



**Northamptonshire
Children's Trust**



Placement Sufficiency Strategy October 2022- March 2025

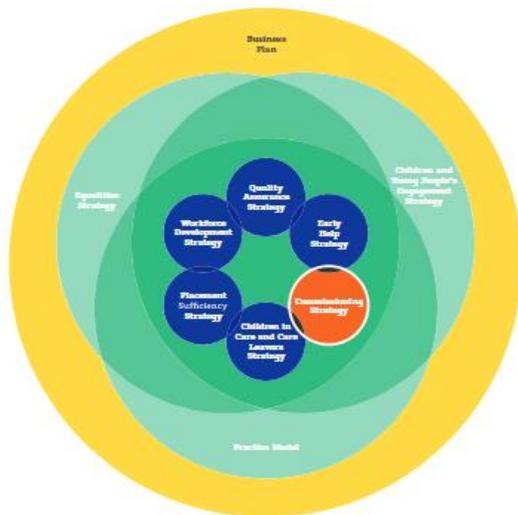
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1. Introduction

At Northamptonshire Children’s Trust we are dedicated to ensuring children, young people and families are at the heart of all we do – in every action we take and every decision we make. We know that what we do today affects children and young people’s tomorrows and we are focused on helping children and young people to live safe, be safe; fulfil potential; develop resilience and enjoy good health and wellbeing.

Our Placement Sufficiency Strategy sets out how we will ensure children in our care and care leavers have a home that is safe and suitable for their individual needs, where they are supported by people who care for them and about them to be achieve their full potential, develop resilience, enjoy good health and wellbeing and develop into adulthood. This will enable us to fulfil the *Sufficiency Duty*¹ along with West and North Northamptonshire councils by ensuring sufficient accommodation is secured that meets the needs of the children in our care and care leavers. Our Placement Sufficiency Strategy connects to the other core NCT strategies that together deliver our overall business plan:



In particular, it reflects the ethos and practice for working with children in care and care leavers, as set out in our Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2021-25:

¹ Section 22G of the Children Act 1989

- 1** **Children and young people are best cared for wherever possible with their birth family or extended family.**

We recognise the strengths that are present in every family and help families to arrive at their own solutions to their own difficulties; we believe children are best raised within their birth family network and will do all we can to support this. We will ensure that the children in our care are only those who need to be in our care.
- 2** **Children and young people will live in homes that take account of their needs and preferences.**

We will work to ensure that positive opportunities and effective help are available at the earliest opportunity – encouraging children and young people to be ambitious and make the choices that mean they can thrive and achieve. Children's care will be well planned, promote stability and reduce the need for placement changes and emergency placements.
- 3** **Permanence and a sense of belonging will be secured for children and young people.**

Relationship-based practice will strengthen the relationships that are important to children and help them to stay connected to those people they love and are important to them.
- 4** **Aim high and have high expectations.**

We work with children young people and the families in which they live to ensure that they receive the support and services they need to live happy, healthy and successful lives.
- 6** **Children and young people develop positive and stable relationships with those who support them.**

Retaining a stable and resilient workforce which will empower and enable children, young people and families to achieve their full potential.
- 5** **Good outcomes for children and young people are achieved through a collaborative approach with partner agencies.**

Children, young people and their families experience consistent joined up approaches to assessing and meeting their needs.
- 7** **The views, opinions, needs and priorities of children in care and care leavers inform everything we do.**

We listen and observe attentively to children, young people and families, and respond to what they are telling us in order to inform how we improve the delivery of our services.

And is key to achieving this aspect of our pledge to children in care and care leavers, by achieving the outcome of *increased sufficiency of local placements so there is more choice for children:*

Make sure you are living in the right place

In delivering our Sufficiency Strategy we keep in mind what our Children in Care Council have told us about what **makes a good home**

People	Place	Other things that matter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivate me • Support with medical needs and appointments • Kind hearted • Gentle • Patient • Approachable • Caring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nice family who want to involve you in their family • Having someone there for you • Good company • Boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm comfy environment • My own bed • My own space • Good food • Pets • Blankets • Safe • Activities to do • Groups to go to • Have access to things you like • Good school • Sense of belonging • Pocket money and budgeting

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a voice is the most important • Someone to talk to • Friends • Need respect • Larger family wanting to be involved with the young people • Strict but fair • Organised • Mother / father figure • Agree rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to freely express myself without judgement • Help me with my future • Life skills • Help with homework • Informed about trauma and how it affects me • Understand feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect my privacy • Wi-Fi • Own computer • Clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness • Good birthday and Christmases • Holidays
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Our Strategy is delivered within the **NCT Strategic framework**



Strategic Framework

Vision

Children, Young People and Families at the heart of all we do - in every action we take and every decision we make.

Our Commitment

(co-produced with children and young people)

What we do today affects your tomorrow, we promise to walk side by side with you

Outcomes Framework



Conditions for Success



2. Our journey since 2020

In Northamptonshire, the vast majority of our children in care are cared for in stable placements that are meeting their needs, supporting them to achieve positive outcomes and progression towards independence. Compared with 2020/21, a higher proportion of children who have been in care for 2.5 years or more have been living in the same placement for 2+ years or placed for adoption (68% YTD at August 2022 compared with 63% in 2020/21), bringing us in line with our statistical neighbours.

We use a mixed model of inhouse and external fostering, children’s homes and supported accommodation to meet the needs of our children and young people. The majority of our children

are living in children's homes or foster care that is rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. This means we are assured that children receive good quality care and we can see how this helps them achieve good outcomes through their care or pathway plan reviews.

We have improved the quality of our NCT IFA (Independent Fostering Agency), which is now judged as 'requires improvement to be good' by Ofsted, and we continue to deliver activity to further improve the quality of the services delivered by our IFA. The vast majority of our NCT children's homes and those on our 'block contract' (where we have sole use of the homes delivered by an external provider) are judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted. At the time of writing, 2 of the 14 NCT and block contract homes were judged as 'requires improvement to be good' and have plans in place to achieve an improved rating. All provision on our residential and IFA frameworks are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. In the main any spot purchased registered provision we commission is rated good or outstanding.

Our 2020 – 2022 Sufficiency Strategy was delivered in a context of major local, national and global challenges and changes: The Covid 19 pandemic impacted our lives in a way most had not previously experienced and we continue to see the impact on children and families' mental health, pressure and dynamics in families, which has been exacerbated by cost of living increases in 2022. Nationally, there has been increased demand in public and specialist services whilst recruitment and retention challenges in care and social work have grown, and risks to children from outside their homes in the form of exploitation continues to cause serious safeguarding issues, trauma and stress to children and those who care for them across the country.

As is the case nationally, we have seen an increase in demand for our support, an increase in the complexity of needs of children and an increase in numbers of children in care as we emerged from lock downs. NCT have seen an increased number of safeguarding referrals; 43,393 initial contacts were received by children's social care across 2021/22, which is 2,020 more than 20/21. The number of children in care in August 2022 was 1218 in comparison with 1143 at March 2021. We also saw an increase from 785 children in placements in Apr 2021 to 888 in June 2022. Additionally, since 2020/21 we have seen an increase in the proportion of our children in care who have had 3+ placement moves in the last 12 months, and this is higher than England and statistical neighbour averages.

During this time, it has also been recognised that the placements market is not meeting the needs of children or local authorities: [Final Report - The Independent Review of Children's Social Care \(independent-review.uk\) \(June 2022\)](#); and The Competition and Markets Authority report on Children's Social Care [Final report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\) \(March 2022\)](#)

Within this challenging context, we have remained relentless in our drive to achieve the priorities of our 2020- 2022 Sufficiency Strategy:

- Improved placement stability
- Improved outcomes for children and young people
- Improved sufficiency of NCT fostering
- Improved sufficiency of placements
- Reduction of placement costs

The impact of this activity is that we now have a better early help offer which is having a positive impact enabling families to remain together or be reunited. We have improved our understanding of needs and have delivered plans to provide access to a greater number of fostering, children's homes and independent supported accommodation that is suitable to meet the needs of our children. We have reviewed our processes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of placement searches to

enable the right placement to be found in a more timely way and have improved our quality assurance activity to ensure action is taken swiftly to address any concerns and better value for money is achieved. Many of the activities will continue as we move into the delivery of our 2022-25 Sufficiency Strategy and the continuing national sufficiency challenges and increase in demand mean this remains a top priority for NCT.

A summary of what we did to deliver these priorities and the impact on children and young people is provided at **Appendix 1**.

3. Sufficiency Assessment 2022 - Our children

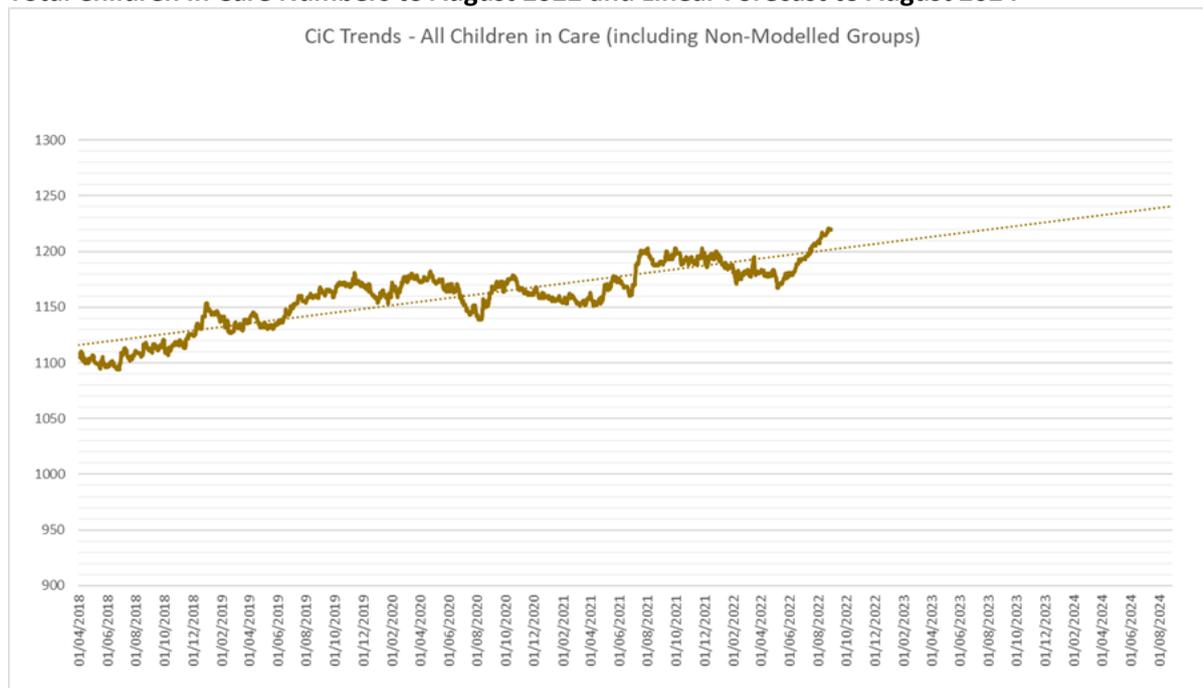
Number of Children in Care and Forecast

At the time of the 2020 -2022 Sufficiency Strategy, there were 1163 children in care. The linear forecast at that time was 1254 children in care by March 2022. As at 31st March 2022, there were 1184 children in care, 70 less children than our forecast. The number may have been lower than expected due to the Covid 19 pandemic and lockdowns from March 2020 when the number of children in care remained steady.

Overall numbers of children in care increased from 1094 to 1184 across 4 years up to March 22, which is an 8% increase. April – August 2022 has seen a further increase to 1218. This is likely due to the impact of the pandemic followed by a significant cost of living crisis, as well as separated children arriving after the allied withdrawal from Afghanistan. Using the Placement Modelling tool from the Data to Insights project with August 2022 data, a straight linear trend line estimates the August 2024 total care population at 1241². The forecasting tool also provides a lower and upper confidence intervals of 1185 and 1257 respectively. NB because the tool forecasts up to 2 years ahead and the current cost of living crisis could have a major impact on children needing to come into care, we will re-run the forecast every 3-6 months and adjust our plans accordingly.

² The term ‘modelled groups’ refers to children in care in foster placements, residential or supported accommodation. It excludes groups where modelling is not created – e.g. adoption placements, placements with parents and other placements.

Total Children in Care Numbers to August 2022 and Linear Forecast to August 2024



Based on current trend, the tool provides a forecast by age and placement type as per the table below:

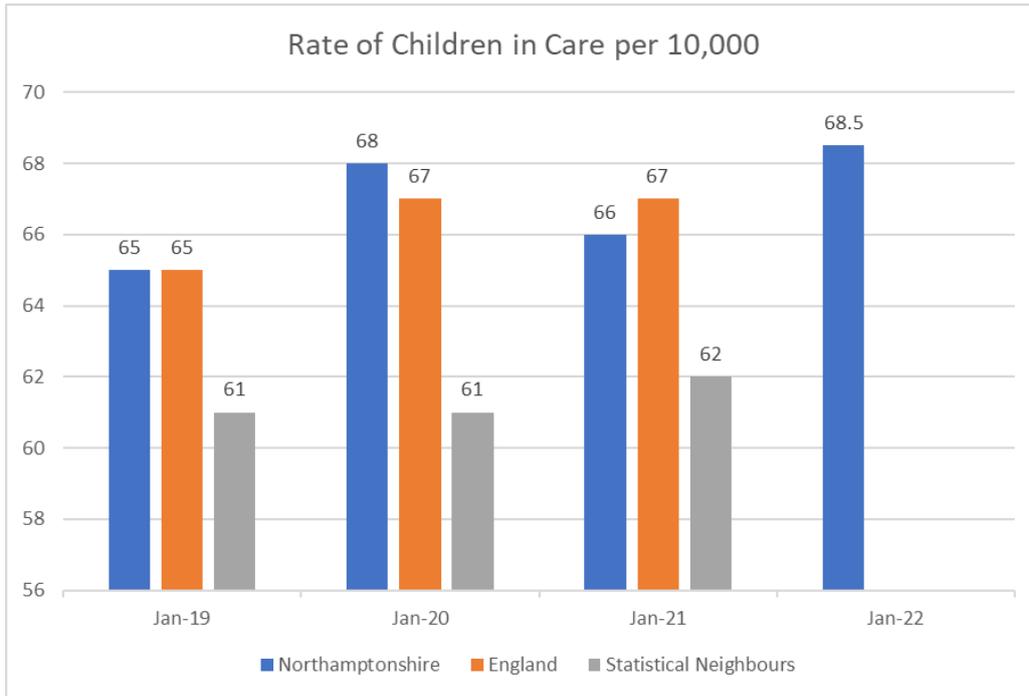
2024 Forecast Summary Figures for children likely to require fostering, residential and supported accommodation: Placement Type and Age

	Total - All	Total Modelled (Fos, Res, Supp)	Fos	Res	Supp	Age 0	Age 1_4	Age 5_9	Age 10_15	Age 16_18
31/03/2022 Actual	1184	1062	844	131	87	57	115	207	440	243
31/08/2022 Actual	1218	1093	847	139	109	43	136	188	441	285
31/08/2024 Tool Forecast	1221	1085	861	134	90	48	123	201	461	252
Base LCI	1185	1048	830	122	77	36	110	186	441	234
Base UCI	1257	1121	892	146	103	60	136	216	481	270
31/03/24 Linear Trend Forecast	1241	1114	862	141	111	44	139	192	449	290
% change Aug 2022 to tool forecast	0.2%	-0.7%	1.7%	-3.6%	-17.4%	11.6%	-9.6%	6.9%	4.5%	-11.6%

The forecast shows an expected increase in the numbers of children aged 5- 15 years and an expected increase in demand for fostering.

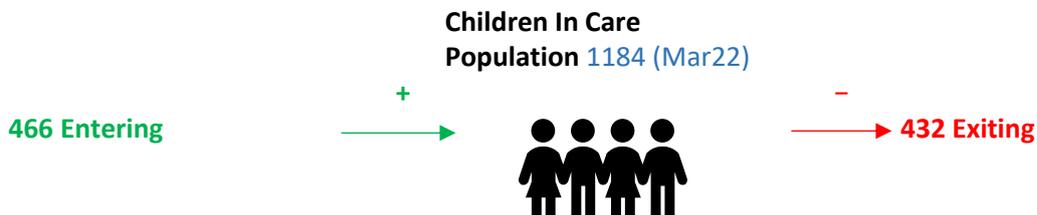
Rate of Children in Care per 10,000

As at March 2022, the rate of children in care per 10,000 was 68.5. This is slightly higher than the latest available national average 67 per 10,000. As with the number of children in care, the rate per 10,000 has increased since 2019.



Please note the rate of children in care data for England and Statistical Neighbours will be not released until November 2022.

Number of Children Entering and Exiting Care (all under 18s) April 21 – March 22



Gender and Age of Children in Care

In Northants, the proportion of **boys and girls** in care remained steady in 2020/21 (54%/46% respectively) and 2021/22 (55%/45% respectively). There were 194 females entering care in 2021/22 compared to 272 males.

This was similar to the latest available national data of children in care from 2020/21 (55.9% boys and 44.1% girls). Boys are overrepresented in the care system in comparison to both the county and national demographics.

Census data 2021

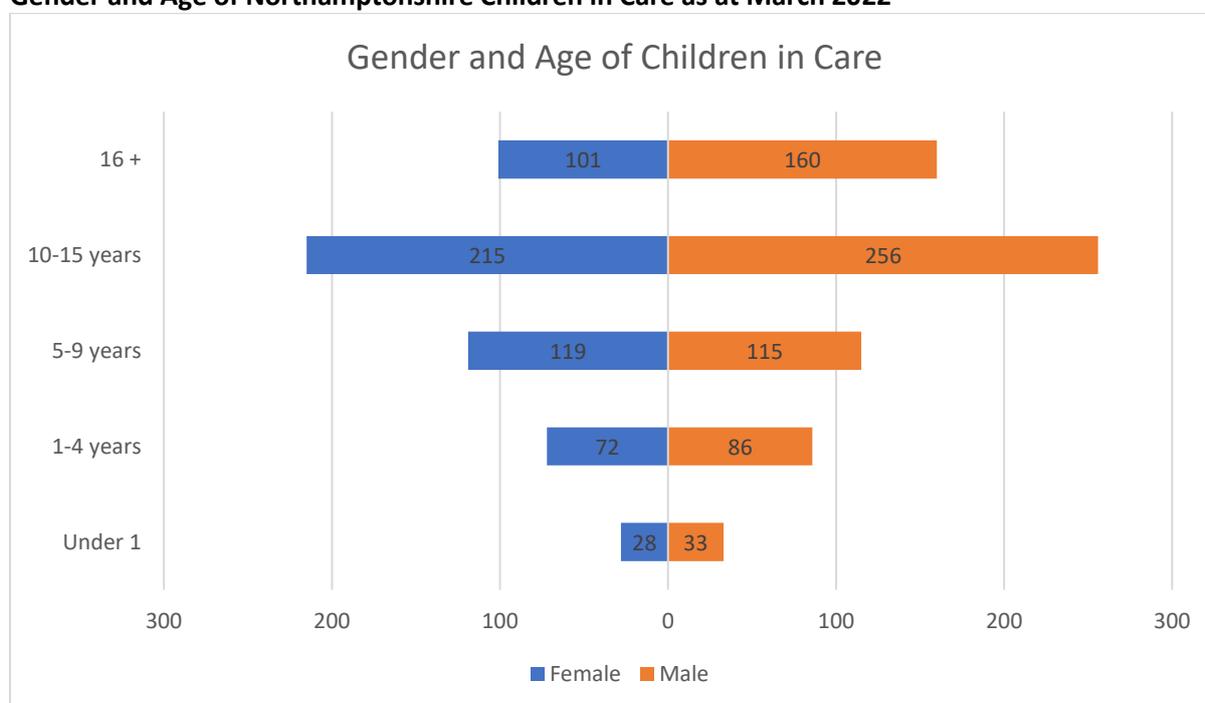
0-19 years old Northamptonshire	%
Male	51.04%

Female	59.86%
0-19 years old England & Wales	%
Male	51.23%
Female	48.77%

A What Works for Children’s Social Care study (2021) highlighted that boys are more likely to externalise emotions. There is some evidence to suggest that children who externalise are more likely to make positive progress in residential care³.

The **age group** with the highest number of children in care and entering care is the 10–15-year-old age group. We know that a significant number of this age group has a care plan of long-term fostering.

Gender and Age of Northamptonshire Children in Care as at March 2022



The largest group of children entering care during 21-22 were 10-15 year olds.

Entrants (March 21- 22)			Grand Total
	Females	Males	
Under 1	36	40	76
1-4 years	31	37	68

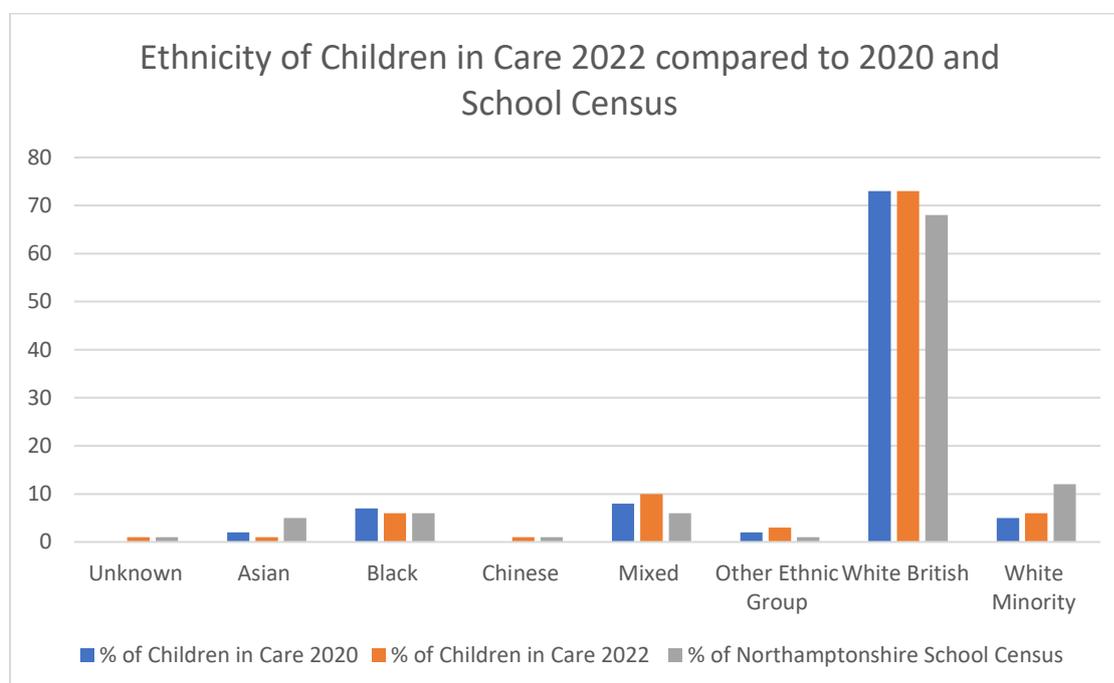
³ What Works for Children’s Social Care (2021) ‘Residential Care’, *Comparing the outcomes of residential care with other types of placement, such as foster care*. Available at: <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/evidence/evidence-store/intervention/residential-care/#:~:text=Overall%2C%20residential%20care%20had%20no%20effect%20on%20children%E2%80%99s,care%20when%20both%20were%20providing%20%E2%80%98care%20as%20usual%E2%80%99>

5-9 years	39	59	98
10-15 years	63	72	135
16 +	25	64	89

Ethnicity of Children in Care

The largest ethnic group of children in care is White British, with 865 (73%) children and young people. The second largest is children from any other White Background (61 children, 5%) followed by African (50 children, 4%). The lowest number of children in care ethnic groups are Chinese (>5), Asian (>5) and Other Ethnic Groups (>5)⁴.

The profile of children in care is slightly different to the Northamptonshire school population as a whole with White British and Mixed Ethnicity being slightly overrepresented in the children in care population. This is change from 2019 when Black children were slightly overrepresented in the Northamptonshire care system compared with the school population.



Children In Care with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

There are 198 children in care with an EHCP (Education, Health, and Care Plan) (at March 22). 4099 children in Northamptonshire have an EHCP, which is 3.3% of all children. Of the 767 children in care who are of statutory school age 26% of children in care have an EHCP. Therefore, of the 4099 children in Northamptonshire that have an EHCP 198 of them are children in care which is 5% meaning that children with an EHCP are slightly over represented in the care system.

⁴ The ethnicity categories used are those used in the Census and further definitions and information can be found here: [List of ethnic groups - GOV.UK \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.service.gov.uk/ethnicity-facts-figures) and [Writing about ethnicity - GOV.UK \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.service.gov.uk/ethnicity-facts-figures).

There are currently 43 children in full time care in the Disabled Children’s service, 27 of whom are in residential care.

Needs of Children in Care

Reasons for Children Coming into Care over 2021/22 were:

Entrants by Reason	Entrants
Socially unacceptable behaviour	12
Parental disability or illness	12
Low income	0
Family in acute stress	23
Family dysfunction	79
Child's disability	7
Abuse or neglect	205
Absent parenting	50
Cases other than children in need	78

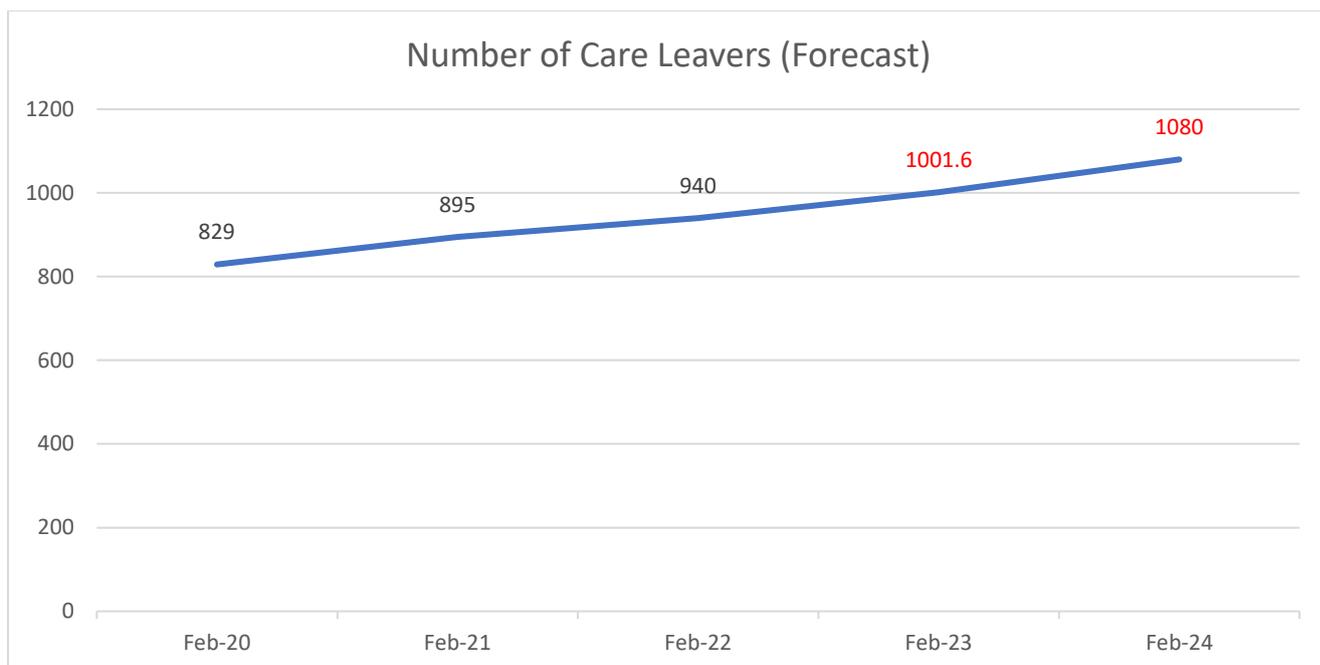
The most frequent reason for children coming into care is because of abuse or neglect. This means we will need placements that can support children who have experienced abuse and neglect and the effect this can have on children’s presenting behaviour, particularly as they reach teenage years.

Leaving Care

In March 22, 940 young people above the age of 16 were being supported by the Leaving Care team.

Leaving Care Cohort by Age	Grand Total (Mar 22)
16+17	258 (14 of whom are relevant so no longer in care)
18	146
19	140
20	165
21	100
22	55
23	47
24	29
Grand Total	940

Our projections tell us that this population is likely to grow to 1080 by 2024 which is an increase of 140 who are likely to require the support of the Leaving Care service (this includes 16 – 17 year olds supported by the service)



Number of Young People 18+ Entering and Exiting the Leaving Care Service Projections based on current age (April 22-March 24)

This projection is based on the number of 16 & 17 years old currently in care who may become care leavers and the number of 22 - 24-year-olds who are leaving care as shown in the diagram below.

The net gain in the care leavers population is potentially 127 by March 2024

It should be noted that over 21s choose whether they still want support from Leaving Care. However, it is envisaged with the forthcoming economic challenges faced in the UK, as well as other challenges facing young people such as mental health, that more care leavers may choose to stay supported.



The percentage of care leavers aged 17-21 and in employment, education or training was 60.6% and 92.5% were in suitable accommodation (August 2022), both above the national and statistical neighbour averages. This indicates the majority of our care leavers are on positive journeys to independence.

Separated Children

There are currently 68 separated children in care (also known as UASC – unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) and 48 entered care during 2021/22. 97% of the UASC population is male (66) and only 3% are female (less than 5). Out of the 48 UASC who entered care during 2021/22, 85% (41) are 16 or 17 years old. Only 7 (14%) are 10 to 15 years old. The number of separated children arriving in

the UK is impacted by international issues such as wars and will need to be monitored carefully to adjust plans according to any large increases.

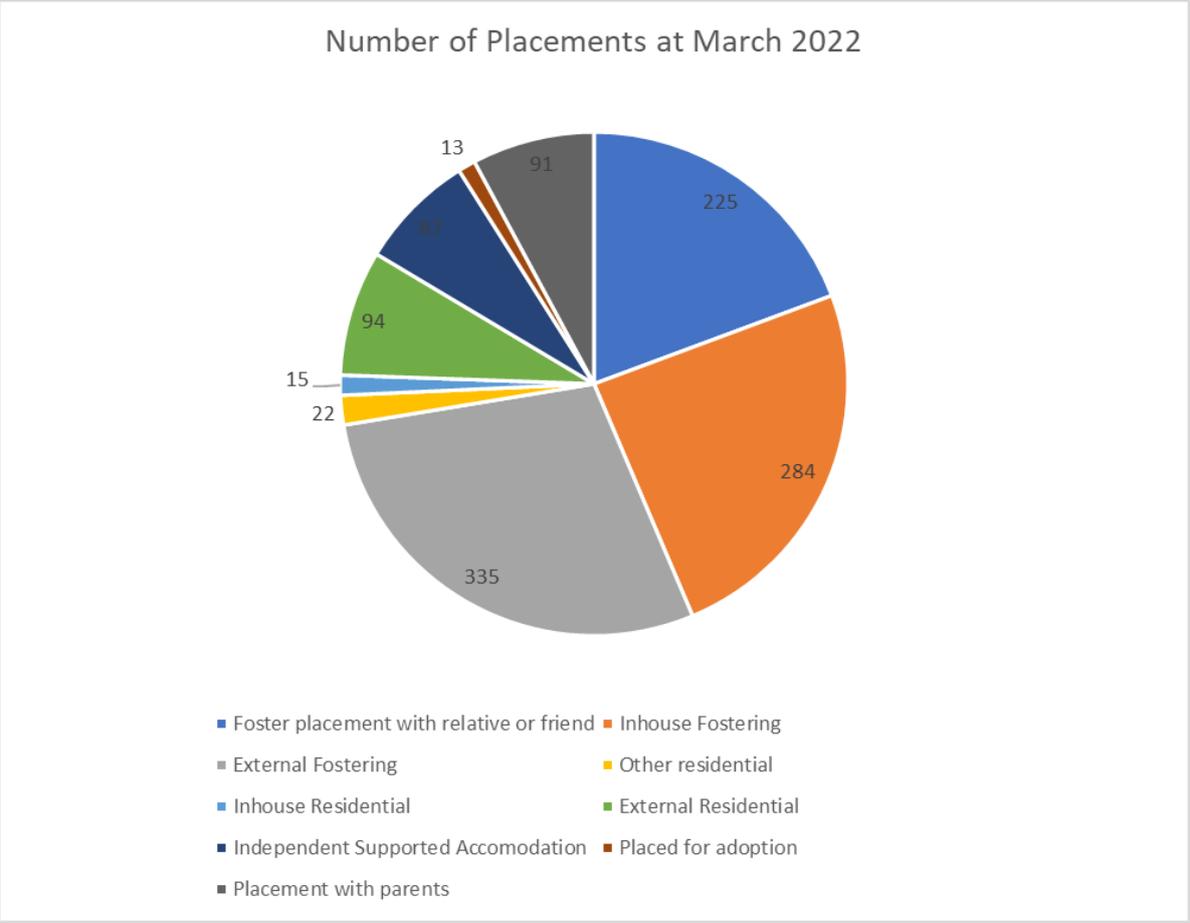
Age	UASC	Former UASC population (care leavers)
14	1	
15	3	
16	19	
17	45	1
18		43
19		50
20		56
21		24
22		19
23		14
24		8
Total	68	215
Grand total	283	

Of the 215 former separated children most have leave to remain status, 11 have no recourse to public funds and have the status of ARE (Appeal Rights Exhausted). All young people who are ARE will have a Human Rights Assessment before decisions are made as to next steps.

In the next year, according to the numbers above, 45 separated young people will become care leavers.

Current Placement Trends

Placement Types for CIC (Children In Care including separated children) and Care Leavers (including separated young people)



In March 22 the largest number of placements were with foster carers with 335 children placed with external fostering agencies and 284 with our internal foster carers. There were 94 children placed with external providers children’s homes. There were 82 under 18s in Independent Supported Accommodation and a further 204 over 18s were also in ISA placements.

49% of all placements for under 18s at end of August 22 were with external providers.

Separated children

For those externally commissioned placements we know that separated children and young people are placed in the following types of provision:

Placement Type	Number of Children in Care UASC
Supported Accommodation	37
Agency Fostering	15
Staying Put/Shared Lives	0

Placement Type	Number of Care Leavers UASC
Supported Accommodation	111
Agency Fostering	0
Staying Put/Shared Lives	10
HMOs	9

Planned and unplanned placement requests

We use the following definitions for our placement requests:

Planned	14 days notice or more
Short notice	4-13 days notice
Emergency	2-3 days notice
Crisis	Same day

The proportion of crisis placement requests have reduced since 2017 and the proportion of planned placements has increased. Planned placements allow for time to be taken for the best match to be found and therefore are more likely to have better outcomes for our children.

Placement Request Type	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	CYP	%								
Crisis	336	39%	444	37%	410	38%	308	35%	318	35%
Short Notice	264	31%	303	25%	259	24%	294	33%	280	30%
Planned	259	30%	452	38%	406	38%	283	32%	317	35%

58% of respondents to a People Too survey of our providers (Jan 22) said that the main reason they serve notice on a placement is due to challenging behaviour presented by the young person. The highest proportion (38%), when asked what would help more, said closer working and support from allocated social workers would be valuable.

There is a national shortage of placements that can receive children in an emergency or on the same day. To address this we are taking the following action:

- Taking actions to reduce placement breakdowns and need for emergency placements, informed by analysis completed on this in 2021 and 2022 (effective earlier intervention with families, effective multi disciplinary team and placement stability meetings, more effective and efficient placement request and brokerage processes, additional capacity to support NCT IFA and external placement stability)
- Focused recruitment of NCT emergency and short term foster carers
- Commissioning external emergency external foster carers
- Commissioned 2x new emergency children's homes (6 places in total) to be operational in Q3 22/23
- Secured continuation funding for therapeutic interventions for children in NCT foster care
- Improving our understanding of the impact for children of therapeutic support within placements

Type of placement requested vs type of placement secured

Due to the national sufficiency challenges it is not always possible to secure the same type of placement as that which was requested. This means the placement may not be completely in line with the child's care plan and a further move may be needed when a preferential type is available. Although it should be noted that more than one placement type may be suitable for a child. Data for the 12 month period of 1 Sept 21- 31 Aug 22 shows:

- Of the 688 children for whom a foster placement was requested, 49 went to residential care and 28 to supported accommodation – this suggests their needs could not be supported within available foster care places

- Of the 111 children for whom residential care was requested, 21 went to supported accommodation - this suggests their needs could not be supported within available residential care places

Unregulated/ Unregistered Placements

Places where children (other than disabled children) are accommodated while on holiday or taking part in leisure, sporting, cultural or educational activities where each individual child stays there for less than 28 days in any 12-month period, do not require registration with Ofsted and are unregulated. The child would however require a main placement, that should be regulated.

THE CARE PLANNING, PLACEMENT & CARE REVIEW (ENGLAND) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2021 came into force on 9 September 2021 and prohibit placement of children in care under 16 in unregulated / unregistered accommodation.

Where a service is **providing care for a child under the age of 18** in a static placement, this service must be registered by Ofsted. Failure to do so results in the placement being unregistered and therefore illegal. It is NCT policy that we do not place in an unregistered setting.

All young people over the age of 16 who have care needs and are living in accommodation other than foster care, are required to be placed in a children's home that is registered with Ofsted. Supported accommodation is not Ofsted registered and is therefore deemed an unregulated setting. We use the DfE published care and support checklist to confirm if care or support is being provided for over 16s if this is not immediately apparent. All independent and semi-independent provision for children in care and care leavers aged 16-17 will be required to register with Ofsted and subject to mandatory national standards from April 2023 and inspections from April 2024.

There are circumstances when it may be appropriate for a care home to be registered with CQC (Care Quality Commission) rather than as a children's home with Ofsted. If a child over the age of 16 is placed in accommodation because of their need for nursing care or personal care, the CQC provider would be suitable if registered to provide residential care and the child's plan indicates that would be the young person's permanent home beyond the age of 18. If the primary reason for placing a child in the accommodation is care that is not nursing care or personal care, it is likely this will be a children's home that should register with Ofsted.

Like children's services in other local authority areas, we have on occasion had to use unregulated provision for children under and over 16. This has been in the context of the national sufficiency challenges and there not being a suitable regulated provision available that could meet the needs of the individual child.

The decision to use unregulated/ unregistered provision is taken at Assistant Director level or above, with confirmation of how the placement can meet the child's needs, quality assurance checks and an unregulated placement risk assessment. Once a child is living in unregulated provision, IRO and senior management will continue alongside regular visits from the child's social worker and the Quality & Outcomes team. The Quality and Outcomes team continue to provide quality assurance and follow up any actions required of the provider with regards to quality, they will also provide advice and guidance regarding Ofsted registration and track progress of this.

As at 31st August 22, there were:

- 9 under 16s living in unregulated/ unregistered accommodation
- 9 over 16s living in Independent Supported Accommodation and receiving care

- 8 over 16s living in CQC registered provision, including 3 for whom the plan is for them to continue living in the placement after the age of 18

Of these children:

- A number had required a same day placement as a result of a police protection order and / or bail conditions meaning they could not return home
- A number were subject of deprivation of liberty order or applications were in progress
- A number had been living at a residential schools which had given notice and an alternative residential school had not yet been identified
- A number were living in provision that had applied or started the process to apply for Ofsted registration

There has been a commonality of needs of children for whom we have been unable to find regulated/ registered provision when the placement has been made and we are progressing plans to address this sufficiency needs

Needs	Progress so far on increasing our sufficiency to meet the need
Mental health issues, self-harm, suicide ideation	3 places planned - DfE capital bid in partnership with external provider and West Northants Council
Exploitation (particularly criminal and sexual)	Proposal to develop 3 NCT beds through unitary capital refurbishment scheme
Complex disabilities including ASD and behaviour that challenges	Additional 5 bed out of county children's home added to our block contract – operational from Nov 22
Trauma from a history of abuse	New provisions will provide trauma informed care

Emergency provision opening in the autumn 22 will provide 6 regulated beds with an external provider helping us to avoid need to make unregulated placements.

We are also commissioning a block contract for emergency same day and out of hours foster carers.

Unregulated foster care

If a child is placed with a connected person who is not approved under Regulation 24, or with a foster carer where the placement is not in accordance with their terms of approval, the placement is unlawful. Where it is in the best interests of the child to be in an unregulated foster care placements approval is required at Assistant Director level or above. A risk assessment and senior management oversight of actions will be in place.

There are 225 children living in Family and Friends Fostering arrangements. In July 22 11 of these arrangements were unregulated with the carers in the process of undertaking registration and training.

Proportion of Children living out of county and 20+ miles from their home

As at August 22, 17% of our children were living out of county and placed 20 miles or more from their home. This has decreased steadily from 19% in 2020/21 and 18% in 2021/22. We are now in line with our statistical neighbours and 1% point lower than the national average. Whilst in some instances an out of county placement is required, where it is not, we always seek to find a suitable home in county and within 20 miles of their home so they can continue to easily access support from local services and networks. We therefore need to continue to focus efforts on ensuring sufficient local provision that can meet children's needs

4. Current Sufficiency

Fostering

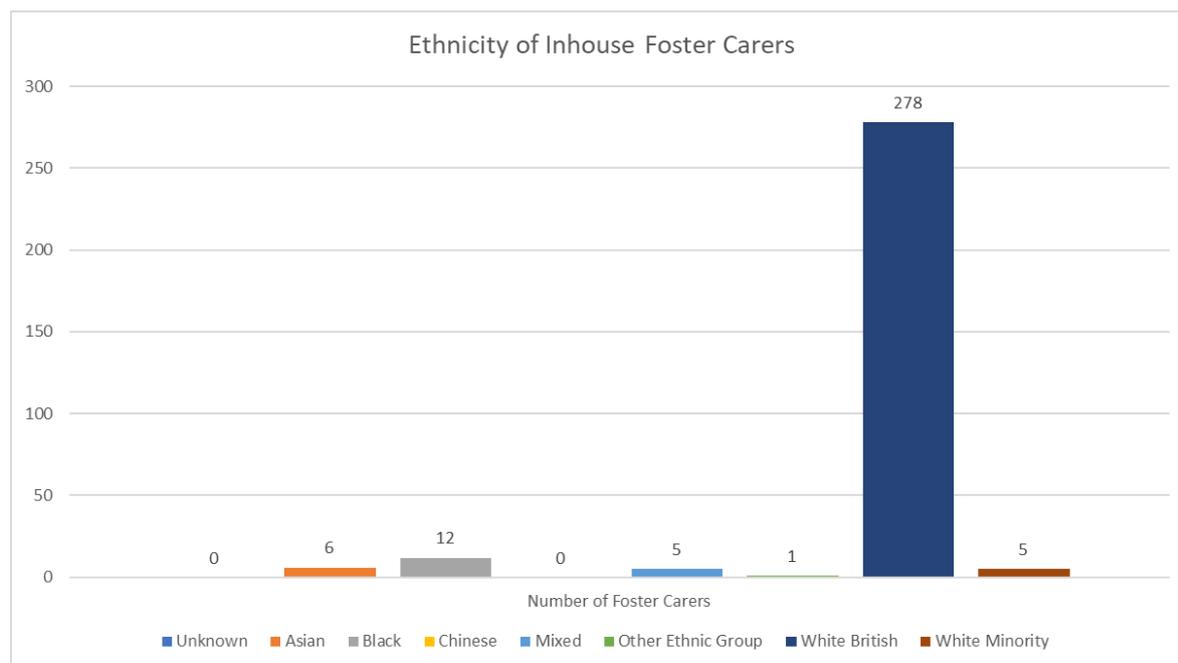
NCT Independent Fostering Agency

As at end of August 22, there were:

- 122 approved friends and family carers
- 207 approved foster carer households, providing up to 392 places, including:
 - o 44 long term specific
 - o 149 long term/ short term
 - o 5 emergency
 - o 5 resilience (for children with more complex needs / stepping down from residential)
 - o 2 parent and child
 - o 3 respite only

As at August 22, the NCT foster carer utilisation rate was 67% , with 27% of places not currently available (for example due to awaiting child moving in, carer holiday or to meet needs of a child). This doesn't include friends and family carers.

Ethnicity of NCT foster carers (including family and friends foster carers)



* Ethnicity of Carer 1

89% of NCT foster carers are White British with the second largest group of Black Ethnicity, followed by Asian and then Mixed Ethnicity. **This suggests it would be beneficial to recruit more carers from global majority backgrounds to provide more options of a cultural match for our children.**

Ethnicity	% Of inhouse Foster Carers	% Of Children in Care
White British	91%	73%
Black	4%	6%
Mixed	2%	10%

Gender of NCT foster carers

Carer 1	
Gender	
Female	274
Male	33

Carer 2	
Gender	
Female	30
Male	185

This data suggests it would be beneficial to increase our number of male carers particularly as the proportion of boys in care is higher than girls.

Location of NCT foster carers

Area Breakdown	
North	159
Out of County	29
West	119

This data suggests it would be beneficial to have additional carers in the West as the proportion of children in care from North and West is around 50/50

Ages of NCT foster carers

Age of Carer 1 (years)	Number of foster carers
21-30	6
31-40	36
41-50	84
51-60	111
61-70	60
71-80	9
81-90	1

59% of our foster carers are aged 51+ and 22% are aged 61+ so our recruitment plans need to take into account the likelihood of retirement for these carers

External Independent Fostering Agencies

As at August 22, have the following numbers of providers on our IFA framework (NB placements are purchased on an as needed basis according to matching with children and other local authorities also use these providers, so the placements are not guaranteed for NCT)

- Standard: 41
- Specialist: 8

The vast majority of our external fostering placements are made with providers on our framework (live placements as at 15/8/22). Making placements with providers on our frameworks can mean we are able to achieve better value for money and already have assurance of the quality of provision.

	No. of Framework placements	% of Framework placements	No. of Non-Framework placements	% of Non-Framework placements	Total number
External IFAs	320	87%	48	13%	368

Children's Homes

NCT have 5 Children's Homes, with capacity for up to 21 children. In August 22 our children's homes were at 76% occupancy. The statements of purpose have been reviewed to ensure that the needs of our population of children in care are met and help us to operate at a higher rate of occupancy.

NCT also has a strong partnership through a **Block Contract arrangement** where we work closely with a provider to deliver high quality homes for children. This provides homes for 32 children across 9 Northamptonshire locations which we have sole use of. Utilisation rate was 91% at end of Aug 22. In addition:

- During Q3 of 22/23 a further out of county home, providing up to 5 places will be operational within the block contract.
- During Q3 of 22/23 2 new emergency children's homes will be operational (one in West, one in North) providing up to 6 places as a block contract

NCT Children's Home Framework

As at August 22, we have the following numbers of providers on our Children's Home framework (NB placements are purchased on an as needed basis according to matching with children and other local authorities also use these providers, so the placements are not guaranteed for NCT):

- Standard: 46
- Specialist – Children with complex social emotional and mental health needs and low-level disability: 30
- Specialist – Children with a disability and complex health needs: 12

52.5% of our external children's homes placements are made with providers on our framework (live placements as at 15/8/22). Making placements with providers on our frameworks can mean we are able to achieve better value for money and already have assurance of the quality of provision. **This data suggests our children's home framework provision is not able to meet the needs of our children or provide places as much as we would like.**

	No. of Framework placements	% of Framework placements	No. of Non-Framework placements	% of Non-Framework placements	Total number
External Children's Homes	53	52.5%	48	47.5%	101

Independent Supported Accommodation

Independent Supported Accommodation is suitable for children aged 16+ where this meets their needs to develop independent living skills and they no longer require care. All our commissioned ISA provision works to enable young people to achieve independent living outcomes

Training Flats

We have a block contract for 19 training flats in Northampton for up to 21 care leavers who need additional support to develop independent living skills. Capacity as at August 22 was 100%. At the end of Q4 21/22, only 2 care leavers living here were NEET. All young people who moved out did so in a planned way, however some young people have lived here for longer than intended suggesting there has been difficulty in securing them move on accommodation.

From summer 2023 we will have an additional 9 training flats for care leavers with additional needs in Northampton.

Other ISA placements

As at August 2022, we have the following numbers of providers on our ISA framework:

- Semi Supported Accommodation with 24 hour staffing (Accommodation Manager) and a minimum of 2 hours of 1:1 support per young person per week: 68
- Semi Independent Accommodation (solo or shared) with 2 hours of 1:1 Support per young person per week: 68
- Standard Additional Support hours: 71
- Specialist Additional Support hours: 36

The vast majority of our ISA placements are made with providers on our framework (live placements as at 15/8/22). Making placements with providers on our frameworks can mean we are able to achieve better value for money and already have assurance of the quality of provision.

	No. of Framework placements	% of Framework placements	No. of Non-Framework placements	% of Non-Framework placements	Total number
Independent Supported Accommodation	296	90%	32	10%	328

Independent supported accommodation **will become subject to Ofsted registration** from April 2023 and the first inspections are expected from April 2024. This will benefit young people and commissioners through external scrutiny of quality of provision. There could however be an adverse impact on sufficiency if providers choose not to register or fail to meet requirements.

In August / September 2022 we surveyed ISA providers that are currently supporting our 16-17 year olds. Of the 39 that responded, 59% indicated they are likely to register, 39% would like support to know more. Only 2 providers said they are unlikely / will definitely not register. We are planning to deliver support during Q3 and Q4 22/23.

There is a risk that landlords may not be willing to apply for this type of planning permission, if one is required, due to impact on neighbours and locality, and this may impact on provider's ability to source appropriate properties for this effect.

The final version of the national standards have not yet having been published, so it is currently unknown what costs will be associated with providers registering with Ofsted. This may present a challenge in growing the market and therefore drive costs up. When the government's response was first published, it was thought that at a regional level it could increase prices by up to 30%. This will require careful monitoring.

Staying Put

Care leavers people can remain with their foster carers until they are 21 years-old, through a staying put agreement between NCT, foster carers and the young person. As at Aug 22, there are 58 care leavers under this arrangement. This is a good outcome for young people as it allows them to remain where they live for longer while learning to prepare for independence. However, this scheme has a slight impact in the sufficiency of foster carers for children in care.

Shared Lives

Is a CQC (Care Quality Commission) registered scheme, where young people with complex needs, such as learning disabilities or mental health difficulties, live with approved carers. As at Aug 22, there are 7 care leavers in this arrangement.

Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

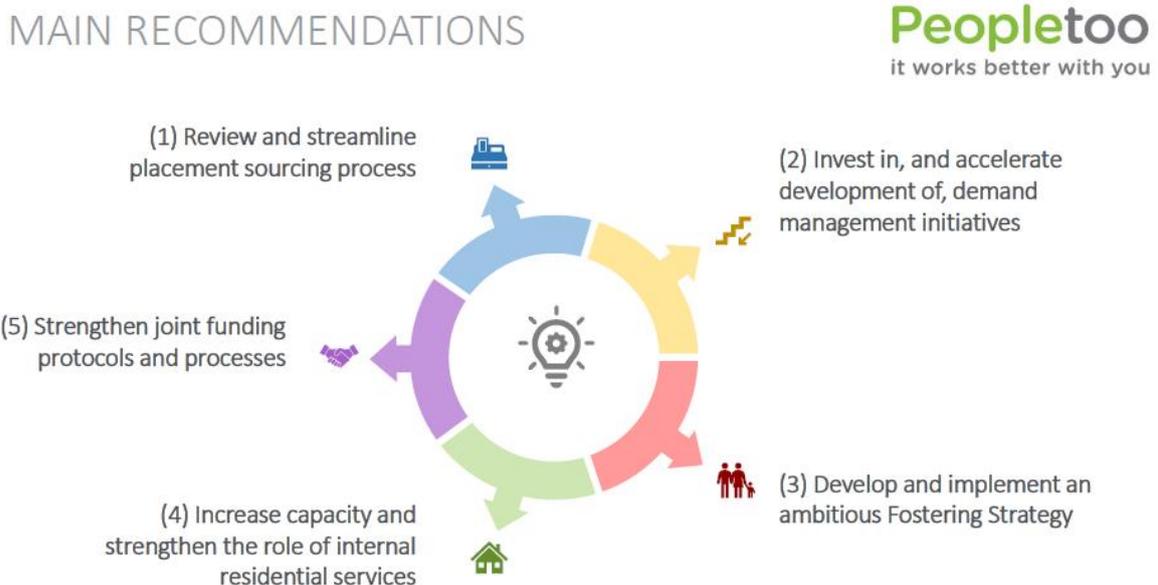
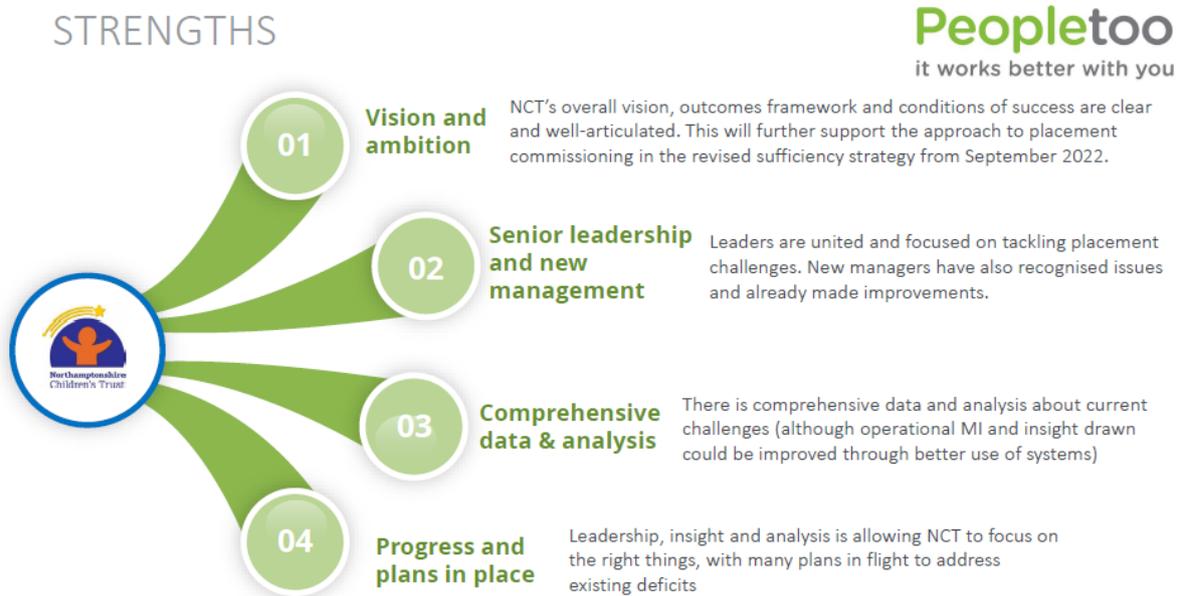
As at August 22, we have use of 3x HMO properties providing places for up to 16 care leavers in Northampton. These are suitable for care leavers who do not require support, particularly previously separated children. We have decided not to renew the lease of 1 of the properties in accordance with current needs and are considering future use of the HMOs in line with staying close proposals.

5. External review – Key messages

In 2022 we commissioned an external review of our placements commissioning to identify areas for improvement and inform the refresh of our Sufficiency Strategy. The review completed by People Too in February 2022, found:

- NCT has a good understanding of demand, sufficiency, and its key challenges and opportunities relating to children in care placements.
- In some areas, NCT is managing and meeting need as effectively as comparators. Despite this, some intractable issues are present that require creative and innovative solutions
- The provider market is not operating effectively to meet NCT's needs. Whilst some changes can be made to commissioning processes, this will still be insufficient. To make the step-change that NCT wishes to, in line with its strategic ambition, there are opportunities for a significant return on investment programme relating to internal fostering and residential services to increase capacity and their ability to support those with the most complex needs.
- There are also opportunities to streamline and increase the efficiency of placement sourcing processes, alongside a re-balancing of senior management and practitioner accountability, to reduce the delay in sourcing placements.
- Progress has been made to strengthen arrangements relating to joint funding of packages and this is evidenced in additional funding contributions; however, there are opportunities to embed this further and re-balance the proportionate contributions from different agencies, accompanied by clearer representation and accountability at decision-making panels.

- NCT should also consider opportunities to enhance its offer to reduce demand for placements, through a strengthened early help partnership offer, high quality social work practice, and edge of care services.



We have progressed actions to deliver these recommendations during 2022 (see Appendix 1) and will continue through the 2022-25 Sufficiency Strategy priorities and action plan.

6. What does our data tell us? – Key messages for our sufficiency plans:

Based on linear forecasts to 2024:

- We expect an increase in the total number of children in care between August 2022 – August 2024 of approx. 23 children and we continue to have a higher rate of children in care than our statistical neighbours and the national average. **We will need to continue to improve early intervention and practice to enable children to remain within or return to their families if this in their best interests.**
- We expect we will continue to see a higher proportion of boys in care and therefore will need placements that can meet their needs – **including more male foster carers**
- Of those likely to require a placement, we expect to see the number of babies reduce slightly, the numbers of 1-4 year olds and 16-18 year olds reduce and an increase in numbers of children aged 5-15. **We are therefore likely to need more placements for the 5 -15 age group and expect a high proportion will have a plan for long term fostering. We will need to improve likelihood of matching by recruiting and retaining and commissioning carers who reflect the demographics of our children (more from global majority backgrounds), and increase family finding activities.**
- Based on linear projections we expect our need for foster care to increase by approx. 14 places, however we are aware that currently we have not been able to identify suitable foster carers for some children whose plan is for foster care (approx. 70 places based on current patterns). **Therefore approx. 85 additional foster care placements are required to 2024, as well as replacing any NCT carers who retire. This includes those that can support children with more complex needs and those that can care for children in an emergency**
- We expect our need for residential placements to remain steady/ decrease slightly, however we are aware that currently we have not been able to identify suitable care homes for some children whose plan is residential care (approx. 20 places based on current patterns). **We will have an additional 11 places available in Q3 22/24, including 6 emergency places and are seeking capital funding and properties for additional NCT provision**
- In addition, given the current challenges in finding the right residential care for children with more complex needs we know we need to increase access to residential care that can support:
 - Children who need to access care in an emergency/ crisis situation
 - Children who require a solo or dual placement
 - Children with Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs
 - Children with disabilities including behaviour that challenges others
 - Children with disabilities with complex health needs
 - Children at risk of or experiencing violence, gangs, exploitation, including those returning from custody, secure remand, secure welfare
 - Children requiring step down or prevention from hospital with needs including trauma, suicide attempts/ ideation, self-harm, eating disorders, gender dysmorphia

We have plans in place to secure capital funding to increase NCT and external provision to meet this need and will need to review plans if this is not forthcoming.

- We do not want to continue being in the situation where we have to use unregulated/ unregistered provision for under 16s or over 16s where this is not in line with their care plan. In addition to increasing access to places that can meet the needs of children that we struggle to find regulated places for, **we need to continue to work across the system to reduce placement breakdowns and emergency / crisis (same day) placement requests**
- We expect our need for supported accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds to decrease by approx. 19 places, however our number of care leavers is expected to increase by approx. 127 by March 2024 and it is expected a proportion will continue to require supported accommodation, including those providing pathways to independence / training
- We will need to continue to support ISA providers to prepare for Ofsted registration (from April 23) and closely monitor the impact on sufficiency and costs of regulation, adjusting plans accordingly.
- We need to continue to work with colleagues in Housing to ensure there is suitable housing available for our care leavers to move on to their own tenancies
- We need to continue to improve our commissioning (understand, plan, do and review) to ensure we are making the best use of our total resources to improve outcomes for children and families in the most equitable, efficient, effective and sustainable way.

7. Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 2025 Our 4 Priorities



Strengthening Families

Key Outcome: Children are able to remain within the care of their families and/ or network where this is in their best interests



Finding a Place Called Home

Key Outcome: Children are able to live in a setting that meets their needs and they benefit from improved outcomes



Promoting Stability & Permanence

Key Outcome: Children feel safe and secure in their home and their placement is stable



Pathways to independence

Key Outcome: Children and young people thrive and are on track to becoming independent

The delivery of our 4 key priorities will be enabled by:



Improved commissioning

We will use the total resources available for children, young people and families in order to improve outcomes in the most equitable, efficient, effective and sustainable way⁵



Strengthening Families

Key Outcome: Children are able to remain within the care of or return to their families and/ or network where this is in their best interests

What we will do:

This priority will be delivered through activity already identified in:

- NSCP's Early Help Strategy & action plan
- NSCP's Neglect Strategy & action plan
- NSCP's Exploitation Strategy & action plan
- NCT's Business Plan: *Strong, relationship based practice & Healthy Partnerships*
- NCT's Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy Live Safe, Be Safe priority

In addition, we will:

- Continue to review the impact of the Pause programme in enabling women who have previously had children removed to improve their outcomes, and seek continuation of funding to continue beyond 2025 if it continues to have successful impact on preventing children from coming into care

⁵ Commissioning Support Programme, 2010

- Continue to review the impact of our commissioned targeted safeguarding support in achieving positive impact for children who are subject of children in need and child protection plans, and re-commission if it continues to have successful impact (current contract ends 31 Mar 24).
- Continue to review the impact of our commissioned targeted family support/ early intervention for children under 5 in Corby and re-commission if it continues to have successful impact (current contract ends 31 Mar 24).
- Implement re-designed model of short breaks and respite from children with disabilities from Apr 23 to improve access to impact of support for children with disabilities to remain within the care of their families or current placement.
- Commission respite care, particularly for teenagers, to prevent the need for children to come into care if a family is in crisis

How will we know if we've made a difference?

- Feedback from children, young people and families
- Our rate of children in care will reduce to reflect national / statistical neighbour averages – *NB we expect this will take place after a period as we know that strengthening early help is likely to lead to an initial increase in numbers of children in care*
- The need for emergency and crisis placements will continue to reduce from 2022 level



Finding a Place Called Home

Key Outcome: Children are able to live in a setting that meets their needs and they benefit from improved outcomes

What we will do:

Fostering:

- Deliver the NCT Fostering Improvement Plan with the aim of securing a 'good' Ofsted judgement
- Work with WNC and NNC to implement capital programme for NCT foster carers' homes to increase number of placements / placements for siblings and / or children with disabilities
- **Recruit NCT foster carers** in line with annually set targets. For 2022/23 this is 40 new households (specifically targeting carers for children aged 8+ and seeking to increase proportion of male and global majority carers) including:
 - 5 resilience carers
 - 3 households that can care for sibling groups
 - 5 households that can provide short breaks for children with disabilities
 - 3 households that can provide parent and child placements
 - 4 households who can offer emergency provision
- Improve the retention rate of **NCT foster carers**. Plans to be delivered in 22/23 include:
 - Review of financial allowances and enhanced payment scheme
 - Deliver revised training package
 - Introduce specific out of hours support

- Propose council tax reduced payment scheme
- Increase support for carers who are 'on hold'
- Expand therapeutic support to deliver proactive intervention
- Commission **external IFA emergency carer provision** in 22/23
- **Build and improve relationships with external IFAs** so that they are more aware of the needs of our children and so that we become a commissioner of choice
- Re-open our **IFA framework** on an annual basis and commission new framework for April 2025

Children's Homes:

- Work with WNC and NNC to open min. of 3 new NCT children's homes by 2025 to support children with more complex needs (children with disabilities and behaviour that challenges, mental health needs, those subject of exploitation)
- Review impact of additional block contract out of county and emergency homes – due to be operational in Q3 22/23
- Secure capital funding to open one externally delivered home by 2024
- **Build and improve relationships with external children's homes providers** so that they are more aware of the needs of our children and so that we become a commissioner of choice
- Re-open our **children's home framework** on an annual basis and commission new framework for April 2025
- Develop long term sustainable partnership in the re-commissioning of our **children's homes block contract**
- We will continually improve oversight of any unregulated/ unregistered placements that have had to be made for under 16s or over 16s where this is not in line with their care plan
- Support local providers of unregistered / unregulated provision to apply for Ofsted registration for children's homes.

Accommodation for Care Leavers:

- Continue to review impact and re-commission our 19 training flats for April 2024
- Open additional commissioned training flats in Summer 2023
- Review use of HMOs by Apr 23
- Support providers to be able to register with Ofsted by Apr 23, monitor likely impact on sufficiency and cost and take appropriate mitigating action

How will we know if we've made a difference?

- Feedback from children, young people and families
- All children will be able to live in the same type of placement as per the type requested, in line with their care plan
- We will not have to use unregulated/ unregistered provision for under 16s and over 16s where this is not in line with their care plan
- The % of children in care with 3+ moves in previous 12 months will reduce from Aug 22 figure of 13.1%
- We will reduce the number of high cost placements



Promoting Stability & Permanence

Key Outcome: Children feel safe and secure in their home and their placement is stable

What we will do:

- Continue to work across the system to intervene earlier and reduce need for police protection orders and crisis (same day) placement requests
- Taking actions to reduce placement breakdowns and need for emergency placements, informed by analysis completed on this in 2021 and 2022 (effective earlier intervention with families, effective multi disciplinary team and placement stability meetings, more effective and efficient placement request and brokerage processes, additional capacity to support NCT IFA and external placement stability)
- Monitor the impact of additional family support capacity intended to improve placement stability of NCT fostering and external placements (operational from Q3 22/23)
- Regular reviewing the impact of placement support packages
- Continue to monitor impact of public health funded therapeutic interventions for children in NCT foster care and identify means of mainstreaming this support if it continues to have positive impact
- Improving our understanding of the impact for children of therapeutic support within placements

How will we know if we've made a difference?

- Feedback from children, young people and families
- % of children in care for 2.5+ years who have been in the same placement for for 2+ years/ placed for adoption will increase from Aug 22 figure of 68.1% and remain in line or reach above comparators
- The % of children in care with 3+ moves in previous 12 months will reduce from Aug 22 figure of 13.1%



Pathways to independence

Key Outcome: Children and young people thrive and are on track to becoming independent

What we will do:

- Develop our leaving care data set to inform a needs analysis for the care leavers population
- Further analyse young people's needs and co-design commissioning models to further develop care leavers accommodation based on pathways; including development of supported lodgings

- Working with social housing providers to develop stages of supported accommodation from stage 1 working with young people to develop resilience and improve health and wellbeing, stage 2 training flats for independence to stage 3 young people moving onto their own tenancy with floating support.
- Develop our staying close offer to provide additional support for young people moving on from children’s homes.
- Developing the current ISA model for 18+ with the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) and ISA providers so that young people are able to develop independence skills through being supported to claim benefits and seek work.
- Explore review of Staying Put arrangements to become ‘opt in’; Pre-tenancy agreements with private landlords, guarantor schemes (recommendation from Independent review of children’s social care)
- Further develop strategic relationships with the West and North Northamptonshire Housing departments to plan for the future and ensure sufficient housing for young people to move onto; and review the impact of the joint protocol for Care Leavers Housing
- Continue to develop our Mental Health Support Offer for Care Leavers, review the impact of public health funded provision and seek mainstreaming of this by 2024 if continues to have impact
- Review our current offer to support care leavers into education, employment or training to inform future commissioning by Apr 23

How will we know if we’ve made a difference?

- Feedback from young people
- The proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation will maintain or improve upon Aug 22 level of 92.5%; and above statistical neighbour and national averages
- The proportion of care leavers in EET will maintain or improve upon Aug 22 level of 60.6%; and above statistical neighbour and national averages



Improved commissioning

We will use the total resources available for children, young people and families in order to improve outcomes in the most equitable, efficient, effective and sustainable way⁶

What we will do:

We will make improvements at each stage of the cycle, ensuring that we are taking a relationship based approach to commissioning:

Understand

- We will review children in care and care leaver forecasts every 3-6 months
- We will regularly analyse the range of data available within NCT to us to give us to better understanding of demand and use of placements
- We will review our demographic analysis after West and North unitary councils have produced and published their Joint Strategic Needs Assessments

⁶ Commissioning Support Programme, 2010

- We will better understand the views of our children and young people through a broader and deeper range of engagement with them; including consideration of any variation for those with protected characteristics, and co-develop commissioning projects with them
- We will work to develop information on protected characteristics by using data available on Care First and estimates based on census data to create a better understanding of our children in care population beyond age, gender and ethnicity which will enable us to better understand and consider what type of support we need to provide and commission for our children

Plan

- Our Sufficiency action plan will remain a live document, adapted over the course of the strategy as needs and/ or markets change, with progress overseen by the Sufficiency Board
- We will review NCT foster carer recruitment targets on an annual basis
- We will allow sufficient time to undertake commissioning projects
- We will produce market position statements and engage with the market prior to commissioning / re-opening frameworks to help providers plan for the needs of our children
- We will plan for any changes regarding regional commissioning and provision of placements that is introduced by government in response to the Independent Review of children's social care

Do

- We will fully implement improvements to our placements brokerage processes and review the impact
- We will commission a digital brokerage solution to improve the efficiency of our systems and reporting, reducing waste and enabling brokerage team to spend more time with providers
- We will focus on developing and improving relationships with external providers
- We will implement the revised joint funding protocol for placements

Review

- We will improve our understanding of experiences and outcomes for children in placements
- We will continue to utilise national and regional information to benchmark our progress and develop plans
- We will continue to regularly review packages to ensure provision meets the needs of children and young people and achieves the best value for money

How will we know if we've made a difference?

- Improved commissioning will enable us to achieve the four priorities for children and young people
- We will improve the value for money achieved in placements
- The proportion of partner contributions to placements will be in line with other areas

Appendix 1 – Summary of our delivery of 2020-2022 Sufficiency Strategy and impact for children

Improved Placement Stability	
<p>Compared with 2020/21, a higher proportion of children who have been in care for 2.5 years or more have been living in the same placement for 2+ years or placed for adoption (68% YTD at August 2022 compared with 63% in 2020/21), bringing us in line with our statistical neighbours.</p> <p>13% of children leaving NCT's care obtained permanence through a special guardianship order between Jan – June 22, this compares with the latest available data (2020/21) of 14% statistical neighbour and national averages</p> <p>This means more children have had stability of care which enables them to feel safe, secure and achieve outcomes</p>	
<i>What we did</i>	<i>Impact for children and young people</i>
<p>Following an analysis of placement breakdowns, we have identified a range of actions to improve placement stability and reduce the need for emergency placements which are being taken forward by managers across our services</p>	<p>More children will benefit from stability in their care</p>
<p>Created additional family support worker posts to support stability of NCT fostering placements, and commissioned a pilot to support stability of externally delivered placements</p>	<p>When these initiatives are operational (expected Q3 of 22/23) we expect placement breakdowns and emergency placement requests to reduce, this will improve stability for children</p>
<p>We implemented our Public Health funded project to support the mental health of children in NCT foster care which has had a positive impact on placement stability, and have secured funding to continue this to Dec 2023</p>	<p>Of 65 children who had received therapeutic support directly/via carer at end June 22, 6 (9%) had experienced a placement breakdown in comparison with the pre-project baseline of 30%<.</p>

Improved outcomes for children and young people	
<i>What we did</i>	<i>Impact for children and young people</i>
<p>Implemented an improved early help assessment tool. Early Help Strategy, board and networks developed across the multi-agency partnership.</p>	<p>Families are more likely to receive the right support at the right time, to prevent issues from escalating and enabling children to remain in the care of their families</p>

Improved outcomes for children and young people	
Reviewed the 16 – 17 Homelessness Joint Protocol to improve joint working and clarified responsibilities to young people	Once implemented, we expect more young people will receive the support they require, when they require it and the voice of the young person will be clearer in decision making about their future and legal status
We developed the Family Solutions (edge of care) service as part of our Children and Family Support Services (CFSS) to support families to stay together and we have supported the reunification of children to their families where this is in the best interests of the child.	<p>More children are being supported to remain with their families or return to their families after a period of being in care where this is in their best interests</p> <p>Between June 21 and June 22 CFSS worked with 93 children who were specifically identified as risk of care. 79 (85%) were able to remain in the care of their families.</p> <p>In 2020/21, the % of children returning to parents was 8%. This has doubled from 4% in 2018/19. The England average in 2020/21 was 7% and the regional average was 6%. As a the end of June 22, 74 children had left care in the last 6 months to return to their parents/ relatives, this was 37% of all children whose care episode ceased in the period</p>
<p>The Pause programme, funded by Big Lottery via Public Health until 2025, has worked with 24 women who have had 89 children removed into care, this equates to 3.7 removals per women. 35 women are being worked with from Q1 22/23</p> <p>14 women have completed the programme with 0 live births and 0 children taken into care.</p>	Women who have previously had children taken into care have been able to take a pause and improve their outcomes before having another child
Positive outcomes have been achieved for children and families supported by our commissioned targeted services: targeted family support/ early intervention for children under 5 in Corby and family support and MST for families known to safeguarding services	<p>Over 70% families accessing support at Corby Children’s Centre reported reduction in isolation, increased understanding of child development and relationship with their child, greater level of support from community services (Q1 22/23)</p> <p>96.5% of children supported by MST remained living at home at the end of the intervention</p>

Improved outcomes for children and young people	
	12 month follow up of families supported by Action for Children: 84% of children remained in the family home; 75% were no longer under a Social Care plan
<p>Family and friends fostering is always considered when case planning to enable a child to remain within their existing network where possible.</p> <p>At the end of July, there were 175 children in Family and Friends placements, which is a total of 38.8% of all fostering placements.</p>	<p>Children and young people who stay within their family or friends network have better outcomes than those in other placements and stability of these placements is good if not better than other foster placements (Family and friends foster care (England) The Fostering Network, 2022).</p>
<p>We reviewed foster care provision that can support step down from residential and children with more complex needs and have mainstreamed our NCT Resilience Foster Carer scheme as this has shown positive outcomes for children</p>	<p>In utilising our NCT Resilience foster care scheme for children and young people with more complex needs children's outcomes are more likely to improve</p>
<p>We have improved procedures for when unregulated placements absolutely have to be used, improved risk management, quality assurance and senior management oversight.</p>	<p>Children and young people living in unregulated/ unregistered provision where this is not in line with their care place are safe</p>
<p>We partnered with an external organisation, to provide an objective review of our commissioning and brokerage and are implementing a range of improvements to make our processes more effective and efficient.</p> <p>We have implemented a weekly Placements Planning Forum to review and prioritise the week's placement searches</p>	<p>The right placements for children will be found in a more timely manner</p>
<p>We have focused on establishing and improving relationships with local and specialist external providers that can support the needs of our children. Through 1-2-1 commissioner / provider relationships, regular communications and provider forums covering local and specialist topics</p>	<p>We are more likely to secure placements that can meet the needs of our children</p>

Improved outcomes for children and young people	
Our partnership with Homes to Inspire (H2I) and Prospects (both part of Shaw Trust) is enabling better co-ordination of support to improve outcomes for children living in our block contract homes	This is a relatively new initiative and we expect the education, employment and training outcomes of the children receiving this support will be maintained at a good level or improved
<p>In addition to Ofsted inspections,</p> <p>Regular monitoring of the external Residential Children’s Homes, Fostering and Independent Supported Accommodation frameworks demonstrates positive outcomes for our children and young people. ISAs are being supported to prepare for Ofsted registration from 2023</p> <p>We have improved performance monitoring within NCT’s IFA. Performance of NCT homes are monitored through an external regulation 44 visitor who provides monthly reports with recommendations/ actions and internal monitoring</p>	<p>Children’s outcomes are supported as any concerns relating to provision is addressed in a timely manner and improvements achieved</p> <p>The ISAs we commission work towards the same set of key performance indicators and outcomes for care leavers which help the young person develop independence skills.</p>
<p>To support pathways to independence for care leavers we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resumed NCT’s Independent Living Programme in July 22 following the pandemic - Established West and North Unitary Council Accommodation and Transitions Panels to ensure good advanced planning so that the right permanent homes are found - Agreed the Care Leavers Joint Housing protocol July 22. 	<p>Between July – Sept 22, 8 young people successfully completed the Independent living course and said that they felt more prepared for independence into adulthood as a result</p> <p>We expect the impact of the accommodation and transitions panel and Care Leavers Joint Housing protocol will enable more care leavers to move on to independence in a time that suits their needs, homelessness to be prevented and more effective management of housing crises for young people where they occur</p>

Improved Sufficiency of NCT Fostering	
<i>What we did</i>	<i>Impact for children and young people</i>
We have implemented our NCT fostering marketing and recruitment campaign including resilience, mainstream, Family Link, emergency, and short-term carers.	More children and young people can be cared for by NCT foster carers where this in line with their care plan and matching

Improved Sufficiency of NCT Fostering	
<p>At the end of August 22 there were 207 approved 'mainstream' fostering households as part of NCT's IFA. There has been a net gain of 9 additional households over the previous 2 years which has seen a national trend of carers leaving the profession post pandemic. In addition, there are 122 approved Family and Friend Carers</p> <p>A review of the approval status to maximise more internal foster homes for children has resulted in 15 additional placements</p> <p>We have also developed plans to increase the retention rate of NCT carers, which will be implemented during the second half of 2022/23</p>	
<p>Increasing the skills and number of NCT foster carers able to support children with more complex needs through our Resilience foster carers scheme. By end of Mar 22, 5 children were being cared for by 5 resilience carer households.</p>	<p>More children and young people with more complex needs are able to be cared for in a family setting where this is in line with their care plan</p>

Improved Sufficiency of Placements	
<p>73% of our children in care were placed in foster care at end June 22, in comparison with 71% in 20/21. The latest comparator data is 20/21 when 71% of both statistical neighbour and England averages were 71% children in foster care. The proportion of children living in residential care has remained consistently below statistical neighbour and England averages since 20/21</p>	
<i>What we did</i>	<i>Impact for children and young people</i>
<p>Reviewed the statements of purpose of NCT and block contract homes to better meet needs of our children.</p>	<p>Children and young people's needs can be better supported in local provision that is solely available for NCT children in care</p>
<p>Northamptonshire's Framework for Children's Homes and Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) was established in 2020 and has been opened twice for additional providers to join. We have 48 children's home</p>	<p>More providers provide more placement options for children and young people, so they can be placed in homes that match their needs.</p>

Improved Sufficiency of Placements	
providers and 43 IFA providers currently on our framework following the reopening of the framework in July 22.	
As at Sept 22, we have secured an additional 11 residential care beds for the sole use of NCT by the end of 2022, including in emergency/ urgent situations (by commissioning 2 new emergency homes within the county and adding an additional out of county home to the block contract)	Once operational, we will have better access to residential care that can meet the needs of our children and young people
Submitted a partnership bid to the 2022 DfE Capital funding to provide a home for children with mental health / behavioural needs. We are working with NNC and WNC to secure capital funding and additional council owned properties to create additional NCT residential care and care leaver accommodation that will meet needs	If successful in securing funding, we will have increased access to local residential care and independent supported accommodation that can meet the needs of our children and young people
We have revised the criteria for our commissioned training flats for care leavers so that the referral process is more accessible to young people. This has resulted in higher levels of utilisation	More care leavers are able to live in our training flats which help them to achieve positive outcomes
We have commissioned an external provider to deliver supported accommodation for care leavers with additional needs. This will provide a steps to independence providing more intensive support to develop skills to move onto training flats and then to own tenancies. In development for delivery from summer 2023	Once operational, more care leavers with additional needs will receive support that helps them to achieve independence

Reduction of Placement Costs	
Achieving better value for money and appropriate contributions from partner agencies has helped mitigate some of the financial pressures experienced due to rising costs, inflation and a highly competitive market. This means we have been in a better position to manage the financial impact of increased demand for placements.	
<i>What we did</i>	<i>Impact for children and young people</i>
Children and young people's placements have been reviewed to ensure they are receiving the right level of support/care at the right time and their needs are supported as they change and develop in their placement.	Children and young people are receiving the right care/ support for their needs.

Renegotiation of packages achieved savings of £1.2m in 21/22 and £480k Apr – Aug 22.	
We commissioned an external review joint funding arrangements to ensure appropriate shared financial responsibility for placements	Children and young people are receiving the right care/ support for their needs.