



BEING IN CARE

Booklet for children age 5-12

This book belongs to:



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What does it mean to be in care?



There are about 300 Children in care in Brent so you are not alone. Some children go into care when they are babies, and some when they are older. Some children stay in care for most of their childhood. Some children spend a short time in care before going back home. It all depends on your situation.

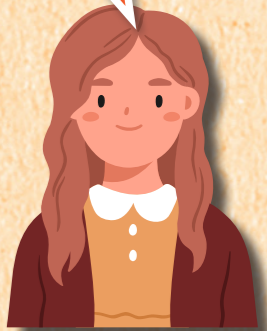
While you are in care, we have a responsibility to make sure that you are safe and healthy. We will support you to go to school and do activities you enjoy. Where possible, your social worker and other people involved in looking after you will keep things familiar for you, like school and seeing your friends.

BEING IN CARE MEANS that Brent Children and Young People's Service has a say about who looks after you, where you live and what happens to you. We will listen to you and your wishes. You will have a social worker who will visit and speak to you.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE SAFE AND HAPPY. The government makes laws about how parents and carers should look after their children to make sure they are safe and happy. When it is not safe, social workers make a decision for you to live somewhere else. Sometimes your parents and carers will agree to this. At other times the social worker will have to go to court and ask a judge to decide where is safest for you to live.

The reasons why you are in care can be hard to understand. How long you will be in care depends on your personal situation. Your social worker will explain this to you and try to answer all your questions.

Why am I moving into care?



What about my family?



IF YOU ALSO HAVE BROTHERS OR SISTERS who cannot live at home anymore, your social worker will try to keep you together. If this is not possible, you will be able to visit your brothers, sisters and other family members. Sometimes there are reasons why you cannot visit people you care about. Your social worker will explain these reasons to you.

Where will I live?

WHERE YOU LIVE depends on your situation, your needs and your safety. Your social worker will explain this to you and why. Most children and young people live in foster care. This means living with a foster family.

You may be able to live with someone you know well. Otherwise, you will live with people who you do not know at first. Your social worker will take you to your foster carer's home and you will meet everyone who lives there. We hope you will be happy with your foster family but may take time to feel settled. This is normal.

You can talk to your social worker about your care, and how it is going. Your social worker will discuss options with you and make sure you feel safe.

Some children and young people may live in a house with other children who are in care. This is called a residential home. If you live in a residential home, you will have a key worker. They work at the home and support you. They are someone you can talk to and build a relationship with you.

IF YOU GO TO LIVE with a foster carer or in a home outside of Brent, you will get the same support. Your social worker and your Independent Reviewing Officer will still visit and you will still go to school.

You might also receive additional support to see your family and friends. Your social worker will speak to you about contact with people that are important to help you stay in touch.

What about money?

YOU WON'T NEED TO WORRY about things like food, clothes, toiletries and haircuts – these will be provided for you. You will get pocket money an extra allowance on your birthday and for celebrations. We will also make regular savings to help you when you are an adult.

What if I live outside of Brent?

YOUR CARER WILL MAKE SURE you are able to see a doctor if you are sick and you will have regular medical and dental checks. If you want to see a doctor or a nurse on your own and you are old enough to decide, your foster carer will respect this.

What should I do if I have a health problem?

What about school?

IF POSSIBLE, YOU WILL CONTINUE to go to your usual school. If you are living far away or if it is no longer safe to go to your school, your social worker may arrange an alternative school.

What is an Independent Reviewing Officer and what will they do?

EVERYONE COMING INTO CARE has an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). An IRO is separate from your social work team and independent from the people working directly with you.

Your Independent Reviewing Officer will hold a meeting called a 'LAC review' within one month of you coming into care and then every 3 to 6 months. Your review is to make sure you are okay and help you meet your goals. This includes where you are living, your education and health, your free time (for example, any sports or hobbies you enjoy), your visits with your family and the plans for your future. Your IRO will normally speak to you before the review starts on your own.

You have a say in who comes to your review meeting. People who will be there are usually your social worker, the people looking after you, your parents, and sometimes other people like teachers or doctors.

Reviews can take place at your home, the Brent Civic Centre, school, or somewhere else. It is important they take place where you feel comfortable. It is also important for you to share your views. Your social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer want you to know and understand the important decisions made about your life. You don't need to stay for the whole meeting if you choose not to.



What is an independent visitor or advocate?

INDEPENDENT VISITORS ARE VOLUNTEERS who befriend and support children and young people up to the age of 18. They don't work for Brent Children and Young People's Service. Most importantly, they are there to

listen to you. All Independent Visitors are checked to make sure they're right for you. Speak to your social worker if you would like and Independent Visitor.

An **advocate** is someone who makes sure your views and feelings are understood, and that you are fully involved in decisions making. An advocate can go to a meeting with you, or even go instead of you. They can support you with making a complaint too. Speak to your carer, social worker or IRO if you would like to know more about Advocates.

IF YOU ARE COMING INTO CARE, you might not have been safe or happy in the past. The most important thing for us is your safety. If you tell an adult looking after you something to be kept private, the law says they must unless it suggests that you are in danger. In this case, they must tell your social worker. Everyone involved will make sure that only the people who need to know the information are told. Keeping you and others safe is the most important thing.

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



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 have help to develop the promises through Care in Action groups.

What promises have been made to children and young people in care in Brent?



Brent Care in Action is Brent's Care Council. Its purpose is to make sure children and young people who have experienced care have the chance to be involved in decisions. We want to hear your voice too.

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

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 also tell you more about how you can get involved.

EVERYONE HAS BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS to be kept safe from harm and protected from discrimination. As a young person, you also have extra human rights; the right to education and the right to be listened to and have a say in decision-making. These come from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and apply until you become 18 years old.

Because you are in care, you have some more 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 your social worker, the right to make a complaint, and the right to a solicitor to make sure that your voice is heard in court.

The Children's Commissioner for England is responsible for making sure that young people who are in care have a say on issues that are important to them. The Children's Commissioner is not part of Brent Children and Young People's Service. Visit their website at www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk or call them on 0800 528 0731 or email advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

What are my rights in care?



How do I make a complaint?



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A COMPLAINT because you are not happy or you think something is not right, you can contact us by sending an email to: complaints.service@brent.gov.uk or by phone: 020 8937 2444

If you need some help making your complaint or need someone else to talk to, you can speak to an advocate. This is someone who can listen to you and speak on your behalf. If you want an advocate, you can ask your social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer.

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