

Name: _____



Being in care

Booklet for children age 12-17



CONTENTS

What if I don't understand the information in this booklet?	3	What is life story work?	8
What promises have been made to children and young people in care in Brent?	3	Will the things I tell people looking after me be kept private?	9
Why am I in care?	3	What are my rights in care?	9
Where will I live?	3	Who is the Children's Commissioner?	9
Will I still see my family and friends?	4	What do I do if I am not happy?	10
What if I live outside of Brent?	4	What do I do if I'm happy?	10
Can I go home?	4	Care in Action – Brent's Children in Care Council	10
Can I stay overnight with friends?	4	Plans, meetings and review	11
Who will support me?	6	What is a Placement Planning Meeting?	11
Brent social work teams	6	What is a care plan?	11
Foster carers	6	Looked After Children Reviews	12
Independent Reviewing Officers	6	Why do I have review meetings?	13
Advocates	7	Can I have my say?	13
Independent visitors	7	Where will the review meeting be?	13
What might change while I am in care?	7	Who comes to my reviews?	13
Will I still go to school?	8	What happens at the meeting?	14
What about my health?	8	What happens after my review?	14

What if I don't understand the information in this booklet?

There is a lot of information in this booklet. You may have questions. Your social worker will go through this booklet with you to make sure you understand everything and help answer any questions you have.

You can also look through this booklet with a grown-up at home or at school, like your foster carer or a teacher.

If you have difficulties reading the booklet because of the language, the size of the words or anything else, let your social worker or carer know and they will help you.



What promises have been made to children in care in Brent?

The Brent Promise to Children and Young People in Care is a set of promises from Brent Council to all children and young people in care in Brent. Young people in care in Brent helped to write the promises. You can talk to your social worker to learn more about the Promise.

Why am I in care?

The words 'looked after' is often used to describe being in care. You will hear this phrase from time to time. You can be in care because your parents or family might be unable to look after you or it might not be safe to stay at home.

Where will I live?

When you come into our care, you will usually go to live with another family – a foster family. Brent's Children and Young People's Service assess foster carers so they can care for you. Friends or relatives of children in care can also be foster carers. They are also assessed. Sometimes children live in a house with other children in a residential home. If you live in a residential home, you will have a key worker. This is someone who works at the home and will build a relationships with you. Even though you may be looked after by a foster carer or in a residential home, Brent Council is responsible for making sure that all your needs are met.



Will I still see my family and friends?

Yes, this is something that your social worker will talk to you about. We will make sure that you see your family in a way that is best for you. How this happens depends on your age and the reason for you coming into care.

Visits can take place during holidays, or letters, phone calls and cards. There may be friends you will want to stay in touch with, not just family.

The grown-ups looking after you, including your social worker, will talk about all staying in touch with people who are important to you. You can also tell us what you want to happen. The arrangements for who you will see, when and where will be written down in something called a care plan.



What if I live outside of Brent?

If you go to live with a foster carer or in a home outside of Brent, you will receive the same support. This means you will have the same visits and contact with your social worker and your Independent Reviewing Officer.

You might need extra support if you are living outside of Brent. We understand how important it is to keep in touch with your family and friends. Your social worker will speak to you about keeping in touch with people who are important to you.

Can I go home?

Your social worker will always try to support you to go back to your family if it is safe. Sometimes it may seem unfair not to be allowed home. It is really important to have a safe and happy place to grow up.

Can I stay overnight with friends?

Usually your carer will decide this with you. Sometimes they may discuss this with your parent and/or your social worker. They need to know the details of the person you want to stay with and that they are able to contact you. Some of the things they think about are:

- If they know enough about the people you want to stay with
- What you will be doing and how long you want to stay
- A court order or anything written in your care plan or placement agreement that stops you from being in a certain area or in contact with a particular person.

Your carer will talk to your friend's parents about you staying in their home. They need to know the phone number and address and check by phoning the number.

They will write the information down in their logbook: where you are going, when you are coming back, what you are doing and whom they have spoken to about it. This is to make sure you are happy and safe.

You can write the names of the people in your team in this table.

	Name	Telephone number	Email Address
Social Worker			
Practice Consultant			
Team Manager			
Independent Reviewing Officer			

Who will support me?

It is important that all children have someone they can go to for help, advice and support. These are some of the grown-ups that you will probably meet while you are in care.

Brent social work teams

In Brent Children and Young People's Service social workers work in a team. Teams usually have workers called:

- Social Workers
- Practice Consultant
- Team Manager

You will have one social worker who you will know best. If your social worker is away, you can get in touch with someone else in the team when you need them.

Your social worker will:

- visit you at least every six weeks
- talk and work with your family and carers
- work with you in planning your future
- make sure your wishes and feelings are listened to and make sure you understand the decisions made about your care.



Foster carers

Your foster carer will:

- look after you day-to-day
- talk with you about family, health, school, friends, clothes and money
- help you say what you want at meetings
- talk with you about your wishes, hopes and fears for the future
- be there for you when you are upset and celebrate when you are happy
- encourage you to do well at school and at other interests you have
- help keep you healthy
- treat you the same as any other member of their family and respect your individuality.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)

Everyone in care has an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

Your IRO is independent from your social work team and is not a person who is already working with you.

The job of your IRO is to make sure you are looked after well and your social workers are doing everything to help you. This includes thinking about how you can speak with or see your family and other important people in your life. It is also the job of your IRO to make sure you understand the plans that are being made for you and that your views and wishes are listened to.

Your IRO has to:

- be in charge of your Looked After Child reviews (sometimes called LAC reviews). We will try to make sure you have the same IRO at your LAC reviews. This is so you can both get to know each other
- meet you before your LAC review to see what you want to say at it
- make sure your care plan is right for you and approve any changes to it
- write down and send out any recommendations from your LAC reviews so everyone remembers what they have agreed to do
- make sure that everything in your care plan is happening as it should be
- make sure that everyone is focused on your needs
- make sure things are done when you need them to be done.

Advocates

An advocate is someone who makes sure your views and feelings are understood, and that you are fully involved in decisions making.

Advocates can also help you speak up for yourself or put your views across for you. An advocate can go to a meeting with you, or even go instead of you. They can support you with making a complaint too.

What you say to your advocate is private unless they think you are in danger. If they think you are in danger they will take action to keep you safe and tell you who they have passed the information on to. Speak to your carer, social worker or IRO if you would like to know more about Advocates.

Independent visitors

Independent visitors are volunteers who befriend and support children and young people up to the age of 18. They do not work for Brent Children and Young People's Service. They are interested in you, how you are getting on and what you like to do. They listen to children, and support them. All independent visitors are checked to make sure they are right for you. Speak to your social worker if you would like to know more.

What might change while I'm in care?

Being in care is already a big difference for you. We try to avoid making changes as much as possible but sometimes things have to change. This can be because:

- where you live might change because you were moved in an emergency or needed somewhere to stay for a short time. You might then move to another foster home or children's home if this is best for you.
- how everyone gets on in the foster home doesn't work out so you can move to another foster home where relationships can be better.
- your social worker may change because they go to another job or moves to another team
- you may have to change schools because you move away from the area you have been living in.

You will always know as soon as possible about any change and we want to know what you think and how you feel about it.

Will I still go to school?

Yes, you will. We want you to get a good education and to do as well as possible.

Your education is very important. There is a group of people working with Brent's Children's service called the Virtual School. They make sure every looked after child gets a good education.

They work in offices but they are teachers and can help you and your foster carer if you need it.

- They can talk to your teachers.
- They can make sure you get help in class.
- They run brilliant trips in the school holidays for children who are in care.

Any help required is written into Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is part of your care plan. You can request what is written in your Personal Education Plan – things you like doing at school and things that are difficult or things you might want help with.

CAMHS

If you are very upset or worried about something, you might also get help from an organisation called CAMHS. This stands for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. CAMHS has people you can speak to who will help you with your emotional health. You can speak to your social worker if you would like help from CAMHS, or another grown-up might think it is a good idea for you and talk to you about it.



What about my health?

We want to make sure you are healthy. You may see a nurse or doctor when you are in care, and have regular dental checks. They will explain to you what they are doing and why, and you can say if you do not want them to do something. Your social worker, carer or parent will have to give permission and someone will be with you.

It is important to keep our heads (what you think) and hearts (what you feel) healthy. This is your emotional health and your social worker, carer or parent can help you think and talk about anything you want to. This includes things that have happened and things that are happening in your life now. You might want to think about how you feel, how you behave and how you want to feel in the future.

What is life story work?

When there are changes in your life, we will help you to remember the places and people that are important to you. This is called life story work. Your social worker and carer will talk to you about this.

Life story work might involve making a book all about you. This includes photos and writing down where you were born and where you have lived, who the important people are in your life are and things you like to do. We will also help you to keep things like birthday cards or memories from religious festivals or holidays.

Will the things I tell people looking after me be kept private?

If you're in care, you might not have been safe or happy in the past. The most important thing for people who are looking after you is that you stay safe. If you tell a grown-up looking after you something that you want to keep private, the law says they have to keep it private unless they think that you or someone else may be at harm or in danger. In this case, they must tell your social worker.

When information about you is written down on forms or in plans, these are kept on a computer or on paper. Only certain people can see the computer records as they have passwords. Paper records are kept in locked cupboards.

There are laws that say that you can see what is written down about you and Brent Children and Young People Service have rules to let you do this. Your social worker can tell you more about this if you ever want to see what has been written about you.

What are my rights in care?

Everyone has basic human rights to be kept safe from harm and protected from discrimination. As a child, you also have extra rights that include the right to education, and be listened to. These come from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and they apply until you are 18 years old. Because you are in care, you have some special rights. These include:

- the right to see people who are important to you (unless there's a good reason not to)
- the right to see information about you held by Brent's Children and Young People's Service
- the right to make a complaint
- the right to a solicitor to make sure that your voice is heard in court.



Who is the Children's Commissioner?

The Children's Commissioner for England is responsible for making sure that children who are in care have a say on things that are important to them. They are here to help you if you want to know more about your rights in care.

Visit their website at

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk or call them on **0800 528 0731** or

020 7783 8330 alternatively, you can email at advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk



What do I do if I'm not happy?

We need to know if you are not happy about anything that is going on in your life. We will always listen to you and try to make things better. You might be unhappy about something that we cannot change but we will help you understand the reasons why.

You can tell any of these people how you feel and they will help you:

- your friends
- a teacher
- your foster carer
- your social worker
- your Independent Reviewing Officer

You can request an advocate or call a helpline like Coram, Tel: **0808 800 5792** Web: <https://www.coram.org.uk/how-we-do-it/coram-voice-getting-young-voices-heard-or-Childline>,

Tel: **0800 1111** Web: www.childline.org.uk/pages/home.aspx

Coram Voice and Childline support and advise children in care. They have some useful information on their website and you can call them if you want to speak to someone.

If things aren't sorted out and you're not happy or you think something is not right you can make a complaint by emailing complaints.

service@brent.gov.uk or by calling us on **0208 937 2444**. Most children in care are helped to make a complaint by an advocate. If you would like an advocate to help you make a complaint, talk to your carer, social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer.

What do I do if I am happy?

You can tell us if being in care is good too. You can tell your social worker or IRO who would love to know what is going well for you.

Brent Care in Action

Brent Care in Action is Brent's Children's in Care Council. It works to make sure children and young people who have experienced care have the chance to be involved in making decisions. It is a chance to share views about the services and support you receive.

There are two groups which children and young people can get involved in:

- Junior Care in Action is for children in care aged 7-12 years old. They meet once a month on a Saturday.
- Brent Care in Action is for young people in care aged 13-17. They meet monthly, usually on a Tuesday after school.

A third group named Care Leavers in Action is accessible to young people aged 18+.

CIA aims to:

- give young people a chance to share their views and ensure their thoughts and feelings are considered in decisions that are made
- meet other children/young people and take part in fun activities/outings
- talk to Brent's Children's Services about policies and rules that effect you
- discuss ways to improve services for children in care

Your carer, social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer can tell you more about how you can get involved.

Plans, meetings and reviews

When you're in care, the people who support you and care about you need to meet, plan and discuss how you are doing. These are some of the plans, meetings and reviews that happen.

What are care proceedings and care orders?

Care proceedings happen when a court is asked by Brent Children and Young People's Services whether a child should become 'looked after' by Brent Council.

Care orders are rules that the court says everyone has to stick to. If your social worker feels you should become looked after, but your parents do not agree, the social worker can go to court to get a care order. We then share responsibility for looking after you with your parents. Your parents and Brent Children and Young People's Services will plan together how to keep you safe and where you live.

What is a Placement Planning Meeting?

When you first become looked after, you, your parents or family, your carer and someone from your social work team will meet to make sure all the important arrangements have been made. This helps everyone get to know each other.

This may happen before you move in but if not, it will happen within the first 5 working days (a working day means Monday to Friday). This meeting is called a Placement Planning Meeting.



What is a care plan?

Information about how we will look after you and what you need is all written down in something called a 'care plan'. Your care plan will have different sections that have important information about you, like your health, education and what you like to do in your spare time. It can include things like what you like to eat or watch on TV, how you get to school, and which grown-ups will make decisions about where you live.

It is important that you tell everyone what you want to be written down in your care plan. You can write things down, speak to someone, record a message or even make a video and give it to your foster carer or social worker. We know it can be hard to speak up sometimes but you should always say if you do not understand or if you want anything else in your care plan.

LAC Reviews

Your review is a meeting to find out how things are going for you. It is often called a LAC review. LAC means 'looked after child'. The review is for you and about you. We will talk about where you are living, your education and health, your free time, your contact with your family and plans for you in the future.

At your review you will meet your Independent Reviewing Officer and from then on your reviews will happen every 3 to 6 months. Your Independent Reviewing Officer will always ask to speak to you before the review starts to discuss how you would like the meeting to happen and what you would like to talk about.

This table can be completed by you or your social worker to remind you of your first few review dates.

	What time?	Where?
First LAC review		
Second LAC review		
Third LAC review		

Why do I have review meetings?

The reason for LAC review meetings is to give you and the people helping you a chance to discuss your living arrangements and everything else that affects your life. Any changes to your care can be discussed at your review and it is important that your views be listened to.

Can I have my say?

This is your meeting, so it is important that your views are heard. Your social worker will talk about the plans with you before the review. If you feel unable to come to the review, your social worker or your advocate will let people know what you think and feel.

Another way to get your views across is by filling in the consultation form. This is a paper form that you will be sent before the review meeting. This is for you to write down or draw pictures of all the things you want to be talked about in the meeting. Anyone that you trust can help you fill this in if you do not want to do it on your own. Before the meeting, your Independent Reviewing Officer will offer you the opportunity to talk to him or her on your own about the meeting and about the plans that have been made for you.

These are some ways you can share your views:

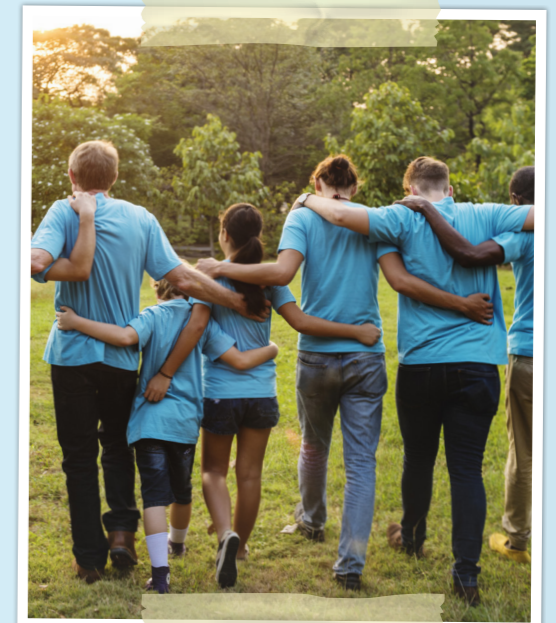
- speaking at your meeting (you can stay for all or part of it)
- talking to your social worker when they come and visit you
- talking to your Independent Reviewing Officer before your meeting
- asking for an advocate
- asking someone else that you trust to help you share your views
- putting your views in writing or drawing pictures on your consultation form before your meeting

Where will the review meeting be?

It is important that your review takes place somewhere you feel comfortable (usually where you live) and you have a say in this. Sometimes it might take place at the Brent Civic Centre or at school, but it is important that this only takes place if you are happy about it. It is really important that you are at, or contribute to, your review so that your social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer can hear what you think when they are talking about important decisions for your life. You do not need to stay for the whole of your review meeting if you do not want to.

Who comes to my reviews?

You have a say in who comes to your review meeting. This will always include your social worker, your carer and usually your parents. Sometimes a teacher from your school or doctor might come. If there is someone else that you would like to come (or not) then let your social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer know.



**That's
it! :o)**