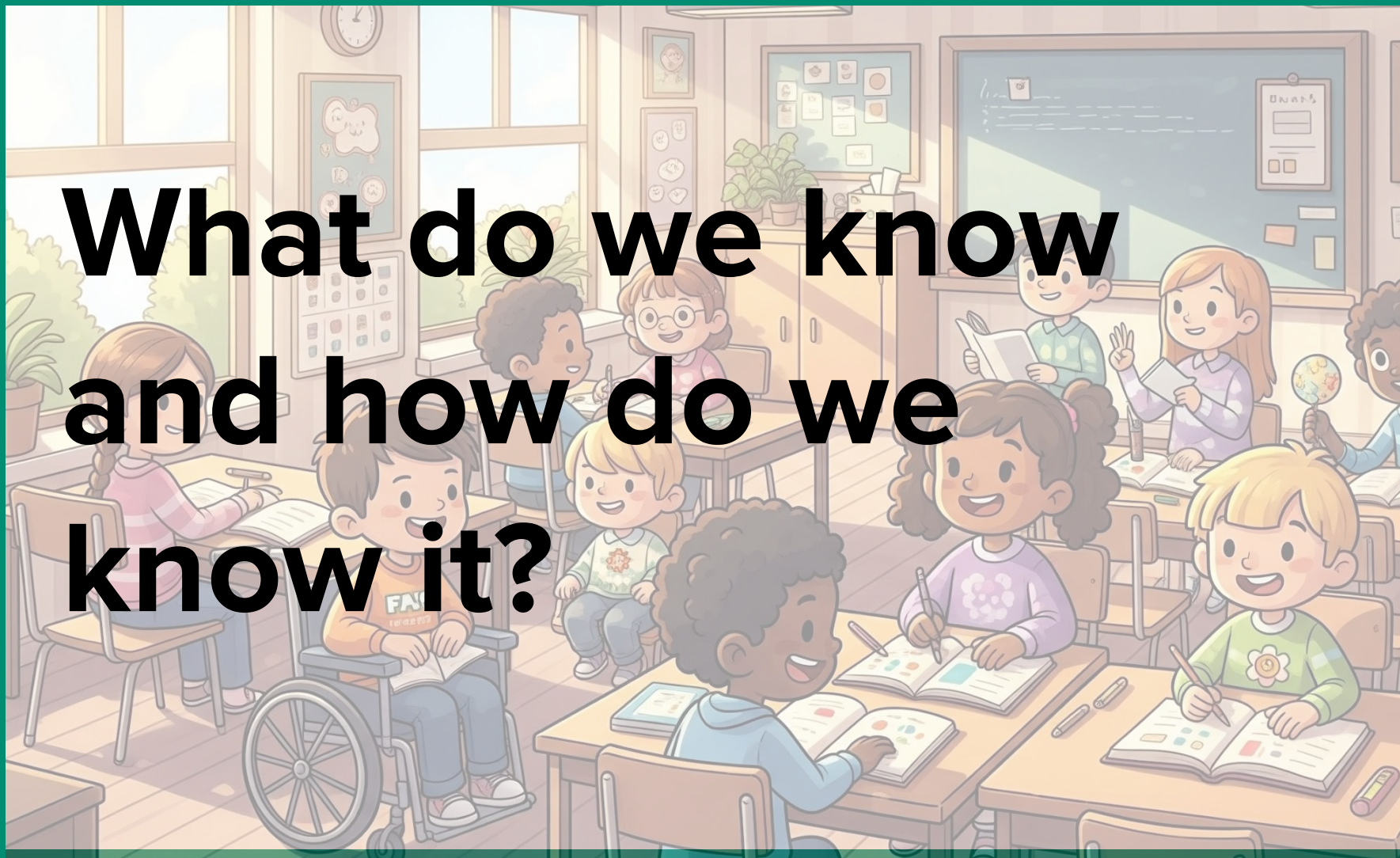
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 (forecast)
In year position	-£2.9m	-£9.2m	-£12.9m
Cumulative position	-£1.4m	-£10.6m	-£23.5m

## DSG Management Plan

- Sutton has not benefited from Safety Valve or Delivering Best Value funding support from Government and will require exceptional financial support in March 2028 if the statutory override is removed
- A DSG management plan was approved by Schools Forum in February 2025 which is being supported by two seconded headteachers from local schools (primary and secondary)



# What do we know and how do we know it?



# Local Area SEND Data dashboard Headlines

- Initial requests for assessment in Sutton per 10,000 population are higher (96) than the London average (80)
- Needs are identified and often assessed in a timely way - but there are pressures on therapy assessments for over 5s due to increases in the volume of EHCNAs being requested
- Advice from Educational Psychologists, therapists, social care and health teams is generally timely with the majority provided within 6 weeks
- Following agreement to issue, Sutton has consistently issued EHCPs in a timely way operating above national and London averages for (at least) the last 6 years
- CYP with SEND achieve good outcomes (above national averages for EY, KS1 and KS2 and KS4, and post 16 AP learners in Sutton also achieve good outcomes
- Sutton has a lower % of CYP with SEND NEET at 16 and 17 and higher % of 19+ achieving Level 2 and 3 qualifications against national average
- Overall absence rates for SEND children in Sutton have been improving in recent years and are below national average rates but slightly above average London rates
- Rates of exclusions and suspensions for pupils with EHCPs in Sutton are lower than national averages - this has been an area of focus in recent years.
- Tribunals have reduced in successive years with the exception of 2024. Sutton now in line with national averages in terms of appealable decisions appealed; most appeals relate to requests to assess and contents
- The total number of young people with an EHCP accessing EHE or EOTAS provision has remained relatively stable
- The total number of young people supported with travel assistance has reduced in recent years following a review of the Council's Home to School Travel Assistance Policy and a focus on Preparation for Adulthood.



# The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND



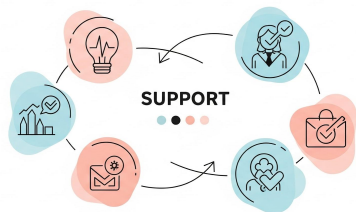
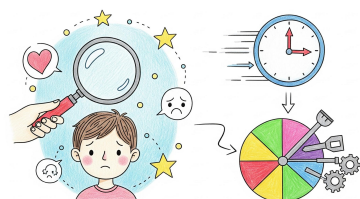
**There are strong multi agency partnerships in the local area**, including our local area SENCO clusters, Primary and Secondary Heads Boards, Education Leadership Group, Vulnerable Pupils Panel, Designated Safeguarding Lead Network, multi agency SEND panel, Mental Health Support Teams Mobilisation Group, Children's Delivery Board and our Sutton SEND Partnership Board.

**Educational outcomes in the local area are good for SEND/CLA and learners in AP**, our schools and settings are almost all Ofsted rated good or outstanding across mainstream and specialist provision and many have been highly praised for the support they provide to young people with SEND. Recent visits by our DCS and Lead Member / SEND Champion have yielded positive feedback from schools about SEND services in the Borough despite the systemic challenges faced by all, however this feedback is more mixed amongst secondary schools than primary.

**Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and are assessed in a timely way** (for example - through our [EY Operational Group](#) Academic Year to date we have supported 487 children with additional targeted SEND support funding); we have effective practice in early years and in school settings to identify and meet needs. Children that are new to the area and have a high level of need receive an EP assessment within 3 weeks.

**We have effective programmes of support for young people with SEND and their families to receive the right support at the right time** including our [Paving the Way](#) team where 96% of pupils make good progress as a result of the interventions in place. In addition our [A-plan pathway](#), [Therapeutic Hub](#) and our [Parenting Hub](#) provides strong support to parents of children with autism and additional needs. Outcomes from these services are strong albeit they are in high demand.

Leaders regularly track the **timeliness of advice** as part of the EHCP process and take action where timeliness has dropped. **The quality of Education Health and Care Plans is generally good** - we know this because of the strong quality assurance process that is in place within the SEND Service prior to issuing plans but also through the multi-agency QA audits we have undertaken in the local area



# The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

Agenda Item 6



**We have a highly valued Portage service** run by [Playwise CIC](#) that provides outstanding support to families with children 0-8 with complex needs. 98% parents have seen positive changes in their child having worked with Playwise - [read latest impact report here](#).

**We have a child-centred, holistic therapies offer** in the local area with the vast majority of pupils receiving high quality therapy support in a timely way and with good outcomes (in 24/25 - 96% partially achieve, achieve or exceed their targets). Further work is underway to embed therapy practice through a network of SEND Champions.



[Sutton Independent Advice Support Service](#) (SIASS) have recently implemented a [new service model](#) which has improved response times, alongside a refreshed website with a focus on building links directly with CYP, ensuring the service remains highly valued by parents. Where [mediation takes place in the local area it is generally effective](#) with good outcomes.

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**Since 2015, we have significantly increased the capacity of local specialist provision in the area** and have a new ASD special school planned for September 2027, a new primary SEND base introduced in 2024 and are the first LA in the country to provide PDA-specific provision. This has helped to manage reliance on high cost non maintained / independent provision though as state funded provision becomes saturated this remains a key financial risk in the local area.



**We have invested over £6m over the last three years in supporting schools** to create more inclusive learning environments (mainly in the mainstream sector) in order to support inclusive practices (i.e break out spaces, multi sensory spaces, outdoor inclusion classrooms, nurture provision); [Outcomes from the programme have been positive](#).



**We have improved our approach to Preparation for Adulthood** introducing a number of supported internship and work experience programmes as well as a commissioned [Independent Travel Training](#) (ITT) programme; all promoted through an [annual multi-agency Preparation for Adulthood event](#) for young people with SEND. We have improved our approach to transition from CSC to ASC which is helping to prevent 'cliff edge' at 18 - recently recognised in ILAC inspection (June 2025).

# The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND



**Waiting times** for paediatric assessment, neurodevelopmental assessment (e.g autism and ADHD) and CAMHS referrals remain a key challenge in the local area which is recognised by local area leaders (albeit wait times in Sutton remain generally lower than the South West London average); advice, guidance and support for families is offered while they wait. A neurodevelopmental “one stop shop” is launching in October 2025, and this will support those waiting.



**Our previous Parent Carers Forum worked hard to ensure young people feel valued, visible and included in their communities** - examples of their work include the well received [inclusive exclusive play spaces](#) for SEND families, SEND friendly [play spaces in our parks](#), promotion of our Sunflower Lanyard scheme and Preparation for Adulthood events at the Sutton Life Centre. Our **new SEND forum** is in its infancy but is starting to work effectively with local leaders (recommissioning of short breaks, drop in sessions across schools in the Borough) and attending the SEND Strategic Partnership.



**Transitions** remain a key challenge in the local area with noticeable increases in placement breakdowns and EHCNA requests in the Early Years and in Year 7.

We do not yet have sufficient high quality **wrap around provision that children and families with SEND can access** - we have made some progress on this but for many families this remains a gap in the local area

# The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND



Changes in Children and Young People with Disabilities Service (CYPDS) - **Numerous projects developed in response to 36% increase in demand for short breaks.** Parent / Carers and children and young people's views were sought as part of the re-commissioning of short break services (link to Committee Report and engagement summary).



**Improvements in the Transitions into Adulthood Process** - All young people who are in receipt of a service as a child are transferred to the Transition Team, so each young person has the same experience.



**DSCO** - Investment in a Dedicated Social Care Officer (DSCO) has improved partnership working for children with special educational needs and systems relating to Continuing Care. Multi agency engagement with SWL ICB colleagues has ensured better reviews of children with complex needs and funding is shared. The DSCO has implemented, following a pilot, for staff to attend annual reviews of EHCP's for any child who is open to short breaks. We are committed to providing up to date social care advice and attending the annual reviews will help reduce repetition for families and reduce the number of assessments and transitions they experience.



**Bitesized Training** - The DSCO also organises Bitesize training sessions working with partners on a range of themes to deliver the SEND support message, this includes themes such as continuing care, preparation for adulthood, ordinarily available provision, assisted travel, S117, short breaks, EHCNA social care advice, EHCP's.

# SEND Quality Assurance Framework

Our framework incorporates the following elements:

- **Operational Quality Assurance process** - Cognus operate an established QA protocol to ensure the quality of EHCPs prior to issue.
- **Multi-Agency Audits:** These audits involve representatives from Cognus, Health, Children's Social Care, and Schools, and they examine selected cases, focusing on areas agreed by the group and based on EHCPs already issued.
- **Single-Agency Audits:** single agency audits allow for a more focused examination of each agency's practices - these take place on a case by case basis and are often commissioned by the SSP.
- **Practice Learning Fortnight:** This dedicated period fosters ongoing professional development and knowledge sharing.
- **Tracking Audits:** Tracking selected cases in an inspection-style setting.

## Multi-Agency Audits

7 sessions were completed over 2024 and into 2025. The audit team looked at 31 cases.

**Positive themes:** Strong inclusion of the child/young person's voice and views (Section A); Clear and concise setting out of special educational needs (Section B); Positive emphasis on Preparation for Adulthood; Readability and accessibility of plans; Holistic plans with relevant appendices; Effective plan revisions that respond to changes in circumstances.

**Themes for development:** Outcomes often lack specificity and a clear link to a young person's aspirations; Provision is frequently not adequately quantified or specified; The Golden Thread: A consistent link between needs, aspirations, and outcomes is sometimes missing; Plan Structure: Plans for older children are less detailed, and the inclusion of ordinarily available provision in Section F should be phased out.

## Other Audit Activity

Children's Social Care: In the last year, 60 cases were audited. Key findings include:

- Lack of consistency / quality across staff completion across teams
- Child's voice was not always clearly identified and included
- Completed advice was not shared with the parent/carer prior to submission

Regular training and clear How To Guides have improved common themes each quarter and a new Practice Guidance is being developed.

## Tracking Audits:

Tracking audits take place 2-3 times per year, and are multi-agency audits completed in 'inspection-style conditions'.

Our most recent audit found the following themes:

**Positive themes:** Comprehensive contributions and good partnership work across all education partners; Strong understanding of children and young people, with clear, holistic plans; Good examples of co-produced work that incorporates the child's voice and identity; Proactive and responsive health services.

**Themes for development:** The impact of interventions and joint working needs to be clearer; The child's voice and cultural identity should be more consistently and strongly represented across all cases; Improve communication and contributions from universal health services (GPs) and social care; Ensure professional reports contain more detail and are fully integrated into the EHCP; Improve evidence of cross-team working and information sharing, especially regarding children on SEN Support.



# Working with children and young people and families



# CYP are valued, visible and included in their communities

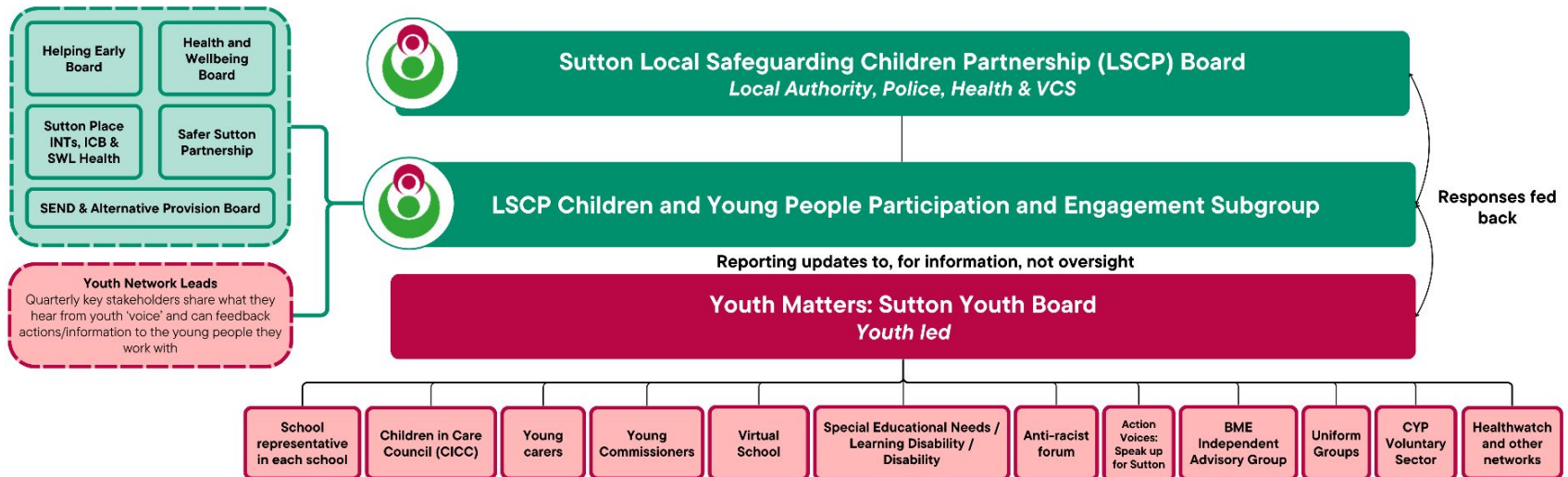
- Opportunities for inclusion through music - [Inclusive Music Making – Cognus](#) / [Autistic youth choir](#) - / [Open Orchestras - Accessible Youth Orchestras](#)
- [Orchard Hill College hold awards](#) evenings and celebration assemblies to celebrate achievements of YP and Nickel Support Annual Awards Ceremony
- Local area leaders continue to support and promote the [Hidden Disability Sunflower Scheme](#)
- [inclusive exclusive play spaces](#) for SEND families, and SEND friendly [play spaces in our parks](#),
- The libraries and heritage houses provide [regular SEN friendly and inclusive events](#) that can be accessed and enjoyed by all children and young people.
- Young People with additional needs supporting with local area initiatives - [Cognus Attendance Video](#)
- Our Local Offer Coordinator has engaged regularly with SEND young people in Sutton, through school visits and attending local SEND activities. Young people have supported the development of Local Offer content - [annual report here](#).
- Developing local area routes into employment - [Nickel Support Cafe staffed by young people with SEND](#), Sherwood Park training members of the cafe opposite the Hill site in PODD (the communication system used at the school), inclusive cafe planned at Robin Hood lane
- [Video created by Re-yon](#), a young person, at the 2024 Preparation for Adulthood event
- [Photo of Billy and Ben winning a Community Award for their 2023 video](#) of the Preparation for Adulthood event

# Our Youth Engagement Framework

We have developed a three year [Children and young people's Voice and Influence Framework](#). Children and young people with SEND are an integral part of the framework.

We are developing a video on the Youth Matters Framework that is aimed at young people with SEND, and they have been involved in making the video.

The diagram below shows how all of the youth groups feed into the youth board, including Action Voices.





# How we actively engage with and work with children, young people and families (and use the feedback)

Care leavers  
interviewing for  
senior  
positions  
(DCS, AD)

Limes Family  
Support  
Group

Participation:  
Young  
commissioners  
Youth Board

Participation:  
consultations Advocacy  
For All. Sutton consult  
with YP aged 12-25,  
running interactive  
workshops sending out  
easy read questionnaires  
and writing easy read,  
e.g. PFA, Short Breaks,  
LD start, travel training.

Young People  
involved in  
foster care  
recruitment

Parenting  
Programmes in  
the Borough  
including for  
families with  
Autistic CYP

Your Voice  
Matters  
Report 2024

Annual CYP  
PFA EVENTS

Playwise  
family  
events

Local offer  
You said, we  
Did

Sutton  
YOUTH  
SUMMIT

Sutton  
Healthwatch  
- CYP mental  
health  
surveys

LD Strategy  
Conference

School Awards  
Evenings

We contribute YPs  
views to the adult  
LD strategy  
delivery groups, so  
their voices are  
heard (age 18-25)

Customer Care  
and Complaints

PEP YP voice  
"All about me"  
reviews  
EP voice of the  
child in strat  
reports

CYP  
Attendance  
Video

Sutton SEND Forum  
- Face to face and online  
engagement events (e.g. coffee  
mornings)

Local offer  
Coordinator  
visits to Special  
Schools

CYP helped  
contribute to  
design of  
Local offer  
web pages

Cognus Family  
voice

Cognus SEND  
Coffee  
Mornings

Barnado's Your  
voice Matters  
engagement work

Participation: Action  
voices group (AFA)  
core group - teaching  
self advocacy skills,  
helping YP make  
friends, feel valued and  
speak up about  
services (Speak Up  
Sutton)

CYP /  
engagement and  
involvement in  
awarding Short  
Breaks  
Contracts

Parents  
Newsletters:  
CYPDS  
Family Focus  
Newsletter

SYC / Police  
Youth  
Newsletter



# Children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities

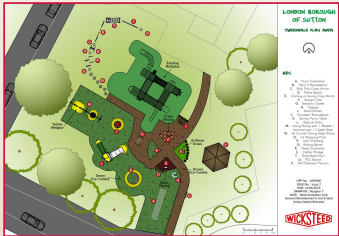
Our annual PfA events at the Life Centre (200 plus CYP in attendance)



Investing in inclusive playgrounds in the Borough (latest Fairlands Park improvements April 2024 completion)



Developing 'inclusive exclusive' play spaces for SEND CYP at Tweedale and the Grange - Easter completion



Our specialist providers organise regular awards evening to celebrate the achievements of our learners



# Children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities



A new Nickel Cafe will be opening at the Life Centre in November 2025. This will recruit young people to work in the cafe and attain qualifications to transition into hospitality work.

Our next PFA event will be on 12th November 2025



We are opening the PFA Hub in November 2025 and have undertaken various pieces of engagement work to understand what young people would want the hub to look like. This has directly fed into the colour scheme and zones within the space that we will be creating.

Action Voices has met with young people from Orchard Hill College to talk about what activities they would like to see at the Hub, and we are following up with the relevant organisations.

During the Preparation for Adulthood event in November 2024, the Children and Young People's Disability Service gathered feedback from around 100 young people about what they want in their new hub. Using a "PFA Wall," participants chose from a range of visuals and wrote their own ideas, with strong themes emerging. The top priorities included access to computers, a place to meet friends, and having music available. Young people also expressed a desire for a fun and comfortable environment with separate zones, as well as various leisure activities, opportunities to gain independence skills like cooking, and help with employment.

# Developing a new Parent Carer Forum for Sutton

- A new Parent Carer Forum and steering group has been established in the local area supported by Contact.
- Representatives from the Steering Group are members of the Sutton SEND partnership and feedback the views of families that they work with.
- A partnership agreement was signed in July 2025 setting how both parties want to work together.
- Further work is needed in the local area to support the group to grow

**Sutton SEND Forum**

EMPOWERING PARENTS VOICES



## PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Working together for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities in Sutton

Sutton SEND Forum, London Borough of Sutton, South West London Integrated Care System, Cognus

July 2025





# Commissioning provision for CYP with SEND and additional needs

# Commission services and provision to meet needs and aspirations of children and YP - Specialist and AP provision in the Borough

Since 2015 we have **increased the number of specialist school places in the Sutton by 30%, including:**

- The creation of a new special school on the Sherwood Park Hill site (2016)
- Creation and expansion of the Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) opportunity base at Avenue Primary School (2018).
- Expansion of Link Academy School (2021 onwards)
- Created the first Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) specific provision in the country at Link Academy (2022)
- Expanded Limes College AP from 140 to 180 places - strengthening outreach support to mainstream schools (2023)
- Expansion and then relocation of Carew Academy to purpose built new school (2025)
- Expansion of Sherwood Park School to a new site at Carew Manor, creating 25 places in 2025 and 24 in 2026.
- [Plans have been approved](#) for a new ASC special free school is planned for the Rosehill site (2025)
- Creation of a [new primary specialist Base](#) campus of Avenue Primary School at Wallington Primary Academy in partnership with Cirrus Trust
- Creation of a new ASD base a Overton Grange school (2025)
- Opening of a new vocational offer in Sutton to be run Limes for CYP at risk of exclusion (vocational pathway) - Sep 2025.
- We have also invested over £12m in specialist provision capital fund into mainstream schools to create inclusive spaces



# Commission services and provision to meet needs and aspirations of children and YP - Alternative Provision



## Limes and STARS are our main commissioned AP providers:

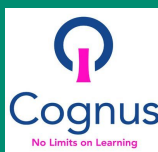
1. Limes College (Ofsted Good, 2024) is the commissioned to support pupils that are excluded or at risk of exclusion, Sutton Tuition and Reintegration Service (STARS) (Ofsted Outstanding 2024) provides education to pupils who are unable to attend school due to their health
2. Both providers are funded 'up front' based on a total commissioned number - Outreach is part of this commissioning arrangement
3. Commissioners oversee KPIs which are reviewed at regular termly AP commissioning meetings with both providers
4. Limes College makes use of two registered alternative providers, Just'Learn and Road 2 Success and we use Limes expertise to monitor, assess, and quality assure AP provision on behalf of LBS in the local area
5. We have addressed the issue of waiting lists in Limes by increasing the commissioned number of places, and are currently [recommissioning the provision at STARS](#)<sup>25</sup>



# Our plans - SEND and AP Strategy 2024-2027

[SEND and AP Strategy 2024/27](#)

[SEND and AP Strategy 2024/27 - Delivery Plan](#)

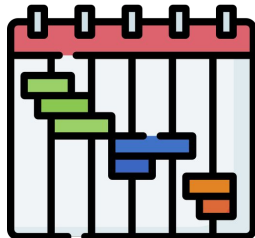




# SEND and AP Strategy 24-27 - Year 1 summary

This [People Committee Report Annex A](#) document provides an update on our progress against our SEND and AP Strategy. Some key highlights are:

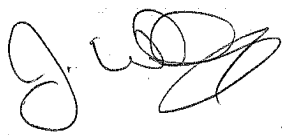
- **Priority 1: Earlier identification and more timely support.** We are strengthening support for children with SEND from an early age. Community nursery nurses are now assigned to pre-schools to aid in early identification. Specific funding is in place to help 487 children make a smooth transition from Early Years settings to primary school, a process further supported by the successful pilot of the PlayWise Support Passport. We're also proud to report that health advice in our EHCNA's consistently meets the six-week statutory deadline. Finally, our 'talk matters programme' has been highly effective, helping 96% of participating primary school pupils to improve their communication skills and narrow the gap with their peers.
- **Priority 2: Embed joined up and relational practice.** To better support families, we now have a directory of support live on the Local Offer website, making it easier to find SEND information. At Limes College, a new multidisciplinary taskforce has led to improved attendance and fewer behavioral incidents and suspensions. Our 'building stronger foundations' program, which provides trauma-informed training, has expanded to 22 schools. A new Post 16 SEND college and Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) hub is on track to launch in a limited capacity in October 2025. Finally, we've improved the transition to adult social care, with 90% of 16-17 year olds now having a jointly allocated worker, and supported internship placements have tripled since 2022.
- **Priority 3: Strengthen access to education for vulnerable pupils.** To better support vulnerable students, we've established new vocational programs at Limes College and NESCOL. We've also added more specialist school places at Carew Manor and Oakfield Base, with new SEND resource bases confirmed in mainstream schools. A new operating model at the STARS medical PRU is showing positive results, with nine pupils successfully reintegrating into their original schools. The roll-out of the StudyBugs platform is significantly reducing exclusions and suspensions, while the expansion of wraparound provision means it's available in nearly all mainstream schools.
- **Priority 4: Grow the voice and influence of children and young people.** A new, independent Sutton SEND Forum (SSF) has been established, actively participating in re-commissioning short breaks. A 'Voice and Influence framework' has been agreed, with a Youth Board developing the 'Youth Matters' logo, ensuring inclusion of children and young people with SEND through groups like Action Voices/Speak Up Sutton.
- **Priority 5: A more financially sustainable system.** A deficit recovery plan for the High Needs Block was endorsed, focusing on reducing the rate of overspend. "Every Child Every School" guidance for Ordinarily Available Provision has been drafted. A new SEND Support Advisory Partnership is rolling out to strengthen support at the SEND Support level. Specialist commissioning efforts include creating additional in-borough places at Carew Manor, Oakfield, and new secondary bases to reduce reliance on external Non-Maintained and Independent (NMI) provision. An NMI Officer has been appointed to scrutinise placements and costs.



# SEND and AP Strategy 24-27 - Year 2 and Year 3 plans

Leaders continue to be ambitious for young people with SEND in the Borough

- PfA hub at Life Centre
- Developing a SEND family hub
- New Angel Hill Free School
- 'Needs-led model' to be piloted in Sutton
- Therapies - joint working with health
- Difference Matters Project in Secondary settings
- Infinity Support Hub
- SEND Champions schools network
- Developing our plans in response to the Schools white paper and SEND Reform / NHS reform
- Cognus Education Centre
- Improved use of SEND data at school level to improve accountability in the system and joint working practices

<b>Report Title</b>	Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services 2025		
<b>Committee</b>	People Committee		
<b>Meeting Date</b>	25 September 2025		
<b>Chair</b>	Councillor Marian James		
<b>Report From</b>	Jonathan Williams, Director of Children's Services		
<b>Report Author</b>	Jonathan Williams, Director of Children's Services		
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	Council Business		
<b>Ambitious for Sutton priorities</b>	An efficient and well run Council		
<b>Open/Exempt</b>	Open		
<b>Signed</b>		<b>Date</b>	09.09.2025

## 1 Summary

- 1.1 Children, young people and their families are at the centre of Sutton's ambition to ensure that its residents feel included and are supported by an efficient and well run council. Specifically, Sutton's Children Services continue to be ambitious in supporting children and young people in Sutton to be safe, and promote the achievement of positive outcomes.
- 1.2 Local Authority Children's Services are regulated and inspected by Ofsted as part of the 'Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services' framework (ILAC). Part of the inspection framework consists of an annual self assessment against Sutton's Children's Social Care Self Assessment (Appendix A).
- 1.3 Sutton Children's Services was inspected in June 2025 and the report was published on 29 July 2025 (Appendix B).
- 1.4 The key judgements across the domains assessed are as following:
- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families - Good
  - The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection - Good
  - The experiences and progress of children in care - Good
  - The experiences and progress of children care leavers - Good
  - Overall effectiveness - Good

## 2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the Children's Social Care Self Assessment.
- 2.2 To note the findings of the Ofsted inspection.
- 2.3 To note the action plan outlining progress against the recommendations from the inspection.

### **3 Background and Key Information**

- 3.1 The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) is a system of inspection. This system includes:
  - Local authorities sharing an annual self assessment of the quality and impact of social work practice
  - An annual engagement meeting between Ofsted and the local authority to review the self-evaluation and to reflect on what is happening in the local authority
  - Intelligence gathered through data and information
  - Focused visits that look at specific area of service
  - Standard and short (for good and outstanding authorities) inspections when judgements are made
  - Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI)
- 3.2 Sutton's Children's Services' last short inspection took place in December 2021. This was followed by a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) in September 2023 and the last annual engagement meeting took place on 1 May 2025. The annual engagement meeting was informed by Sutton's Children's Social Care Self Assessment. This self assessment process is completed each year and highlights what Children Social Care knows about practice and how this is known. The self assessment incorporated the transformation journey and outlined the ambition and significant achievements that had been made whilst also delivering on £1.78m savings in the year leading up to the inspection. This year the self assessment was also converted into [a podcast](#) which was shared with Ofsted.
- 3.3 The short inspection took place over two weeks in July 2025. The first of those weeks inspectors were offsite reviewing data, documentation and having interviews with leaders and key stakeholders. During the first week over 200 documents were uploaded and a significant amount of data was provided. For the second week there were, at times, 9 inspectors onsite across the Civic, the Quad and Cantium House. They were reviewing case files and interviewing frontline practitioners. They also met with parents, children and care leavers. In addition, education services relating to inclusion, safeguarding and children looked after were inspected. This was the first inspection of Sutton since Care Leavers became a new judgement area.
- 3.4 The overall judgement of the inspection rated the services as 'Good'. This includes the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families, the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection, the experiences and progress of

children in care, and the experiences and progress of children care leavers, all of which were also judged as 'Good'.

- 3.5 The report outlines that most children and families in Sutton receive appropriate help, protection, and care. Since the 2021 inspection, services for children and care leavers have generally been maintained and improved.
- 3.6 Ofsted stated that “The senior leadership team, along with strong political and corporate support, has injected energy and pace to facilitate improvements to ensure that children and care leavers benefit from effective social care practice”. This is supported by the self-assessment, which details numerous activities aimed at improving outcomes for children.
- 3.7 The report specifically highlighted the positive impact of staff in several areas:
- The Targeted Early Help Service (TEHS) offers effective support that helps children thrive.
  - Skilled, specialist support workers based in the social work locality teams deliver intensive, bespoke and effective packages of support to children.
  - Parents and children who access the parenting group programme experience meaningful and transformative support delivered through targeted interventions.
  - Disabled children have thoughtful, knowledgeable and skilled social workers who understand their needs well.
  - An effective in-house therapeutic service, staffed by an expanding and committed multi-disciplinary team, offers targeted interventions to children and care leavers.
  - Social workers know their children very well. They take time to get to know children and establish positive and helpful relationships.
  - Children in care do well in school, supported by effective school arrangements and the designated safeguarding lead network.
  - Care leavers receive an attentive service from dedicated personal advisers (PAs) who genuinely care about them.
- 3.8 The report also commended the ‘one council’ approach, citing Sutton’s recognition of care leaver status as a protected characteristic. This initiative acknowledges the additional vulnerabilities of care leavers and lays the groundwork for broader corporate responsibility and accountability for care leavers across the borough.
- 3.9 Ofsted identified three areas that required improvement:
- The quality and consistency of response to children who are looked after who go missing from home.
  - The effectiveness of the initial response to children who are at risk of physical harm.
  - The quality and robustness of leaders and managers’ oversight of discrete areas of practice where there is not effective social work.
- 3.10 An action plan against the above recommendations has been implemented and progress is being made including:

- Increased investment in the corporate parenting service, with a second service manager appointed and recruitment underway for vacant management positions; sharing best practices from locality teams regarding missing children; and developing commissioning arrangements for responding to missing children and conducting return home interviews.
- Multi-agency workshop held to review threshold guidance for physical harm; a practice directive issued to staff outlining expectations; and additional investment in service management arrangements at the Children's First Contact Service for enhanced oversight of decision-making.
- Recommendations have been escalated to the appropriate governance boards.

#### **4 Benefits to Sutton and its Residents**

- 4.1 When a local authority children's services receives 'Good' judgement across all areas, it provides residents with a strong sense of confidence and reassurance.
- 4.2 Residents can have high trust that Sutton is effectively identifying and responding to children at risk of harm.
- 4.3 A 'Good' rating across the board indicates that children (including those who are looked after, care leavers, or who have disabilities) are receiving the right help at the right time.
- 4.4 The judgements and report reflects a well-supported, stable, and skilled social work workforce. This means that children and families are more likely to benefit from consistent relationships with experienced professionals, leading to more effective support.

#### **5 Implications**

- 5.1 This report is intended to offer assurance on the effectiveness of Children's Services following the inspection by Ofsted.

##### Equalities Implications

- 5.2 There are no material equalities implications resulting from the recommendation(s) of this report.

##### Climate Implications

- 5.3 There are no material climate implications resulting from the recommendation(s) of this report.

#### **6 Finance and Legal Commentary**

##### Finance Comment

- 6.1 There are no material financial implications resulting from the recommendations of this report. Funding has already been provided for the additional service manager in Corporate Parenting within the recent transformation.

Financial Risks

- 6.2 There are no material financial risks resulting from the recommendation(s) of this report.

Legal Comment

- 6.3 There are no specific legal comments

Legal Risks

- 6.4 There are no specific legal risks.

## 7 Appendices and Background Documents

### 7.1 Appendices

Appendix Letter	Appendix Title
A	Sutton's Children's Social Care Self Assessment
B	Ofsted Report

### 7.2 Background Documents

Date of Expiry	Background Document
N/A	N/A

## 8 Consultations

Consultees	Yes/No	Officer	Date of Comments
Finance	Yes	Victoria Goddard Director of Finance	09/09/2025
Legal	Yes	Lucy Craig Assistant Head of Law, Social Care and Education Team	09/09/2025
Commercial and Procurement	No	N/A	N/A
Others	No	M/A	N/A



# Children's Social Care

Self Assessment, 2024/25

# Summary

**Sutton is ambitious for children and invests in innovation** to continuously improve. Plans are in place to move from 'Good' to 'Outstanding', focusing on a 'family first' approach and early intervention strategies.

**Sutton's well performing and engaged workforce knows its community and children well** to improve the lived experience of our children and young people within the local community.

**The diverse Senior Leadership Team is visible, approachable and supportive** demonstrating its commitment to children's social care through its knowledge of local communities and needs, investment and engagement, advocating continuously for children.

**Sutton's partnership working is strong** as noted in the LGA Peer Review (2024), JTAI (June 2023) and the ILACs (December 2021).

This self assessment highlights the progress made over the last year, focusing on achievements made in:

- Helping Early (including Sutton's successful parenting programme),
- EDT (including the Alternative to Custody initiative),
- Targeted Early Help, and the strength of the Front Door (leading to a reduced number of re-referrals to CSC),
- CIN (including improved consistency of practice),
- Children Looked After (including keeping CLA local in high quality residential provision including our in-house residential provision rated 'Good' in all areas by Ofsted, and the development of the Fostering Hub), and
- Care Leavers (including the One Council approach to Corporate Parenting).

Sutton's progress over the past year, as evidenced by these accomplishments, reinforces its commitment to delivering high-quality children's services.



# Introduction

The **London Borough of Sutton** is ambitious for its children and families. We are proud of our accomplishments within Children's Services and have a clear understanding of our strengths and areas for improvement.

This self-assessment highlights our significant progress over the past year, showcasing successes, achievements, and the challenges we've overcome. Throughout the document, you'll find quotes from children, families, and professionals celebrating our work.

Sutton is continually striving for excellence and has ambitious plans to positively build on their “good” judgement. Our leadership and services are actively exploring changes that will enhance experiences and outcomes for children and families.

To provide additional context and evidence, we've included links to various sources throughout the document. Further information can be made available if required.

## Local Context

The London Borough of Sutton is a place where people want to live and work, with strong partnerships across public services and the charity and community sector. Our staff are our greatest asset; we have a strong, stable and committed workforce who are ambitious for our children.

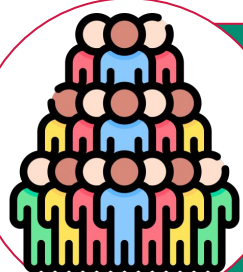
A LGA Corporate Peer Challenge took place at the end of 2024. The [Position Statement](#) provides a comprehensive understanding of Sutton. The [feedback report](#) stated “Sutton is a well-performing council with a good record of delivery, supported by an engaged workforce, and a healthy organisational culture with a clear commitment to serving its residents. The council benefits from positive working relationships between the officer and political leadership, a critical factor for success in the best performing councils.”

As a council we know ourselves well and people are open and friendly.

**“Thank you so much for all your help, understanding, and support over the last year or so, words cannot express how much we have valued this - there were times without it we felt we would not have survived. We are and always will be very grateful and we will always remember your advice and kindness.”**

**Feedback from a parent to the Therapeutic Hub**

# Demographics



**52,756**

children aged 19 and under live in Sutton \*



**24%**

of Sutton's population is under 18 \*



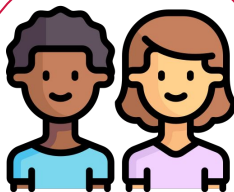
**1 in 5**

Sutton children (21.8%) are living in poverty (2021/22). This is lower than the rates for London and England \*



**82%**

of children reach the expected standard of reading (compared to London 77% and England 73%) \*\*



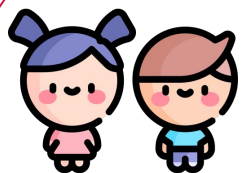
**2.2%**

of 16 and 17 year olds are not in education, employment or training. This is lower than the national percentage of 5.2% \*\*



**217**

Children open to Early Help in Sutton (as of 24th February 2025) \*\*\*



**624**

Children in Need in Sutton (as of 24th February 2025) \*\*\*



**184**

Children in Sutton are on a Child Protection Plan (as of 24th February 2025) \*\*\*



**213**

Children / Young People are looked after in Sutton (as of 24th February 2025) \*\*\*

\*\* Data from "This is Sutton"

\*\* Data from [data.sutton.gov.uk](https://data.sutton.gov.uk)

\*\*\* Data from Weekly Report, w/c 24/02/2025

# Political and financial context

## Political Context

- Liberal Democrat Borough since 1990.
- Strong and stable political Leadership.
- Cllr Marian James has been Lead member for the People Directorate and children since 2018. Cllr James chairs the People Committee and the Corporate Parenting Forum.
- Good track record of delivering for residents.
- Local leaders are highly visible, actively involved in the community, and frequently attend events.
- The [People Committee](#) is the council's statutory social services committee. Its responsibilities include: executing statutory and non-statutory functions within its area of responsibility, adhering to approved budgets and policies, and recommending new or revised policies to the Full Council.

## Financial Context

- Like other local authorities, unprecedented period of financial risk over the past decade.
- Managed pressures well, maintaining a stable financial position.
- Reserves consistently lower than other London boroughs.
- Demand for services is up and complexity of need has increased.
- Four transformation programmes focusing on Adult Social Care, Temporary Housing, Children's Social Care and SEND.
- CSC has a total budget of £47m.
- Projected Overspend 24/25 of £1.681m.
- 25/26 budget growth = £1.5m (residential £1m; CYPDS £0.5m).
- 25/26 savings = £1.778m staffing; £150k CLA/ LC accommodation.
- Reduction in high cost residential placements to 23 (+5 in house residential home + 5 16/17 years CYPDS) from as high as 30 a year ago.
- Reduction in the number of high cost residential placements costing more than £10k per week, from 9 to 1 over the last 18 months.

# What do we know and how do we know it? : The role of leaders

## Political leadership in Sutton is strong and advocates robustly for children:

- CSC is a priority. Political leaders respond to demand; 2025/26 £1m investment for residential and £500k for short breaks
- A commitment to growing our residential establishment through utilising assets and capital and revenue investment - Willow Rise [news story](#), [YouTube video](#), and [Kickstart futures](#).
- Strong cross party support for corporate parenting responsibilities; one of the first London Boroughs supporting [care experience as a protected characteristic](#) ([Sutton video for National Care Leavers Week](#)).
- Recognise the achievements of our children and families by showing their support at key events such as [fun days](#), [celebrating success](#), Shining Stars Awards, Operation Elf, and [meeting with parents / carers](#) in our communities as well as [staff](#).
- Invest further in what works, eg parenting programmes - [parenting video](#).
- Support with key areas of challenge such as [Hong Kong recruitment project](#).
- Promote and value our foster carers and care leavers through events, such as [Mayor's receptions](#) and [Celebration Events](#) ([click to view a photograph of a recent event](#)).
- Safeguarding Leadership Group affords reassurance to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive about the effectiveness of partnership arrangements, impact and outcomes for children.

## An engaged and dynamic chief executive and DCS:

- Visibility, accessibility and support from the Chief Executive and DCS keeps them alive to practice on the ground through regular, [communication](#) and the [Practice Learning Fortnight](#).
- Leaders encourage staff to be [mentors](#) for our Children Looked After with many staff, including the DCS, being mentors.
- Regularly keep staff up to date with developments and promote the work through various communication channels; for example regular online 'Time to Talk' sessions with staff, [dedicated staff CSC intranet page](#), [regular CSC updates](#), and an anonymous form for staff to ask questions which are then responded to in Time to Talk sessions and on the intranet.
- Outward facing, floor walking and getting to know staff, partners and children through [drop-in sessions with staff](#), hosting a [staff Christmas event](#), [celebration events for staff](#), joint visits to Willow Rise, [semi-independent accommodation developments](#), foster carers' homes and receptive to feedback from children, young people and their carers/parents.
- Promoting the work of our foster carers and attendance at i.e. [foster carer awards](#).
- The Lead Member and DCS visit the borough's schools.

# What do we know and how do we know it? : The role of leaders

## Children's service is a priority for the council and receives joined up support from other directorates:

- Children's Services has two priority transformation workstreams with investment for change - Children's Social Care and SEND
- Strong and effective business partner arrangements with council departments. For example, alternative to children in police custody arrangements and use of housing assets to support post 18 care experienced accommodation options.
- Corporate services [engage with our staff](#) and listen to their feedback, influencing change and culture. For example, our PRIDE VALUES refresh, and [celebrate their achievements](#).
- Support our staff through the [staff networks](#) - Staff Networks Day [video](#).
- Transforming community assets to benefit our children such as the [repurposing of our Life centre](#) to become a Preparation for Adulthood centre of excellence.
- Sutton celebrates the success of their staff at the [staff PRIDE awards](#) and through the [people conference](#).
- Practice Learning fortnight gives leaders across the council the opportunity to observe practice. During the most recent event senior leaders and councillors observed:
  - Child Protection Conference (Helen Bailey)
  - CIN Meeting (Jonathan Williams)
  - Risk Panel Meeting (Tendai Dooley)
  - Adoption Tracker Meeting (Kieran Holliday)
  - Short Breaks Panel (Joanna Cassey)
  - Child Focused Panel (Councillor Rob Beck)
  - RCPC (Imran Choudhury)
  - SEND Panel Meeting (Richard Simpson)

## Wider service

- The [Children's Leadership and Management team](#) is stable, visionary, experienced and holds detailed organisational history, strategic and operational knowledge. They have authentic understanding, response and collaboration with partner agencies and local communities in managing safeguarding concerns.
- **Visible, approachable, and supportive Senior Management Team** - Senior leaders care about our children, their communities and our staff, and take pride in our 'One Sutton' approach that drives our practice model, vision, and aspiration for Excellence. Senior leaders are visible through floor-walks, Practice & Performance, and CELM.
- **Passionate, accountable and Integrated within practice** - Senior leaders maintain both strategic and operational oversight on practice through Child Focused Panel, Defensible Decisions, Need to Know, bi-monthly SMT meetings, and joint visits.
- **Elevation of the PSW role and strengthening of the Social work Academy** - ensuring there is a clear practice Model (Investing in Excellence), ability and capacity to grow our own and effective support to staff needs.
- [Senior Leaders Check-in](#) - (every third Wednesday of the month) positive response to children in care and care leavers and ensuring they have direct access to Director of CSC and Safeguarding and Lead member for children. Maintains line of sight and alignment of practice with lived experiences of those we support.



# Education

There are 64 schools in the Borough - 15 Secondary Schools, 40 primary schools, two Pupil Referral Units, five Special schools, two maintained nursery schools. Carshalton College is also located within the Borough as well as numerous independent and non maintained provisions. There are a total of 318 Early Years and Childcare providers who offer places for children from birth upwards.

At the secondary phase, Sutton is a significant importer of pupils with five selective secondary schools and two voluntary aided catholic schools that typically have much larger catchment areas. Sutton is a relatively autonomous education system in Sutton with a high level of Academisation (70%), Despite this, there is a high level of collaboration between schools and with the Local Authority. There is a exceptionally strong DSL network lead by Cognus with schools acting as the 4th statutory partner in our local area safeguarding arrangements since 2019.

In Sutton, school support services are delivered by Cognus - a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC). The company provides 27 education services, eleven of which additionally generate income through trading some services; this income is reinvested into education services for Sutton's children and young people. In 2021, the company transferred to 100% ownership by Sutton Council.



## SEY Settings / Schools Performance

Sutton is [an excellent place for children to attend school](#). Almost all schools are Ofsted rated “Good” or “Outstanding”. [See ‘Get Information about Schools’ on the DfE website](#). Whilst attainment and progress overall is very strong in the Borough across all key stages, the local area recognises that further work is required to support vulnerable learners with SEND, CIN or CP plans.

## Virtual School Performance

Sutton had 23 Year 11 young people in care for more than 1 year. 30% of the cohort achieved 5 or more GCSEs and 13% achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grade 4 or above. There was a 0.30 increase in Progress 8 from 2022/23 for Sutton CLA. 96% of young people identified and applied for an education, training, employment (EET) post 16 destination for September 2024 start. Post 16 students have registered for courses across the range from ESOL entry level 2 through to level 3 A-Levels.

33 young people started Year 12 in September 2024 and 94% started in education, employment, or training (EET) in September. 50 young people were in care at the end of year 13 and 72% were in education, employment, or training (EET) in September 2024, which continues to be above the National average of 70% of 18-year-old care leavers in EET destinations.

Four care leavers took up a university place in September 2024 with a further one due to start in January. All university applicants are offered support with their UCAS and finance applications, through the Leaving Care Team and Sutton Virtual School. There are currently 13 Sutton Care Leavers age 18-25 enrolled on a Higher Education pathway. There were two Sutton care leaver graduates this year, achieving a 2:2 degree in Computer Science at the University of Greenwich and a 2:1 in Radiography at St. George's University.

[More details are available in the Virtual School annual report.](#)



# Transformation

The overall plan of the 3 year Transformation Programme has been to set a new operating model for Children's Social Care within the People Directorate of the London Borough of Sutton (LBS) that will achieve savings required in 2025 and enable the further development of our service over 2026 to support the following vision:

**In Sutton Children's Services we believe that through building trusting relationships with children and families we can support them to live their best lives.  
Supporting, Protecting, Relating.**

The Transformation Programme will meet this vision by delivering an outstanding Sutton family help model that ensures...

- the right support is provided at the right time to families to ensure children thrive and remain within their family network whenever it is safe for them to do so
- that children who need to become looked after can remain in the local community and return home as soon as it is safe to do so
- that children access an inclusive, high quality education
- that Sutton is a Child Friendly Borough with Young People's voice and influence present in all areas of the Council.

**We are proud of our achievements so far in our programme and the position that we are now in to really develop our family first partnership arrangements over the next year!**

## Year 1 (2023/24) - Achievements and Impact:

### Children in police custody accommodated at local contact centre

- Children in appropriate accommodation and care - now being taken up by other local authorities

### EDT/CFCS Transformation

- Better EDT Service with more visibility/face to face contact with service users where needed.
- Streamlined services enabling refocus of resource in service

### £401k Savings made

- Achieved through voluntary redundancy and other efficiencies with no reduction of front line staff

### Internships for Social Workers from Hong Kong

- Successful internship programme to enable social workers from Hong Kong to work in Children's Services to gain experience while transferring their qualifications.

# Transformation - Year 2 (2024/25)

## Year 2 - Achievements and Impact:

### Sutton Practice Academy - Investing in Excellence

- New learning and career development framework for staff
- Rooted in restorative and trauma informed approaches

### Investment in a Fostering Hub Model

- £100k invested and first hub going live in March 2025
- Foster Carers excited and invested
- Move towards increased placement stability

### Early Help Panel Pilots/Front Door Brief Intervention Pilots

- Right support at right stage, preventing escalation of need
- 3125 families received early intervention services support Sept 22-Aug 23 and 3590 in the following year. Increase of 475 families
- Reduction in child and family assessments
- Both Pilots now BAU.

### Restructure Children Looked After Services

- Removal of Court Team and integrated work within CLA service to reduce transition points.
- Plan to develop specialist CLA and CL service put on hold and subject to further review following staff feedback

### Investment in Specialist Roles

- DSCO appointed ensuring strategic and operational join up across children and adults social care, education and health.
- Domestic Abuse worker appointed to CFCS - ensuring early targeted intervention at the front door

## Welcoming Community Safety into Children's Services:

- Has enabled joined up approach across our youth and community services for young people and their families.

## Development of Willow Rise Residential Provision:

- Sutton first London borough to develop in house residential
- 3 houses fully staffed
- Estimated cost saving of £500k over the year
- Ofsted 'Good' rating - local care for our children

## Parenting Programme Investment:

- Funding for 2 part time posts for volunteers re-entering the workplace to facilitate Early Help Parenting Programme
- Working with communities in a sustainable way

## KickStart Futures Programme

- Joint project with LBS, Barnardos and Sutton Housing Partnership
- 10 local properties for 31 young people
- £100k year on year savings. Joined up support.

## Affordable and accessible short breaks provision for children and young people with SEND

- Provider framework in place ensuring good quality group and individual provision
- Costs reduced, no impact on quality of care
- Inclusive playgrounds - improving inclusivity to everyday activities - great feedback.

## £1.78 million achieved in revenue savings for 25/26

- Achieved through a core design principle of savings not impacting upon service delivery to children and families.

# Transformation - Year 3 (2025/26)

We are in a strong position to progress with our Family First Partnership Programme which will include governance of our Corporate Parenting Project.

We have had early engagement with our neighbouring local authorities, police, education and public health and have presented to the LSCP and Early Help Board on the Child Wellbeing and Schools Bill and our plans to progress this.

We have been able to resource the programme to ensure we can work with partners and families to move forward together to develop our services over the next year:

## What will this look like?

### Continuation of our Corporate Parenting Project

- 2 fostering hubs by the end of 2025, and 2 further by end 2027
- Increase of 10-12 net foster carers year upon year over the next 2 years
- 6 supported lodgings carers for young people aged 16-25 who want to remain in a family environment by end 2025.
- Develop a dual registration residential provision for young people with learning disabilities and autism
- Updated Recruitment and Retention Offer for Foster Carers
- Development and delivery of Kinship Local Offer, including training for all staff
- Increase respite foster carers by net of 3 year on year.
- Further review of CLA / CL structure to inform decision to have specialist or integrated teams

### Roll out of Practice Academy 'Investing in Excellence'

- New learning/development framework/opportunities within the career framework reflected in appraisals
- Progression to senior specialist support worker and social worker posts embedded in appraisal process.

### Launch of Voice and Influence Framework

- Formal launch at Youth Summit - Oct 2025
- Video version by YP with SEND - July 2025.

### Family First Partnership

- Multi-agency family help teams in place by April 2026
- Multi-agency child protection team in place by April 2026
- Family Network Support Packages -
- Review of Family Led Decision Making by Aug 2025
- One family led assessment and plan in place by Sept 2026 - co-produced with families.
- Digital enablement to improve family experience and staff capacity embedded in all workstreams
- Work with partners to review arrangements for children who are home schooled and at risk of harm
- Workforce training on new arrangements/practice/legislation
- Implement Delivery Plan of 'Our Family Help Services'.

[Our Approach to Family First 2025-2027 \(draft\)  
Delivery Plan for Our Family Help Strategy](#)

# Helping Early: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Effective Helping Early Strategy** - Our [Helping Early Strategy](#) shows what we, as a whole partnership of services working for children and families in Sutton, have agreed to prioritise and practice together to provide the most effective, earliest help possible.



**Increase in Universal Youth Provision** with three groups now operating across the borough each week. One is in the Family Hub with 83 young people registered, and the local authority funds two which are delivered by the Time Out for Youth project.



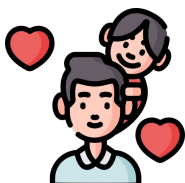
**Parenting Programme** - Sutton's established [parenting programme](#), running for over two years, offers both in-person and online courses, specialist support for families with autism, and advice sessions that have facilitated numerous referrals to essential services. 400 parents attended in person programmes in 2024/25. The Peer Led Parenting Programmes have five active Parent Group Leaders (PGLs), with new PGLs trained and awaiting sign off. Three volunteers have been supported into employment within the service. Presented at National conference



**National Conference and award** - The Parenting Service recently [presented at a National Conference](#). The Parenting Service has also been shortlisted for a MJ award.



**Children's Centres and Family Hubs** provide targeted services to more deprived communities. There has been a 49% increase in the number of families living in the 30% most deprived areas accessing these services (compared to 2021/22).



**Supporting Male Carers** - There are two [male carers groups](#), including one for fathers of under 5's and their children in the children's centre. 142 male carers attended in 2024/25. 30 male carers attended the 'Chill, Chat, Connect' event group in 2024/25.

# Helping Early: What do we know and how do we know it?



## Children's Centres continue to provide support:

- FIS and EY funding has been integrated and more children are taking up childcare places than expected;
- EY Operational Group - the multi-disciplinary team review health notifications, early intervention for children with SEND, and review co-ordinated support through providers and settings;
- Families concerned about their child's development are able to make use of monthly drop-ins with children's centres, Cognus, Playwise and FH coordinators;
- A rolling programme of workshops for families is being developed;
- Positive feedback has been received for the Learning Through Play course, showing the impact the course has on the home learning environment;
- Stay and Play, Mini Explorers, and Story and Craft are all aimed at improving the understanding of child development, home learning environment, and early identification. Over 1,014 families attended these programmes in the last year.



**Daily Mile** - Sutton has developed videos to showcase the Daily Mile in Sutton and promote the DM Fit for Life Award. We visited Cheam Park Farm Primary Academy, Cheam Fields Primary Academy, Brookfield Primary Academy and Manor Park Primary Academy to film children and teachers and hear their views about the Daily Mile. Their comments highlight the value of exercise for health and wellbeing. [View one of the videos here](#).



**Sutton LSCP and SSAB Fire Prevention and Safeguarding Toolkit** - In early 2025, the LSCP and SSAB jointly launched the Fire Prevention and Safeguarding Toolkit and Training [e-learning module](#), developed in collaboration with the London Fire Brigade. This aims to equip individuals working with vulnerable populations at risk of fire incidents with the necessary knowledge and skills to prevent fatalities and serious injuries. The [Fire Prevention and Safeguarding Toolkit](#) is available locally, providing essential resources for all those who interact with individuals at increased risk of home fires across Children's and Adult's Safeguarding.



**Addressing Vaping in Sutton Schools** - In response to growing concerns about the rise in youth vaping and following engagement with young people at Carshalton Boys Sports College, Sutton has developed new resources to educate students and parents about the potential health risks associated with vaping. These materials aim to equip young people with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions and provide parents with effective strategies for discussing vaping with their children. The resources include [an animated film](#), a [leaflet for parents and carers](#), and [a poster](#), all designed to raise awareness about the dangers of youth vaping.

# Front Door and EDT: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Better intervention at the Right Time** - Additional investment in Children's First Contact Service (CFCS) has supported a greater triage and better intervention at the right time, preventing the need for statutory child and family assessments. For example - investment of a full time DA Advisor enables a faster gateway into our newly commissioned Cranstoun Services that offers a spectrum of specialist services. In summary assessments have reduced from 301 to 181 in 12 months - a reduction of 120 child and family assessments in a year.



**Effective Integrated Partnerships** as part of the MASH including daily MASH meetings and weekly Multi-agency Meeting Domestic Abuse (MAMDA), with exceptional links to schools through the Education Navigator



**Review of CFCS** - The review of CFCS has enabled greater efficiency in the processing of contacts effectively with no backlog in contacts. This has enabled greater collaboration between the multi-agency staff.



**Alternative Provision to Custody** whilst seeking accommodation through our Family Contact Centre, facilitated by CEDT social workers, sessional workers, and a police officer. This successful approach has been in place since December 2023 and has led to the police advocating for similar provisions in all London Local Authorities. Additionally, LBS is being commissioned by LB of Merton to implement the same provision.



**SMT supports 4 borough EDT arrangements** - maintains consistent and trusted out of hours support to complex emergency situations, ensuring the right decisions are made regardless of the timing of the incident or concern.



# Targeted Early Help: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Effective support from Targeted Early Help Service (TEHS)** - The number of families re-referred to CSC within 6 months of closure to TEHS remains low; an average of 7.7% for the first three quarters of 24/25.



**Increased work with absent parents** - TEHS have worked hard to improve engagement with absent parents, with worker's confidence engaging with fathers having grown considerably following a series of team training sessions.



**Shared understanding of outcomes** - Work with partners to help them better understand the Supporting Families Outcomes Framework has supported both reductions in the number of referrals that are NFA'd but also drawn in significant additional income for the borough via successful claims.



**Improved information sharing across the partnership** - The 6 month [Early Help System Panel pilot](#) during 2024 proved successful. Improved information sharing and a shared commitment to support families across the early help system has led to the pilot becoming BAU.



**Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC)** - 4 staff members were trained up as Train the Trainers in RPC and have cascaded this training to their respective services and will now be cascaded learning across the safeguarding partnership during 25-26.



**Schools Team reducing permanent exclusions** - Of the 137 children at risk of permanent exclusion referred by Secondary Schools to the Schools Team between May 23 and Dec 24, 127 (86.3%) have been supported to maintain their place in school. This work, along with many other partners (including education and health) contributed to the 35% overall reduction in exclusion in academic year 23/24. The multi-agency Vulnerable Pupil Panel (VPP) is a vital partnership in addressing systemic needs.



**Improving school attendance** - Joint investment between Cognus and TEHS has enabled the rollout of the Studybugs platform which provides SSWs/SWs with live school attendance data for children and supports better information sharing between CSC and Schools.



**New Parenting Programmes Launched at Therapeutic Hub** - The Therapeutic Hub introduced two new 12-week parenting group programmes in April 2024: Therapeutic Parenting and DBT (current group has 9 people, and another parent is being supported on a 1:1 basis). Three PACE courses have taken place so far. These programs are offered three times a year to provide more parents with access to therapeutic support. By focusing on improving family relationships and keeping children at home, these programs are empowering parents with valuable strategies. Participants have reported positive outcomes, finding the strategies beneficial and expressing gratitude for the support received.



# CIN: What do we know and how do we know it?



**The Building Stronger Foundations** programme ran in six Sutton schools in year 1 and is running in 23 schools in year 2. It supports partnership working and relational approaches for CWSW as well as developing school systems to be more trauma informed in their approach. This is jointly run by Virtual School, Limes College, and supported by EP, social care and Therapeutic Hub.



**Improved Child and Family Assessment Completion** - the timeliness of child and family assessments has improved.



**Improvement in consistency of practice and standards for children through workshops** - Management workshops have improved consistency and raised standards in child protection practices. Audits and observations show better chairing of strategy meetings, and there is a clear 'golden thread' through assessments, plans, and interventions. Most cases are 'Good' or 'Outstanding' in Practice Learning Conversations, and repeat CP rates have reduced.



**Transition to Adulthood** - Sutton has participated in the Annual Review pilot for young people aged 16+, aiming to strengthen our support for these individuals as they transition to adulthood. By attending their annual reviews of the Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) has enabled cross fertilisation of valuable insights into their needs and aspirations, with a view of aligning PfA with other reviews.



**Termly Multi-Agency Meetings** - Termly meetings are held with the locality teams, education and health. These meetings have led to improved communication between agencies, which supports the partnership work for children and families.

# CP: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Child Protection Reviews on time** - Sutton performs well, achieving 98.3% of reviews within timescale (data correct as of September 2024). Performance has been at just below or at 100% since April 2023.



**Improved ICPC Completion Rates** - A systems-based approach has led to significant improvements in the timely completion of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) within 15 working days. As of February 2025, compliance rates have increased from 91.5% on 2023/24 to 95.8%. This demonstrates the effectiveness of our strategies in ensuring prompt and efficient child protection interventions.



**Improved practices in our PLO (Public Law Outline) process** have resulted in positive outcomes - By modifying our assessment and intervention strategies, 50% of cases (current rate) were not escalated to proceedings, enabling children to stay with their families.



**Care Plans in the Court Team Centre the Child's Voice** - Children's views are fully represented in court proceedings by incorporating direct input from the child, including personal drawings or statements. This practice, currently implemented within the court team, will be extended to local teams where court work takes place. The inclusion of direct child involvement has significantly strengthened the clarity and impact of children's voices in legal proceedings.

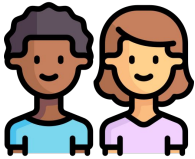


**LADO updates** - over the last year, improved links have been developed between LADO, HR and Children's Social Care with termly meetings. Staff are good at alerting LADO and knowing when to make referrals. The LADO has been working with Willow Residential Services to support safeguarding processes and advise around allegation management. Good attendance at the LADO Steering Group means that consistent messages are shared across the partnership. Sutton hosted the South West London [Safer Recruitment and Employment](#) conference in February 2025.

# CP: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Attend to Achieve** - A group of pupils (including children with a social worker and children looked after) helped to shape [Sutton's Attendance Strategy](#). A video can be [viewed here](#). Suttons total rates of absence for all children, including those with an EHCP, are better than the national average.



**Your Choice** - As of August, we successfully enrolled 51 young people in the 'Your Choice' random control trial, providing CBT-informed interventions to those at risk of serious violence or harm. The trial continues until March 2025, and while a comprehensive evaluation will not be available until that time, participants have already benefited from financial incentives (e.g. to be able to decorate their room, etc) and staff have received valuable clinical supervision. Sutton has been recognised by the research team as a model of good practice in this area, and our staff have been invited to present at regional meetings to share insights from the project. A video is linked on page 21.

# Integrated Support: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Managing extrafamilial risk in the community** - Social workers are being supported to keep young people safe in the community through the increased use of contextual safeguarding approaches, better information sharing and cross border working between Police, Community Safety and CSC.



**Evidence based interventions to support family relationships** - Therapeutic Parenting and DBT parenting groups are now being delivered via trained practitioners from the Therapeutic Hub. These interventions provide parents with strategies and help reduce family breakdown.



**Cognitive behaviour approaches to reduce risk** - Sutton children have benefited from being part of a London-wide study into whether CBT approaches reduce a child's risk of violence/exploitation.



**Keeping families together** - The Adolescent Team continues to offer intensive, restorative support to young people and their families subject to CIN/CP to reduce family breakdown. This includes out of hours support at evenings and weekends.



**High performance in youth justice** - The Youth Justice Board recognised Sutton YJS as a Quadrant 1 performer in 2024 and performance against KPIs remains strong with reduced first time entrant and reoffending rates. Sutton welcomes external challenge and support. [Feedback](#) from the Youth Justice Board highlights some of the outstanding practice.



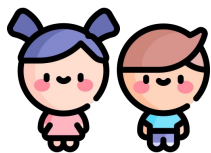
**DA/VAWG** - Sutton has the 4th lowest rate of domestic and sexual violence in London, with 1,882 domestic violence offences in 2022, down 7% from 2021. Sutton has long-established provision for young people experiencing domestic and sexual violence via Limes College and is recognised nationally as a leader in this field. Sutton also has a range of initiatives for perpetrators, including a bi-weekly perpetrator panel. The consortia model for delivering the commissioned DA service was recognised as a model of best practice in 2022 by the Home Office. Sutton DASS provides added value services, including the IRIS programme and Ask Me training. Sutton also provides empowerment programmes for survivors, including the Helping Hands programme and a range of social and skills-building programmes offered by Sutton Women's Centre.

# Your Choice: In conversation with Sutton

In this 'In Conversation With', Safa from the London Violence Reduction Unit's Young People's Action Group asks Canaan and Caroline from Sutton about their experience of engaging in clinical supervision as part of the 'Your Choice' programme.



# CYPDS: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Changes in Children and Young People with Disabilities Service (CYPDS)** - Numerous projects developed in response to 36% increase in demand for short breaks. Parent / Carers and children and young people's views were sought as part of the re-commissioning of short break services (link to [Committee Report](#) and [engagement summary](#)).



**Improvements in the Transitions into Adulthood Process** - All young people who are in receipt of a service as a child are transferred to the Transition Team, so each young person has the same experience.



**Preparation for Adulthood** - Hundreds of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) attended the Council's third Preparation for Adulthood event on 7 November at Westcroft Leisure Centre. Preparation for Adulthood forms part of the Council's [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Strategy 2024-27](#).

Children's Services works closely with Adult Social Care to prepare young people for the transition into adulthood - [video created by Re-yon](#), a young person, at the 2024 Preparation for Adulthood event, and [photo of Billy and Ben winning a Community Award](#) for their 2023 video of the Preparation for Adulthood event



**DSCO** - Investment in a Dedicated Social Care Officer (DSCO) has improved partnership working for children with special educational needs and systems relating to Continuing Care. Multi agency engagement with SWL ICB colleagues has ensured better reviews of children with complex needs and funding is shared.

# Children Looked After: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Keeping CLA local in high quality residential provision** - Sutton's in-house multi-building children's home received a 'Good' overall judgement in its first full Ofsted inspection in January 2025 and provides care for 6 Sutton CLA across 3 homes.



## **All About Me reviews:**

- Over 80% of reviews were held in timescale.
- More than 90% of children and young people attended their review or participated in some way. Children were encouraged to have their say as part of the care planning process: how their review meeting will run, who will be there and where it will be held, as well as sharing their views.
- All children received a personalised letter from their IRO after each review to summarise what was spoken about.
- IROs advocate for young people in having their voices heard by offering to meet with each child individually before the review or seeking their views to be shared.
- Feedback has been harder to achieve with the standard feedback forms used and remains a priority over the coming year.
- All children received a personalised letter from their IRO after each review to summarise what was spoken about.
- Our February 2025 data shows us that Sutton is performing well, achieving 95.1% of children with no confirmed overdue reviews.

This approach ensures that Children and Young people are involved in plans for their lives, and what they need to be safe, healthy, happy and to achieve their dreams.



**Participation, Voice and Influence** - The Children in Care Council (CiCC) has been strengthened by the appointment of a new Participation Officer and an increase in membership. Events held include: CiCC meetings, the UASC group, the Summer Fun Day (jointly run by social care and Virtual School), and [Celebrating Success](#), demonstrating the ongoing commitment to providing meaningful opportunities for children in care. A CiCC newsletter keeps children in care and care leavers informed on how they can get involved, news of events, links to useful websites, and information on groups. [September's edition can be read here](#). More information on participation in CLA/LCT [can be found here](#).



**Young people have a voice at the Corporate Parenting Forum** - and young people attended as appropriate, giving them the opportunity to have their voice heard by leaders. Three young people attended the Corporate Parenting Forum that took place in March 2025.



# Children Looked After: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Raising the profile of Foster Carers** - There has been a focus on increasing the number of in-house foster carers through recruitment activities from monthly information sessions to community events to leaflets and online promotion. The impact of this means that we are able to provide a family environment for more children in care.



**Ensuring Good Fostering Placements** - FIRO reviews are conducted within the specified timeframe (94%), reinforcing our commitment to ensuring that children and young people receive timely and appropriate care from their foster families. We ensure that foster carers are engaging with training opportunities to provide the best quality of care for our children and young people. There has been a significant increase in foster carer participation in training, with over 52% of carers completing over 30 hours of training in the last year (compared to 35% in the previous year). We are reviewing our training requirements to ensure the best training is being offered.



**Strong Partnerships** - Due to excellent joint working between the Virtual School and social care, 92.68% of PEPs were completed within timescale. This supports strong partnership working between the Virtual School, social care, and health around education. Furthermore, the Virtual School Lead and New Participation Officer have been working jointly around a number of events for Children Looked After and children with a social worker. This ensures that we are able to provide the best quality of education for our children and young people in care.



**Sutton Virtual School seeks to place Sutton CLA in schools that are graded good or better.** Where it is necessary to for a child to change school, the school's OFSTED rating will be one of the main considerations in making that decision as this helps us know about the quality of teaching and learning. Analysis of the schools our children attend shows 86% of pupils attend a school that is rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding', which is an increase from last year. We continue to maintain a risk assessment for each child who is being educated in a school that is Ofsted rated less than good and intervene if we consider there are any concerns related to the children, and change their school if it is required.

# Children Looked After: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Early Years Foundation Stage - CLA** - There were 13 young people in reception taking end of early years key stage assessments. These children achieved very well (61.5% Good Level of Development), which was considerably higher than National CLA (41.0% GLD) and Regional CLA (46.0%) and almost in line with all Sutton children (68.3% GLD). This is a continuing year on year trend.



**Improvements in Writing Outcomes** - Virtual School identified last year that the writing attainment for CLA was lower than National CLA average and therefore a concern. We have introduced a focus on writing this year, with SMART targets being set for KS1 and 2 children in PEP meetings and Pupil Premium Plus funding being used to support writing based enrichment events and activities. We are pleased to see a significant improvement in writing outcomes this year and will continue to strengthen writing outcomes moving forward.



**New Finance Policy for Children Looked After and Leaving Care** - has been implemented to provide clear guidelines for Personal Advisors and Social Workers supporting children and young people within the Service. The PEP contains a reminder for Foster Carers to ensure the child trust fund is claimed



**Cognus Mentoring Offer** - The Cognus Board have offered mentoring support to Sutton CLA. So far one young person has taken up this offer and others are encouraged to consider this offer as the Cognus Board seek to offer their skills, network connections and experiences as Corporate Parents to the young people.



**Kinship Care** - Kinship care is a priority, and Sutton looks to see if this is possible to reduce entrance into mainstream fostering. On 31 March 2025, there were 146 children with an open fostering care package. Of those, 41 (28%) had a placement type indicating that they were placed with family/friends. 21 children (14% of the total) had an open 'Approved family/friend fostering' care package which implies they were Reg24 on that date.

# Care Leavers: What do we know and how do we know it?

Sutton’s Care Leavers KPIs are in line (or above) with the London Average:

Indicator	Outturn for Quarter 3	London Average	Comparison to London Average
Care leavers aged 17-24 who were UASC while in care	34%	32%	Around average
Care leavers aged 17-24 who are in touch with authority (%)	100%	92%	Above average
Care leavers aged 17-24 who are in suitable accommodation (%)	91%	87%	Around average
Care leavers aged 17-24 who are in EET (%)	56%	58%	Around average



**Sutton has a One Council approach to Corporate Parenting** - Care leavers have been designated as a protected characteristic, emphasising their unique needs. A dedicated Care Leavers Employability Working Group meets bi-weekly to identify employment and Work Experience (WEX) opportunities within the council for care leavers. In preparation for National Care Leavers Week, a comprehensive plan is being developed, with discussions underway to include an all-staff livestream in collaboration with Human Resources and the Communications team.



**Parents Group** - Our Children in Care Council (CICC) has recently started running a Parents Group. Parents Group is a safe space for any of our parents who are looked after, or care leavers, and want to meet other parents and have a space for their children to play. We put on a light lunch and have recently opened our ‘Parent’s Boutique’ where parents can browse pre-loved clothing and toys to take home for their little ones. This group will run every other month and take place at the Quad in the Creche.



**Ongoing Success of UASC Group** - The UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children) group remains active, taking place every half term, and continues to attract strong attendance. This positive trend indicates the group’s value and importance in providing support and resources to unaccompanied young people.

# Care Leavers: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Education, Employment and Training** - Sutton remains ambitious for its Care Leavers, believing they can achieve whatever they put their mind to. Sutton is proud of the partnerships it has developed through its social value work and with HR to increase opportunities within the council and with partner agencies. Setting up drop in with the DWP and developing great working relationships with local services ensures that care leavers enjoy a robust, wrap around support network. One such opportunity is Sutton is working with chief of staff and senior case worker for an MP for Sutton and Cheam, who are offering a 3-month paid internship for a care leaver. [More details are available in this report.](#)



**Health Support for Care Leavers** - A new Systemic Family Psychotherapist and an Occupational Therapist will be joining Sutton, providing therapy support to care leavers/ families where there has been reunification and offering support to foster carers to help them manage the needs of the young person. In addition to this, there's a piece of work that is underway to improve how social care and health examine SDQs together. A review of the Care Leavers Health Summary is underway to incorporate a more "all about me" approach.



**Virtual School Post 16 and Care Leaver strategy** - Building on the successful development of the Care Leaver Network in 2022, the Virtual School consulted post 16 CLA and care leavers to gain their views on the development of our post 16 and care leaver offer. The young people requested support to help them set up their own businesses and was most strongly voiced by those that have been persistently not in education, employment and training (NEET). As a result, we have developed a three year post 16 and care leaver strategy and added a strand around Enterprise. We are currently developing this offer and will launch this work in 2024.



**ESOL** - Virtual School has continued to provide laptop training for all new ESOL CLA leading to increased college readiness when the young people start their ESOL courses. Young people are quicker to access cloud based learning tasks for completion at home, which has a positive impact on learners.

# Celebrating Success

On Saturday 12 October, 150 children and young people plus their guests joined us at a special event at Chessington World of Adventures to celebrate their achievements.

In the morning each child and young person was honoured for their unique achievements at an award ceremony held at the Safari Hotel with certificates presented by Cllr Marian James, Cllr Gemma Munday, Bobby Dean MP, and Director for Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, Tendai Dooley.



The children and young people were entertained by a magician, a photo booth, face painting, snacks and games. MAPS mentoring and advocacy provided a chill out space where children, young people and their carers could relax, do some colouring and charge their phones. Andrew Rowat, one of our Independent Reviewing Officers drew portraits on the day too! After the ceremony everyone headed into the park to enjoy the rides and games with friends, carers, Social Workers and Personal Advisors.

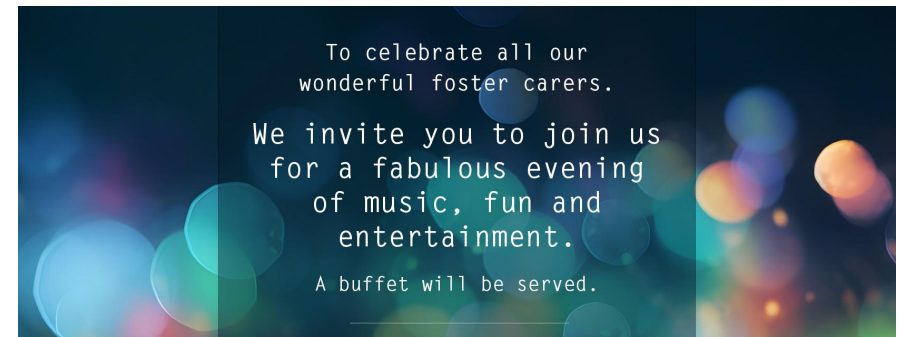
**"Chessington was really fun and amazing. We went on rides we have never been on before and they were really scary too."**

# Celebrating Our Foster Carers

Our foster carers were treated to a delightful evening of celebration at a special appreciation dinner.

The night was filled with lively entertainment, including live music and a fun, cash-free casino, alongside a delicious buffet and the opportunity to capture lasting memories with professional photos.

We also took the opportunity to recognise their invaluable contributions with service awards.



# Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

As of 7th April, Sutton has 24 unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

## KickStart Futures Programme

KickStart Futures is the development of a new model which has optimised the value of a range of Council assets. This is a joint project with London Borough of Sutton, Barnardo's, and Sutton Housing Partnership.

KickStart Futures is a collaborative service model which utilises London Borough of Sutton assets to deliver high quality accommodation with floating support to care leavers with low support needs who are either;

- Unaccompanied asylum seeking young person awaiting a decision from the home office; or
- In employment, as an affordable alternative to Supported Accommodation.

The service is designed to support young people transitioning to independent adulthood by helping them to develop essential skills for independent living. It offers personalised guidance in areas such as budgeting, accessing welfare benefits, securing and maintaining employment, pursuing education or training, and acquiring practical life skills like cooking and home maintenance. KickStart Futures Floating Support provides a more cost-effective alternative to traditionally expensive outsourced semi-independent living services due to the use of London Borough of Sutton property assets and flexible key worker support.

Outcomes of the project so far include:

- More UASC accommodated in Sutton;
- Development of a sense of belonging in local residential communities;
- Provision of a more bespoke service for UASC (including peer support);
- Financial savings.

## UASC Group

A new UASC group has been set up by the Participation Officer in the CLA/LCT team. The group provides a space for unaccompanied asylum seeking children/young people to come together, socialise, meet new people, get to know staff, eat and play games. The Director for Children's Services has also attended the group to meet the young people.

## Support from Virtual School

Virtual School provide laptop training for all new UASC on the laptop they receive from social care. They also get access to Flashacademy which they can use to access early english, alongside their ESOL course that they are enrolled on to, and PPP is used to purchase appropriate picture dictionaries.

ESOL summer school events have been run for many years, with a mix of morning learning and activities in the afternoon. The Virtual School has also commissioned places on ESOL summer schools in other boroughs where requested.

This year saw a Sutton UASC graduate from university in Radiotherapy in Kingston University. This is a great example of joint working to support a young person who could not speak english initially all the way through to degree completion.

Find out more: [KickStart Personal Advisers - Pilot Proposal Recommendation](#) and [KickStart Futures Presentation](#).



# Sufficiency of placements



The **demographic profile of the children entering care has remained similar** with a majority being either very young children or teenagers. There has been a decline in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children requiring care placement, which, if continued, will impact the future demographic profile of the cohort. In 2023/24 the profile of the overall care population in Sutton has remained broadly similar. Children with white or mixed ethnicity remain over-represented in the borough's care population.



**Foster care remains the predominant placement type** for looked after children in the borough. An ongoing shortage of foster placements and high complexity of need presented by some children entering care has continued to result in a high use of children's home placements and alternative placement types.



The **Council's in-house children's home offer, Willow Residential Services, has expanded to incorporate two further satellite homes** giving greater flexibility to the placement options the Council can offer and has reduced our reliance on the residential care market for care of young people with the most complex emotional and behavioural difficulties.



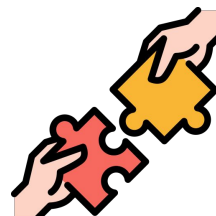
The borough's annual spend on placements in **2023/24 was higher than in previous years reflecting both the profile of placements types used** and the very high support needs of a small cohort of children in the care of the Local Authority.



Sutton has **increased the opportunities for care experienced young people to live in the borough**. The Council has focused on ensuring optimum use and expansion of the commissioned supported accommodation offer in Sutton for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and care experienced young people.



**The Fostering Hub** will support complex care arrangements, provide supplementary care (respite), and reduce placement breakdown. This will support children stepping down from residential provisions, and support any transitions back to parents where appropriate.



Sutton has **worked with partners** to address the local sufficiency gap in children's homes for children in the Local Authority's care with autism or learning difficulties to provide both longer term care placements as well as preventative / family respite service provision. In addition, a staff member from Virtual School who is open about being care experienced volunteers to support Fostering Panel and support foster carer recruitment. There was also a session with Cognus staff promoting Foster Carer recruitment.

**An external review** on placements was undertaken by the LGA. [A report covering the findings can be found here](#). The recommendations are currently being taken forward.

# Unregistered Settings

As of 1st April 2025, Sutton had 5 unregistered children's home placements with providers who were actively working towards Ofsted registration (exception of one new placement made where we are seeking to confirm with provider), and 2 unregistered supported accommodation placements (16 - 17 year olds) with 1 provider who was at the final stages of the Ofsted registration application.

A comprehensive quality assurance process is in place to ensure the suitability of any unregistered settings. More information on this can be [viewed here](#), along with details of the social care process when making such placements.

Oversight of unregistered placements:

- Monitoring and reporting of unregistered placements is discussed monthly at the Senior Management Meeting (SMT), and Defensible Decision forms are completed;
- The Corporate Management Team (CMT) reviews all unregistered placements on a quarterly basis;
- A monthly Children's Joint Intelligence Group meeting is held with Children's Social Care, Commissioning, and Quality Improvement Officer representation to share intelligence on placement provision and ensure quality improvement activity is effectively targeted.

## Transition with National Standards for Supported Accommodation:

Sutton Council has taken a number of steps to support the introduction of the new National Standards for supported accommodation in 2023 and ensure compliance of its placements.

Sutton's Dynamic Purchasing System mandates Ofsted compliance for supported accommodation providers for 16-17 year olds, and specifications for all ages (16 - 25 years) align with the new National Standards.

Throughout 2023, we facilitated provider network meetings to provide guidance and peer support opportunities to our providers as they completed their applications to Ofsted.

As at 28 October 2023, all supported accommodation placements for young people aged 16 - 17 years in the care of the Local Authority were compliant (i.e. complete application for registration accepted by Ofsted, as evidenced by a URN).

Since October 2023, we have continued to monitor our supported accommodation placements to ensure providers had the necessary registration with Ofsted. Where we have needed to make unregistered supported accommodation placements, we have followed the same process as set out above for unregistered children's home placements.

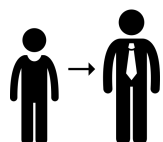


# Child's Voice: What do we know and how do we know it?

**Voice and Influence** - Our focus has been on voice and influence in 2024/25, [read all about it here](#). Some key highlights have been captured below and on the following pages:



**"Safer Sutton for All": Co-Designing with Young People** - From January to May, young people in Sutton actively participated in co-design workshops and activities. This initial phase focused on listening to young people's perspectives and understanding their safety needs within the borough. Through interactive sessions, we gathered insights from 207 young people, conducting 12 co-design and engagement activities. Following the development of an Insights Report summarizing the key priorities expressed by young people during these sessions, the Innovation Unit and Sutton Council team selected four insights for further development. These insights will be transformed into prototypes, shaped by local youth and host organisations. [Find out more here](#).



**Preparation for Adulthood Event** - Work Experience and Consultation: Sutton holds an annual PFA event with over 53 stalls. 12 young people undertook work experience to help plan the event and run the day. Over 100 students took part in a consultation event using visuals and a 'PFA Wall' to identify their priorities for what needs to be available at a PFA Hub, which is being launched in October 2025.



**Children in Care Council** - In the February 2025 CiCC meeting, some members became the named link for Housing, UASCs, Provider Training, and Chair. Communications and Digital 'link roles' have also been developed, and those young people will attend the Corporate Parenting Forum. The Pledge has been refreshed and the participation strategy is being updated. One of the exciting developments this year will be to train some young people to undertake quality assurance visits with QA/Commissioning/Placements professionals. The CiCC also contributed to the design of the "Tell Us Survey" for children in care and care leavers (launching April 2025), which will gather feedback on their homes and support to inform quality improvement with placement providers.



**TLE Anti-Racist Youth Summit** - 60 young people from seven secondary schools participated in discussions. They expressed appreciation for having a genuine safe space to address this important topic and were encouraged by the growing recognition of this protected characteristic.



**Mental Health** - School nurses presented in schools and support with improved communications for signposting and support for young people in Sutton schools. Mental Health is one of the four 'key asks' of young people in the borough under the Sutton LSPP Children and Young People's Engagement and Participation subgroup plan.

# Child's Voice: What do we know and how do we know it?



**Sutton Youth Board:** This diverse group of young people who lead and run the meetings, have provided insights and key information to leaders, local committees, Public Health, MPs and organisations. Concerns raised included Mental Health support in Schools, Equality & Diversity, Safety and the Police, as well as wanting to see more work around the environment. Held an annual Youth Summit to **Celebrate Sutton's Diversity - informed by young people enabling organisations and young people to engage and celebrate youth and diversity in Sutton.**

- 23 organisations actively listened, asked questions and then provided information and activities.
- Over 100 young people attended, learning about new cultures from dance to food
- Created a Sutton Celebrating Diversity booklet as a guide around diversity.
- Set up a new LGBTQ forum for young people.



**Safety** - Completion of a safety survey by over 700 young people. Young people provided insight into The New Met Police mission and in partnership create quarterly newsletters for young people shared across all schools and organisations



**Young Commissioners** - 25 diverse young people meet fortnightly to discuss actions and areas of interest including meeting MPs, the local authority leader, police, councillors and organisations. Young people have been able to represent or present for other young people at the local Safeguarding Partnership Board, LBS Corporate Peer Review, Child Exploitation Week. Young people have recently won Jack Petchey Awards and completed Duke of Edinburgh awards.



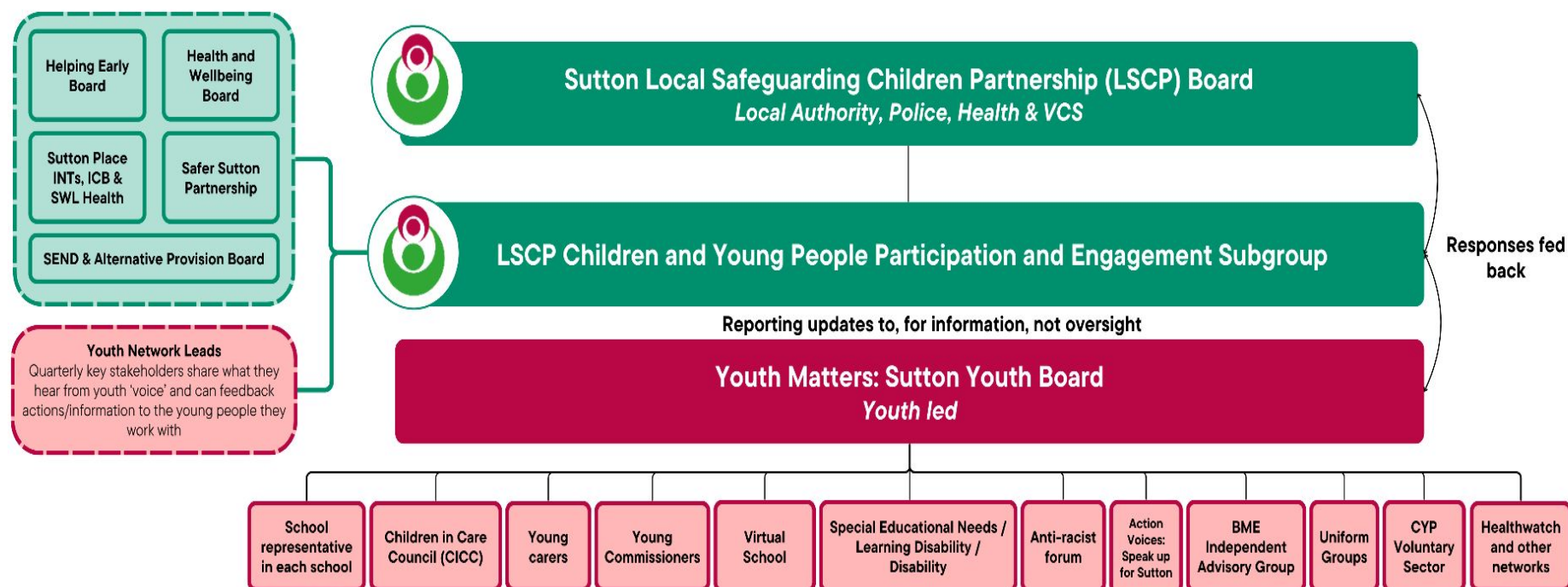
**Sutton Schools Council** - 13 schools met with young people feeding back their concerns to the Youth Board. These key asks included:

- Vaping - Are students actually aware of the dangers?
- Public transport - Anti social behaviour in general on buses in particular
- Social media - the impact it is having on young people
- Changing needs of young people , understanding and supporting students with a range of needs that are common place in society.

These key asks were presented by Young Commissioners to the LSCP Board in 2023, and are incorporated into the LSCP Children and Young People Engagement and Participation subgroup Delivery Plan for 2025/26. Progress on these priorities is presented to young people through the Young Commissioners meetings.

# Child's Voice: What do we know and how do we know it?

## Children and Young People Engagement and Participation work in Sutton



The above structure shows how the various youth groups aim to feed into the Youth Board (under the *Youth Matters* framework). The priorities and key asks from young people can then be reported, for information, from the Youth Board to the LSCP CYP engagement subgroup, from which insights can be communicated on to other Partnerships and agencies as required. To ensure that we feed back to young people about what we have done, in response to what they have said, the LSCP CYP subgroup will liaise with the Youth Board to feed back about progress and updates. This ensures a regular update, alongside any projects taking place in the borough.



# Child's Voice: What do we know and how do we know it?



## Youth Matters Framework

The working group for the *Voice and Influence* project consisted of a range of partners who joined together to put forward a framework of best practice for the voice of the child in Sutton, meeting regularly throughout 2024-25.

Written in partnership between colleagues from Children's Services, children and young people in Sutton, Commissioning, and local partners providing services in Sutton, the group drafted a **Youth Matters Framework** which outlines standards for engaging with young people in the borough. These standards set out the best practices for engaging with young people, for all youth participation activities undertaken in Sutton, large and small. Throughout the development of the principles and guidelines set out in the framework, the purpose of this project has been to ensure the right of the child to express their views is strengthened and encouraged.

## **Products of the workstream:**

1. The revised **structure** for the voice of the child through the Sutton Youth Board.
2. Stakeholder engagement **checklist**
3. The **9 principles** of good engagement with young people
4. Voice and Influence **framework** including **tools** and **resources**.

## **What's Next?**

- **Draft Framework** - being launched at Youth Summit in October 2025
- **Young Person Version of Framework** - in consultation with young people
- **SEND friendly video version of Framework** - being created with young people in Summer 2025
- Email address for professionals and partners for advice/signposting on all things voice and influence - by June 2025
- Work on fair recompense for participation/co-design work - by Sept 2025
- Dedicated Youth Matters page on the Sutton website - by Dec 2025



# What do we know and how do we know it? : Staff feel valued

**HR and Children's Social Care** - Staff are supported well by HR in Sutton. [This document](#) highlights Sutton's commitment to staff networks (including Multi Ethnic, Women's, LGBTQ, Inclusive Ability, Carers and Families, Early Careers & Youth). Children's Services staff are actively involved in these networks and their activities.

The document shows how children are central to the council's work, such as **MAPS Mentoring**, a work experience cohort for care leavers, and **"Aspiring to Thrive"** which empowers care leavers in the workplace.

The council offers "Aspiring Managers" and "Aspiring Leaders" programmes to develop leadership skills and promote inclusivity, with 36 employees from Children's Social Care having completed these programmes.

Analysis of the Staff Pulse Survey in October 2023 shows Children's Social Care and Safeguarding feeling more positive than the council overall in several areas, such as support for new staff, emotional and mental wellbeing support, team communication, understanding of role contribution, demonstration of PRIDE values, fairness perceptions, and satisfaction with the Insight newsletter.

**Long serving employees are recognised and celebrated** through our [long service awards](#): Theresa Cameron, Parenting Programme Lead, Early Intervention Service.

**Transformation** and managing change has impacted on some staff /services more than others. A programme of engagement with staff will be taken forward for the Families First programme.



**Staff PRIDE Awards** - Sutton's annual Staff PRIDE awards are themed around the Council's "PRIDE" values. The awards take place in November each year. Paul Arthur, team manager in Early Help was the co-host.

- [Empowering: Parenting Service](#)
- [People-focused: Mo Patfield](#)
- Inclusive: Charlie Thomas-Haynes, Specialist Support Worker – Youth Justice Team
- Apprentice of the Year: Molly Jordan, Public Health Project Officer – Public Health & Wellbeing
- Employee of the Year: Laura Devereux, Early Intervention Service Manager – Early Intervention Service

People Directorate Conference 2024 Awards - **Staff across social care were recognised in the People Directorate** Conference awards that took place in May 2024. The theme of the most recent event was **'Promoting our Values in Challenging Times'**. The morning included a welcome and opening address from our Chief Executive, a keynote address from Dez Holmes., and a [Voice and Influence Video](#) with table discussions and feedback. The conference concluded with an awards ceremony hosted by Councillor Marian James, followed by closing and reflections from our Directors of Adult and Children's Social Care.

Winners from Children's Social Care included those from CLA & LCT, Quality Assurance, and the Adolescent Service:

- Outstanding contribution to Children's Social Care - [Individual award: Sterenberg Horn](#)
- And an honorable mention to Angela Killalea, Laura Toal, Perrie Chambers & Sharna Gayle
- Outstanding contribution to Children's Social Care - Team award: Adolescent Service  
And an honorable mention to Willow Rise
- Outstanding contribution to Social Care - Systems Support - Individual award: Lou Yardley  
And an honorable mention to Joe Harper
- Laura Holland received the most compliments during 2023/24

# Practice Spotlight

The following examples of practice were submitted to the LiiA for the Practice Spotlight in December 2024:

- [Therapeutic Hub](#) (Supporting and strengthening the workforce);
- [HK Social Workers](#) (Supporting and strengthening the workforce) ([Letter of Recognition](#));
- [Kickstart Futures](#) (Delivering excellence for Care Leavers);
- [Parenting programme](#), inc. prison ones (Delivering positive impact through early intervention and Supporting and strengthening the workforce) ([Letter of Recognition](#));
- [Children in police custody](#) (Improving outcomes for children with complex needs who are in care or on the edge of care and Building safety for young Londoners) ([Letter of Recognition](#));
- [The Girls Autism Group](#) (Impact for children with special educational needs and disabilities) ([Letter of Recognition](#)).

Cognus submitted the following:

- [‘Better Together’](#) – Strengthening our Designated Safeguarding Lead Network (Supporting and strengthening the workforce) ([Letter of Recognition](#));
- [The ‘A’ Plan](#) - post diagnostic initiative attached to the autism assessment process (Impact for children with special educational needs and disabilities) ([Letter of Recognition](#))
- [Building Stronger Foundations](#) phase 1 and 2, trauma-informed schools (Delivering positive impact through early intervention)’
- [Developing Anti-racist practice in Sutton](#) (Reducing racial disparities and tackling racism) ([Letter of Recognition](#)).



# Quality Assurance

## Quality Assurance Framework

A new Quality Assurance Framework was developed in 2024 that builds upon the previous version and better fits the needs of the service. [The framework is available to view here.](#)

The quality assurance activities aim to identify good practice, as well as areas for improvement. This is done through audit activity and Practice Learning Fortnight (PLF). The PLFs are held twice a year and give the Chief Executive, Lead Member for Children, Strategic Director, as well as Heads of Service and other managers, the opportunity to directly observe practice.

## Practice Learning Conversations

Practice Learning Conversations (PLCs) continue to be Sutton’s way of regularly auditing cases in Children’s Social Care. PLCs look to audit the practice and compliance in randomly selected cases and are jointly completed by the practitioner and their manager.

This approach provides practitioners with the opportunity to reflect on the work they’re doing, and is a useful tool for showing the difference social work intervention has made to a child or family.

Details of the PLCs that were undertaken in 2023/24, and those that have taken place so far in 2024/25, can be found on the following pages.

**Case Reflection and Moderation (CRM)** meetings take place after each round of PLCs. Chaired by the Head of Service for Quality Assurance, these meetings ensure consistency by benchmarking the cases on the application of grades and standards of good practice. Within these meetings a greater understanding of ‘what good looks like’ has been established and themes identified for future audits.

## Practice Learning Fortnight

Two Practice Learning Fortnights have taken place since the last self assessment was written. The most recent Practice Learning Fortnight (PLF) took place in September/October 2024. PLF is a dedicated fortnight for practice to be observed by leaders and managers across Children’s and Adults’ Social Care. 100 observations took place in our February event, and 68 were undertaken in the September/October event.

Read our most recent Practice Learning Fortnight Reports here:

- [February / March 2024](#)
- [September / October 2024](#)

Another PLF took place at the end of March 2025, and the analysis and report are currently being finalised.

# Quality Assurance: Practice Learning Conversations

Three rounds of PLCs are conducted annually in Children’s Social Care, facilitating knowledge sharing and best practice development across various teams. In addition to the PLCs, five thematic audits have taken place, looking at [Child & Family Assessments](#), [Strategy Meetings](#), a [Children’s Social Care / Schools audit](#), an Unregistered Placements audit, and a Young Carers audit (reports are currently in progress for the last two audits).

The table below details the months of each PLC round, along with the corresponding number of cases audited and the overall manager grades awarded. Separate PLCs also took place in the Youth Justice Service.

PLC Round	Blue - Outstanding	Green - Good	Amber - Requires Improvement	Red - Inadequate	Total
<a href="#">R1 - May - June 2023</a>	5	31	7	0	43
<a href="#">R2 - Oct / Nov 2023</a>	8	35	5	0	48
<a href="#">R3 - Feb/March 2024</a>	6	35	8	0	49
<a href="#">R1 - June / July 2024</a>	11	31	11	0	53
<a href="#">R2 - Oct / Nov 2024</a>	5	25	7	0	37
<a href="#">R3 - March 2025</a>	7	38	7	0	52

Areas of strength	Areas of improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strong multi-agency working;</li><li>Voice of the child (including in Pathway Plans);</li><li>Identity;</li><li>Parental involvement;</li><li>Cases are ‘outcomes focused’.</li><li>Generally, workers were able to build and maintain good, trusting relationships with the children, young people and families that they support.</li><li>Tailored approaches.</li><li>Practitioners ensure that they understand and complete work around the identity of the child/young person/family that they are working with.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Better, more consistent documentation is needed on Mosaic (e.g. when recording direct work).</li><li>Chronologies to be kept up-to-date;</li><li>Supervisions, assessments, and processes to be completed within timescales;</li><li>Intervention plans to be kept up-to-date to further measure the progress of outcomes.</li><li>Feedback to be collected in more PLCs.</li></ul>

### Addressing the Challenges:

- Actions and recommendations from PLCs are consistently shared with the Senior Management Team (SMT) and then disseminated to the wider service.
- The QA Team follows up on these actions monthly to ensure completion.
- To improve message reception by teams, we're exploring additional communication channels.

### Enhancing Actionable Insights

Following each PLC round, we collaborate with the PSW and L&D team to further refine actions and recommendations.

# Areas of Focus

Over the coming months, Children's services will be focusing on:

## Investing in our workforce:

- focused recruitment and retention
- locum to permanent opportunities to reduce vacancy rates
- use of social work academy to support practice and development opportunities, coaching, create opportunities for non SW staff
- supporting staff with managing change

## Transformation

- focus on journey and experience of the service user
- reduce changes in SW, promote practitioner better known to family to lead, multi-agency threshold training (LCSP/ CFCS), streamlined but efficient and effective Children's Services structure
- Review of CLA / CL service - integrated v's specialist service

## Implementing Families First

- support to family & kinship arrangements and reduce entrance to mainstream fostering.
- multi-agency child protection teams / child in need team

## Reducing children in unregulated placements

- recruiting & retaining more foster carers, creating fostering hubs
- clear step down arrangements for residential placements
- maintain use of in-house residential provision

## Foster carer recruitment

- review foster carer packages of support with SFCA
- encourage retiring foster carers to offer respite/ floating day support
- Recruitment of respite carers to support short breaks and complex needs
- menu of social activities for birth children and activities for foster carers
- out of hours support to foster carers

## Performance

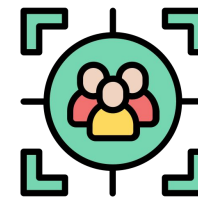
In terms of performance, Sutton will focus on:

- C&F Assessments;
- Pathway Planning;
- Dental Health Checks.

## Practice

In terms of practice, Sutton will focus on:

- Better, more consistent documentation is needed on Mosaic: Ensuring case files and plans are kept up-to-date to ensure the 'full story' is available on Mosaic for all cases, and outcomes can be accurately tracked;
- Further work to be completed on Unregistered Placements, such as finalising the Defensible Decision Making process, and working collaboratively with the Commissioning Team;
- More focus on gathering and working with feedback collected both in PLCs and outside of audits.



# The regional adoption alliance

Sutton continues to be part of the regional adoption authority, Adopt London South and is one of 10 Local Authorities that make up this South London Partnership. Adopt London South work in partnership with the local authority to coordinate all their adoption cases. This is a commissioned service, which has been working well, with a good working partnership relationship with Sutton. There are regular board meetings that the Director has been attending and monthly quality assurance meetings, involving all the partnership authorities.

Early permanency (a child placed with foster carers who may go on to be the child's adoptive parents) is being considered now, within every appropriate case. Sutton currently has two early permanency placements. Within our legal planning meetings, if a child is to be removed from its family, then early permanency is considered as an option. ALS is currently training all prospective adopters to become early permanency carers, so that there is a greater choice when matching.

## Adoption Priorities for 2024/25:

- **Statutory Birth Parent Service:** Current services are provided by PAC-UK. They provide support for birth parents affected by adoption - Up to 6 counselling sessions for birth parents. There is a birth parent support group offered both virtual or in person and a helpline and information (on request) provided by ALS.
- **Updating Tri-X to include ALS interface.**
- **Early Permanence:** This is being developed across the boroughs as part of the wider London Early Permanence Project, led by a London Lead.
- **Recruitment of adoptive parents:** A new 'Am I Ready To Adopt Tool' is being launched to allow people interested in adoption to determine if they are in the right place to do so.
- **Race disparity:** Black Adoption Project (BAP) this is an ongoing project to increase awareness of the need for adoptive parents from black and other minority groups.

## Adoption Priorities for 2024/25 (continued):

- **Quality Assuring CPR'S Training.** – development of this training to be shared across the partnership.
- **Openness in adoption:** Developments from PLWG Recommendations and Culture Change series by Adoption England and UEA to think about improving keeping in touch arrangements for children post adoption [Wholesale reform to adoption process is needed, says Public Law Working Group - Courts and Tribunals Judiciary.](#)
- **Improving Adoption Services for Adults** – Better quality service for Adopted Adults, better access to records and information. [Support for Adopted People | Adoption England.](#)

## Adoption Data as at 31st March 2025:

- Adoption Orders for Sutton children - April 2024/25: 8 adoption orders granted with in-house adopters.
- Sibling group of 2 children placed within the year and waiting for court hearing dates.
- Current children placed 4 children (currently placed with no AO at present - includes 2 above). Sutton currently tracking 4 cases (as listed above).
- Currently tracking 1 child - awaiting outcome of DNA testing to establish paternity – may proceed with EP depending on the outcome.
- No referrals from Sutton in 2024 and one referral in Q4 2025



# Local safeguarding partnership arrangements

The Sutton Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) is a strategic partnership function established under the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 statutory guidance. Sutton's Local Arrangements for the multi-agency safeguarding partnership underwent a consultation and revision process in 2024-25 to implement changes in Working Together 2023 and came into force on 1 January 2025.

## Overview of Sutton LSCP Subgroup achievements 2023-25

Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Strategic Subgroup (MACE)	Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents (Case Review Subgroup)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>37 Child exploitation and serious youth violence audit tools completed by 9 partners;</li><li>Child exploitation strategy in development (to continue in 2025-26);</li><li>Child exploitation awareness week 2024-25 which gained feedback from 800+ young people;</li><li>Information stalls held in Sutton Civic library to provide consultation, advice and resources on spotting the signs of exploitation.</li><li>Community events and training sessions held in Sutton to increase engagement with young people and raise awareness of exploitation.</li><li>Multi-agency Safeguarding Adolescents and Missing protocols revised and disseminated to MACE partners.</li><li>LSCP MACE dataset scrutinised by MACE Strategic subgroup members and recommendations identified.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Child death operating protocol revised and updated;</li><li>Revision of the Child Safeguarding Toolkit and e-learning, embedding learning from serious child safeguarding incidents.</li><li>LCSPR microsite updated with 7-minute briefings and news;</li><li>Health visiting audit of transfer-in cases in relation to Child C;</li><li>Review of children on repeat child protection plans audit action plan;</li><li>Workshop held on learning from serious child safeguarding incidents relating to neglect;</li><li>Data dashboard of Sutton LCSPR and rapid review data developed and shared with Partners for local learning;</li><li>Regular monitoring of progress for implementing learning from LCSPR and rapid review action plans.</li></ul>
Children and Young People Participation and Engagement Subgroup	Quality Assurance and Improvement Subgroup (QA&I)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Young Commissioners, Cognus, and the Met Police co-produce a half-termly newsletter to raise awareness of the crimes affecting young people in Sutton;</li><li>Workshop held with Young Commissioners to review the subgroup delivery plan and progress on key asks from young people.</li><li>Youth Safety Survey circulated and responded by 1300 young people. Learning shared at the Youth Safety Conference in December 2024 and at the LSCP Board.</li><li>Youth Summit attended by over 220 people to celebrate Sutton's diversity and inclusion.</li><li>Progressing the development of a Voice and Influence framework to standardise and improve the quality of engagement with young people in the borough.</li><li>Anti-Racism summit organised by Local Authority and coordinated by and for young people in the borough.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Neglect Toolkit and 6 other LSCP multi-agency protocols revised and disseminated to the workforce, in consultation with partners;</li><li>Joint scrutiny of LSCP Dataset 2023-24, and action plan;</li><li>Audit programme undertaken on the following themes:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Children vulnerable to exploitation approaching adulthood;</li><li>Child sexual abuse;</li><li>Child exploitation and serious youth violence audit;</li><li>Children with a social worker in school audit;</li><li>Section 175/157 audit for schools;</li><li>Children's First Contact Service;</li><li>Children with a social worker in school audit.</li></ul></li><li><a href="#">Child sexual abuse microsite</a> developed as a product of the child sexual abuse leadership event held in September 2024.</li><li>Joint data review of strategy meeting attendance and actions identified to improve attendance from Partners through task and finish group.</li></ul>

# Learning from the JTAI

Findings of Sutton's joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk (often referred to as the 'front door'), held from 10 to 14 July 2023, include the following:

- Strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for further development were captured by the recommendations that have been developed through an action plan that was completed by the end of May 2024.
- Established governance and independent scrutiny are in place, with effective links across key strategic and operational multi-agency working groups.
- Committed leaders have an accurate and realistic understanding of the services they lead, including both the strengths and the challenges, ensuring that most children can access the requisite level of help, support and protection.
- The LSCP is an equitable partnership with full engagement from police, health, social care and education.

[This document](#) shows the recommendations from this inspection along with the actions that have been taken and the impact this has had.

The JTAI noted that *"There is a comprehensive training and development multi-agency plan, but participation by police and health staff is limited, despite creative endeavours to increase accessibility, due to staff capacity pressures. This adversely impacts the quality of multi-agency referrals and supervision."*

An LSCP task and finish group was set up to explore ways of strengthening multi-agency learning and address this area for improvement. Examples of learning activities undertaken to address this recommendation include:

- Multi-agency input into two child safeguarding learning sessions for GP practices
- Children's Social Care providing input into training sessions for Police response officers on improving the quality of Merlin referrals.
- Five themed multi-agency learning events on child sexual abuse, hate crime, suicide awareness, invisible men in a child protection context, safer recruitment and employment.
- A fire prevention and safeguarding e-learning module, based on safeguarding case reviews related to fire, has been locally launched to promote awareness and learning for all partners.

## Cognus

Cognus has delivered training to social care and other partners on online safety and attendance. Cognus regularly promotes the Child Safeguarding Toolkit across the partnership and wider (having recently shared two podcasts).

Cognus delivers Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews training to new ASYEs annually.

# Learning from Reviews

## Child safeguarding incident notifications and rapid reviews

Since April 2023 to now, three child safeguarding incident notifications have been made to the National Panel (Child E - April 2023, Child H - March 2024, Care Leaver J - August 2024).

The rapid reviews for Child E, Child H, and Care Leaver J, decided that the criteria for an LCSPR had not been met. In all instances the National Panel accepted the decision.

Progress on the rapid reviews:

- Child E: A review of children on repeat CP plans was conducted; and **raising partnership awareness of the potential impact of prescribed medications on parenting.**
- Child H: Two learning events with partners have been held; and a **multi-agency NEET protocol is being developed by the Partnership.**
- Care Leaver J: A review of **how CAMHS support is provided for those children and young people who self-discharge**; a review of how insights are gained from care leavers' medical records.

## Learning from national reviews

A transformation programme in CSC has been put in place in response to the independent review of children's social care. **This transformation aims to see social care and education working closer together.**

Learning from the national review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson has included **a review of the front door in regards to malicious referrals**, which provided assurance that all referrals go through the same process.

The LSCP Case Review subgroup annually reviews the **National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel** annual report, which has key messages for partnerships from a review of serious child safeguarding incident notifications, Rapid Reviews and, Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The LSCP QA&I subgroup annually scrutinises the SWL CDOP report for learning in Sutton.

## Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs)

- In the last 18 months, **one LCSPR was completed, but not published**, due to the ongoing criminal investigation (Child C- approved by the LCSPR panel in February 2024).
- The Child C LCSPR action plan is being taken forward by the Case Review subgroup and all actions are being progressed.
- The Child A LCSPR action plan was completed in September 2024, with learning including a multi-agency audit on child sexual abuse and a leadership conference event at the Chaucer Centre, Merton, with 89 senior Partnership leaders in attendance.
- All LCSPR action plans are being progressed and all actions are regularly reviewed at the LSCP Case Review subgroup for progress of implementation of learning from LCSPRs.
- Learning from the Child X LCSPR has resulted in **all relevant in-house foster carers receiving safer sleep training and paediatric first aid training.**

## Other reviews

In 2024, the Sutton Youth Justice Board undertook a learning review for a fatal stabbing incident where a Sutton young person was involved. This review followed lines of enquiry around the child's needs, responses, and quality of practice, and made recommendations for multi-agency practice in the borough for children and young people involved in the criminal justice system.



## Feedback from our families

**"They helped me to get into college, feel better about my disability and start to make plans and live again. I am happy and ready to live my life like a normal teenager now."**

- Feedback from a young person

**"Finally I have a trusted person in school, I can openly and freely express myself during our sessions without fear of getting in trouble."**

- Feedback from a young person when asked "What's going well?" as part of a Practice Learning Conversation

**"The support that we are getting from Early Help is really good. Knowing that someone is now involved with our family who we can trust is reassuring. Knowing that the kids can have someone to talk to when overwhelmed, like today, is so nice."**

- Feedback from a family in a Practice Learning Conversation

**"Sessions are fun and also relevant. Never felt judged."**

- Feedback from a young person in a Practice Learning Conversation

**"My social worker always does what she says she will, she helps us a lot with everything."**

- Feedback from a young person in a Practice Learning Conversation

**"Thank you so much for all your support and care in my difficult times."**

- Feedback from a family

**"Honestly you have been the best social worker I've ever had, you have supported me through so much and have helped me to get to the other side. I will forever cherish everything you did for me."**

- Feedback from a young person in a Practice Learning Conversation

**"I think you are brilliant, there is nothing to change. [Child] felt heard throughout the course of the sessions which he expressed at different points. He felt that the sessions helped him get through his school week and unpick issues with teachers, finding solutions to these challenges."**

- Feedback from a family in a Practice Learning Conversation

**"Every question or issue I have had has been resolved quickly by [social worker] and she has been nothing but wonderful and amazing to work with."**

- Feedback from a young person in a Practice Learning Conversation

**"I feel happy in my home and enjoy having my own space."**

- Feedback from an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young Person on the KickStart Project

# Data

- CIN Census - 2023/24
- 903 Return - 2023/24
- CHAT tool - 1st April 2025
- Draft End of Year Headline Data - 31st March 2025

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# Inspection of London Borough of Sutton local authority children's services

**Inspection dates:** 16 June to 20 June 2025

**Lead inspector:** Gareth Dakin, His Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care	Good
The experiences and progress of children care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

The majority of children and families in Sutton receive the help, protection and care that they need. Most services to children and care leavers have been maintained and improved on since the last inspection in 2021. The senior leadership team along with strong, political and corporate support has injected energy and pace to facilitate improvements to ensure that children and care leavers benefit from effective social care practice.

Senior leaders' ambition for children and care leavers through relationship-based practice, the quality of direct work with children and care leavers, and a focus on meaningful help are areas of strength.

Practice, assurance and governance arrangements are mostly comprehensive and purposeful. Nevertheless, for a small number of children in specific cohorts, these arrangements are not consistently effective. This has led to a small minority of children not receiving the timely help and protections they need.

## What needs to improve?

- The quality and consistency of response to children who are looked after who go missing from home (Outcome 4, National Framework).
- The effectiveness of the initial response to children who are at risk of physical harm (Outcome 1, National Framework).
- The quality and robustness of leaders and managers' oversight of discrete areas of practice where there is not effective social work (Enabler 2, National Framework).

## The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good

1. The majority of children in Sutton receive effective and responsive help and protection.
2. The Targeted Early Help Service (TEHS) offers effective support that helps children thrive. Leaders have significantly reduced the waiting period for an assessment. Some families still wait too long for services, but this is communicated with them, and most families receive support or signposting during this period. Practitioners understand well-established step-up arrangements; this allows for appropriate escalation when children's needs increase or risks emerge. Skilled, specialist support workers based in the social work locality teams deliver intensive, bespoke and effective packages of support to children who step down from a plan or after a social work assessment of children's needs.
3. Parents and children who access the parenting group programme experience meaningful and transformative support delivered through targeted interventions. Parents are empowered to support others in the community by becoming parent volunteers and supporting more families at the early help stage.
4. Most children referred to the Children's First Contact Service, Sutton's front door, receive a timely and effective response. For the vast majority of children, decision-making is appropriate. Children's levels of need and risk are considered carefully to decide the right course of action. However, for a small number of children, the response to allegations they make of physical harm results in them being left in situations of unassessed risk and waiting too long before they receive the help and the support they might need.
5. When children need help and protection out of hours, social work responses are prompt and proportionate. Effective handovers of information to daytime staff result in timely follow-up the next working day.
6. When safeguarding concerns are identified, the majority of decisions to progress to a strategy meeting are appropriate. Strategy meetings are timely

for most children and well attended by relevant agencies. These meetings lead to well-considered decisions regarding the steps required to explore and identify the needs and risks to children. Assertive interim safety planning is collaborative with families where appropriate, and multi-agency information-sharing and accountability leads to a proportionate response and relevant actions that help to protect children.

7. Children's assessments are sensitively written, comprehensive and are informed by children and their parents' views and reflect their needs. Assessments also reflect the views of other agencies involved. Assessments reflect children's histories, include children's voices, and most result in helpful next steps stemming from clear analysis.
8. Children are visited in line with their presenting needs. Social workers use a range of creative communication tools to ensure that children's views and lived experiences influence and shape their plans.
9. Effective partnership working, co-ordinated through child protection conferences, core groups and reviews, contribute to the analysis and reduction of risk for children. Most children's child protection and child-in-need plans are specific, measurable and are regularly updated to reflect changing needs. Children and families' views are captured effectively, which enables plans to be individualised and focused.
10. Children in the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline benefit from timely and well-managed intervention. Specialist assessment and family involvement is prioritised, with creative packages of support often enabling children to remain safely at home.
11. Support and services for children with a child-in-need or child protection plan that go missing from home have strengthened since the last inspection. Management oversight is robust and, when children do go missing, they are met with a timely and well-coordinated response. Exploratory and holistic return home interviews help reduce the likelihood of future episodes and intelligence is used to develop trigger plans.
12. Children at risk of exploitation benefit from robust systems for early identification, information-sharing and coordinated action to disrupt emerging risks across and beyond local boundaries. Persistence and high levels of involvement, working at the child and family's pace, underpin this work. A trauma-informed approach manages and reduces risk effectively.
13. Leaders have very clear arrangements to identify and respond to children who are missing from education or who are electively home educated. Effective tracking and monitoring systems ensure that vulnerable home-educated children are safeguarded.
14. Disabled children have thoughtful, knowledgeable and skilled social workers who understand their needs well. This leads to children receiving services that

support them to make progress in their lives. Transitional support is planned well in advance of adulthood, and this reduces anxiety for children approaching adulthood.

15. The local authority designated officer (LADO) responds promptly to allegations made against adults who work with children. Consistent and clear thresholds ensure that allegations against staff and volunteers are responded to, and meetings are convened where required and are well attended. This helps to safeguard children in Sutton.
16. A very small number of children are identified as being privately fostered in Sutton. Awareness-raising work continues across the community to improve the identification of these arrangements. Leaders have acknowledged the need for enhanced oversight of these arrangements and took steps to address this during the inspection. However, it is too early to test the effectiveness of these changes.
17. Children's assessments do not always identify and consider the specific needs of children that arise from their role as young carers. Leaders are aware of this and have initiatives in place to help workers better acknowledge young carers, their caring status and how their associated needs are being responded to, but it is too soon to see the impact of this for children.

### **The experiences and progress of children in care: good**

18. When they are not able to live safely at home, children come into the care of the local authority when it is in their best interests to do so and most enter care at the appropriate time. Social workers assess kinship carers promptly to enable children to live in their family/friend networks when it is safe to do so. When children enter care, social workers take time to understand their needs and their lived experiences well through thorough social work assessments. Most children in care enjoy positive experiences. They make good progress in many aspects of their lives and most achieve well from their respective starting points.
19. When children come into care, plans for permanence are identified early. Managers, social workers and independent reviewing officers consider the range of permanence options for children concurrently before deciding what the best option is for each individual child. There is robust tracking of children's care plans. Once decisions are made to issue care proceedings, these decisions are timely and informed by needs and risk. This is supporting children to be safer. The family court and CAFCASS report positively about the work professionals in Sutton undertake with children and their families. They say that the 'right children are coming into care at the right time'.
20. 'All About Me' assessments inform comprehensive and clear care plans that are purposeful and individualised, and they provide a lovely snapshot into a child's life. As a result, most children live in stable homes that meet their needs and

where they thrive. Children live with their brothers and sisters if this is right for them, with increased support if there is a risk of breakdown.

21. Care plans for children are tailored to the child's needs. Plans are child focused and reflect the wishes and feelings of children well. Children's needs arising from their race, religion, ethnicity or culture are consistently considered when planning for children in care.
22. Independent reviewing officers are visible in children's lives. All-about-me review meetings take place regularly. Children are actively participating and leading in their reviews and their voices are heard. Where there are difficulties in children's participation, they have access to a range of support and advocacy to enable them to be involved in key decisions.
23. Children are supported to keep in touch with their familial networks and maintain connections with important people in their lives. This helps children to maintain and strengthen relationships and promotes their sense of identity.
24. Risks to children in care are mostly recognised and responded to. Practitioners work collaboratively with children's networks, and this is helping to protect them from harm. However, for those children who go missing from care, the response is not robust enough for children.
25. When children who are looked after go missing or their whereabouts are unknown, there is an inconsistent range of coordinated responses, curiosity and care afforded to them. The line of sight for these vulnerable children is unclear and as a result, a small number of children receive inconsistent help and support at times when they need it most. This has been acknowledged by leaders, who have reported that they will review this area of practice and assure themselves that the right children are getting the right support at the right time.
26. Sutton has developed a range of high-quality services to enhance the health and well-being offer for children and care leavers. An effective in-house therapeutic service, staffed by an expanding and committed multi-disciplinary team, offers targeted interventions to children and care leavers. Skilled staff help promote children's mental health, resilience and recovery. As a result, children are receiving better help and a timelier response.
27. Time-sensitive reviews of children's permanence plans result in an increase in planned exits from care via special guardianship orders or the ending of care orders. For children exiting care, decisions are informed by timely and comprehensive assessments. Skilled social workers work closely with parents, families, children and the wider professional network to support safe and appropriate exits from care for children in line with their needs.
28. Social workers know their children very well. They take time to get to know children and establish positive and helpful relationships. Visits are regular and purposeful. Social workers articulate children's needs well and are purposeful in

their work and aspirations for children. When direct work is completed with children, it is focused and delivered with purpose. Practitioners do not shy away from discussing difficult topics with children who have experienced significant trauma in their earlier lives, and this supports them to better understand the experiences of children.

29. Most children live in stable homes where they make good progress. When placements are at risk of breakdown, prompt stability meetings help professionals to identify what support is needed to help children to remain in their homes. When children do move homes, these are mostly planned in a child-focused way. This provides children with time to understand the reasons for the move and support them to settle.
30. Children in care do well in school, supported by effective virtual school arrangements and the designated safeguarding lead network. They enjoy good health and have lots of opportunities to follow their interests and hobbies. This is enabling children to make progress and enrich their lives.
31. Social workers in the disabled children's team know each child well and are attuned to their needs. They support and encourage children, including those who do not communicate verbally, to have a say in what is important to them. This is informing children's plans and helping them to have better experiences.
32. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are well supported in Sutton. They are provided with suitable accommodation that meets their individual needs. They are helped to gain independent living skills and have access to appropriate healthcare such as a GP, dentist and opticians. Progress for these children is evident in their achievements, as they make good educational and community-based progress that is promoting positive experiences.
33. A very small number of children are placed in unregistered children's homes. There is strong oversight of these unlawful arrangements. Leaders regularly monitor the welfare of children living in these settings and work with commissioners to find registered homes for children. Enhanced visiting and oversight from social workers and care staff ensure that children are supported while alternative arrangements are made.
34. Leaders know there is more to do with the recruitment of adopters and foster carers. They have a strong marketing strategy in place and are working with partners to enhance this offer. There is a commitment to keeping Sutton children in the borough, supporting them to be in or near their community.

### **The experiences and progress of care leavers: good**

35. Care leavers receive an attentive service from dedicated personal advisers (PAs) who genuinely care about them. PAs are allocated in good time, enabling meaningful and trusted relationships to develop as care leavers progress through adulthood. PAs are persistent in developing relationships with those



care leavers who are hard to reach so they are more likely to turn to their PA when in need.

36. The majority of care leavers in Sutton live in safe, stable accommodation which meets their needs. Most care leavers progress well in education and employment, and are supported according to their individual needs. Additional support to live independently and maintain tenancies is tailored to the young person's needs. PAs are staunch advocates for young people's accommodation needs, and work well with housing colleagues. However, some housing decisions are inconsistent and do not always consider young people's vulnerabilities. Leaders are taking steps to address this.
37. Care leavers are well supported to develop and maintain links with their family and friends' networks. PAs consider the level of support offered by families, and family group meetings are used routinely. This demonstrates how the importance of these relationships is an active consideration for PAs.
38. Care leavers are involved with and shape their own individual pathway plans, and most pathway plans are comprehensive and accessible. Plans reflect the day-to-day life for care leavers, highlight their priorities and are aspirational. Plans contain clear actions, which help care leavers successfully navigate early adulthood. Plans are regularly reviewed to remain relevant and reflect progress made.
39. Care leavers benefit from a developed local offer in Sutton. PAs understand the offer, and this is reflected in pathway planning and in the support offered. However, some young people told us that they can struggle to access and fully understand the offer and their entitlements. Leaders have acknowledged this and are exploring steps to improve communication and maximise the awareness of the local offer.
40. Sutton has recognised care leaver status as being a protected characteristic. This recognises the additional vulnerabilities of care leavers and is providing the foundations for wider corporate responsibility and accountability for care leavers across the borough. Decisions made across the council and partners are now explicitly considering the impact to care leavers as part of their corporate parenting commitment. The impact of this is being seen in areas related to housing and employment opportunities, and leaders know there is still more to do to embed this approach.
41. For most care leavers, risk is identified and addressed by PAs who understand their care leavers well. Help and support is provided in a timely way and, for most care leavers, they receive a consistent service that supports them to live safer lives.
42. PAs provide a sensitive and attuned response to care leavers who are parents. They provide practical and emotional support and know care leavers' children well.

43. Care leavers who are former asylum-seeking children are well supported by PAs, who are sensitive to their stories, trauma and cultural and religious needs. They are helped in their applications to remain in the UK, supported to learn English, and to make connections with those with similar experiences. Care leavers are actively supported post 21, if they want this, although PAs are conscious not to create dependency and they reduce support when the young person is ready for this.
44. Most care leavers in custody receive a consistent response and are well supported up to the age of 25. However, for a small number of care leavers, it is not clear that they receive the support and advice that they need. For these care leavers, gaps in recording and management oversight did not evidence work being done to improve the support and experiences of these care leavers.
45. PAs are mostly proactive in supporting care leavers to access employment, education and training, helped by a specialist EET worker. Many care leavers make good progress.
46. Care leavers' achievements are celebrated. They enjoy a range of activities to enhance their personal development, and to bring them together to have fun and make connections. This is supporting care leavers to develop social networks and become more independent and confident in their communities.

### **The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: good**

47. Sutton benefits from an established, motivated and forward-thinking leadership team that is focused on improving the experience of children and care leavers. Leaders have set out a clear, strategic vision for service development and have influenced a range of practice improvements across children's services.
48. Leaders understand service areas in Sutton well, and these services are delivering effectively to children and care leavers. However, over the course of the inspection, inspectors identified some discrete areas of practice that were not clearly understood by leaders. This includes decision-making at the front door when children allege physical harm, children in care who go missing and services to children who are privately fostered. For these children, practice, assurance and governance arrangements and structures need to be more effective. Once identified, leaders took swift and proportionate action during the inspection to address these areas of weaker practice.
49. Corporate and political support is focused on children. Leaders understand the needs of children in the borough and are committed to improving their experiences. An engaged chief executive and lead member hold the DCS to account and provide challenge and support, and there is a shared focus on improving outcomes for children and care leavers.

50. Developing impactful services is a key priority for leaders, and this is supported by investment in children's social care that has delivered a range of good services to children and care leavers. Sutton has a strong track record of implementing multiple new initiatives effectively and these are having a positive impact on children's experiences. By taking a 'one council' approach, investments have been made in areas such as the opening of new children's homes, a therapeutic hub that offers a specialist emotional and mental health service to children and care leavers and consultation to staff, and the Kickstart futures & Joint Housing protocol for care leavers.
51. These developments, along with a range of other initiatives, are helping to improve the experiences and opportunities for children and care leavers, which is enabling them to make better progress.
52. Increased workforce capacity and investment underline a commitment to achieving priorities and improving outcomes for children. A sound understanding and investment in placement sufficiency means that more children are being cared for in and close to their home area, although a small number of children still reside in unlawful unregistered children's homes.
53. The voice of children and care leavers is a priority in Sutton, and the corporate parenting board reflects this. The effectiveness of the board is promoting an ethos of high support and high challenge towards senior leaders and politicians. Achievements such as the 'one council' approach to care leavers have led to their profile being raised and celebrated. This, alongside a commitment to care leaver status being a protected characteristic, is enabling change and improving help and support for care leavers across the borough.
54. Senior leaders have welcomed scrutiny and challenge from safeguarding partners. Relationships are strong and mutually challenging, and partners work together to effect change for children and care leavers. Leaders and managers are reflective and use learning from practice and feedback to improve the experiences and care of children.
55. Leaders are focused on developing their approaches to a national reform agenda. Some progress has been made such as the opening of family hubs, more help to keep children in their family networks, improving support to care leavers and increasing the number of homes for children. These changes are being monitored for effectiveness, and leaders are committed to further investment to enable them to deliver on the reforms purposefully, in line with their service vision and to minimise disruption to service quality and delivery.
56. Embedded quality assurance frameworks help leaders to understand most children's experiences in Sutton. These frameworks have not been consistently effective in alerting leaders to the quality of practice in some discrete areas.
57. Strong leadership has set the foundations for practice to be trauma informed and relational in its approach. This is palpable in the day-to-day work between

social care staff, children, care leavers and their family networks. Workers understand and advocate for children and care leavers with agility and are committed to supporting children and care leavers. They put impressive energy into building purposeful relationships with children and care leavers. This is leading to strengthening relationships with staff, who know children well and understand their individual circumstances.

58. Management oversight and supervision in Sutton is mostly regular, reflective, comprehensive and of good quality. Practitioners report this to be helpful and accessible in providing challenge and direction. However, for a small number of children in specific circumstances, supervision does not offer sufficient rigour and challenge to consistently identify and reduce risk to children.
59. Staff told inspectors that they enjoy working in Sutton. They report a culture and leadership that is supportive, visible and accessible. Staff understand the ethos and vision set out by leaders and feel valued. Training is tailored to challenge and improve practice and staff feel supported with opportunities to develop.



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<b>Report Title</b>	People Committee In Year Performance		
<b>Committee</b>	People Committee		
<b>Meeting Date</b>	25 September 2025		
<b>Chair</b>	Councillor Marian James		
<b>Report From</b>	Nick Ireland, Strategic Director for People Services		
<b>Report Author</b>	Sarbjit Oberoi, Interim Data Team Manager		
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All Wards		
<b>Ambitious for Sutton priorities</b>	An inclusive place for everyone Campaign for quality local services An efficient and well-run Council		
<b>Open/Exempt</b>	Open		
<b>Signed</b>		<b>Date</b>	11.9.2025

## 1 Summary

Sutton is aspirational and ambitious for its residents and strives to make its borough an inclusive place for everyone by ensuring access to the best quality services to meet the needs of residents. As part of this ambition, Children's and Adult Social Care and Education (including Cognus) provides statutory support to children and adults to promote their well-being, stay safe and support their independence.

- 1.1 Sutton's ambition is underpinned by the efficient use of resources and the promotion of best practices. To assess how well services meet the needs of children and adults, a comprehensive set of performance indicators has been established. These key indicators cover two main areas of provision, namely Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care.

Appendix A of this report provides the latest available data for Children's and Adult Services. The reporting methodologies for each indicator are specified, with some data reported monthly and others cumulatively over three months. Education-related metrics are presented separately in a dedicated Education report for the People Committee.

## 2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the in-year performance data reported in Appendix A.

### 3 Background and Key Information

- 3.1 To enhance the scrutiny work of standing committees and governance around the provision of Social Care and Education, a twice-yearly performance report is provided for the committee. This enables performance information to be explored, questions asked and assurance provided as to any mitigations being put in place to support ongoing improvement. This oversight also contributes to the assurance on performance provided to Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- 3.2 Over the last few months, the Council has been subject to inspections by various regulatory bodies. Adult social care has been inspected by the CQC, and Children's social care has been inspected by Ofsted. The Ofsted inspection result has confirmed that Sutton's Children's Social Care is 'Good'. Adult Social Care is still awaiting the outcome of the CQC inspection.
- 3.3 Sutton is ambitious to positively improve performance that leads to better health and care outcomes for residents with care and support needs and unpaid carers. The most recent performance outturns demonstrate that these ambitions are being realised with ongoing improvement in performance since last year. This is also evident when Sutton's performance is compared to the London and England averages.
- 3.4 Performance measures in this report will be benchmarked against statistical neighbours and or national averages where this benchmarking data is available. This will provide an initial guide as to whether particular performance metrics are performing above or below the level that might be expected.
- 3.5 It is important to note that the way statutory data is collected for Adult Social Care has changed from the previous aggregated and annual Short & Long Term Return (SALT), which related to requests for social care support and service users and carers receiving eligible support, to a more detailed quarterly 'Client Level Data' (CLD) Return.
- CLD has evolved from SALT, providing more granular detail and timely data to allow for more flexible and broader analysis of Adult Social Care requests, assessments, reviews, and services provided under the Care Act 2014.
  - This change allows the government, via DHSC and CQC, to scrutinise performance more closely, tracking the entire client journey instead of periodic snapshots.
  - Key indicators, previously based on the aggregated SALT returns, some of which are included in this report, will now use the granular CLD's new statutory reporting methodology for client-level tracking.  
For instance, under the Short & Long Term Return (SALT) data collection method, an "admission to care" was recorded as a simple count of activity within specific data tables. It was a numerical entry indicating that an admission occurred, without any

accompanying details about the client. With CLD, however, an admission will be viewed as an event for a specific individual with start and end dates, offering clearer insight into their social care journey to date.

With the ability to now also link local authority client-level data with NHS records for the same individuals, this will enhance a shared understanding of how people transition between health and social care. This improved oversight will help assess how services collaborate to achieve better outcomes for individuals receiving care.

- CLD submissions will eventually be used to benchmark Sutton's data against other local authorities using a methodology that is currently in development and not yet publicly available. This benchmarking data will highlight for local authorities specific areas of good performance in relation to their comparator local authorities in the strive for excellence.

- 3.6 Appendix A contains the most recent performance data, showing a noticeable improvement across several metrics compared to the 2024/25 performance.

### **Adult Social Care**

- 3.7 The latest data for Adult Social Care illustrates ongoing strong performance in key areas, whilst focus remains on improving performance in other areas as described below:
- 3.8 Admissions to Care: Performance is currently RAG-rated green. In July 2025, there were 311.1 permanent admissions of people aged 65 and over to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population, against a Better Care Fund target of 312.7. This equates to approximately 9 admissions per month. Admissions in Sutton remain low compared to the London average of 435.8 and the England average of 566.0 per 100,000 of people aged over 65 years.
- 3.9 To keep achieving and exceeding expected performance, focus will remain on both avoidable admissions from the community and on helping people return and remain at home following discharge from hospital.
- 3.10 At home after 91 days: Performance is currently RAG-rated Green. As many people as possible are supported to remain at home. Performance is exceeding the target at 88.0% against a target of 81.4%.
- 3.11 Reviews: Performance at the end of July is RAG-rated Green at 83.8%. This measure includes reviews carried out with people in receipt of support from Adult Social Care on 31 March in the preceding year. Performance is currently exceeding the target. There were 2,163 clients in 2024/25, requiring a review, compared to 2100 clients in 2025/26. It should be noted that this measure will not count repeat reviews for an individual. Neither does it capture review activity for people new to the service from 1 April. Good practice indicates that new care and support should be reviewed early and as often as necessary to ensure care is delivered at the right level to meet changing needs. Early review helps to ensure care is not over or under-provided.

3.12 Carers Assessments: Performance is RAG-rated Amber at 58.0% as at July 2025, showing ongoing improvement. A focused approach is supporting the trajectory towards the target of 60% by year end. A new Carers Strategy and improvement plan have launched, with planned communication to raise awareness. Various actions are being implemented to support carers in relation to assessments.

- Targeted work by additional dedicated carers' workers to prioritise the current outstanding carer assessments.
- A carers training programme, jointly delivered by the Carers Centre, Adult Social Care (ASC) and Children's Social Care (CSC). This aims to raise awareness of staff responsibilities under legislation in relation to carer assessments, including those for young carers.
- The information held on unpaid carers continues to be monitored to maximise data quality and that opportunities to optimise performance are utilised.
- Each social work team in the directorate has improvement targets to support an overall performance journey to excellence. An increase has been seen in the number of carer assessments completed so far this year in the rolling 12 month period (Jul 24-Jul 25) at 762 out of 1313.
- LBS is committed to ensuring carers are supported and have a choice about when and how they receive support. Acknowledging this, a new workflow is now embedded to better record the wishes of carers who do not want a carers assessment at this time and can manage their caring responsibilities without additional support from the council. These carers will be offered a welfare check at a later date agreed with that carer.

### **Children's Social Care**

3.13 The revised performance framework and refreshed performance indicators for Children's Social Care continue to be reported since 1 April 2024. This ensures the existing performance framework remains relevant and meaningful.

3.14 Referrals - Performance is RAG-rated Amber at 419.2. Numbers decreased in July 25 and remained below the historical average. There were 172 referrals in July, and on average 177 per month over the preceding 12 months. This can be considered to be positive as it indicates that children are only opened with intervention by social care where appropriate and that other support is being provided within the wider children's services and partnership system.

3.15 Child Protection Plans (CPP) rate per 10,000 - Performance is RAG-rated Green. The latest data suggests a slight increase in the current year with this indicator, but it remains

in line with the national average, and Sutton's target rate per 10,000 (42.0). 218 children/young people were subject to a Child Protection Plan at the end of July 2025.

- Sutton (current value) 42.8 (July 2025)
- National - 43.2
- Outer London - 40.4
- Statistical Neighbour - 39.6

3.16 Scrutiny continues in this area of practice by the Head of Service and the lead Child Protection Chair. Review and monitoring of Children with Child Protection plans continue to ensure that children are not left to drift. In addition, robust work is undertaken at the Child in Need stage to try and prevent children from escalating to Child Protection.

3.17 Children Looked After (CLA) rate per 10,000 - Performance is currently RAG-rated Green. The number of Children Looked After recorded on Mosaic (the Social Care Client Record System), was 228 as of July 2025. Sutton remains lower than the Statistical Neighbour rate per 10,000, at 44.8.

- Sutton (current) - 44.8 (July 25)
- Statistical Neighbours - 49.9
- Outer London - 46.0
- National - 71.0

3.18 There continues to be comprehensive scrutiny and oversight of children in care to ensure they need to remain in care. Alongside this, extensive support is provided to families to enable children to remain with their families and for those children in care who can safely return to their families. There are a number of children and young people with a high level of multiple complex needs and a direct correlation with the high costs of some placements. There is focused scrutiny of plans for children in high-cost placements to step them down, or renegotiate costs where the young people are now settled and stable.

3.19 Repeat referrals in the last 12 months (3-month rolling window). Performance is currently RAG-rated Green at 3.4% as of July 25 (target 5.0%). This measure is a percentage based on the number of repeat referrals i.e. relating to a child/family that had a prior referral in the past 12 months and has presented again for the same or different reason during the previous three-month period, as a percentage of all referrals in the same period. The proportion of re-referrals over the three months increased slightly in July, with 9 repeat referrals in the last 3 months. Analysing the three months individually: May 25 was slightly above the target at 5.5%, June 2025 saw a noticeable decrease to 2.2% and July increased to 3.7%. Overall, however, repeat referrals are at the lowest they have been in the last 5 years.

3.20 Children and Family Assessments completed in 45 days. Performance is currently RAG-rated Red: 77.2% (Target 90%). This measure looks at the number of Child and Family Assessments completed in 45 days in the previous three months. Sutton's

performance at present for this indicator is below the average rate for Statistical Neighbours, Outer London and England.

- Sutton (current) - 77.2%
- Statistical Neighbours - 83.7%
- Outer London - 85.7%
- National - 82.5%

3.21 There are a number of reasons that delay the completion of these assessments. These include engaging families, competing demands, manager sign-off and staff availability. The service priority must be managing safeguarding actions over section 17 assessments, however, actions are being taken to address the issues that delay timely completion of assessments.

3.22 Further details of Children's Social Care performance will be discussed in a separate Ofsted report for the People Committee.

#### **4 Benefits to Sutton and its Residents**

4.1 This report provides an update on the response to meeting and progressing the key performance indicators across social care. It also describes below how the outcome of the performance framework promotes positive outcomes for people in the borough.

4.2 Ensures children and families receive timely and appropriate support from Children's Social Care.

4.3 Ensures adults receive the care and support from Adult Social Care that meets their needs and promotes their independence.

4.4 This overview of performance informs decision-making on how best to support children, young people and adults and where there are areas for development and improvement.

4.5 The outcome of the performance framework ensures the care and support offered is of the highest quality and accessible for those who most need it, thus promoting equality and inclusion within the community.

#### **5 Implications**

5.1 In considering the above performance information, the committee may seek to accept assurances or to make further inquiries.

##### Equalities Implications

5.2 There are no anticipated implications on people with protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) arising directly from this report.

- 5.3 An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has not been undertaken.
- 5.4 An EQIA has not been undertaken as this is a retrospective report on performance measured against specific key performance indicators.

#### Climate Implications

- 5.5 There are no anticipated implications on the climate, particularly Sutton Council's commitment that the borough should be a net zero environment.
- 5.6 A Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) has not been undertaken as this is not required.

### **6 Finance and Legal Commentary**

#### Finance Comment

- 6.1 This report is a performance review and as such, there are no direct financial implications of the recommendation. A summary of the financial position of the services the Committee oversees is included in the quarterly Finance & Performance updates to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

#### Financial Risks

- 6.2 The People Services directorate continues to report significant financial pressures in 2025//26 as a result of the ongoing high demand for support and complexity of need from care and SEND services. This is likely to continue across the medium-term planning period, placing significant pressure and risk to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. The 2025/26 - 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Plan presented to the Strategy & Resources Committee in February 2025 included significant growth and savings plans for People services, which are necessary to manage the ongoing demand and cost pressures within available funding levels.
- 6.3 The risk of overspending against budget plans is mitigated through detailed financial monitoring and control processes operating throughout the year and the work undertaken through the budget-setting process. Regular review of the financial position alongside service activity data and demand trends is used to inform future financial planning so that pressures are forecast early and can be managed within the wider Council budget.

#### Legal Comment

- 6.4 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

#### Legal Risks

- 6.5 There are no significant legal risks arising from this report.



## 7 Appendices and Background Documents

### 7.1 Appendices

Appendix Letter	Appendix Title
A	Performance Report: People Committee In Year Performance

### 7.2 Background Documents


Date of Expiry	Background Document
N/A	N/A

## 8 Consultations

Consultees	Yes/No	Officer	Date of Comments
Finance	Yes	Victoria Goddard Director of Finance	28/08/25
Legal	Yes	Lucy Craig  Lucy.Craig@merton.gov.uk	05/09/25
Commercial and Procurement	No	N/A	N/A
Others	No	N/A	N/A
Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)	No	N/A	N/A
Climate Impact Assessment (CIA)	No	N/A	N/A

Adult's Performance Indicators														
Indicator	2018-19 Performance	2019-20 Performance	2020-21 Performance	2021-22 Performance	2022-23 Performance	2023-2024 Performance	2024-25 Performance	Current Performance (July 25)	Performance Period	Values (July 2025)	Current performance vs Target	Target Range (2025-26)	Trend (Jan 25 - July 25)	Rationale for Target
1. Permanent admissions of older people to residential nursing care (rate per 100,000 population)	359.7	330.7	290.9	271.8	247.9	295.2	318.9	311.1	12 month period to July 25	Performance equates to 96 admissions to care in the last 12 months		Target: 312.7 Amber <= 281.4 Red > 281.4		Target determined by Better Care Fund.
2. Proportion of older people who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital. - methodology now includes all reablement packages that are started and not just those that are completed in line with statutory reporting	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	81.4%	87.7%	88.0%	12 month period to July 25	662 still at home from a total of 752		Target: 81.4 Amber >= 73.2 Red < 73.2		
5. Proportion of carers assessments.	48.1%	48.9%	55.7%	56.1%	55.4%	33.6%	61.5%	58.0%	12 month period to July 25	762/1,313 carers assessments completed		Target: 60% Amber >= 53.8% Red <= 53.8%		Target was raised in 2018/19 from 50% to 60% - performance has remained consistent
6. Reviews of service users (in receipt of service as at 1st April 2024)	80.5%	75.8%	79.8%	76.6%	69.9%	62.7%	77.5%	83.8%	12 month period to July 25	1,555/1,856 reviews recorded		Target: 80% Amber >= 71.8% Red < 71.8%		Target provides appropriate level of challenge and will remain the same.
7. Safeguarding – Making Safeguarding Personal	92.9%	93.3%	93.3%	93.3%	84.3%	88.3%	89.6%	86.4%	12 month period to July 25	1,198/1,387 Where MSP recorded as 'Yes'		Target: 90% Amber >= 81.1% Red < 81.1%		Target provides appropriate level of challenge and will remain the same. Awaiting finalisation of new assessment tool
8. Outcomes of Short Term and Reablement Team (START) – No. people with reablement in a non-selective service to have no ongoing care needs	64.4%	68.9%	55.7%	61.5%	56.7%	67.1%	72.4%	71.4%	12 month period to July 25	556/779 successfully reabled		Target: 74.1% Amber >= 66.7% Red < 66.7%		Target provides appropriate level of challenge and will remain the same.
9. Percentage of People with a Learning Disabilities in employment	15.0%	17.0%	23.6%	22.9%	27.6%	29.7%	30.9%	29.1%	12 month period to July 25	119/409 recorded in employment or training scheme		Target: 25% Amber >= 22.5% Red < 22.5%		Target provides appropriate level of challenge and will remain the same.
10a. Percentage of Deprivation Of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) being authorised within timescales - methodology now includes all DoLS activity and not just those where a delay is out of local authority control in line with statutory reporting	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	23.3%	20.0%	71.0%	Single Month July 25	25/35 DoLS not breached		Target: 60% Amber >= 54.0% Red < 54.0%		

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<b>Report Title</b>	Home Care Strategy Update		
<b>Committee</b>	People Committee		
<b>Meeting Date</b>	25 September 2025		
<b>Chair</b>	Councillor Marian James		
<b>Report From</b>	Nick Ireland, Strategic Director for People		
<b>Report Author(s)</b>	Anna Saunders, Director of Commissioning		
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All Wards		
<b>Ambitious for Sutton priorities</b>	An inclusive place for everyone		
<b>Open/Exempt</b>	Open		
<b>Signed</b>		<b>Date</b>	11.9.2025

## 1 Summary

- 1.1 The Home Care Commissioning Strategy 2023-29 was presented to the People Committee on 31 October 2022. This report provides an update to the Committee on the implementation of the new Home Care Flexible Framework Model set out in the strategy, outlining the key changes and the resulting benefits to Sutton's residents.
- 1.2 Sutton Council is committed to delivering high-quality local Home Care services for Sutton residents. The Home Care Service promotes a proactive and preventative approach to health and well-being, enabling the Council to achieve its overarching Ambition for Sutton, which focuses on supporting individuals to maintain their independence and quality of life within their own homes and communities for as long as it is appropriate to do so.

## 2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the updates following implementation of the Home Care Commissioning Strategy and the new model for commissioning Home Care set out in this report.

## 3 Background and Key Information

- 3.1 In 2023, the Council's Home Care service was provided by two contracted providers for a small portion of services, supplemented by 36 additional spot-purchase providers. As a result, the service was fragmented and the quality inconsistent. The challenge set out in

the Home Care Commissioning Strategy was to ensure improved outcomes for service users, including:

- Delivery of a more efficient and responsive Home Care service to facilitate an effective response by providers during periods of high demand, such as the winter period, which would reduce and prevent delayed transfers of care and meet the demand for care thus enabling residents to remain safely in their home;
- Development of dedicated specialist Home Care providers to supplement and improve the provision of care and support for people with a learning disability or with mental health needs;
- Address provider reluctance to accept care packages for residents in specific areas of the borough or to deliver early/late calls in locations poorly served by public transport.

- 3.2 The new model of Home Care services, commissioned through a framework of providers, has been transformational; it has improved service delivery for residents and addressed the challenges set out above since its implementation in September 2023. The new homecare services together with the Council's innovative Tech Enabled Care offer, provide numerous benefits to residents including, increased independence and a higher quality of life enabling people to remain in their familiar home surroundings for longer.
- 3.3 The new Home Care services, with a geographical patch model based on Sutton electoral wards, has 11 lead provider patches for older people and adults with physical disabilities and a further 2 lead provider patches for the provision of care and support services for residents with a learning disability and mental health needs. As lead providers are now operating in smaller geographical areas, this provides continuity of care for residents and has improved service reliability by reducing travel time for carers. The model also contains a supplementary list of 14 providers that supports the patch providers. This new model for organising Home Care has provided a platform for stability, consistent capacity throughout the year, choice where necessary as well as improving and maintaining service quality.
- 3.4 The new model has led to significant performance improvements to the Council's Home Care service. The acceptance rate for new care packages is now 97%, and 100% of hospital discharges requiring Home Care are sourced without delay. The Home Care market continues to demonstrate significant capacity, supporting standard reablement packages when required and effectively meeting needs during periods of high demand, such as winter pressures periods. All Home Care providers have a Care Quality Commission rating of Good or Outstanding.
- 3.5 The transfer of service users from spot providers to the Council's commissioned lead providers commenced in June 2024 at which point there were 1,014 people receiving a homecare service across 30 spot providers. With each phase of the transfers, the support plans of affected service users are reviewed by Adult Social Care in liaison with a number of other teams to ensure that the transfer will continue to provide a safe, sensitive and effective service provision. This particularly applies if a person suffers with advanced dementia, is at the end of life, has a learning disability or a mental health condition. As at the end of July 2025, 118 service users have continued with their spot provider. 786 service users either no longer received home care commissioned by the Council, moved to residential or nursing care, passed away or opted for a direct payment to employ a

provider of their choice. The remaining 110 service users will be considered for transfer in the final three phases. A reduction in the number of Home Care providers to contract manage gives the Council greater capacity for more in-depth and qualitative monitoring of the service to ensure consistent quality and improved outcomes for residents.

- 3.6 The Council's implementation of a flat rate fee for all commissioned Home Care providers has strengthened market sustainability and management, allowing for a greater focus on service quality for residents whilst maintaining competitiveness with other South West London boroughs. As set out in the original Homecare Commissioning Strategy the Council is continuing to phase in the London Living Wage for commissioned Home Care providers.
- 3.7 The payment of service providers for the delivery of social care services is a key business process, ensuring that services are viable, reliable and visible to the Council. A new automated provider portal is being developed in partnership with Access Group to deliver a payment system, commencing with Home Care providers, to reduce the potential for overcharging. The introduction of the provider portal that is expected to go live in September 2025 will provide a robust payments tool that will ensure the Council is accurately charged and residents receive a cost effective service.
- 3.8 The Council is also exploring the provider portal's reporting functions to determine what performance data can be retrieved automatically; including arrival times, visit durations, visit cancellations and any manual adjustments to visit records. This proactive approach will contribute to the effective management of Home Care providers and the continuation of high-quality care delivered to residents.
- 3.9 As set out in the Home Care Commissioning Strategy, a new Domiciliary Care Trusted Assessor role has been introduced. This role in the Home Care provider workforce is to coordinate support, signpost and connect residents to local community facilities as well as being able to prescribe minor pieces of equipment in a timely way to avoid delay in residents receiving aids and equipment that are needed to maintain their independence.
- 3.10 To ensure the responsible and appropriate delivery of the Trusted Assessor role, the Council's Occupational Therapy team has implemented robust monitoring processes. This initiative is further supported by close collaboration between the Occupational Therapists and Assessors to foster continuous learning, effective communication, and best practices that will enhance the quality of service provided to residents.
- 3.11 A future opportunity for the use of Home Care is being introduced in the NHS 10-year plan. It advocates for a shift from hospital to community-based care, emphasising increased support for individuals at home through Home Care services. While the plan does not detail the specific roles of Home Care workers, it establishes grounds for a more integrated, community-focused healthcare approach where Home Care is increasingly vital. As integrated Neighbourhood Teams are developed, the Council's Home Care service can be integrated within those teams as required, maximising opportunities for health and social care to work together.

- 3.12 The Home Care Commissioning Strategy proposed incentives for providers to rightsize care packages where appropriate. The implementation of these incentives was explored by the Council but has not been taken forward at this stage. This is because the Home Care providers on the new framework are effectively communicating with the Council about fluctuations in the level of care needed by residents so that care plans and cost of care can be adjusted accordingly.
- 3.13 A case study set out in Appendix A demonstrates the commitment to personalised care and addressing the holistic well-being of adults by the Council's new Home Care Framework providers.

#### **4 Benefits to Sutton and its Residents**

- 4.1 The implementation of the Home Care Commissioning Strategy and the Home Care Flexible Framework has delivered the following benefits for Sutton and its residents:
- Providers operating in smaller geographical areas have provided greater continuity of care for residents and improved service reliability due to reduced travel time, services that can provide for early or late visits. This has enabled a more responsive and personalised service.
  - Increased the overall capacity of providers to set up and deliver care, meaning residents can be discharged from hospital and supported at home often on the same day or within 24 hours.
  - Lead providers work seamlessly with the Council to deliver short term reablement care when required to do so by the START service. This has prevented delayed discharge from hospital where a person is deemed medically fit to leave; significantly reducing risks to residents' wellbeing.
  - The Home Care Framework model provides a legally sound and auditable process for procuring Home Care providers. This model ensures the delivery of well trained and experienced carers and allows for the framework to be reopened as needed to address any future unmet demand. Residents can be assured that they will receive safe, good quality care and receive a more positive experience of care.
  - The new Trusted Assessor role within the provider workforce enables the timely provision of aids and equipment, helping residents maintain their independence and avoiding unnecessary delays that impact the quality of life of residents.
- 4.2 The benefits that have been outlined will contribute to building on individual and community resilience to help people to live independently in their own home and maintain their independence for as long as possible.



## **5 Implications**

- 5.1 This report provides an update of the key Home Care Commissioning Strategy outcomes, for information.

### Equalities Implications

- 5.2 The Home Care Commissioning Strategy update is for information only. The Home Care service will provide a service to all eligible people regardless of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.3 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this update. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out when the Strategy and the commissioning intentions were presented to the People Committee for approval on 18 October 2022.

### Climate Implications

- 5.4 There are no material climate implications resulting from the recommendation of this report.

## **6 Finance and Legal Commentary**

### Finance Comment

- 6.1 Adult social care services are operating in a challenging financial environment, impacted by an ageing population with increasingly complex, long-term health needs, and rising operational costs for providers, which are driven by inflation.
- 6.2 The council's implementation of the home care strategy has been crucial in managing the costs of the services it buys. By ensuring there is a sustainable market of providers, the strategy has helped to lessen what would have likely become additional financial pressures for the council, both in recent years and for the future.

### Financial Risks

- 6.3 There are no material financial risks resulting from the recommendation of this report.

### Legal Comment

- 6.4 There are no legal implications or risks arising from this report.

### Legal Risks

- 6.5 None.

## 1 Appendices and Background Documents

### 1.1 Appendices

Appendix Letter	Appendix Title
A	Personalised Home Care - Case Study

### 1.2 Background Documents

Date of Expiry	Background Document
N/A	N/A

## 2 Consultations

Consultees	Yes/No	Officer	Date of Comments
Finance	Yes	Victoria Goddard Director, Finance	28/08/25
Legal	Yes	Rachel Godson-Amamoo Principal Lawyer, South London Legal Partnership	27/08/25
Commercial and Procurement	No	N/A	N/A
Others	No	N/A	N/A
Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)	No	N/A	N/A
Climate Impact Assessment (CIA)	No	N/A	N/A

## Appendix A

**Personalised Home Care - Case Study**Introduction

The Home Care Framework works towards a more personalised and community focused service within the Council. The aim is to empower adults aged 18 and over to live independently within their homes, enhancing their quality of life through tailored care and support. This approach focuses on fostering well-being, independence, and resilience, aligning individual circumstances, health status, and personal goals with the services provided

Case Study: KC's Journey to a Fresh Start

KC faced significant challenges due to a severely cluttered home. This environment posed a risk of falls and contributed to feelings of shame and isolation, further compounded by her fragile mental health and limited family visits. Her home had become a major barrier to her happiness and connection. The Home Care provider stepped in to provide compassionate, person-centred support aimed at restoring KC's confidence, improving her mental well-being, and creating a safe and inviting home environment.

**Support Provided:**

1. **Decluttering:** The intervention began with sensitive conversations focused on helping KC regain pride in her home. Together, they systematically decluttered key areas:
  - The kitchen, from which 9 bags of expired food were removed.
  - The bedroom, where 17 bed sets were reduced to a manageable 4.
2. **Promoting Independence:** Through this support, KC began to take ownership of tasks between visits, rediscovering her love for cooking healthy meals in her now cleared kitchen.
3. **Rebuilding Relationships:** The transformation of her home allowed KC to reconnect with her family. For the first time she felt comfortable inviting them for dinner and joyfully began babysitting her grandchildren overnight.
4. **Fostering Self-Care:** The process of decluttering also led to KC rediscovering a hairdryer, prompting her to independently manage her hair care and even initiate visits to a salon. Furthermore, she proactively sought dental work, with a new plate currently on order.

**Outcomes:**

KC maintains her decluttered spaces with a renewed sense of pride and is in the process of completing the final room. Her mental health has significantly improved, and she attributes much of her past depression to her previous living conditions. Her family relationships are strengthening, and she expresses a profound sense of purpose and joy. As KC shared, "I feel so happy now. My home is no longer a source of shame, it's a place I'm proud of."

Through the dedicated and personalised support provided by the Home Care provider, KC has successfully reclaimed her independence, rebuilt her confidence, and transformed her

Appendix A

living space into a home where she can thrive and welcome loved ones. This case study underscores the power of a truly personalised Home Care framework in delivering tangible, life-changing outcomes for residents.