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Thrive-to-25

Programme Report 2024/25

Southwark
Council



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Appendices

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*This project has been evaluated separately as it concerns a different cohort of young people and provision type, and was introduced to the programme at a later stage using some underspend from the 2023/24 budget.

Executive

Summary

We embarked on our short breaks transformation journey in Summer 2022 knowing that there were significant issues with our existing offer. Families reported gaps in provision for under 8s, over 16s and those with complex needs. What we didn't realise was *how* disjointed and mis-weighted the offer was, and how high the levels of dissatisfaction were.

Bidding for the Short Breaks Innovation Fund prompted us to reach out to the community, engage them differently and more deeply, and review what was happening internally and in other areas.

Through development and delivery of Thrive-to-25 we have worked collaboratively with a range of partners, parents and families to take a 'whole system' approach to improving our offer.

Some of the key developments include:

- **Greater focus on early support and intervention** through the expansion of SENsational stay & play and short breaks; system-wide roll-out of positive behaviour support training and an underpinning Community of Practice; and capacity building support for play, leisure and childcare providers.
- **Greater range, quantity and quality of short breaks provision** through the development of new provision for different age and interest groups, and those with more complex needs.
- **Improved access and data** through the introduction of a new streamlined registration and booking system, to improve navigation for families and oversight for the local authority.
- **Greater understanding of the impact of different types of alternative education provision** through the testing and evaluation of new initiatives.

We've taken an agile approach to delivery, testing and learning with partners throughout the two year delivery period. The impact has extended beyond the programme, informing our ongoing commissioning intentions and the way we deliver services. Some examples include demonstrating need for additional investment in positive behaviour support, prompting a redesign of our local offer website and an expansion of our 16+ short breaks offer.

We've developed a range of resources that will continue to deliver positive change within local provision, including staff handbooks, inclusion toolkits and a central repository of PBS resources.

Satisfaction with our short breaks service and the numbers of children and young people accessing have risen dramatically.

We have developed better relationships with providers and our parent carer forum and continue to work better together for the benefit of local children and young people with SEND and their families.

Benefits summary

Programme benefits	KPI	Delivered
To improve emotional and educational outcomes for CYP with disabilities and their families.	30% increase in C&YP accessing a short break	362 unique cyp supported in year one, 537 unique cyp in year two constituting an annual increase of 48%. Please note: This figure includes all participants of the Thrive-to-25 programme, including a number of initiatives that wouldn't typically be classed as short breaks i.e. alternative education pilots and stay & play sessions.
	90% of CYP report improvements in at least one of the specified areas i.e. communication & behaviour; personal, social and emotional development; relationships; aspirations; family wellbeing; resilience	97% of CYP reported improvements in at least one of the specified areas
To reduce placement breakdown/ transfer of CYP from mainstream to specialist settings	80% of providers that access capacity building support report increased knowledge and confidence in supporting cyp with SEND.	95% of providers that accessed capacity building support reported increased knowledge and confidence in supporting cyp with SEND.
	60% of participants on the alternative education pilot have improved attendance	90% had improved attendance at AP during pilot compared to previous period at mainstream school 70% had improved attendance at mainstream school whilst attending the AP 50% had improved attendance at mainstream school when they returned full time following the pilot
	80% of staff/ parent carers accessing PBS training have increased knowledge and confidence in supporting cyp who exhibit behaviours of concern	80% reported an increase in knowledge of PBS post training 85% reported increased confidence in delivering PBS post training

Introduction

In December 2022, Southwark Council and partners secured funding from the Department for Education's 'Short Breaks Innovation Fund' to deliver a programme of work intended to transform the offer of short breaks and other forms of support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and their families.

The challenges we aimed to address

Engagement with families, colleagues and partners during Summer 2022 highlighted a number of issues and gaps with the current offer. These included:

- Limited provision for under-8s, with parents and carers expressing the need for more early support to develop knowledge and strategies to support their child's needs.
- Difficulties accessing short break provision due to provider confidence in managing specific needs such as epilepsy, personal care and behaviours of concern.
- Lack of opportunities for young adults with SEND to socialise and pursue interests outside school or college.
- Limited post-19 options and post-college pathways, with many young people remaining in college for 4+ years with little progress against intended outcomes.

Southwark Council worked with partners, including the local parent carer forum, to co-design a transformation programme to address these issues. The programme, known locally as Thrive-to-25, was delivered between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2025.

This report outlines and evaluates delivery in year 2 of the programme (April 2024-March 25), building on the findings from an interim evaluation published at the end of year one (included at Appendix B).

Methodology

A range of information has been considered and a number of research methods employed to understand the impact of the Thrive-to-25 programme. This includes

- Analysis of session data
- Surveys to capture self-reported outcomes
- Workshops with young people to capture their views and feedback
- Qualitative case studies (see Appendix A)
- Validated measures, attendance records and cost comparison (Thrive Education pilot only, see Appendix C).

The latter two were undertaken by Renaisi-TSIP, a social research organisation commissioned to support programme learning and evaluation.

Overview

The programme consisted of four workstreams, with a fifth introduced in year two.

Thriving Families (Under 11s)

Development and roll-out of stay & play and short break sessions for 0-11s across the borough, integrating specialist advice and support.



Thriving Minds (Complex needs/ASD)

Development of specialist weekend and holiday provision for children with complex needs, including those who exhibit behaviours of concern.

Thriving Futures (16-25s)*

- (1) Development of special interest groups and social clubs for young adults aged 16+.
- (2) Development of a community-based personal development programme for young adults 19+ as an alternative to formal education.



Thriving Together (Inclusive provision)

Capacity-building support for play, leisure and childcare providers to improve inclusive policies and practices.

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)

Whole system PBS workforce training and development programme, including development of a local community of practice.



Year two
only

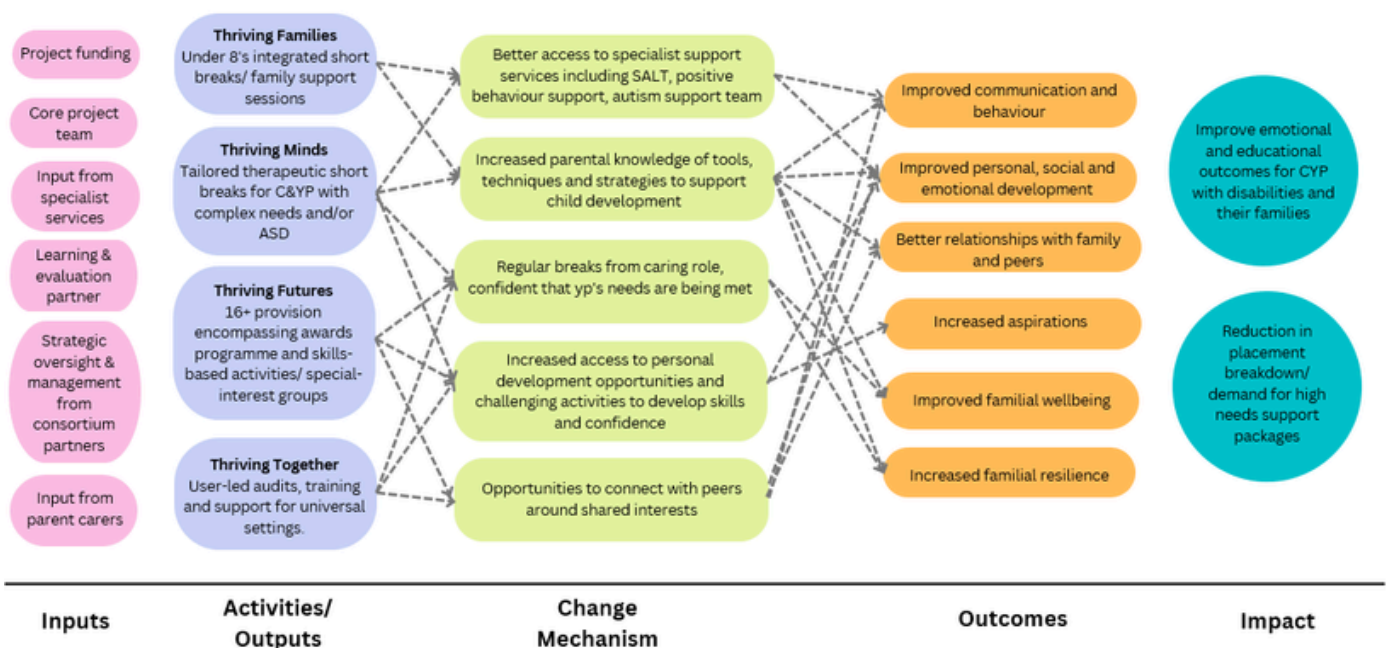
*The Thriving Futures workstream also included the 'Thrive Education' pilot, a time-limited alternative education intervention for young people experiencing emotionally-based school avoidance. This has been evaluated separately. The report is included at Appendix C.

Aims & Objectives

The overall programme aims were stipulated by the Department for Education (DfE). They were:

- 1.To improve emotional and educational outcomes for CYP with disabilities and their families
- 2.To reduce placement breakdown/ transfer of CYP from mainstream to specialist settings.

At the start of the programme, we worked with a range of partners including our local parent carer forum, to develop a 'Theory of Change' to demonstrate how we would contribute to these aims by addressing our local challenges.



The outcomes we monitored can be split into two categories

Outcomes for CYP	Outcomes for parents/ carers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved communication and behaviour Improved personal, social and emotional development Better relationships with family and peers Increased aspirations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved wellbeing Increased resilience

Output, Outcomes & Key Learning

Thriving Families

Through the 'Thriving Families' workstream we worked with our Children and Family Hubs and Cherry Gardens Special School to develop a borough-wide offer of 'SENsational' stay & play and short break sessions for 0-11s.

Stay and play sessions are for children and parents to attend together. **Short break** sessions allow parents to take a break whilst their child is cared for by the trained staff team.

The structured sessions incorporate specialist advice and support, with regular attendance from our Positive Behaviour Support team as well as other visiting professionals and services.

Delivery summary

Target	Delivered
278 SENsational sessions (including 24 days holiday provision)	231 SENsational sessions delivered
12 CYP per session	Average 7 CYP per session
200 unique CYP across the year	331 unique CYP across the year

Overall, annual session numbers were lower than anticipated due to the closure of two busy sessions midway through the year. This included Ivydale Children & Family Centre which closed in November, and the session based at Cherry Garden School which ceased in October as the designated space was no longer available. An alternative site, Rye Oak, was identified but activity did not commence until late in the year.

Despite this, the unique number of children supported throughout the year was substantially higher than the initial target, with 331 children supported overall. The average number of sessions accessed per child was 5. The proportion attending 5+ sessions was fairly small at 21% (68/331) with a small number of children accessing very regularly i.e. 16 children attended 25+ times. The highest recorded number of repeat visits was 69 i.e. more than once a week. Further investigation is required to understand why repeat attendance was low in many cases. Some possible factors are explored on the next page.

Session attendance varied greatly by site with average attendance ranging from 2.5 children per session at one location to 11 children per session at another. Attendance also varied by day with Saturday and holiday sessions significantly more popular than midweek sessions. It is worth noting that these sessions had an extended age range of up to 8 on Saturdays and 11 during school holidays to accommodate primary aged children, where as midweek sessions during term-time were for under-5s only.

Feedback from families indicated that **familiarity**, **consistency** and **experience** of staff were significant factors in determining which sessions they attended, as well as the **structure** of sessions. A small number of families intentionally opted for quieter sessions due to the needs of their child(ren).

A range of measures were taken in an attempt to increase attendance at poorly attended sessions, including outreach activity in the local area and partnership work, but this failed to generate a sustained increase in attendance.

Outcomes and impact

The table below summarises survey responses received in relation to SENSational.

Service ratings	
87% of respondents rated SENSational as 'Good' or 'Excellent'	
Intended outcomes	Evidence
Improved communication and behaviour	50% stated that their child's communication and/or behaviour improved
Improved personal, social and emotional development	79% stated that their child developed new or existing skills
Better relationships with family and peers	29% stated that their child made new friends
Improved familial wellbeing	93% stated that the provision had a positive impact on their wellbeing
Increased familial resilience	71% stated that they felt better able to manage future challenges

Improved familial wellbeing and skills development were the most commonly reported outcomes. Many parents and carers referenced developing supportive peer networks and the benefits of having a safe SEND-specific space with access to specialist advice and support.

"My children have benefited from having a structure to their Saturday morning, being introduced to communication strategies such as the use of visuals, and from having parents who feel happier and more supported for being able to meet parents and carers who understand our situation!"

There were also references to SENSational supporting children with their school or nursery readiness, and parents gaining confidence in leaving their children in the care of others.

SENSational case studies are included in Appendix A.

Key learning & next steps

The SENSational offer has developed considerably over the last two years with the introduction of 'short break' sessions, Saturday sessions, extended age ranges and regular input from services like the Positive Behaviour Support team. Staff have benefited from additional training including Makaton, PBS (both formal training and coaching in sessions), SEN toolkit by Cherry Gardens School and SENCO training.

These developments have led to a range of positive outcomes for children and families, particularly in relation to **child development**, parental **wellbeing** and **peer-to-peer networks**.

Creating a consistent, borough-wide offer has been a challenge, with some sessions over-subscribed whilst others have little to no attendance. The use of agency and less experienced staff has been a contributing factor to the variation in attendance patterns and feedback. Families value **structure, consistency** and **familiarity** and where this isn't provided they are quick to seek out alternative provision or stop attending altogether. Where attendance is poor families do not benefit from the **peer-to-peer networking** that has emerged as an important benefit of this provision.

As part of the sustainability plan a new contract has been established, focussing on short breaks delivery during weekends and school holidays for primary-aged children. Some midweek stay and play provision will continue as part of the wider Family Hub contracts.

A SENSational staff handbook, induction plan and session plans have been developed to support greater consistency in delivery.



Thriving Minds

Through the 'Thriving Minds' workstream we worked with existing and new short breaks providers to develop provision that could accommodate children with more complex needs, addressing previous barriers to access. In year 1, this included providing additional funding and support to existing providers and piloting new provision specifically for children with additional health, personal care and behavioural needs.

In year two we focussed on further development of the offer for young people with Autism aged 11-19 who display significant behaviours of concern. This group was identified as experiencing some of the greatest barriers to accessing short breaks. We worked with specialist provider, Resources for Autism, to develop and target provision, which consisted of weekend and holiday sessions based at one of the borough's special schools. Sessions incorporate a range of indoor and outdoor activities including cooking, art, music, sports and sensory activities.

Delivery summary

Target	Delivered
455 holiday/ weekend placement days	463 holiday/ weekend placement days
45 unique CYP (revised down to 27 to reflect 3 groups of 9)	39 unique cyp

Session delivery was in-line with annual targets with 39 unique young people benefitting overall. As a specialist provision offering one-to-one support for young people who exhibit behaviours of concern, referral was via the All Age Disability (AAD) team and special schools only. In opening up a referral route from special schools, the intention was to avoid referral to social care if families simply required access to weekend and holiday provision. This worked well with special schools supporting with the identification and referral of young people that required a specialist holiday club but where there weren't any wider social care concerns.

The offer to families was consistent with the rest of Southwark's Targeted Short Breaks service i.e. up to 10 days holiday provision and unlimited Saturdays (subject to availability). Families requiring support over and above this were often already open to AAD.

Outcomes and impact

The table below summarises survey responses received in relation to the complex needs provision delivered by Resources for Autism.

Service ratings	
90% of respondents rated the provision as 'Good' or 'Excellent'	
Intended outcomes	Evidence
Improved communication and behaviour	22% stated their child's communication improved; 56% stated their child's behaviour improved
Improved personal, social and emotional development	61% stated their child developed new or existing skills
Better relationships with family and peers	39% stated their child made new friends
Improved familial wellbeing	78% stated that the activities had a positive impact on their wellbeing
Increased familial resilience	67% stated that they felt better able to manage future challenges



The most commonly reported outcomes related to the **wellbeing** and **resilience** of families with many parents referencing having time to do other things like spend time with other children, do chores or take a break.

A significant number of young people also developed new or existing skills with reference to **social skills** and **independence**.

"It is good for A to interact with other people and peers and the holiday club enables this. It also provides some respite for parents and time to run errands/chores."

Key learning & next steps

The complex needs provision developed across both years one and two of the programme has enhanced the Targeted Short Breaks service, opening it up to children and young people with a broader range of needs. Children and young people who require a higher level of support can now access a one-to-one placement at a Saturday club or holiday scheme without referral to the All Age Disability team for assessment.

Feedback has indicated that this provision has had a significant impact on the wellbeing and resilience of families who were previously unable to access regular short breaks. For families that include a child that exhibits behaviours of concern, the need for a wellbeing break can be particularly acute.

As part of the sustainability plan a new contract has been established to instate this provision as part of the core targeted short breaks offer.



Thriving Futures

Through the ‘Thriving Futures’ workstream we worked with a range of partners to develop

- 1.Special interest groups and social clubs for young people aged 16-25
- 2.A community-based personal development programme for young adults 19+, as an alternative to continued formal education.

Special interest groups

We worked with local providers to develop six new social clubs and special interest groups in response to the needs and aspirations of young residents. This included the following regular activities:

- Gigs and trips group
- Coding club
- Autism support group
- ‘Choose what we do’ club
- Saturday social club
- Photography, film and drama workshops.

The aims were to support young people to build connections around shared interests and develop skills and interests that they could continue into adulthood.

Delivery summary

Target	Delivered
244 sessions	246 sessions
12 YP per session	Average 12 YP per session
80 unique young people	150 unique young people

Session delivery exceeded targets with 87% more young people accessing the provision than initially anticipated, and consistently good attendance throughout the programme. Service-uptake was high from the start with awareness of the opportunities spreading quickly amongst established family networks. The new 16+ provision also generated interest from other areas with neighbouring Local Authorities contacting us to find out more about the offer.

Outcomes and impact

The table below summarises survey responses received in relation to the special interest groups.

Service ratings	
97% of respondents rated the provision as 'Good' or 'Excellent'	
Intended outcomes	Evidence
Improved communication and behaviour	81% reported improved communication or feelings of being listened to; 79% reported improved behaviour or feeling calmer*
Improved personal, social and emotional development	92% reported developing new or existing skills
Better relationships with family and peers	92% reported making new friends
Increased aspirations	100% reported trying new things
Improved familial wellbeing	94% of parents/ carers reported improved wellbeing
Increased familial resilience	72% of parents/ carers reported feeling better able to manage future challenges



As well as survey responses, feedback was captured via collaging workshops and interviews with young people. A range of positive outcomes were recorded, most notably related to trying new things and developing new skills. There were frequent references to growing **confidence** and developing greater **independence**, as well as mention of individual **aspirations**.

"Yeah, I'm thinking about being a computer engineer, a software engineer, maybe these type of jobs I actually can, in the future"

*Questions about communication and behaviour were phrased differently for young people responding to the survey directly

Key learning & next steps

The special interest groups filled a gap in Southwark’s local offer, providing opportunities for young adults with SEND to connect with their peers outside school or college. Prior to delivery, families reported difficulties in young people accessing age appropriate activities that aligned with their interests. Uptake was immediate and attendance consistently high, highlighting significant demand for this provision.

Self-reported outcomes and feedback have been overwhelmingly positive, with many young people reporting improvements in **confidence** and **skills development** as well as new **friendships**.

As part of the sustainability plan, a small grant programme has been launched to continue to part-fund special interest groups and social clubs for young people aged 16+. Providers are charging affordable fees to support ongoing sustainability. The upper age limit has been removed in response to feedback, recognising that young people can experience a service ‘cliff-edge’ at 25. This service continuity aims to support young people as they transition into adulthood.



Gateway Award

The Gateway Award at Southwark Resource Centre is a personal development programme for young adults with a learning disability. It is based on Mencap’s Gateway Award, a national award similar in structure to the Duke of Edinburgh Award. It consists of five modules: Hobbies, Fitness, Lifestyle, Volunteering and Challenge.

The programme acts as a gateway to adulthood, with a strong emphasis on personal development, daily living skills, independence and engagement in community life.

The programme has been developed for young adults aged 19-25 with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) as an alternative or follow-on from college.

Delivery summary

Target	Delivered
150 days provision	148 days provision
6 unique participants	17 unique participants

At the start of the year we planned to work with a small cohort of six participants. However, by the start of the academic year, far more referrals had been received. Young people attended the provision for four days per week during term-time with average attendance of 85%.

Outcomes and impact

The Gateway Award operates on an academic year. At the time of conducting programme surveys, young people had not been accessing the provision sufficiently long to respond. Therefore there is no survey data for this scheme.

A number of qualitative case studies were captured through interviews with young people, parents/carers and staff working on the programme. The case studies demonstrate that the Gateway Award achieved positive outcomes for two distinct cohorts of young people:

- Those with higher support needs that had typically spent four or more years in college prior to joining the programme
- A younger cohort with more moderate needs who were struggling in a college environment and/ or wanted to focus on developing skills for employment.

For the first cohort, many young people had limited verbal communication, physical/ mobility needs and some behaviours of concern. Some of the outcomes reported included improved **fitness** and **mobility** through regular postural and exercise sessions, improved **literacy** and **numeracy**, improved **communication** skills and **emotional regulation**.

Since attending the Gateway Award, Daniel has learned to write his own name, a skill his carers note he was previously unable to do

When I come to work and do my job, it makes me feel like I've improved...if you ask me to do a task, I just know what to do now."

For the latter cohort we have seen improved **work-readiness** with improvements in **timekeeping** and **punctuality**, **digital** and work-based **communication** skills and increased **confidence**.

At the end of academic year 2024/25, 48% of the EHCP plans will cease as young people transition to their next phase of adult life, demonstrating that the gateway award has supported young people to achieve their educational outcomes and transition into adulthood.

Key learning & next steps

The learning from the pilot has led to the development of two distinct programme pathways:

- Gateway to Employment - For young adults with a mild to moderate learning disability who aspire to volunteering or paid work.
- Gateway to Community - For young adults who require more support in order to achieve their learning and personal development goals, and who are looking to build a fulfilling adult life.

Southwark Council are moving forward with the continued insourcing of this provision providing 25 guaranteed in-borough places for academic year 2025/26.

Thriving Together

Through the 'Thriving Together' workstream, we commissioned user-voice charity, VoiceAbility, to deliver capacity building support to play, leisure and childcare providers to advance SEND inclusive policies and practices in Southwark.

People with lived experience were employed to review provision and co-deliver training and support. Specialist partners, including Cherry Gardens Special School, SENSE Charity, Evelina London and the council's PBS team, were engaged in the delivery of training and development of practical resources.

Delivery summary

Target	Delivered
36 user-led reviews and support packages (revised to 24 to take account of the organisations receiving continued support from year 1)	23 user-led reviews and support packages

When initially developing the proposal, we established a primary KPI of number of reviews and support packages delivered. In reality, VoiceAbility worked flexibly with providers, utilising a range of methods to deliver support. Across the two year programme they delivered the following outputs:

- Recruited and trained **four experts-by-experience** (disabled young people and parent carers) to co-deliver support to providers as Speak Out Leaders
- Organised **10 training and shared learning events**
- Awarded **48 resource grants** to participating organisations for things like sensory equipment, communication software and bespoke training.
- Provided support to a total of **76 organisations** that deliver play, leisure or childcare provision in Southwark.

They also developed a comprehensive **Inclusion Toolkit** which can be found [here](#). The toolkit includes a wide range of activities, tips, templates and resources to help organisations create more inclusive and capable environments for children and young people with SEND.

Outcomes and impact

Intended outcomes	Evidence
Improved knowledge and confidence in supporting cyp with SEND	95% of providers that responded to the survey reported increased knowledge and confidence in supporting cyp with SEND.
Providers adopt more inclusive policies and practices	63% of providers that responded to the survey made specific changes to their provision as a result of the support

Most providers accessed support via multiple channels, including attending shared learning events, training, one-to-one support calls, review visits and resource grants.

“The training opportunities, such as Makaton, have been so important for our team. The networking was also brilliant, as was the chance to share ideas, good practice, and support systems, and even venues for project activity.”

A large majority of providers reported increased knowledge and confidence in supporting children with SEND. Some of the most commonly referenced areas of improvement included better understanding of **sensory regulation**, improved **communication skills** (eg. Makaton) and a better understanding of how to create **inclusive spaces and activities** for children with a range of needs.

Over 60% of providers that responded to the survey made specific changes to their provision as a result of the support including introducing **sensory boxes** and other SEND resources, **developing quiet areas** to support sensory regulation and updating registration forms to **capture better information** about a child’s needs.

There were also significant outcomes for the young people and parents/ carers involved in the project. As well as developing new skills and confidence, they reported feeling heard and gaining a great sense of accomplishment from their role in delivering the project outcomes.



“Working on the VoiceAbility Thriving Together project was a great and rewarding opportunity for me to share my personal experiences, working with families and providers to encourage inclusion and act as a Speak Out advocate for SEN families. It is my continuing mission to ensure that all our voices are heard, loudly and clearly, as well as encouraged to thrive successfully regardless of our different abilities.” Jackie, Speak Out Leader

Key learning & next steps

The Thriving Together project has facilitated structured collaboration between people with lived experience, specialist organisations and providers of play, leisure and childcare. Participating organisations had varied levels of knowledge and previous experience, with some having a vision to be more inclusive but no current clients with SEND, and others with well established policies and practices related to inclusion. This supported dissemination of best practice as well as reciprocal relationships related to venues and partnership projects. For those earlier in their inclusion journey, the project provided access to support, training and resources to develop strong foundations for future inclusive delivery.

The inclusion toolkit was developed to provide a lasting legacy for this work. This will be embedded within commissioning and contract monitoring for youth, play, leisure, and short break services at Southwark Council. It will also be shared widely with VCSE organisations and childcare providers.

We are working with Southwark's newly established Disability Hub to sustain the networking and shared learning opportunities for providers.

"SEN has been my world for over 20 years, I've met so many lovely people over the years, but the thrive to 25 project has had the most impact on me, and hopefully we've been able to make our mark, and leave a lasting legacy to help you and others in the future" Jon, Speak Our Leader



Output, Outcomes & Key Learning

PBS

Positive Behaviour Support is a person-centred, evidence-based framework for supporting children and adults who exhibit behaviours of concern. Our PBS workstream involved an early intervention approach to delivering PBS, by:

- Introducing two new PBS support workers to the council's PBS team, to work with families at an earlier stage, through informal support at SENSational sessions as well as direct case work
- Rolling out a tiered training programme across the health, social care, education and community sectors to improve knowledge, skills and confidence in delivering PBS-informed approaches
- Developing a local PBS Community of Practice to bring together colleagues and parents/ carers from across the system to share best practice, learning, tools and resources.

The aims of the PBS workstream were to improve outcomes for people exhibiting behaviours of concern and reduce escalation of needs by increasing capacity to deliver PBS across the system.

Delivery summary

Target	Delivered
Train 6 senior managers to level 6/7 in 'Leading Positive Behaviour Support in Organisations'	2 staff completing Advanced Diploma (Level 7) in 'Leading PBS in Organisations'
Train 2 existing Level 4 PBS workers to Level 5 Diploma in 'PBS Practice Leadership'	10 staff completing Level 5 Diploma in 'PBS Practice Leadership'
Train 10 senior support workers or equivalent to level 4 in PBS practice	19 staff trained as PBS Coaches (Note: There was limited interest in the Level 4 qualification so we commissioned PBS Coaches courses instead)
Train 60 staff and parent carers in 2 day PBS short course	118 staff and parent carers trained in 2 day PBS Practitioner course

Note: There were no specific KPIs for the interventions delivered by the PBS support workers or the Community of Practice so this section focusses on the training outputs and outcomes. Case studies associated with the direct work are included in Appendix A.

The initial target was to train a total of 78 staff and parent carers from across the system using a tiered training model dependent on their role. We commissioned the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) to deliver most of the training bar the Level 7 advanced diploma which was delivered by Northumbria University. Interest in the courses was far greater than anticipated and by 31st March 2025 a total of 151 people had either completed training or were in the process of doing so. This number continues to grow with some final courses scheduled for early 2025/26.

During mobilisation we learnt more about the four-day coaches course which provides additional training to people who have already completed the two-day practitioner course. This course supports people to start imparting knowledge within their wider teams and organisations. This course, as well as the Level 4, 5 and 7 qualifications were made available based on an expression of interest which was reviewed by a cross-system steering group. There was significantly more interest in the four-day coaches course than the other higher qualifications which take between 12 and 18 months to complete.

Outcomes and impact

The table below and overleaf summarises survey responses received in relation to the PBS training. The quality ratings are based on a sample of 123 post-survey responses. The outcome scores are based on a sample of 61 training attendees that reported that they had applied their training to their work or home life. Many of the remaining trainees completed the post-training survey shortly after finishing their course and stated that they had not yet had chance to apply their learning.

Quality ratings	
Course attendees rated the training 4.8/5 for content, 4.9/5 for delivery and 4.7/5 for course materials.	
Intended outcomes	Evidence
Improved communication	77% of training attendees that had applied their learning reported a positive impact on communication with the person/ people they support
Improved behaviour	69% of training attendees that had applied their learning reported a reduction in behaviours of concern

Improved relationships with family and peers	66% of training attendees that had applied their learning reported improvements in relationships with family/ peers
Improvements in quality of life	75% of training attendees that had applied their learning reported improvements in quality of life
Improved familial wellbeing	70% of training attendees that had applied their learning reported improvements in family/ carer wellbeing
Improved familial resilience	72% of training attendees that had applied their learning reported improvements in family resilience

The feedback from the training was very positive and there were a broad range of outcomes recorded. Over three quarters of those that had applied their learning in practice reported improvements in **communication**. Many parents and carers reported greater understanding of their child and as such felt better able to support them.

"Helped us understand our child better and in turn helped him."

"With 2 x young children, at times when they present with behaviours I think about the "ABC's and the underlying reasons for why this may be happening. It provides me with a better understanding of all the variables going on and had increased my ability to consider the slower triggers/ background things"

Over two thirds of training attendees that had applied their learning reported a reduction in behaviours of concern. Many of the comments mentioned using specific strategies or approaches such as **ABC charts** or **STAR**.

Key learning & next steps

The interest and initial outcomes from the training have exceeded expectations. Interest remains high with regular training enquiries and a growing waiting list. A Community of Practice (CoP) has been developed to support continued professional development and embedding of PBS within Southwark. This includes quarterly **meetings**, quarterly **newsletter** and a **shared repository** of tools, strategies and research. We are also planning to develop a local training programme that can be delivered by staff that have completed a PBS diploma or higher.

"Training was great . The culture needs to be embedded in Southwark especially in schools. Senior leadership in schools need to do this training as it is a culture that needs to be adopted to support the families. Training was great to support our plans we carry out with families."

Data & accessibility

Alongside delivery of the five workstreams, the DfE grant enabled us to pilot a new registration and booking process for short breaks, to commence with the start of our recommissioned Targeted Short Breaks contracts.

This involved utilising the eequ.org booking platform that had been adopted by a number of Holiday & Food Programme teams across the country, including in Southwark. We worked with the developers and local providers to tailor the platform to a short breaks context, launching a pilot in April 2024. The platform enabled us to centralise registrations and eligibility checking to a team within the council as opposed to individual providers, as had occurred previously.

The introduction of the platform led to a number of significant outputs and outcomes:

- Improved oversight by the local authority, enabling us to quickly and efficiently check eligibility of new registrations and sign-post to other services where criteria are not met
- Ensure greater equity of provision during high demand periods by setting booking limits
- Improving data quality and accessibility through a consolidated dashboard which enables us to draw down reports in real time to support contract monitoring, performance reports and FOIs
- Improved navigation and booking experience for families with all provision listed in one place, filterable by age, location and date
- Reduction in admin for providers due to a move to a self-serve model as opposed to email and phone-based booking processes.

It is important to note that the latter two outcomes were not consistent across all parents and providers. Some found the new platform more difficult to adopt than others due to varying levels of digital literacy. Additional support and training was provided by the Thrive-to-25 team, platform developer and partner organisations including our local parent carer forum. For some providers, there were also added complexities with their provision i.e. a need to manually match children with more complex needs. This wasn't always easy to do through the platform. We have continued to work with our providers and the platform developer to address any outstanding issues.

Feedback from parents and carers has been broadly positive with a sample of 61 rating the new booking platform an average score of 4 out of 5 for ease of use.

"Accessible at anytime and easy to explore the website for booking cancellation and to communicate [with] the organisers "

Since introducing the new platform (and commencing our new Targeted Short Breaks contracts) registrations for targeted short breaks have risen from circa 100 unique children and young people in April 2022 to over 400 unique children and young people by April 2025, an increase of more than 300%. Please note: this figure is different to that quoted on page 4 (programme benefits summary) as Thrive-to-25 included a number of initiatives that wouldn't typically be classed as short breaks i.e. alternative provisions and stay & play sessions. The figure quoted here considers those registered for targeted short breaks only.

To view Southwark's Targeted Short Breaks offer on the online booking platform see [here](#).

Conclusions

The outcomes achieved by the Thrive-to-25 programme have been broad and far reaching. We have seen significant improvements in the short breaks offer, and been able to demonstrate a positive impact on children, young people and their families.

A strong emphasis has been placed on developing sustainable approaches to addressing the challenges outlined at the start of this report. Through the programme, we have developed a wide range of resources that will be utilised to ensure continuous improvement, namely

- SENsational handbooks and session plans
- Inclusion toolkit
- Positive Behaviour Support Community of Practice.

Our approach to commissioning and contract monitoring has developed, with greater involvement from parents and families, improved data quality and reporting, and greater use of feedback through an annual short breaks survey. We are also embedding the inclusion toolkit across youth, play and leisure commissioning.

The programme has enabled the development, testing and evaluation of alternative provision for key groups of young people with Education, Health & Care Plans. This is an important local priority and has advanced our understanding of what works for different cohorts and how we can improve local sufficiency. To understand the impact of these initiatives, it is important to track the longer term outcomes and destinations for these young people.

The programme has been underpinned by a strong partnership of providers, practitioners, parent/carers and young people and has demonstrated the value of good coproduction and collaboration.

The programme has benefitted from an agile approach to delivery with progress and performance monitored closely and providers encouraged to tweak provision when feedback or performance data indicates that it is not fully addressing needs.



Programme Partners 2024/25



Southwark
Independent
Voice



Southwark Family Hubs



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autism

CAPA



TUKE
SCHOOL



Black Stock
Media



Evelina
London

VoiceAbility

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