

**Alternative
Education
Provision
New Business
Information and
Guidance**

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide information for a new business who are interested in becoming a provider on Nottinghamshire County Council's alternative education framework.

What is the alternative education service?

Nottinghamshire County Council is seeking to commission alternative education for those children and young people for whom it has statutory responsibility, who are without a school place; or where a maintained school or academy has been unable to fully provide an appropriate individualised education package.

This service will offer a wide range of alternative education provision, supporting wherever appropriate, transition back into school.

It is envisaged that the following groups of children and young people may require access to alternative provision:

- Those children/young people who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools
- Those children/young people without a school place
- Children and young people who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan and whose needs cannot be met in Contracting Authority maintained or academy provision
- Children and young people who have an identified Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) need
- Children and young people who are disengaged from school and who are at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)
- Juvenile, young offenders and ex-offenders
- Pregnant teenagers and teenage parents
- Children/young people who are unable to attend school due to a medical condition

The Council is currently looking at commissioning placements through providers who can meet the specific gaps in existing provision:

- Providers with a physical base or staff who can meet with pupils' face to face in community settings across Nottinghamshire
- Provision that covers rural areas, including Bassetlaw and Newark and the south of the county including the rural areas of Rushcliffe.
- Providers who can offer functional skills and a range of qualifications, including GCSE and BTEC and a range of courses such as humanities, geography, IT, business studies, catering etc.

- Providers who can offer exam arrangements to enable pupils to gain qualifications.
- Provision for primary years and post 16
- Providers who are registered with the DfE so young people can be educated at the same provision instead of multiple provisions.
- Providers who can offer sensory and therapeutic provision

Alternative education tender

East Midlands Tenders Portal

Nottinghamshire County Council procure alternative provision through the East Midlands Tender Portal at <https://www.eastmidstenders.org/>

Read our supplier guide, which provides instructions on registering an interest and completing a tender response:

[simplified-supplier-system-user-guide.pdf \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](#)

If you have any queries about using the East Midlands Tenders Portal, you can contact the Council's Procurement Team by emailing:

corporate.procurement@nottsc.gov.uk

IMPORTANT UPDATE NOTICE MAY 2026: Alternative education provision in Nottinghamshire is currently going through a recommissioning process. The current framework is due to expire at the end of December 2026 and no further applications to join this will be evaluated.

A new tender is expected to go live in May 2026. A Planned Procurement Notice has been published on the Find a Tender Service (FTS) – 2026/S 000-041889, which contains further information and guidance on the forthcoming tender opportunity. Find a Tender notice reference URL: <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/041889-2026>

If you wish to discuss this or require further information, please email the Commissioning and Contracts Management Team at childrens.qualityassessment@nottsc.gov.uk

Information and advice on the tender application and process

You will need to complete a questionnaire, which has a set of standard questions, including financial, that are scored as pass/fail to ensure compliance with procurement regulations.

When completing your tender application there are a set of project specific questions to assess your technical and professional ability. Providers will need to score 60% or

higher to pass. These questions include the description of your provision, qualifications offered, achievement and progression.

PLEASE NOTE: Council staff are unable to offer specific guidance and advice on answering the tender questions. Please refer to the tips below on completing your application.

Top tips and advice when answering project specific questions:

- **DO** read each question carefully and answer them accurately and precisely – there may be additional prompts to outline specific information that is required from your answers
- **DO** relate your answers to the service specification. The spec outlines exactly what the service requirements are, and your answers should demonstrate you have read and have a clear understanding of it. The service you propose should mirror the requirements of the specification.
- **DO** keep your answers concise and focused on the question as there will be a limited word count
- **DO** use examples where possible to support your answers
- **DO** double-check your answers before submitting for spelling errors, omissions/areas of confusion and clarity etc
- **DO NOT** cut and paste answers from another tender application
- **DO NOT** make any assumptions about what the Council may or may not know about you or your company. Each tender is scored on its own merits and the Council can only evaluate what you have submitted. The Council cannot refer to any previous knowledge or experience it has had with a supplier when scoring a tender application.
- **DO NOT** use a preface in your answers to put things into context as this is not necessary and will only use up your word count

All tender applications will only be scored once the round has closed and you will be notified of the outcome of your application by the Procurement Team.

If you are successful with your tender application, an essential checklist process will be undertaken to check that you have the relevant policies, procedures, and documentation in place before you will be accepted on the framework and can receive referrals.

Requirements

Insurances

£5 million public liability & £10 million employer's liability is required for all businesses.

*If administering medicines or health care you will also need to consider medical malpractice insurance.

Regulations

Advice from the Department for Education (DfE), entitled “Registration of Independent Schools” published in January 2016, stipulates that any school (as defined by section 4 of the Education Act 1996) would need to be registered as an independent school, if it is providing:

- full time education for five or more learners of compulsory school age
- or where one or more such learners have an EHC plan or statement of special educational needs
- or where one or more learner is “looked after” by the Contracting Authorities

It is acknowledged that, because of this DfE guidance, there may be some providers who are originally categorised as alternative providers of education, but who will ultimately need to become registered as independent schools.

Where a Provider meets the threshold for independent school registration, the Provider must notify the Contracting Authority that this threshold has been reached. No further alternative provision placements should be accepted.

Read further DfE guidance on registering as an independent school below:

[Independent school registration guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Legislation

You must comply with all relevant legislation relating to the service, which includes any updates and amendments. It is the providers responsibility keep up to date with any such developments.

Listed below is some of the relevant legislation that providers are expected to comply with and is not meant to be exhaustive:

- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Education Act 1996, 2002 and 2011
- Health and Social Care Act 2001, 2008 and 2012
- The Chronically sick and Disabled Act 1970
- Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Mental Health Act 1983 and 2007
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Data Protection Act 1998 and 2018
- The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and 2005

Statutory guidance

Providers should ensure that their provision is compliant with the following statutory guidance:

- [Alternative Provision Statutory guidance for Local Authorities, January 2013;](#)
- [Promoting the education of looked-after children, February 2018;](#)
- [Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years, January 2015.](#)

Policies and procedures

You will need to have robust written policies, procedures, and codes of practice, which should include adequate instruction, guidance, and support for staff in the function and delivery of the service outlined within the service specification. These should be accessible to all stakeholders and should include the following:

- Safeguarding – identifying, logging and reporting of concerns, designated lead for child protection, contact details for [Nottinghamshire County Council's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub \(MASH\)](#)
- Safer Recruitment Procedures – [Nottinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Children Partnership Guidance](#)
- Recruitment and use of volunteers (if applicable)
- Staff supervision and training
- Staff training and induction
- Risk assessment – individual/environmental/activities
- Care Planning – Assessments/support plans/reviews
- Health and safety policy – Consider the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Lone working policy
- Incident/Accident/Emergency procedures
- Confidentiality and data protection
- Equal opportunities – anti-discriminatory practice
- Behaviour management
- Whistleblowing
- Code of conduct (appropriate boundaries)
- Business continuity plan (to include risk assessment and contingency in relation to interruption or closure of the service i.e., power cut, inclement weather, unforeseen staff absence)
- Moving and handling
- Complaints and compliments
- Grievance
- Anti-bullying

Documents and systems

You will need to ensure you have relevant documentation in place for the effective running of the service and for scrutiny purposes. These documents should include the following:

- Care/support Plans
- Progression monitoring/reporting system
- Risk assessment forms
- Induction/welcome packs for children/young people and their families
- Attendance management system
- Incident/accident forms/logs
- Behaviour logs/outcomes
- Staff training and supervision records
- Staff files - Right to Work checks/references/training records
- Single DBS record – Evidence all staff have DBS checks, and these are kept up to date
- Child/young person and parent/carer feedback forms
- MAR (Medication Administration Record) *Where applicable

*Please note that if staff are transporting children/young people in their vehicles then they should have up to date business insurance in place.

Training

You will need to ensure that staff have the necessary training in place to deliver the service safely and effectively to meet the needs of the children/young people accessing the provision. If a service is to be provided to children and young people with complex health needs, then appropriate training must be available in order that all staff are trained and assessed as competent by a health care professional.

The following is a list of training that is required for staff, although it should be noted that this list is not exhaustive:

- Safeguarding Children
- Health & safety (including lone working)
- Paediatric First Aid
- Behaviour Management
- Autism awareness
- Mental health awareness
- Care/support planning
- Risk assessments – identification of individual/environmental/activity risks
- Reporting of incidents/accidents
- Academic/vocational training as required to deliver teaching effectively
- Moving and handling (where applicable)
- Administering of medication (where applicable)

- Specific health/care procedures (where applicable to meet the specific needs of children/young people e.g., PEG feeding)
- Seizures & rescue medication (where applicable)

Quality assurance and contract management processes

The quality of alternative provision is measured through three processes:

- Quality assurance framework self-assessments and validation
- Performance indicators
- Contract management reviews

Alternative education providers must meet Nottinghamshire County Council's Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) minimum standards for all core objectives. These core objectives include assessment and support planning, health, and safety, safeguarding and protection from abuse, fair access and diversity, client involvement and empowerment and management of provision. The provider will be required to self-assess against the QAF as part of a validation visit.

Performance Indicator (PI) workbooks are submitted by providers termly to capture student progress in relation to academic attainment, outcome stars and agreed targets. The outcome stars are the SEND outcomes, which were co-produced with young people:

- I need to be listened to and heard
- I need to be the healthiest I can be
- I need to be safe and feel safe
- I need to be accepted and valued by people I trust
- I need to be prepared for my future
- I need to enjoy life and have fun
- How young people feel about their education setting

Contract reviews take place with providers across agreed timeframes to facilitate an on-going dialogue between the provider and Nottinghamshire County Council to support service improvements. Providers are asked to submit a summary report covering areas of success and improvement, stakeholder feedback and student satisfaction and feedback, business continuity plans, service improvement plans, risk register, and evidence of all relevant insurance.

Business support and advice (All businesses)

D2N2 Growth Hub

Offer advice and guidance on starting and growing a business including a free business health check.

<https://www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk/>

Tel: 0333 006 9178

Nottingham Business Ventures

Offer advice and support on starting and growing a business. They also offer free training on starting up and running a business.

<https://nbv.co.uk/>

Tel: 0115 964 8494 or Email: enquiries@nbv.co.uk

East Midlands Chamber

Offer tailored business advice and support.

<https://www.emc-dnl.co.uk/supporting-growth/business-advice-and-support/>

Tel: 0333 320 0333

Voluntary sector organisations

Community Accounting Plus

They help voluntary and community organisations manage themselves well in all areas of accounting and finance. They hold regular finance surgeries for businesses.

<https://www.caplus.org.uk/> or Tel: 0115 947 0839

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

Offer a Consultancy Service, which includes tailored support around governance, strategy, and organisational development.

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/consultancy>

Tel: 020 7520 2552 or email: hello@ncvo.org.uk

Nottinghamshire County Council Communities Team

Offer practical support such as help with writing a constitution, advice on policies, preparing accounts and budgeting. They can also offer financial advice and support.

<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/get-involved/supporting-voluntary-sector>

Tel: 0115 977 2041 or email: communities.team@nottscc.gov.uk

Further information

If you have any questions in relation to the INMSS tender please email the Commissioning and Contracts Management Team at

childrens.qualityassessment@nottscc.gov.uk