

Cambridgeshire Virtual School offer for Children Previously in Care and Children in Kinship Care

Advice and Information Offer

In 2018, the remit of the Virtual School was extended to include offering advice and information for Children Previously in Care. This includes children who have been in the care of a local authority and are now the subject of:

- an Adoption order
- a Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
- a Child Arrangement Order (CAO)

or who were adopted from 'state care' outside of England or Wales.

'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

In 2024, the remit of the Virtual school was further extended to include offering advice and information for Children in Kinship Care including children who have never been in the care of a local authority.

Who can access advice and information?

The duty is placed on the local authority where the child accesses education. Cambridgeshire Virtual School provides advice and information where a relevant child attends a Cambridgeshire education setting. Where the child attends an education setting in another local authority, the advisor will support by providing the contact details of the relevant virtual school.

Advice and information is available to:

- Parents or carers of children previously in care and in kinship care aged 0-18 years
- Staff of education settings including early years settings, schools and colleges
- Local authority teams, including the Regional Adoption Agency
- Any other relevant party that the Virtual School deems appropriate

Generic advice will be offered to professionals. No specific information will be discussed without the consent of the parents / carers. The Virtual School will ask that a referral form is completed and returned before individuals can be discussed.

What constitutes advice and information?

The Virtual School will make general information and advice regarding children previously in care and in kinship care available through their websites:

Cambridgeshire Virtual School [Cambridgeshire Virtual School - Learn Together](https://cambslearntogether.co.uk)
(cambslearntogether.co.uk)

Where questions are frequently asked, documentation will be produced to support, an example of this is how to claim pupil premium plus, how it can be used and accountabilities for it.

The Virtual School's framework draws on the principles of Nurturing Cambridgeshire:

- **The environment offer a safe base:** A safe, predictable and nurturing environment builds trust and *felt safety*, required for thriving and learning.
- **Children's learning is understood developmentally:** Children develop at different rates; adults respond to their individual stage, with understanding.
- **The importance of nurture for wellbeing:** Emotional safety and wellbeing are essential foundations for learning and must be actively prioritised.
- **All behaviour is communication:** Behaviour reflects the underlying needs; adults respond with support rather than judgement.
- **Language is a vital means of communication:** Children are supported to move beyond behaviour in their expression of their thoughts and feelings.
- **The importance of transitions:** Children are carefully supported through all transitions to maintain safety, stability and wellbeing.

Specific advice or information is aimed at empowering others to act in the best interests of the child, to promote educational outcomes. This may include:

- Details on what is included within statutory guidance
- Details of roles and responsibilities; along with what could reasonably be expected
- Signposting to other relevant local authority teams and support organisations
- Signposting to relevant resources and websites
- Working across the system to influence and improve outcomes

The Virtual School is not the corporate parent, as they are for children in care. The role of advice and information does not extend to acting as a lead professional or carrying out the role of other professionals. The Virtual School will not:

- Lead on school searches
- Chair or regularly attend multiagency meetings
- 'Case-hold'
- Provide reports on individual children
- Complete assessments

Training

All Virtual School training will make reference (where relevant) to children previously in care and in kinship care. This includes:

- Trauma and attachment
- FASD
- Nurturing Cambridgeshire
- The role of the Designated Person for children previously in care
- Preparing new adopters to support education
- Virtual School annual education event for parents and carers
- Providing educational input as part of wider Local Authority training and support activity

Referring to the Virtual School

The Virtual School can provide generic advice and information, however, if you require a conversation around a specific child, we will need parental consent. Please complete the referral form and send with your enquiry to VirtualSchool@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk.