



Market Position Statement

2026-2027:
Fostering and
Children's Homes

Children's Commissioning
and Placements



Nottinghamshire
County Council

Foreword

As Director of Children's Commissioning at Nottinghamshire County Council, I am delighted to introduce our Market Position Statement for 2026-2027. It is my responsibility to ensure that our Nottinghamshire children and young people in care can thrive in a supportive and loving home. This document will set our understanding of our current home needs, the pressures and challenges we face, our strengths and best practice, and what kind of provisions and partnerships we need to develop.

The Market Position Statement is a commissioning document which allows us to have an open conversation with the market. We expect the Market Position Statement to be beneficial for providers to position their services to meet our current and future needs, so that they can add value and create more loving homes for our children and young people. This is just the first step in working closer with the external market. We have aims to implement innovation workshops and provider forums in the near future to better support children and young people's outcomes and home-finding.

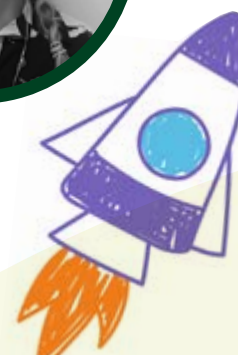
We are facing a greater complexity of need than ever before against the backdrop of a limited supply of suitable homes for our children and young people. Despite national and local pressures, our ambitions remain clear; we require high quality nurturing homes which are as close to home as possible; Nottinghamshire homes for Nottinghamshire children and young people.

We also want to say a big thank you to our current commissioned providers who provide fantastic outcomes for our children and young people, and our local and district borough partners for their continued collaboration and market engagement. To those who are thinking about supporting our children and young people, we encourage you to make contact and start building positive relationships with our team.



Rachel Miller

Director of Children's
Strategic Commissioning



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Introduction

Nottinghamshire County Council's Fostering and Children's Home Market Position Statement sets out the ways we will work with providers to achieve meaningful outcomes for our children and young people. This document aims to explain Nottinghamshire's current understanding of demand and strategic drivers in the local and national fostering and children's home landscapes. This document will also illustrate the types of foster care and children's homes we intend to commission, ensuring that children's care is provided on a needs-led basis and that wherever possible, we are able to provide Nottinghamshire homes for Nottinghamshire's children. This document was developed in collaboration with multiple relevant stakeholders, ensuring it provides a comprehensive, holistic, and up-to-date assessment of current and future service needs. We hope that this document encourages and enables current and prospective providers to shape the market to meet these needs.

This document will be refreshed annually, with key data shared quarterly to keep the market informed. If you would like to receive our quarterly newsletter or have any questions, require further information, or wish to provide feedback on this document, please contact the PlacementReviewTeam@nottscc.gov.uk

Nottinghamshire County Council remains committed to developing strong relationships with independent fostering agencies and children's home providers and welcomes ongoing feedback from our partners.



As of April 2026, within Nottinghamshire there were

587

Children on a Child Protection Plan

6541

Children with an Education Health and Care Plan

908

Children in Care



547

Care leavers aged 16-25

Principles of working with us

There are a number of key principles and values we expect to see from our provider market when working with us.

You should be able to answer YES to the following statements:

- ☐ We are child-centred and love-led
- ☐ We build resilience and encourage independence so that children and young people have positive transitions into adulthood
- ☐ We provide care in the least restrictive way, which might mean we use flexibility to support better children's outcomes
- ☐ We provide transparent and fair cost of care
- ☐ We communicate regularly to evaluate changes in need
- ☐ We understand that education is a protective factor
- ☐ We are strengths-based
- ☐ Our services are consistently high quality, and we strive to work with the local authority to continuously improve our practice
- ☐ We are eager to collaborate with other providers, share best practice and support Nottinghamshire County Council with innovation
- ☐ We embrace change and new opportunities
- ☐ We are registered with Ofsted and/or CQC where appropriate and adhere to core legislation and statutory guidance.

As of April 2026 Nottinghamshire County Council commissioned



224

residential placements



68

residential providers across
160 children's homes

276

IFA Placements



National policy and strategic aims

- National policies continue to reshape the delivery of fostering and children's home care, driven by reforms aimed at strengthening family-based care, improving early help offers, and addressing limitations in our current systems.
- However, across the country the demand for foster placements is rising faster than recruitment of foster carers, and children are entering children's homes with more complex and nuanced needs than seen previously. This means that local authorities must redesign services while still managing day to day sufficiency challenges.
- Providers also face uncertainty as new regulations and expectations emerge.
- The Independent Review of Children's Social Care (Department for Education, 2022) calls for a rebalanced system focused on family networks, workforce development, and rebalancing the fragmented care market. Alongside this, the Competition and Markets Authority (House of Commons Education Committee, 2025; Competition and Markets Authority, 2022) highlights significant pressures around placement sufficiency, rising costs, and market fragility.

The Children's Social Care Reform Statement (Samuel, M., 2025) reinforces national expectations for more stable, loving homes, and stronger kinship and foster care, and promotes commitment to the continuity of care and improved placement quality and oversight.

- Ofsted's annual reporting (Ofsted, 2024; Ofsted, 2025) also continues to emphasise the need for high-quality provision, strong leadership, and better outcomes for children in care. Together, these drivers are shaping how local authorities plan, commission care, and collaborate with providers to ensure sustainable, child-centred care arrangements.
- The recent Government publication (Department for Education, 2026) entitled 'Renewing Fostering: homes for 10,000 more children' indicates a renewed focus on increasing the number of foster carers across the country. We hope that these proposed changes are embraced, enabling providers to work with us to trial new ways of working, embed support and stability within their services, share data transparently, and prioritise children's needs alongside broader social value outcomes.



Nottinghamshire's strategic aims

Within Nottinghamshire, we aim to:

- Ensure sufficient local, high-quality homes for children
- Strengthen early intervention offers to reduce the need for children's homes
- Improve stability for our children and ensure needs-led matching
- Work with providers to develop a diverse range of care across the county, including specialist and emergency options
- Enhance multi-agency partnerships across health, housing, and education
- Manage the care market collaboratively with providers
- Use robust data and forecasts to plan for future needs, integrating market feedback and coproduction

Internal fostering

We are working through the D2N2 collaborative (Derby City, Derbyshire, Nottingham City, and Nottinghamshire) to share best practice and improve efficiency around the recruitment and retention of foster carers including our Foster for East Midlands Councils regional recruitment hub.

We also have our own internal Fostering Improvement Board to review our internal fostering practices, making them smarter, simpler, clearer, and more transparent. By placing a focus on valuing and recognising our foster carers whilst increasing the support they receive, we hope to build and strengthen the number of foster families in Nottinghamshire who can offer stable, loving, caring homes for our children and young people.



Independent Fostering Agencies

To ensure we have a strong internal and external market, we ask IFAs to invest in innovative practice, trauma-informed approaches, and enhanced wraparound support that enables children and foster carers to thrive.

Our 'gold standard' providers:

- "Their training is outstanding; they have their own training facilities and are rolling out their own City & Guilds accredited qualification for carers this year!"
- "The provider is fully committed with a strong ethos and values that run through the agency and all their staff. They only want to recruit people that share these similar or same values."
- "They complete a lot of community fundraising and take part in local charity events."
- "They offer strong wrap around support including clinical supervision, fair pay, and high quality training."

Internal children's homes

Within our internal children's homes, we continue to strengthen and enhance the training offer available to all staff. We use trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches across our homes, enabling caregivers to develop a deeper understanding of behaviours associated with trauma and to promote safety, stability, and trust through consistent, nurturing relationships and shared experiences. Our focus is on continually improving outcomes for children through high-quality, reflective practice.



Children's home providers

To ensure we have a strong internal and external market, we ask children's home providers to prioritise the development of specialist homes with skilled staff that can meet the increasingly complex needs of our children and young people. Providers should reinvest in high-quality staff training, robust clinical supervision where appropriate, and comprehensive support structures that equip teams to deliver consistent, therapeutic care. Whilst we want homes to remain homely, we also need some specialist providers to create a safe environment for children with more complex needs. Our providers will continue to play a vital role in improving children's outcomes, injecting stability and consistency, and creating environments where children feel safe, understood, and able to flourish.

Our 'gold standard' providers:

- "We value 'stickability'!" From leaders to care practitioners, we need providers who stay with children through challenges and change.
- "Providers who promote education as a protective factor and supports sustained engagement."
- "Providers who contribute positively to the local community and give back to the sector."

- "Encouragement of growth and independence rather than containment, preparing children for adulthood."
- "Staff who care for children with the same commitment they would show for their own children: one trusted adult can have immense power in contributing to positive outcomes for young people."
- We have very strong links with colleagues across health services. For instance, we have worked with therapeutic children's homes who have supported children displaying escalating self-harm and other challenging behaviours related to their mental health. We have seen first-hand how providers are able to build relationships with health colleagues and with young people to deliver appropriate therapeutic support in an incremental way, ensuring a consistent collaborative approach throughout. Such providers are able to make young people feel safe and provide robust and thoughtful safety plans that ensure children's health needs are assessed appropriately and in a timely manner.



Similarly, we have seen providers delivering fantastic education outcomes:

- “Kaleb was experiencing an unsettled time in education with lots of changes. Kaleb’s home consistently communicated well and worked effectively with the team around Kaleb to improve his educational experience, which included remaining professional and solution-focused, even when situations felt most stuck. Carers were creative and flexible in their approach when Kaleb had gaps in his timetable. The home was dedicated to understanding Kaleb really well and knowing what works for him, which enabled them to advocate for him successfully. Kaleb’s home was proactive in arranging visits to new settings and supporting extended transitions. Kaleb now has 100% attendance and when asked about education recently he said, “everything is great”.“ Head of Virtual School

What does a good home look like

“It feels like you’re walking into your own home” (Quality and Contracts Officer)

“It’s somewhere you’d like to live yourself” (Commissioning Officer)

“Definitely not institutionalised” (Service Organiser)

“They meet the safety standards but do it in a way that keeps that sense of home” (Commissioning Officer)

“When you take pride in where they live, the children take pride in where they live” (Quality and Contracts Officer)

“Somewhere they feel comfortable bringing their friends” (Service Organiser)

“No more beige please!” (Quality and Contracts Officer)



Nottinghamshire's demographics

Figure 1 ([Renewing Fostering: homes for 10,000 more children](#)) illustrates a clear and persistent market shift within England across all placement cohorts, also mirroring trends observed across the rest of the UK ([Children looked after by local authorities, April 2023 to March 2024 \(official statistics in development\) \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)). Foster care remains the most prevalent care setting; however, the number of children in foster care has continued to decline year on year since 2020. In contrast, the use of both supported accommodation and children's homes are increasing. These trends are driven by distinct factors – growth in supported accommodation is largely attributed to changes in Ofsted registration requirements and the formalisation of provision for older children, whilst the expansion of children's homes reflects the increasing complexity of children's needs, sufficiency pressures, and a reduction in available foster placements.

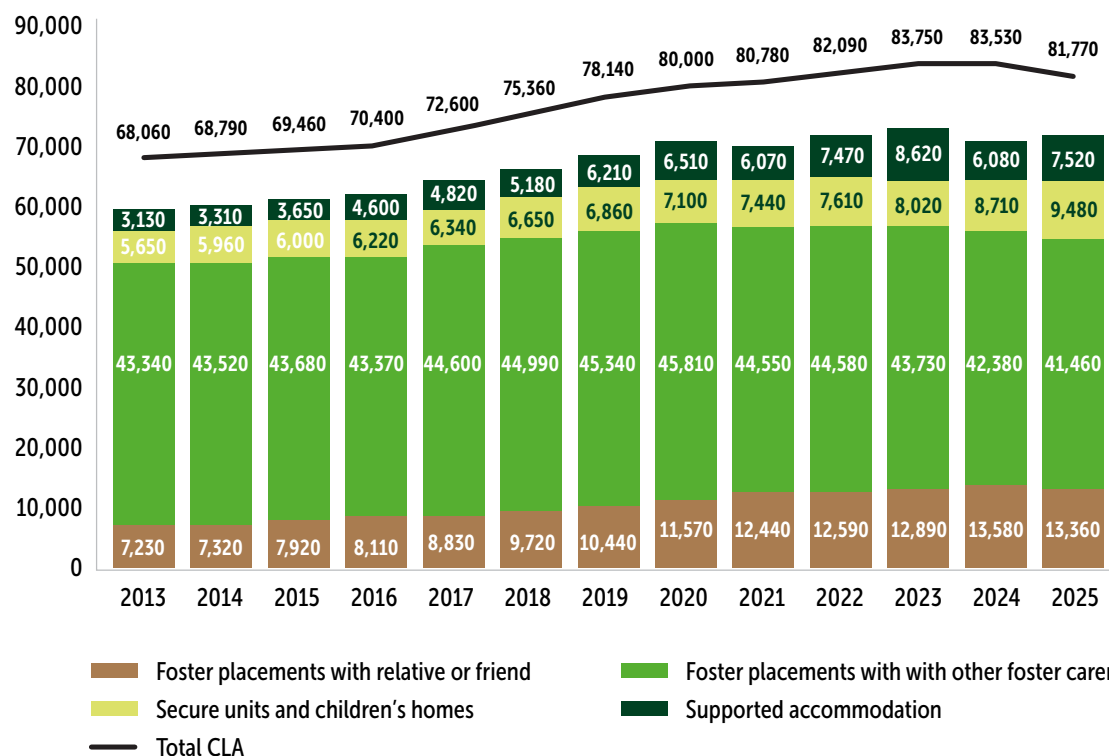
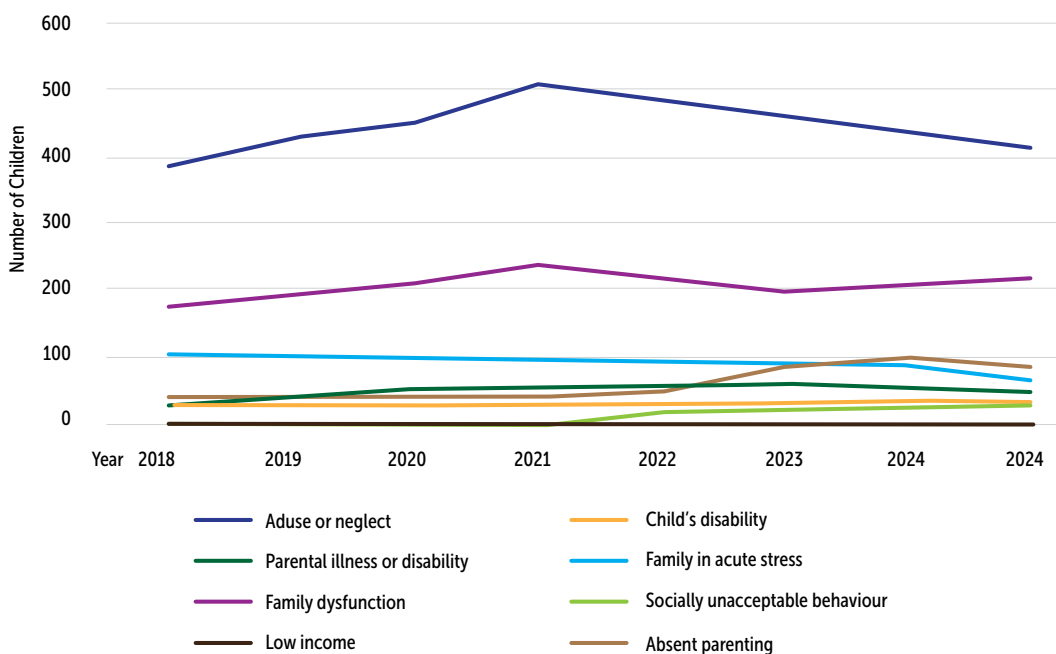


Figure 1: Number of children in care within England at 31 March 2025 by placement type

In Nottinghamshire, the number of children in care has decreased steadily over time following a peak in 2021, falling from approximately 1000 children in care to just over 900 children in care. This decline has been incremental rather than volatile, indicating structural and/or social change rather than short term anomalies, suggesting that early intervention, effective step-down and reunification processes are beginning to lead to positive results.

Figure 2: Nottinghamshire Category of Need: Historical & Forecast



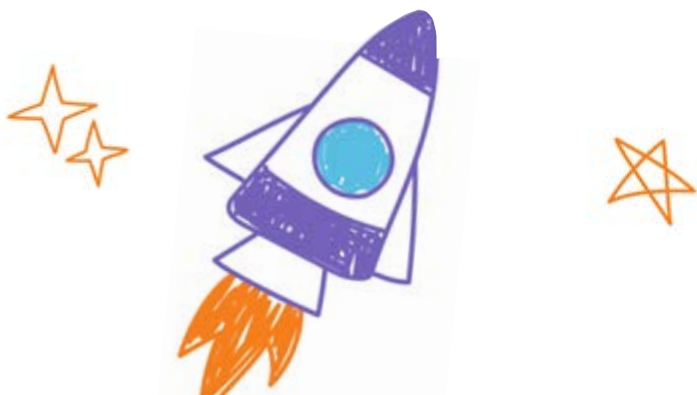
Abuse or neglect remains the dominant reason children enter care in Nottinghamshire (46% in 2025).

Family dysfunction (24% in 2025) is the second most prevalent cause of children entering care in the county, and the numbers of children that enter care for this reason continues to grow.

Other reasons children may enter care in Nottinghamshire include disability, parental illness, low income, and socially unacceptable behaviour.

Forecasts to 2030 indicate that Nottinghamshire will continue to see the greatest demand for care from children affected by trauma, adversity, and family crisis.

This highlights the need for strong support networks and sufficient trauma-informed placements to meet the needs of children entering care.



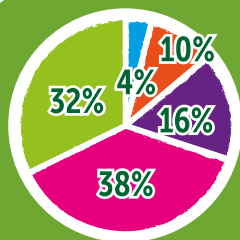
"We need providers who offer genuine and embedded trauma informed care, rather than a surface level model to meet our needs."

Children's Commissioning Officer reflection on need.

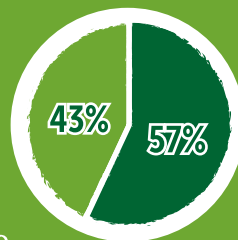
"We need more providers across every need, but recently we have seen a rise in need for children who experience physical, health and learning support, parent and child placements, siblings and older children requiring a foster home placement."

Children's Commissioning Officer reflection on need.

Most of our children in care in Nottinghamshire are between 10 and 18 years old.



- 2025
- < 1 year
 - 1-4 years
 - 5-9 years
 - 10-15 years
 - 16+ years



- 2025
- Female
 - Male

Sufficiency of homes for children in care in England

As of April 2026, there were 344 registered IFAs across England. This has risen by 1.47% from 2025 [Figure 3]. As of April 2026, there were 4,831 registered active children's homes across the country, including 14 secure children's homes. **This figure has risen by 20.51 % since 2025.**

Figure 3

Date	Data type	All Children's Homes	Children's Homes	Secure Children's Homes	Independent Fostering Agencies	Places
March 2025	Providers	4,009	3,946	14	339	15,742
March 2024	Providers	3,491	3,423	13	332	14,486
March 2023	Providers	3,119	3,050	13	328	13,528
March 2022	Providers	2,873	2,798	13	326	12,898
March 2021	Providers	2,706	2,624	13	317	12,732
March 2020	Providers	2,460	2,378	13	300	12,175
March 2019	Providers	2,304	2,221	14	305	12,035
March 2018	Providers	2,209	2,124	14	308	11,746

Between 2019-2025,

55-67%

of children in care lived in foster care placements.

14-19%

of children in care lived in children's homes.

Sufficiency of homes for children in care in Nottinghamshire

This trend is also evident at a more local level. Within the East Midlands, the number of registered children's homes increased from 271 in 2018 to 633 in 2026, representing a 133% increase. In Nottinghamshire, registrations nearly doubled over the same period, rising from 48 in 2018 to 95 in 2026—a 98% increase. The number of registered IFAs within the East Midlands has increased from 5 in 2018 to 19 in 2026 representing a 280% increase, and from 0 to 7 within Nottinghamshire.

Figure 5: Nottinghamshire Foster Placements: Historical & Forecast

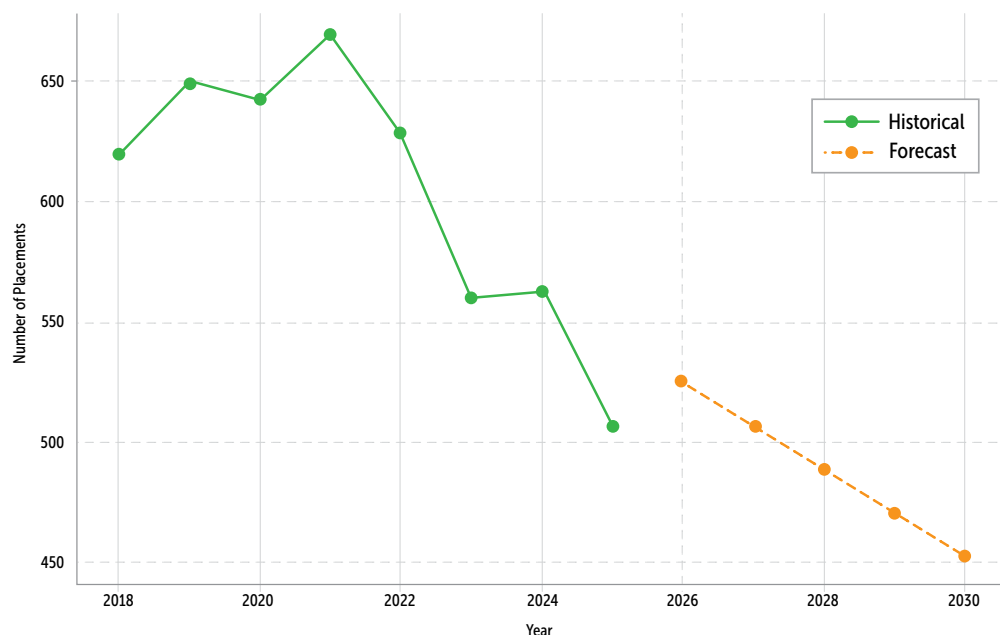
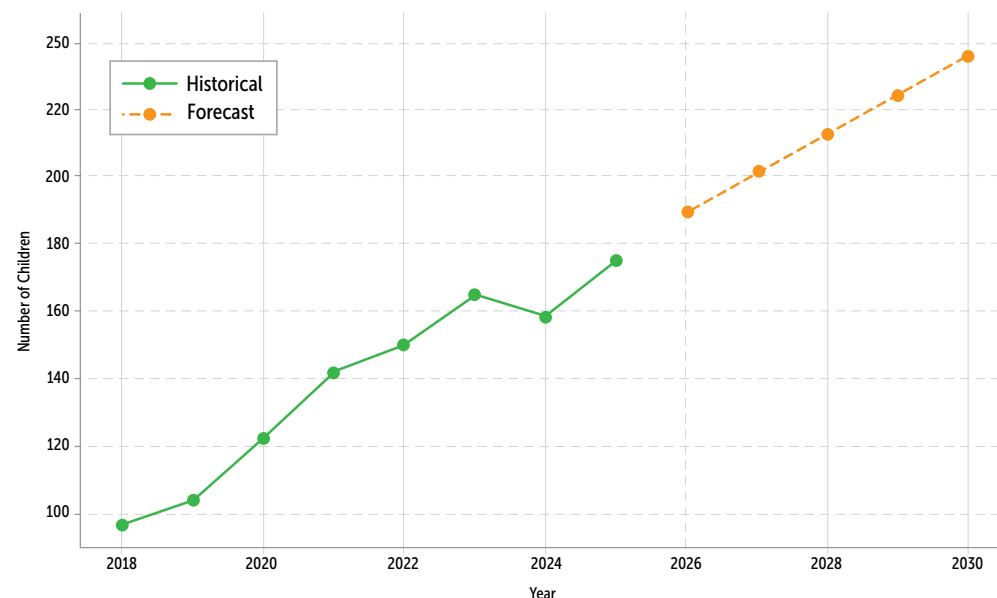


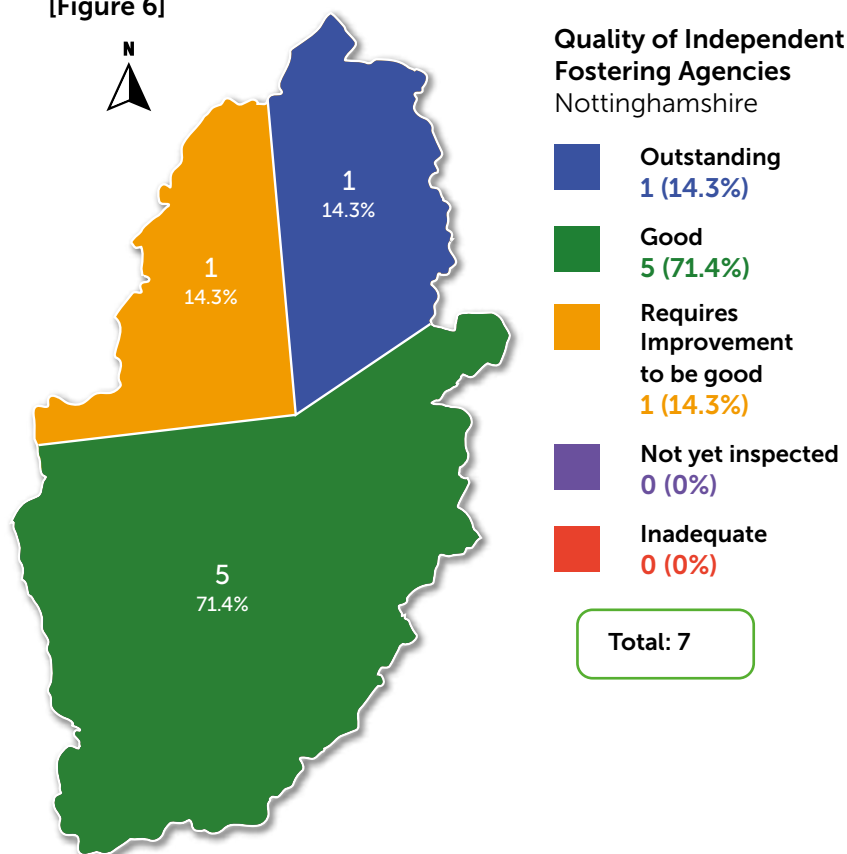
Figure 4: Nottinghamshire Residential (Secure & Children's Homes) Forecast



Whilst these figures seem promising, Nottinghamshire County Council don't always have access to all the available homes they need within Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands. This can mean that children are living in children's homes for longer than they need to due to lack of available foster carers. Children with complex needs may also experience inconsistency with their home finding, with many experiencing multiple moves due to a lack of specialist children's home care providers or foster placements.



IFAs in Nottinghamshire
[Figure 6]



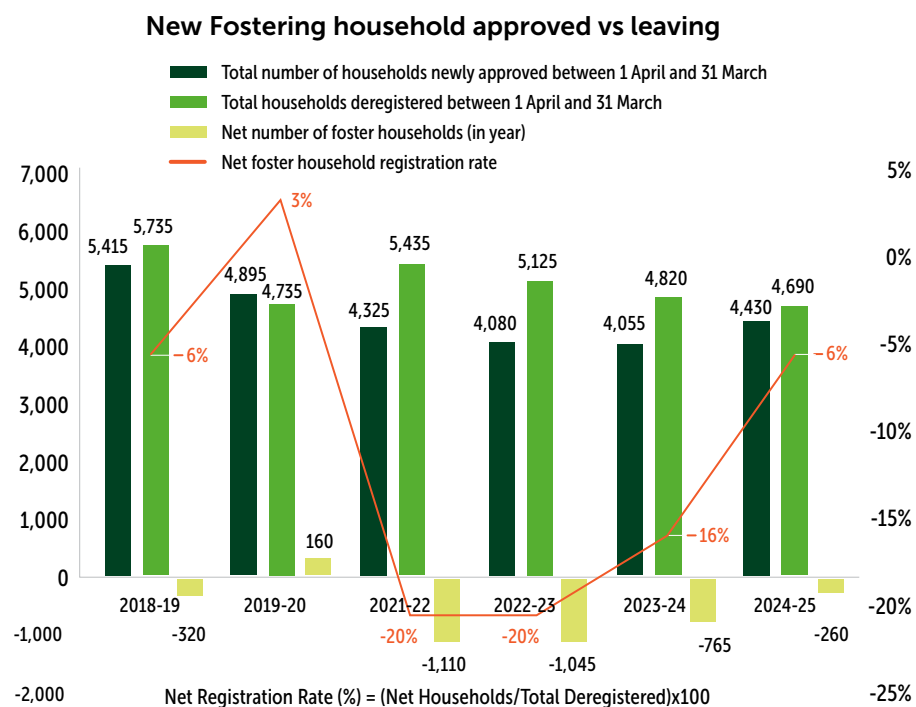
Within the D2N2 boundary, we are seeing a general decline in the availability of foster homes for Nottinghamshire's children and young people. Between May 2024 - May 2025, 20% of foster carers supporting Nottinghamshire County Council's children and young people went on to accept a child from another local authority following a foster care home placement coming to an end. 33% of foster carers chose to continue supporting Nottinghamshire's children and young people, sometimes in different ways e.g., as a staying put carer, support carer, or as a parent and child placement.

Nottinghamshire's IFA providers frequently deliver strong and positive outcomes [Figure 6.]. We have seen the market develop organically with some providers looking to specialise in certain areas to support a variety of cohorts. This includes sanctuary-seeking children, children with disabilities, parent and child, and children who require health and education input. We encourage this development!

We continue to need IFAs who are focused on providing more high-quality foster carer homes to Nottinghamshire's children and young people across all cohorts of need. We also need a renewed focus on keeping sibling groups together wherever possible.

- For both internal and external fostering homes, the number of children living with Foster Carers in Nottinghamshire has shown a noticeable decline since its peak in 2021. After reaching 669, numbers have fallen steadily, with only 507 children living with fostering families end of year 2025. This downward trend reflects wider recruitment and retention challenges, the rising complexity of children's needs, the cost of living, and growing competition across the wider care sector.

Figure 7: National Foster Carers External and Internal



- This trajectory highlighted a critical need for renewed investment, enhanced support to foster carers, and targeted recruitment strategies to stabilise and strengthen the fostering workforce. As a result, Nottinghamshire's internal fostering team are working to develop a range of new incentives for foster carers and have increasingly begun working more creatively than ever before to support children to live in family-based settings.
- Data from Nottinghamshire County Council's internal fostering service suggests a recent increase in the number of available internal foster homes as a result of these new initiatives, particularly in comparison to the national average [Figures 7 and 8].



Figure 8

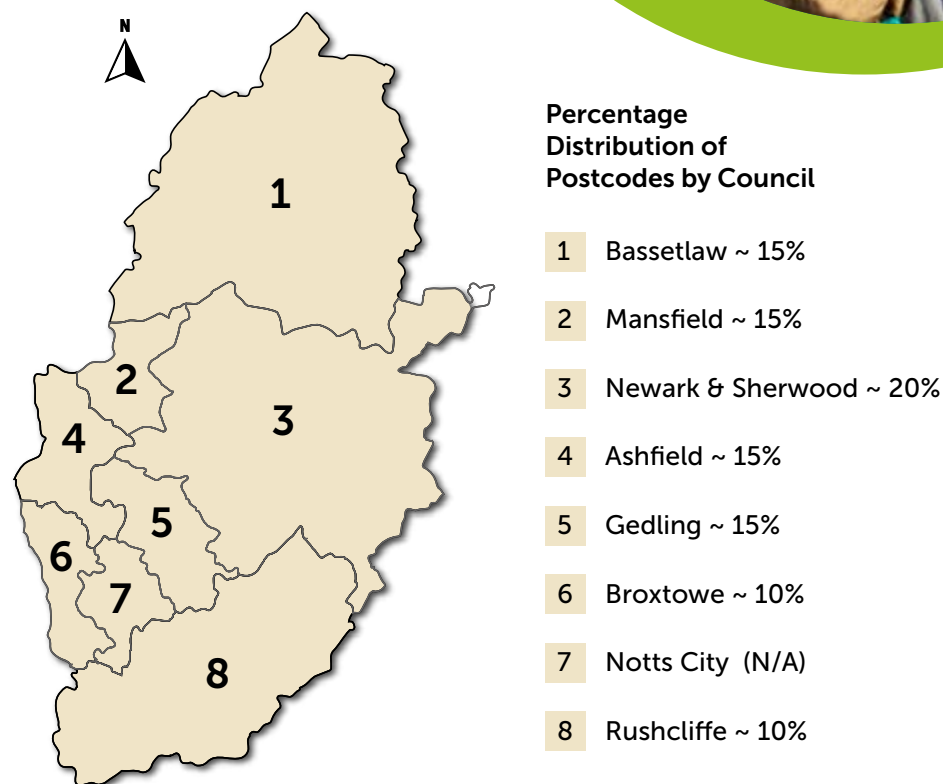
Date	Children	Children with NCC FC (including Family and friends)	NCC vs total	Monthly comparison
March 2025	920	203	22.07%	↑ 1.86%
March 2026	911	218	23.93%	

Children's Homes

Of the 95 registered children's homes in Nottinghamshire, 13 are rated Outstanding by Ofsted, 58 are rated Good, 11 are rated Requires Improvement, 1 is rated Inadequate, and 12 have not yet been inspected (data accurate as of April 2026). Data from planning applications suggest a recent increase in the number of proposed C2 changes of use and certificates of lawfulness to operate as a children's home. These applications are generally proposing to support children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) homes however in some cases these homes may support more than one need.

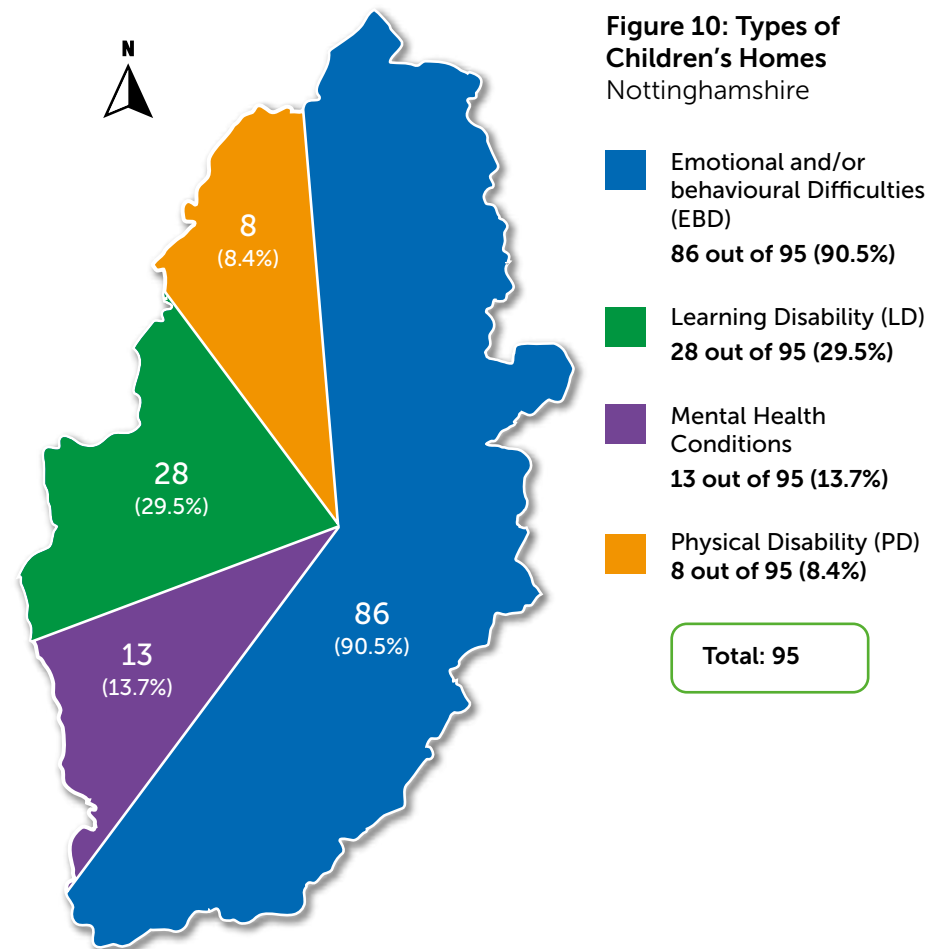
Figure 9 shows the concentration of children's homes in each district and borough in Nottinghamshire. We would benefit from homes being developed in the north and south-east of the county to reduce the likelihood of over-saturation in any one area.

Figure 9



There is a strong prevalence of homes that can support young people with Emotional and/or Behavioural Difficulties in Nottinghamshire [Figure 10]. However, although with the best intentions, outcomes for some of our young people may be compromised due to the lack of available specialist providers. We particularly require homes that support specialist adolescent mental health, secure step-down (for remand and welfare), and homes that maintain strong links to family (fostering or kinship) with whom the child could live with in the future.

We would like to see an increase in the number of Nottinghamshire's children and young people living in homes in Nottinghamshire, so that children can stay close to their local communities, families and friends, and trusted professionals, wherever possible.



ONLY 44%

of the available homes within the boundaries of Nottinghamshire care for Nottinghamshire County Council's own children and young people.

Our Internal Children's Homes

- Nottinghamshire delivers a small but strong mix of specialist and mainstream homes, with two Good services for children with disabilities—The Big House, a six-bed short-breaks home supporting up to 32 children with complex needs, and Caudwell House, a 12-bed children's home and short-breaks home providing long-term and short-break care for up to 22 children.
- Nottinghamshire also has two mainstream homes: Lyndene House, a three-bedded home operating at full capacity and judged Good by Ofsted, and Oakhurst, a four-bedded home currently caring for three children, also rated Good with areas of Outstanding practice
- Across the estate, strengths include consistent positive Ofsted outcomes, stable and experienced teams and well-embedded therapeutic approaches.
- In addition, Nottinghamshire County Council operates Clayfields House, a secure children's home which is a national resource across England and Wales for children and young people requiring custodial or secure welfare home between the ages of 10 and 18. Clayfields House also looks after young people overnight under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, where young people are deemed at risk or vulnerable in police custody. Up to 12 children can be placed by the Youth Custody Service and up to 8 children can be accommodated under section 25 of the Children Act 1989.

"Children placed in these homes make strong and meaningful progress, showing notable improvements in health, communication and independence. Many young people have been able to take part in enriching community activities, including holidays abroad, which have built their confidence and improved their emotional wellbeing. Several young people have successfully moved into semi-independent living, developing resilience and life skills while maintaining positive relationships with staff. Regulation 44 visitors also consistently highlight the homes' warm, nurturing environments and the substantial progress children make."

Residential Service Manager.



Nottinghamshire's Block Contract

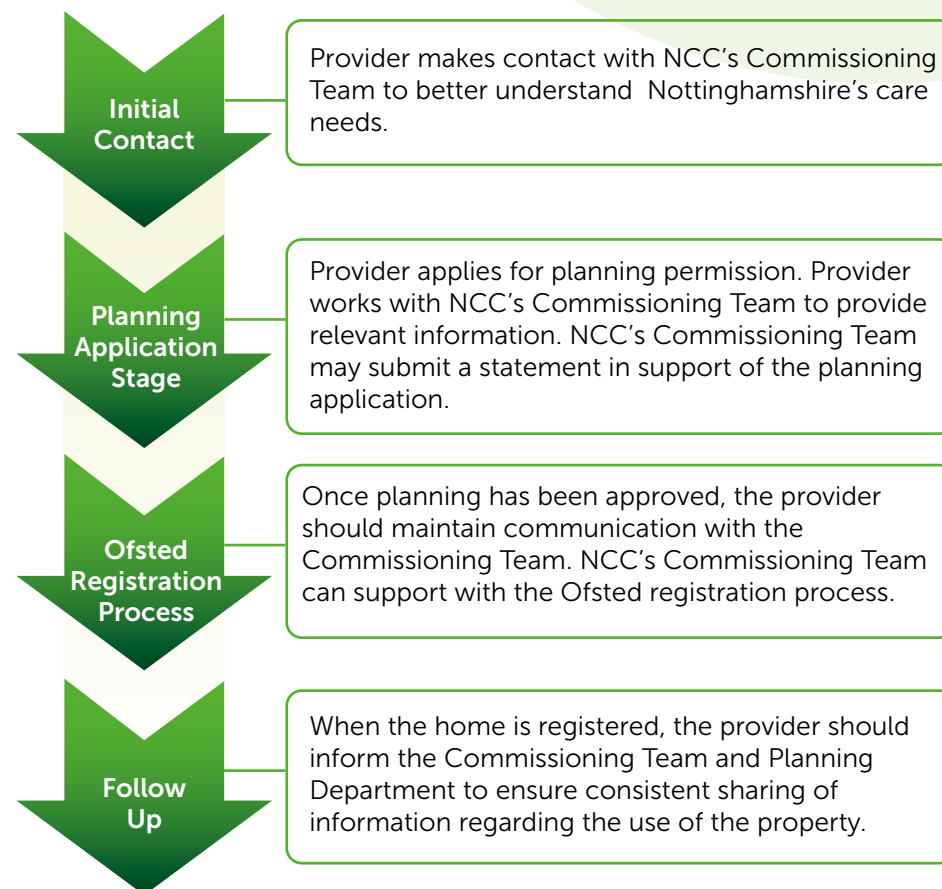
Nottinghamshire County Council values long-term, relational partnerships that put children first. Our current block contract with Homes 2 Inspire, which launched in October 2025, demonstrates the impact of working collaboratively with a shared ambition. Currently through this partnership, 13 Nottinghamshire-based homes provide stable, high-quality care for 28 children with emotional, behavioural and complex needs. The homes are flexible and responsive, ranging from solo and dual homes to larger family-style settings, all grounded in a strong multi-agency approach. Providers work closely with health, education, youth justice, police, CAMHS, the Virtual School and Preparing for Adulthood services to ensure wraparound, joined-up support for each child.

What makes this partnership successful is the strength of relationships – between the link commissioner, social care, the provider and most importantly with children and young people. Regular support meetings create space for reflection, shared problem-solving and forward planning, helping to stabilise placements, avoid crisis moves wherever possible, and create a real home setting.



Setting up new homes

- Nottinghamshire County Council's Placements and Placement Review Teams work alongside our district and borough councils to consider whether a proposed children's home is appropriate. We offer support from your initial business idea and throughout the planning process, offering developmental and operational insights. Once you're a commissioned service we offer continuous quality assurance.
- Early engagement with our team is encouraged. We aim to establish initial contact with all prospective and existing providers to explore your experience, motivations, and the suitability of proposed homes in relation to our local need. Nottinghamshire County Council creates a planning statement for our district and borough councils that reflect the home's location, access to amenities, safeguarding considerations, home size, and community impact, how this home will meet our sufficiency of care needs, and how the home adds social value.
- Following a successful planning outcome, Nottinghamshire County Council will continue to support providers through Ofsted registration and will undertake thorough due diligence to ensure a consistent high-quality, compliant provision. Where appropriate, the Council may also advocate for the prioritisation of a provider's Ofsted application to accelerate the establishment of much-needed local homes for Nottinghamshire's children and young people.

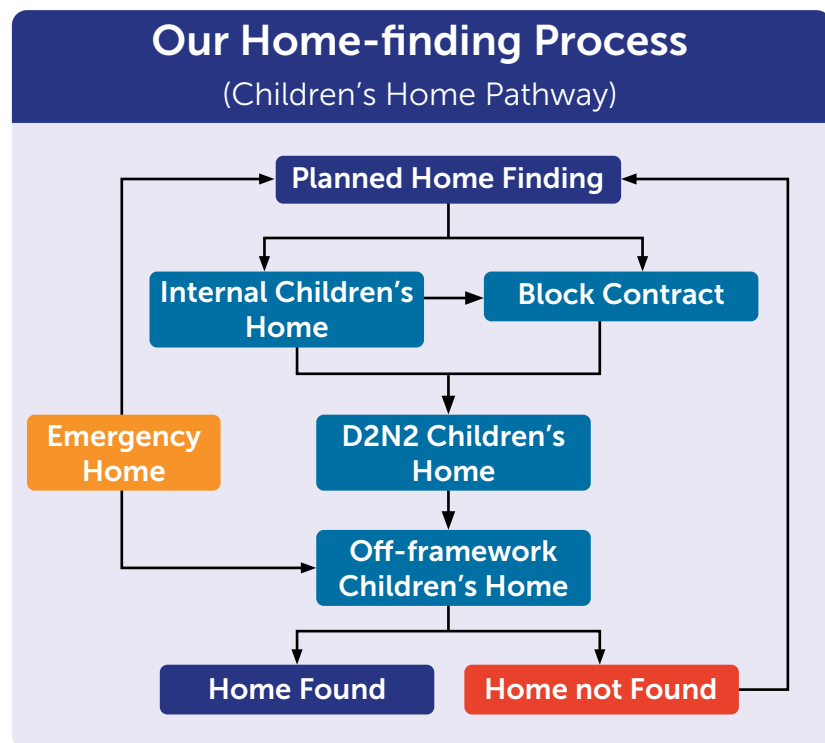


Ofsted

- We recognise that the Ofsted registration process can present challenges, particularly for new providers entering the market. Nevertheless, Ofsted registration remains a fundamental requirement for all residential and foster care services commissioned by Nottinghamshire County Council.
- Our commissioning approach is focused on developing a high-quality, resilient local provider market, and we are committed to working with organisations that demonstrate the right values, a strong commitment to Nottinghamshire's priorities, and a desire to deliver excellent care for our children and young people.
- To enable this, we endeavour to support you throughout the registration process – from pre-registration guidance through to ongoing quality assurance – to help new providers establish sustainable, well-regulated services and contribute to a diverse, high-quality placement offer within the county.
- We are moving at pace, since April 2025, 21 homes within Nottinghamshire have registered with Ofsted, providing 47 potential homes for children.

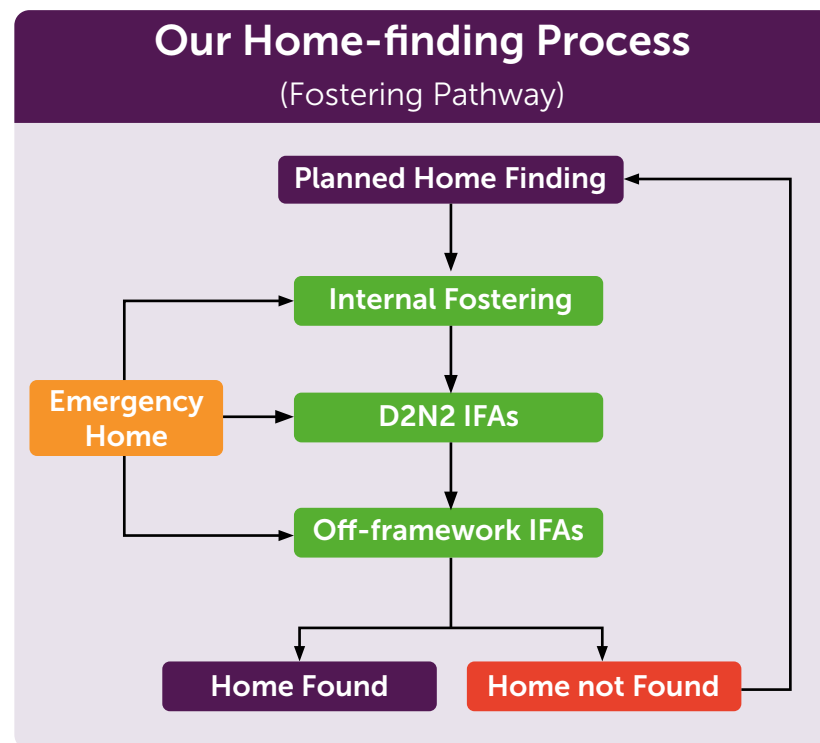


The commissioning process



What is the D2N2 Framework?

Derby City, Derbyshire County, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils, known collectively as D2N2, work together to maintain the sub-regional commissioning of placements for our children in care via the 'D2N2 Children in Care (CiC) Framework'. This includes foster care and residential children's homes.



Our Due Diligence Process

Prior to working with us, we need to complete some initial due diligence checks. Following this, we'll reach out with a Welcome Pack, Commissioning Pack and additional resources, so you have all the relevant information you need regarding our team and our processes.

When searching for a foster home or children's home, we aim to fill our internal provisions first. If nothing is available internally within our children's homes, we will search for a home within our residential home block contract if applicable and then we will approach providers on the D2N2 Framework. If all options have been exhausted, we will contact other IFAs or providers who are not on the D2N2 Framework. When an emergency placement is needed, we will usually search internal homes, block contract homes, D2N2 Framework homes, and off-framework homes simultaneously, enabling us to ensure the child's needs are met whilst still considering the cost and sustainability of each offer.

We want providers to be able to navigate Nottinghamshire's brokerage, procurement and commissioning arrangements with confidence. We offer strong wraparound support to all providers. We are strengthening our commissioning arrangements by developing clearer, more joined up ways of working, with an emphasis on co production. We are doing this by:

- Enhancing home finding documentation to better support effective matching
- Strengthening communication with providers regarding the progress and status of home searches
- Introducing matching conferences to enable collaborative discussion and shared decision-making
- Developing a continuous feedback loop to inform improvement across the system.

Within Nottinghamshire, each provider will have a linked Commissioning Officer who has oversight of the full brokerage, commissioning, and payments process. This means we can build provider confidence, offering consistency and continuity by providing a single point of access for our providers. Providers appreciate our expert knowledge at each part of the commissioning lifecycle and how this elevates our understanding of our children and young people. Our Quality Assurance and Contract Officers are also improving Nottinghamshire County Council's engagement with the IFA market by acting as a single, consistent point of contact and by collaborating with your linked Commissioning Officer. This role supports the commissioning role, where we add value by offering another perspective and added support.

We are continually seeking feedback from our partners. If you would like to provide feedback, please email:

PlacementReviewTeam@nottsc.gov.uk

Valuing Care

IMPOWER and the Heart of Nottinghamshire

We have been working with partners at IMPOWER to improve outcomes for children through a needs-led approach. We are building a clearer understanding of our children's needs and the key gaps in sufficiency across both fostering and children's homes. We have implemented Valuing Care, a tool which improves home-finding processes, focuses care package reviews, and better aligns services to children's strengths, and we continue to embed this tool into our everyday practice.

Valuing Care allows social workers, commissioners, and leading stakeholders to identify, articulate and track a child's (or a cohort of children's) needs and outcomes. This better enables us to match children to homes which can support them into their future.

A sample of 152 children and young people in care (17% of Nottinghamshire's total population of children in care) had a Valuing Care profile completed in September 2025 to understand their strengths and needs, and identified opportunities for professionals to make positive changes to their care support that better meet each child's needs.

IMPOWER

When scored out of 10 (representing the highest level of need in that area), Emotional Health (5.6), Managing Emotions (5.4) and Understanding Identity (5.4) were the highest average need areas across this cohort of children in care. Physical Health (2.6), Communication (3.4) and Learning Difficulty (3.7) were the lowest average needs across the cohort. The average scores of this cohort of children in care can be seen within the 'Heart of Nottinghamshire' [Figure 11.]

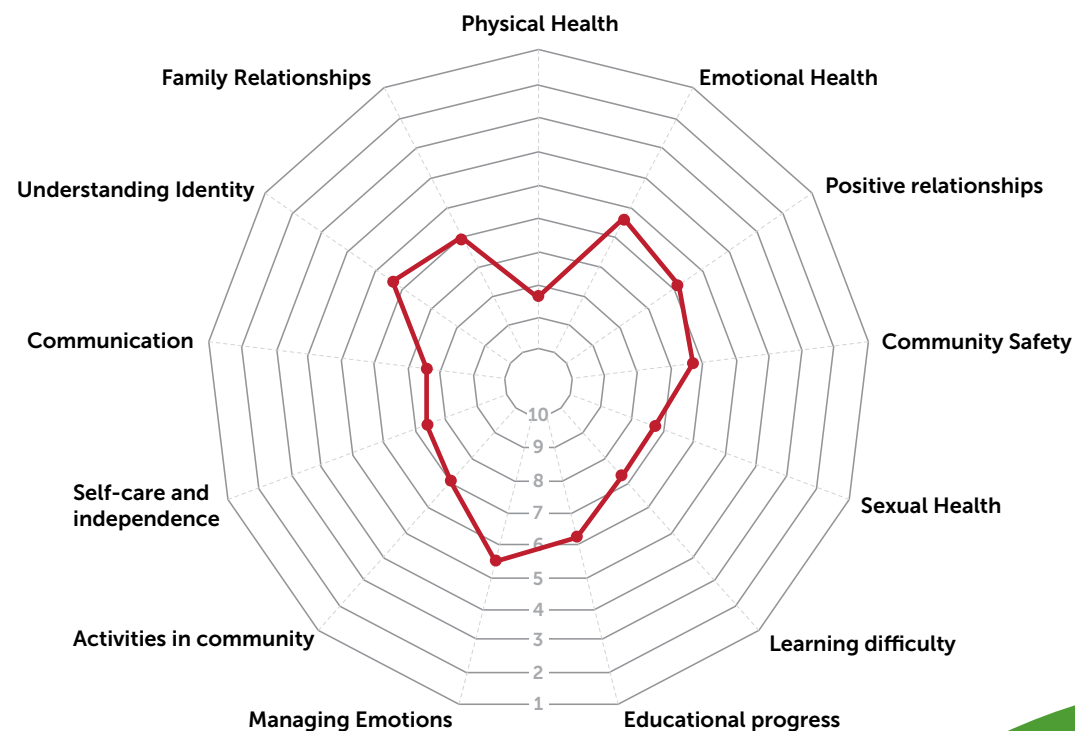


Figure 11

Valuing Care in action:

- Wherever possible, home finding requests will be accompanied by a Valuing Care overview of the support needs of each child.
- We have also begun hosting 'matching events' with our IFAs, aiming to prompt IFAs to consider whether their foster carers could support a child currently in a children's home.

"We are optimistic that this will create a landscape where we can better understand each part of a child's overall needs"

Commissioning Officer.

"Whilst it's still early days, we are integrating this at pace."

Quality and Contracts Officer.

"We are optimistic that this tool will show us how placements are progressing and what needs this snapshot presents for our children and young people and how best we can support our children."

Quality and Contracts Officer.

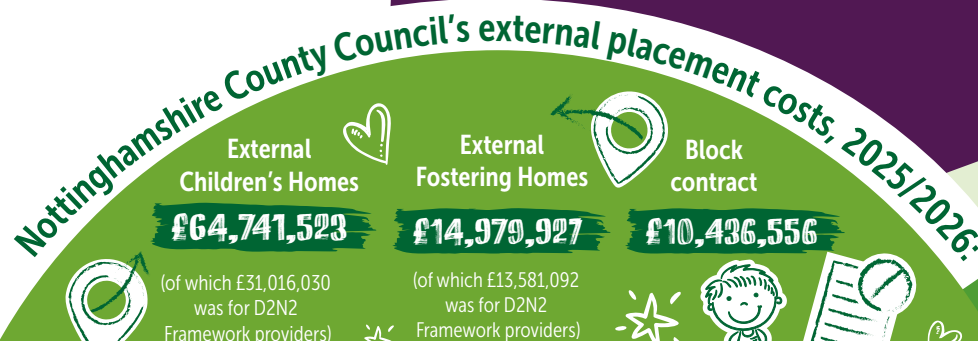
CareCubed is used by over 60% of all local authorities in England, and by over 500 care providers across the UK. CareCubed is a tool that enables local authorities and care providers to better understand the fair cost of care, using national averages to determine baseline costs for different types of residential care packages.

We are committed to being a fair, supportive partner to our providers. Nottinghamshire County Council use CareCubed to achieve greater clarity around the costs of our off-framework children's homes arrangements, whilst continuing to recognise the needs of each child and the bespoke nature of specialist support. This is because our spending on external children's homes has increased year on year, with little understanding about whether the cost of each child's care aligns with their level of need. We aim to improve transparency around the cost of care to ensure that public funds are used to improve children's lives, whilst ensuring that providers can operate sustainably, develop and plan with confidence, and continue delivering high-quality care for our children and young people.

As an off-framework children's home provider, you will be required to complete a standard Expression of Interest form prior to us being able to agree a placement with you*. The Expression of Interest form details your core and additional staffing costs and work patterns, children's allowances, non-staff costs, the cost of additional support provided to children including therapy, and profit. We will not be able to inform the child's social worker about your expression of interest until this form has been completed in full. Please contact us if you would like a copy of the Expression of Interest form.

"This new process supports providers new to the market to better understand granulated costs and benchmarks. We've been working hard to get this process implemented and we are optimistic it will add value to our commissioning conversations throughout the lifecycle of our placements."

Commissioning Officer





Our 'gold standard' providers

We have seen a significant increase in the number of children's homes becoming operational within Nottinghamshire, but these homes often do not offer prioritised places for Nottinghamshire's children and young people. We have also seen a general decline in the number of available IFA carers. We know that the provider market within Nottinghamshire is strong with some great specialisms, and we recognise providers' dedication to provide positive outcomes for our children and young people. We are equally dedicated to maintaining high standards in quality, safeguarding, and delivering personalised care and accommodation, aligning with our shared goal of ensuring every child receives the support they need and deserve. Our approach is rooted in partnership, mutual respect, and a collective commitment to excellence. We therefore want to work with providers who demonstrate certain positive characteristics (see our checklist on the next page.)



"Work with us to team around the child and promote placement stability"

Commissioners.



We need providers who can support:

- Teenage boys who require additional and significant support with their emotional wellbeing, behaviour and relationships to help them feel safe, manage strong emotions and develop positive, trusting relationships. This includes those who may be vulnerable to or affected by child criminal exploitation.
- Young people experiencing significant emotional dysregulation including mental health concerns, regular self-harming, ligaturing and high-risk taking behaviours, such as substance use, and those at risk of child sexual exploitation.
- Young people who have frequent missing episodes.

We need providers to focus on:

- preparing for independence, rather than simply containing the young person
- preparing for adulthood, including knowing how to solve problems
- building-in stamina and resilience for staff
- promotion of flexible care offers

★ Gold standard provider checklist

Gold Standard Characteristics	What this looks like in practice.	✓
Consistency & Continuity	"Stickability" – we need providers who stay with children through challenges and change.	
Flexibility	Practical and emotional flexibility to adapt to children's needs and circumstances.	
Support for Carers	Strong wrap around support including clinical supervision, fair pay, and high quality training.	
Child's Voice & Reflection	Actively listens to children, responds to their views, and embeds learning into practice.	
Responsiveness	Rapid, thoughtful responses to changes in a child's presentation or needs.	
Multi Agency Collaboration	Skilled communication and effective partnership working with professionals across the sector.	
Trauma Informed Practice	Genuine, embedded trauma informed care rather than a surface level model.	
Relational Care	Staff who care for children with the same commitment they would show for their own children; the power of one trusted adult.	
Education Focus	Promotes education as a protective factor and supports sustained engagement.	
Positive Risk Taking	Encourages growth and independence rather than containment; prepares children for adulthood.	
Social Value	Contributes positively to the local community rather than a focus on extraction only without giving back.	



Our children's voices

Children in foster and children's homes have described their ideal caregiver via Residential Reflections - [Clipchamp](#)

"Caring, funny, good listener and they understand me"

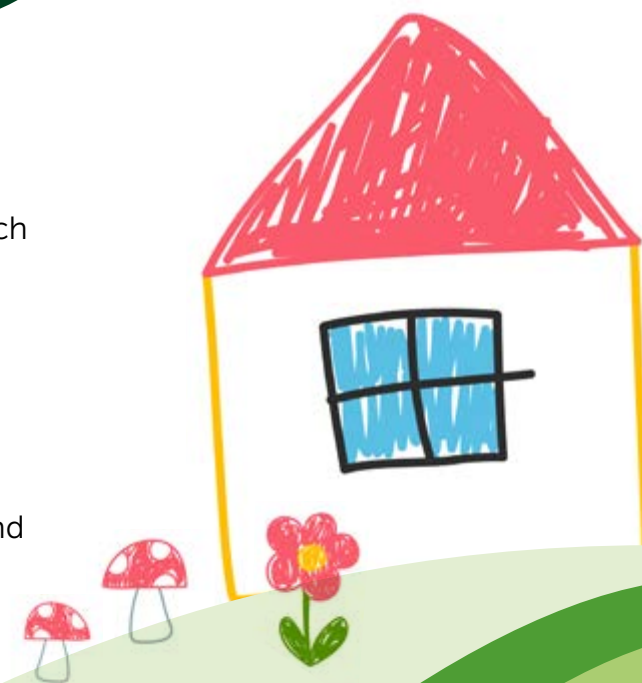
"Respectful and kind."

"Good listener, caring and nag me in a good way!"

"Gives me space when I need it."

"I like people who listen and understand me more."

Children and young people need thoughtful co-produced preparation as they approach the next transition in their journey, whether moving on from foster care or a children's home. Preparation should focus on building their independence, confidence, and practical life skills, while also ensuring they feel emotionally supported and heard. We believe that a focus on developing routines, managing responsibilities, and supporting young people to access education, employment, or training helps them feel more secure about their future. A well-planned, gradual transition can make a significant difference in helping children and young people move forward positively and successfully into adulthood. See link regarding Smooth Moves: - [Staying Close Multi-Disciplinary Team - Smooth Moves - YouTube](#)



Upcoming opportunities



- We continue to onboard new providers to support them to develop provision that meets the needs of the young people in Nottinghamshire. This may include using CareCubed to understand your cost model, providing a supporting statement towards your planning application, offering guidance throughout your Ofsted registration process, and undertaking due diligence in a timely manner to ensure you can be notified of home finding requests if applicable.
- The new D2N2 CiC Framework has been in place since 1st April 2026. The tender will re-open ensuring providers have the opportunity to join the framework, however a timeline has not yet been made available.
- We have begun hosting 'matching events' with our IFAs, with the aim of supporting foster carers to better understand a child's needs, increasing the likelihood of children in children's homes moving to live with a foster carer.
- NCC are developing a Specialist Homes Framework, where we are looking for providers who can provide care for children with multiple presenting needs. This framework is proposed to start from September 2026. We are also working with Action for Children to develop a 2-bed home to support children who require a step-down home.
- We are working to implement a new home-finding mapping tool across our IFAs, and we are reviewing the existing home-finding mapping tool already in use with children's home providers. This will give you a consistent way to notify us of any vacancies coming up in your properties or with your carers, ensuring we don't miss out on any potential opportunities and reducing the impact on our duty team.
- The Stronger Families Team offers short-term, targeted interventions to support reunification, respond to children on the edge of care, and begin stabilising long-term care plans. The team is looking ahead to develop their services to provide sustained support to families in line with NSPCC principles, with additional therapeutic input from the Developmental Trauma and Attachment Team later this year.
- Finally, we will be sharing our updated Sufficiency Strategy document later this year.



Thank you

We hope that this Market Position Statement has provided a clear and comprehensive overview of our Nottinghamshire children's needs, and how you can best support us in meeting them. We are committed to strengthening our approach to sharing relevant and timely data, enabling us to better respond to children's needs and to enhance co-production with providers in shaping a responsive and sustainable placement market. We are keen to encourage innovation and new ways of working that will improve outcomes for Nottinghamshire's children and young people. We also want to see providers demonstrating and delivering social value, and we welcome opportunities for you to share your progress and impact with us.

Finally, we would like to thank you for the vital role you play in making a difference to the lives of Nottinghamshire's children and young people.



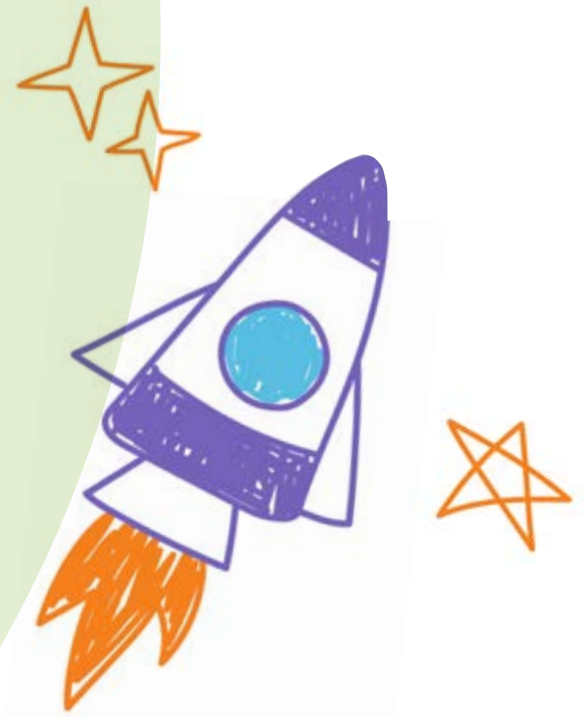
Contact information

Nottinghamshire County Council aims to continue developing strong relationships with IFAs and children's home providers, and we are continually seeking feedback from our partners. If you have questions regarding this document, would like some further information, or would like to provide your feedback, please email placementreviewteam@nottsccl.gov.uk

Mark all enquires FAO of Market Development Officer

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August 2026 - Version 1