

Children's Strategic Commissioning

**Children's Services
Independent Placements**

Market Position Statement 2024-25

Executive Summary

Lincolnshire County Council's (LCC) Market Position Statement (MPS) for 2024-25 provides information about residential placement demand for Lincolnshire Children in Care (CiC), care leavers, and children and young people requiring independent (special) school placements.

This is an update from the previous MPS for 2023-24 and accompanies the **Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27** and the annual action plan update.

LCC wants to continue developing partnerships with independent placement providers, especially those in Lincolnshire or in directly adjacent counties, in order to meet the care, support, and education needs of Lincolnshire children and young people, keeping them as close to home and existing communities as possible.

LCC Children's Services was graded '**Outstanding**' by Ofsted in April 2023 in their Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services, and remains ambitious in future service planning and developments.

LCC Children's Services is highly regarded and at the forefront of innovative practice; the **Families First Pathfinder** funding provides an exciting opportunity to develop services and support for the county's children and families including **Family Hubs** and Family Support Networks, all of which will inform national delivery. In addition, DfE Staying Close Staying Connected funding will enable LCC and their partners to support CiC and care leavers in residential accommodation to engage with Education, Employment and Training (EET) through mental health and substance use support and explore where their key networks are located to identify accommodation options.

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 care leavers 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.

Key messages to the independent placement market 2024-25

We want to work with independent placement providers to:

- **secure long-term, stable placements for Lincolnshire CiC where they are supported by their carers to feel happy and achieve their potential**
- **identify the right placement for the right child in the right location that meets their emotional, educational and support needs**
- **prioritise Lincolnshire placements for Lincolnshire children, CiC and care leavers**
- **create commissioning opportunities in areas of the county where we need placement capacity**
- **maximise capacity and create efficiencies within individual placement provision through commissioning of block numbers of places as well as individual placements, supporting sustainability of provision.**

Lincolnshire children and young people at the end of March 2024:

350 children and young people with a 'Child Protection Plan' (CPP)

753 Children in Care (CiC)

7711 children and young people with an EHCP

978 care leavers aged 16-25

Key priorities for 2024-25

Based on the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27 action plan, Children's Strategic Commissioning have identified the following priority areas:

- **In-house regulated placements**

recruitment of foster carers to increase capacity; opening of 2 new residential children's homes; effective information starting to maximise capacity to meet CiC needs in the best placement; increase of secure placement capacity

- **Independent regulated placements**

re-open the Open Select List (OSL) in July 2024; develop effective provider relationships to maximise in-county capacity; SEND/CWD placement planning; transitional placement pathways are embedded

- **Supported accommodation**

Youth Housing service review to start 2024; sector support around Ofsted inspections; effective accommodation pathways; Staying Close Staying Connected achieves positive outcomes for CiC and care leavers

- **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)**

accommodation options meet cultural and educational needs; former UASC care leavers are suitably accommodate whilst they await decisions on their asylum claims; move-on options are clear and affordable

- **Care Leavers**

decision on recommissioning Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service by June 2024; development of 21+ support; Supported Lodgings are developed; rent gap payments utilised if needed to support move to independence

Lincolnshire Children in Care (CiC) numbers

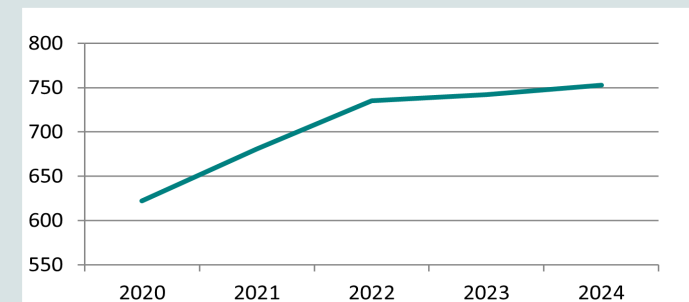
CiC and care leaver numbers continue to increase, including late entrants into care and rise in UASC due the mandated National Transfer Scheme. At the end of March 2024, UASC make up c.9% of the total CiC cohort.

We have seen an increase in complexity of support needs for a number of younger people, and have subsequently noted some capacity and placement sustainability issues.

At the end of March 2024, 73% of CiC live within our own provision and 71% of all Lincolnshire CiC are in foster care placements (in-house and independent). 22% of CiC are placed out of county.

At the end of March 2024, 9% of CiC have a disability, 85% are white British, and 51% are female. 34% of CiC are aged 10-15 years old. UASC are almost all male and come from a number of countries, with Sudan, Iran and Afghanistan being the most common.

Lincolnshire Children in Care (CiC) at 31st March



Source: LCC Mosaic data

Placement Commissioning

Lincolnshire County Council Children's operate an Open Select List (OSL) procurement process to broker placements with independent providers. New OSL arrangements started in September 2022 and new providers 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 (IFAs)**, **independent residential children's homes** and **independent non-maintained (special) schools (INMS)**, as well as regulated **supported accommodation** and SEND/CWD Services (**domiciliary care, alternative provision to support interim home tuition** and **CWD short breaks**) strands.

We will be opening two new OSL strands in 2024 for **regulated alternative provision** and **tutor-led alternative provision**.

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.

If there are any concerns with the placement due to a safeguarding incident or as a result of an Ofsted inspection, 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.

In addition to using the OSL, Lincolnshire commission a 72-bed Youth Housing Service for 16-17 year olds and care leavers and a Closed Ordered List (COL) for UASC and former-UASC care leavers.

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**.

Useful information for providers

LCC Children's Strategic Commissioning have published a number of documents online to support independent placement providers understand our requirements:

- The CiC Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27
- Market Position Strategy 2023-24 *and* Market Position Strategy 2024-25
- Provider Guide to the Open Select List process for children's independent placement referrals and contract award
- Children's independent placement contracts - *standard templates for each placement type*

Go to <https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/children's-commissioning>

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 independent placements outside Lincolnshire 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.

Current concerns

Lincolnshire County Council has a very high proportion of in-house foster carers who are highly skilled, well supported and a valuable resource within the Fostering and Adoption Team.

However, due to the increase in CiC numbers during 2023-24 along with young people coming into care with more complex needs, our in-house foster care capacity is being fully used, resulting in children and young people being placed with IFAs.

Costs of standard placements are increasing as a result of cost of living rises, with complex need placements increasing further.

We are also seeing an increase in sibling groups and greater need to offer respite placements to existing foster carers.

What we need in 2024-25

Lincolnshire County Council believes children and young people thrive best in a family environment.

We need:

- carers who are resilient, experienced in de-escalation techniques and who understand childhood trauma, risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) or criminal exploitation, challenging behaviours, learning disabilities and autism
- long-term, stable and planned placements for the majority of children and young people, as well as permanent foster placements
- short-term respite and emergency foster care placements
- foster carers able to support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)
- foster carers that facilitate family time with family and friends
- support for children on reduced timetables or excluded from school
- experienced foster carers for teenagers
- foster carers able to accommodate sibling groups, and children moving from residential homes
- Staying Put foster care placements for care leavers who wish to remain with their foster carer.

Independent Foster Care Placements cont.

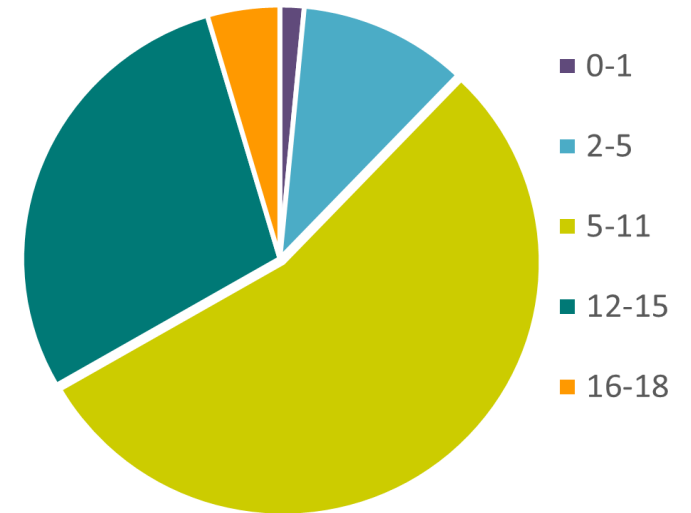
Building relationships

Lincolnshire County Council have started to build strong relationships with IFAs and want to continue reaching out to IFAs who are proactive and want to work with us to find solutions to maintain placement stability, including the development of programmes and care plans that, if appropriate, will support the individual child to achieve permanence.

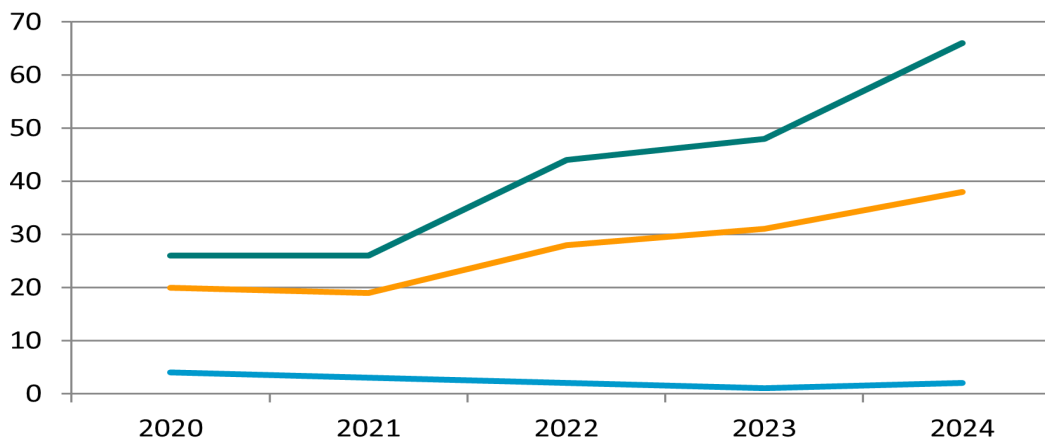
The Council wants to work closely with IFAs that provide appropriate support to their foster carers, including a wide range of training and support, a peer network of other carers and access to respite when required.

The Council wants to work with IFAs that prioritise Lincolnshire placements for Lincolnshire children; by placing more young people in-county, we can offer wraparound services and targeted support to the whole family and support placement stability.

Independent Foster Care placements by age



Source: LCCPlacements data



Independent foster care placements as of 31st March

Source: LCCPlacements data

Residential Children's Homes

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.

In particular we want to strengthen our relationships with Lincolnshire independent residential children's homes to maximise capacity in-county, keeping Lincolnshire CiC close and offering wraparound services and targeted support to enhance placement stability.

Current concerns

Capacity issues in foster care placements (in-house and independent) have resulted in more children moving into residential children's homes, notably older young people with challenging and complex behaviours needing high support packages.

Costs of standard placements are increasing in response to cost of living rises, with costs for complex need and challenging behaviour placements increasing further.

What we need in 2024-25

We need:

- resilient providers and carers with experience of working with childhood trauma and challenging behaviour issues, and who are skilled in de-escalation techniques with minimal physical interventions
- access to clinical therapy, mental health and behaviour support
- smaller residential children's homes in Lincolnshire that are supportive, friendly and offer stability of both staff and care
- residential children's homes that will support older young people aged 13+ and older teens aged 16-17 many of whom exhibit challenging behaviours
- providers that will work with us to develop the skills children and young people need for their next steps, be it foster care or independence, and will reduce support packages as behaviours stabilise
- support for children on reduced timetables or excluded from school to encourage engagement with education
- occasional specialist placements for young people at risk of self-harm or with Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS).

Residential Children's Homes cont.

In-house provision and capacity

Lincolnshire has six in-house residential children's homes spread across the county, supporting a total of thirty nine children and young people aged 5 to 18 years of mixed abilities, plus two residential respite homes for children with disabilities to support Short Breaks and a 5-bed residential weekly boarding unit at one of Lincolnshire's maintained special schools which also offers weekend and holiday respite.

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 MoJ has approved funding for a new purpose-build 28-bed secure children's home and planning is underway.

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**.

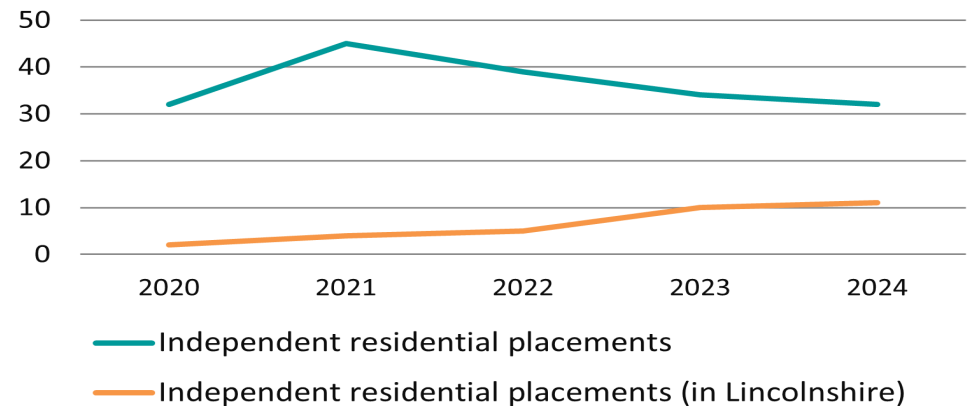
Building relationships

Lincolnshire County Council have started to build strong relationships with independent residential children's homes in Lincolnshire and adjacent to the border. We want to work with providers to understand placement capacity so that Lincolnshire children are placed in-county wherever possible, and wrap around support from other Council services.

Lincolnshire wants to build effective working relationships with providers at the planning/development stage of registration process to identify potential placements early, and work with providers to reduce placement breakdown.

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.

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



Supported accommodation for 16+ year olds

Lincolnshire's aims

We will ensure young people have appropriate accommodation options that offer stability and support to independence.

Pathways to our in-house supported accommodation, 72-bed commissioned Youth Housing Service, Supported Lodgings and spot purchase supported accommodation are clear for young people, their social workers and Leaving Care Workers.

UASC young people are made welcome and placed in supported accommodation that meets their cultural needs whilst they apply for leave to remain.

Current concerns

Increasing numbers of late entrants into care, some with resulting higher levels of challenging behaviour, has increased demand for independent spot purchase supported accommodation, especially those requiring solo placements.

Some of these young people will continue to receive support from Adult Services once they turn 18.

Numbers of UASC have increased due to high numbers of referrals through the mandatory National Transfer Scheme.

What we need in 2024-25

Lincolnshire County Council has in-house and block commissioned supported accommodation but we still have occasional need to place young people aged 16-17 years old in independent supported accommodation when suitable placements are unavailable.

This may be as a result of short-term capacity challenges or due to the need to undertake some specialist work, or proximity to young person's support network or previous residential placement.

We need:

- access to affordable accommodation offering flexible and appropriate support hours that develop a young person's independence and confidence, avoiding high levels of staffing or inappropriate 24/7 support
- accommodation providers that encourage engagement in education, employment and training (EET) and assist young people to establish appropriate support networks
- clear, positive exit plans so young people can move on in a planned way to independent living
- flexible supported accommodation providers who will work with us to identify young people in need of additional support around their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

Supported accommodation for 16+ year olds cont.

Building relationships

Lincolnshire County Council has established positive relationships with supported accommodation providers in Lincolnshire and adjacent Local Authority areas.

We want to continue developing our understanding of local capacity to maximise flexibility and ensure young people are able to access services such as mental health and substance use support, as well as the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service.

We want to work with providers to identify appropriately costed and resourced support packages that support young people achieve independence and personal stability.

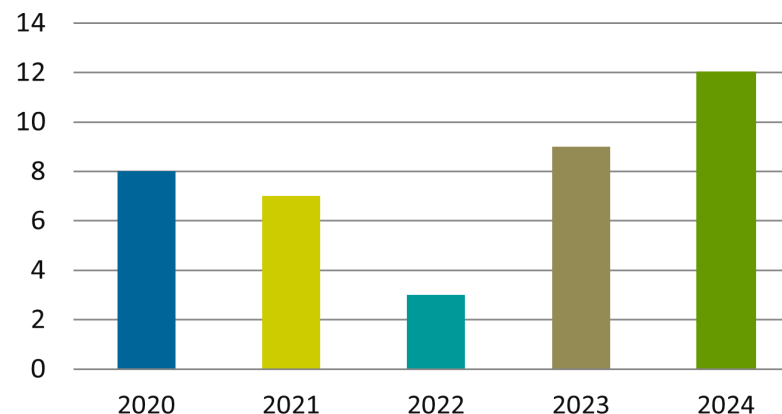
Regulation & inspection

As of October 2023 to meet the **Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023** all supported accommodation provision for 16-17 year olds must be registered with Ofsted.

The Council will not place young people with providers unless there is evidence that they are listed on the monthly Ofsted Children's Home list as an 'active' or 'proposed' supported accommodation provider **or** have received their Ofsted certificate following an interview and visit.

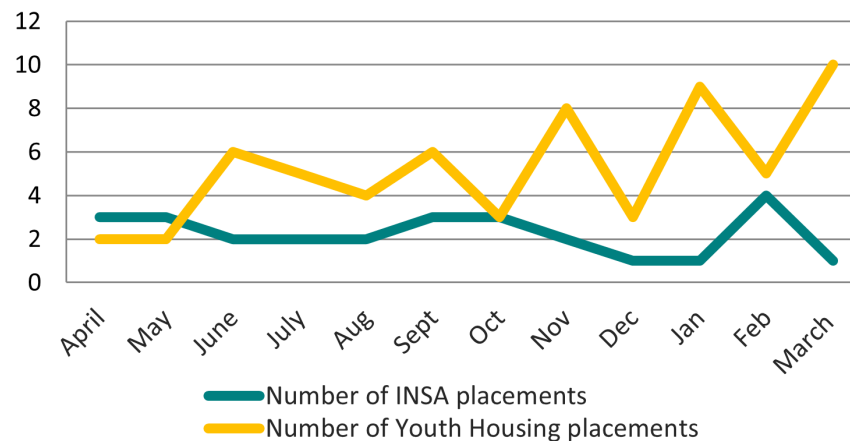
Ofsted inspections will start from September 2024.

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



Source: LCCPlacements data

Number of new supported accommodation placements made from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024



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

Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools

Lincolnshire's aims

We want to ensure all children and young people with identified SEND or CWD needs can access high quality school places that are supportive and appropriate to their learning needs, and though we have a large number of maintained/academy special schools, high demand means we do place with the independent sector for (special) school places.

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

Current concerns

Increase in social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) referrals.

Different levels of SEMH can make matching difficult i.e. some children exhibit challenging behaviours whilst others display anxiety and school avoidance. Difficulty in matching is also evident for schools specialising in complex needs and disabilities.

Low numbers of INMS provision in the east and north of the county, leading to excessive travel or general unsuitability.

Increasing rise in demand for independent (special) schools placements versus limited capacity and high placement cost.

What we need in 2024-25

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 and CWD aged from 5 to 25 years.

We need:

- providers that are supportive of children with SEMH and ASD needs
- providers support children to re-enter a formal education environment when those children have low attendance, are on reduced timetables, or who are experiencing school avoidance issues
- providers able to support children with complex disabilities
- to review our commissioning arrangements to facilitate block referrals i.e. where we might want to discuss securing a full class of capacity.

Building relationships

Lincolnshire County Council want to work with providers to identify capacity and develop effective relationships to mutually understand the cohort of young people requiring a school place, and to develop links with provision in the most suitable areas so that capacity is identified early and is in the right location for the right cohort of children and young people.

Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools cont.

Lincolnshire Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans

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

SEN2 Return Year	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Total	% of population	Total	% of population	Total	% of population	Total	% of population
Under age 5	217	3%	191	3%	187	3%	236	3%
Aged 5 to 10	2250	36%	2318	35%	2440	35%	2660	34%
Aged 11 to 15	2195	35%	2430	37%	2712	39%	2984	39%
Aged 16 to 19	1261	20%	1394	21%	1380	20%	1529	20%
Aged 20 to 25	305	5%	301	5%	249	4%	302	4%
Total	6228		6634		6968		7711	

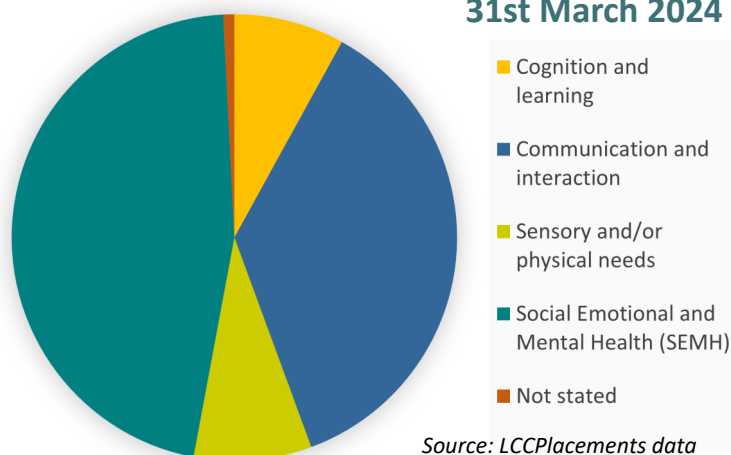
Source:
LCC SEN2 SFR
data

Lincolnshire children and young people with an EHC Plan, by age group and locality at end March 2024:

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	56	606	628	347	54	1691
East Lindsey	36	440	590	292	61	1419
Lincoln/West Lindsey	73	726	806	432	71	2108
North/South Kesteven	71	888	960	458	116	2493
Total	236	2660	2984	1529	302	7711

Source:
LCC Mosaic
data

Lincolnshire independent (special) school placements by broad area of need at 31st March 2024



Source: LCCPlacements data

Current Independent Placements

As of 31st March 2024, Lincolnshire County Council has 374 children and young people with an EHCP placed in Independent day and residential (special) schools throughout the UK:

Placement type			
52 weeks	38 week 'weekly'	38 week 'termly'	Day placement
Education & Residential	Education & Residential	Education & Residential	Education only
13	16	6	337

Source: LCCPlacements data

Alternative Provision

Lincolnshire's aims

Alternative Provision is education to support pupils who have been excluded from mainstream school, either permanently or temporarily, or are awaiting a special school placement, having been placed on Interim Home Tuition.

Alternative Provision is required across the broad spectrum of ages, from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4.

The aim is to engage pupils who may be disengaged from education through a broad and flexible curriculum offer, and support a return to mainstream education if appropriate.

We will be commissioning two new OSL strands in 2024 for *Regulated Alternative Provision* and *Tutor-led Learning Alternative Provision* alongside the existing *Alternative Provision to support Interim Home Tuition (IHT)*.

Current concerns

Demand for Alternative Provision placements in Lincolnshire has increased substantially over the last two to three years compounded by an increase in permanent school exclusions and children awaiting a special school placement.

Some children and young people require smaller, bespoke settings to meet their educational needs. This may include some online provision to support young people to physically attend school in the future.

What we need in 2024-25

Lincolnshire County Council recognise that some children and young people benefit from being in high quality Alternative Provision to support their education.

Disengagement from mainstream school may be due to, for example, challenging behaviours, exclusion, SEMH, and illness etc.

We need:

- to increase the number and variety of Alternative Provision providers locally to meet individual needs of children and young people
- to work with innovative Alternative Provision to develop effective education pathways for Lincolnshire children
- to identify more Ofsted-regulated Alternative Provision providers in Lincolnshire and/or bordering Lincolnshire with capacity
- to engage with online Alternative Provision providers to deliver high quality online and face-to-face tuition
- to engage with Alternative Provision providers to support children and young people to re-engage with formal education.

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/CWD 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 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.

What we need in 2024-25

We need:

- **Domiciliary Care** providers to join our OSL when it re-opens in summer 2024; we no longer block contract any Domiciliary Care provision and have seen an increase in such referrals for children and young people, particularly personal care provision.
- **Short Breaks** and respite for children with disabilities is highly valued by parents and carers; children and young people benefit from stable and familiar settings. We want to hear from Short Breaks providers offering a range of activities and residential options to meet a wide range of needs.

Contact us:

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