

**Democratic Services****Location:** Phase II**DDI:** 01895 250185**CMD No:** 1623

To:	<b>COUNCILLOR IAN EDWARDS LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b>
	<b>COUNCILLOR SUSAN O'BRIEN CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES &amp; EDUCATION</b>
	c.c. All Members of the Children, Families & Education Select Committee c.c. Gary Binstead, Education & SEND c.c. Julie Kelly – Corporate Director Children's Services
Date:	03 February 2026

**Non-Key Decision request****Form D****Transitional support for secondary aged pupils with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) / Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)**

Dear Cabinet Members,

Attached is a report requesting that a decision be made by you as an individual Cabinet Member. Democratic Services confirm that this is not a key decision, as such, the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 notice period does not apply.

You should take a decision **on or after Wednesday 11 February 2026** in order to meet Constitutional requirements about publication of decisions that are to be made. You may wish to discuss the report with the Corporate Director before it is made. Please indicate your decision on the duplicate memo supplied and return it to me when you have made your decision. I will then arrange for the formal notice of decision to be published.

Liz Penny  
Democratic Services

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**Title of Report:** Transitional support for secondary aged pupils with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) / Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)

**Decision made:**

**Reasons for your decision:** (e.g. as stated in report)

**Alternatives considered and rejected:** (e.g. as stated in report)

Signed ..... Date .....

Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education

# Transitional support for secondary aged pupils with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) / Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)

<b>Cabinet Member &amp; Portfolio</b>	Councillor Ian Edwards – Leader of the Council Councillor Susan O'Brien – Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Julie Kelly – Corporate Director Children's Services
<b>Report Author &amp; Directorate</b>	Gary Binstead – Education & SEND
<b>Papers with report</b>	N/A

## HEADLINES

<b>Summary</b>	This report sets out the intention to commission a service to support children with ADHD / ASC when they transition from Primary school to Secondary school, to support them to successfully integrate into secondary school life.
<b>Putting our Residents First</b> <b>Delivering on the Council Strategy 2022-2026</b>	This report supports our ambition for residents / the Council of: An efficient, well-run, digital-enabled council working with partners to deliver services to improve the lives of all our residents
<b>Financial Cost</b>	Contract value of £218,289 for 12 months funded through the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).
<b>Select Committee</b>	Children, Families & Education
<b>Ward(s)</b>	All

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member:

- 1) Accept the single tender from Centre for ADHD and Autism Service (CAAS) for the provision of transitional support in every maintained and academy Hillingdon secondary school for pupils with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) / Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), to the London Borough of Hillingdon for a One-year period from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027 and at the value of £218,289.
- 2) Note the procurement approach set out in the report from 1 April 2027 onwards.

## Reasons for recommendation(s)

Children with ADHD and autism often find the transition from primary school to secondary school challenging as they move from a smaller, more nurturing learning environment to a much larger setting with far more people, and increased noise and sensory stimulation. The Council has been working with CAAS for the last 18 months to develop a model of support for these children starting with 4 schools initially and supporting 6 schools by the end of 2025.

The pilot project is aimed at the prevention of school placement breakdown (inc. request to change to special school and permanent exclusion), and has been successful to date, ensuring that all but one of the children with EHCPs supported through this initiative during their transition have remained in mainstream school, while increasing the skills, knowledge and confidence of the education teams within these schools.

This scalable model is now planned to be implemented in all the mainstream academy and maintained secondary schools in the Borough so that more children can benefit from the support and advice delivered by CAAS, who will also develop a set of tools that can be used by all schools to support children into the future.

This project supports children with EHCPs to remain in mainstream school and prevents the need for more expensive and often unnecessary specialist provision, improving children's life chances and overall outcomes.

Although it is apparent that the market is limited for this type of expert provision, the intention is to offer a competitive tender opportunity to the open market during 2026, with an intended start date of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2027 for a new longer-term contract.

## Alternative options considered / risk management

When the project was initiated, there were a range of options open to the Council as set out below, but the option being proposed and recommended was assessed as the best option supporting the prevention of permanent exclusions.

### 1. Do nothing

The Council is actively working on ways to improve inclusion and ensure more children with EHCPs are able to remain in mainstream secondary schools for their education, where appropriate. However, if the Council does not progress this contract to expand the support to all Hillingdon secondary schools, only certain schools, and therefore children, would benefit from the support provided by CAAS, risking additional exclusions.

### 2. Employ additional support staff within the Council

This was very cost prohibitive, and it would be a significant challenge to recruit and retain appropriate staff with suitable skills, expertise and qualifications that were in line with the support required for children with ADHD and autism.

### 3. Delegate funding to schools to provide support

This option did not lend itself to a consistent approach, and there would still be a need to employ a co-ordinator or similar role to manage the project and check on service quality and outcomes for children. This is not a viable option.

## **Democratic compliance / previous authority**

The previous smaller scale project was previously approved by the Corporate Director Children's Services under delegated powers. Now the project is due to be expanded to all secondary schools, approval is sought from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Families, and Education.

## **Select Committee comments**

None at this stage.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **Context**

1. CAAS have been operating since 1996, when they were originally called ADHD Support Harrow, later becoming CAAS. The organisation is based in Hillingdon, and they are experts in the field of ADHD and autism, with 50% of the Trustee Board being family members of ADHD/autistic individuals. 66% of the Senior Leadership Team, and 70% of the staff team, being parents/partners of ADHD/autistic individuals or neurodivergent themselves.
2. CAAS provide information, training, support groups and practical help to residents of North-West London. Their support services encompass education, benefits, parenting and care advice with signposting to other agencies if appropriate. They also offer specialised parenting courses, workshops and training.

### **Details of the Project**

3. The aim of the project is to support Year 7 pupils who have an EHCP and either have or are awaiting a diagnosis of ADHD or autism, to help them engage in their schooling, and manage the transition from primary school to a mainstream secondary setting.
4. The project provides one to one support to pupils, to understand their diagnosis and help them to learn strategies to manage their school life. It also provides transition workshops for parents and young people where children are moving from Year 6 to 7, during the summer term prior to the transition.
5. It gives a better insight to teachers of how the pupils can be supported to stay in the classroom setting and attend school more regularly with appropriate support and adjustments to enable this.
6. It includes direct work with families to help them support their child to attend the setting and provides strategies for managing any challenges for the child and their family.
7. A significant aim of the revised project seeks to build more neuro-affirming schools across the Borough, working with peers and the wider teaching group, to ensure that school environments are tailored to support neurodivergent pupils' needs, creating resources that the schools can use to improve their own tools and insights.

8. CAAS begin work during the summer term engaging with the pupils, families, primary schools, and secondary schools for all identified pupils in order to prepare them for their move to secondary school. This includes workshops and individual engagement with stakeholders.
9. Throughout the autumn and spring terms, CAAS continue to work with the pupils and these wider groups to ensure that pupils remain supported and that all identified strategies are implemented, revising any support as necessary to ensure that pupils achieve their intended goals.
10. CAAS will support all secondary school teams, and will be present in each school on a regular basis to offer support and advice to all identified pupils, and review the implementation of relevant strategies and actions
11. In addition, CAAS will provide training and resource packs for all school teams across the Borough during the year, which will help to improve the understanding of ADHD and autism, including strategies to improve inclusion, leading to schools becoming more neuro-affirming and neuro-aware.

### **Who will be supported through the project?**

12. Year 7 pupils with an EHCP that includes ADHD or Autism.
13. Year 7 pupils without an EHCP that have or are on the waiting list to have a diagnosis of ADHD or Autism and have been identified as needing specialist support.
14. Where capacity allows, Year 8 pupils with an EHCP that includes ADHD or Autism.
15. Where capacity allows, Year 8 pupils without an EHCP that have or are on the waiting list to have a diagnosis of ADHD or Autism and have been identified as needing specialist support.
16. It is also important to understand that all pupils must have the cognitive ability to engage with the content of the project, so all pupils will be assessed, and those with learning disabilities may not meet the criteria, where alternative support will need to be in place.

### **How successful has the initial project been?**

17. This project supports mainstream inclusion by improving students' confidence, emotional regulation, and understanding of their neurodivergence, key factors in sustaining placements.
18. The project has also clearly reduced reliance on more expensive specialist provision and the need for additional school transport costs.
19. The data below demonstrates the impact of the first year of the project from the 4 mainstream secondary schools who were involved. These include:
  - a. 83% of pupils gained confidence
  - b. 89% of pupils improved coping strategies

- c. 83% of pupils better understood their condition
- d. 100% of pupils reported improved mental wellbeing
- e. All but one pupil remained in mainstream school post transition phase

20. This initiative has proven effective in preventing placement breakdowns, improving school attendance, supporting our schools, and reducing costs.

### **How many pupils will the project support?**

21. During the initial development phase of the project, 95 pupils were successfully supported in the first year, across 4 schools, with only 1 pupil leaving to go to a more specialist education setting.

22. There is an expectation that increasing the scope of the project to include all 16 secondary aged education settings across Hillingdon will lead to around 400 pupils benefitting from the support between April 2026 and March 2027.

### **Contract monitoring**

23. The contract will be kept under review, and any learning will inform the formal tender which is due to be published in the Autumn of 2026.

24. This will include regular quarterly meetings with the Provider, where outcomes and service development will be discussed, and the Provider will publish regular updates to demonstrate impact and outcomes for the pupils and the learning delivered to schools.

25. The cost of the 12-month contract will be £218,289.

26. This will enable CAAS to support all 16 secondary schools across the Borough and also develop a toolkit of resources for all schools to compliment the direct work being carried out with pupils.

27. The staffing structure is set out below and will include Youth and school support workers, management oversight, a training lead to develop and maintain resources, and relevant travel and resources costs.

<b>Description</b>
Youth and School Support Workers
Direct team management
Training and Content Lead
Indirect management oversight
Direct project costs

28. It is important to remember that the aim of the project is to ensure that pupils are supported to remain in mainstream secondary school instead of requiring a specialist education setting, providing better outcomes for them and improving their life chances as they progress to adulthood.

29. In addition to personal outcomes improving, specialist settings are also more expensive so by supporting needs early in secondary school will also reduce escalation of needs in the long term, which will lead to a more efficient use of resources, whilst enabling special schools to have places for the children with more complex needs.

30. The table below demonstrates the cost of mainstream provision compared to an alternative specialist setting per year.

Type of Provision	Per Pupil		
	Average annual cost	3-year cost	5-year cost
Mainstream	£6,349	£19,047	£31,745
Maintained Special school	£23,600	£70,800	£118,000
Independent special school	£51,748	£155,244	£258,740

## Financial Implications

The one-year contract, valued at £218,289, will be funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block. The project aims to support children to have a positive transition whilst preventing costly specialist placements by supporting pupils to remain in mainstream schools, delivering significant invest-to-save benefits and contributing to the Council's Safety Valve programme objectives to manage High Needs expenditure. Funding is within the existing High Needs allocation and does not impact the Council's General Fund.

## RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

### The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities

As a result of this project, there will be a range of direct benefits to the pupils, wider benefits for the community, and financial benefits as well which will enable the Council to support more pupils. These include:

- a. Pupils being educated closer to home in their local mainstream school
- b. Better support for pupils with ADHD and autism
- c. Increased skills and knowledge for school staff
- d. Improved school environment for neurodivergent pupils
- e. Ability for pupils with ADHD and autism to manage better in a range of situations, leading to more opportunities into their adult life.
- f. Pupils able to contribute more to their community as they progress to adulthood

Overall, by supporting pupils to manage better in mainstream schools, enabling them to remain in their local community with their peers, and provide them with the skills to manage their condition, we are supporting them to succeed. They will be empowered and enabled to have healthy and productive adult lives where they can contribute fully to their community.

## **Consultation & Engagement carried out (or required)**

During the initial project, pupils, families and schools have been consulted about the success and challenges of the project to shape the proposed project. It is clear that there is wide support, and there will be further consultation as part of the tender activity planned for later this year.

## **CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Corporate Finance**

Corporate Finance have reviewed this report and concur with the Financial Implications set out above, noting the recommendation to award a contract to Centre for ADHD and Autism Service for the provision of transitional support in every Hillingdon secondary school for secondary aged pupils with ADHD / Autism Spectrum Condition over a period of one year from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027.

Furthermore, it is noted the contract value of £218k will be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block, with no financial implications to the general fund.

### **Legal**

Education services fall within the categories eligible for the light-touch regime, and a direct award may be made where one of the statutory justifications set out in Schedule 5 of the Procurement Act 2023 applies.

Legal Services confirms that a direct award to CAAS is permissible where a valid statutory justification exists, namely, that CAAS is presently the provider best placed to deliver the required services. Their established base within the Borough enables continuity and efficiency.

In addition, seeking competitive tenders or quotations at this stage would not be prudent or practical in meeting the Council's objectives, for the reasons set out in the report. The Council is seeking to conduct a full competitive tender this year which demonstrates a proportionate and time-limited approach aligned with the requirements and intent of the Procurement Act 2023, ensuring future openness and competition.

Legal Services confirms that there are no legal implications in agreeing to the recommendation.

### **Property**

Nil.

### **Procurement Comments**

The recommendations propose a one-year contract award under the provisions of the Procurement Act 2023. This short-term arrangement will allow sufficient time to prepare for a longer-term procurement strategy. The award falls within the light-touch regime, as the services relate to support for children with additional needs. At present, there are limited viable alternatives to these services; however, the forthcoming longer-term procurement will provide an opportunity for wider market engagement and competition.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

## TITLE OF ANY APPENDICES

Nil.