

Looked-After Children Placement Modelling

Sample output

Illustrative example using synthetic data

This sample shows the output of the placement model run on a synthetic cohort of 482 looked-after children. It forecasts placement numbers and cost by placement type over one to five years, identifies the high-cost and high-volatility pressures, and separates volume risk from price / market risk, so Children's Services can plan sufficiency and budget before pressures crystallise. The figures here are illustrative; your own output would be generated from your placements, finance and demand data.

482

children in placement
(baseline)

£39.8m

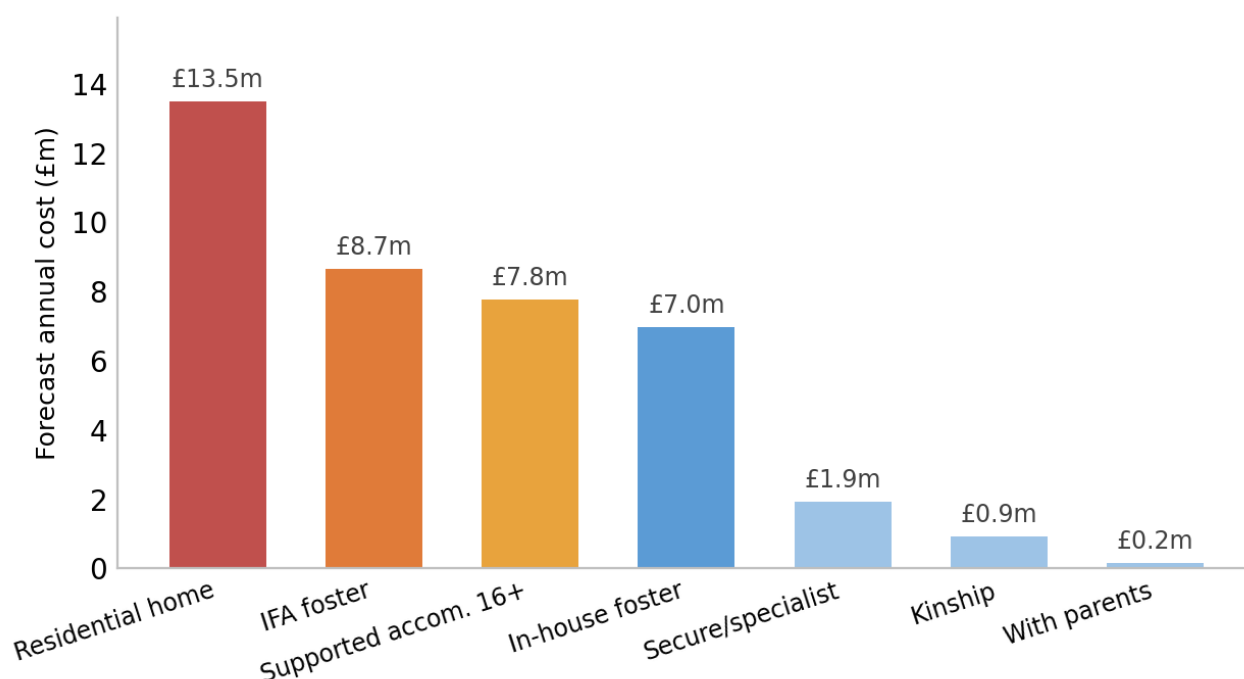
forecast placement cost
(Year 1)

+26%

projected cost growth by
Year 5

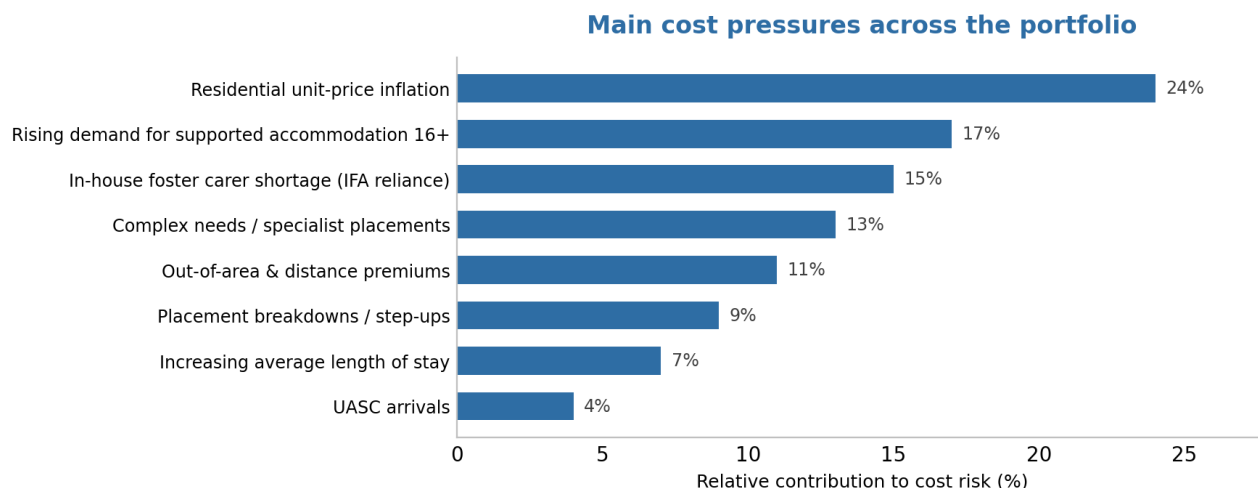
Where the cost sits

Forecast placement cost by type (Year 1)



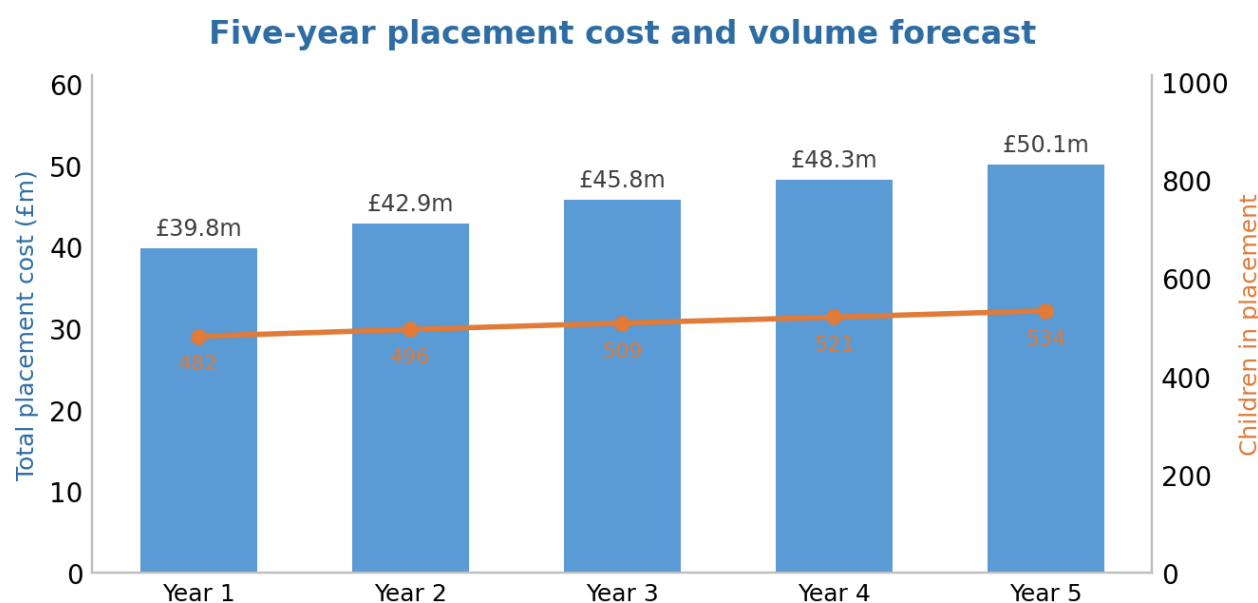
Cost is heavily concentrated in a small number of placements. Residential care accounts for just 54 children (11% of the cohort) but around 34% of forecast spend, while the largest group — in-house fostering — is comparatively low cost. The average placement costs about £83k a year, but a residential placement is several times that, which is why a handful of cases drive the budget.

What is driving it



Returning the drivers, not just the numbers, is what makes the output actionable. Here residential unit-price inflation, growing demand for 16+ supported accommodation and a shortage of in-house foster carers dominate — pointing to where carer recruitment, commissioning and in-area sufficiency work will have most effect.

Five-year forecast



Total placement cost is projected to rise from £39.8m to about £50.1m over five years (+26%), while the number of children in placement grows more slowly, from 482 to 534 (+11%). Decomposing that increase, roughly a third is **volume risk** (more children) and two thirds is **price / market risk** (rising unit costs and mix shift toward higher-cost placements) — the split that tells you whether to act on demand or on the market.

High-cost, high-volatility placements

The ten placements contributing most to cost and forecast volatility, with the primary driver and a suggested action for each. The full output covers every child in scope.

Type	Primary driver	Suggested action
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Placement ref		Age band	Forecast annual cost		
C-04821	Residential (solo)	15-17	£468,000	Complex needs, high staffing ratio	Review step-down to specialist fostering; commissioning plan
C-01130	Secure / welfare	14-15	£520,000	Secure welfare placement	Multi-agency review; explore secure step-down
C-02934	Residential home	12-14	£312,000	Out-of-area, distance premium	In-area sufficiency review; repatriation plan
C-04190	Residential home	15-17	£405,000	Placement breakdown risk	Stability meeting; contingency placement
C-02250	Residential (therapeutic)	10-11	£356,000	Specialist therapeutic need	Assess therapeutic fostering options
C-00845	IFA foster + education	12-14	£142,000	Bespoke education package	Review EHCP funding split with education
C-05612	Supported accom. 16+	16-17	£128,000	Solo supported placement	Move-on / independence plan
C-01077	Supported accom. 16+	17	£112,000	High-cost 16+ market	Sufficiency / block-contract review
C-07240	IFA foster	8-11	£96,200	IFA sibling group	Assess in-house transfer at next review
C-03980	IFA foster	5-7	£78,000	Distance from home area	In-area matching at next review

How to read this

Each placement is forecast on likely future numbers and cost, using child and placement attributes, placement history, cost and contract data, and demand trends. The model also returns the principal drivers behind each forecast and separates volume risk from price / market risk, which is what turns a number into a decision. Forecasts are recalibrated as new data accrues, giving a consistent narrative for Members, the Section 151 Officer, DfE and Ofsted.

This is a worked example on synthetic data, produced to show the format and type of insight. The figures should not be read as sector benchmarks.

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