

Children in Care Placements - Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy

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

2021 - 2023



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

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure sufficient accommodation for its Looked After Children and Young People. This is referred to as the 'Sufficiency Duty' as laid down in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989. This duty should be undertaken within the context of the planning and co-operation duties which the 2004 Act places on partners in order to improve the wellbeing of the children in the local area.
- 1.2 This Strategy responds to the duty by formalising the approach in which Nottingham City Council (NCC) commissions Children in Care (CiC) placements, informed by current and anticipated sufficiency requirements. The Strategy lays out the City's vision and commitment to all children and young people requiring a care placement and details the current gaps, opportunities and commissioning plans for the local placement market.

2. Background and Context

- 2.1 Nottingham is a vibrant City with a diverse population. It is a city of business and enterprise, learning and science, sport and culture. Nottingham, like other cities, still faces challenges. Socio-economic factors such as high levels of deprivation; unemployment, domestic abuse, alcohol and substance misuse, all impact on the volume and complexity of needs presented by children and young people.
- 2.2 Like other local authorities, one of the greatest challenges for the City is improving outcomes for the small cohort of the most highly complex children and young people, who often have multiple needs and display highly challenging behaviours which lead to placement instability and escalating care needs. Radically rethinking the way in which these young people are placed and cared for, to achieve stability and improved outcomes, is a priority for Nottingham City.
- 2.3 Changes in the volume and type of placement demand, combined with financial pressures, legislative changes and learning from serious case reviews, have all impacted upon local sufficiency requirements. Most recently, the Covid-19 Pandemic has impacted upon the care placement market and may continue to in the short and medium term. It is important that Nottingham City remains agile to these challenges, alongside preparing to respond to other current market drivers, including the reforms to unregulated provisions, due to be implemented in September 2021, the Competition and Markets Authority's study into the care placement market, and the independent review of children's social care which launched in January. The next two years will reveal important learning for the sector.
- 2.4 The Local Government Association (LGA) are working to establish a nationwide framework for producing sufficiency statements, to enable consistent monitoring of need for, and delivery of, children's placements. NCC welcome this development and have fed into the consultation regarding the framework format, which is anticipated to include (i) a nationwide database on children's placements that will be used to inform the councils' statements, (ii) a sufficiency statement template, and (iii) a basic predictive tool for monitoring future trends in demand for placements that can be used by all councils in England

3. Vision and Commitment

- 3.1 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

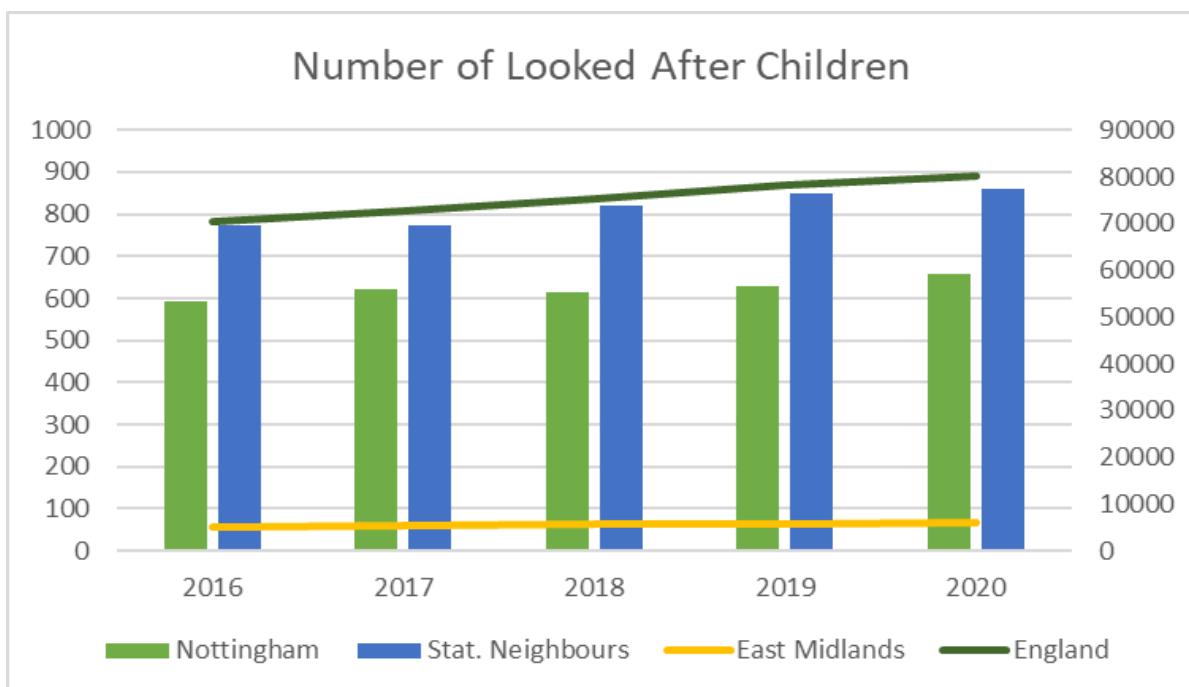
For all of our children and young people, Nottingham City Council commits to:

- ✓ Secure the best possible placement for every child and young person.
- ✓ Achieve consistency in the quality, support and entitlements offered to children and young people within all placement provision, through standardised specifications, contracts and requirements.
- ✓ Improve outcomes for Children in Care, through improved stability and quality of service provision.
- ✓ Keep our Children in Care close to home. Our ambition is place a minimum of 85% of our children and young people locally i.e. within 20 miles of the centre of Nottingham. For those placements made outside of the local area, NCC will ensure that the same levels of monitoring and quality standards are applied.
- ✓ Regularly review the appropriateness of placements and placements plans, and support children to be reunified with their family, wherever safe and in their best interests to do so.
- ✓ Listen to children and young people and maximise opportunities for their feedback to inform and influence service delivery.
- ✓ Measure children and young people's outcomes across all placements, ensuring an understanding of what does and does not work and acknowledging when something needs to change.
- ✓ Articulate to providers what excellent outcomes look like for each child and young person and be open to exploring incentives for over-achievement.
- ✓ Implement effective early intervention, for example;
 - Making a financial commitment where a specialist/therapeutic placement is required, for a period of time determined by a qualified professional
 - Escalate and recommend change when a young person has experienced multiple placement breakdowns
- ✓ Implement robust commissioning, contract and quality assurance processes.

4. Placement Demand

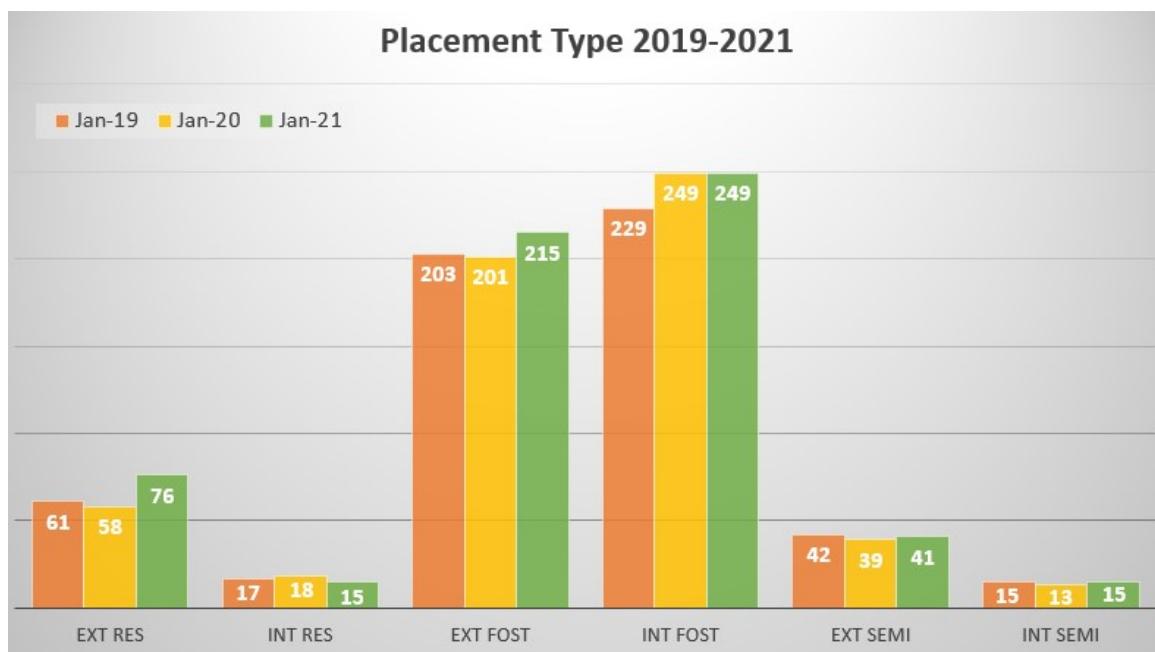
4.1 The number of Children in Care in Nottingham City continues to rise. The data below provides an overview of growth over the past five years, alongside NCC's statistical neighbours, the regional and the national picture. Although a steeper increase can be seen in the most recent year for NCC, it is noted that the overall growth in the last five years, is lower than national and regional growth. The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the resulting lockdown, is not yet well enough understood to forecast future demand; however further growth is anticipated.

Number of Children in Care							
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change from previous year	Change over five years
Nottingham	594	622	616	628	656	4.5%	10.4%
Stat. Neighbours	774	775	821	849	861	1.4%	11.2%
East Midlands	5170	5360	5620	5840	6110	4.6%	18.0%
England	70410	72610	75370	78140	80080	2.5%	13.7%

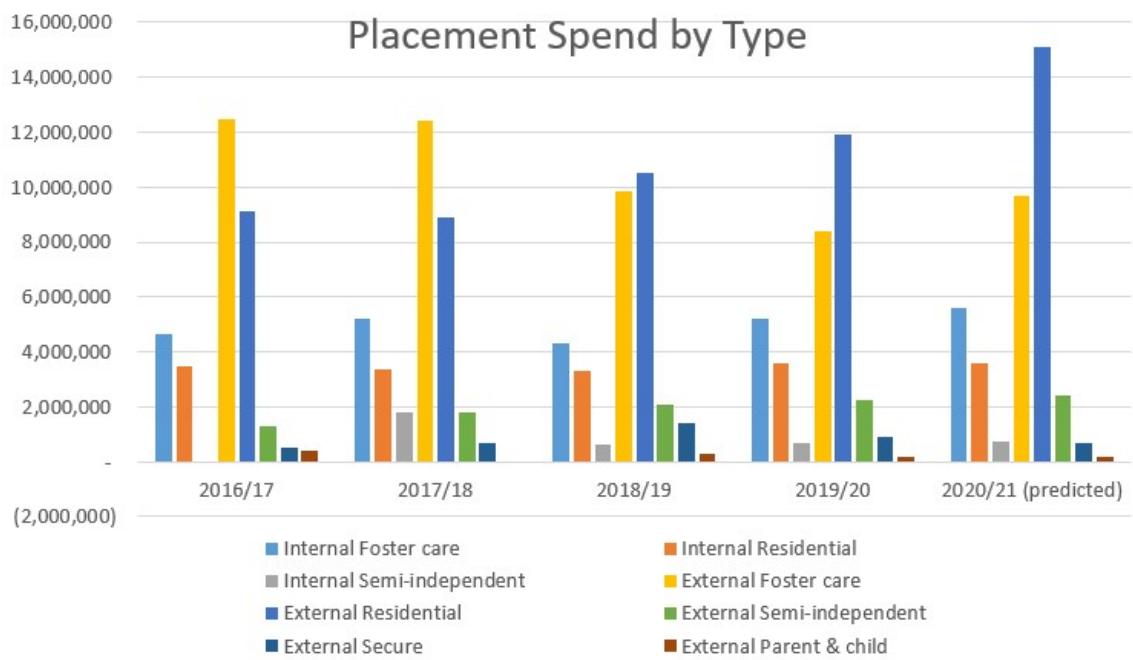


Rate of Looked After Children per 10,000							
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change from previous year	Change over five years
Nottingham	90	93	91	91	95	4.4%	5.5%
Stat. Neighbours	92.7	90.2	94.7	97	97.5	0.5%	5.2%
East Midlands	53	55	57	59	61	3.4%	15.0%
England	60	62	64	65	67	3.0%	11.6%

- 4.2 NCC places children and young people across a range of internal (local authority) and external (private) placement provision. The below data details the breakdown of these placement types over the previous three-year period. This information does not capture other placement types, such as Connected Persons, secure or hospital settings.



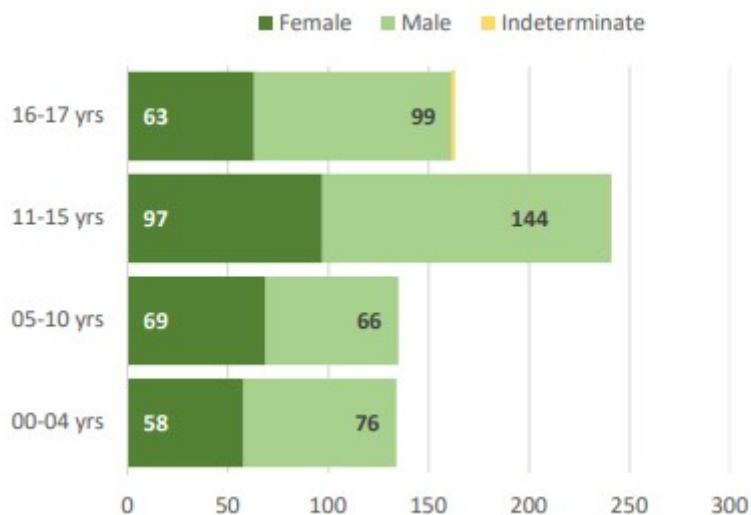
- 4.3 The proportion of CiC placed within internal fostering, compared to external fostering, has shifted from 45% to 55%. The steep increase in external residential placements over the last 12 months has been in response to an increasing presentation of complex and/or challenging behaviours amongst our children, for which there is insufficient supply of suitable foster carers to meet the demand. The decrease in internal residential was due to an intentional temporary measure to reduce capacity to ensure sufficient staffing levels as the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic hit. The level of demand, locally, regionally and nationally, particularly for fostering placements, is such, that often we find that providers are able to be selective in which children and young people they care for, and are able to set prices reflective of demand and market forces, rather than individual need. Spend by placement type is provided below.



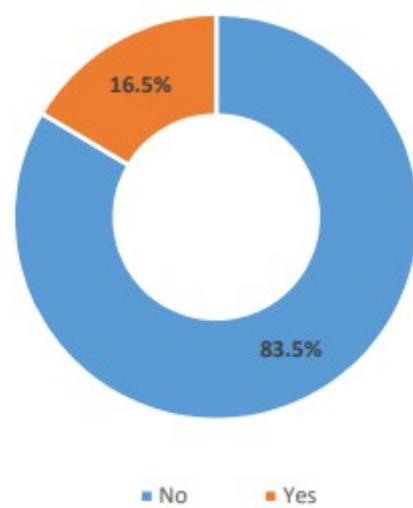
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4.4 The below data shares insight into the profile of the children and young people placed.

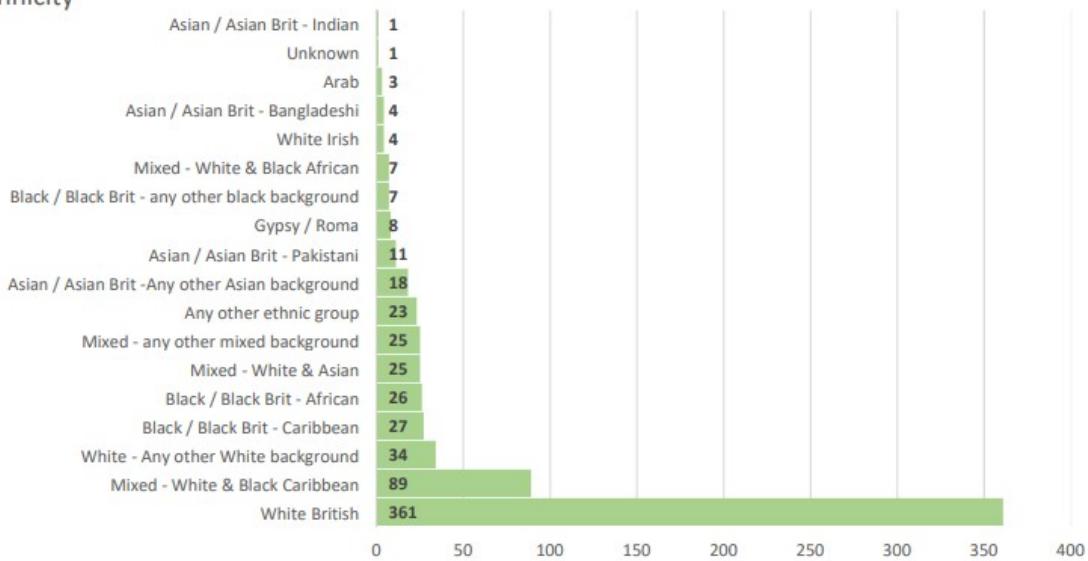
Age Band and Gender



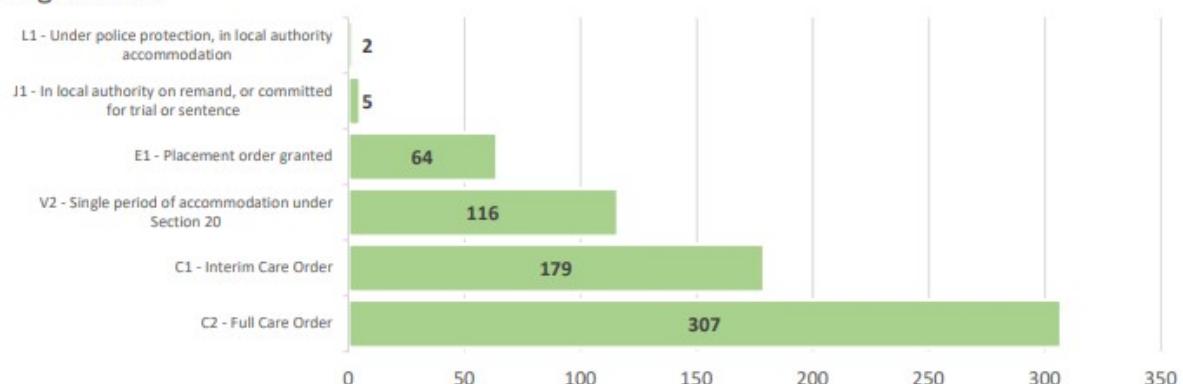
Disability



Ethnicity



Legal Status



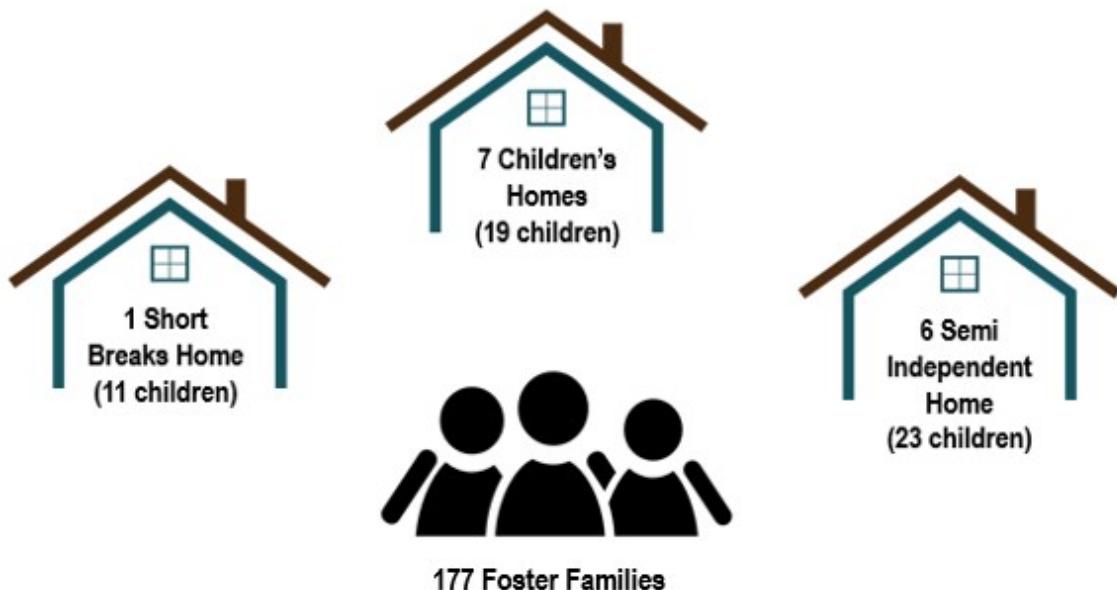
- 4.5 We know that the needs of the children we care for, are increasing in complexity. The majority of our children present with needs that are deemed typical of Children in Care; needs that can be well met within a nurturing family environment. However, for some of our children, due to their childhood experiences of neglect, abuse and trauma for example, their needs are more complex and they may require more coordinated, intensive support. Some of these children and young people display emerging mental health issues, self-harming, sexually inappropriate or challenging behaviours. Some of these children and young people are at risk of, or engaged in, child sexual and criminal exploitation. We require more providers who demonstrate expertise, skill and resilience, to provide care, intervention, treatment and stability, to enable improved outcomes for these children. We see this as a shared responsibility, and want to work collaboratively with providers to achieve this.
- 4.6 There is currently insufficient capacity to meet this demand. Most specifically within fostering placements, for older (10 years plus) and more complex children – also for specialist, secure, parent and child and emergency residential provision.



Key Sufficiency Messages

Strengths and Opportunities

- NCC's well-established, high quality internal provision;



- Seven registered children's homes, caring for up to 19 children. All Ofsted rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'
- One short breaks unit, caring for up to 11 children. Ofsted rated 'Outstanding'.
- Six unregulated semi-independent homes, able to care for up to 23 young people
- Established fostering service, providing long-term, short-term and respite family care for over 200 children and young people.
- Potential for expansion across all internal placement provision
- Increased local placements and maximised value for money achieved through NCC's long term residential block contract, established in 2015. Potential for expansion of existing, or new, block contract arrangements.
- Successful regional 'D2N2' Framework for children's fostering and residential placements, established in 2020. Increasing local placement options.
- An increasing number of NCC's Children in Care living locally (5% increase over the last five years).
- Established provider and partner relations, enabling continued market development, influence and management.
- Effective regional and sub-regional local authority relationships, achieving; shared commissioning, collaborative market management, shared intelligence, analysis, fee review governance and quality assurance.
- Regional collaboration opportunities for creative, radical redesign of solutions for the most complex placement requirements – e.g. DN2 STARS Pilot (Social Impact

Bond), delivering interventions from Edge of Care to Residential Step-Down, foster placement stability and reunification home, to ensure as many children as possible are able to live in a family environment.

- Assured quality and consistency in the support provision for young people placed in external semi-independent accommodation, through the implementation of an Accredited 16+ Support and Accommodation Scheme, embedding a standardised specification of support and accommodation (including registration with the Decent and Safe Homes (DASH) scheme)
- Comprehensive quality assurance processes.
- Robust contract management processes.
- Support and expansion of local Staying Put arrangements.
- Close partnership working between Health, Education and Social Care, to promote opportunities to achieve the best possible outcomes for young people.
- Extensive Edge of Care support through Targeted Support Team (TST), Multi Systemic Therapy Team (MST) and MST Child Abuse and Neglect (MST CAN) and Edge of Care Hub which are identifying and supporting families as an alternative to care.

Areas for Development

- There is a need for increased availability across placement provision, to increase choice, particularly for local complex fostering and residential provision, and for all emergency provision. This includes the need for more black and minority ethnic foster carers, to provide culturally appropriate placements for our children.
- We need more fostering placements for children aged 10 years and above.
- We need more local placement options for parent and child placements, including parent and child assessment provision.
- We need to further expand the opportunities to meet and effectively de-escalate the needs of the most complex children and young people – with a focus on areas of need associated with high-risk, such as; emerging mental health, self-harm, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, offending behaviour, remand placements.
- We need to be agile in our response to the minimum standards which are due to be implemented across unregulated provision for semi-independent living, and develop new approaches and options for the commissioning of placement provision for this cohort (16 – 18 year olds).
- We need to ensure consistency in the quality of all placement provision.
- We need to understand and manage the escalating costs of external placements.

5 Commissioning Direction

Approach

- 5.2 To ensure choice and diversity, NCC will continue to operate within a mixed economy of internal and external provision, commissioned through an appropriate range of mechanisms which are being developed to incentivise the achievement of specific outcomes wherever possible. This will include frameworks, block contracts, spot purchasing, and the use of a Social Impact Bond which brings investor financing alongside grant funding from the Life Chances Fund.
- 5.3 NCC will continue to maximise its use of internal provision. A focus over the coming years will be the development of new and innovative approaches to the recruitment of foster carers, targeted recruitment of carers to meet specific needs represented within our CiC cohort and the exploration of regional local authority fostering initiatives. We are further developing our successful residential estate with the addition of one further children's home, able to care for up to four children.
- 5.4 These commissioning approaches will be implemented as an individual Authority, and in regional and sub-regional partnerships, where we will seek to address common needs and challenges. 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 promote a market which is truly fit for purpose.
- 5.5 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. Where we are able to meet the needs of a child through an internal placement, this would always be our preferred option, as it allows us to offer fully joined up services for our children.
- 5.6 NCC's priority is 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. We recognise that the more we achieve in terms of placement stability and improved outcomes for our children and young people, the greater our influence is on costs and value for money also – partnerships and collaboration with providers is key to achieving both aims.

Regional Collaboration

- 5.7 NCC will continue to build upon strategic relationships with regional local authorities to achieve greater regional and sub-regional collaboration and identify future areas for tactical 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.
- 5.8 Regional work continues to be strengthened through the East Midlands commissioning leads group, achieving shared resource, intelligence and planning for care placement commissioning. Through these established East Midlands regional forums, NCC are encouraging creative discussion around radical

approaches to meeting the placement needs of the most complex children and young people. Across the region, local authorities deploy significant resources on placements for a small number of the most complex children and young people. NCC will support the development of new approaches to better meet need and improve outcomes for this cohort.

- 5.9 To this end, a strong commissioning and operational partnership has been developed with Nottinghamshire County and Derby City colleagues, resulting in the development and implementation of a Social Impact Bond. This outcomes-based contract is operating across the three authority areas to support de-escalation from residential care, support foster placements at risk of breakdown (particularly where escalation to residential settings is likely), reunify children in care with primary carers / birth family, and provide Edge of Care services.
- 5.10 Further work is underway to strengthen and expand upon the sub-regional partnership (D2N2), exploring the potential of more joint commissioning approaches with the local market of fostering, residential and semi-independent provision, across the D2N2 area. The local market will be consulted on different approaches to commissioning and contracting, to better meet the needs of our children and young people, and to improve quality, sufficiency and value for money.

Local Placements for Local Children

- 5.11 Nottingham defines a 'local' placement as anywhere within a 20-mile radius from Nottingham City Centre. Where appropriate, the aim is for children and young people to remain living locally, taking into consideration maintaining a young person's educational, health, social and cultural connections and access to resources. Nottingham City currently has 84% of its CiC living within this 20-mile radius (against a target of 85%). This has improved by 5% over the last five years, which is an even greater achievement when compared against a national picture of an overall reduction.

% of Looked After Children Placed within 20 miles from Home							
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change from previous year	Change over five years
Nottingham	79%	84%	83%	82%	84%	↑ 2%	↑ 5%
Stat. Neighbours	86%	86%	85%	86%	85%	↓ 1%	↓ 1%
East Midlands	84%	84%	85%	85%	81%	↓ 4%	↓ 3%
England	86%	86%	85%	85%	84%	↓ 1%	↓ 2%

- 5.12 NCC continues to work collaboratively 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. Small scale block contracting has increased local placement capacity, whilst broader market development will improve co-ordination, provision of more specialist foster care, and advanced placement planning. 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.

6 Market Position and Sufficiency

Market Development Approach

- 6.1 To effectively shape the market, NCC 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. We believe that the market should be;
- Composed of 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
- 6.2 The development of such a market locally / regionally requires close partnership working with neighbouring authorities to present a viable proposition to providers in the area. This collaboration will continue on a regional and sub-regional basis, with the aim of creating, developing and sustaining more specific local commissioner-provider partnerships that are better equipped to meet need and demand.

Internal Provision

- 6.3 NCC is committed to maximising the effectiveness of internal provision and securing 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.
- 6.4 Fostering
In January 2021, 55% of fostered young people were placed with internal foster carers. Whilst the proportion of young people placed with internal foster carers fluctuates over time, the trajectory over the last 12 months has been one of increasing or maintaining internal foster placement numbers. In 2018, 47% of fostered young people were placed with internal foster carers, demonstrating an 8% increase. NCC has pledged to continue the drive to increase the capacity of the internal fostering service over the next two years. It is anticipated that this will enable more children to be placed locally, reduce external spend and achieve improved placement management throughout a child's journey through care, ultimately leading to overall improved outcomes.
- 6.5 It is acknowledged that growing the internal fostering service will be challenging and will take time. The priority will always be finding the right family for the child, and therefore we will always need our local Independent Fostering Agencies to help us achieve this. A priority for NCC is working with these local IFAs to explore alternative commissioning approaches that enable providers to better meet demand, particularly where a bespoke arrangement may enable them to support more complex and challenging children to maintain living within a family environment.

- 6.6 **Residential**
NCC has seven registered children's homes, caring for up to 19 children. In addition, NCC has one short breaks unit, caring for up to 11 children. The homes provide high quality consistent care and are rated by Ofsted as either Good or Outstanding. Plans for one further home, able to care for up to four children, is currently in development. The strategic aim of the internal investment is to help NCC to keep its more complex young people closest to the City and the network of care and support services that can be marshalled around those individuals when their placement remains local to the authority.
- 6.7 **Semi Independent**
NCC has six unregulated semi-independent homes, able to care for up to 23 young people. These well-established provisions offer consistent, high quality, flexible accommodation and support for those young people embarking upon their journey to full independence. New approaches and options are regularly considered and a plan is being developed to implement a supported lodgings option for these young people, by the Summer of 2021.

Internal Governance

In addition to the Looked After Child planning and review process, NCC have a number of decision making forums which review the quality and appropriateness of placements, and ultimately impact upon placement demand

Edge of Care Panel
The Edge of Care Panel ensures a robust process for determining the threshold for children being accommodated. Through a menu of alternative interventions, such as Multi Systemic Therapy and wrap around support in the home, the Edge of Care Panel is able to prevent inappropriate admissions and facilitate timely rehabilitation where this meets the needs of the child.

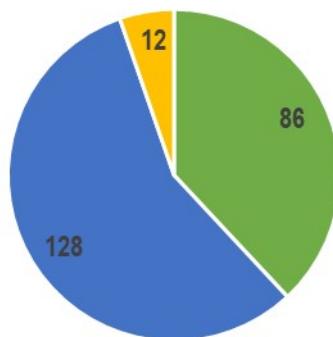
Placements Panel, Reunification Panel, Transitions Panel

These Panels meet on a weekly rotation to review placement progress, placement planning and transition plans for young people preparing for independent living. These panels also consider quality and value for money of placements, and consider requests for placement package variations. Membership spans a broad range of professions, including social care, education and CAMHS - all of whom contribute to determining whether or not each placement is meeting the child or young person's needs.

External Provision

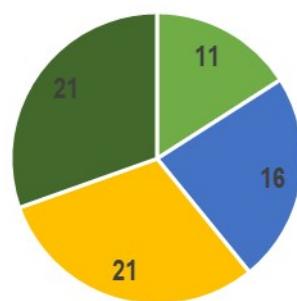
- 6.8 The external market meets a significant proportion of the City's CiC placement needs, through framework, block contracting and spot purchasing arrangements. Despite the intention to maximise internal provision, it is acknowledged that there is an ongoing need to commission from the external market. The Placement Service undertakes effective, consistent procurement, contract management and quality assurance of all external placements. The data below provides an overview of external placement commissioning, as a snapshot from March 2021;

External Fostering



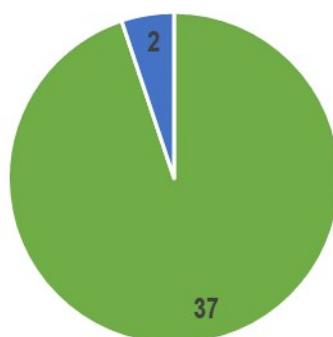
■ D2N2 Framework ■ Historic East Mids Framework ■ Spot Purchased

External Residential



■ Block Contract ■ D2N2 Framework ■ Historic East Mids Framework ■ Spot Purchased

External Semi Independent



■ Accredited Provider ■ Spot Purchase

6.9 D2N2 Children in Care Placement Framework

The East Midlands Regional Children's Framework expired in 2020. The Framework provided a formalised agreement between participating local authorities and independent providers of fostering and residential placement provision. In February 2020, this was superseded by the D2N2 Children in Care Placement Framework, following consideration of the improved benefits achievable through working on a more local footprint. The Framework has brought about benefits including; efficiencies, shared risk, buying power, market influence and information and resource sharing. An annual Market Position Statement is published by the D2N2 Framework, which should be considered alongside this Strategy.

6.10 The framework supports NCC to;

- Maintain a diverse, healthy and competitive market by enabling new providers to join the Framework annually throughout the life of the contract.
- Achieve efficiencies through streamlined processes and coordinated contract management and performance monitoring.
- Enable further targeted commissioning through a mini competition process, omitting the need to undertake further lengthy and resource heavy procurement exercises.

6.11 Residential Block Contract

As an identified commissioning priority, in April 2015, NCC implemented a long term block contract for ten residential placements with one external provider. Since implementation and following the move to full usage, the contract has demonstrated a shared approach to ensuring good outcomes, increased local provision, greater placement stability and value for money. The contract to date has supported the achievement of;

- An increased percentage of children and young people placed locally.
- A significant reduction in local authority spend on residential care (alongside improved budget management and forecasting).
- Efficiencies via reduced staff time and travel expenses (e.g. social care and quality assurance visits).
- Efficiencies via reduced need to commission out of area services (e.g. CAMHS, education).
- Greater forward planning for the local authority and provider, leading to improved outcomes and placement stability.
- Greater consistency of service delivered.
- A close and collaborative working relationship with a residential provider that now has a significant local presence

It is the intention of NCC to increase block contracting arrangements, to further achieve these benefits.

6.12 Fostering

The immediate priority will be to secure greater local sufficiency of foster placements for CiC presenting with highly complex needs, to reduce unnecessary disruptions and increase the chance of placement stability and improved outcomes for this cohort. Furthermore, the work to address sufficiency locally for this cohort has a clear aim of avoiding escalation to residential care on the basis of lack of fostering capacity rather than due to children and young people's specific needs.

Directly linked to the increased activity in recruiting foster carers is to ensure carers are well trained and supported to consistently meet the needs of the children placed in their care

6.13 **Semi Independent Provision**

Unlike fostering and residential provision, semi-independent provision is not regulated by Ofsted and there are very few barriers to new providers establishing themselves. This proves beneficial in terms of ensuring a diverse market which provides choice and encourages healthy competition - however it is also a risk in terms of quality and consistency of services provided.

- 6.14 In response to this, NCC has undertaken a programme of quality improvement work with local providers, setting new quality standards which include accreditation of properties by the East Midlands Decent and Safe Housing service which is hosted by Derby City Council. An open accreditation process allows providers to commit to NCC's specified standards and helps to ensure that young people are offered consistent quality accommodation and support in their transition to independence. It is believed that further improvement can be achieved through block contracting of this provision, to enable NCC to invest in a more direct and collaborative approach to improved quality and meeting the anticipated minimum standards.

- 6.15 To further expand our offer, recognising that some young people do not want to 'stay put', we are increasing choices for young people with a plan being developed to deliver a supported lodgings option with the support of host families. These developments, will produce a new family-based alternative to traditional Semi-Independent services.

6.16 **Spot Purchasing**

Spot purchased provision will be commissioned for services that are not available through internal provision or external regional and local contract arrangements and where there has been no previous or predicted demand. A specific contract has been developed for spot purchased placement services to ensure a robust legal position is maintained.

Contract Management

- 6.17 An Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) is issued for all commissioned placements and these form a contractual agreement between the local authority and the provider. The IPA provides detail on specific aspects of the placement, the expected objectives/outcomes, fees and consenting signatures from the local authority and the provider
- 6.18 Meetings are held with all providers of commissioned placements a minimum of once every six months and consider the following areas: contract and compliance monitoring, performance management, business development; individual placements, feedback from social care, health, education, young people, opportunities for improvement/increased value for money and negotiations on the level of support being provided.

Quality Assurance

- 6.19 Through robust commissioning and quality assurance process, NCC ensures that all CiC are accessing well matched, high quality and value for money care placements. A system for monitoring providers, which takes into consideration performance, business viability, inspection judgements, history and complexity of current placements, determines the level and frequency of quality assurance visits. The visits are undertaken by the Placement Service's Quality Assurance Officer and selected social care professionals. Placement feedback from Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officers and children and young people is gathered to support quality assurance processes. Clear service protocols determine the required actions to be undertaken by NCC where quality concerns are identified.
- 6.20 It is Nottingham City Council's ambition to only place with Ofsted judged 'Good' and 'Outstanding' providers. However, the demand for both fostering and residential placements locally, regionally and nationally, combined with the type and level of young people's needs that are often evident when a placement is required at short notice, mean that we do have to consider offers from providers with lesser Ofsted judgments. The current position with the private market is one that allows providers to be very selective as demand for placements is high. It is therefore natural that such providers may shy away from more challenging or complex young people as they may be seen to pose a risk to a provider's Ofsted grade. When NCC has to place a young person with a provider that has an Ofsted rating of less than 'Good' we ensure that our expectations for the service and what is required to meet the needs of the young person are very clear. When making such a placement NCC Placement Service ensures that robust quality assurance is carried out as soon as possible, and that the provider improves to a level of 'good' within a prompt timescale.

Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy – Recommendations

No	Recommendations
1.	<p>Radical Redesign and Market Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with the East Midlands and D2N2 local authority partners to explore alternative commissioning approaches with the local market, to meet the placement needs of all children and young people in the geographical area, including the most complex children and young people across the East Midlands / D2N2, and to ensure choice and value for money. Maximise opportunity through the STARS, social impact bond, to support complex and challenging children to live within a family setting. Develop a broader understanding of placement stability across residential and foster care placements to inform requirements within the market and support the work across the region. Deep dive into financial modelling and highest cost placements. Implementation of a systematic approach to negotiation of high cost placements – predominantly regarding residential provision
2.	<p>Fostering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of NCC foster carers including the use of targeted recruitment campaigns and specifically recruiting carers with relevant backgrounds and a strong desire to care for older and/or more complex young people (to include perspective STARS carers), and parent and child carers Review of internal training and support offer for foster carers Bespoke fostering packages for small cohort of complex children Explore D2N2 collaboration options for internal fostering, shared resource, and external commissioning options Explore commissioning options for external foster carers for older and complex children Understand what works to enable carers to continue caring for complex children
3.	<p>Residential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to manage the current residential contract to ensure children and young people are placed in local provision that is of high quality and represents value for money. Consider additional developments within the contract to meet emerging needs as required. Development of further block contracting arrangements for children's residential care, with a model of smaller group homes – either through existing block contract or via mini competition through D2N2 Framework Development of internal four bed home Commissioning of emergency resource (either NCC or D2N2)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist therapeutic and mental health provision Local parent and child provision
4.	<p>Semi Independent Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a block contract for semi-independent accommodation and support, to include the provision of emergency resource Explore opportunity for sub-regional commissioning arrangement to meet any demand outside of the internal and block contracted Consider the development of additional internal Semi Independent units Further development and expansion of Staying Put arrangements with internal foster carers. Implement Supported Lodgings (host families) model as a trial of this approach for specific cohorts 16 years plus as an alternative to Semi-Independent placements Exploration of 'Gap Homes' model
5.	<p>Support children with complex health needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint work with Health partners to develop placement planning, commissioning and support for children in care with complex needs. To include physical, mental health and learning needs. To develop upon the existing Continuing Care Framework for Children in Care, alongside strengthening pathways for young people entitled to Section 117 support and for young people with health needs that fall outside of the Continuing Care Framework.

