

**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy,
Executive Director of Children's Services**

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	07 September 2023
Subject:	Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027

Summary:

This report presents the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 for the Panel's endorsement prior to online publication. The Sufficiency Strategy also includes the Children in Care Action Plan (Appendix A1) and the Children's Services Independent Placements Market Position Statement 2023-24 (Appendix A2).

Actions Required:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to:-

1. support and endorse the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 and Appendices A1 and A2.
2. support and endorse the online publication of the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 and Appendices A1 and A2.
3. agree to the annual presentation of the update of the Children in Care Action Plan (Appendix A1) prior to publication online.

1. Background

[Section 22G](#) of the [Children Act 1989](#), and the [Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children \(2010\)](#), is explicit in placing a duty on Local Authorities to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they include, in relevant commissioning strategies, their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.

The 2018-2022 Sufficiency Strategy was previously signed off by the Corporate Parenting Panel with the recommendation to report annually on progress against the Action Plan (Appendix A1 to the Sufficiency Strategy). The last Action Plan update came to the Corporate Parenting Panel in January 2022, where it was also agreed that an updated Sufficiency Strategy would be developed and realigned with the reporting/financial year.

Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027

Children's Strategic Commissioning has worked with internal Officers and appropriate commissioned stakeholders to finalise the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy for the period 2023-2027, and has aligned the Strategy to the Children in Care (CiC) and High Needs Transformation Programmes as well as the national picture of placement sufficiency highlighted in the 2022 [Children's Social Care Market Study](#) by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and more recently in the Government's implementation and strategy document for social care reform [Stable Homes, Built on Love](#).

The Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027, attached at Appendix A, gives the position on 31 March 2023; progress after this will be aligned to the financial/reporting year and reported through the annually updated Children in Care Action Plan, returning annually to the Corporate Parenting Panel in Quarter 1 of each year, with the first annual update due in May 2024.

Children's Strategic Commissioning will also develop an annual Market Position Statement which will support the market development work to be undertaken with the independent placement sector to support placement capacity in Lincolnshire and ensure Children in Care are able to be accommodated in high quality placements as close to home as possible.

The Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 and its appendices, including the annually updated Children in Care Action Plan (Appendix A1) and the Market Position Statement (Appendix A2) will be published online to support market development and engagement with the independent placement sector.

2. Conclusion

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to discuss and endorse the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027; and endorse the publication of the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 online with Appendices A1 and A2, the annual update of the Children in Care Action Plan and the annually updated Market Position Statement.

The Corporate Parenting Panel is also invited to request Children's Strategic Commissioning provide an annual update of the Children in Care Action Plan (Appendix A1 to the Sufficiency Strategy).

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Risks were identified within the Strategy and elements are included within the Action Plan (Appendix A1) which will identify key actions for reporting and review.

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27, including Children in Care Action Plan (Appendix A1) and Children's Services Independent Placements Market Position Statement 2023-24 (Appendix A2)

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Bridie Fletcher who can be contacted on 07748 181381 or by e-mail at bridie.fletcher@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Children in Care

Sufficiency Strategy

2023-2027

Ensuring Lincolnshire's Children in Care and care leavers are supported to thrive and reach their potential in high quality accommodation placements and have access to effective support services

Contents

1. Lincolnshire Sufficiency Statement

1.1. Key challenges.....	3
1.2. Sufficiency Duty.....	4
1.3. Strategic priorities and strategies	4
1.4. Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy 2022-2025	5
1.5. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	6
1.6. Listening to our children and young people	6
1.7. Transformation programmes	7

2. National and local context

2.1. National and regional context.....	8
2.2. Local context	9
2.3. Impact of Covid-19	10

3. Lincolnshire's position

3.1. Challenges in providing placements and related services	11
3.2. Needs of Children in Care.....	12
3.3. Supply of placements	12
3.4. Location of placements.....	13
3.5. Cost of placements.....	14
3.6. Placement trends and projections	14
3.7. Care leavers.....	15
3.8. Support services.....	16

4. Lincolnshire priorities for 2023-27

4.1. Operational improvements identified identified in the previous Sufficiency Strategy 2018-22	21
4.2. Strategic priorities for 2023-27	23

Appendices

A1 Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy Action Plan.....	24
A2 Market Position Statement 2023-24.....	28
B1 Glossary of Acronyms	29

1. Lincolnshire Sufficiency Statement

The vision for Children’s Services in Lincolnshire is *‘Putting Children First – working together for all children, young people and families to be happy, healthy, safe and the best they can be.’*



Lincolnshire County Council Children’s Services aims to secure sufficient accommodation to support Children in Care (CiC) and care leavers to achieve the highest possible outcomes. Such accommodation should be:

- safe and suitable
- meets young people’s social and emotional needs
- supportive and caring
- enables an effective transition to independence and adulthood.

We will work with internal and external stakeholders, including commissioned services and partner agencies to develop and maintain effective support for our CiC and care leavers, to enable them to thrive and succeed.

We will continuously evaluate our progress, holding ourselves and our partners to account, whilst challenging practice and the way we do things to ensure the needs of our children are prioritised through innovative practice, and always listening to our children’s voices.

Lincolnshire County Council’s Sufficiency Strategy aims to ensure we have the right placement, of the right quality, in the right place, at the right time and for the right price.

1.1. Key challenges

1.1.1. Lincolnshire County Council's Children's Services is rated **Outstanding** and provides a range of support services for our most vulnerable children and young people.

1.1.2. Children's Services work with partners and commission services to deliver support based on need, encouraging and empowering children and young people to achieve positive outcomes.

1.1.3. Nevertheless, Lincolnshire, like other areas, is facing significant challenges:

- The need to increase capacity in foster households both in-house and within the independent market is a national concern and focus for development. We want children to experience growing up in positive family environments wherever possible.
- Capacity within residential children's homes is similarly an issue, with many homes at capacity or experiencing difficulties with needs matching and recruiting and retaining high quality staff.
- Placing children who have very complex needs and challenging behaviours is demanding. Demand for placements nationally means suppliers are more inclined to accept placements for often younger and less challenging children. This is a national issue and can result in authorities paying incredibly high costs or having to fund whole settings to secure a single placement, which is reducing capacity further.
- Projected increases in CiC numbers is likely to impact on services including social care, Virtual School, and health services and may then impact on support to care leavers as numbers also increase.
- Market and relationship development of independent suppliers is critical to sourcing and supporting effective and value for money placements. There are children placed in Lincolnshire from other areas and Lincolnshire children that are placed outside of the county. Greater partnership working is needed with the independent market to ensure local sufficiency that can meet local needs.
- There is an increase in CiC needing mental health support as part of their placement offer and a noted growth in the number of education placements needed for children with Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Mental Health services across the county are under pressure, particularly since the pandemic, with higher demand for services impacting waiting times. Local services are highly regarded, rated **Outstanding** by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and work closely with Children's Services but it is harder to secure the right support when a child is placed out of area. There is also a need for increased supply of education settings that can support children with SEMH needs.
- Providing placements for CiC with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may be increasingly challenging over the next four years, especially if there is an education need that cannot be met within mainstream provision.
- Workforce recruitment and retention is a challenge across the placement sector, including in-house and independent provision, this sometimes impacts on market capacity with beds closed because of unsafe staffing ratios.
- The impact of OFSTED regulation and inspection on supported accommodation suppliers may mean some suppliers will exit the market if registration is incompatible with their business model.

- There is an increase in referrals through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- There are rising placement costs as a result of the increase in the cost of living, with costs passed back to the Council.

1.1.4. The ability to accurately forecast placement demand impacts on the way Local Authorities (LAs) can shape and develop their local independent placement market, offering further challenge to being able to procure the right placements for children and young people that meet their needs.

1.1.5. Demand for children’s independent placements as of March 2021 increased by 25% since 2010.

1.2. Sufficiency Duty

1.2.1. **Section 22G** of the **Children Act 1989**, and the **Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (2010)** places a clear duty on LAs to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they include, in relevant commissioning strategies, their plans for meeting the Sufficiency Duty.

1.2.2. The Sufficiency Duty requires each LA providing children's services to take steps that secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that it is looking after and children whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation in the LA area.

1.2.3. The Duty not only applies to CiC but equally applies to children and young people who are on the edge of care, acknowledging the importance of taking earlier, preventive action to support children and families so that fewer young people enter care.

1.2.4. The **Children and Young Persons Act 2008** defines Sufficiency as *‘a whole system approach which delivers early intervention and preventative work to help support children and their families where possible, as well as providing better services for children if they do become looked after. For those who are looked after, Local Authorities and their Children’s Trust partners should seek to secure a number of providers and a range of services, with the aim of meeting the wide-ranging needs of looked after children and young people within their local area.’*

1.3. Strategic priorities and strategies

1.3.1. Lincolnshire Children’s Services is rated as **Outstanding** by OFSTED, who noted that *‘Children and families have benefited from leaders prioritising and investing in services, strengthening the range and offer of support’*.

1.3.2. Lincolnshire Children's Services principles, which underpin how we will commission and deliver services to achieve our vision, are:

- **Early Help:** Strong protective universal services accessible to all with a range of early help available so children have the best start in life and families have extra help when they need it.

- **Safeguarding:** A shared responsibility to ensure children are safe at home, school and in their community.
- **Aspiration:** Children are able to thrive and cope with life challenges.
- **Learning and achievement:** All children being the best they can be with targeted interventions to close the gap so vulnerable children achieve as well as their peers.
- **Best use of resources:** Integrated commissioning with a focus on best value, improved outcomes and community engagement.

1.3.3. Lincolnshire’s main principles are further supported by and are embedded in conjunction with:

- Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy (see 1.4.1.)
- **Care Leaver's Charter**
- Early Help Strategy (see 3.8.1.2.)
- **Early Childhood Strategy**
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) (see 1.5.)
- **Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy**
- **Lincolnshire High Needs Strategy**
- **Lincolnshire SEMH Strategy**
- Participation Strategy (see 1.6.4.)
- **Lincolnshire Local Transformation Plan for Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health**
- **SEND High Needs Strategy.**

1.4. Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy 2022-2025

1.4.1. The **Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy 2022-2025** focuses on 6 key priority areas:

1. **Support to remain with family** - *We support families to improve their relationships and avoid preventable difficulties by providing them with the right support in their community, from the right person at the right time. We only bring children into care when it cannot be made safe for them to stay in their home, family network or community.*
2. **Stability and permanence** - *When children and young people need long term care outside of the family network, they will have stability and be safe from harm. All placements for children and young people will be targeted to support their needs, whether this is foster care or residential provision.*
3. **Build not break relationships** - *All children, young people and care leavers can build enduring relationships with consistent people and they have a trusted, stable relationship with an adult who is important to them.*
4. **Learning and aspirations** - *We want our children, young people and care leavers to succeed in their educational setting and continue with lifelong learning so that they can realise their aspirations.*
5. **Healthy and resilient** - *We promote good long term physical and emotional health and want to enable our children, young people and care leavers to have contented and healthy lives and be helped to evolve from what has happened in the past.*
6. **Safe and suitable accommodation** - *We support our children, young people and care leavers to access and sustain suitable accommodation which meets their needs, helps them feel safe and supports their growth to independence.*

- 1.4.2. Key priorities that the Sufficiency Strategy actively will support to achieve are (2) **stability and permanence**, and (6) **safe and suitable accommodation**.

1.5. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

- 1.5.1. The JSNA process aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of current and future local needs across a range of issues, utilising a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data, including user, patient, and community views. The requirement to produce a JSNA has been a statutory duty on LAs and local NHS since 2007. This duty has been further enhanced by the 2022 update to the **Health and Social Care Act 2012**.
- 1.5.2. Children and young people's Health and Wellbeing is one of the core themes of the JSNA, with a key priority being to improve health and reduce health inequalities for children and young people.
- 1.5.3. Lincolnshire's **JSNA** is on the **Lincolnshire Health Intelligence Hub**, along with a range of population and demographic data.

1.6. Listening to our children and young people

- 1.6.1. Lincolnshire County Council takes a child's rights approach to help ensure that children and young people's views are heard and acted on. The foundation of our work is Article 12 of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**.
- 1.6.2. Our priorities are working with the Lincolnshire Youth Cabinet, Voices for Choices (V4C), Young Inspectors, and Lincolnshire's Children in Care Council. Further information about these is at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/young-people.
- 1.6.3. V4C events have been held in four quadrants of the county during half terms, with a mixture of virtual and face-to-face meetings. In addition, Big Conversation events are supported by Children in Care teams, care leavers, senior staff including Councillors. Notes, issues, concerns and proposed solutions are shared widely across the Council.
- 1.6.4. The **Participation Strategy 2023-26** for Children's Services provides a framework for the participation of children and young people in Lincolnshire and ensures that the voice of the child can be clearly heard and evidenced. Listening to and acting on the views of children is essential for the development and improvement of relevant and effective services. This applies to services provided uniquely to children and young people and those provided to the wider community.
- 1.6.5. Lincolnshire children and young people have co-produced a number of resources, including the **Skills for Adult Life booklet**, the Caring Promise, guidance for social workers and the Family Services Directory (FSD) and SEND Local Offer (*see 3.8.1.14.*), and have contributed to service design of both in-house and commissioned services.

1.7. Transformation programmes

- 1.7.1. Lincolnshire County Council continues to develop and enhance services, undertaking reviews with key stakeholders to consider how services and working and how they may be improved, especially as cohort needs and demand change over time.
- 1.7.2. The **Children in Care (CiC) transformation programme** seeks to develop and improve information and tracking of CiC to better understand their strengths and challenges, with the aim of stepping them down from residential placements to foster family environments and bringing them back into Lincolnshire wherever possible to better provide wraparound support by other services as a holistic outcomes-focused improvement approach.
- 1.7.3. The **Building Communities of Specialist Provision programme** is looking to transform Lincolnshire's special school landscape, through creating an integrated system where pupils attend the nearest school with investment in facilities, building a new school, expanding several others and increasing special school places.
- 1.7.4. The **SEND transformation programme** is similarly looking to transform the SEN support landscape, with a focus on supporting mainstreams schools to deliver robust early intervention through a meaningful graduated approach.
- 1.7.5. The **Children and Young People's Mental Health transformation programme** vision is that, together with children and young people in Lincolnshire, we will understand how we can best support their emotional wellbeing and mental health and transform and improve services enabling CYP to live independent, safe, well and fulfilled lives in their local communities.

2. National and local context

2.1. National and regional context

National context

2.1.1. Between 2016 and 2022 the number of CiC rose 16.7% in England¹ and the annual cost of children's social care in England is currently around £5.7 billion per annum.

2.1.2. In March 2022, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) published its final report into the children's social care market. Taken directly from the report², the CMA found that:

- *a lack of placements of the right kind, in the right places, means that children are not consistently getting access to care and accommodation that meets their needs*
- *the largest private providers of placements are making materially higher profits, and charging materially higher prices, than we would expect if this market were functioning effectively*
- *some of the largest private providers are carrying very high levels of debt, creating a risk that disorderly failure of highly leveraged firms could disrupt the placements of children in care.*

2.1.3. The CMA also recognised that children and young people had increasing complex needs, highlighting the gap between the number of children and young people requiring placements and the number of placements available.

2.1.4. Further concerns highlighted in the report included the number of children and young people placed far from their home Local Authority and/or existing support networks, difficulties in accessing wraparound and support services, sector recruitment and retention (including foster carers and residential children's home staff) and regulation and inspection requirements.

2.1.5. Following the CMA report, in February 2023 the Government published their implementation and strategy document, **Stable Homes, Built on Love**, which sets out six key pillars that aim to reform children's social care:

Pillar 1: Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families

Pillar 2: A decisive multi-agency child protection system

Pillar 3: Unlocking the potential of family networks

Pillar 4: Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care

Pillar 5: A valued, supported and highly-skilled social worker for every child who needs one

Pillar 6: A system that continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data.

¹ Source: [Local Authority Interactive Tool \(LAIT\)](#), Number of Looked After Children

² Source: [Children's social care market study](#), Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), March 2022

- 2.1.6. **Pillar 4** in particular will impact on placement sufficiency and quality, with a focus on foster care recruitment, leadership and management improvements in the children’s homes sector, increased financial oversight of placements as well as two pathfinder Regional Care Co-Operatives (RCCs) to plan, commission and deliver care places.
- 2.1.7. In addition, **Pillar 4** focuses on: prioritising loving relationships; strengthening and widening the corporate parenting role; creating increased education, employment and training opportunities for CiC and care leavers; universal wraparound support and accommodation for care leavers; decrease mental health and physical health disparities and increase life expectancy for CiC and care leavers.

East Midlands context

- 2.1.8. The East Midlands region has similarly seen a rise in CiC numbers, increasing by 25.15% from 2016 to 2022³, which is greater than both the rise across England (see 2.2.4.) and the 6.5% rise in Lincolnshire CiC numbers in the same period.
- 2.1.9. Placement capacity has been stretched across the region; whilst Lincolnshire, like many LAs, is a fostering first authority. Lincolnshire has a preference to place children and young people in-county, so they can be close to their important networks and receive outstanding support; as of 31st March 2023 22% of CiC were placed outside the county boundary.

2.2. Local context

- 2.2.1. Lincolnshire is the fourth largest county in England with diverse communities dispersed across a large and diverse landscape. The county is predominantly rural and home to approximately 761,224 residents ([Office of National Statistics \(ONS\) mid-2020 population estimates](#)).
- 2.2.2. Approximately 21.5% of the total population is aged 0-19 years (163,550), of which 76% (124,565) is aged 5 to 19 years.
- 2.2.3. Based on the [Indices of Multiple Deprivation \(IMD\) 2019](#), 6.7% of Lincolnshire's population (approximately 50,000 people) live within the 10% most deprived areas of England. This is highest within Lincoln (16.9%) and East Lindsey (16.8%). There are 29 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within the 10% most deprived nationally.
- 2.2.4. In Lincolnshire at end of March 2023⁴, there were 728 CiC, 391 children and young people with a 'Child Protection' (CP) plan, and 3,135 Children in Need (CiN) with an open episode of need. 6,968 children and young people had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and there were 63 UASC who made up 9% of all CiC. Lincolnshire CiC numbers have increased by 10.5% since 2018⁵, versus c.16% increase nationally.

³ Source: [Local Authority Interactive Tool \(LAIT\)](#), LA Level Data, Number of Looked After Children

⁴ Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children’s Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) March 2023

⁵ 659 Lincolnshire CiC on 31st March 2018 (Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children’s Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) March 2018)

2.2.5. As a snapshot rate, Lincolnshire CiC numbers represent 49 per 10,000 young people, versus 70 per 10,000 in England⁶

2.3. Impact of Covid-19

2.3.1. The Covid-19 pandemic which started in March 2020 has had a significant impact on social care teams across the country, and Lincolnshire was no exception.

2.3.2. Presenting behaviours and needs of young people were often exacerbated by not having the structure of education settings, parents and carers faced numerous difficulties, and the Council's Children's Services teams continue to see the effects of this with a rise of late entrants into care and an increase in young people accessing some of our support services, notably those around mental health (*see 3.8.1.5.*).

2.3.3. We worked closely with our in-house and independent placement suppliers to avoid placement breakdown and successfully maintained the majority of those placements.

⁶ Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) March 2023

3. Lincolnshire's position

- The population of Children in Care (CiC) has increased in Lincolnshire by 10.5% over the last 5 years.
- 728 children were in care on 31st March 2023 – 42% of them were female while 15% were of mixed, Asian, Black or other ethnic origin.
- 78% of CiC were placed within Lincolnshire on 31st March 2023.
- 67% of children were placed in foster households while 5% were in residential settings.
- The CiC numbers are predicted to remain fairly stable over the coming few years at around 720-740.



3.1. Challenges in providing placements and related services

- 3.1.1. Despite CiC numbers predicted to remain fairly stable, the Council want to ensure high-quality placements are available for those young people that need them, and it is critical to develop effective cross-functional mechanisms to support information sharing and process development.
- 3.1.2. Children's Services and relevant commissioned services work closely together to share intelligence and ensure young people are well supported. However, challenges in providing support can arise due to the scale and complexity of Children in Need (CiN), children and families open to Early Help, CiC and care leavers.
- 3.1.3. Social care teams have found positions difficult to recruit to, and some commissioned services have experience additional difficulties in staff retention, particularly as a result of the cost of living crisis which has driven people into higher paid employment. This is also reflected in children's placements, with in-house foster carer recruitment and retention being impacted and independent placements being similarly affected.
- 3.1.4. Similarly, the continued recruitment of **in-house foster carers** seeks to maintain, and ultimately increase, numbers of foster care households within Lincolnshire who are able to offer a variety of placement types including respite and short-term therapeutic placements, in addition to shorter-term and longer-term opportunities. There remains an ongoing need to source long-term and more permanent homes for CiC who are unable to return to their birth families.

- 3.1.5. The CiC Transformation Programme continues to review existing placements, both in-house and in the independent sector, through the monthly Placement Management Meetings in order to provide assurance of impact and value for money. The Valuing Care (VC) toolkit has been developed and is embedded into the Mosaic social care reporting platform as a means of highlighting children and young people's strengths and challenges.
- 3.1.6. One of the key aims of the transformation work is to place Lincolnshire CiC within county or as close as possible, as this will help the Council provide its range of effective support services to both young people and their carers.

3.2. Needs of Children in Care

- 3.2.1. Social care teams are working closely with Children's Strategic Commissioning and commissioned partners to consider the needs of young people, and where capacity is available or may be developed based on need, availability and cost.
- 3.2.2. Social care teams have seen an increase in complexity of need, alongside the rise of late entrants into care which became more evident around the start of the pandemic and has continued.
- 3.2.3. 4.6% of school age children in Lincolnshire had an EHC Plan or SEN Statement⁷ which is higher than the 3.4% seen across the East Midlands; of this, 41.2% of Lincolnshire school age children with an EHCP were Children in Care (CiC)⁸. 4% of children and young people in **Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMS) placements** on 31st March 2023 were looked after⁹, and social care and SEND teams are seeing an increase in young people with SEMH difficulties requiring specialist education placements.
- 3.2.4. The level of complex and high challenging behaviours is evident across **residential children's homes**, and Lincolnshire social care want to place CiC with carers skilled in effective therapeutic care and de-escalation techniques that minimise physical interventions and support placement stability, whilst supporting the transition of some young people into foster families or on to independence.
- 3.2.5. The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)** has impacted both capacity of placements and capacity of health and social care. Many UASC have additional support needs, having experienced trauma, separation and violence on their journey; many experience poor mental health and require significant support to access education and the wider community offer.

⁷ Source: [Local Authority Interactive Tool \(LAIT\)](#), LA Level Data, Children with SEN, % of Pupils with Statement (of SEN) or EHC Plans (all schools), 31st March 2021

⁸ Source: [Local Authority Interactive Tool \(LAIT\)](#), LA Level Data, Looked After Children, % of LAC with a SEN Statement/EHCP

⁹ Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children's Strategic Commissioning - LCCPlacements INM workbook 2022-23

3.3. Supply of placements

- 3.3.1. Many LAs are experiencing challenges in securing placements for their CiC, as in-house provision is increasingly insufficient to cope with the numbers of children and young people that require our support.
- 3.3.2. The CiC Transformation Programme aims to develop and support in-house placement capacity through ongoing recruitment of staff and carers. Lincolnshire is increasing its' number of **in-house residential children's homes** to increase the number of spaces available – these will be smaller homes that aim to transition children and young people into a foster family environment where the majority of young people are best able to thrive.
- 3.3.3. Despite having a good level of in-house foster carer numbers compared to many other LAs, Lincolnshire has seen an increased reliance on **Independent Foster Agencies (IFAs)**, use of which has increased by 182% over the past 5 years. As of 31st March 2023, 65% of placements with IFAs were in Lincolnshire, and we have seen a significant decrease in the number of IFAs offering placements for older children and those with complex behaviours.
- 3.3.4. **Supported accommodation** placements for 16 and 17 year olds are well supported through the Council's commissioned Youth Housing service (known as NEST¹⁰) which is contracted to Nacro until 31st December 2025 and delivers 72 bed spaces for CiC, care leavers and young people at risk of homelessness in Lincoln, Boston and Grantham as well as a small number of intense support houses for the most complex young people. Lincolnshire also has two in-house supported accommodation homes for CiC, supported lodgings via the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (see 3.7.) and a range of more specialist commissioned placements for UASC. Long-term use of Supported Accommodation has decreased, with such placements more typically being short-term transitional placements to manage complex behaviours or low-need placements outside of Lincolnshire where a young person has established networks and/or education. OFSTED are due to commence registration of supported accommodation in 2023 in line with new regulatory requirements, which may impact on the number of suppliers offering placements.
- 3.3.5. Children's Strategic Commissioning and the LCCPlacements Team manage the sourcing of independent placements, procuring them via the Open Select List¹¹ and UASC Closed Ordered List¹² and undertaking ongoing contract management and quality assurance. Commissioning Officers seek to develop mutually beneficial relationships with suppliers to maximise outcomes for Lincolnshire children and young people.

3.4. Location of placements

- 3.4.1. Lincolnshire County Council works closely with colleagues from across the East Midlands region on a range of initiatives, action groups and projects to increase access to services across the

¹⁰ Nacro Education, Support and Transition

¹¹ The Open Select List (OSL) is a procurement mechanism that manages referrals to suppliers for independent placements. Suppliers apply to join the OSL annually and are given first opportunity to respond to referrals.

¹² The UASC Closed Ordered List (UASC COL) is a procurement mechanism that manages placements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children aged 16-17 on arrival, who are referral via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) or are spontaneous arrivals in Lincolnshire.

region, given many CiC, where not placed within their home Local Authority (LA), are placed in bordering LAs¹³.

3.4.2. Lincolnshire places the majority of children and young people close to 'home' – as of 31st March 2023, 60% of independent foster placements (inc UASC), 86% of Independent Non-Maintained (Special) School (INMS) placements and 38% of independent supported accommodation placements for 16-17 year olds were in Lincolnshire or adjacent counties¹⁴. 53% of independent residential care placements were not in Lincolnshire or adjacent counties and this needs to be a real area of focus for market development.

3.4.3. Regional Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) meet weekly and there are various strategic groups that meet monthly to share best practice and explore solutions to emerging issues and improve intelligence about placement capacity and development. The region has worked together on a number of bids including *DfE Staying Closer Staying Connected* and the *UASC Foster Care Project*, both of which sought to develop service and support capacity for CiC and care leavers across the region.

3.5. Cost of placements

3.5.1. The nine East Midlands LAs have developed a regional approach to agreeing independent placement fee increase requests via the online portal which launched in 2022. The process supports LAs in reviewing placement fees, offering challenge to suppliers and sharing intelligence around contract and service quality, including any concerns.

3.5.2. Placement costs have steadily increased over the past 5 years; in 2017-18 the average residential cost for an independent residential children's home placement for a Lincolnshire young person was £4,038 per week and in 2022-23 this has risen to an average of £5,504 per week.

3.5.3. In the same period total costs for independent residential children's homes placements increased by almost 80% from £5,928,000 in 2017-18 to £8,701,219 in 2022-23; this is related to an increase in total placement numbers, which have increased over the same period (see 3.6.4.).

3.5.4. Suppliers have been additionally impacted due to the rising cost of utilities and other inflationary pressures, staff wages impacting on recruitment and retention and increasing complexities of behaviour and need of young people, all of which have driven up the placement cost.

3.6. Placement trends and projections

3.6.1. Lincolnshire is not alone in seeing a rise in late entrants into care, an increase in complex and challenging behaviours and high numbers of children and young people requiring specialist education provision.

¹³ 22% of Lincolnshire CiC placed out of county on 31st March 2023 (Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT))

¹⁴ Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children's Strategic Commissioning - LCCPlacements INM workbook 2021-22

- 3.6.2. The 2022 Commissioning and Markets Authority (CMA) report¹⁵ stated:
- The Institute for Government¹⁶ projected in its 2021 Performance Tracker that demand for children's social care would grow by around 5% between 2019-20 and 2024-25, driven by increasing demand for foster and residential placements. The Social Market Foundation¹⁷ projected that, in England, 'based on the growth seen in the last five years, we could expect that close to 77,000 children will be in foster care by 2030; an increase of more than 30% from now.'*
- 3.6.3. Certainly over the past five years, Lincolnshire has seen a rise in numbers of CiC from 659 on 31st March 2018 to 728 on 31st March 2023, along with a rise in placement moves/breakdown¹⁸.
- 3.6.4. Children's Strategic Commissioning have seen a rise in independent placements in place on 31st March 2018 to those in place on 31st March 2023:
- 126% increase in independent residential children's home placements (15 to 34)
 - 182% increase in independent foster care placements inc UASC (33 to 60)
 - 560% increase in Independent Non-Maintained (Special) School placements (63 to 353).
- 3.6.5. As a result of investment in successive commissioned Youth Housing contracts (see 4.1.1.8.) and Lincolnshire's two in-house supported accommodation sites, there has been a reduction in numbers of children and young people in Intense Needs Supported Accommodation (INSA), which has seen a decrease of 38% from those in place on 31st March 2018 to 31st March 2023 (13 to 8).
- 3.6.6. The NTS was mandated nationally in October 2021 in response to exceptionally high numbers of UASC being accommodated by Kent and LAs on the south coast. Since then, Lincolnshire has accommodated 66 referrals to 31st March 2023, 83% of whom have been accommodated via the UASC Closed Ordered List (the remaining 17% were aged under 16 years old at point of referral and were placed with foster carers). In comparison, pre-NTS spontaneous arrival numbers averaged 20 young people per year. NTS referrals are unlikely to slow in the short-term as the Home Office continues to try to move children and young people from temporary asylum hotels as quickly as possible to Local Authority care, and small-boat arrivals continue to be a factor.

3.7. Care leavers

- 3.7.1. Lincolnshire County Council has commissioned Barnardo's to deliver the statutory **Leaving Care Service** for a number of years, with the most recent 5 year contract starting in 2020. There were 418 Lincolnshire care leavers on 31st March 2023 that were supported by the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (LLCS).
- 3.7.2. LLCS work closely with social care and other partners to ensure effective transition, with allocations just after 16 years old ensuring young people get to know their Leaving Care Worker early and are supported to independence.

¹⁵ Source: [Children's social care market study](#), Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), March 2022

¹⁶ Source: Institute for Government, [Performance Tracker 2021](#)

¹⁷ Source: [Fostering the Future](#), Social Market Foundation, June 2021

¹⁸ 5% of CiC experienced 3 or more placement moves in 2017-18 versus 9% of CiC in 2022-23 (Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT))

- 3.7.3. As of 31st March 2023, 93% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in safe and suitable accommodation, with clear understanding of the reasons for those living in unsuitable accommodation. LLCS has a clear focus on this measure, which includes support to former-UASC care leavers requiring accommodation during their asylum process, young parents, and supported lodgings suppliers. LLCS administer the New Homes Grant on behalf of the Council, adding value to young people through care packages and practical tenancy and benefit support.
- 3.7.4. As of 31st March 2023, 50% of care leavers aged 19-21¹⁹ were in Education, Employment and Training (EET). The service supports are leavers to access EET and also supports the Care Leaver Apprenticeship Service (CLAS).

3.8. Support services

- 3.8.1. The previous Sufficiency Strategy 2018-22 identified a range of support services that were central to integrated support to CiC and care leavers, ensuring Lincolnshire children, their carers and involved professionals are able to access appropriate and high quality services:

3.8.1.1. Whilst some other Councils have reduced their **Children's Centres**, Lincolnshire recognises the importance and value of this key part of early years support to all families and has retained all 48 **Children's Centres**, which continue to be integral to offering preventative services for early years and deliver wide range of services and support to families across the county. They are open to anyone who has or cares for a child under the age of 5 years old. Lincolnshire has also been selected as one of 75 LAs to benefit from the Government's **Family Hubs and Start for Life** programme; the programme stems from clear evidence that identifying risks early and preventing problems from escalating means better long-term outcomes for children and their families. Family Hubs provide high-quality, joined-up, whole-family support services from conception, through a child's early years until they reach the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with SEND).

3.8.1.2. Through the Council's **Early Help Strategy**, the early help front door is embedded into social care practice, resulting in consistency in decision making, allocations and use of resources. Children and young people and their families are offered targeted clear support as early as possible, successfully preventing the need for statutory interventions and diverting many young people away from entering the care system, as well as providing the support they and their families need to thrive. On 31st March 2023, there were 4821 cases open to Early Help which is an increase of almost 300% (1615) from March 2022. There were also 704 incoming requests²⁰ in the same month; trend data highlights that requests for support increase during the longer school holidays in December, April and August.

3.8.1.3. The Council has commissioned **Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS)** and the **Autism Learning Difficulties Service** (*known as the **Working Together Team***) on behalf

¹⁹ Based on a cohort of 210 care leavers

²⁰ Source: LCC March 2023 Summary Performance Report, Early Help Request Data, MOSAIC

of Lincolnshire schools and academies since 2016 as part of the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy. A commissioning review of both services commenced in February 2020 prior to the previous agreements for the services coming to an end in August 2022. The new re-commissioned services offer robust training and workshops primarily to Lincolnshire mainstream schools and academies, and parents/carers. Both services also have a strong focus on early intervention and prevention, building resilience across Lincolnshire mainstream schools and academies, increasing inclusion and promoting a collective responsibility to improving Lincolnshire pupils' social, emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns.

- 3.8.1.4. **Safe Families for Children** have been commissioned to provide support to families whose children are on the edge of care, utilising approved volunteers to help stabilise the family dynamic through befriending, mentoring and positive role-modelling, aiming to lower the risk of abuse and neglect and reduce the number of children and young people taken into care.
- 3.8.1.5. Following a successful pilot, **Future 4 Me (F4Me)** was established as a permanent service in 2018. The F4Me service supports adolescents on the edge of care through a recognised profile of need linked to support around emotional wellbeing, missing and exploitation, substance misuse, and criminal behaviour. A strong focus on early intervention and timely support to avoid children entering the criminal justice system is provided by the **Joint Diversionary Panel (JDP)**²¹. F4Me includes social workers, police and probation officers, and education mentors. In addition, a dedicated complex needs health team is embedded in the service and is funded through NHS England (Health and Justice) to develop individualised support packages and provide psychology-based trauma-informed consultation to the wider staff team. F4Me work with partners from the Police, Probation, Courts, District Councils, and Health to support young people more holistically. The **Restoring Family Relationships Team** focus on working with families in times of conflict or family breakdown to ensure, where possible, relationships are restored, and young people remain within their families where it is safe and appropriate to do so. In April 2023, an inspection of Future4Me by the youth justice Inspectorate His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) rated the service as **Outstanding**.
- 3.8.1.6. Children and young people who are experiencing difficulties or concerns with their **mental health and wellbeing**, their families and the professionals working with them are able to access information about the support available from a variety of universally available local services via the online **Emotional Health and Wellbeing Pathway**. Lincolnshire commissions Children and Young People's Mental Health (CYPMH) services that span the spectrum of emotional wellbeing and mental health needs from prevention and early intervention to specialist and crisis mental health services. To ensure that young people and their families get the right support at the right time, by the right team, all routine referrals are triaged and/or screened by practitioners in the

²¹ First time entrants in Lincolnshire for the period January 2022 to December 2022 were 107 per 100,000 10-17 year olds; this compares to 171 per 100,000 in the East Midlands and 149 in England in the same period.

Children and Young People Access Team. The [Here4You Line](#) provides the opportunity to speak directly to a mental health practitioner who can discuss how a young person is feeling or presenting and explore which services are best suited to help. Young people and parents can also self-refer via the Here4You Line. [Healthy Minds Lincolnshire](#) provides emotional wellbeing support to children and young people up to 19 years old (25 if special educational needs/disability or care leavers). [Mental Health Support Teams](#) are being rolled out across the most deprived areas of the county to work in education settings, and [CAMHS \(Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service\)](#) supports those young people with moderate to severe mental health needs. There is also a community crisis service with on call support available 24/7. Lincolnshire Children's Services, health services and key partner agencies have a trauma-informed approach to working with young people.

- 3.8.1.7. Lincolnshire's commissioned **Domestic Abuse Support Service** delivers outreach support for adults who have experienced domestic abuse, therapeutic sessions for children and young people who have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse, professional resources and refuge support. The new [Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse website](#) launched in January 2023 with a range of resources and information for adults, children and young people who are either being abused or are using abusive behaviour, to offer support and advice, and signpost them to services locally and nationally.
- 3.8.1.8. Work is ongoing with the Lincolnshire's Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Family Adoption Links, which was launched in October 2020 with regional partners to determine which services could be jointly developed or commissioned to offer pre- and post-adoption support to birth and adoptive parents. Lincolnshire now delivers post-adoption support to adoptive parents in-house and has commissioned [Pac-UK](#) to deliver statutory **Birth Counselling** services to birth parents and families whose children have been placed for adoption.
- 3.8.1.9. It is important that we listen to the views of children and young people but recognise sometimes they may benefit from an independent advocate who can help them to articulate what they want and how they may feel about things. Following a service review, [Voiceability](#) were commissioned to deliver a range of **advocacy services** including for CiC and child protection advocacy.
- 3.8.1.10. **Caring2Learn (C2L)** has been embedded into Children's Services delivery and sits within the Fostering Service and the Virtual School. [Caring2Learn](#) continues to develop effective networks with schools and foster carers, delivering evidence-based good practice models and a highly valued training programme for schools, carers and Children's Services staff. The Fostering Service and the Virtual School continue to promote the Caring2Learn Award for Caring Schools and Learning Homes and is further developing the Foster Care Champions network which provides peer support to fostering households. The Virtual School has developed a bespoke training package to support schools and designated teachers to nurture and promote wellbeing and attachment and improve educational outcomes for CiC.

- 3.8.1.11. CiC and care leavers are more likely to have lower educational attainment than other young people and, whilst Lincolnshire young people have performed comparably well, there are indications that the impact of the pandemic and disruption to almost two years of school has had an adverse effect over the entire school age cohort. The **Virtual School** and **SEND** colleagues work closely with the Education team to enhance provision and develop strong relationships with individual school settings to overcome some of these attainment barriers and increase educational resilience and aspiration.
- 3.8.1.12. The commissioned **We Are With You** service for young people under 18 years old who are worried about their or someone else's drug or alcohol use offers a free online chat and telephone service, with a comprehensive website offering a range of advice and information. The We Are With You service has a strong **social media presence** to deliver their safety messages and attend a variety of outreach events. In the 2022-23 academic year they delivered to approximately 19,500 students in Lincolnshire secondary schools and alternative education provisions, as well as 'What's In The Box?' sessions on substance misuse to 3688 children in Year 6 at primary school. Online learning modules are available on request for students not attending school, including those who are home-schooled. Substance misuse services for adults (18 year old and over) are located in Lincoln, Boston, Grantham, Spalding and Skegness, as well as at HMP Lincoln.
- 3.8.1.13. **Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP)** is a statutory multi-agency partnership that has identified a number of strategic priorities for 2022-2025 which cover a range of safeguarding and welfare issues that face children and young people in Lincolnshire. They include exploitation, neglect, emotional wellbeing, healthy relationships, and sexual and physical harm. Through the work of the sub-groups, partners collaborate on multi-agency audits, design campaigns and develop and review training, policies and procedures to support practitioners in their work. **LSCP's** comprehensive 6-year training pathway is available for all statutory and non-statutory partners, including Children's Services staff. On a three year cycle, the LSCP seeks assurance from all partners, and any services they commission, on their compliance with section 11 of the Children's Act 2004.
- 3.8.1.14. **Workforce development** for social care and SEND staff development and progression is highly valued in Lincolnshire, with clear training and learning pathways to develop good practice, explore new thinking and build confidence. Supplier development is similarly critical; through strong relational commissioning, the Children's Strategic Commissioning Team is proactive in supporting suppliers to develop their skills and knowledge as a way of promoting the Council's aspirations and priority outcomes for CiC and care leavers.
- 3.8.1.15. Information on available services and general advice and support for Lincolnshire families and young people have been enhanced through the on-line **Family Services Directory (FSD)**, which incorporates the **Care Leaver Local Offer** and an extensive section on Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health (see 3.8.1.15.). In addition the **SEND Local Offer** has a wide range of information to support families with children with disabilities and SEND.

3.8.1.16. The previously commissioned **Return Interview Service** was brought in-house from 1st April 2018. Subsequent review of protocols and processes with all stakeholders have seen an increase in return interviews following a missing episode, with an average of 98% of young people accepting the offer of a return interview throughout 2022-23. Young people, their families or placement suppliers are subsequently offered appropriate advice, including referrals to support services.

4. Lincolnshire priorities for 2023-27

4.1. Operational improvements identified in the previous Sufficiency Strategy 2018-22

4.1.1. The previous Sufficiency Strategy 2018-22 identified a number of improvements to delivery and practice that would positively impact on wider social care support for Lincolnshire children and young people, including the commissioning of key support services:

4.1.1.1. The DfE **Partners in Practice (PiP)** programme was an initiative that aimed to develop effective partnerships between local and central governments. Lincolnshire's PiP work resulted in 5 main projects: embedding the Signs of Safety model including Restorative Practice; review and redesign of Early Help support; sector-led improvement; the development of the Future 4 Me (F4Me) and Caring2Learn (C2L) service; and the development of the children's social care workforce. The 2020 evaluation²² of the programme found '*largely encouraging findings and areas of added value*'; much of the work of PiP has now been embedded into day-to-day delivery and practice, overseen by the Quality and Standards Team, and has further led into the CiC Transformation programme (see 1.7.). The DfE Sector-Led Improvement Partnership (SLIP) is continuing, with Lincolnshire a key partner in providing high-intensity support to other LAs.

4.1.1.2. The value and role of **Kinship Carers** is recognised and these carers receive the same level of supervision, support and training as all other approved foster carers. Exploring and capitalising on the family network can be hugely beneficial for children whose carers are supported to understand the challenges these children face, with a range of financial, practical and emotional support available to manage the difficult feelings and relationships that are unique to kinship care. Support from social care teams continues to be vital in unlocking the potential of family networks, including Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) which continue to be a significant permanence option for CiC.

4.1.1.3. Due to increasing local and national demand, existing arrangements regarding the **Lincolnshire Secure Unit (LSU)** were reviewed with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The review resulted in the recommissioning of a 5-year contract in 2019. Work is ongoing with the DfE on a new purpose-built 24-bed secure children's home, with an additional 4-bed step-down bed spaces. Funding has been approved to take this project through to planning which is due in mid-July 2023 with a view to work starting on site in early 2024. The home is expected to open in early 2026.

4.1.1.4. A full service review of the statutory **Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service** was carried out in 2018-19; extensive service user and stakeholder engagement resulted in a service redesign which included earlier allocation at 16, twin tracking with social care and enhancement of specific service elements. Barnardo's were awarded 5-year contract in 2020 to deliver the service, and have continued to add significant value, including accommodation and Education, Employment and Training (EET) workers, specialist

²² [Lincolnshire Partners in Practice Programme Evaluation](#), March 2020

support to former-UASC care leavers, an embedded Mental Health Worker post through LPFT, emotional wellbeing workers and management of Supported Lodgings suppliers. The service will again be reviewed in 2023 to consider the model from April 2025.

- 4.1.1.5. Children’s Strategic Commissioning successfully implemented the **Open Select List (OSL)** procurement process in 2017, which facilitates the compliant procurement of placements for CYP in independent residential care, independent foster care, supported accommodation and Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools²³. The OSL re-opens annually to allow new suppliers to join and has been effective in the management of placement referrals to the independent market. Subsequent OSLs were created in 2020 for Domiciliary Care, Alternative Provision (to support Interim Home Tuition) and CWD Short Breaks and were incorporated into the new 5-year OSL cycle which opened in 2022 with updated service specifications and Terms and Conditions for each of the seven strands.
- 4.1.1.6. Ongoing placement and contract management is one of the key priorities of the Children in Care (CiC) Transformation Programme (*see 1.7.*) and has resulted in the Valuing Care (VC) toolkit for mapping strengths and needs of Lincolnshire CiC to better support placement matching, along with the Placements Management Meeting (PMM) and strengthened protocols with the in-house Foster Duty Desk.
- 4.1.1.7. The **Closed Ordered List for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC COL)** was commissioned in 2018 to facilitate the timely accommodation of spontaneous arrivals of unaccompanied 16-17 year olds. Suppliers have close working relationships with both social care and Leaving Care teams, and young people are well supported to access health and community services, education and legal representation. The UASC COL was reviewed in 2021-22 and a new 5-year contract was recommissioned in 2022 with updated service specification and Terms and Conditions. Additional capacity created through the new contract is essential to manage the increase in UASC referred to Lincolnshire through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS).
- 4.1.1.8. Lincolnshire’s commissioned **Youth Housing service** was redesigned in 2019 and a 5-year contract was awarded to Nacro. The start of the contract was delayed to 1st January 2021 due to the impact of Covid on accommodation readiness, government guidance that young people should not needlessly move placement, and recruitment difficulties. The service has continued to evolve and now incorporates the Care Leaver Homelessness Prevention Project, via grant funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
- 4.1.1.9. The Corporate Parenting Manager (CPM) has worked with key partners including District Councils and Adult accommodation suppliers to develop effective pathways, including a county-wide housing protocol and agreement to local connection for Lincolnshire care

²³ When it opened in 2017, the OSL included 4 strands: independent residential children’s homes, independent foster care (IFAs), Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools (INMS) and Intense Needs Supported Accommodation (INSA, now Supported Accommodation).

leavers in any part of the Local Authority (LA) area. The CPM has also developed onward housing options for former-UASC care leavers leaving supported accommodation.

4.2. Strategic priorities for 2023-27

- 4.2.1. Lincolnshire children and young people that may need support, be they CiC, care leavers, young people at risk of homelessness or young people on the edge of care, deserve strong, outcomes-focused and enabling services that offer appropriate challenge and nurture to support our young people to develop the skills and resilience for adult life and independence.
- 4.2.2. These aims are reflected nationally in the emerging children's social care reforms detailed in the **Stable Homes, Built on Love** implementation strategy and consultation report, and within Lincolnshire's Children's Services transformation programmes (see 2.1.5.)
- 4.2.3. Following the review of the 2018-22 Sufficiency Strategy, including where services and support have been embedded into current delivery (see 3.8.) and where identified aims have been completed (see 4.1.), the Council have identified **five key priority areas** for the 2023-27 Sufficiency Strategy:
 - **In-house regulated placements**
 - **Independent regulated placements**
 - **Supported accommodation**
 - **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)**
 - **Care leavers**
- 4.2.4. Each of the priorities has a number of current issues and targeted actions which are detailed in the **Children in Care Sufficiency Action Plan** (see *Appendix A1*); these will be reported on annually and will inform the review and update of the Council's **Market Position Statement** (see *Appendix A2*).

Appendix A

A1 Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy Action Plan

Progress against the identified **Strategic Priorities for 2023-27** will be reported annually to the Council’s Corporate Parenting Panel in July of each year from 2024 and will inform the development of the annual **Market Position Statement** (see *Appendix A2*) which will be published on the Council website.

Page 86

	Category/service	Priorities	What needs to happen	Progress	
1	In-house regulated placements	i	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of foster families to meet demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of foster care support and benefits to support retention Programme of foster carer recruitment including succession planning as older foster carers retire Foster carer training package including digital offer and Caring2Learn (C2L) Recruitment of carers for particular groups of young people e.g. UASC, parent and child, teenagers with challenging behaviour Consistent, high quality support to foster carers by social workers 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		ii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information sharing across teams to support placement planning is effective and reflects the needs of children and young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop information sharing protocols between service areas Information shared at Placement Management Meeting (PMM) to support placement decisions Continue to support information sharing with in-house Foster Duty Desk and LCCPlacements 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		iii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity and occupancy of in-house residential homes is effective and meets CYP needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of CYP placed in-house to consider if a move to foster placements would be suitable (in-house or independent) Review of in-house residential children’s homes to ensure they meet the needs of our CiC cohort Opening of two new residential children’s homes in 2023 Recruitment of high-quality staff including bank and relief staff to ensure workforce is flexible and has sufficient capacity Monitor occupancy levels to ensure in-house placements are utilised effectively to maximise outcomes 	<i>To be reported annually</i>

		iv	Capacity within the secure estate is sufficient to meet CYP needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and renegotiate the Lincolnshire Secure Unit (LSU) contract with Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in 2026 Commence building the new 24-bed secure children's home Lincolnshire CYP are able to access in-county secure accommodation when needed CYP in secure estate are supported effectively to return to 'mainstream' placements CYP with Deprivation of Liberty orders (DoLS) are accommodated in safe and suitable placements 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
2	Independent regulated placements	i	Independent regulated placements are effective and meet CYP needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual re-opening of the Open Select List to increase numbers of pre-approved suppliers LCCPlacements team are well-resourced to support service areas with referrals and contract arrangements Develop relationships with suppliers to negotiate block contracts and block commissioning arrangements, and enhance knowledge of vacancies and new local provision Children's Services placement management oversight (in-house and independent) to seek to bring most Lincolnshire CYP back into Lincolnshire-based placements 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		ii	Independent regulated placements offer Value for Money (VfM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable fee increases are agreed with suppliers through the regional panel Full-cohort oversight of placements in line with the aims of the Children in Care (CiC) transformation programme Review INMS placements with SEND team to ensure suitability and management of referrals, and look to develop a placements overview forum to consider placement demand, capacity and needs trends Appropriate challenge to placement packages including support and cost reduction, and effective step-down or transition 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		iii	Placements for late entrants into care with complex behaviours deliver high outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing development of placement referral form to ensure young people are represented clearly and positively Suppliers are upskilled in a range of de-escalation techniques and management of complex behaviours 	<i>To be reported annually</i>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop effective step-down referral route into in-house supported accommodation and commissioned Youth Housing service 	
		iv Children with Disabilities (CWD) are supported to access appropriate SEND services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of supplier relationships to increase access to high-quality and effective SEND services Commissioning of CWD Support Services including Early Support and Learning Provision, Targeted Positive Activities, and Domiciliary Care Commissioning of Alternative Provision, Domiciliary Care and CWD Short Breaks through the Open Select List provides VfM Open Select List for SEND services re-opens annually to develop supplier numbers 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
3	Supported accommodation	i Numbers of young people in Supported Accommodation are low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioned Youth Housing contract continues to deliver VfM and high outcomes through their intensive support placements Young people are accommodated in-house where appropriate 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		ii Care leavers and young people aged 16-17 at risk of homelessness are supported to access suitable accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective contract management and appropriate challenge to supported accommodation suppliers to are effective in reducing placement packages Deliver a well-resourced Youth Housing service Review existing commissioned Youth Housing service to determine delivery from January 2026 Young people are supported to access education, employment or training (EET) to increase future opportunities and independence Joined-up access to move-on options e.g. adult accommodation, Intense Housing Management (IHM) accommodation, specialist accommodation Maintain and develop links with District Councils and other housing suppliers 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		iii Supported accommodation suppliers are registered with OFSTED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported accommodation suppliers register with OFSTED in good time to ensure placements are made in line with regulations In-house supported accommodation is registered with OFSTED Supported accommodation contract is reviewed to ensure new regulations are reflected in our service specification and Terms and Conditions 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
4	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)	i UASC are placed in high quality, culturally appropriate placements that meet their specific support needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UASC Closed Ordered List and the Open Select List continue to deliver capacity and timely response to UASC arrivals Other suppliers are upskilled to be able to offer support to UASC UASC are supported to access EET soon after they become CiC 	<i>To be reported annually</i>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted use of Home Office Annex A grant to support service capacity Ongoing development of in-house, commissioned and community support to the UASC cohort 	
		ii	Former-UASC care leavers are supported effectively and are accommodated in high quality suitable accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective links with the Home Office and legal representatives result in timely asylum decisions Former-UASC care leavers are supported to remain in EET whilst they await their asylum claim outcome Maintain and develop suitable accommodation options for former-UASC care leavers awaiting a decision on their asylum claim Establish clear and affordable move-on options for the cohort 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
5	Care leavers	i	Deliver an effective and appropriately resourced Leaving Care Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing commissioned Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service to determine delivery from April 2025 Consistently high numbers of care leavers in suitable and safe accommodation Care leavers are supported to access education, employment or training (EET) to increase future opportunities and independence Work with local and regional partners to embed care leaver local connection entitlement Supported Lodgings are developed and supported Targeted use of Rent Gap agreements to support care leavers experiencing short-term financial difficulties District Councils offering priority for housing for care leavers including Council Tax relief Ongoing development of the Care Leaver Local Offer and social media communications/platforms 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		ii	Care leavers are well equipped for independence by the age of 21 as they step down from full service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care leavers have the resources and skills to manage their own accommodation needs, have good mental health, have supportive networks and relationships and are financially secure Develop mechanisms to enable care leavers to remain close to, or in contact with, networks and areas of their choosing Links with other LAs re: Local Connection and reciprocal support for care leavers 	<i>To be reported annually</i>

A2 Market Position Statement 2023-24

The Market Position Statement 2023-24 can be considered a starting point for the Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27, providing a baseline for future updates.

The Market Position Statement 2023-24 is available on the [Lincolnshire County Council website](#) and will be refreshed annually following the annual review of progress against the Key Priorities (*see section 4*) using the Action Plan template (*Appendix A1*).

Appendix B

B1 Glossary of Acronyms

C2L	Caring to Learn / Caring2Learn
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group – <i>now Integrated Commissioning Board</i>
ChAT	Children’s Services Analysis Tool
CiC	Children in Care - <i>formerly referred to as Looked After Children (LAC)</i>
CiN	Child(ren) in Need
CLAS	Care Leaver Apprenticeship Scheme
CMA	Competition and Markets Authority
COL	Closed Ordered List
CPM	Corporate Parenting Manager
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CWD	Child(ren) with a Disability
CYP	Children and Young People
DCS	Director(s) of Children’s Services
DfE	Department for Education
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
DOLs	Deprivation of Liberty Order(s)
EET	Education, Employment or Training
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
F4Me	Future4Me
FSD	Family Services Directory
HMIP	His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation
HML	Healthy Minds Lincolnshire
ICB	Integrated Care Board
IFA(s)	Independent Fostering Agency(ies)
IHM	Intense Housing Management
INMS	Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools
INSA	Intense Needs Supported Accommodation
JDP	Joint Diversionary Panel
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LA(s)	Local Authority(ies)

LAC	Looked After Child(ren) – <i>now referred to as Children in Care (CiC)</i>
LAIT	Local Authority Interactive Tool
LCC	Lincolnshire County Council
LLCS	Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service
LPFT	Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust (NHS)
LSCP	Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
LSU	Lincolnshire Secure Unit
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NEST	Nacro Education Support and Transition (commissioned Youth Housing contact)
NTS	National Transfer Scheme for UASC
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
OSL	Open Select List
PiP	Partners in Practice
PMM	Placement Management Meeting
RAA	Regional Adoption Agency
RCC	Regional Care Co-Operative(s)
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SGO	Special Guardianship Order
SLIP	Sector-Led Improvement Partnership
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child(ren)
UASC COL	UASC Closed Ordered List
V4C	Voices for Choices
VC	Valuing Care
VfM	Value for Money

Children's Strategic Commissioning

Children's Services Independent Placements

Market Position Statement 2023-24

Executive Summary

Lincolnshire County Council's Market Position Statement 2023-24 accompanies the Council's Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27 and will be updated annually to highlight changes in placement demand for Lincolnshire Children in Care (CiC) and children and young people requiring independent (special) school placements.

The Council hopes the Market Position Statement will serve as a tool for independent providers, detailing the placements and services we need for our children and young people.

The Council wants to work in partnership with independent placement providers, especially those in Lincolnshire or in directly adjacent counties, and wants to increase supply across all our independent placement strands.

One of the things we wish to explore during 2023-24 is the block commissioning of placements, and we would like to start a dialogue with providers who are interested in working more closely with us and provide high quality placements for Lincolnshire young people that are as close to home and existing communities as possible.

By working closely with providers in the independent sector, Lincolnshire County Council aims to unlock capacity and develop effective relationships that will be transformational for our children and young people, and we would very much like to hear from you if you would like to be part of the conversation.

Lincolnshire County Council Children’s Services is keen to build relationships with independent providers of accommodation and education for children in care, care leavers and children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans.

Through this Market Position Statement we will set out the needs of our children and young people, our vision for the support we would like them to receive and how we plan to work in partnership with the independent market through the effective and appropriate use of independent placements.

In Lincolnshire, the Council’s Children’s Commissioning Team supports Children’s social care and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) teams to broker placements in independent accommodation for Lincolnshire Children in Care (CiC) and independent education for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Placements are made when in-house provision cannot meet the specific needs of a child including where there may not be capacity.

Lincolnshire services

Lincolnshire County Council’s Children’s Services directorate is highly regarded and prides itself on being an innovative service with integrated health services that means we can wrap multi-disciplinary support around children and young people to meet their needs.

The Council has continued to invest in preventative and early intervention services and so there is a rich offer of early help.

The Council is also the lead commissioner of mental health services in Lincolnshire, on behalf of the local Integrated Care Board, and this enables us to wrap local mental health expertise into both in-house and commissioned provider services.

Lincolnshire children and young people at the end of March 2023:

391 children and young people with a 'Child Protection' (CP) plan

728 Children in Care (CiC)

6968 children and young people with an EHCP

418 care leavers

Lincolnshire County Council Children’s Services
is rated **Outstanding** by OFSTED.

We take great pride in our innovative and highly skilled workforce who deliver excellent services to Lincolnshire children, young people and families.

Lincolnshire demographics

Lincolnshire is the fourth largest county in England with diverse communities dispersed across a large and diverse, predominantly rural landscape. Approximately 21.5% of the total population is aged 0-19 years (163,550), of which 16.4% (124,565) are school aged.

Area	Total Population	0-19 Population	5-19 Population	0-19 % Population	5-19 % Population
East Lindsey	141727	26496	20308	18.7%	14.3%
Boston	70173	16199	11949	23.1%	17.0%
South Holland	95019	20223	15091	21.3%	15.9%
Boston and South Holland	165192	36422	27040	22.0%	16.4%
Lincoln	99299	23596	18085	23.8%	18.2%
West Lindsey	95667	20194	15489	21.1%	16.2%
Lincoln and West Lindsey	194966	43790	33574	22.5%	17.2%
North Kesteven	116915	24907	19032	21.3%	16.3%
South Kesteven	142424	31935	24611	22.4%	17.3%
North and South Kesteven	259339	56842	43643	21.9%	16.8%
Total Lincolnshire	761224	163550	124565	21.5%	16.4%

Source:
Office of National
Statistics (ONS)
mid-2020
population
estimates

Based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019, 6.7% of Lincolnshire's population live in the 10% most deprived areas of England.

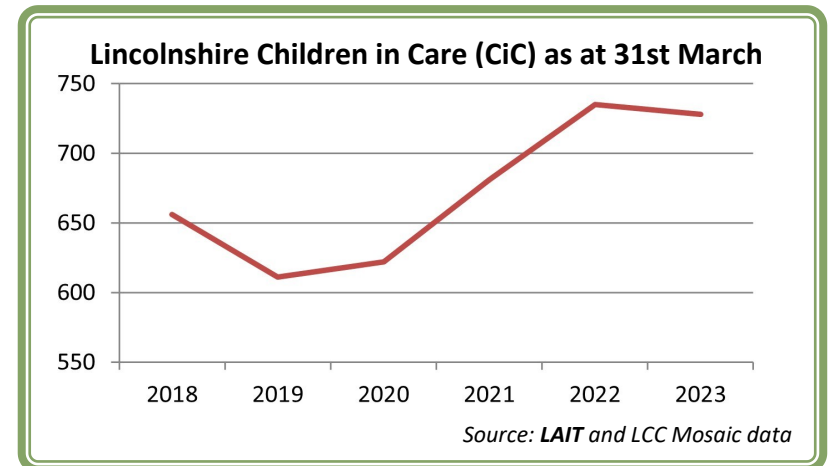
Lincolnshire Children in Care (CiC) numbers

As is the case nationally, the number of CiC has increased over the past 3-4 years and the support these children and young people require is more complex and intense.

The Council is seeing an increasing need for a strong and effective therapeutic approach in both our in-house and independent placements to support these children and young people in the best way possible.

We are seeing children entering care at an older age. We would like placements that can offer step down options which may include a return back home, move to a foster family or independence.

We are keen to grow capacity in Lincolnshire or as close to the county as possible because this means we can work together with providers to wrap other support services around children and young people. We can also look at building strong partnerships and benefit from sharing our resources such as joint matching, joint training and providing enhanced staffing if a young person is struggling.





Placement planning

Lincolnshire County Council's in-house provision for CiC includes residential children's homes, foster carers and unregulated supported accommodation for 16+ year olds.

We also commission our Youth Housing Service and our Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (who manage supported lodgings providers).

Lincolnshire County Council always tries to explore in-house options first as we want children to live in Lincolnshire as close to home and their support networks as possible. We also recognise that we need high quality independent providers to work with us to meet both demand and the needs of the child or young person.

Valuing Care

Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services has embarked upon an ambitious CiC Transformation Programme.

Our key goals are to:

- reduce the need for statutory intervention in families lives, by providing the right help to the right children at the right time and for the right duration;
- support families to build on their existing support networks in order to implement their own solutions;
- improve outcomes for Lincolnshire children and young people, by providing care locally within the county rather than care at a distance, to keep them within their own communities where they can be close to their networks.

The Council wants to work more proactively in partnership with independent providers and we would like to continue to build and strengthen relationships with local providers and carers in Lincolnshire.

The Council appreciates there may be times where a placement outside of Lincolnshire is still the best match for a child, especially if it means they can live in a family.

Valuing Care has a number of live workstreams, all focused on different aspects of improving placements for CiC.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transformation programme

Lincolnshire County Council's **SEND High Needs Strategy 2021-2023** sets out our aims and strategic direction to ensure that children and young people with SEND in Lincolnshire are supported to achieve the best possible outcomes in school and in life.

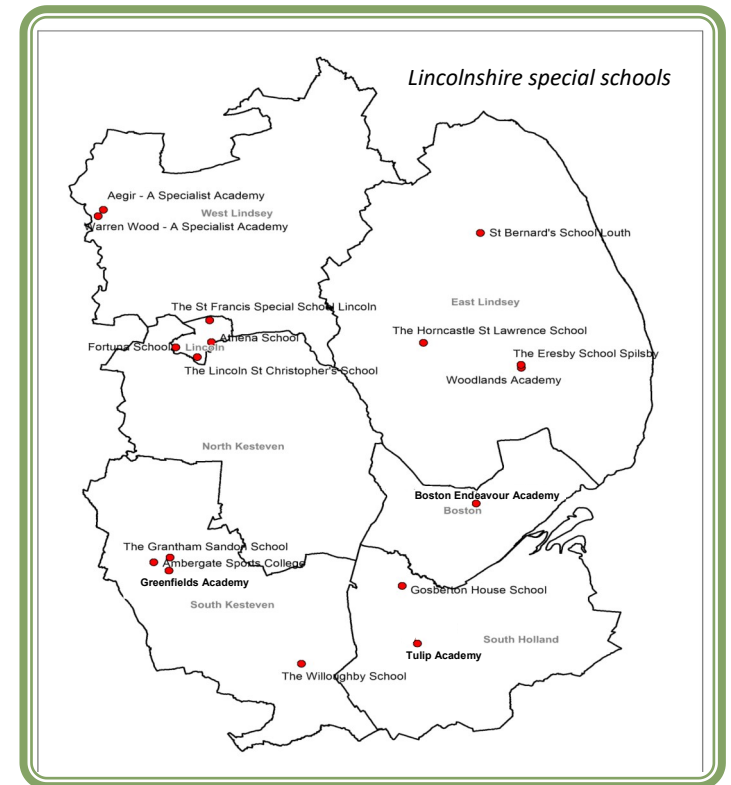
Partners in education, social care and health are committed to working together to establish an integrated school system where children and young people get the right health, care and education, in the right place, at the right time and are able to transition to adulthood and independence when they are ready to do so.

This includes embedding the graduated approach/Inclusion Toolkit and understanding of the support available in Lincolnshire; schools work with families to ensure the home environment reflects the support in school; services will wrap round a child in an inclusive way, reducing school exclusions in recognition that behaviour is a communication of need; and we will have high aspirations for our children and young people with additional needs (higher academic achievement, increased personal resilience, increased socialisation and more resilient adults after education).

Lincolnshire is also strengthening Lincolnshire's **SEND Local Offer**, investing in workforce development, strengthening key times of transitions and facilitating appropriate transitions from special to mainstream schools when access to specialist provision is no longer needed.

Lincolnshire special schools are being redesigned to be all-needs schools, with new special schools for Boston, Lincoln and Spalding. The changes will increase school numbers by 500 places, and should be complete by September 2023.

Nevertheless, there will continue to be a need for independent special school placements due to capacity or the particular needs of the child or young person.



Valuing SEND

The Valuing SEND tool is being utilised to map children and young people's educational strengths and needs in the five key domains of: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health; sensory and physical; and independence.

The tool has been designed for use for any child/ young person with additional needs, from birth through to age 25. Consistent use of this tool will allow a clear picture of how needs change over time, both for the individual child or young person, and for the setting as a whole.

Independent Foster Care Placements

Lincolnshire's aims

The Council want an increased choice of foster care placements based within Lincolnshire to be able to support children with complex needs, reducing the number of out-of-county placements made through necessity rather than choice.

The Council wants to plan foster care placements, identifying children we feel would thrive in a family environment and support both them and their carers with a well-planned transition, and work with Independent Foster Agencies (IFAs) to support resilient and effective placements that meet the needs of our children.



In-house provision and capacity

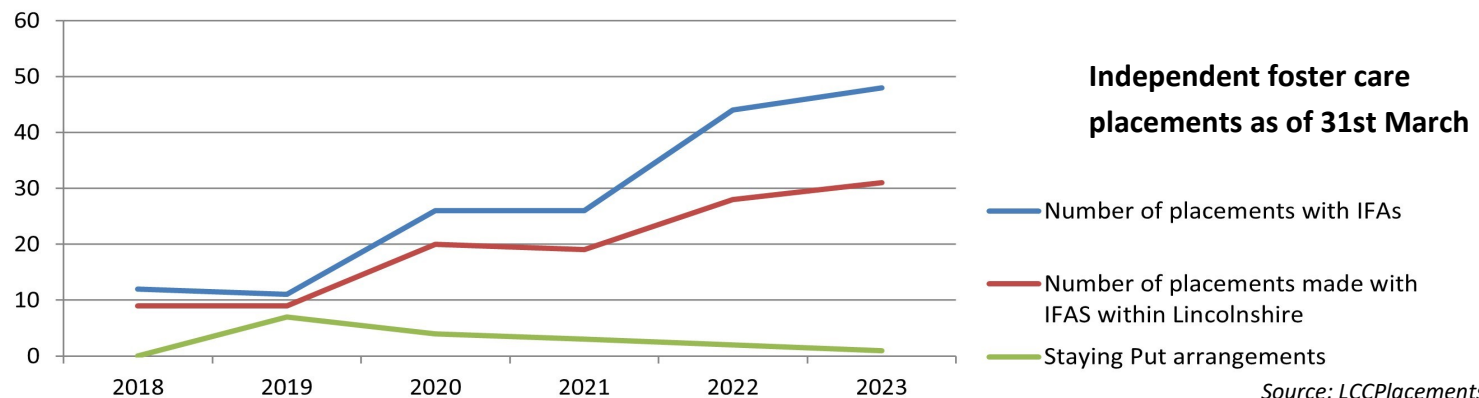
In comparison to other Local Authorities, Lincolnshire County Council have a very high proportion of in-house foster carers. They are highly trained, well supported and very well used.

The increase in both CiC numbers and children and young people coming into care with more complex needs has reduced our in-house foster care capacity, resulting in more children and young people being placed with IFAs.

Current issues

Due to the rise in older children coming into care, Lincolnshire, along with many other Local Authorities, have seen a decrease in foster carers willing or with the experience to take older children or those with more complex needs.

Some IFAs new to Lincolnshire may be developing their networks within our area and may be building the number of foster carers that they have available.



Source: LCCPlacements data

Independent Foster Care Placements *cont.*

Building relationships

Lincolnshire County Council wants to build strong relationships with IFAs who are proactive and creative in working with us, finding solutions to maintain placement stability, including the development of programmes and care plans that, if appropriate, will support the individual child to achieve permanence.

The Council wants to work closely with IFA's that provide appropriate support to their foster carers, including a wide range of training and support, a peer network of other carers and access to respite when required.

The Council wants to develop our awareness of Lincolnshire foster carers as, by placing more young people in-county, we can offer wraparound services and targeted support to the whole family and support placement stability.

Parent and Child

The Council has occasional need for independent foster carers able to offer a Parent and Child assessment placement for up to 12 weeks.

These foster carers need to provide a homely environment, effective support and guide the parent to independently care for themselves and their child and provide assurance of safe parenting post-placement.

Staying Put

Lincolnshire County Council wants to offer our children and young people the opportunity to remain with their foster carers under **Staying Put** arrangements. As such, we want to place our children and young people with foster carers who are willing to support the child placed with them, as they would their own, beyond 18.

What we need...

Lincolnshire County Council believes children and young people thrive best in a family environment; sadly older or children with more complex needs are often harder to place in foster care.

Lincolnshire children and young people need independent foster carers who are resilient when faced with challenging behaviour issues and who are skilled in de-escalation techniques.

The Council want to place with independent foster carers who are trained to understand childhood trauma, risks of absconding, risk of CSE, criminal exploitation, challenging behaviours and learning disability and autism.

The Council wants our children and young people to maintain contact with family and friends wherever possible, including reunification with families when safe and appropriate, so whilst Lincolnshire believe long-term, planned placements are best and most effective for the majority of our children and young people, for others foster care is just one part of their care journey.

Lincolnshire County Council therefore also values independent foster carers who are able to offer short-term, respite or emergency placements, as well as those that can take sibling groups and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children under 16 years old.

Lincolnshire County Council needs independent foster carers that have the flexibility and understanding to be able to support children who have reduced school timetables/attendance and who may be excluded from school.

Residential Children's Homes

In-house provision and capacity

Lincolnshire has four in-house residential children's homes spread across the county, supporting a total of twenty-nine children and young people aged 5 to 18 years, plus two residential respite homes for children with disabilities. Two new homes will open in 2023 and 2024 for a further ten young people.

Most are for children with a mix of ages and abilities, apart from The Beacon in Grantham which specialises in supporting children and young people with disabilities. Lincolnshire are currently developing two new children's homes which are due to open in 2023 and early 2024.

Lincolnshire seeks to broker independent residential placements where in-house provision cannot meet the specific needs of a child including where there may not be capacity.

Secure placements

Lincolnshire Secure Unit (LSU) has one welfare bed which, subject to Court approval, can be used for very complex young people exhibiting high risk behaviours, though secure placements can be made across the UK where there are vacancies. The DfE has approved funding for a new purpose-built 28-bed secure children's home and planning is now underway.

Placement costs

Lincolnshire County Council needs to work with providers whose costs are fair, with sustainable profit margins, whereby we only pay for the support that is required and delivered and which is reduced as the child or young person becomes more stable and grows in independence.

Some children and young people in independent residential placements have complex needs; Lincolnshire want to work with providers who understand these young people and who will work with us to help them transition into a less intense support package that reflects their changing needs.

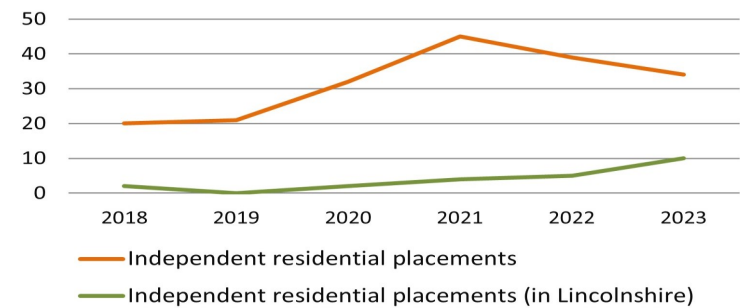
Lincolnshire's aims

We want to build strong relationships with independent residential providers who are able to offer positive outcomes for our children and young people who require complex care packages at the highest end of the continuum of need.

Working together, we strive to achieve the outcomes for our children and young people to enable them to return home or transition to either foster families or to independence.

We want to develop our links to Lincolnshire independent residential children's homes as, by placing more young people in-county and reducing the recent increase in out-of-county placements, we can offer wraparound services and targeted support to enhance placement stability.

Lincolnshire independent residential children's home placements by year to end 31st March



Residential Children's Homes cont.

Regulation & inspection

In line with our high aspirations for our children and young people, Lincolnshire County Council seeks to place with residential providers who are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted and who are registered in line with **Care Standards Act 2000** and operates in accordance with the **Children's Home (England) Regulations 2015** and the nine **Quality Standards**.

Lincolnshire does not use unregulated independent placements for children and young people under the age of 16 years old.



Older children in care

Lincolnshire County Council, in line with the national trend, is seeing a rise in older young people entering care i.e. 13+ years.

This older cohort presents some challenges in terms of behaviours and as a result may experience more placement instability and breakdown than younger children.

We want appropriate and innovative support solutions for these young people, given their time in a residential setting may be short before they move into the next stage of their time in care or on to independence.

What we need...

Lincolnshire children and young people need resilient providers and carers with experience of working with childhood trauma, are resilient when faced with challenging behaviour issues and who are skilled in de-escalation techniques. Lincolnshire wants to build effective working relationships with providers, working together to overcome any challenges in placement to avoid breakdown.

Lincolnshire children and young people need carers who are skilled in de-escalation techniques that minimise physical interventions, as well as carers who are able to provide children and young people with clinical therapy, mental health and behavioural support as determined within their care plan.

Ideally, we feel our children will thrive better in smaller homes that can provide a realistic homely environment, with the excellent intensive support programme the children and young people require, and we are increasingly focused on placing our young people within, or as close to, Lincolnshire as possible so they can access Lincolnshire social care and Leaving Care support as well as other Lincolnshire services such as CAMHS and Virtual School.

Above all, Lincolnshire County Council wants to work with independent residential providers that are able to care for our children for the longer term, and who are able to work with our social care and Leaving Care teams to make a real difference in terms of behaviours, outcomes and stability, as well as work with us to step young people down into less intensive accommodation and support.

Lincolnshire Special Schools

Lincolnshire has seventeen maintained/academy Special Schools spread throughout the county supporting children and young people with a range of complex SEND.

However, due to either a child or young person's specific need and/or lack of available appropriate school placements within our own maintained/academy (special) school settings, Lincolnshire County Council does place with the independent sector for day and residential (special) school places.

Use of Independent (Special) School placements

All placements that Lincolnshire County Council commissions are expected to meet the outcomes and needs as outlined in the child and young person's EHC Plan.

These placements seek to meet and exceed identified needs through innovative care and a robust curriculum, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement through the school's, and where applicable the home's, internal quality assurance procedures.

The delivery of the service will be consistent with the school's function, as approved by the Regulatory Body.

All providers will need to comply, where appropriate, with the [SEND Code of Practice, Children's Homes \(England\) Regulations 2015](#) including the Quality Standards 2015 and the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) \(England\) Regulations 2014](#).

Current Independent Placements

As of 31st March 2023, Lincolnshire County Council has 353 children and young people with an EHC Plan placed in Independent day and residential (Special) Schools throughout the UK:

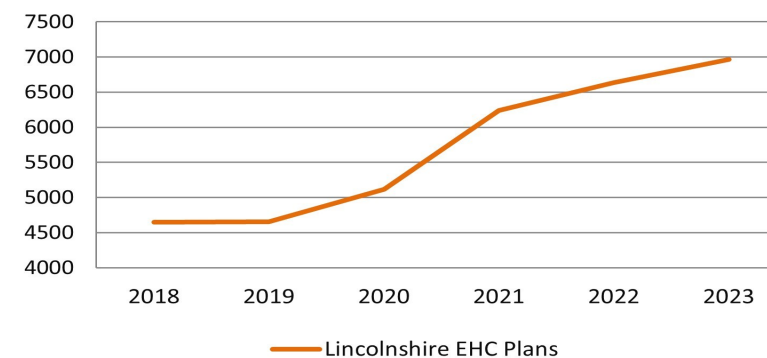
Placement type			
52 weeks <i>Education & Residential</i>	38 week 'weekly' <i>Education & Residential</i>	38 week 'termly' <i>Education & Residential</i>	Day placement <i>Education only</i>
12	17	9	315

Source: LCCPlacements data

Lincolnshire's SEN data

Similar to the regional and national picture, the number of children and young people for whom Lincolnshire maintains an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan under the [Children and Families Act 2014](#) has been rising, with an increase of 2408 EHC plans between 2018 and 2023.

As of 31st March 2023, there were 6968 EHC plans, an increase of 334 in 12 months.



Source: Children's Services performance data

Lincolnshire Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans

Lincolnshire children and young people with an EHCP, by age group and % of cohort:

SEN2 Return Year	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Total	% of population	Total	% of population	Total	% of population	Total	% of population
Under age 5	228	4%	217	3%	191	3%	187	3%
Aged 5 to 10	1652	32%	2250	36%	2318	35%	2440	35%
Aged 11 to 15	1821	36%	2195	35%	2430	37%	2712	39%
Aged 16 to 19	1170	23%	1261	20%	1394	21%	1380	20%
Aged 20 to 25	248	5%	305	5%	301	5%	249	4%
Total	5119		6228		6634		6968	

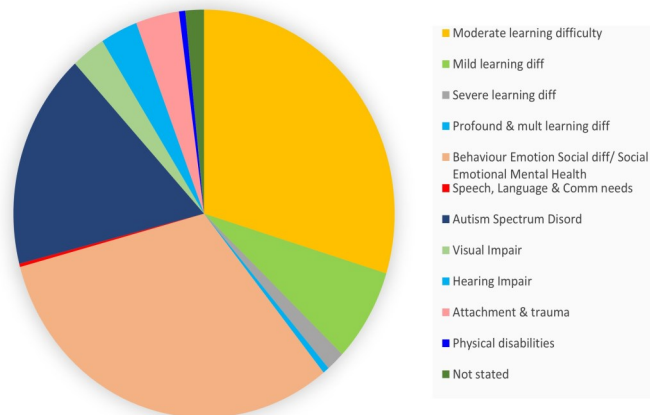
Source:
LCC SEN2 SFR
data

Lincolnshire children and young people with an EHC Plan, by age group and locality at end March 2023:

SEND Locality Team	Under Age 5	Aged 5 to 10	Aged 11 to 15	Aged 16 to 19	Aged 20 to 25	Total
Boston/South Holland	52	575	622	296	49	1594
East Lindsey	26	407	544	288	51	1316
Lincoln/West Lindsey	54	681	737	369	56	1897
North/South Kesteven	55	777	809	427	93	2161
Total	187	2440	2712	1380	249	6968

Source:
LCC Mosaic
data

Lincolnshire independent (special) school placements by primary need at 31st March 2023



Source: LCCPlacements data

What we need...

Lincolnshire County Council wants to ensure we have access to effective and holistic specialist provision that supports the diverse needs of our children and young people with SEND aged from 5 to 25 years.

We have seen an increase in placements for Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) over the past few years, though the cohort is ever changing.

Lincolnshire's SEND team continue to work with mainstream schools in Lincolnshire to support our children and young people to remain in (or return to) mainstream schools wherever possible, but we recognise that this is not always practical or the best environment, so we want to develop strong relationships with Lincolnshire providers that offer value for money.

Post-16 education placements

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) provide core funding (Element 1) and additional needs funding (Element 2) for High Needs learners aged 16 years and above with special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) who are attending a Further Education establishment, more commonly referred to internally as Post-16.

Lincolnshire County Council provides additional 'top up' funding to learners (known as Element 3) where the costs to support the learner's needs are higher than the amount provided by the ESFA. The choice of Further Education establishment is determined by the learner.

Open Select List for SEND support services

Lincolnshire County Council commissions the following SEND support services:

- **Domiciliary Care:** supporting children and young people with disabilities, most usually in their own homes, with personal and intimate care, leisure and community activities, life skills, transition support, social and communication skills, and low-level nursing not requiring a qualification.

Providers of Domiciliary Care must be **CQC-registered**. Independent domiciliary care services will be sought through the OSL when there is insufficient capacity through the block commissioned contract to deliver domiciliary care to 0-18 year olds living in Lincolnshire with profound and significant learning and/or physical disabilities or life-threatening illnesses.

- **Short Breaks:** offering children and young people with disabilities an enjoyable experience away from their primary carers to enhance their personal and social development, whilst parents and families are provided either with a valuable break from their caring responsibilities or with help accessing the community with the young person.

Short breaks can occur at different times – during the day or evening, overnight or on weekends, and can span a few hours or a number of days.

- **Alternative Provision:** supporting pupils in schools years Reception to Year 13 (or up to age 25 years where applicable) who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The aim is to engage pupils who may be disengaged from education through a broad and flexible curriculum offer.

The OSL for SEND services re-opens annually to allow new suppliers to apply.

In-house provision

Lincolnshire County Council has two in-house accommodation projects based in Grantham and Gainsborough, jointly accommodating up to 10 16-17 year old CiC or care leavers who are usually in transition from residential and foster care placements.

Young people can stay in these projects for up to 9 months to develop their independent living skills.

Commissioned services

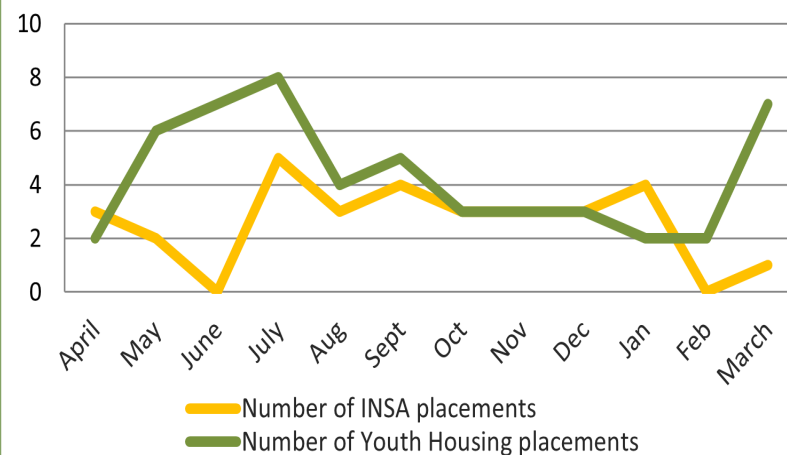
Lincolnshire County Council currently commissions seventy-two bed spaces in Lincoln, Boston and Grantham as part of the Youth Housing Service designed to accommodate 16-17 year olds (including CiC) and Care Leavers up to 21 years old who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This contract is in place for up to five years to the end of 2026. Young people are supported to live independently or to return home to family wherever it is safe and possible to do so.

There are also around 18 Supported Lodgings providers offering nearly 30 family-based placements for 18+ year olds care leavers; these are managed by Barnardo's who deliver our commissioned Leaving Care Service which is contracted for up to five years to March 2025.

Lincolnshire also commissions placements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) aged 16-17 years old through our Closed Ordered List arrangements which are designed to respond quickly to spontaneous arrivals. The current UASC Closed Ordered List is in place to October 2027.

Number of new supported accommodation placements made from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023



The chart demonstrates that demand for supported accommodation is sporadic but the Youth Housing Service receives the majority of referrals.



Additional Supported Accommodation

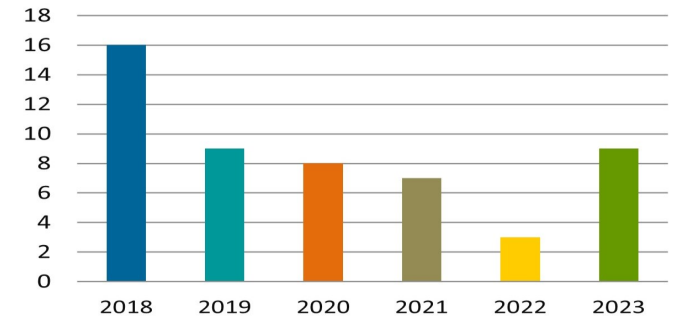
Lincolnshire County Council does have occasional need to place young people aged 16-17 years old in Supported Accommodation (SA) when suitable placements in Youth Housing are unavailable.

This may be as a result of short-term capacity challenges or due to the need to undertake some specialist work with young people before they can move into other accommodation.

SA placements are usually individual units of accommodation with high level support packages due to the nature of the cohort, including young people with significant emotional, social or behavioural needs.

Demand for SA fluctuates and is often unpredictable or is on an emergency basis; requirements have steadily declined over the past five years in line with the introduction of the Youth Housing commissioned service and in-house supported accommodation options, alongside a focus on working with young people to either support them to remain at or return home.

Number of young people in supported accommodation placements as at 31st March



Source: LCCPlacements data

Regulatory changes

OFSTED have confirmed that supported and semi-independent accommodation will be regulated i.e. inspected and meet minimum standards. More detail can be found at www.gov.uk. Suppliers are able to submit applications from April 2023, and will be inspected from April 2024 onwards.

What we need...

Lincolnshire County Council needs access to affordable accommodation offering flexible support hours on occasions where Youth Housing is unavailable. Young people need tailored support to suit them, and not 24-hour surveillance which limits a young person's ability to become independent.

Most young people in supported accommodation are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), so accommodation needs to be available in areas which offer good transports links with opportunities for education, employment and training.

Supported accommodation should aid young people to step forward to more independent living. Lastly, it is important that all young people within supported accommodation have a clear exit plan in place to either transition into our in-house or commissioned contracts, or to move to an independent tenancy.

Placement Commissioning

Lincolnshire County Council Children's Strategic Commissioning Team operate an Open Select List (OSL) procurement process to broker placements with independent providers.

New OSL arrangements started in September 2022 and new suppliers can join the list annually.

Providers are asked to submit business-level information such as accounts and/or evidence of financial standing along with a self-declaration application form. Subject to approval, the provider joins the relevant strand of the OSL; there are regulated (independent fostering agencies, independent residential children's homes and independent (Special) Schools as well as Supported Accommodation (soon to be subject to regulation) and SEND Services (domiciliary care, alternative provision and CWD short breaks) strands.

Providers on the OSL are notified of a suitable referral before other providers not on the OSL, and have the opportunity to make an offer regarding the placement.

The LCCPlacements team who administer the OSL process, issue contracts and Individual Placement Agreements (IPAs) and oversee payments.

Commissioning Officers then monitor contract performance and undertake meetings/visits to providers periodically.

If there are any concerns, Commissioning Officers liaise with social care and SEND, in regard to either placement stability or the support package being delivered, and work with placement providers to develop strong relationships that are mutually beneficial.

All placements will operate, where applicable, within the [Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) Child Protection Guidelines including compliance with [Section 11 of the Children Act 2004](#).

Contact us:

Children's Strategic Commissioning Placements

Team

Lincolnshire County Council

County Offices

Newland

Lincoln

LN1 1YL

e. LCCPlacements@lincolnshire.gov.uk

www.lincolnshire.gov.uk