



**Children's Services**

Change Lives, **Every Day**



**Cambridgeshire  
County Council**

# **Cambridgeshire County Council Corporate Parenting Strategy**

## **2018 - 2021**



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## Foreword from the Chief Executive

In Cambridgeshire, we believe that ensuring effective support, care and protection for children and young people who are Looked After by the local authority is one of the most important responsibilities held by elected members, partner agencies and staff working with children and young people. In order to do this, we must all work together to meet the needs of Looked After Children and young people and to promote and achieve positive outcomes so that our Looked After Children and young people are supported in respect of their Relationships, Safety, Rights, Well-Being, Achieving, Recovery and Reunification with their families where this is appropriate.

Children and young people who are Looked After are among the most vulnerable. As Corporate Parents, it is our responsibility to work alongside their families to keep them safe, make sure their experiences of being looked after are positive, and improve their life chances. We must approach this parenting role with as much passion and commitment as any family would and ensure that our looked after children and young people have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

This Corporate Parenting Strategy provides an overview of the aims and aspirations that we hold. All organisations and services within Cambridgeshire who hold Corporate Parenting responsibilities are essential contributors to ensuring that this strategy is successful and that the outcomes for children and young people who are Looked After are as good as those for all children and young people. In support of this, Cambridgeshire's Children's Services Director, and Lead Member have signed a 'Promise' to all Looked After Children and young people.

This strategy describes how we will improve the lives of the children and young people who are Looked After through the joint development of priorities and the delivery of associated services. Our intention is to bring together the range of activity across the Children's Services Partnership and Members of the council at all stages of the care journey. Crucially, this strategy was developed in partnership with young people, partner agencies and carers.

## Our Promises to Cambridgeshire Looked After Children

Cambridgeshire County Council is committed to supporting Looked After children to reach their full potential and has high aspirations as to what they can achieve. Collaboratively with Voices Matter, we have identified the following 10 promises that Cambridgeshire County Council make. We will:

1. Make sure you know why you're in care and support you to understand this throughout your life
2. Support you to achieve your goals and reach your potential, in school and in your hobbies and interests
3. Support you to live a healthy lifestyle, including helping look after your mental health
4. Keep you safe and help you to keep yourself safe
5. Always work to keep you in a placement where you are happy
6. Ask you about, and keep you updated of any changes to your care plan
7. Always work to ensure that if you need move placement, this is done in a planned way, and give you a chance to meet your new carers first
8. Help you to see the important people in your life
9. Listen to you and show you respect
10. Support you as you move into adulthood and continue our relationship with you until you are 25

## Strategic Context

The Children Act 1989 sets out Local Authority responsibilities to Looked After Children. Volume 3 of the Guidance Regulations: Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers gives details of how Care Leavers should be provided with support and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extended the responsibility of the Local Authority to young people leaving care, up to the age of 25.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of Corporate Parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for Looked After Children and young people, and Care Leavers. Being a Corporate Parent means doing everything possible for every Looked After Child and Care Leaver to give them opportunities that other children receive. This means that Corporate Parents should:

- act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for them
- make sure they have access to services
- make sure that they are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living

Local Authorities do not act alone in their Corporate Parenting role. The Children Act 1989 placed a duty on the NHS, housing and education authorities to assist social care services to fulfil their responsibility by providing support and services.

For both officers, councillors and partners, being a Corporate Parent means that when any service is being reviewed that could impact upon Looked After Children and Care Leavers, or when hearing feedback from, or reports about, looked after children, they should consider:

“What if this were my child?” and, “What can we do to put this right?”

As Corporate Parents, we all need to recognise the uniqueness of the children in their care, and make sure each child is getting what they need to do their best. To do this, it is about being informed, getting involved, asking questions, championing rights and making sure the voices of children and young people are being heard.

## How the Strategy was developed

In 2017 and 2018, Cambridgeshire County Council, in conjunction with Coram Voice and Bristol University engaged with our Looked after Children and Care Leavers to participate in a survey into their well-being. The Survey 'Your Life, Your Care' (also known as Bright Spots), aimed to Improve the care experience and well-being of children in care and care leavers by identifying and promoting 'bright spots' - the practices that had a positive influence on children and young people's well-being. A number of the themes arising from the results of the Bright Spots Survey have been used to put a relevant and meaningful structure within Cambridgeshire's Corporate Parenting Strategy.

The Strategy has been consulted on by Looked After Children, foster carers, the children's workforce, and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Safeguarding Children Board which includes representatives from Health, Education, Police, Youth Offending, Housing and voluntary services.

## How the Strategy will be monitored

The strategy has been divided into the following subsections (in line with the Your Life, Your Care survey)

- Relationships
- Safety
- Rights
- Well-Being
- Achieving
- Recovery
- Reunification

The strategy sets out the priorities to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. There is a workstream for each of the seven outcome areas. Each work stream is led by a manager best placed for that role. Our aim is to ensure that the commitments set out in each promise are achieved and evidenced.

Relationships	
Happiness with the amount of family contact how and where it takes place	Monitoring frequency, planned and actual. Experiences of children will be clearly explored at LAC reviews
Keeping the same carers	Frequency of placement moves and evidence that children feel settled
Keeping the same social worker	Where possible ensure consistency of social worker
Having at least one good friend	Exploring the child's social network at statutory visits and LAC reviews

Safety	
Help to find a trusted adult/network of support	Identified in care plan and revisited at LAC reviews
Having fun, hobbies and access to the natural world	Evidence that fun and hobbies are prioritised in the same way that health and education are for looked after children
Offer you second chances	Evidence in carer supervision and LAC reviews that this is happening
Enjoying education	Children have good experiences of school, learning and support as needed. Monitored through PEPs.
Carer's support for learning	Carers attend all meetings for children about their school and active support with homework/revision
Life Skills	Looked after children are equipped with all the skills they need and are given opportunities to be successful adults

Rights	
Included in decision making	Evidence that children are invited to contribute views at LAC reviews, PEP's, health assessments and other important places where decisions are taken
Mitigate the stigma of being in care	Checking in with children's experiences at statutory visits and LAC reviews
Knowing and contact with social workers	All children are told in writing and in person who their social worker is and how to contact (development of credit card/concertina style leaflets) with this info and info on participation and rights
Feeling safe	How is feels to live in their placement, statutory visits, LAC review and MOMO
Bullying	Routinely discussed at statutory visits, carers supervision and LAC reviews
Use of MOMO to express wishes	Increased usage of the app to support improvements
Knowing and accessing support services	Access to advocates, Independent Visitors and opportunities to express experiences through participation



Well being	
Improvements to the timeliness of initial and review health assessments	Ensure workers understand the task, responsibilities and timescales. Continue frequent monitoring and build on relationships with health and social care
Specialist health services develop policies to prioritise looked after children, young people and care leavers	Policies are published and their implementation monitored
Build and sustain relationships with mental health service providers	Understand the offer to looked after children and keep mental health services, statutory and non-statutory in conversations around the local need
To understand the emotional needs of looked after children and to improve their mental health	SDQ scores and evidence of input to support these, i.e. Clinical or CAMH input or increased social work support at times of stress
To engage actively with the looked after children in the planning and delivery of services	Joint work with health, social care and the participation service to enable this to happen

Achieving	
Improving attainment and progress in school each year	Outcome of report, ongoing support and monitoring
Achieving as well in school as children who are not care experienced	Outcome of reports, ongoing support and monitoring
Staying in education after the age of 16	Support and advice from the Virtual School, social workers, Schools and PA's
Feeling confident and prepared when starting new schools	Support and advice from the Virtual School, social workers, Schools and PA's
Knowing and having support to continue into employment, training or higher education	Monitored through the NEET reduction strategy
Having opportunities to take part in work-experience placements, apprenticeships and jobs	Report annually on the numbers receiving support and the opportunities created
Knowing that Head Teachers and Governors understand what they can do to offer the best support	Messages from the Virtual School and training events for schools
Knowing that all professionals and carers understand the best way to support learning	Develop new training and extend the existing offer
Using the pupil premium grant to make school a success	Collect information to confirm this and provide evidence
Knowing the Virtual School will champion needs and that their work reviewed by their management board.	Restructure following outcomes of the virtual school review

Recovery	
Knowing life story	Increased training for staff to develop confidence in this work. Evidence that life story understanding is discussed with children regularly and evidence is collected
Sensitive carers and support with worries	Evidenced through carer supervision and participation groups
Being trusted and helping out	Evidenced through carer supervision and participation groups

Reunification	
Consider the possibility of reunifying looked after children with their families at all points of their looked after journey	Consider in planning for children accommodated under S.20 and for longer term looked after children at transitions points
Use the NSPCC framework and access practice champions	Phase the training of staff in this model and ensure documentation supports and enables staff to achieve reunification assessment and planning