



Children in Care Placements - Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy

A Strategic Approach to the Commissioning
of Children in Care Placements

2016 - 2018



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

Strategy and Commissioning, Children and Families, Nottingham City Council

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 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. 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 minimum standards, commissioning plans and accelerated strands for the placement market.
- 1.3 The Strategy for 2016-2018 details key developments and market changes and drivers over the previous two year period, including current market gaps and opportunities. Recommendations for accelerated work streams and the implementation plan will be led by the Council's Strategy and Commissioning Directorate, but owned by City partners as a whole.

2. Background

- 2.1 Nottingham is a vibrant City with a high and diverse population. It is a city of business and enterprise, learning and science, sport and culture. Nottingham, like other cities, still faces challenges. Its socio-economic factors; deprivation, unemployment, domestic abuse, alcohol and substance misuse, all impact on the volume and complexity of needs presented by children and young people. Nottingham's Children in Care (CiC) population remains higher than the national average, but is below the average of its statistical neighbours.
- 2.2 Like other local authorities, one of the greatest challenges for the City, is improving the 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 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. Nottingham City has remained agile in its response to these challenges. The City's Placement Service has dedicated capacity to implement robust market development, contracting and quality assurance processes. Accelerated strands from the 2014-2016 Strategy, detailed within this paper, have led to increased transparency of services and quality, delivered greater value for money, more effective provider relations and improved market management.

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, in an open market, with consistent application of processes across internal and external provision.
- ✓ Place a minimum of 85% of all 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.
- ✓ Provide consistency in the quality, support and entitlements offered to children and young people within all placement provision, through standardised specifications, contracts and requirements.
- ✓ Articulate to providers what excellent outcomes look like for each child and young person and be open to exploring incentives for over-achievement.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ 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
 - Escalate and recommend change when a young person has experienced multiple placement breakdowns
- ✓ Implement robust commissioning, contract and quality assurance processes.

4. Key Sufficiency Messages

Strengths and Opportunities

- Effective provider, local authority and partner relations, enabling continued market development, influence and management.
- Regional opportunities for creative, radical redesign of solutions for the most complex placement requirements.
- Implementation of the new East Midlands Regional Provider Framework (2016 – 2020) and the opportunity for more creative and efficient commissioning arrangements.
- Increased local placements and maximised value for money achieved through the implementation of a long term residential block contract.
- Assured quality and consistency in the support provision for young people placed in external semi-independent accommodation through the implementation of a new block contract and framework.
- Comprehensive quality assurance processes.
- Robust contract management processes.
- Capacity to scrutinise value for money and budget management (including Health contributions).
- Opportunities to maximise the effectiveness and define the unique selling point of the internal provider.
- Further integration of commissioning from Health, Education and Social Care.
- Development of extensive Edge of Care support through Targeted Support Team (TST), Multi Systemic Therapeutic 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

- Increased availability across placement provision to ensure 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.
- Meeting and effectively de-escalating the needs of the most complex children and young people.
- Developing expert knowledge and experience of what does and does not work (e.g. most appropriate placement model for victims/perpetrators of sexual abuse, challenging behaviours)
- Continued local authority financial pressures requiring innovative solutions to ensure the City sufficiently meets demand.

5. Commissioning Direction

Approach

- 5.1 To ensure choice and diversity and to avoid monopolies, NCC will continue to 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. 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.
- 5.2 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. 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.
- 5.3 We work with Independent Reviewing Officers and Social Workers to understand the individual needs, wishes and feelings of children and young people for each individual placement search. We also work directly with the Children In Care and Care Leavers Council when undertaking commissioning or development activity to ensure their views inform decision making.

Regional Collaboration

- 5.4 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 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.
- 5.5 Through 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, all 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, radical approaches to redesign solutions to better meet needs and improve outcomes for this cohort.

Local Placements for Local Children

- 5.6 Nottingham defines a 'local' placement as anywhere within the boundaries of a 20 mile radius from Nottingham City Centre. Where appropriate, the priority is 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. The ambition is for 85% of all CiC to be placed locally. The current proportion is 83.6% (*based upon an average year to date*).
- 5.7 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. 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

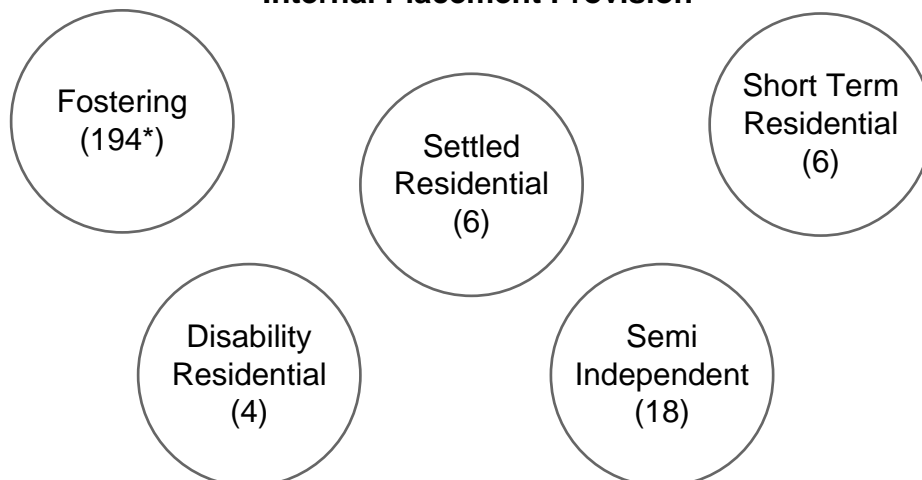
Market Development Approach

- 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. 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

Internal Provision

- 6.2 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.

Internal Placement Provision



* All figures denote capacity, excluding fostering which is the number of actual placements

- 6.3 Fostering
 At 31.03.2016, 43% of fostered young people were placed with internal foster carers. NCC have pledged to increase this proportion 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.

- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 Residential
NCC has 16 residential care home placements across six small group homes. The homes provide high quality consistent care and are rated by Ofsted as either 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. 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 demand will reduce in the near future. Refer to quality – all good / outstanding
- 6.6 Semi Independent
NCC has 18 semi-independent placements across five homes. These well-established provisions offer consistent, high quality, flexible accommodation and support for those young people embarking upon their journey to full independence.

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 exits from care.

Matching Panel

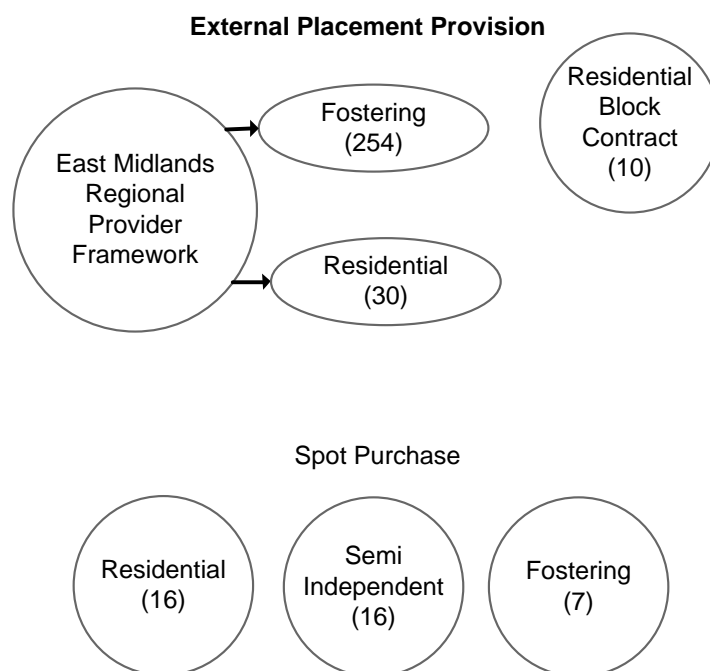
The Matching Panel meet monthly to consider all referrals for residential and semi-independent accommodation, ensuring consistency across internal and external contracted residential provision and internal semi-independence provision.

Placements Panel

The Placements Panel meet weekly to review placement progress, ensure value for money and to consider requests for placement package variations. Membership spans a broad range of professions, including social care, health, education and CAMHS - all of whom contribute to determining whether or not each placement is meeting the child or young person's needs.

6.7 External Provision

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.



6.8 East Midlands Regional Provider Framework

The new East Midlands Regional Provider Framework was implemented in February 2016. The Framework provides a formalised agreement between participating local authorities and independent providers of fostering and residential placement provision. The previous Framework brought about multiple benefits, including; efficiencies, shared risk, buying power, market influence and information and resource sharing.

6.9 Building upon the success and capturing learning from the previous framework, the new arrangements offer added dynamics in order 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.

6.10 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. In

the first year of implementation, the contract has demonstrated a shared approach to ensuring good outcomes, increased local provision, greater placement stability and value for money. Long term, 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.

6.11 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.

6.12 Semi Independent Provision

Unlike fostering and residential provision, semi-independent provision is unregulated 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.

6.13 In response to this, NCC will be tendering for a block contract and framework which successful providers will be obliged to conform to Nottingham's quality standards. The application of the NCC's Semi Independent Accommodation Standard and Life Skills Programme, with specified accommodation and support requirements, will ensure that young people are offered consistent quality support in their transition through to independence. Provider success will be determined against the individual outcomes they are achieving for young people.

6.14 Spot Purchasing

Spot purchased provision will be commissioned for services that are not available through internal provision or external regional and local contracted arrangements and where there has been no previous or predicted demand e.g. parent and child assessments, rare/specific disability/health need.

6.15 **Contract Management**

An Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) will be 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

6.16 Meetings are held with all providers of commissioned placements a minimum of once every six months and consider the following areas: contract & 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.

6.17 Quality Assurance

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. Dedicated semi independence experts have been trained to undertake visits to ensure consistency throughout semi-independent provision. Placement feedback from Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officers and children and young people is being gathered to support quality assurance processes. Clear service protocols determine the required actions to be undertaken by NCC where quality concerns are identified.

- 6.18 It is Nottingham City Council's ambition to only place with Ofsted judged 'Good' and 'Outstanding' providers. Minimum standards detailing what constitutes a good quality placement are incorporated into service specifications and lay a benchmark for providers applying to care for Nottingham's children and young people.

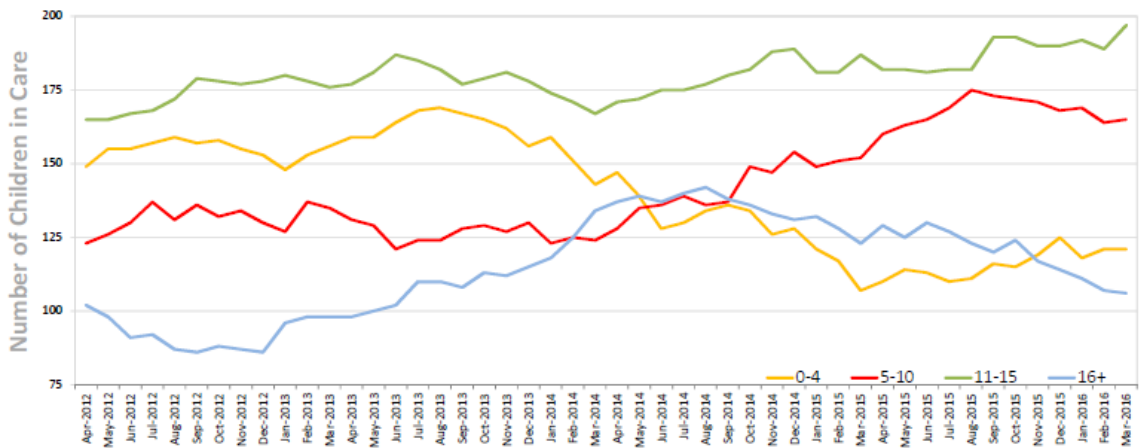
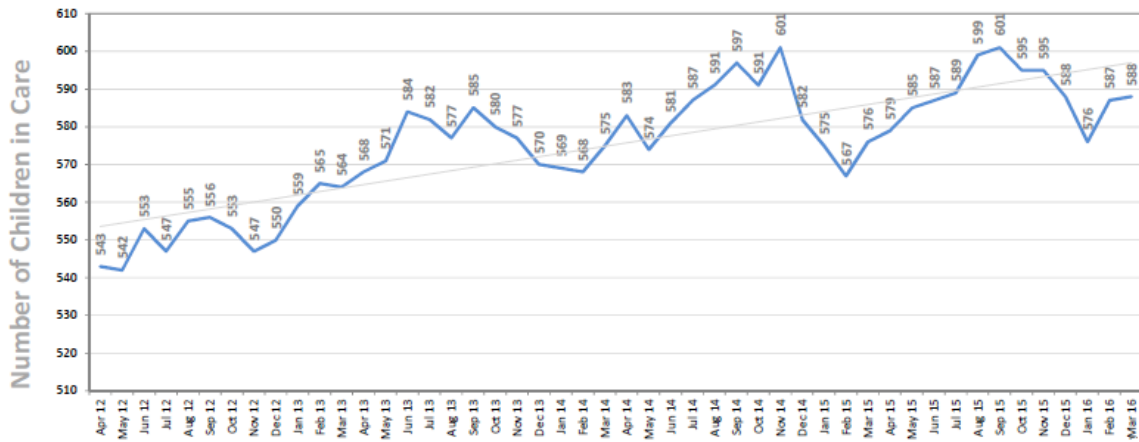
→→→ Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy – Recommendations →→→

No	Recommendations
1.	<p>Develop Nottingham City Council provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of NCC foster carers (2016 / 17) • Consider the development of additional internal residential care for children and young people with complex needs (2016 / 17)
2.	<p>Market Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting complex and challenging children to remain in family settings, through the development or commissioning of specialist foster placements and consideration of the development of a multi-agency team to support foster carers (2017/18) • Work with local Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) to ensure sufficient, quality local care to offer choice and value for money (2016 / 18) • Consider the implementation of Multi-Dimensional Foster Care Treatment (2017 / 18) • Develop a broader understanding of placement stability across residential and foster care placements to inform requirements within the market (2016 / 17) • Support the ACDS Pilot for commissioning welfare secure placements, working with Hampshire County Council and regional / national local authorities. (2016 /17)
3.	<p>Semi Independent Support and Accommodation Contracts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a local Semi Independent Framework and block contract for 16 – 18 year old care leavers to ensure they are accommodated and supported, enabling a positive transition to adulthood (2016 /17)
4.	<p>Residential Block Contract:</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 (2016 / 17)
5.	<p>Radical Redesign:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead regional collaboration to redesign solutions to meet the placement needs of the most complex children and young people across the East Midlands, linking to the DfE Innovation Fund & Social Investment Platform.(2016/17)
6.	<p>Support children with complex health needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with partners in health to commission and fund appropriate placements for children in care who have complex health needs (2016 / 17) • Support the regional development of a Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) for children & young people with the most complex needs.(2016 / 17)
7.	<p>Ensure value for money through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular review of high cost placements (2016 / 18)

- Consideration of creative packages of care as an alternative to residential placements (2016 / 18)

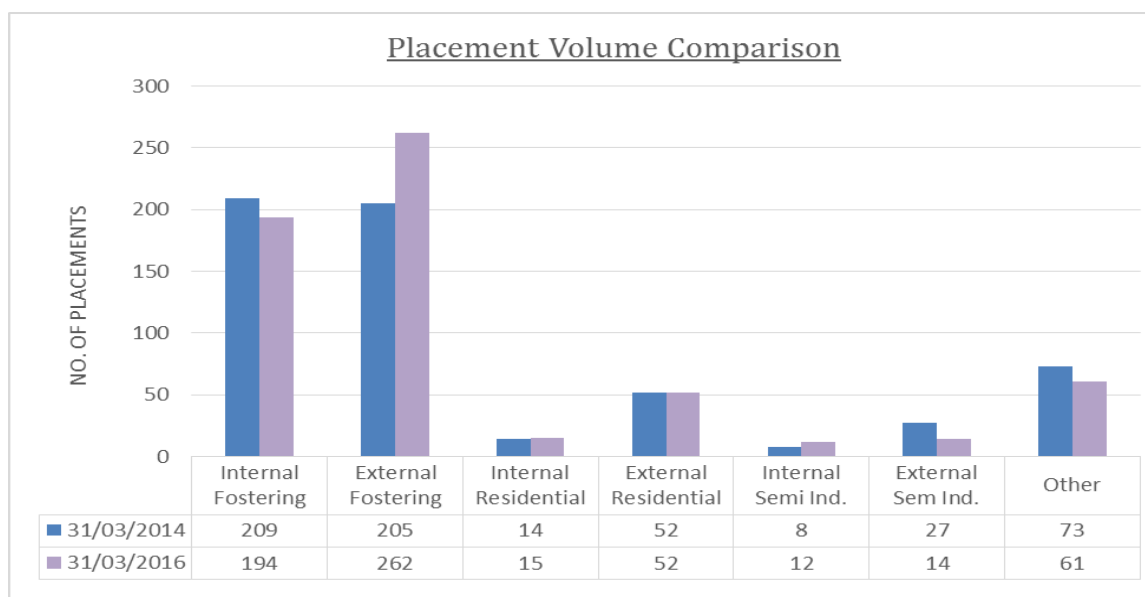
APPENDIX ONE

Children in Care Population Analysis



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





Placement Type	As at 31/03/2014	As at 31/03/2016	Vol. Change	% Change
Internal Fostering	209	194	-15	-7.7%
External Fostering	205	262	57	21.8%
Internal Residential	14	15	1	6.7%
External Residential	52	52	0	0.0%
Internal Independent Living	8	12	4	33.3%
External Independent Living	27	14	-13	-92.9%
Other (made up from the below)	73	61	-12	-19.7%
Parent and Child	3	2	-1	-50.0%
Secure	6	6	0	0.0%
Health	3	1	-2	-200.0%
Placed for Adoption	47	39	-8	-20.5%
Placed w/ Person w/ Parental Responsibility	5	1	-4	-400.0%
Other Placement	1	0	-1	-100%
Total	580	598	18	3.0%

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children & Young People (UASC)

Local Authorities have a duty of care to ensure the welfare needs of asylum seeking children and young people, under the age of 18 years, not living with their parents, relatives or guardians in the UK are met. As of the end of May 2016, there were 17 UASC placed and supported by Nottingham City and 28 Asylum Seekers (Care Leavers) with an expectation that these numbers would increase throughout the year.

Remand

As a result of LASPO Act 2012, there has been an increase in the demand for remand placements resulting in 15 young people having 18 placements on remand during 2015 / 16.

Staying Put

The Department for Education introduced arrangements where-by young people aged eighteen and older who were previously looked after can remain living with their former foster carer/s (who may also remain a foster carer for younger children). In Nottingham we had 8 young people in Staying Put arrangements with private providers and 18 with internal foster carers.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

A number of children and young people who are looked after also have special educational needs and commissioning of an appropriate placement must take this into account to ensure their educational needs are met. The Virtual School, SEN Team and Placements Service work closely together to commission, fund and manage these placements. In Nottingham, there were 71 children with either an Education Health Care Plan (EHC) or a Statement of Educational Needs in August 2016 and 207 children receiving support through either School Action or School Action Plus.