



East Cambridgeshire Youth Strategy

Introduction

This strategy endeavours to ensure that young people in East Cambridgeshire are engaged and contributing to local decisions that may affect them so that they are connected, healthy, safe, respected and are aware of the support and resources available to them to maximise their potential.

The strategy's objectives are to:

- **EMPOWER** – young people by giving them a voice
- **ENGAGE** – understand the issues faced, needs, aspirations and desires of local young people
- **PARTICIPATE** – involve young people in effective and appropriate pathways in decision making processes
- **PROMOTE** – promote the resources and support available to young people
- **WORK TOGETHER** – recognise the skills, knowledge and resources available throughout the district and work together to improve the lives of local young people

The strategy endeavors to identify and build on the positive work currently being carried out and understand what can be done to improve the lives of young people.

It is recognised that the needs and aspirations of local young people can only be effectively met by partnership working between a range of different agencies in the public, voluntary and community sector. This strategy aims to influence the council's contribution to this collaborative approach and it compliments other local young person's policies.

In the 21st century young people experience a very different society to past generations. The economy, society and technology have changed, leading to a whole host of additional opportunities being available to them. However, the current economic situation brings with it a different set of ever-changing challenges for young people.

Young people also have more pressures upon them, not least from the media. The availability of new media technologies such as the internet and mobile communication devices have revolutionised the way they interact with the world.

Between the ages of 5-18 children face challenging times, especially around key transition stages such as changing schools and moving into adulthood e.g. money, relationships, employment, health, self-esteem, etc.

The Council is aware that some local young people experience difficulties in their life that mean they need more support than others. Tackling the range and complexity of problems faced by the minority who are at risk goes beyond the remit of this strategy, but it does complement other strategies employed by partners to address these issues.

Context

Countywide Context

Cambridgeshire County Council's Youth in Community's service support the development of a youth offer for Cambridgeshire. The principles of this offer are that it is:

- Led by communities
- Delivered by effective partnerships

- Informed and enjoyed by young people

Youth and community professionals and small project teams across Cambridgeshire deliver the service by:

- working in partnership with those working with young people at a local level
- working in partnership with local communities to understand local needs so that Cambridgeshire County Council put resources in the right places, empower and support communities to deliver their own sustainable solutions
- supporting communities who wish to deliver their own youth services
- helping with governance, funding and safeguarding through mentoring, training and signposting
- facilitating the Community Reach Fund which enables new community groups to meet needs within their community giving young people a say in every aspect of services provided for them
- Supporting young people to play a part and be recognised within their communities. This could be through:
 - volunteering
 - meaningful social action
 - speaking out and having a voice
 - participation in positive activities that support their development, emotional health and well being
 - securing external funding to deliver youth programmes and make existing programmes accessible to young people who need them.

East Cambridgeshire Population and Geography

East Cambridgeshire is a predominantly rural district located to the north-east of Cambridge within the county of Cambridgeshire. East Cambridgeshire is a largely rural district which covers an area of almost 65,500 hectares¹ and has a population of approximately 86,580 which is predicted to grow to 108,610 by 2036.²

The largest population settlements in East Cambridgeshire are Ely, Soham, Littleport and Burwell. Together, these comprise approximately 56% of the district's population, with the remaining population is spread between about 50 villages.³

East Cambridgeshire has an ageing population. There is predicted growth in the total sizes of all age groups by 2036. The numbers of young people aged 5-19 is forecast to increase by 3,100 between 2016 and 2036³. Over the next 10 years, the largest actual and proportional increases expected is in under 5-year olds and 10 to 19-year olds, with a relatively small increase in 5 to 9-year olds.⁴

The majority of Parish's within East Cambridgeshire are experiencing growth. Ely, Littleport and Soham are experiencing significant housing growth and development, in accordance with the Council's locational strategy in the 2015 Local Plan. Witchford and Fordham have experienced a high volume of major applications for residential development and growth. Isleham and Haddenham are also experiencing

¹ <https://eastcambs.gov.uk/east-cambs-district-council/about-east-cambs>

² <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Cambridgeshire-2015-Based-Population-Forecasts.xlsx>

³ <https://data.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/dataset/2015-based-population-forecasts-0-19-years-cambridgeshire-and-peterborough/resource/63cdaebf#view-graph:graphOptions:hooks:processOffset:bindEvents:graphOptions:hooks:processOffset:bindEvents:>

⁴ Mid 2015 based population forecasts, 2016 to 2026, Research Group, Cambridgeshire County Council

growth, through a number of smaller major applications. Sutton and Burwell have reasonably large housing allocations within the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. Kennett also has outline permission for up to 500 dwellings, new school, community, retail and business uses. The Council is in a strong position at present as has a 5-year housing land supply, but this can change and could see speculative development coming forward in settlements which we didn't envisage in the future.⁵⁶

Young People living in Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire – A snapshot

	Cambridgeshire	East Cambridgeshire
Young people (0-19 inclusive)	151,000 (23% of the population) ⁷	21,000 (24%) ⁸
Children living in poverty ⁹	12.7%	10.1%
Teenage conceptions rate	11.4 per 1,000 ¹⁰	5.8 per 1,000 ¹¹
Excess weight at year 6 ¹²	19.1%	13.8%
U18s Alcohol specific hospital admissions ¹³	23.4 per 100,000	17.0 per 100,000

Different areas across Cambridgeshire experience different rates of self-harm. In 2017/18, East Cambridgeshire had a statistically significantly higher rate of self-harm admissions compared to the overall rate for Cambridgeshire. There has been a noticeable increase in East Cambridgeshire, which appears to be due to a small number of patients being admitted numerous times during the year. Self-poisoning is the main reason for self-harm emergency admissions in children and young people aged 10-24 in Cambridgeshire. Approximately 75% of the self-harm hospital admission rates in Cambridgeshire were from children and young people who had a mental health diagnosis recorded.¹⁴

Approach

This Strategy has been informed following extensive engagement with young people and the agencies, community groups and organisations currently accessed by young people to understand the issues, needs, aspirations and desires of the young people in East Cambridgeshire. The Strategy identifies examples of work currently being done to address the issues identified by local young people. From this, gaps can be identified and services can be reviewed to ensure that they are being utilized as effectively as possible, so that the district's young people have the services and resources they require to thrive.

⁵ https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Local%20Plan%20April%202015%20-%20front%20cover%20and%20inside%20front%20cover_0.pdf

⁶ <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/neighbourhood-planning>

⁷ Mid 2015 based population forecasts, 2016 to 2026, Research Group, Cambridgeshire County Council

⁸ Mid 2015 based population forecasts, 2016 to 2026, Research Group, Cambridgeshire County Council

⁹ https://www.localhealth.org.uk/#c=report&chapter=c04&report=r01&selgeo1=lalt_2013.E07000009&selgeo2=eng.E92000001

¹⁰ https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/3/gid/8000073/pat/6/par/E12000006/ati/202/are/E10000003/iid/20401/age/173/sex/2/cid/4/page-options/car-ao-1_car-do-0

¹¹ https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/3/gid/8000073/pat/6/par/E12000006/ati/201/are/E07000009/iid/20401/age/173/sex/2/cid/4/page-options/car-ao-1_car-do-0

¹² <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/1/gid/8000073/pat/6/par/E12000006/ati/201/are/E07000009/cid/4>

¹³ https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/1/gid/1938132694/pat/6/par/E12000006/ati/201/are/E07000009/cid/4/page-options/ine-vo-0_ine-yo-1:2016-1:-1_ine-ct-2_ine-pt-0

¹⁴ <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CYPMHNA-15.6.20.pdf>

The consultation was carried out using a phased approach to provide opportunities to reflect on information received and determine if and what further information was needed. It also provided an opportunity for to share findings to date with young people and relevant stakeholders. The phases of the consultation are outlined in the section below.

Consultation and Engagement

During July-August 2019 a consultation exercise took place across East Cambridgeshire aimed at children and young people aged 5-18. Questionnaires were distributed to a wide range of organisations and agencies that children and young people engage with including schools and sixth form colleges, youth groups, brownies, girl guides, cadets, sports clubs and leisure centres. 212 young people responded to the consultation.

The questionnaires included questions seeking to find out about what it is like to experience life as a young person in East Cambridgeshire. The consultation sought to assess the following:

- Opinions of living in East Cambridgeshire
- Leisure time experiences
- Popular meeting places and use of facilities
- Barriers, dilemmas and desired changes
- Provision of information relating to facilities, services and activities

The consultation findings identified a number of common themes that are of importance to or affecting young people across East Cambridgeshire. The themes are detailed below:

- Engagement
- Travel
- Safety
- Spaces and Activities
- Health
- Education and Careers

During November and December 2019, the main themes of the consultation were shared with education providers (primary, secondary and special educational needs schools and sixth form colleges) within the district. Education providers were invited to share the findings with students and seek feedback to determine if there were any gaps in the findings, and also to provide students an opportunity to identify proposed solutions or suggestions to address any matters identified. Unfortunately, no responses were received from education providers and we therefore engaged with them to understand the reasons why which included that unfortunately the timing of the surveys were unable to be incorporated into lesson plans.

Youth groups were sent the main themes of the consultation and were invited to share the findings with young people that attend their sessions to seek feedback, and again to determine if there were any gaps in the findings, and also to provide attendees an opportunity to identify proposed solutions or suggestions to address any matters identified. Focus group sessions were facilitated with youth groups to obtain further insight into the issues identified.

In January 2020, a range of partner agencies and stakeholders were invited to a workshop to discuss the consultation findings and to identify any work currently being done addressing the findings and also to identify any gaps and opportunities for further exploration. Partner agencies and stakeholders invited to attend included Public Health, Children's and Young Peoples Social Care, Childcare and Early Learning, East Cambs Assessment Team, East Cambs Children's Team, Youth Support Services, Police, Housing, Youth and Communities team, housing providers, Youth Offending Team, Youth Support Services, Early Help and Adolescent Strategy Group, Centre 33, GP practices, Chamber of Commerce, local schools, Children's Centres, Voluntary and Community Action East Cambridgeshire, Infinity Graphics and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

The consultation findings were shared with all parish councils and also with relevant members of the Council's Register of Consultees in February 2020 and they were also invited to advise of known services and provisions that they were aware of that addressed the matters identified by the consultation findings, and to advise of what more could be done as well as advising of any gaps that they were aware of within their parish.

Issues Identified

This section outlines the issues identified by young people (grouped into common, recurring themes).

Engagement

- The consultation identified that young people felt that more information was needed about activities, services and facilities.
- There was an aspiration for more engagement with young people and youth councils was identified as a possible means of achieving this.
- Having an independent voice outside of school was listed as something that young people want.

Travel

- 50% of respondents advised that transport links could be better and 15% advised that lack of and/or cost of transport prevents them from doing the activities that they want to do therefore young people in the district are often reliant on private transport.
- The consultation identified that transport links, including safe cycle links, between places need to be improved or created.

Health

- A variety of health-related matters were identified as issues by young people, including mental health (including suicidal thoughts), lack of exercise, pressure from peers to vape, smoke, take drugs and drink.
- School pressures and feelings of disengagement and loneliness were identified as being linked to mental health issues including depression
- The consultation identified that young people felt that there was a lack of mental health services specifically for young people.
- In addition to the issues identified above by young people, GPs are reporting increases in children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders such as ADHD, autism and sleeping problems. At present, GP surgeries do not have a school nurse to liaise with and GPs

are reporting that nowadays young people are more likely to raise concerns regarding their mental health.

Safety

- 47% of respondents advised that safety could be better, with consultees reporting fears of anti-social behaviour, knife crime, stranger danger, peer pressure to join a gang, drug taking, bullying and concerns about people online.
- Young people felt that there was a lack of consequences deterring people from committing offences and that they'd like to see more police presence.
- 15% of respondents advised that safety and fear prevents them from doing the activities that they want to do such as walking to places.

Spaces and Activities

- Having things to do and places to go were identified as matters of importance to young people. The consultation found that youth club charges could prevent some young people accessing them.
- Young people expressed a desire for a space where there were opportunities for engagement with specialist agencies and services in a familiar setting such a local youth club.
- There was a need for more informal, indoor spaces to allow young people to socialise and also a desire for life skills to be learnt such as cooking and careers.
- Young people advised that they would like more WIFI in areas for them to hang out.
- There was a desire for more special interest clubs such as gamer clubs, and a want for more indoor and outdoor spaces for activities such as bowling, sports, swimming, gyms and arcades.
- More open space and outdoor sports and recreation provision was identified as a need where young people can freely play or take part in activities without the need for supervision or being a part of a 'club'.
- Lack of activities and things to do were identified as causes of boredom and a reason why young people may drink or take drugs.
- Some young people felt that areas could be cleaner and safer, with some reports of drug paraphernalia in parks and the need for more traffic calming infrastructure and lighting.
- There were reports that some activities were too expensive and that things to do locally weren't advertised well enough.
- A lack of retail provision was identified as an issue to some young people as well as a need for play areas and/or spaces used by young people to be segmented into age groups.
- The installation of water taps was suggested by some young people for people to refill drinks and also some respondents advised that more public toilets were needed.
- Feedback indicated that some young people are intimidated to attend some facilities such as their local skate park due to drug use and litter.

Education and Careers

- Education/life balance was flagged as an issue for young people with reports of too much homework and feeling overworked resulting in stress and lack of help.
- Better career advice, workshops on trade work and assistance with preparing for work and CV writing were all identified as areas for improvement by consultees.
- Some young people reported that there is a need to make education more fun and improve participation in extracurricular activities
- Some young people felt that there needed to be a reduction in university fees.
- The consultation found that there needs to be an improvement in the teaching of tolerance to children to include everybody and that nobody is excluded or feels discriminated against.
- Young people found that more investment in school was needed to improve resources and that more local sixth forms were needed to reduce the need to commute.
- Online material regarding education and careers was identified as needing improvement.

What is being done?

This section details examples of work currently being done to address the issues identified by local young people.

Engagement

- There are already a range of engagement platforms available for young people such as police outreach work and cadets, youth clubs and websites showcasing events taking place.

Travel

- There are a variety of provisions in place within the district addressing travel for young people including community transport schemes and providers for those meeting the criteria; subsidised travel is offered by some travel operators such as rail and bus companies and travel land transport reviews have been taking place that have included community engagement.

Health

- A wide variety of services are already available that focus on improving the health of young people in East Cambs such as campaigns like Kick Ash, mentoring against smoking, vaping and the use of cannabis, Personal, Health, Social and Economic (PHSE) sessions in schools can focus on health-related matters.
- There are online platforms that include resources and lesson plans addressing health issues concerning young people.
- Preventative work is carried out in schools with a substance abuse referral system in place.
- Local counselling services are available in the area.
- The Cambs County Council Early Help Team engages with secondary schools to deliver peer social groups.

- The District Council proactively promotes play areas and areas of informal open spaces and the Let's Get Moving programme seeks to improve health outcomes for residents.
- East Cambs has a number of leisure centres, swimming pools and clubs located around the district as well as campaigns taking place promoting physical activity.

Safety

- The Community Safety Partnership offers a variety of training to young people such as Transforming Lives and also Eyes and Ears training, which is available to all schools and includes topics such as drugs, exploitation and knife crime.
- Schools currently utilise PSHE sessions to educate young people in a variety of matters such as online safety and appropriate contact and also run workshops for parents on various topics, an example being social media and online safety.
- Public Health has commissioned the PSHE team to create additional resources for schools around the new 'relationships and sex' agenda.
- The Fire Service run annual multi-agency Safety Zone events aimed at schools which include topics such as stranger danger. At present these events are for primary school children however there may be an opportunity to widen the scope in the future.
- The County Council Vulnerable Strategy includes actions against knife crime and the Police deliver workshops in schools about knife crime. An anti-bullying app has been launched.

Spaces and Activities

- There are a variety of things to do in East Cambs for young people including Duke of Edinburgh programmes, youth clubs (however provision in East Cambs is depleted and sketchy), skate parks, cinema, leisure centres and a range of other activities.
- There are volunteer opportunities, promotional websites and parks and open spaces.
- Due to the rural nature of the district and issues with transport, not all of these facilities may be available to all of the district's young people.
- There are a range of special interest clubs and activities in the district such as arts and theatre groups and martial arts clubs.
- There are volunteering opportunities through initiatives such as local timebanks.
- In recent years, the Council and some of the district's parish councils have invested money into the development and upkeep of spaces for young people including play areas, parks and recreation grounds.
- Some of the district's leisure centres provide incentives for young people by offering discounted activities. There are local (parish level and district-wide) online platforms providing information on local activities and events.

Education and Careers

- There are a variety of services being provided to young people in East Cambs experiencing mental health issues such as stress (which was been identified by some young people as being linked to educational pressures), services include mental health charities and online support.
- There are also clubs that support students with homework.

- There are a range of careers and employment related services available for young people such as local careers fairs attended by local businesses, school career evenings, promotion of local apprenticeship opportunities, online career related platforms, school trips to local businesses and universities and local businesses providing mentoring, direction and advice.
- There are websites providing advice on core skills for young people including money management and critical thinking.
- During school Personal, Health, Social and Economic (PHSE) sessions, a variety of topics are covered which includes career related matters.
- There are services available on how to use the internet and some schools have banned the use of mobile phones during school hours to encourage young people to make face-to-face friendships and relationships.
- As part of the Fenland and East Cambs Opportunity Area, all the secondary and special schools in East Cambs have developed very good careers programmes. In line with the National Careers Strategy 2017 and Baker Clause of 2018, schools welcome a multitude of Careers Education Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) providers, apprenticeship organisations, colleges and employers into their establishment in order to give the students as many opportunities as possible to make informed choices regarding their post 16 and post 18 destination. The Aim Group deliver the government funded apprenticeship programme to the schools across the area. It can be whole school assemblies, small groups or 1:1 support for individual students seeking an apprenticeship.
- A provider which develops an alumni database and delivers on employability skills, has worked with many of the schools. Connecting students with their former schools, not only provides the school with a wealth of contacts from many different occupational sectors, but is a free sustainable resource which can grow annually.
- Four of the five secondary schools receive funding from 'The Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach' (NEACO). NEACO aims to help young people from East Anglia with little or no experience of university to explore the world of higher education. They work with students in years 9-13 who live in areas identified by the Government with low rates of progression to higher education.
- Some schools have invested in digital careers platforms and this has proven particularly beneficial during COVID-19. The schools in the Opportunity Area are part of the Careers & Enterprise Adviser Network. Schools receive the support of an enterprise adviser, a senior person from the business sector, who is matched to their school. They also have access to an enterprise co-ordinator who can support the school with their careers and employer engagement strategy, signpost to resources and other Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) service providers. The area is also fortunate to be supported by 6 cornerstone employers who will give additional support to schools where needed. Projects currently being planned is the support for virtual work experience by local employers and collaboration between a national employer, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Learning and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) on a mentoring project for Year 10s for one of the special schools.
- The CPCA is launching their localised labour market information for schools and colleges in March 2021. This will provide students with a wide range of information with regards to the local economy as well as providing a digital, interactive careers platform 'Careers Explorer', which will

give students up to date information on the opportunities available to them within our area, on, apprenticeships, vacancies, Further Education & Higher Education opportunities.

- The CPCA's newly formed Business Growth Service (BGS) is targeted to increase learning outcomes across the whole CPCA region via the Skills Brokerage Team. The Skills Brokerage Team will link businesses and education and help individuals to navigate a complex skills ecosystem.

Impacts of COVID-19 and emerging issues

In November 2020, the Council shared the Consultation and Engagement Findings and sought feedback on any changes or emerging issues identified as a result of the impacts of COVID-19. The following feedback was received:

- The landscape has changed considerably and many activities, clubs and events for young people have been suspended.
- Stakeholders have expressed concerns that some young people may not be engaged with services during the pandemic.
- Careers related events have been cancelled and schools are asking local businesses to engage with young people in other ways, such as via lunchtime lectures.
- There may be potential to explore a digital strategy to connect young people with businesses.
- The Council is encouraging local businesses to sign up to the government's Kickstart scheme and create work placements for young people. The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to create new job placements for 16 to 24-year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment.
- There are increasing levels of parents opting to home educate their children as a result of the pandemic. A survey of 151 local councils carried out by the Association of Directors of Children's Services found that there was a 38% rise in the number of home-schooled children in England as a result of COVID-19 in 2020. Elective Home Education can cause some issues to both children and their families such as educating children at home requires time therefore parents/carers may need to stop work or change their working patterns; there is a cost to home educating as Parents/Carers are responsible supplying materials, exam costs, additional support of a home tutor or online learning; parent/carer and young person may find themselves socially isolated being at home; there may be a lack of facilities in the home to effectively educate; teaching requires specific and specialist skills, ability and knowledge which we not be available at home; motivation may be impacted; the child's choices of career may be limited, and; schools play an important role in safeguarding as they provide a direct line of sight to the child. If a child is taken out of school, the school cannot know if the child is in a safe environment and that their needs are being met. Learn Together Cambridgeshire is an agency that provides guidance and training for schools and other settings and has an array of information available to assist parents/carers educate at home: <https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/home-learning>

SWOT Analysis of Youth Strategy

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route to continually engage with young people • Based on consultation responses from young people • Commitment from the Council to promote support and resources to young people and organisations and act as a sign-posting resource on matters relating to young people • Addresses local issues • Raises awareness of matters affecting local young people to organisations that can make a difference • Gives young people a voice • Encourages a multi-agency approach to tackling what is important to young people • The right organisations have been involved in consultation process and willing to engage • Local delivery vehicles have been identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low response to some phases of consultation that could have enhanced engagement and representation
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives young people a platform to be heard • Opportunity to promote support and resources available to young people • Raises the profile of young people and how they can shape what they want and need locally • Helping young people understand how they can get involved • Organisations working in partnership with young people to deliver the outcomes they want 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people not engaging or not wanting to get involved • Potential lack of support from organisations in implementation of action • Priority changes impacting resources/capacity to deliver

Addressing gaps and implementing opportunities

Following engagement with young people and stakeholders, plus the mapping exercises conducted as part of the development of this strategy, it is clear that there is a breadth of work being done by a wide range of agencies seeking to address the matters identified by the district's young people.

The Council recognises that even with these existing efforts and current provisions in place, the issues faced by young people continue to evolve, especially as the district responds and recovers from the impacts of COVID-19.

To add value to existing efforts and to ensure that the Council is doing all that it can for the district's young people during these challenging and changing times, an Action Plan that aligns with the themes identified within this strategy has been developed. Within the Council's Action Plan are actions to support multi-agency initiatives and approaches to address issues outlined within the strategy which seek to add value to the work that the Council is proposing to undertake.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The following methods will be used to assess whether the aims of this strategy are being achieved:

- Delivery of the East Cambridgeshire Youth Action Plan 2021-2024
- Set up an officer project team to monitor and review performance of the strategy and action plan bi-annually
- Provide Operational Services Committee with an annual noting report detailing progress made on the strategy and action