

# Nottinghamshire Looked After Children Placement Commissioning Plan

## 1. Understanding Need

### *Sufficiency Statement*

A 'Sufficiency Duty' is made of Local Authorities under the Children's Act 1989 (Section 22G). The Sufficiency Duty requires local authorities to improve outcomes for looked after children by requiring local authorities to take steps that secure sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of children in their care.

The number of children entering the care system has steadily increased since 2008. During 2013-14 the numbers appear to have stabilised peaking at 909 in July 2013 and reducing to 885 in December 2013. The number of children in care proportionate to the population of 0-17 year olds remains lower than both the national average and Nottinghamshire's statistical neighbours. If it came in line with the national average, there would need to be a 12% increase to 973 LAC. However if it came in line with Nottinghamshire's three nearest statistical neighbours (Staffordshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire) it would reduce slightly to 862.

Age profiling demonstrates that Nottinghamshire has a higher number of children aged 16 or over in local authority care and a lower number of children aged 6-9 years in care than other local authorities (against whom we are bench-marked).

### *Understanding Costs*

Nottinghamshire in common with other local authorities is responding to the Local Government Budget reductions and is attempting to combine efficiencies in service with improved outcomes for Looked After Children.

Recent work between Nottinghamshire's Children's Social Care Service and its Transformation Team has focussed on understanding the relationship between cost, quality and outcomes in Children's Placements (see Appendix 1 *Fostering Positions Statement* and Appendix 2 *Residential Position Statement*). These documents demonstrate that internal fostering placements represent the best value for money, and lowest costs (average £465 per child, per week as at December 2012.); External Fostering costs are on average £829 per child per week. Internal residential placements cost on average £3,952 per week, while external Residential Care costs on average £2,711 per week. There is also increased demand for semi-independent Placements for 16-18 year olds which have lower average costs and offer a better opportunity for young people to prepare for adult life.

### *Strategic Priorities for Nottinghamshire*

An understanding of costs and numbers suggests the following priorities:

1. **Increase the number of internal fostering placements** including Salaried Carers Scheme for complex young people ('Fostering Futures'); Carer's Scheme for older looked after children (11+ Fostering) and prioritising recruitment of internal carers generally.
2. **Increase capacity where appropriate and safe to do so within internal children's residential homes**, to lower overall delivery costs, develop good practice and place most complex young people within our own managed services.

3. **Increase the provision and improve the quality of semi-independent placements for 16-18 year olds** to create a robust exit strategy from residential care and increase the life skills and resilience of looked after young people before they live independently.
4. **Block Purchase the majority of 'mainstream' Residential Beds** to increase placement choice within Nottinghamshire, lower individual bed costs and create hubs of good practice in Children's Residential Care.

Over the next 3 years the following numbers of placements are projected to be required:

	External Residential	Internal Fostering	External Fostering	Semi-independent Living	Internal Residential	Placed for adoption	Placed with parents
<b>13-14</b> (as at Dec 13)	78	416	256	28	16	75	6
<b>14-15</b> (as at Mar 15)	70	436	226	35	24	78	2
<b>15-16</b> As at Mar 16)	63	483.	206	36.	24	77	6
<b>16-17</b> (as at Mar 17)	45	512	180	46	24	85	6

The table above outlines the projected number of placements needed as at the end of March each year in order for the Placement Commissioning and Internal Residential budgets to not overspend. They assume a growth of 2 LAC per month until there are 898 children in care.

## 2. Principles and Values Statement

- That the decision about where a child is best placed is made according to the assessed needs of the child or young person.
- That all Placements commit to the principles and values enshrined in the Nottinghamshire Pledge to Looked after Children (see appendix 3).
- That the majority of Placements will be within Nottinghamshire to ensure that young people retain links to their communities and receive best possible care. Children will only be placed out of county where this is in accordance with their assessed needs.
- That the Children in Care Council ('No Labels') are routinely consulted and involved in the commissioning and monitoring of Placements.
- That all placements are of a high standard, aiming for 'Outstanding' inspection criteria and offer a differentiated service according to the identified social, emotional and cultural needs of children, young people and their families.
- That work with Providers should be collaborative, with shared best practice, shared training and agreement of common values and outcomes.
- That young people should receive high quality preparation for adulthood.

- As recommended by Central Government Enquiry, Nottinghamshire seeks to weight quality and financial value as 60% Quality: 40% Value for Money.

### 3. Outcomes Measures

- Introduction of a standardised **Outcomes Tool**: To be introduced in Residential Care (internal and external from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014). This will measure progress made by individual young people and enable comparisons of placement quality. This measure will be extended to internal and external fostering from April 2015.
- **Placement Stability**: This is measured quarterly and reviewed annually.
- **Geographical location of Placements**: Successful implementation of this Commissioning Plan should see an increased number of young people placed in Nottinghamshire.
- **Budget Performance**: The Placements budget is monitored on a monthly basis and successful implementation of the plan should result in a balanced budget i.e. improvement savings will be realised.

### 4. Proposed development activity for 2014

- **Block Purchase of Residential Beds**: Aims to reduce unit costs of external residential provision and increase numbers of Placements in Nottinghamshire. Proposed completion date: August 2014.
- **Creation of Block Purchase Contract for semi-independent placements for 16-18 Year Olds**: Aims to improve quality of provision for young adults; create an exit strategy from high cost residential placements, improve outcomes and pathways into adulthood. Proposed completion date: Autumn 2014.
- **Use of a care fund calculator**: To negotiate costs of some spot-purchased residential care placements with providers. Proposed completed date: March 2015.
- **Feasibility study of use of Crisis or Emergency Residential Provision**: Cost and outcomes analysis of use of Emergency beds to inform future Commissioning Plan, to be completed by March 2015.
- **11+ Fostering**: To recruit additional internal carers specifically for older looked after children. Proposed completion date: December 2014.
- **Adaptations to internal homes**: Where safe to do so, increase number of beds in internal homes to reduce unit costs. Proposed completion date: December 2014.

### 5. Review Dates

- October 2014: Budget Review
- January 2015: Review of Sufficiency Statement and Targets
- March 2015: Assimilation of Outcomes Documents for Reporting Purposes
- March 2015: Review of data regarding Placement breakdowns
- April 2015: Placements Commissioning Plan for 2015 published.