The best place for most children to be is with their families. However, some children in Cambridgeshire come into care and are 'Looked After' by the Council because they cannot be supported by their own families. Some children and young people just need to be looked after for a short period before returning to their family; others need to be looked after for much longer. When they become Looked After, wherever possible, we try to keep children in the same family together.

Children may be Looked After under a voluntary agreement with their parents (sometimes called Section 20 accommodation), or sometimes we ask for agreement through the Courts. We will always look to other family members to provide alternative care in the first instance. Where this is not possible, the majority of Looked after Children are placed with foster carers and for a few children a residential placement in a children's home is more appropriate. Some young people aged 16 and 17 may be supported in a more independent arrangement such as supported lodgings or supported accommodation.

We encourage contact with children's families and try to find ways and means by which they can return home where it is safe to do so. All looked after children will have an allocated social worker who visits them regularly and talks to them and their family about what help they need, and what the plans are for the short term and longer term.

**Information for care leavers aged 16-25**

We have a section called Care leavers (16-25) local offer - with all the information you will need as a young person leaving the care of Cambridgeshire County Council.

**Short breaks for disabled children**

For parents of disabled children we operate a short breaks scheme which provides care for children enabling their carers to have a break and for children to have a positive break away from home. Sometimes the amount of overnight short break stays mean that children are deemed to be 'looked after'. For a few children who are severely disabled or need specialist care or support, or where there are concerns about significant harm, they may be looked after full time and live in specialist foster placements, residential homes or residential schools. Find out more about support for Looked After Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
Cambridgeshire County Council is committed to our Looked After Children's care, and will always have high expectations of what they can do and achieve. The Council is committed to supporting Looked After Children to reach their full potential. Our Children in Care Council 'Voices Matter' and Care Leavers Forum have identified the following 10 Promises that Cambridgeshire County Council will strive to achieve.

A 'Looked after Child' refers to any child or young person aged between 0 - 17. The Council also has a responsibility to those young people who have been in care for 13 weeks or more straddling their 16th birthday. Responsibilities to provide leaving care services start from the age of 16 until young people reach 21 years of age, or 25 if they are in higher education. At the age of 18 a young person is no longer Looked After but if they are a care leaver will receive support from our 14 - 25 service.

The Corporate Parenting Board comprises Elected Members (Councillors) and senior managers of the council and has responsibility for ensuring that looked after children and care leavers receive services that meet their needs. As corporate parents the Council will strive to ensure we provide our Looked after children with safe and supportive care which promotes their talents, skills and potential and encourages them to be the best that they can be.

The council participation service runs the Just Us groups and activities for looked after children to have fun, meet other looked after young people, give their views and influence services for looked after children. Further information can be provided by the child's social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer.

Linked services for Looked After Children

- [Advocacy services](http://www.totalvoicecp.org/)
- [Lead nurse for looked after children](http://www.camscommunityservices.nhs.uk/what-we-do/children-young-...
Contact us

Telephone: 0345 045 5203
Email: [email protected]