



# **Children in Care Placements - Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy**

**A Strategic Approach to the Commissioning  
of Children in Care Placements**

**DRAFT**  
**2014 - 2016**

**“Getting it right first time, on time, every time”**

**Early Intervention and Market Development, Quality and Commissioning,  
Children and Families, Nottingham City Council**

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## Vision and Commitment

In line with the Nottingham City Council Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan, the overarching ambition of this Strategy is to ensure that all children and young people are given the best start in life and have the opportunity to thrive and achieve.

### The Vision - Getting it right first time, on time, every time

Nottingham City Council will provide every child and young person with the best possible placement, which meets their needs, wishes and feelings and provides them with the opportunity to thrive and achieve.

Nottingham City Council will drive a dynamic, outcomes-focused, child-centred placement market, which offers good value, quality and choice, to ensure that the right placement is found the first time, on time, every time.

### The Commitment

**For all of our children and young people, Nottingham City Council commits to:**

- ✓ Secure the best possible placement for every child and young person, in an open market, with consistent application of processes and standards across internal and external provision.
- ✓ Place a minimum of 90% (fostering) and 80% (residential) of children and young people 'locally'. For those placements made outside of the local area, Nottingham City Council will ensure that the same levels of monitoring and quality standards are applied.
- ✓ Articulate to providers what excellent outcomes look like for each child and young person and explore incentives for over-achievement.
- ✓ Measure children and young people's outcomes using a standardised approach across all placements, ensuring an understanding of what does and does not work and acknowledging when something needs to change.
- ✓ Listen to children and young people and maximise opportunities for their feedback to inform and influence service delivery.
- ✓ Provide quality, standardised 'life skills' development support and entitlements for young people transitioning into independence.
- ✓ Implement effective early intervention, for example;
  - Financial commitment where a specialist/therapeutic placement is required, for a period of time determined by a qualified professional
  - Ensure that all eligible young people are engaged in the Family Nurse Partnership
  - Escalate and recommend change when a young person has experienced multiple placement breakdowns
- ✓ Implement robust commissioning, contract and quality assurance processes.

## Background and Purpose

Nottingham is a vibrant City with a diverse population of approximately 305,700. It is a city of business and enterprise, learning and science, and sport and culture. Nottingham, like other cities, still faces challenges. The population has increased by 14% over the last 10 years, driven largely by increasing student numbers, a higher birth rate, and international migration. The proportion of the population from Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities is now at 35%, almost double what it was a decade ago, with the population of under 18's being even more diverse.

High levels of deprivation and disadvantage in some parts of the City, has led to Nottingham being ranked as the 20th most deprived out of 326 local authority districts. The percentage of children living in poverty has fallen slightly over recent years but still stands at over 35% (equating to over 19,500 children under 16 years). The socio-economic factors of the City; deprivation, unemployment, domestic abuse, alcohol and substance misuse, all impact on the volume and complexity of needs presented by children and young people.

In September 2013, there were 584 children and young people in the care of Nottingham City Council. The cohort has been increasing at an average rate of 3.9% each year, against a national average rate of 2%. Although the rates are higher than both national and regional rates, they are slightly lower than comparator authorities. Legislative changes, including the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) and the Southwark Judgement have also impacted upon demand.

Much of the changes in demographics, such as increasing population, rising birth rate, and international migration, show little signs of reversing in the short term. Nottingham City Council has actively responded to the increasing demand and financial pressures. In 2011, the Placement Service was restructured to increase dedicated capacity to implement more robust processes and arrangements, review all placement packages and build more effective provider relations. This has led to greater value for money, increased transparency of services and quality delivered, and improved market management.

The East Midlands Regional Provider Framework was implemented in April 2011. The Framework established a formalised agreement between participating local authorities and independent providers and has brought about multiple benefits, including; efficiencies, shared risk, buying power, market influence and information and resource sharing. The current Framework expires in March 2015.

The combination of all of these factors; growing and changing demand, financial pressures, legislative changes, learning from Serious Case Reviews nationally and the expiring Framework, means that the need for a formalised Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy is timely and critical.

Led by the Quality and Commissioning Directorate, and owned by City partners as a whole, this Strategy determines the way the City commissions CiC placements, informed by current and anticipated sufficiency requirements. It lays out the City's vision and commitment to all children and young people requiring a care placement and details the minimum standards, commissioning plans and accelerated strands for the placement market.

*\*\* Comment from Portfolio Holder for Children's Services to be inserted here \*\**

## Market Position and Sufficiency

Analysis undertaken into the CiC cohort provides detailed insight into the City's sufficiency requirements, revealing the market strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities, and enabling commissioners to determine how much of what type of provision the City requires. *Appendix One provides an overview.*

### Key Market Messages

- Each year there are over 600 new CiC placements made. Typically 250-300 of these are children and young people entering care, with the remainder being moves between existing placements.
- The number of CiC continues to increase at an average annual rate of 3.9%.
- Limited availability across all placement provision is restricting choice and matching prioritisation, particularly with local provision.
- Meeting and effectively de-escalating the needs of the most complex children and young people is becoming increasingly challenging.
- Continued local authority financial pressures require innovative solutions to ensure the City sufficiently meets demand.
- The Regional Provider Framework comes to a close in March 2015 (fees are fixed until then). Clear direction is required to inform the refresh and development of the Framework.

### ✘ Weaknesses and Gaps

- Insufficient availability of local provision - specialist residential, solo and dual residential, complex fostering, semi independent accommodation and support, emergency provision
- Some inconsistencies in the application of processes and monitoring standards across internal and external provision
- Inconsistent transition support to independence, between placements and rehabilitation home
- Insufficient use of Staying Put arrangements
- Provision for vulnerable Care Leavers who do not meet the threshold for adult services, but are not ready to secure their own tenancy at 18
- Insufficient expert knowledge of what does and does not work (e.g. most appropriate placement model for victims/perpetrators of sexual abuse)
- Limited financial resources
- Lack of incentives for providers to ensure excellent outcomes for children and young people in their care

### ✔ Strengths and Opportunities

- East Midlands Regional Provider Framework – opportunity to build upon success of the current Framework and inform the developments of the new Framework
- Placement Service capacity: quality assurance, contract compliance, strategic oversight, opportunity for innovation
- Effective provider relations and opportunity for improved market management
- Stakeholder engagement/senior management buy-in

- Improved Quality Assurance Framework
- Improved transition planning and support to independence, between placements and rehabilitation to family
- Further integration of Health, Education and Social Care
- Maximised local placement availability, enabling an increased number of CiC to be placed locally

## Commissioning Direction

To ensure choice and diversity and to avoid monopolies, Nottingham City Council (NCC) will operate within a mixed economy of internal and external provision, commissioned through framework, spot and block purchasing arrangements, some of which will be regional and issues based. Placements will be made according to what placement can best meet the needs of the child or young person. To ensure this, there will be a consistent application of processes across internal and external provision.

All commissioning will be strategic and needs-led, with robust procurement and contracting functions embedded. Collaboration between partners, commissioners, the market and children and young people, will ensure a market which is truly fit for purpose. NCC will continue to build upon strategic relationships with neighbouring local authorities to achieve greater regional and sub-regional collaboration and identify future areas for issues/tactical based commissioning. Work to further integrate Health, Education and Social Care through joint planning and funding will sustain shared accountability and inter-agency cooperation, drive efficiencies and prevent duplication.

Significant work has been undertaken to reduce costs and ensure value for money. Whilst this will continue to be a focus, the priority remains to drive up quality and ensure early intervention leading to de-escalation of need and greater placement stability for better outcomes for our children and young people.

### Market Development

To effectively shape the market, Nottingham City Council will maintain a strong visible presence and consult directly with the market, articulating a clear direction for what is required internally and externally to best meet the needs of our children and young people. The market must be;

- Composed of the optimum number, sector and size of providers. A mix of small, medium and large organisations from the public, private, voluntary and not for profit sectors, to achieve variety, sustainability and avoid monopolies
- Dynamic, flexible and responsive - proactively adapting to changing demand and need
- Person-centred and outcomes-focused
- Efficient, effective and value for money

## **Placing Our Children Locally**

Nottingham City Council defines a 'local' placement as anywhere within the boundaries of a 20 mile radius from Nottingham City Centre. Securing a local placement will take into consideration maintaining a young person's educational, health, social and cultural connections and access to resources.

Nottingham City Council will strive to secure the most appropriate placement available for each child and young person. Where appropriate, the priority will be for all children and young people to remain living locally. This will be achieved through short, medium and long term strategies to maximise local provision availability. Where it is not possible to secure a local placement, the remaining matching criteria for a young person will be prioritised and the Local Authority will evidence that it has done all that is reasonably practicable to secure a suitable placement.

A mapping exercise, detailing all local care placement provision against availability and use, revealed that a significant proportion of local placements are being commissioned by other local authorities. NCC will collaborate with the provider market and with regional local authorities to ensure that the use of local placements for local children and young people is maximised. In the short term, this will include improved co-ordination and advanced placement planning, alongside some retained arrangements, where appropriate. In the medium to long term this will include block contract arrangements and plans for increased local placement capacity.

## **East Midlands Regional Provider Framework**

Implemented in April 2011, the Framework has brought about a number of benefits including; efficiencies, shared risk, buying power, market influence and information and resource sharing. It is Nottingham City Council's intention to remain in the Framework following its expiration in March 2015. NCC will inform the refresh and development of the Framework, promoting more dynamic arrangements which;

- Enable new providers to join throughout the life of the contract
- Support smaller, local providers to increase choice and avoid monopolies by larger providers
- Allow flexibility to encourage innovation and improvement over the life of the contract
- Ensures a true multi-agency approach, through greater integration of Health and Education

## **Block Contracting**

Nottingham City Council will embark upon block contracts which guarantee business to a number of providers across a portfolio of provision, securing reduced fees, assured availability and forward planning for the local authority and provider. The following will be considered for block contracts;

Fostering: local fostering for 'complex' children and young people, remand foster carers (sub regional collaboration).

Residential: local solo and dual homes for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, semi independent accommodation and support

## **Spot Purchasing**

Spot purchased provision will be commissioned for services that are not consistently required or where there has been no previous or predicted demand e.g. parent and child assessments, rare/specific disability/health need.

### **Accelerated Strands**

- ⇒ Defined 'local' provider, ensuring appropriate geographical boundaries which maintain appropriate attachments and enable easy access to local services and resources
- ⇒ Maximised local placement availability (internal and external), enabling an increased number of CiC to be placed locally
- ⇒ Improved Quality Assurance Framework
- ⇒ Remand fostering pilot (sub-regional collaboration)
- ⇒ Define what early intervention looks like for our most complex young people
- ⇒ Explore dynamic block contracts for external residential and semi independent placements
- ⇒ Explore dynamic block contracting of local foster carers in the external market
- ⇒ Secure emergency placement provision
- ⇒ Standardised 'life skills' development support and entitlements for young people transitioning into independence
- ⇒ Complex cohort provision (e.g. defining the most appropriate placement model for victims/perpetrators of sexual abuse)
- ⇒ Capture themes emerging from ongoing quality assurance activity (e.g. how to incentivise excellent outcomes for the child/young person)



## Quality Assurance

Through a robust Quality Assurance Framework, Nottingham City Council will ensure that all children and young people are accessing high quality, value for money care placements. Consistent application of processes will be applied to internal and external provision impartially.

Minimum standards detailing what constitutes a good quality placement will feed into service specifications and lay a benchmark for providers applying to care for Nottingham's children and young people. Elements of the criteria will be specific to the type of placement being required (e.g. therapeutic) and will recognise particularly vulnerable cohort (e.g young people experiencing teenage pregnancy and child sexual exploitation).

A Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rated system for monitoring providers will determine the level and frequency of quality assurance visits undertaken by the Placement Service. A set of criteria, factoring in performance, business viability, Ofsted judgements, history and complexity of current placements, will determine whether a provider is rated as Red, Amber or Green.

It is Nottingham City Council's ambition to only place with Ofsted judged 'Good' and 'Outstanding' providers. A formalised protocol to address what action should be undertaken when a provider receives an 'Inadequate' Ofsted judgement will be established. This will build upon current practice which sees an assessment of the appropriateness for a young person to remain in placement, increased monitoring visits and close liaison with the provider and Social Care. This protocol will form part of a suite of Placement Service Protocols to address;

- a provider receiving an 'Inadequate' or 'Adequate' Ofsted judgement
- concerns around a providers' financial viability
- decline in provider quality
- spot purchasing of a non-vetted provider
- authorisation of Out of Area placements
- managing a placement contract

The voice of children and young people will tangibly inform service planning and delivery, through actively capturing their views and feedback. The Placement Service intends to recruit a young apprentice with experience of the care system to support with quality monitoring responsibilities.

### **Improved Outcomes**

Improving outcomes for our children and young people is the ultimate objective of this Strategy. Nottingham City Council intends to build upon current practice for measuring and monitoring outcomes by moving to a standardised model, allowing a young person's progress to be accurately monitored throughout their time in care. This will be developed by experts from a provider, commissioner and young person perspective and will support regional discussion.

→→→ Placement Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy - Implementation Plan →→→

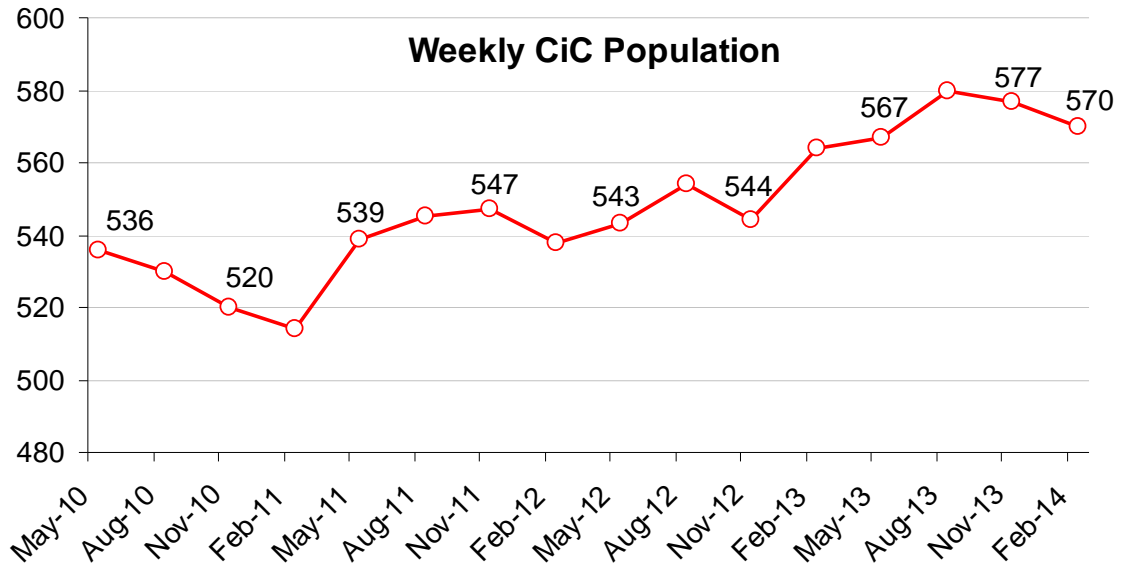
<b>August - September 2013</b>	
<b>Cohort and Market Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Identify the profile of the current cohort, articulating volume and need in order to predict demand and shape the market. <i>(Overview of findings included in Appendix One)</i></li> <li>➤ Clarify market strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>October 2013</b>	
<b>Local Market Mapping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Map all local care placement provision, alongside availability and use. Use to explore options for Nottingham City Council to maximise the use of local resources <i>(A map maintained by the Placement Service will be used to measure progress)</i></li> </ul>
<b>November 2013</b>	
<b>Quality Assurance Framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Initiate the refresh of the Quality Assurance Framework <i>(RAG rated providers, monitoring visit rota, quality standards and criteria)</i></li> </ul>
<b>December 2013</b>	
<b>Draft Placement Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Draft Strategy to determine a strategic approach to the commissioning of CiC placements, informed by current and anticipated sufficiency requirements</li> <li>➤ Draft Placement Service Protocols developed</li> <li>➤ Agree a vision for the Placement Service and a set of commitments to children and young people</li> <li>➤ Ensuring appropriate geographical boundaries which maintain appropriate attachments and enable easy access to local services and resources</li> </ul>
<b>Placement Service Protocols</b>	
<b>Placement Service Vision and Commitments</b>	
<b>Defined 'Local' Boundaries</b>	
<b>January 2014</b>	
<b>Placement Commissioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Draft Strategy out for consultation.</li> </ul>

<b>and Sufficiency Strategy</b>  <b>Regional Provider Framework Review</b>  <b>Quality Assurance Standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Commence working group to refresh and develop the East Midlands Regional Provider Framework, ahead of its expiration in March 2015</li> <li>➤ Quality assurance standards agreed</li> </ul>
<b>February 2014</b>	
<b>Remand Foster Care Pilot</b>  <b>Quality Assurance Framework</b>  <b>Young Person Input</b>  <b>Market Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Implementation of a six month sub-regional pilot for the foster care of remanded young people</li> <li>➤ Quality Assurance Framework agreed</li> <li>➤ Establish methods for collating and utilising children and young people's feedback to inform service delivery. Pursue recruitment of a young apprentice with experience of the care system</li> <li>➤ Market Development Plan and timeline established</li> </ul>
<b>March 2014</b>	
<b>Implementation of Placement Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy</b>  <b>'Life skills' Support and Entitlements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Implementation of market development and procurement activity, and Placement Service Protocols</li> <li>➤ Agreed standardised 'life skills' development support and entitlements for young people transitioning into independence</li> </ul>
<b>April 2014 – March 2015</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ <b>Market development and procurement activity</b></li> <li>➔ Continued implementation of the Placement Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy</li> <li>➔ Develop regional local authority collaboration</li> <li>➔ Develop sub-regional tactical/issue based commissioning</li> <li>➔ Develop Health and Education collaboration</li> </ul>	
<b>April 2015 - Commence new Regional Framework arrangements</b>	

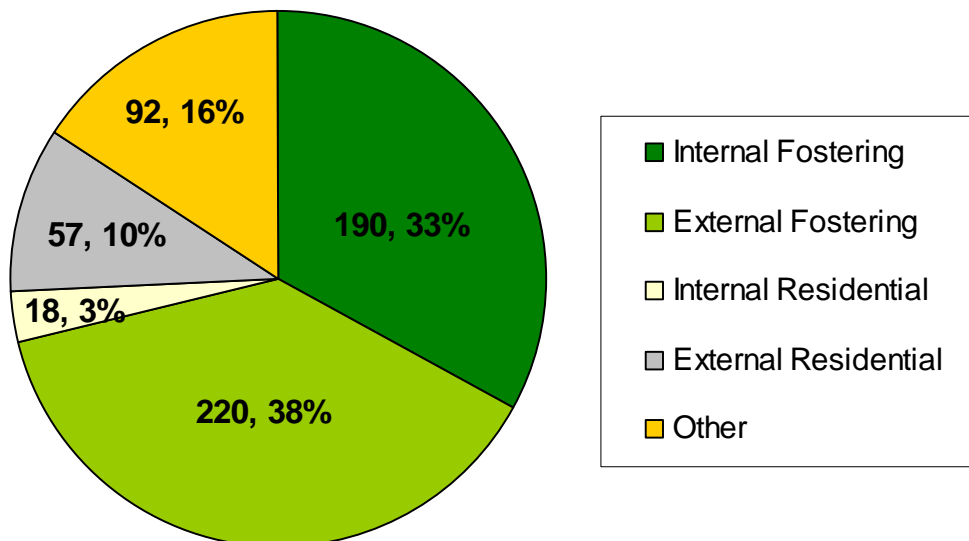
APPENDIX ONE

**The Current Market**

**Placement Volume and Type**

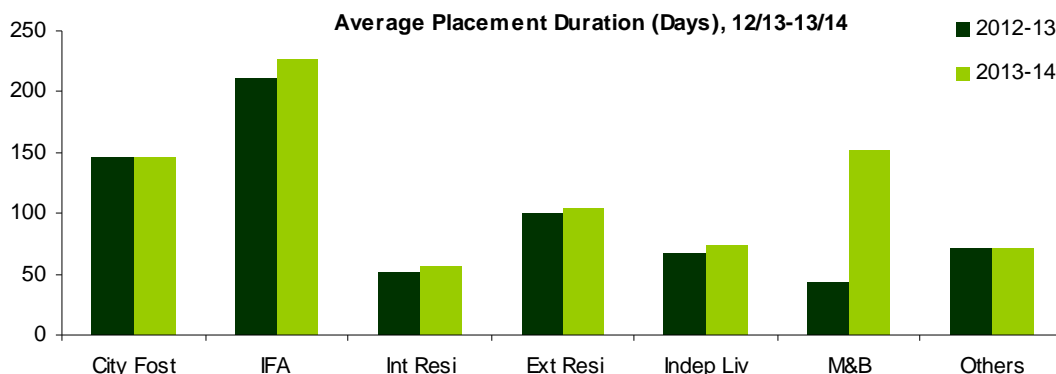


In March 2014, there were 577 children and young people in the care of Nottingham City Council, placed in following provisions;



Each year there are over 600 new CiC placements made. Typically 250-300 of these will be children and young people entering care, with the remainder being moves between care placements.

## CiC Placement Average Duration



## Placement Stability

At the end of March 2013, 14% of CiC placed externally had three or more placements in the previous year, compared to 10.5% of those placed internally. These figures provide an indication of the short term placement stability. Longitudinal research is required to look at long term placement stability.

In fostering, 5% of CiC placed internally had three or more placements in the previous year, compared to 4.5% of those placed externally. In residential, 54% of CiC placed internally had three or more placements in the previous year, compared to 46% of those placed externally. To provide context, it should be noted that the external market caters for a higher proportion of complex needs, which will impact upon the stability statistics.

## Commissioning Methods

Nottingham City Council commissions a mixture of internal and independent placement provisions via formal framework arrangements, block contracts and spot purchasing.

	Internal	External Framework	External Spot Purchase
<b>Fostering</b>	51%	48%	1%
<b>Residential</b>	27%	46%	27%
<b>Semi Independence</b>	26%	28%	46%

The needs of the young person will drive the placement search. Once accommodation has been agreed by Social Care senior management, the Placement Service then trawl the internal market for a suitably matched vacancy. If there are no internal vacancies which can meet the needs of a young person, the search will then be extended to framework providers. Only if there are still no suitable vacancies, will the Placement Service consider spot purchasing from a non-framework provider.

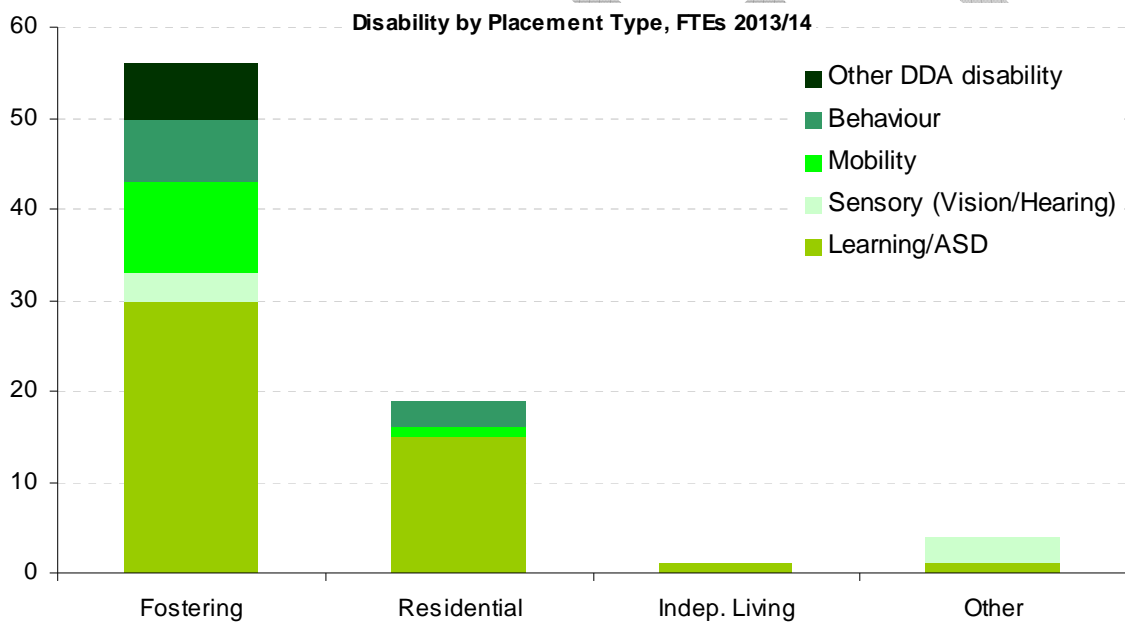
## Placement Need

	Need Level	Fostering FTE	Fostering %	Residential FTE	Residential %
2012/13	Core	384	90%	0	0%
	Enhanced	29	7%	45	73%
	Complex	11	3%	16	27%
2013/14	Core	395	90%	0	0%
	Enhanced	32	7%	46	73%
	Complex	12	3%	17	27%

*\*Full Time Equivalent*

Between 2012/13 and 2013/14, there was an increase in the volume of fostering placements across all need levels, with the proportion of need remaining the same.

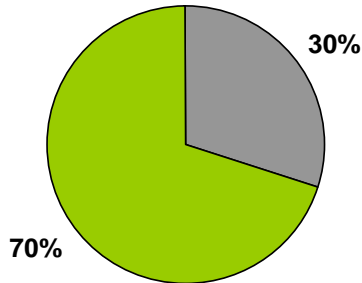
## Placement Requirements due to Disability



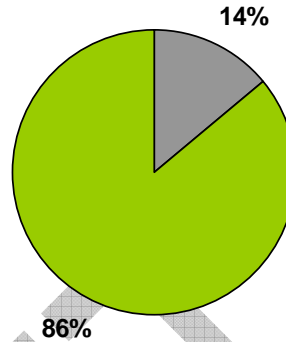
The percentage of CiC with a disability classification has reduced from 15% in 2012/13 to 14% in 2013/14. The cohort requiring specialist provision due to their disabilities is minimum, as the majority of these young people are able to be placed in 'mainstream' provision, with appropriate additional support being provided through universal services.

**Placement Location:**

**Residential**



**Fostering**



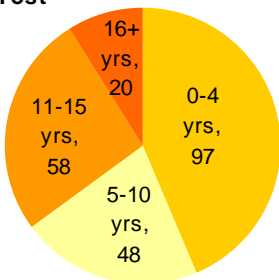
**Within 20 miles of the City Centre**
 **Outside 20 miles of the City Centre**

In comparison to other local authorities, Nottingham places more young people locally. Nottingham City Council defines 'local' as a placement within a 20 mile radius of the City Centre. NCC will strive to increase the percentage of young people placed in local foster placements to a minimum of 90% and increase the percentage of young people placed in local residential placements to a minimum of 80%.

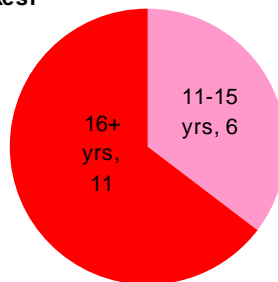
**Age and Gender**

**Age:**

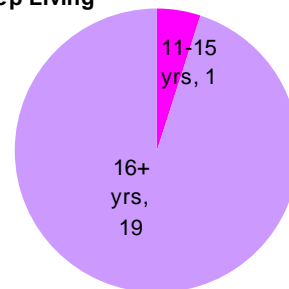
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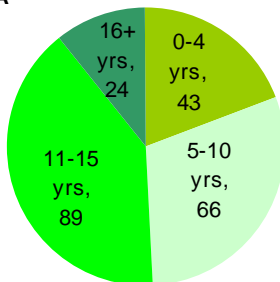
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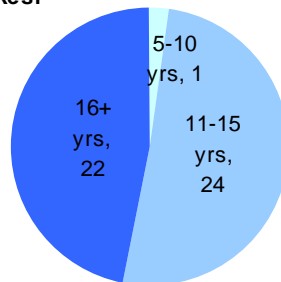
**Indep Living**



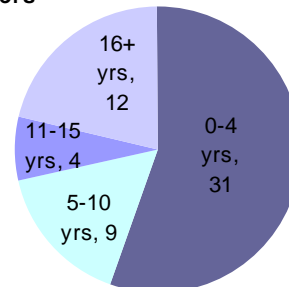
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**Others**



Count of Child ID	Gender (Snapshot at 01/04/2012)			
Age	Female	Male	Total	%
0-4	62	54	116	21%
5-10	63	61	124	23%
11-15	61	67	128	24%
16+	75	97	172	32%
Grand Total	261	279	540	100%

Count of Child ID	Gender (Snapshot at 30/08/2013)			
Age	Female	Male	Total	%
0-4	83	85	168	29%
5-10	59	67	126	22%
11-15 years	82	93	175	30%
16+	41	72	113	19%
Grand Total	265	317	582	100%

Snapshots taken from 2012 and 2013 demonstrate that the percentage of CiC aged 16+ years has reduced from 32% to 19%. The percentage of CiC aged 0-4 years has increased from 21% to 29%. The percentage of CiC aged 11-15 years has increased from 24% to 30%.

### Gender:

CiC Gender



Although the overall gender split has remained relatively even (46% female, 54% male), there has been an 8% decrease in female CiC aged 16+.

These statistics highlight that the market needs to be flexible year on year. It needs to be responsive, proactively adapting to the changing demand and need.

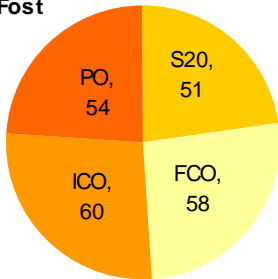


# Legal Status

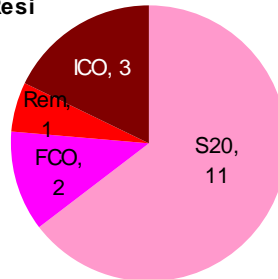
CiC Legal Status - All



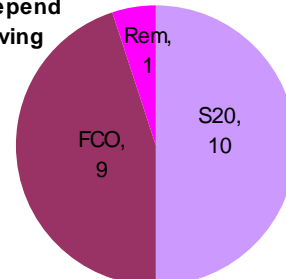
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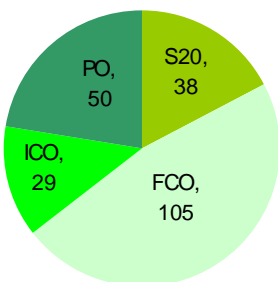
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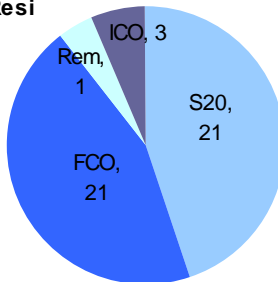
Independ Living



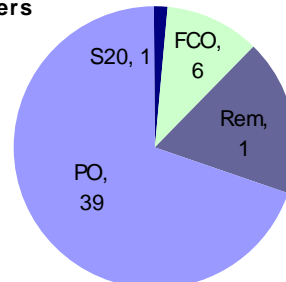
IFA



Ext Resi



Others



DRAFT