



Nottingham
City Council

Children in Care Placements - Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy

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

2014 – 2016

2015 Update: One Year On

“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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Background and Purpose

All 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.

In response to this duty, in April 2014, Nottingham City Council published its first Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy to determine the way in which Children in Care (CiC) placements are commissioned, 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 minimum standards, commissioning plans and accelerated strands for the placement market.

The purpose of this update is to revisit the vision and commitments made in the Strategy and to provide an overview of the progress to date upon each of the agreed commissioning plans and accelerated strands for the placement market.

The paper will also provide an update on the City's sufficiency requirements, providing detail on any change within the market strengths and weaknesses.

Vision and Commitment

In line with the Nottingham City Council Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan, the overarching ambition of the 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.

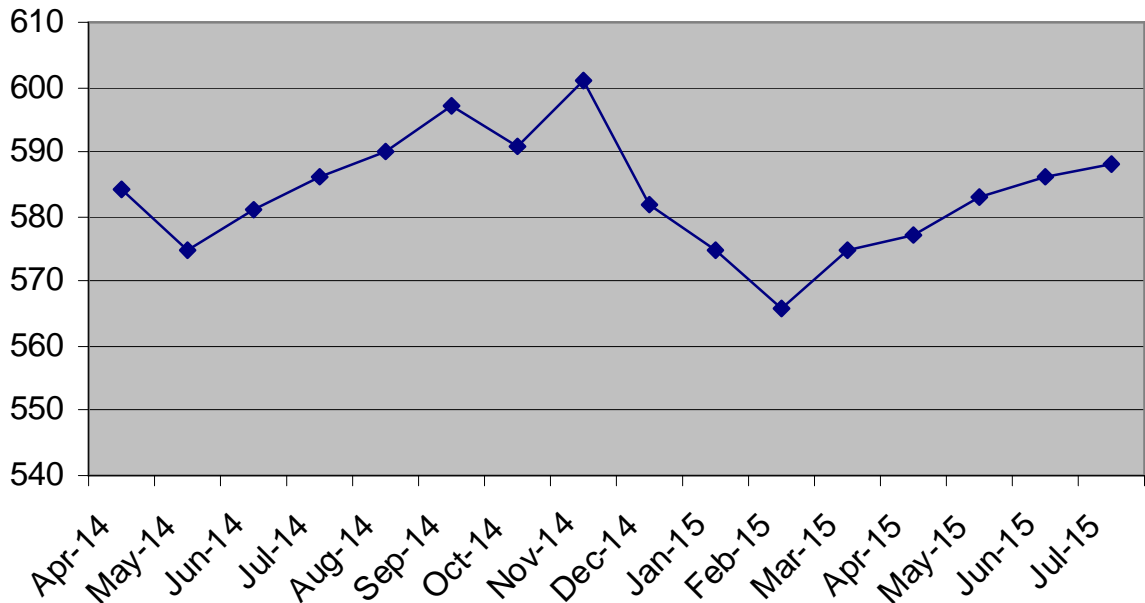
The Commitment

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

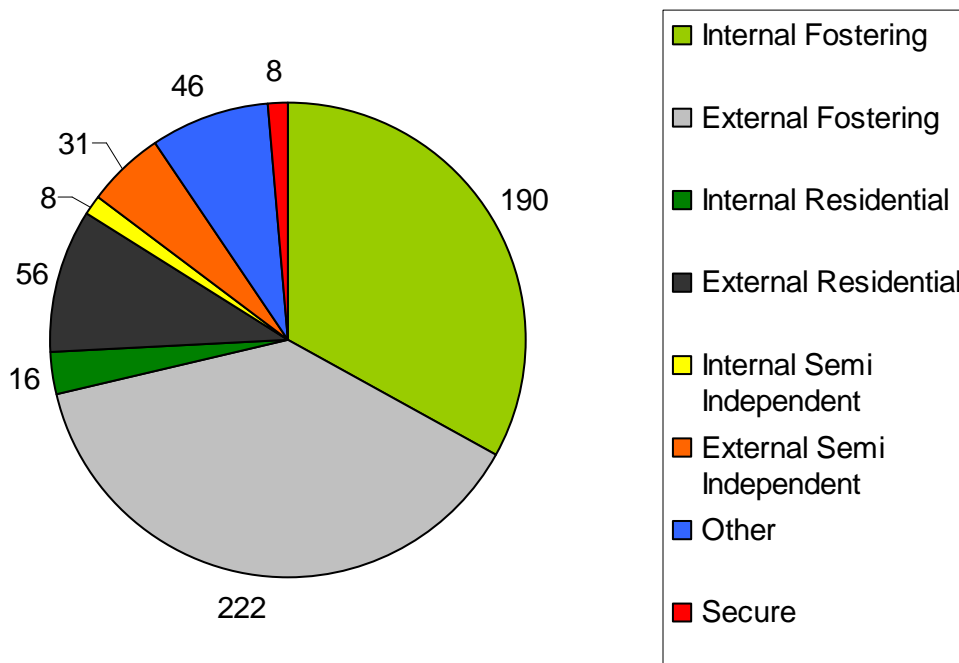
- ✓ Secure the best possible placement for every child and young person, in an open market, with consistent application of processes and standards across internal and external provision.
- ✓ Place a minimum of 90% (fostering) and 80% (residential) of children and young people 'locally'. For those placements 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.

Analysis undertaken into the CiC cohort provides detailed insight into the City's sufficiency requirements, revealing the market strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities. This section provides an overview of the current market position.

Children in Care Population (April 2014 – July 2015)



Nottingham has the 19th highest rate of Children in Care per 10,000 children, yet despite its high ranking, the City has a lower rate than seven of its eleven statistical neighbours.



The above chart demonstrates the number of CiC placed in each placement type as of 31.03.2015. 'Other' includes CiC placed for adoption, with parents and in NHS settings.

Proportion of Internal Versus External Placements at 31.03.2015

Fostering (412)		
	Number	Percentage
Internal	190	46% (↓ 5%)
External	222	54%
Residential (72)		
	Number	Percentage
Internal	16	22% (↓ 5%)
External	56	78%
Semi Independence (39)		
	Number	Percentage
Internal	8	21% (↓ 4%)
External	31	79%

Gender of Children in Care

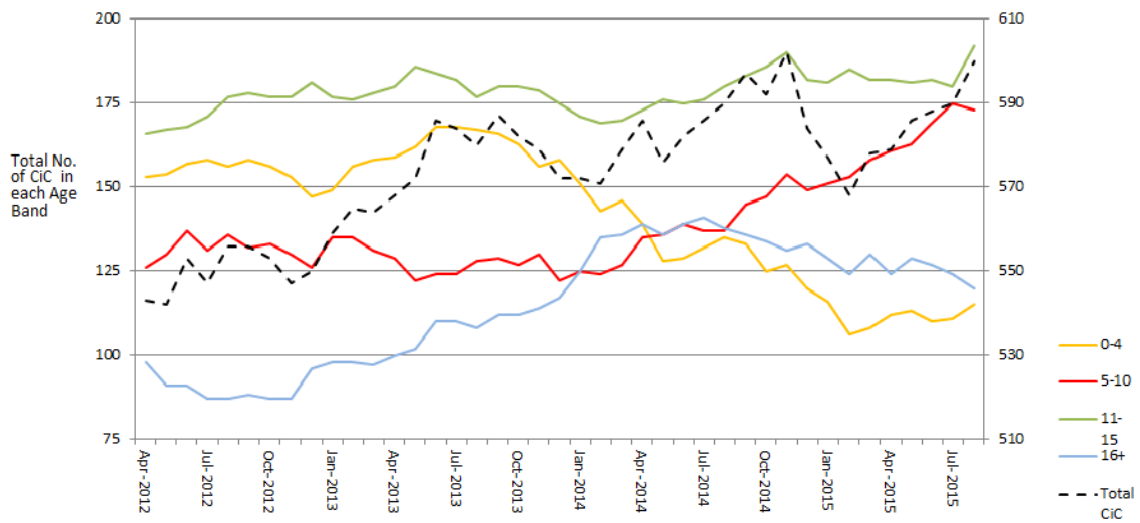
	Male (count)	Male (%)	Female (count)	Female (%)	Total
Internal Fostering	90	47%	100	53%	190
External Fostering	95	43%	127	57%	222
Internal Residential	9	56%	7	44%	16
External Residential	33	59%	23	41%	56
Internal Semi Independent	4	50%	4	50%	8
External Semi Independent	15	48%	16	52%	31

Legal Status of Children in Care

	Section 20 (Voluntary)	Full Care Order	Interim Care Order	Placement Order
Internal Fostering	41	59	45	45
External Fostering	36	130	24	32
Internal Residential	6	10	0	0
External Residential	31	24	1	0
Internal Semi Independent	6	2	0	0
External Semi Independent	19	10	2	0

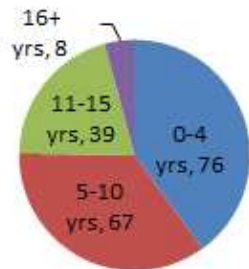
Age of Children in Care

Age band profile over time

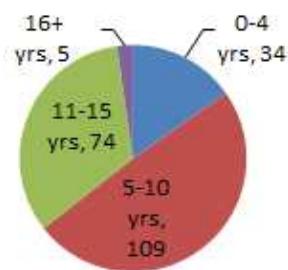


Age at time of placement

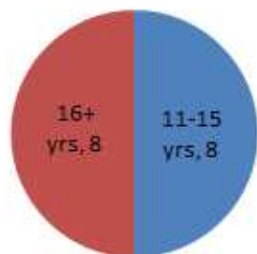
Internal Fostering



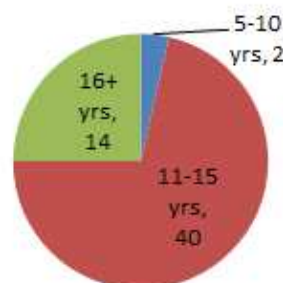
External Fostering



Internal Residential



External Residential



As expected, the internal fostering service cares for a higher proportion of the younger cohort (0-4 years), whilst external fostering cares for a higher proportion of the older, and often more complex, cohort.

Key Sufficiency Messages

✘ Areas for Development

Carried over from Strategy at April 2014

- Develop quality and consistency in the support provision for young people placed in external semi-independent accommodation.
- Further develop consistent application of processes and monitoring standards across internal and external provision.
- Insufficient expert knowledge of what does and does not work (e.g. most appropriate placement model for victims/perpetrators of sexual abuse)
- Meeting and effectively de-escalating the needs of the most complex children and young people remains a challenge.
- Limited financial resources.
- Lack of incentives for providers to ensure excellent outcomes for children and young people in their care.

Added at March 2015

- Limited availability across placement provision is restricting choice and matching prioritisation, particularly for local complex fostering and residential provision and for all emergency provision.
- Risk of market instability, monopolies and over saturation, due to competing local authority and provider priorities.
- Development of fostering opportunities for children within Nottingham City Council internal provision and commissioning priorities

✔ Strengths and Opportunities

Carried over from Strategy at April 2014

- Effective provider, local authority and partner relations, enabling improved market influence and management.
- Opportunities to maximise the effectiveness and define the unique selling point of internal provider.
- Further integration of Health, Education and Social Care.

Added at March 2015

- Improved East Midlands Regional Provider Framework, due to be implemented in February 2016, provides an opportunity for more creative and efficient commissioning arrangements.
- Residential block contract securing local placements and reducing spend.
- Comprehensive Quality Assurance process.
- Capacity to scrutinise value for money and budget management (including Health contributions).

Year One Achievements

Based upon the accelerated strands identified within the Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy and the first phase of the Implementation Plan, this section provides an overview of progress to date.

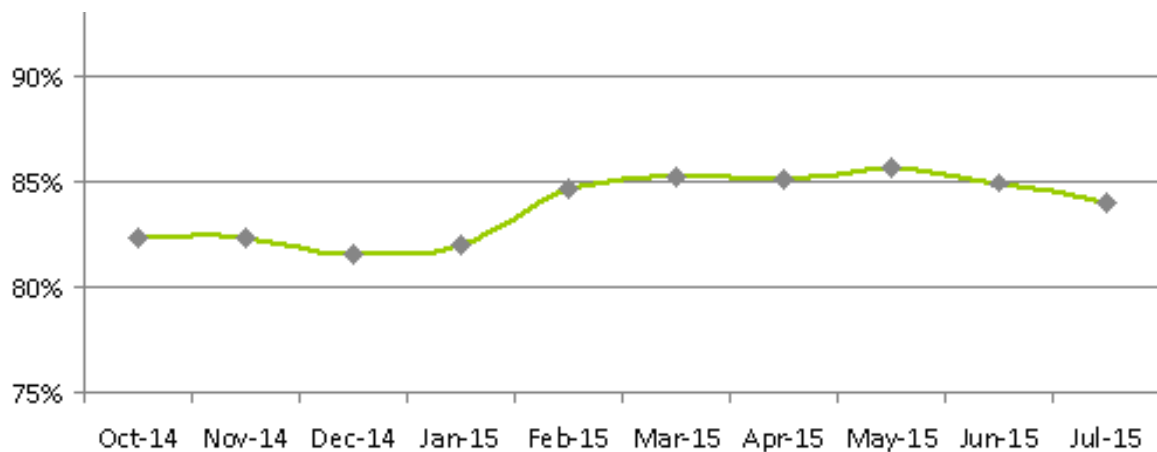
Market Development

In order to shape the market to meet demand, NCC have maintained a strong visible presence and consulted directly with the market, articulating a clear direction for what is required internally and externally to best meet the needs of CiC. Work continues to be undertaken at a local, regional and sub-regional level.

Local Placements

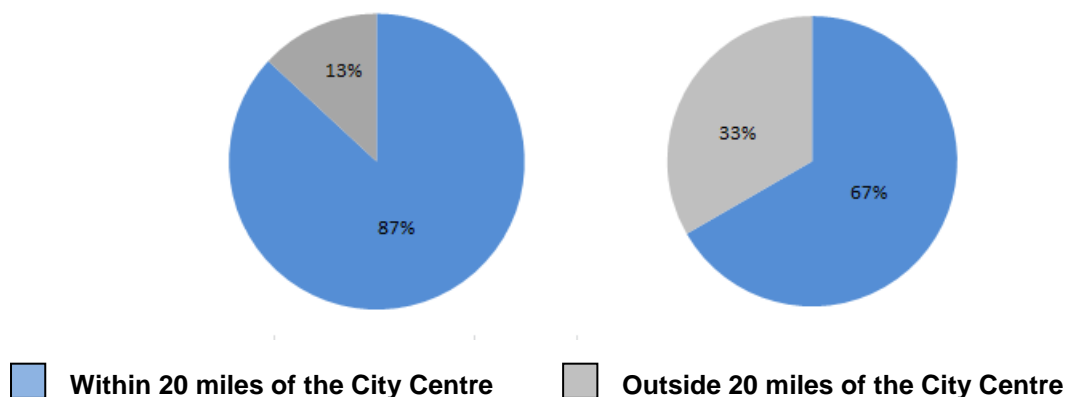
Where appropriate, the priority is for all children and young people to remain living locally, taking into consideration maintaining a young person's educational, health, social and cultural connections and access to resources. NCC has pledged to ensure that a minimum of 85% of CiC live within 20 miles of the City. The below graph demonstrates the change in this percentage. Despite the more recent decline since May 2015, the percentage of local placements has increased overall.

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 is increasing local placement capacity, whilst broader market development will improve co-ordination and advanced placement planning.



Fostering

Residential



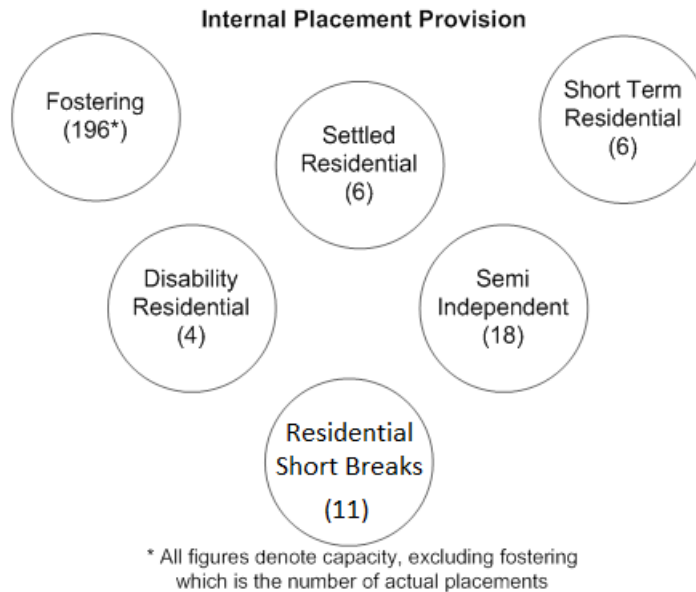
The Strategy makes a commitment to place a minimum of 90% (fostering) and 80% (residential) of children and young people within a 20 mile radius of the City Centre. The above charts demonstrate the percentage of all placements meeting these criteria at 31.03.2015. The percentage of fostering placements within the local boundary has increased by 1% from the previous year, however has decreased by 3% for residential placements.

It should be acknowledged that many of the residential placements will have been intentionally placed outside of the local authority area, to best respond to the needs of the young person. Reasons can include; young people at risk from individuals/affiliations in the local area; young people requiring highly specialist provision which is not available locally.

A recommendation from this update paper is to revise the Strategy's commitment to align with NCC's manifesto pledge for 85% of all children and young people to be placed within the 20 mile radius.

Internal Market Development

NCC are 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.



Fostering

At 31.03.2015, 46% of young people were placed with internal foster carers. NCC have pledged to increase this proportion to 50% by March 2016. 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.

In order to achieve this, the internal provider will be competing with independent fostering agencies who are offering attractive carer packages, which due to financial and resource constraints, it would not be feasible for the local authority to match. Instead NCC will utilise recruitment expertise to develop and market the internal provider's own unique selling point. Once carers are recruited, it will aim to improve upon current retention rates through quality support and training opportunities.

It is acknowledged that achieving the target will be challenging and will take time. Interim external commissioning arrangements will therefore be progressed to secure local foster placements. This will require effective cross directorate working and careful market management to ensure that interdependent priorities are effectively managed and do not compromise the overall ambition.

Residential

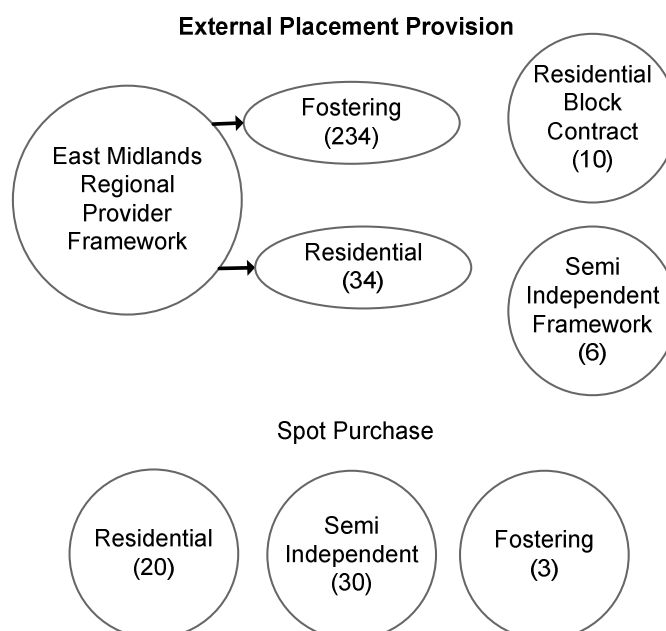
NCC has 16 residential care home placements across six small group homes. There are no plans to increase the current estate, however there is the intention to change the registration of one of the small group homes from short term to long term. This will achieve placement stability for the cohort and for the home, however it will impact upon the number of external residential placement referrals as there is no definitive indication that the current need will reduce in the near future.

Semi Independent

NCC has 18 semi independent placements across five homes. Two new semi independent homes have been commissioned since the Strategy's implementation, offering consistent quality, flexible accommodation and support.

External Market Development

The external market meets a significant proportion of the City's CIC placement needs, through framework, block contracting and spot purchasing arrangements. The Placement Service undertakes effective, consistent procurement, contract management and quality assurance of all external placements. Despite the intention to maximise internal provision, it is acknowledged that there is an ongoing need to commission from the external market.



East Midlands Regional Provider Framework

Implemented in 01.04.2011, and extended to 31.12.2015, the Framework has brought about a number of benefits including; efficiencies, shared risk, buying power, market influence and information and resource sharing. NCC has been working collaboratively with eight regional authorities to inform the development of the new Framework, which will be implemented in February 2016.

It is Nottingham City's intention to remain in the Framework, which provides the opportunity for more dynamic arrangements 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.

Residential Block Contract

A block contract for ten residential placements with one external provider was implemented in April 2015. It is anticipated that the contract will achieve;

- 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.

Remand Foster Care Pilot

NCC embarked upon a 12 month sub-regional pilot for the foster care of remanded young people, with Nottinghamshire County and Derby City. The pilot was commissioned through an Independent Foster Agency and involved retaining several foster carers who were specifically trained and supported to care for young people who had been remanded to local authority care. Evaluation of the pilot concluded that it would not be financially viable in the long term, due to the low usage across the life of the pilot.

Semi Independent Provision

A Framework contract for providers of semi independent support and accommodation was implemented on 01.11.2011 and is due to expire on 31.10.2015. In 2014/15, only 23% of external semi independent placements were made through the Framework. The remainder were spot purchased. These figures have been consistent throughout the lifetime of the Framework.

Since the Framework's implementation, the market has developed significantly. As the provision is unregulated, 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 also poses a risk in terms of quality and consistency of services provided. Future commissioning intentions are currently being explored and will be progressed towards the end of 2015.

In response to the imminent need for emergency semi independent provision, small scale retained arrangements were made to reduce the likelihood of need not being met.

A block contract for Supported Lodgings was decommissioned early to prevent unnecessary spend.

Quality Assurance

Through a robust 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 determines the level and frequency of quality assurance visits, which are undertaken by the Lead Quality Assurance Officer and selected social care professionals. Dedicated semi independence experts have been trained to undertake visits to ensure consistency throughout semi independent provision.

A suite of protocols have been implemented to address;

- a provider receiving an 'Inadequate' or 'Adequate' / 'Requires Improvement' 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

Closer partnership working with regional colleagues is maximising shared intelligence.

Phase Two Implementation Plan

Targeted Market Development (*October 2015 – January 2016*)

In response to the current local capacity issue, imminent market development work is required to mitigate the risk of not meeting demand. The service will consult directly with the market, specifically around complex fostering and residential provision, with the aim of creating greater local capacity and placement choice. This will require effective cross directorate working and careful market management to ensure that any arrangements with the external market do not compromise the ambition of internal provision.

The Placement Service will articulate to providers what excellent outcomes look like for each child and young person and explore incentives for over-achievement.

East Midlands Regional Provider Framework

- Evaluation / scoring of tenders (*19 October 2015 to 13 November 2015*)
- Moderation (*16 November 2015 – 05 December 2015*)
- Implementation (*01 February 2016*)

Residential Block Contract

- Phased implementation to full capacity of ten placements by *November 2015*
- Implementation of Placement Matching Panel (*January 2016*)
- Ongoing contract monitoring and performance management

Fostering

Targeted fostering models:

- Bridging Placements: short term placements to stabilise, assess, prepare and transition a young person to an appropriate long term placement
- Complex Needs Placements: skilled, trained, experienced and supported carers for young people requiring intensive/specialist support

Exploration to determine whether these models will be developed and delivered by the internal provider, or commissioned from the external market (*October 2015*). Estimated Implementation by *July 2016*.

Semi Independent Provision

- Current Framework expires **31 October 2015**
- Options appraisal for future commissioning intentions (**October 2015 – January 2016**)
- Estimated implementation of new arrangements by **March 2016**

Placement Service Capacity

- Capacity to increase Continuing Health Care Contributions (**June 2015 – June 2016**)
- Capacity to review financial contracting arrangements with providers (**October 2015 – March 2016**)

Outcomes (*timescales TBC*)

- Capture themes emerging from on-going quality assurance activity including: (1) how to incentivise excellent outcomes for the child/young person and (2) identifying what works when caring for victims/perpetrators of sexual abuse, in order to help define the most appropriate placement model
- 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.
- 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