

HELLO!

WE ARE MEMBERS OF CARE IN ACTION, THE CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL IN BRENT AND WE WANTED TO WRITE TO YOU TO HELP YOU THROUGH YOUR FIRST WEEKS OF CARE

When you first come into care, it can be the most difficult time because you don't know what to expect. It is never as bad as you might think it will be. Once you start to settle in, you realise there are people who are there to support you, especially your social worker and foster carer. These people only want the best for you and will support you while you are in care.

Remember! You are not the only person going through this as there are other children and young people between the ages of 0-18 who go into care in Brent because its not safe to live at home for all sorts of reasons. Your social worker will help you understand **YOUR** reason for being in care and they will also include you in decisions made about your care, such as where you live, what school you go to, what support you need. Children and young people come into care for so many different reasons and it's important for you to know **YOUR** reason.

When you come into care, sometimes you might worry about if you will see your family again. Seeing your family is important although it's not always possible for everyone. What is important is that you know about what is happening. Your social worker will explain to you any plans to see your family (called contact plans) and include your wishes and feelings in any decisions. In fact everything that is decided about your care has to be discussed with you before the decision is made.

There may be times when things don't go the way you would like them to, for example, if you are not happy with the way your carers treat you, or you don't think you were involved in a decision made about you. It's your right to complain if you're not happy. Don't worry, you won't get into trouble for complaining - staff want to make things better for you. You can contact us at Care in Action and the Participation Service on **020 8937 3695/4173** or the Complaints Team on **0208 937 2444**.

There will be a lot of professional people in your life who often want to make you feel better about being in care. What can work best is meeting other young people that are in care who are going through similar experiences. There is our group, Care in Action that the Participation Service runs which you can be involved in. The group is attended by young people in care aged 13-21 and sometimes service managers and Directors attend too. It's a real chance to change the services that affect you and other children and young people in care. You can call **020 8937 3695/4173** to find out more about the group and when we meet.

Going into care can be a very emotional time, but soon you will start to feel safe and secure. Everyone's experience of care is different but your experience will be good if you are healthy, safe and happy.

We hope this letter makes you feel better!

Going into care is not easy, but making friends with others who are in care makes it a lot easier because they are in the same situation as you. So join many participation groups such as Care in Action. That's what I did and it helped me a lot and built up my confidence. One advice I would also give is that if you feel unhappy about anything even if it is something little, always tell your social worker or someone you feel more comfortable with because they could make things better. Remember bad situations don't last forever, so look to the future because things get better and smile!

Chair of Care in Action