

Therapies Review - Discovery Phase

London Borough of Sutton & SWL CCG



Introduction: this report

We are currently working on a Therapies Review project, to develop and improve therapy services in Sutton and ensure services can continue to best meet the needs of children and young people in the borough, and reflect national best practice.

The first phase of this review was a **discovery phase** which took place between **November 2020 - April 2021** in order to:

- undertake a review of our current services
- Look at what works well and what could be improved
- Identify key areas of focus for future developments
- Ensure commissioning of services focuses on achieving functional outcomes for children and young people

This report sets out the findings of the discovery phase of the review, and covers the process and methodology of this phase, key findings from a range of sources, and areas of focus for future improvements, which will form an action plan for the next phase.

We are now moving into a **design phase**, where we will work collaboratively with parents, families and partners to design the new approach in Sutton based on the findings of this report. This report also covers the next steps as we move into this design phase **between May - September 2021**.

Introduction: the Therapies Review

The Therapies Review project is being carried out jointly by the London Borough of Sutton (LBS) and South West London Clinical Commissioning Group, Sutton borough (SWLCCG) and aims to:

- Deliver a revised model of therapy delivery, across Local Authority and CCG commissioned services, based on quality, innovation and financial efficiency.

The review has focused on Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) and Occupational Therapy (OT) services delivered by the NHS and by Cognus, as well as some specific OT posts in the London Borough of Sutton (LBS).

The review's objectives are to:

- Take a 'whole system' approach to therapy support
- Build on close collaboration and ensure all initiatives are joined up
- Improve access to the right support at an early stage
- Ensure value for money

Introduction: phases of the review

Following the discovery phase and the key findings set out in this report, the project will now move into the **design phase** in order to design a new model and approach to therapy services in collaboration with parents, schools and therapy providers.

There will then be a **delivery phase** where this agreed model will be implemented and an **embedding phase** where the focus will be on making sure any changes are sustainable in the longer term.



Methodology and scope

Data and insights

This phase captured data and insights from a range of sources including:

- Local data
- Benchmarking and engagement with other authorities
- Information on individual commissioned services (NHS and Cognus) & engagement with therapists
- A review from a national expert on therapies to compare the Sutton model to other best practice models across the country
- Engagement with parents convened by the Sutton Parent Carer Forum (SPCF)
- Engagement with schools and SENCOs

Scope of the discovery phase

- This phase did include looking at:
 - What is working well with therapy services and what could be better
 - The performance and quality of services and outcomes services achieve
 - How the current model is working, and how this compares to other local authorities
 - Key areas of focus for improvements in the future
- This phase did look at therapy advice included in EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans) for children but did not include looking at the whole EHCNA (Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment) and EHCP process in the borough.
- This phase did look at how therapy links into other services, but did not look at or review other services for children in the local area.

Discovery Phase - Findings

The following section sets out the findings from a range of sources

Findings: local data and needs

Key Findings

- The population of children and young people in Sutton is growing, and becoming more diverse.
- In February 2021 Sutton had 1,925 children with EHCP plans. There are rising numbers of EHCPs in Sutton, but this trend is broadly in line with the national picture.
- Cognus therapy service supports **1,241** children and young people who receive either Speech, and Language Therapy (SALT) or Occupational Therapy (OT) or both services. This caseload represents 64% of EHCPs in Sutton.
- The NHS SALT and OT services support **1,118** Sutton children, and some of these children have an EHCP.
- There are an estimated **4,000** children with SEN Support needs across Sutton's 68 schools and colleges.

Findings: benchmarking

Discussions were held with neighbouring authorities and where possible Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), to understand Sutton's therapy services within the context of comparative neighbouring councils. The key findings from this were as follows:

01

Operational arrangements and structures vary considerably between different areas, making direct comparisons challenging.

02

Comparison to a national report from 2019 does show that Sutton is in the top quarter of local authorities in England in terms of therapy spend per child*

03

In addition to Sutton a number of other CCGs (in Kingston & Richmond, Bromley, Wandsworth, Merton and Croydon) have all initiated reviews of therapy provision driven by rising EHCP and SEN Support demand, parental expectations and funding challenges

Findings: current model and approach

Our current model involves delivery of therapy services from three organisations as follows:

NHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commissioned to deliver Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), Occupational Therapy (OT), physiotherapy and dietetics.• Works mainly with children aged 0-5 but with transitions in place to Cognus services for children in reception, Y1 and Y2 (where a child has a complex health need, this service retains responsibility until they are 18)• Works mainly in clinics but does also see children in early years settings.• Teams provide clinical advice for EHCP assessments, and transfer care to Cognus for provision which is set out in section F of an EHCP. Children remain on the NHS therapy caseload if they have provision in the health section and are registered with a Sutton GP.• Service works at a universal, targeted and specialist level with a mix of work including training, group interventions and 1:1 based therapy.
Cognus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commissioned to provide SALT and OT for children and young people who are Sutton residents and have an EHCP. Service has been in place for 3 years and a new service specification will be developed which will reflect the findings from this review. The service is intending to deliver more work at an SEN support level, which will be part of the new specification. This will have a focus on the offer at the universal, targeted and specialist level.• SALT and OT teams support Children and young people in primary, secondary and special schools as well as college placements up to the age of 25. Therapy is ordinarily delivered in the education setting but the pandemic has led to an increase in online therapy interventions.• Cognus therapists provide advice regarding access to education as part of the assessment for an EHCP, and are looking to offer more SEN support interventions prior to this point in the future.
LBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The London Borough of Sutton (LBS) employs two OTs who provide advice, assessment and support for aids and adaptations in the home, who are part of the larger Adult OT service in the Borough. These roles do not deliver direct therapy. They work closely with the Children with Disabilities Team, and local housing providers.

Findings: what works well, opportunities to do things differently

	What works well	What could be better?	Opportunities
NHS	<p>Clinic based services provide a good opportunity for discussion with parents and carers.</p> <p>Good examples of the embedded approach in settings where therapists provide training for staff to support therapy aims - this should be built on further.</p>	<p>Currently where there are high caseloads for staff, universal training for early years settings & targeted work cannot always be prioritised.</p>	<p>To build up the universal and targeted component of this work, which will then reduce pressure for access to more specialist intervention.</p>
Cognus	<p>There are good examples of the embedded approach in some settings - where therapy aims are being supported in the classroom and by school staff - this approach needs to be universal across the borough</p>	<p>Schools would like the embedded approach to be used more consistently which is also in line with good practice.</p> <p>Parents would like more engagement with their child's therapist and to be more engaged in therapy.</p>	<p>To offer more opportunities for parents to inform targets, receive feedback on their child's progress, and to be equipped with strategies to support their children's therapy at home.</p>
Whole system	<p>Therapy services from the NHS and Cognus are meeting to coordinate how they work which is working well, this approach should be built on further.</p>	<p>There can be challenges in the transition process between agencies.</p> <p>There are differences in commissioning, specifications, outcomes, performance data and other areas between Cognus and the NHS.</p>	<p>To improve this transition process & create a streamlined, joined up offer across the universal, targeted & specialist levels.</p> <p>To align the approach across Cognus and NHS for areas such as specifications, key performance indicators (KPIs), outcomes, quality assurance etc.</p>

Findings: analysis by therapies expert

Finance and activity data for Cognus services were reviewed by a national expert in this area, who was commissioned to complete a short piece of work with Cognus therapy leads.

Services were reviewed against the nationally recognised best practice 'balanced model' which has a structure of provision based on the universal, targeted and specialist levels.

Findings: this piece of work found that in Sutton there was a tendency to move from 'universal' to 'specialist' provision and interventions immediately, as the 'targeted' offer is not clearly defined. It was recommended that the focus on commissioning of services should move to a focus on **achieving functional outcomes for young people**.

These findings complemented other findings from the review, and the view of stakeholders, that the universal and targeted offer could be improved and support provided at an earlier point to best meet the needs of children and young people in the Borough.

Conclusions: That Sutton should adopt the balanced model to improve outcomes and to have a model which represents best practice, to develop a holistic local area offer, and to meet need for children at the earliest stage. This model also includes an embedded approach where therapy principles, knowledge and practice are embedded into teaching and support in educational settings. Although this analysis was purely for Cognus services, it is recommended the NHS adopt this same approach.

Findings: engagement (summary)

Engagement

2 listening events convened by SPCF

Survey on online therapy

Engagement with schools and SENCOs

Common themes - areas to develop

Parental involvement

Outcomes based approach

Clear targets needed

Transitions (between services & at key stages)

Communication (between therapists, parents, schools and settings)

Embedded model and whole school approach

Home learning environment - strategies to use at home

Findings: key engagement feedback

Parents feedback

- **Local parents feedback on what worked well:** individual therapists were amazing, and there were parents who were pleased with therapy assessments and felt involved with the process.
- **Areas that could be improved:** included communication with parents, transitions between services, consistency of staff, parents being involved in their children's targets and having guidance on how to support their children's therapy at home.
- **In a survey focused on teletherapy,** the majority of parents and children were happy to use teletherapy in the future, and had found this useful, although some parents did hope for a return to 'in person' support in the future.

Schools and Sencos

- **SENCO leads shared good practice examples** in specific schools where therapists are flexible and embedded in the schools.
- **They highlighted a need for need for more short term interventions,** and upskilling of school staff.
- **Schools shared positive experiences** of having regular input from proactive and flexible therapy staff who could provide on site 'troubleshooting' advice and longer term programmes of work (e.g. the whole school 'zone of regulation' initiative).
- **Praise for the 'embedded approach'** of delivering therapy and emphasis on the importance of therapy staff being involved in the learning community, and communicating regularly with parents and school staff.
- **Highlighted the need for a strong focus on preparation for adulthood,** including the need for therapy to adapt to the post 16 learning environment.
- Also a need for more focus on impact and outcomes, and recommendation for a '**cultural shift**' across Sutton in **favour of 'evidence, outcomes and a strength based approach.**

Discovery Phase - Areas of Focus and Development Plan

The following section sets out **5 key areas of focus** as we improve and develop services going forward, and **12 specific actions** within these areas that will form part of the development plan, as we move into the next phase of work.

Areas of focus for the development of therapy services

1. Model and approach

To improve services to align with best practice: with a balanced model, which is embedded in educational settings

2. Partnership and communication

To develop and deliver services in partnership with parents, and to build effective partnerships with professionals across the system

3. Outcomes Focused

For **functional outcomes** for children and young people to be at the heart of services

4. Joined up offer (NHS & Cognus)

To align delivery across the NHS and Cognus, working collaboratively to provide a clear and holistic local approach to therapy services

5. Service provider developments

To take forward specific service developments relevant to individual providers: NHS and Cognus

Overview of key areas and development plan

	Model and Approach	Partnership and communication	Outcomes focus	Joined up offer	Service provider developments
Development plan	1. Balanced model	5. Home learning environment & parental involvement	7. EHCNA advice (focus on functional outcomes)	9. NHS and Cognus collaboration	12. Specific NHS developments
	2. Defined offer	6. Partnership and communication	8. Commissioning: outcomes focus	10. Joined up management of services	13. Specific Cognus developments
	3. Embedded practice			11. Aligning work, focusing on quality	
	4. Expert support in developing the offer				

Area of focus: model and approach

To improve services to align with best practice: with a balanced model, which is embedded in educational settings

Actions for development plan

01

Balanced Model

Adopt the 'Balanced Model' across therapy provision, both NHS and Cognus therapies. This is a framework focused on achieving outcomes through a graduated response (universal, targeted & specialist support).

02

Defined Offer

Define Sutton's universal, targeted and specialist therapy offers - which will include access to SEN Support (through the Graduated Response, SENCO Clusters etc).

03

Embedded Practice

Build on and spread the 'embedded' practice already in the system through upskilling the wider workforce, deepening therapy knowledge and skills in settings and across the extended workforce, having a named therapist for every setting and enabling setting based planning and teamwork time.

04

Expert Support

Commissioners will build in external support, challenge and expertise as we move into the design phase of this work

Area of focus: partnership and communication

To develop and deliver services in partnership with parents, and to build effective partnerships with professionals across the system

Actions for development plan

05

Home Learning environment & parental involvement

Significantly increase parental involvement in service delivery with introductory meetings to agree therapy aims and regular (termly when at school) feedback, production and distribution of therapy at home materials (both NHS and Cognus or combined) and continuing parental participation in service development and quality assurance.

06

Building partnerships with professionals

Build effective partnerships with professionals across the system to ensure professionals understand each others roles and that there is collaborative working and clear pathways between services

Area of focus: outcomes focus

For **functional outcomes** for children and young people to be at the heart of services

Actions for development plan

07

EHCNA Advice

Revise the guidance for and practice of writing EHCNA advice for both NHS and Cognus therapists to ensure that advice has 'functional outcomes' at its core.

Strengthen the links between NHS and Cognus therapies, EHC Coordinators and the EHCP review process.

08

Commissioning: outcomes focus

Move away from commissioning for inputs, i.e. counting hours delivered, in favour of commissioning for evidence of outcomes achieved for children.

Area of focus: NHS & Cognus collaboration / joined up offer

To align delivery across the NHS and Cognus, working collaboratively to provide a clear and holistic local approach to therapy services

Actions for development plan

09

NHS and Cognus Collaboration

Significantly strengthen NHS and Cognus collaboration across assessments, provision of EHCNA advice, planning transitions, production and distribution of home materials and feedback to parents.

11

Joined up management

Explore the most effective way to join up how services are managed, to deliver the integrated transformation required and coordinate both services across the 0 to 25 age range.

10

Quality assurance / aligning work

LB Sutton and NHS commissioners should work with Cognus and NHS therapy partners over the summer months to align:

- Service specifications
- Key Performance Indicators
- Contract reporting mechanisms and Performance Dashboards
- Audits
- User surveys

Area of focus: service provider developments

That while we want a whole systems local approach, we also recognise different areas of focus for our two providers which we will work to develop

Actions for development plan

12

Cognus developments

- a) A new service specification will be developed which will build on the findings from this review and achieve greater alignment across the NHS and Cognus specifications.

13

NHS developments

- a) Review the effectiveness of group interventions over a longitudinal study and share the importance of group work with parents & families.
- b) Consider how the delivery of early speech and language and functional intervention supports Sutton to achieve its wider strategic goals.
- c) Consider system long term outcome measures that therapies support as we move towards an Integrated care system.

Next Steps - Design Phase

The following section set out information on the next steps, in particular how a new approach and model for therapies will be developed jointly with parents and partners

Design phase: principles

The work of the design phase will be undertaken with a focus on the following principles:

- Outcomes for children and young people are at the heart of services
- The model is sustainable and offers a graduated response (universal, targeted and specialist offer)
- There is a focus on intervening early and providing support at the right time
- Services are designed collaboratively with parents and partners
- Services focus on preparation for adulthood
- Services are joined up, and there is a seamless journey for families

Design phase: engagement

A communications and engagement plan has been developed to ensure all of this work is communicated clearly to parents, families and internal and external partners through a range of local forums and channels. Some of the key engagement activities between May - September 2021 will include:

Parent engagement

- A series of focus groups are being run with parents who have experience of these services, to 'deep dive' into key areas and develop what the future model of delivery could look like.

Engaging professionals

- An operational group of practitioners will work together on how to bring services together across Cognus & NHS with a focus on specific areas such as transition points.

School and SENCos

- Engagement will take place with schools and SENCo clusters to ensure they are a key part of this work.