



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - CORPORATE AND RESOURCES

Wednesday, 25 March 2026

10.00 am

Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY

SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA

To: The members of the Scrutiny Committee - Corporate and Resources

We are now able to enclose the following information which was unavailable when the agenda was published:

Agenda Item 6 Strategic and High Scoring Tactical and Operational Risk Report 2025/2026 (Q3) (Pages 3 - 18)

This report updates the Council's Strategic Risk Profile (Appendix A). Twelve strategic risks are unchanged since Q2, with one reduction: ORG006 Economic Growth, which has decreased from 16 to 12. It also provides the quarterly overview of high-scoring (16+) tactical and operational risks, with 26 currently identified (Appendix C). The report includes a proposed update to the Risk Scoring Matrix, introducing revised financial-impact thresholds. (Appendix K).

The Corporate and Resources Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider:

- Current strategic risk profile set out in Appendix A.
- Current high scoring tactical and operational risks set out in Appendices C (summary) D, E, F, G & H (detailed by directorate).
- Endorse the revised Risk Scoring Matrix set out in Appendix K.

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Timeliness of Education Health and Care Needs Assessment

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Projections for backlog reduction – March 2026



Somerset
Council

Agenda Item 6

Summary

- Missed statutory deadlines for EHC needs assessments can lead to financial and reputation risk.
 - Delays in assessment with an Educational Psychologist are due to a 30% increase in number of assessment requests together with 29% increase in number of requests that progress to assessment over the last 2 years.
- Page 4 There are well documented challenges nationally with the recruitment and retention of EPs. Our strategy includes a business case for a pay review following 2023 Soulbury agreement to ensure we remain competitive in the market.
- With current vacancy levels, the EP workforce is unable to meet demand without additional resource.
 - Additional resource is required for EPs, SEND Officers, and Business Support to manage any increase in productivity to avoid backlogs in other areas of the system.
 - Considering should also be given to the White Paper which predicts a rise in requests for assessment before legislation change in 2029.

Statutory Duties

Local authorities have clear statutory duties to ensure Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs) are completed within set legal timeframes. Under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Regulations 2014, a full assessment and any resulting EHC plan must be completed within a 20-week timeframe.

When statutory deadlines for EHC needs assessments are missed, the local authority is in legal breach of the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Regulations 2014. Such delays carry direct **financial risks**, as the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman can require financial remedies for distress, missed provision, or prolonged uncertainty. Persistent delays also increase the likelihood of complaints, tribunals, judicial reviews and additional operational costs. Beyond this, the authority faces significant **reputational impact**: Ombudsman findings are published publicly, and repeated failures contribute to negative outcomes in Ofsted/CQC Local Area SEND inspections—undermining confidence in the authority’s leadership and SEND arrangements. Most critically, missed deadlines delay support for children and young people, increasing the risk of escalating needs and longer-term costs.

Data

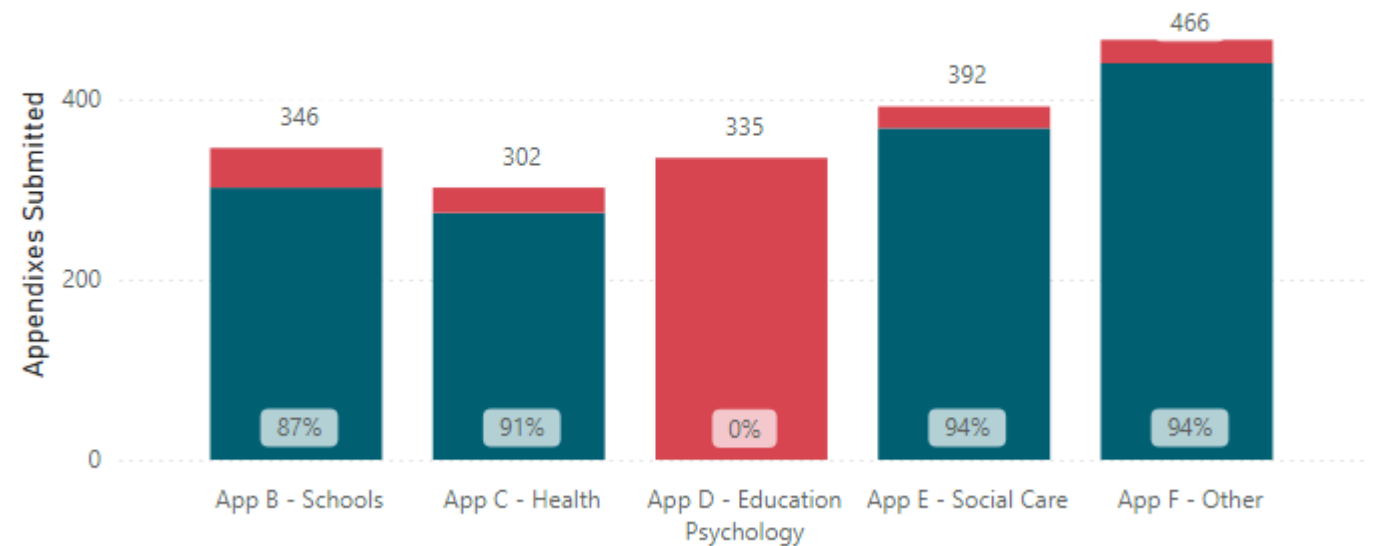
Between 0-5% of EHCNA are completed within the statutory 20 week timeframe. Delays are due to timeliness of Appendix D (Psychological Advice).

October to end of December 2025

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Appendix	Average Weeks to Complete
App B - Schools	4
App C - Health	6
App D - Education Psychology	27
App E - Social Care	4
App F - Other	6

Number of Submitted Appendixes and Percentage Completed On Time



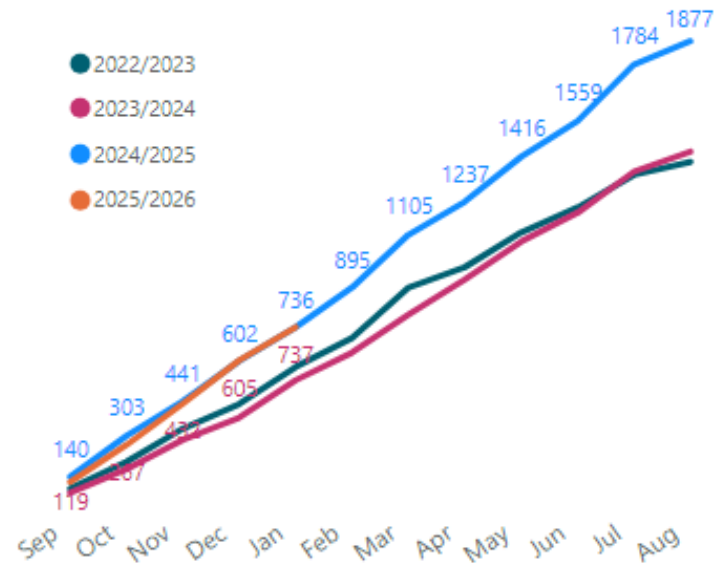
Data

Demand for assessment has significantly increased over the last 2 years as a result of:

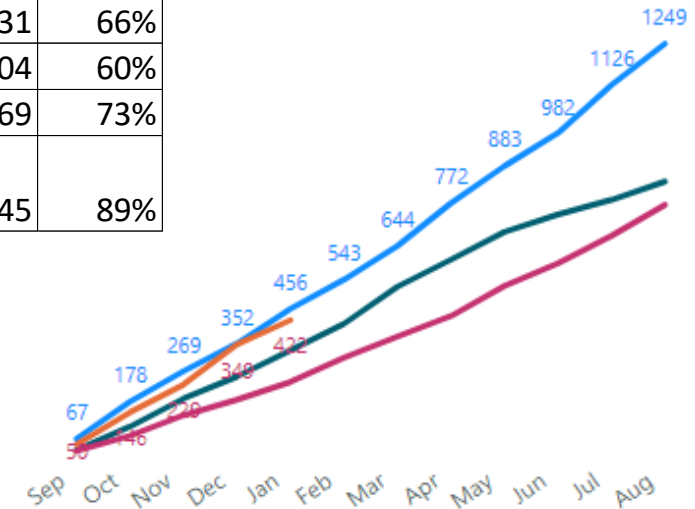
- 30% rise in the number of requests for assessment
- 29% increase in the proportion of requests progressing to assessment

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Requests YTD



Progressed to Assessment



Academic Year	Progressed	Refused	Rate
2022/2023	837	431	66%
2023/2024	767	504	60%
2024/2025	1249	469	73%
2025/2026 to December	349	45	89%

Academic Year	Requests
2022/2023	1396
2023/2024	1436
2024/2025	1877

Staffing

Educational Psychology

EPs FTE	15.21 <i>1fte mat leave</i>
EPs Vacancies FTE	5.5
EPs DMP Vacancies	5.6 <i>2.5fte to start in September 2026</i>
Establishment FTE	26
Vacancy FTE	11.1

2.5 FTE starting in September 2026.

3 TEPs to be interviewed this summer for September 2027 start.

Recent recruitment was unsuccessful with 1 unsuitable candidate and one not available before September 2027.

Staffing

Educational Psychology

National recruitment difficulties of EPs is well documented.

Our recruitment and retention strategy includes

- Business case for pay review following 2023 Soulbury agreement to ensure we remain competitive
- Review starting salary on case-by-case basis taking into account previous experience and market conditions (upon request)
- A pipeline of EPs through the service: AEPs – TEPs – EPs.
- Recruiting up to 2 years in advance
- Engaging with LA workforce support

‘Fee only’ workers are a key part of our workforce funded through budget from existing vacancies. These are employed staff on an overtime arrangement and ‘fee only’ EPs working directly with service (not through an agency).

Staffing

Statutory SEND Officers

	Current Staff	Vacancies	Establishment
Senior Assessment and Reviewing Officers	11 FTE (1FTE maternity leave)	4FTE (1FTE to start May 26)	15 FTE
Assessment and Reviewing Officers	21 FTE	3 FTE (+1 fixed term)	24FTE (+2 fixed term)

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**SEND officers across Virtual School and SEND Assessment & Review*

Additional SARO post to soon to become vacant. Challenges with the structure cited as reason for leaving.

Projections – Jan – March 2026

Agency support is currently in place with contracts ending March 2026. With current temporary agency support:

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Demand	Assessment Numbers
Unallocated	450
Additional new demand Jan-Mar	300
SUM	750

Capacity	Assessment Numbers
Service capacity - Employed EPs	180
Service capacity - Locum EPs	72
Additional Agency capacity	100
SUM	352

Estimate: 2026/27 Financial Year will begin with a backlog of **398**

Projections – April 2026 onwards

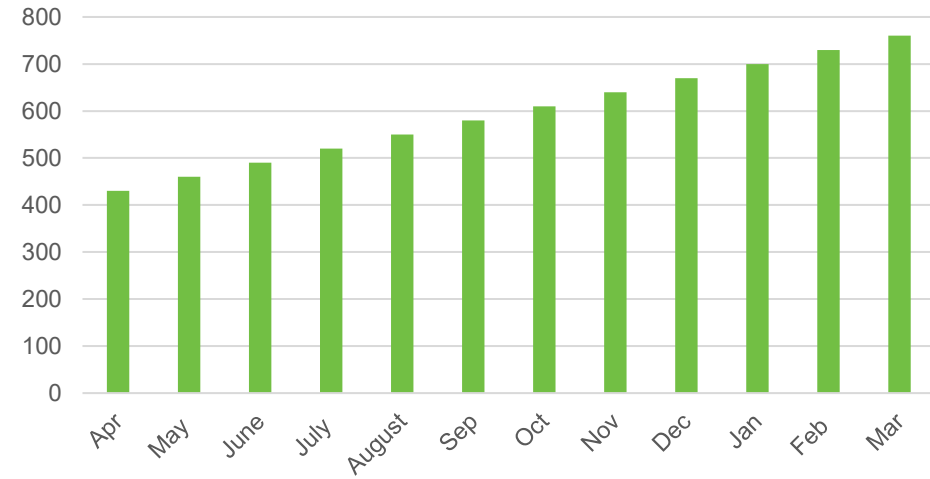
Model 1 – No additional resource

Demand	Assessment Numbers
Backlog	398
Additional new demand	1200
SUM	1598
Capacity (service and fee only EPs)	840
Net	-758

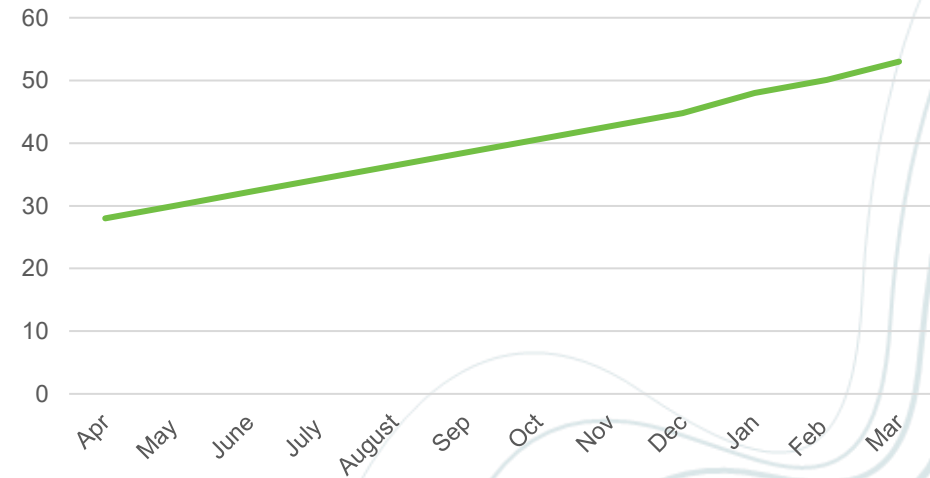
Backlog will rise to approximately 758

Waiting time will likely rise to over 52 weeks

Backlog Projection - Model 1



waiting time for assessment



Projections – April 2026 onwards

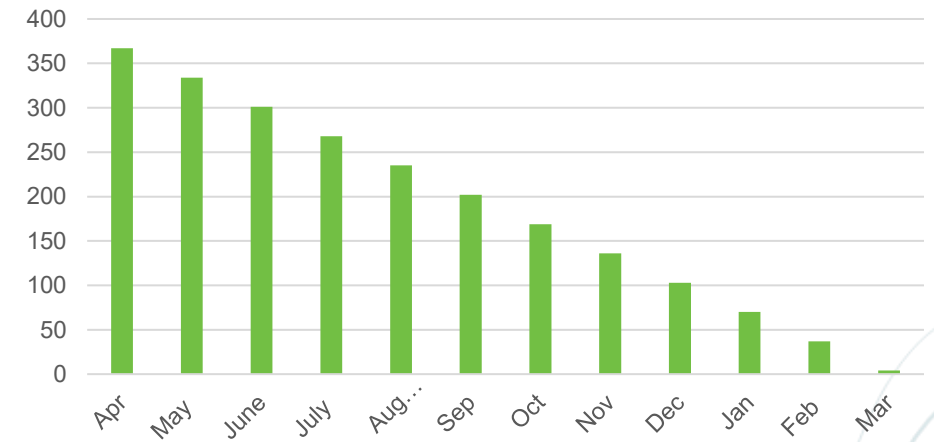
Model 2 – Backlog and wait time eliminated over 12 months

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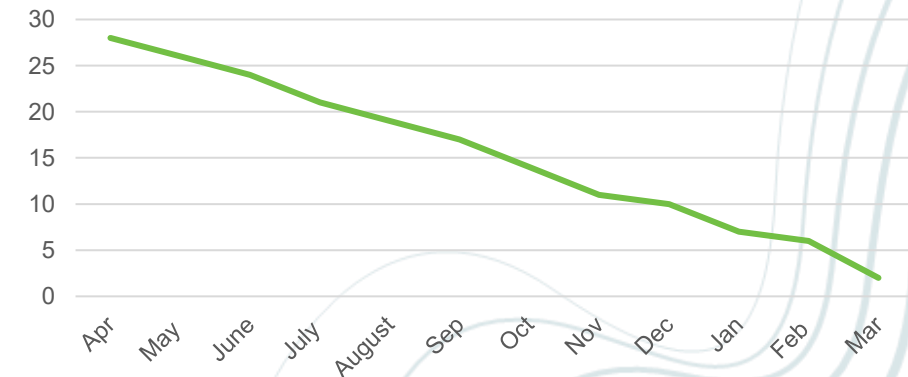
Demand	Assessment N. per month	Assessment N. over 12 months
Backlog	33	398
Additional new demand	100	1200
SUM	133	1598
Capacity (service and service locum EPs)	70	840
Agency capacity required	63	758

Requirement	£ per assessment (average)	£ per month	£ 26/27
Educational Psychology	£1200	£75,600	£907,200
ARO			£295,000
Business Support			£34,361
TOTAL			£1,236,561

Backlog Projection - Model 2



waiting time for assessment



Projections – April 2026 onwards

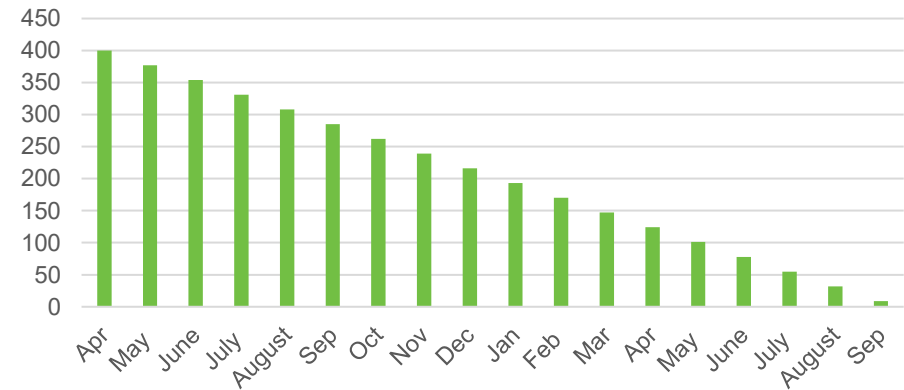
Model 3 – Backlog eliminated over 18 months

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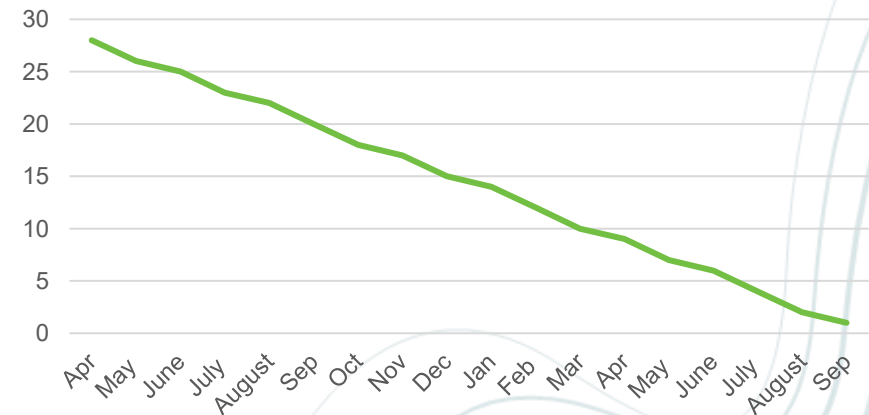
Demand	Assessment N. per month	Assessment N. over 18 months
Backlog	23	398
Additional new demand	100	1800
SUM	123	2198
Capacity (service and service locum EPs)	70	1260
Agency capacity required	53	938

Requirement	£ per assessment (average)	£ per month	£ 26/27	£27/28
Educational Psychology	£1,200	£63,600	£763,200	£381,600
ARO			£157,333	£78,667
Business Support			£34,361	£17,180
TOTAL			£954,894	£477,447

Backlog Projection - Model 3



waiting time for assessment



Projections – April 2026 onwards

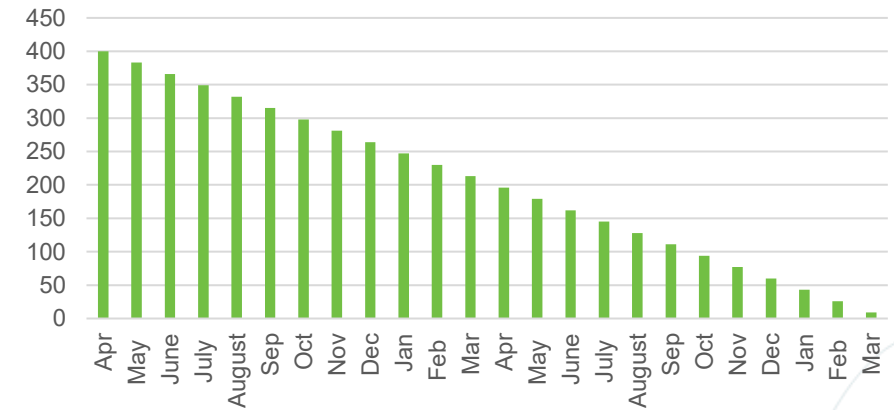
Model 4 – Eliminate backlog over 24 months

Demand	Assessment N. per month	Assessment N. over 24 months
Backlog	17	398
Additional new demand	100	2400
SUM	117	2798
Capacity (service and service locum EPs)	70	1680
Agency capacity required	47	1128

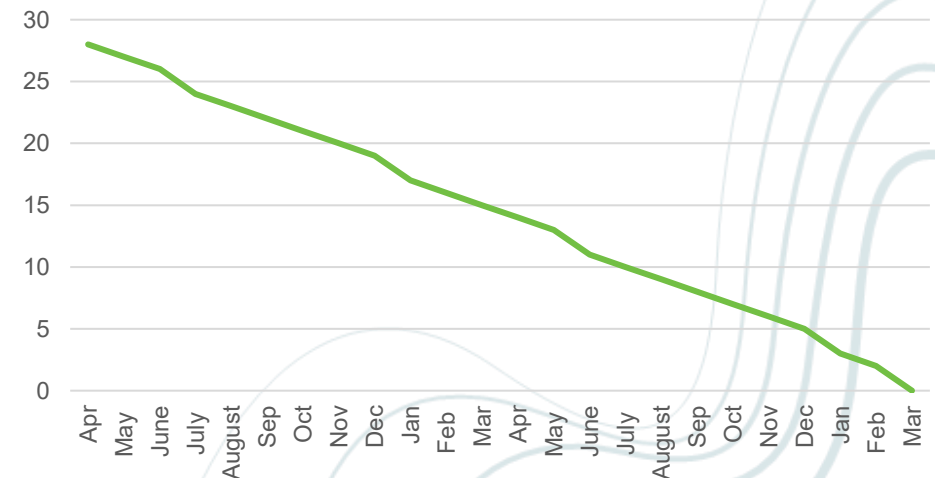
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Requirement	£ per assessment (average)	£ per month	£ 26/27	£27/28
Educational Psychology	£1,200	£56,400	£676,800	£676,800
ARO			£58,500	£58,500
Business Support			£17,181	17180.5
TOTAL			£752,481	£752,481

Backlog Projection - Model 4



waiting time for assessment



Projections – April 2026 onwards

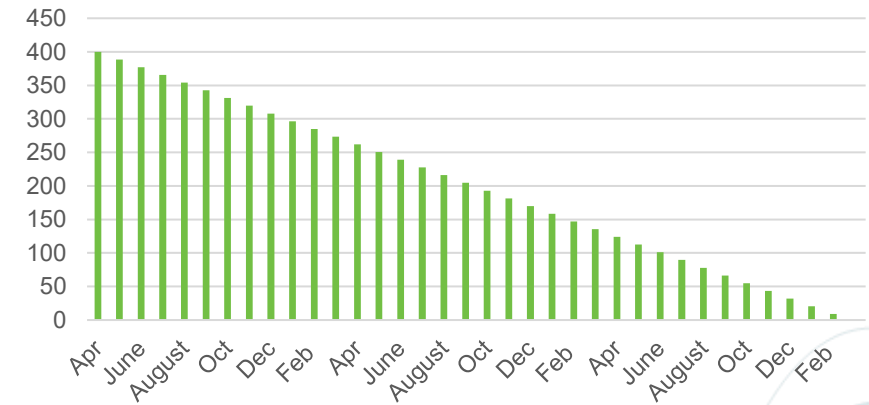
Model 5 – Eliminate backlog over 36 months

Demand	Assessment N. per month	Assessment N. over 36 months
Backlog	12	398
Additional new demand	100	3600
SUM	112	3998
Capacity (service and service locum EPs)	70	2520
Agency capacity required	42	1512

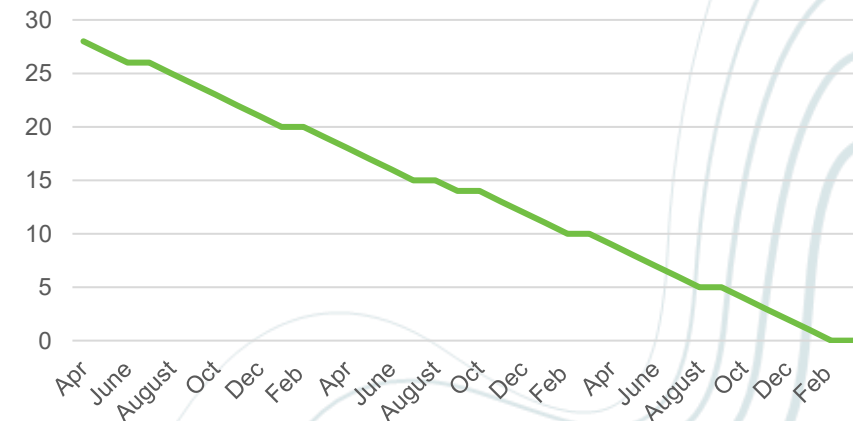
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Requirement	£ per assessment (average)	£ per month	£ 26/27	£27/28	£28/29
Educational Psychology	£1,200	£50,400	£604,800	£604,800	£604,800
ARO			£58,500	£58,500	£58,500
Business Support			£17,181	£17,181	£17,181
TOTAL			£680,481	£680,481	£680,481

Backlog Projection - Model 5



waiting time for assessment



Summary – Backlog Reduction Models

Requirements	12 month	18 months	24 months	36 months
Monthly demand	133	123	117	112
Monthly demand above service capacity	63	53	47	42
Backlog/ <i>wait times</i> at 6 mo	202 / 14weeks	262 / 18weeks	298 / 21 weeks	328 / 23 weeks
Backlog/ <i>wait times</i> at 12 mo	0	124 / 9weeks	196 / 14 weeks	256 / 18 weeks
Backlog/ <i>wait times</i> at 18 mo	-	0	94 / 7 weeks	184 / 13 weeks
Backlog/ <i>wait times</i> at 24 mo	-	-	0	112 / 8 weeks
Backlog/ <i>wait times</i> at 36 mo	-	-	-	0
Cost per year	£1,236,561	£954,894	£752,481	£680,481

NB: If any additional resource is stopped before demand reduces or additional recruitment is possible, backlog will increase again.

