

BRADSTOW COMMUNITY SPECIAL SCHOOL AND CHILDREN'S HOMES FORMAL CONSULTATION - PROPOSAL TO CLOSE (DISCONTINUE) A MAINTAINED SCHOOL

SEPTEMBER 2025

Introduction

Between Monday 6 January 2025 and Sunday 16 February 2025, Wandsworth Council carried out a public pre-publication consultation on the proposal to close Bradstow Community Special School and subsequent closure of the corresponding Children's Homes. Bradstow is located in Broadstairs, Kent, and as of the Spring Term 2025, Wandsworth was one of 10 Local Authorities using the school, while historically Kent County Council was the largest user of the provision with 40% of pupils placed.

This has changed over the duration of the academic year and, as of July 2025, there were 13 students at the provision from 8 local authorities. As such, 77% of the school population is equally placed between Kent, Medway, Newham, Havering and Wandsworth, equating to 2 children per local authority.

The online consultation for the pre-publication consultation generated a total of 408 responses. The largest two groups of respondents were those who said they were responding in any 'other' capacity (46% of all responses) and members of staff (25%). 5% said they were parents/carers of current students and 8% said they were responding on behalf of a local group or organisation. Three-quarters of respondents (75%) disagreed with the proposal to close Bradstow and around a fifth (22%) agreed with the proposal. The Cabinet Member for Children agreed at Wandsworth Council's Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2025 to pause the statutory process on closure of Bradstow School after the pre-publication consultation. This was to allow the governors of Bradstow the opportunity to engage with academy trusts and select a suitable partner with whom to work to secure the future of the school.

We have fully supported this process, which considerably exceeded the amended timescale to delay the decision to move to formal consultation until after 24 March 2025, with notification on the 29 July 2025 that the Department for Education (DfE) was not able to approve the school's application with Cygnus Academy Trust. As a result of this outcome, the school's challenges remain and worsen, given falling pupil numbers and the impact of this on the school's financial position, alongside the aged debt the school already holds.

Within this context, and after careful consideration of all the responses, feedback received and information available, Wandsworth has now taken the difficult decision to proceed to the formal stage of the statutorily regulated process for the discontinuance (closure) of Bradstow Community Special School and subsequent closure of the corresponding Children's Homes.

WHY ARE WE PROPOSING THIS CHANGE?

Wandsworth Council is committed to supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) locally, keeping them educated and cared for within Wandsworth or as close to their homes as possible. This sits alongside the need to retain a sustainable school system that meets the needs of all our children.

The council has invested £41m in expanding SEND provision in Wandsworth creating over 271 places since 2021, of which £34m is on a purpose-built expansion of Paddock Secondary and Sixth Form School to improve our local provision for children with complex special educational needs linked to their diagnosis of Autism and severe learning disability. A primary aim for the development of Paddock School is to enable Wandsworth children to remain in their local community to enable them to successfully retain their close links to family and friends which can be lost if they are placed at a significant distance from home. Although this may not benefit the Wandsworth children currently placed at Bradstow, lack of local sufficiency has historically meant that we have needed to place at Bradstow, and so this investment is part of our future planning for children who present with similar needs to keep them local.

Bradstow School operates within a challenging financial landscape and the unwillingness of some councils to pay the levels of fees needed to maintain the quality of education and financial viability of the school has forced Wandsworth council to look at other options.

Wandsworth Council worked with Kent County Council for a 3 year period, to explore the potential for transferring the provision to Kent County Council. However, in October 2024, Kent County Council decided not to proceed with a transfer. This, combined with the financial pressures facing the school, left no other viable option at that time but to propose closure at the end of the academic year.

Through the pre-publication consultation we made a commitment to prioritise transparency and inclusivity, giving families, staff and the wider community extensive opportunity to engage with the process and provide feedback. We provided a report in response to an e-petition and received a deputation from the Headteacher of Bradstow School in connection with the closure at Wandsworth Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 February 2025. Following this meeting, the Cabinet Member for Children's agreed to delay the decision to move to formal consultation until after 24 March 2025 to allow governors the opportunity to engage with academy trusts and select a suitable partner with whom to undertake the necessary due diligence to secure the future of the school. There was also an agreement to support the leadership of the school to undertake a restructure to align resources and staff capacity with the school's income. Initial calculations showed savings of approximately £816k per annum through a reduction of full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing of 7.2 and amending working patterns to match the reduction of the children's homes from 52 weeks to a 38-week provision.

Following this agreement, the council met with 3 interested parties, Ambitious about Autism, Seva Homes and Cygnus Academy Trust to provide any required information to support the governors' decision to academise. One provider was not progressed by the governors, one provider withdrew their interest, with Cygnus the governors preferred Trust with whom an application to the Department for Education was made.

Despite fully supporting this process, Wandsworth Council were notified on the 29 July 2025 that the Department for Education (DfE) was not able to approve the application with Cygnus Academy Trust.

Given this academisation application decision, the impact of falling pupil numbers, which has worsened the school's financial position, and the aged debt the school already holds, Wandsworth has now taken the difficult decision to re-instate the statutory process and formally consult on closure.

The decision to formally consult on the closure of the school was not taken lightly and was one we have collectively worked hard to avoid. However, to ensure as a council we effectively manage Wandsworth resources and to protect the long-term interests of Wandsworth children, this is the right decision for us to now take. This proposal is not a reflection of the quality of the current leadership, education, and care provided at Bradstow. It is one that is purely driven by the unwillingness of some councils to pay fees at a level needed to ensure the school remains viable, particularly with a cohort of only 13 children attending the school as of July 2025.

The financial sustainability of the school requires that the income generated and paid for by councils is equal to or greater than the expenditure (the costs of running the provision including maintenance, overheads and staffing costs).

This will now be the 7th year where expenditure has exceeded income and the 5th financial year that the school has been in an overall accumulated deficit.

With the significant fall in pupil numbers over the last year, the impact has been that costs have continued to exceed income even after undertaking the most recent restructure. Unfortunately, with only 13 children on roll, and 2 of these still being Kent Council placements whose debt stands at £4.6m and growing, the costs significantly exceed the income. The result is that the already £1m accumulated deficit (before bad debts are accounted for) keeps growing every single day at an increasing rate.

We are now consulting to give those impacted another opportunity to have their voices heard and to provide additional representation and allow Wandsworth Council to carefully consider all views before a final decision is made. If the decision to close the school goes ahead, we will work with school leaders to ensure responsible local authorities liaise with families to put in place suitable alternative provision and plan a smooth transition for each child.

Pre-publication consultation process and feedback

The Bradstow pre-publication consultation was hosted on the Wandsworth Council consultation website from Monday 6 January 2025 and Sunday 16 February 2025. The consultation was open to all interested parties.

Approach

Throughout this process, the Council has been, and will remain, committed to an approach which is transparent, maintains open lines of communication, and has a demonstrable focus on listening to the views of the whole school community.

We recognised that the proposals and the consultation process would be unsettling for pupils, parents and staff at Bradstow and we have worked closely with the school leadership team on an ongoing basis to provide support as needed. We acknowledge and appreciate the ongoing dedication of the Bradstow staff team and governors to the education and well-being of the pupils, as well as to the well-being of parents, staff colleagues, and the wider community. The ongoing commitment of the leadership and staff team in complex circumstances has been commendable and has made the process far easier to navigate for all.

We would also like to acknowledge the support, time, and valuable expertise of Council staff who have applied learning from previous statutory consultations to ensure the proposals and consultation process were communicated and delivered in a clear and sensitive manner.

Documentation

The consultation documentation included the consultation proposal, frequently asked questions (FAQs), an Equality Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) and a questionnaire. The consultation questionnaire sought views on 4 main questions.

To ensure the material was accessible for everyone, the documents were made available in printable and paper format. Other accessible formats were also available on request.

Engagement

The Council actively engaged with pupils, parents and carers, staff, and the governing board, as well as consulted with other local schools and trade unions, other local groups and the wider local community to ensure that all interested parties had the opportunity to have their say on the proposal.

A number of meetings were held to give interested parties the opportunity to discuss the proposal and ask any questions they may have about the proposal or the consultation. This began prior to the pre-publication consultation with an initial meeting with staff to notify them of our decision to commence the statutory closure process, and to outline the rationale and next steps regarding how they could have their say. This took place on 11 November 2024 from 2-3pm and 4-5pm to enable us to reach both teaching and care home/support staff at convenient times.

Once the pre-publication consultation began there were further meetings. This included an in-person event at Bradstow School for children's home and education staff on Wednesday 15 January 2025, from 2-4pm and 4-5.30pm, and an in-person/online hybrid event for parents of Bradstow pupils on Wednesday 15 January 2025, from 5.45-8pm. These meetings were attended by the school leadership, governors and senior officers from Wandsworth Council.

To ensure maximum levels of awareness and encourage participation, the consultation was promoted in a variety of ways throughout the consultation period. This included written correspondence with staff and parents of Bradstow pupils, emails from the local authority to local headteachers, messages from the headteacher to all Bradstow staff and parents, updates and information included in Wandsworth Council's headteachers' bulletin and on the Wandsworth Council consultation hub page.

Responses

The online consultation generated a total of 408 responses. The largest two groups of respondents were those who said they were responding in an 'other' capacity (46% of all responses) and members of staff (25%). 5% said they were parents/carers of current students and 8% said they were responding on behalf of a local group or organisation. There were additional submissions and correspondence in different formats.

Three-quarters of respondents (75%) disagreed with the proposal to close Bradstow. Around a fifth (22%) agreed with the proposal, with 2% stating that they neither agreed or disagreed. 1% of respondents said they don't know whether they agree or disagree with the proposal. Respondents who disagreed with the proposal were more likely to be staff members or governors at Bradstow, parents/carers of current students, and those responding from local groups and organisations. Those who agreed with the proposal were more likely to be school leaders, staff members or governors of a Wandsworth school, parents/carers of a child at a Wandsworth school, councillors or MPs and parents/carers of children who previously attended Bradstow.

Those disagreeing with the proposal were most likely to say they disagreed because of the 'Effect on the educational or social care needs of children attending the provision'. Following this as the most indicated answers were 'Availability of suitable alternative educational and care placements' (85%) and 'Effect on staff employment' (76%).

Respondents agreeing with the proposal were most likely to say the reason was 'Better meeting the needs of children with SEND and care experienced children with places in more locally integrated provision' (65%). The 'complexities and risks of managing an education and care setting outside of the responsible local authority's area' (60%) and 'improved sustainability of and investment in Wandsworth local school systems' (57%) followed as the most indicated answers.

When asked if they had any alternative suggestions on how the significant challenges the school and children's homes face should be addressed, the most common type of suggestions were 'Takeover' or 'Support' suggestions, including academisation, support or potential takeover by private groups or organisations, support from central government and assistance or takeover by Kent County Council or other local authorities. Other suggestions included financial suggestions such as raising new funding and finding savings, and suggestions around staff, such as restructuring and providing more training for staff.

Respondents were also asked to provide comments and views on the Equalities Impact Needs Assessment. This related to the data used as the basis for the EINA, the analysis of the impact of the data and/or any mitigating actions suggested.

Bradstow School submitted additional correspondence during the consultation period. This included minutes from Bradstow's Community Council Meeting, letters from parents/carers of current/previous students, letter from a headteacher of a school in Mitcham, comments from social workers and advocates, 'Our Stories' messages about the current students, and comments from the school's community day for the general public.

Other correspondence received included emails and Members' enquiries from five individual councillors and MPs, email from the Wandsworth Conservatives Group, written response from the Governors and Senior Leadership at Bradstow, and emails from five members of the public, including one consultant psychiatrist who previously visited Bradstow school.

All of the above feedback has been fully considered alongside the responses from the consultation questionnaires as part of the evaluation and decision-making process.

Council response to matters raised by consultation respondents

The Council has addressed matters raised in response to the consultation as follows:

1. Reasons disagreeing with the proposals:

You Said	We Did
CONCERNS	
Effect on students/effect on families of students	<p>We are sensitive to the impact of these proposals on the pupils and families of Bradstow. We have planned support to minimise this impact.</p> <p>We will continue to work with Bradstow to ensure children and families are supported throughout this process, addressing any issues as they emerge and ensuring change is handled efficiently and sensitively. Through the staff team, we are continually seeking the views, wishes and feelings of pupils to inform the support package that is being provided.</p> <p>The School and Community Psychology Service (SCPS) will work alongside the school's leadership team and help them to manage the impact of this proposal on staff, pupils and their families. Should this proposal progress, placing local authorities, and the SCPS alongside Kent County Council Educational Psychology Services will work in collaboration with the school leadership to ensure that children's transition to a new school is managed as effectively as possible. These conversations and this work will be carefully planned and managed sensitively in discussion with the head and senior leadership to ensure they best meet the needs of the school community as they emerge and if needed.</p>
Lack of suitable alternatives to meet students' needs	<p>To realise Wandsworth's collective ambition to give children the best care and keep children local to their family, friends and community wherever possible, we have invested in and developed local maintained provision and expanded our local special schools in Wandsworth. This has meant that we have needed fewer and fewer placements at Bradstow over the years. As outlined in Kent County Councils SEND strategy 2025- 2028, they have developed a SEND sufficiency strategy with current work including reviewing their special school offer to ensure it is appropriate to meet the needs of the most complex pupils through updating school designations. The 24 Kent Special Schools will have one of three designations with supporting admissions guidance, with one being Complex Learning needs - Profound, Complex Severe.</p> <p>Since we commenced the pre-publication consultation process in January 25, 19 children have moved from the school with parental agreement, indicating that there is sufficient suitable alternative provision to meet the needs of the cohort of children attending Bradstow school. This supports the findings of an exercise undertaken by Wandsworth's Assistant Director of SEND and Inclusion at the beginning of the year to map provision in, or near, the local authorities with children remaining at Bradstow. As of July 2025, the cohort of children at Bradstow has reduced to 13, with only 2 being Wandsworth</p>

	<p>residents, and the remaining 85% placed by Kent, Medway, Newham, Havering, Barking and Dagenham, Hillingdon and Richmond.</p> <p>Of the 4 children placed by Wandsworth at Bradstow at the start of the pre-publication consultation in January 25, all have secured offers of suitable alternative placements, with 3 placements accepted and transition commencing in September 25. We are working with the remaining family to ensure there is no gap in education, and their child is appropriately supported through the transition.</p> <p>It has been the recommendation to all other placing local authorities to parallel plan with families and commence the consultation process for alternative provision. This will ensure that if the proposal to close is approved, responsible individuals in placing local authorities will have sufficient time to work with families and the staff at Bradstow school to support pupils to integrate smoothly into their new setting.</p>
Effect of closure on staff	<p>We recognise this is an unsettling time for staff and we have worked with the leadership team at the school to provide ongoing support to staff throughout this process.</p> <p>For those staff considering their next steps, we have commissioned a recruitment specialist to provide recruitment advice for all staff members. Staff will receive help with CV planning, interview techniques and matching their requirements to other jobs. Staff will also receive individualised support dependent on their circumstances. Staff will be fully supported to apply for roles; however, some may decide to take voluntary redundancy.</p> <p>Staff also have access to a 24/7 support helpline from an external provider. The provider's website also has a variety of additional resources.</p>
Positive comments about Bradstow/outcomes it provides	<p>This proposal is no reflection on the quality of teaching, skillset of staff and the current leadership of the school. We are fully aware and appreciative of the positive impact that Bradstow School has had on outcomes for many children, past and present. The decision to consult on the closure of the school is driven by the financial challenges outlined in this proposal. It was not a decision taken lightly and has come as a last resort.</p>
Alternative options to closure not fully considered/need considering	<p>A number of alternative options were considered prior to the proposal to close, as outlined in this proposal.</p> <p>Despite the pre-publication consultation stage closing in February 2025, Wandsworth decided to pause proceeding to the next stage of the statutory process to ensure further exploration of alternative options, such as academisation. This has equated to a period of approximately 7 months for full exploration of all options, none of which were feasible in addressing the school's challenges. The difficult decision then had to be made to reinstate the formal consultation process.</p>

Consultation timeline is unrealistic/unreasonable	Proposing to close a school is governed by a statutory process, which Wandsworth has followed. Further details about this process can be found in the statutory notice, below.
Respondent feels there will be a negative impact on those who require SEND provision such as Bradstow in the future	Wandsworth have increased the range and capacity of SEND provision locally in recent years to ensure the needs of our children are met. This proposal will reaffirm Wandsworth’s commitment to exploring options for children to be educated and cared for in Wandsworth, or as close to their home as possible, to help them to remain connected to their networks and provide more consistent support and resources right the way through to adulthood. Similarly, through the due diligence process undertaken by Kent on the proposed transfer of Bradstow, they advised that following their SEND sufficiency review their intention was to repurpose existing assets to align with their identified needs. Hence their decision not to proceed with the transfer.
Negative comments about management	<p>A new headteacher was appointed in October 2024 and under their leadership the care provision at Bradstow has improved out of an OFSTED category. There has also been capacity and expertise added to the management team following the appointment of a social care professional to the governing board.</p> <p>Officers recently visited the school provision and noted that Leaders have continued to be resilient in the face of uncertainty around the future of the school, as well as observing that the quality of education remains strong for pupils still at the school.</p>

2. Alternative Suggestions

Although we outlined in our pre-publication proposal the alternative options explored, and which continue to be supported through this statutory process to avoid the need to consult on closure, it is important to be clear that the responsibility to progress many of these options sits with the school leadership and governors and not the local authority. This includes choosing to convert to academy status as well as ensuring that the school has a staff operating model which, whilst meeting the needs of children, can be delivered to a fee level that local authority commissioners will pay.

You Said		We Did	
Alternative Suggestions			
Takeover/Support			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academisation of the school• Support or potential takeover by private groups or organisations• Support from central government• Assistance or potential takeover by Kent County Council		<p>Academisation: Although it is the decision of Bradstow’s Governing body to academise, a decision that is irreversible, Wandsworth liaised with the DfE prior to commencing the statutory consultation process on the closure of Bradstow School to ascertain if there might be any interested parties. Due to the school’s complexity, both operationally and financially, at that time no suggestions were offered. However, DfE enquiries would continue with a view that initiating the proposal to close the school would enable interested academy trusts to come forward with an expression of interest.</p> <p>In February, the Cabinet Member for Children’s agreed to delay the decision to move to formal consultation until after 24 March 2025 to</p>	

allow governors the opportunity to engage with any interested academy trusts and select a suitable partner with whom to undertake the necessary due diligence to secure the future of the school.

Wandsworth Council fully committed to supporting transparent discussions about the school's position, including its financial viability. We have been open to considering the terms proposed by academies, with the cabinet deciding whether the local authority can support elements of the deficit, debt, aged invoicing, land, and building maintenance. Timely decisions are desirable, for the children, parents and staff at Bradstow and to preserve a precarious financial envelope as the high-risk financial liabilities associated with the school remain.

As such, the council met with 3 interested parties, Ambitious about Autism, Seva Homes and Cygnus Academy Trust to provide any required information to support the governors' decision to academise. One provider was not progressed by the governors, one provider withdrew their interest, with Cygnus the governors preferred trust and with whom an application to the Department for Education was made.

Despite fully supporting this process, we were notified on the 29 July 2025 that the Department for Education (DfE) was not able to approve the application with Cygnus Academy Trust. Given the impact of falling pupil numbers which has worsened the school's financial position, added to the aged debt the school already holds, Wandsworth has now taken the difficult decision to re-instate the statutory process and formally consult on closure.

Private groups or organisations: The governors and school leadership were able to explore all alternative options to closure during the paused statutory process following the completion of the pre-publication consultation. SEVA homes, a care provider with schooling, approached the council for an introductory meeting, however, governors did not follow up with the provider having shared their contact details further to our meeting.

Central government: Wandsworth have maintained communications with the DfE and met with the Minister for School Standards regarding the context informing the proposal to close Bradstow and the process to be followed. This has been ongoing during our discussions with interested Academies. However, the DfE were unable to approve the application for academisation with the school's chosen partner, which was confirmed in July 2025. Although we are no longer able to delay the closure process given the ongoing financial risks and liabilities for Wandsworth Council and hence Wandsworth residents and children, the DfE will continue to work in parallel to explore alternatives to closure which will be considered as part of the formal consultation process and the subsequent recommendation to cabinet for a final decision.

	<p>Takeover by Kent County Council - As the majority of placements at Bradstow historically were from Kent County Council and the school is located in their county, we worked on a proposal to transfer the schools as a maintained provision to Kent County Council for over 3 years. The transfer included the offer of the freehold of the property. Kent County Council notified us in writing on the 15 October 2024, that they are not interested in pursuing this option. Their reason for this is the financial investment required to make the building fit for purpose alongside the considerable resourcing and risk it would present to operationally sustain the provision. Further to communicating our intention to consult on closure, the leader of Wandsworth Council and lead member for Children wrote to their counterparts at Kent County Council to reopen a conversation to safeguard a future for the school. However, Kent County Council are clear that there are no plans to take over the running of Bradstow School and they are working to find alternative educational provision for the pupils currently attending the provision. Their focus will then concentrate on supporting pupils to integrate smoothly into their new setting.</p>
Financial	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recover unpaid fees • Find savings, reallocate funding, sell land/capital, independent audit of finances • Secure new funds e.g. lottery funding, grants, fundraising, community engagement/partnerships • Other financial suggestions including parental contributions, clearing debt 	<p>Recover/Clear debt: Wandsworth have met with the Department for Education (DfE) to understand the available courses of action to recover the debt. They articulated that because councils are the commissioners and need to agree the charges, especially with regards to inflationary uplifts or changes in prices for existing placements, our ability to set prices is constrained.</p> <p>Some councils, particularly Kent County Council that owes approximately £4.6m, have not paid for placement for a year nor the full fees for much of the previous 2 years. Legal processes for collecting this debt were initiated between February 2024 and May 2024 but were paused to allow for Kent to complete their due diligence of the transfer proposal. Following confirmation that Kent had no interest in taking transfer of the provision, the legal process was reinstated with the recovery of unpaid fees actively pursued through solicitors. This process of recovery is ongoing.</p> <p>The high-risk financial liabilities associated with the school are therefore over £4.6m, total debt is over £8m with the accumulated revenue deficit now £1m. These amounts are growing, and any unrecoverable debt or unrecoverable deficits will be a cost to Wandsworth Council, impacting its residents and children.</p> <p>Find Savings: Bradstow has undertaken a significant exercise in reducing operating costs (including staffing) as it moved from a 52-week to a 38-week provision. This was following a large staffing restructure that delivered approximately £1.0m savings in 2023-24. In total, Bradstow removed approximately £2.5m of costs between financial year (FY) 2023-24 and FY 2024-25, with a further £816k in the most recent restructure, which was in in FY 2025-26. This expenditure is forecast to be significantly lower again in FY 2025-26</p>

	<p>as the full year effect of the restructure is felt. However, the level of income has also fallen with reduced pupil numbers, and as a result a loss is forecast in the current year. This loss will grow by approximately £100,000 a week or over £600,000 a term unless staffing levels fall.</p> <p>Secure new funds / Parental Contributions/sell land/capital/independent audit of finances: It is Bradstow school, rather than the Council, that would be responsible for exploring opportunities to secure new funds as the leadership/governors have delegated responsibility for the running and management of the school, which includes its financial position. To date the school leadership have not made the council aware of any new avenues explored to secure new funding. However, it is very unlikely that the level of funding that could be raised would be enough to consistently sustain the school's finances. Millions of pounds are needed, at least in the short to medium term. The risks of council non-payment and fee levels being challenged will always exist.</p>
Staff	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructuring of staff, policies surrounding staff, provide more training • Listen to staff advice and suggestions • Utilise the skills and knowledge of staff/school to become a training centre for providers/parents 	<p>Staff advice/suggestions: During this process we have been, and remain, committed to an approach which is transparent, maintains open lines of communication, and has a demonstrable focus on listening to the views of staff and the whole school community. We are working closely with the school leadership and staff, including online and in-person opportunities for staff to share their thoughts as part of the consultation. We also value the ongoing commitment of the leadership and staff team in sensitive and complex circumstances.</p> <p>Restructure/policies/training: The school has been through significant staffing restructures in the past two years. It is recognised that, whilst necessary when there is a need to reduce costs, undertaking staffing restructures has an impact on staff engagement, wellbeing and morale. Following the last restructure, which took place within the financial year ending March 2024, it was not considered appropriate for a further restructure to be undertaken whilst negotiations with Kent County Council were ongoing regarding a transfer and the future size and designation of the provision.</p> <p>At the point Kent County Council advised that they were not willing to proceed with a transfer, Wandsworth council had to reconsider its options for the future of Bradstow to maintain the quality of education and the safeguarding of pupils.</p> <p>Given the financial position of the school and refusal of councils to pay outstanding debts and year on year uplifts it was considered that a restructure would not deliver sufficient placement fee reductions that would be acceptable to commissioning local authorities, whilst also maintaining the quality of provision and hence the commencement of the pre-publication consultation phase of the statutory process on closure.</p>

	<p>Following the conclusion of the pre-publication consultation and in response to the feedback received, the leadership were supported to initiate a further staffing restructure to match resource with delivery needs. However, as numbers of children placed at the school continue to decline so does the need to review staffing levels and as such this approach is not considered a viable solution to the financial challenges faced by the school.</p> <p>Training centre: Bradstow is designated as a special school and children's home. It is recognised that staff possess highly specialised skills and knowledge to meet the complex needs of its children, and their input into training of others would be of value. However, given the location of the school in Kent, who would be responsible for supporting the training needs of its schools, the demand for this provision is unlikely to be high and would not generate the level of funding needed to make the school viable. Similarly, establishing itself as a training centre would require the release of staff to deliver bespoke training with associated cover costs in an already difficult recruitment field and thus impact on areas such as the quality of the school's delivery and safeguarding, diverting focus from the school's main purpose and its vulnerable cohort of pupils. The decision to explore this would be for the school leadership rather the council, given their delegated responsibility for the running and management of the school. To date the school leadership have not made the council aware of any proposal to explore the establishment of Bradstow as a training centre.</p>
Management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative feedback on school management/suggestions for changes to management 	<p>A new headteacher was appointed in October 2024 and under their leadership the care provision at Bradstow has improved out of an OFSTED category. There has also been capacity and expertise added to the management team following the appointment of a social care professional to the governing board.</p> <p>Officers recently visited the school provision and noted that Leaders have continued to be resilient in the face of uncertainty around the future of the school, as well as observing that the quality of education remains strong for pupils still at the school.</p> <p>The decision to propose closure is not a reflection of the quality of the current leadership and is one that is purely driven by the unwillingness of some councils to pay fees at a level needed to ensure the school remains viable.</p>
Time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide additional time to consider alternative options to closure/to support a smooth transition if closure occurs 	<p>Despite the pre-publication consultation stage closing in February 2025, Wandsworth decided to pause proceeding to the next stage of the statutory process to ensure further exploration of alternative options, such as academisation. This has equated to an additional period of approximately 7 months for full exploration of all options, none of which were feasible in addressing the school's challenges. The difficult decision then had to be made to reinstate the formal consultation process.</p>
School Facilities	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for expansion of provision at Bradstow • Utilise school facilities for alternative purposes to generate revenue/reduce expenses 	<p>Expansion: The leadership/governors of Bradstow have delegated responsibility for the running and management of the school, including its financial position, which plans for expansion may support. To date. the school leadership have not made the council aware of any new avenues explored in this regard.</p> <p>Utilise school facilities to generate funding: Bradstow school, rather than the Council, would be responsible for exploring opportunities to generate funds as the school has delegated responsibility for the running and management of the school, including its financial position. To date the school leadership have not made the council aware of any alternative purpose use to generate revenue.</p> <p>Given the uncertainty around the future of the school with no viable alternative to closure, it would not be appropriate or in the best interest of children with complex needs, or Wandsworth council and the residents it serves, to allow for any expansion of provision or indeed give agreement for the placement of more children at the school.</p>
Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with children and families to understand and support their needs • Offer provision within students' local authority 	<p>Engage with children and families/Offer Provision – Since the commencement of the statutory process on closure, Wandsworth Council SEND services has actively engaged with the families of existing children placed at Bradstow to understand need, concerns and to progress consultations on suitable alternative placements in line with parental preference should the decision be made to close the school.</p> <p>Of the 4 remaining children placed by Wandsworth as at the start of the pre-publication consultation in January 25, all have secured offers of suitable alternative placements, with 3 placements accepted and transition commencing in September 25. We are working with the remaining family to ensure there is no gaps in education, and their child is appropriately supported through the transition.</p> <p>It has been the recommendation to all other placing local authorities to parallel plan with families and commence the consultation process for alternative provision. This will ensure that if the proposal to close is approved, responsible individuals in placing local authorities will have sufficient time to work with families and the staff at Bradstow school to support pupils to integrate smoothly into their new setting.</p>
General Comments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General comments opposing the proposal to close the school • Comments about the negative impact of closure on students/ their family • General comments about staff 	<p>The Council's response to similar comments can be found in earlier sections of the You Said/We Did table.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments about the safeguarding of students • Comments supporting school closure • Respondent feels closure of the school will result in increased costs in the future 	
--	--

3. EINA

YOU SAID	WE DID
EINA	
Any mitigating actions suggested	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondent feels there is a lack of suitable alternatives which meet needs of students • Respondent feels Paddock School and other local provisions are unsuitable to meet students' needs • Significance of Bradstow in delivering positive outcomes • Respondent feels there is insufficient support from the Council for mitigating actions to be successful/detail on how students will be supported 	<p>As of July 2025, the cohort of children at Bradstow has reduced to 13 from 32 children as recorded in the October census and reported in the pre-publication consultation proposal. This would indicate that alternative placements are available which meet the needs of the children the school currently supports, and which in line with the SEND code of practice parents have agreed to accept.</p> <p>Of the 13 pupils remaining at Bradstow, 77% are placed equally by Kent, Medway, Newham, Havering and Wandsworth with the remaining 3 local authorities placing a single child. Although historically approx. 40% of pupils placed at the school were Kent County Council pupils, the use of the provision from the county in which the school is located has significantly reduced over the last year with pupil numbers dropping from 13 to 2 as of July 2025. Similarly, the demand for places at Bradstow from Wandsworth parents has declined, with fewer and fewer placements required over the years. This has been due to increased investment in the expansion of our local special schools, to realise our ambition where possible to keep children close to their family, friends and community. Although it is acknowledged that this may not benefit the Wandsworth children currently placed at Bradstow, lack of local sufficiency has historically meant that we have needed to place at Bradstow, and so this investment is part of our future planning for children who present with similar needs to keep them local.</p> <p>Since the commencement of the statutory process on closure, Wandsworth Council SEND services has actively engaged with the families of existing children placed at Bradstow to understand need, concerns and to progress consultations on suitable alternative placements in line</p>

	<p>with parental preference should the decision be made to close the school.</p> <p>Of the 4 remaining children placed by Wandsworth in Bradstow as at the start of the pre-publication consultation in January 25, all have secured offers of suitable alternative provision, with 3 placements accepted and transition commencing in September 25. We are working with the remaining family to ensure there is no gap in education for their child with appropriate support provided through the transition.</p> <p>It has been the recommendation to all other placing local authorities to parallel plan with families and commence the consultation process for alternative provision. This will ensure that if the proposal to close is approved, responsible individuals in placing local authorities will have sufficient time to work with families and the staff at Bradstow school to support pupils to integrate smoothly into their new setting.</p> <p>Despite the clear challenges associated with managing and holding the safeguarding risk for a complex provision located so far from Wandsworth resources, it must be reiterated that the decision to propose closure is not a reflection of the quality of the current leadership, education, and care provided at Bradstow all of which result in positive outcomes for children. It is one that is purely driven by the unwillingness of some councils to pay fees at a level needed to ensure the school remains viable.</p> <p>In respect of support for the remaining pupils, through what we recognise is an unsettling time, the council will be guided by the leadership of the school and work with them to address any concerns and implement support as required and appropriate. This will include through the school's link adviser, SEND teams including the SCPS, as well as through collaboration with local Kent services.</p>
The data used as the basis for the Equalities Impact Needs Assessment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General comments about the data • Respondent feels there is insufficient data on suitable alternatives in the south-east or for non-Wandsworth students • Respondent feels the data does not include the impact on social care and community services • Underrepresentation of specific minority groups at the school 	<p>An Equalities Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) was completed prior to the launch of the consultation to identify the potential impact of this proposal on groups with protected characteristics, and any appropriate mitigations. This has been updated following feedback from the consultation events survey, and changes at the school, and has been included as part of the formal consultation documents.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respondent feels that data does not capture the complex needs of students 	
The analysis of the impact of the data	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respondent feels the analysis does not consider the impact of closure on current and prospective students e.g. emotional impact, regression Respondent feels the analysis does not consider the impact of closure on students' families Respondent feels that analysis does not consider increased costs in future/other areas if closure occurs Respondent feels that analysis does not consider the impact of closure on specific groups 	<p>The Council recognises the impact of closure on student and families, and this is addressed in other sections of these tables.</p> <p>The purpose of the EINA is to ensure fairness and prevent discrimination as a result of the impact of the closure. It has been updated further to feedback from the informal consultation and changes at the school and has been included as part of the formal consultation documentation.</p> <p>Matters in relation to costs are addressed in other sections of these tables.</p>
Alternative suggestions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide additional time to consider alternative options to closure/to support a smooth transition if closure occurs Listen to students/families and prioritise their needs Suggestions for expansion of provision at Bradstow Allow a takeover of the school 	<p>These issues have been raised in response to the main survey questions. Please see earlier sections of the table for the Council's response.</p>
Other comments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General concerns about the impact of closure on current and future students General comments about the Equalities Impact Needs Assessment Concerns about the impact of closure on students' families Concerns that the closure does not meet legal requirements/constitutes discrimination 	<p>Please see earlier sections of the table for the Council's response to similar comments.</p> <p>This consultation follows the statutory process for proposals to discontinue a community special school and is outlined in the statutory notice below.</p>

Next Steps

Support for children, families, and staff

We will continue to work with Bradstow to ensure children and families are supported throughout this process, addressing any issues as they emerge and ensuring change is handled efficiently

and sensitively. Through the staff team, we are continually seeking the views, wishes and feelings of pupils to inform the support package that is being provided.

The School and Community Psychology Service (SCPS) will work alongside the school's leadership team and help them to manage the impact of this proposal on staff, pupils and their families. Should this proposal progress, placing local authorities, and the SCPS alongside Kent County Council Educational Psychology Services will work in collaboration with the school leadership to ensure that children's transition to a new school is managed as effectively as possible. These conversations and this work will be carefully planned and managed sensitively in discussion with the head and senior leadership to ensure they best meet the needs of the school community as they emerge and if needed.

We recognise this is an unsettling time for staff and we have worked with the leadership team at the school to provide ongoing support to staff throughout this process. For those staff considering their next steps, we have commissioned a recruitment specialist to provide recruitment advice for all staff members. Staff will receive help with CV planning, interview techniques and matching their requirements to other jobs. Staff will also receive individualised support dependent on their circumstances. Staff will be fully supported to apply for roles; however, some may decide to take voluntary redundancy. Staff also have access to a 24/7 support helpline from an external provider. The provider's website also has a variety of additional resources.

How to share your views

It is important that we hear your views and those of anyone else affected, and we have arranged a number of opportunities to do so. The local authority will consult with pupils, parents and carers, staff, the governing board, other local schools and trade unions. We are also consulting with other groups as well as the wider local community.

Wandsworth Council will begin consulting on the 1 September 2025 for 4 weeks to get views on the outlined proposals. The consultation will close at midnight on the 28 September 2025. Support, objections or comments should be provided within four weeks of the publication date of this proposal (by 28 September 2025)) online, by email or by post as follows:

- Online survey: we would encourage you to complete the online survey as the most efficient and secure way to give your views, at the link or QR code below:
<https://haveyoursay.citizenspace.com/wandsworthcsd/bradstow-25>



- You can email comments to consult@wandsworth.gov.uk – please use the heading ‘Bradstow Formal Consultation’.
- You can send comments by post to the following address:

Bradstow Formal Consultation
Wandsworth Local Authority
Children’s Services’ Executive Support Team
5th Floor
Wandsworth Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London
SW18 2PU

- Hard copy - if you need to request a paper copy, a different language or format, or if you need any support to take part in the consultation, please call or text the Children’s Services Executive Support team’s dedicated Bradstow consultation mobile number at 07779 868995 or email consult@wandsworth.gov.uk (please put ‘Bradstow Consultation’ in the email heading’).
- Upon concluding the formal consultation stage, all views will be considered by Cabinet (November 2025) as to whether to proceed with the proposals. A decision may be called in for scrutiny within three working days of the decision being published.