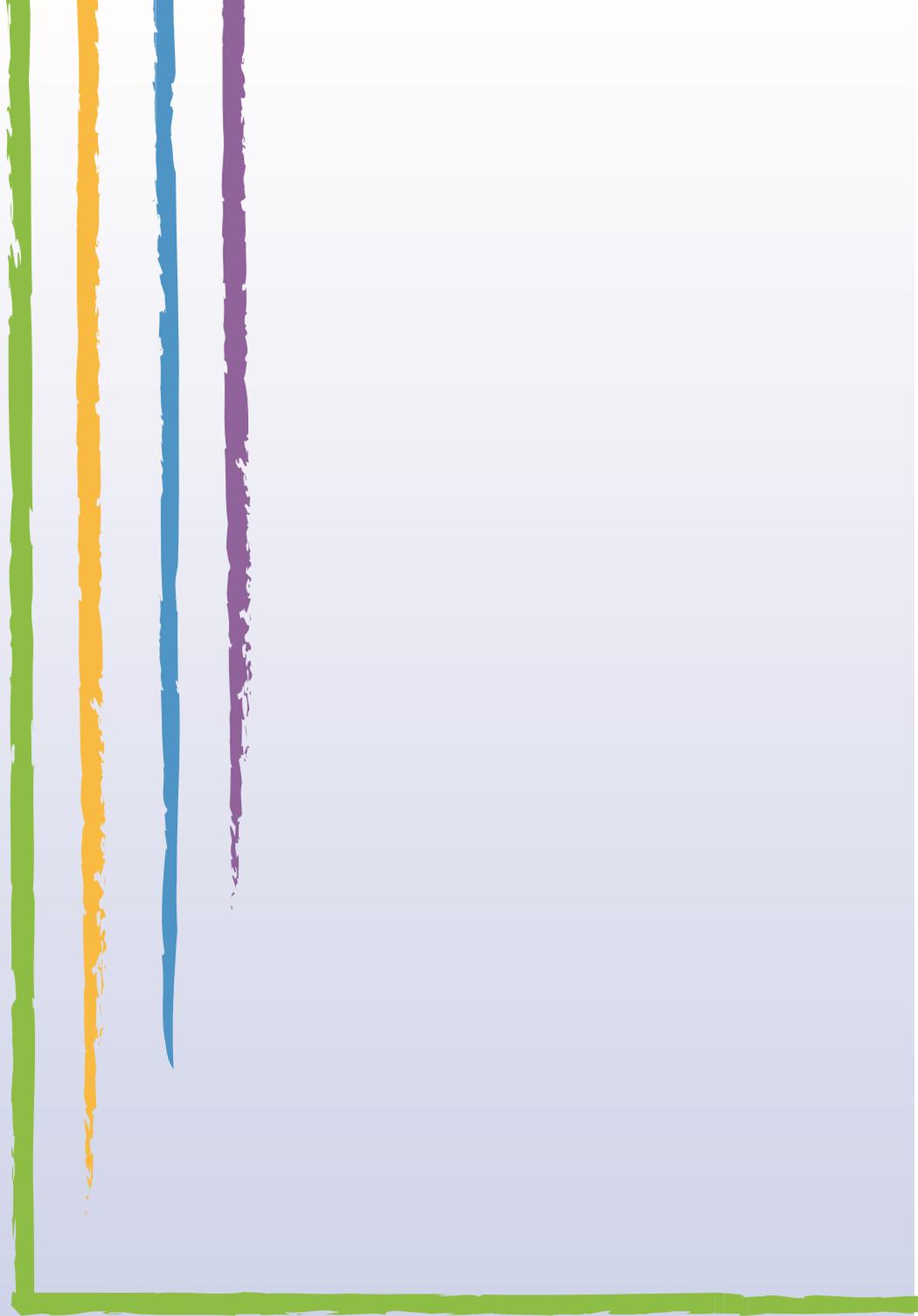


Everything
you need to know about
Fostering

A guide for older children



Why might I need a

foster carer?

Every child or young person has the right to live in a safe home where they are cared for and protected. Where this is not happening for you – this can be for many reasons (due to illness, lots of arguments or where you are being hurt or mistreated) – the [local authority](#) has a [statutory](#) duty to make sure that you are safe. If you have brothers and sisters, they may also have to leave home as well. Every effort will be made to make sure that you stay together or at least see your siblings regularly where this is not possible.

You will be allocated a [Social Worker](#) to keep you safe. Your social worker is someone who works for children's services. It is their job to make sure you are OK, so you should think of them as someone who is there to help you.

Your social worker will visit you regularly and talk to you about what is happening in your life. They care about you and you can talk to them about anything you are worried about.

Sometimes, you may have to live somewhere else for a short time while things are sorted out at home or sometimes for a longer period, depending on the situation. If there is someone in your family such as an aunt, uncle or another relative who can safely care for you, your social worker can arrange for you to live with them. However, sometimes this is not possible and you may have to live with a [foster carer](#).

A foster carer is someone that has been [approved](#) by the local authority to care for children, who cannot live with their families. This means that they will have been assessed and trained by the local

authority to ensure that they have skills, experience, patience and time to care for you.

What will happen to my family?

Whilst you are living with your foster family, arrangements will be made for you to have [contact](#) with your family, friends, brothers and sisters. Your Social Worker will speak to you about this, as there may be reasons why you cannot see them on your own. Your foster carer and Social Worker would need to know when these visits happen, so that they can [monitor](#) this carefully. These visits will be set up by

your social worker and may involve the [contact services](#).

What are foster carers like?

Foster carers are people who choose to look after young people just like you. They will do what's best for you and treat you like part of their own family. Foster carers are all different. For example:



sometimes they may be a single foster carer, or sometimes they may be a couple. Some may have children and some may not. When a foster carer is being chosen, we always make sure that we try to

match your ethnicity, culture and religious needs (if you have any). We also try to make sure that they live near to your school, college and friends. If you have a disability then we will make sure that you live with carers who are trained to look after you. Most importantly the foster carer will need to understand you. A lot of work is done to pick a suitable family.

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Will it be like living at home?

Once you have moved into your foster family's home, there will be a meeting held within the first 5 days of you moving in. This meeting is called the **Placement Information Meeting**, which you can attend. This meeting will look at the day to day arrangements, which include making sure that you are able to maintain routines that you would have had at home, for example: seeing your friends, what time you come home if you are out, when your mealtimes are and what time you go to bed.

There may also be routines that your foster carer may want you to agree to whilst you are living with them. For example, you may be responsible for keeping your bedroom neat and tidy.

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Your foster carer will be given an amount of money to look after you. This is called the **fostering allowance**. The fostering allowance is money that is given to the foster carers, to meet all of your needs.

This includes pocket money, money for your hair and skin, money to go to the cinema or any hobbies that you may have. All of this will be discussed when you have the placement information meeting, which you will be part of and all of your wishes will be discussed.

How long will I be with my foster family?

While you are living with your foster family, your social worker will visit your parents or carers to find out when you will be going home. In such instances it may not be possible as the problem cannot be sorted out. This may mean that you may have to stay with your foster carer for a longer time. This is called **long term** fostering.

People who I will see whilst I am living with my foster family?

Whilst you live with your foster family, you will have regular statutory visits from your Social Worker and your foster carer will have

regular visits from their Supervising Social Worker. These visits will take place once every 4 to 6 weeks. However, if you want to see your social worker sooner, you can arrange this.

You will also have to have regular [Looked after Children reviews](#), which take place once every 6 months. These reviews will be chaired by an [Independent Reviewing Officer](#), who will discuss your progress. Prior to the meeting, the reviewing officer will speak to you to get your views. Your Social Worker, foster carer and parents will attend.

What do I do if I am not happy

with my foster family?

You can talk to your social worker at any time about how you are feeling about being in a foster family, whether this is good or not so good. Your Social Worker and foster carer should be able to sort out any problems you have. You have the right to complain if you are not happy.

How to complain

Why complain?

Sometimes it may seem like no one is listening to what you are saying. Or you may just feel that your feelings are not being taken seriously. Whilst we do our best to make sure we listen to you, if you feel that this isn't the happening, you have the right to complain and you can also request help to do so if you feel awkward or uncomfortable speaking for yourself.

How to complain

You can make a complaint through your Social Worker, review officer, school teacher or anyone else you feel comfortable with. Once a complaint is made, the local authority have 14 days to give you an answer.

Can I speak to the Independent Reviewing Officer?

The Independent Reviewing Officer is there to make sure that all of your wishes and feelings are listened to. The reviewing officer's role is to speak to all the people involved in your care and make sure that everything is being done. They will also make clear recommendations about your care plan, which could be to return home or to remain with your foster family.

Other people you could speak to...

Advocacy services

If you do want someone to help you, you can request an advocate to act on your behalf. The advocate will attend any meetings with you and speak on your behalf, write everything down to show what has been said and talked about, and advise you on your rights and what

you can do. The advocate is a person who does not work for Brent Council and is totally independent.

If you want to arrange for an advocate to help you, you can ask your social worker, teacher, a friend, foster carer, or someone else you trust to help you arrange this.

Buzz words...

Placement Plan Meeting – A meeting to discuss how the foster carer will care for you, whilst you are living with them

Fostering allowance – Money that is provided to the foster carer, to pay for your expenses

Social Worker – a social worker is the person that is allocated to your case and is there to look after everything you need

Supervising Social Worker – This person is allocated to look after your foster carer

Contact – This is when you visit your family and friends

Contact services – A service that arranges contact

Reviewing officer – The person who is independent and reviews your progress once every 6 months

Local Authority – this is the local authority that you live in, which is the London Borough of Brent

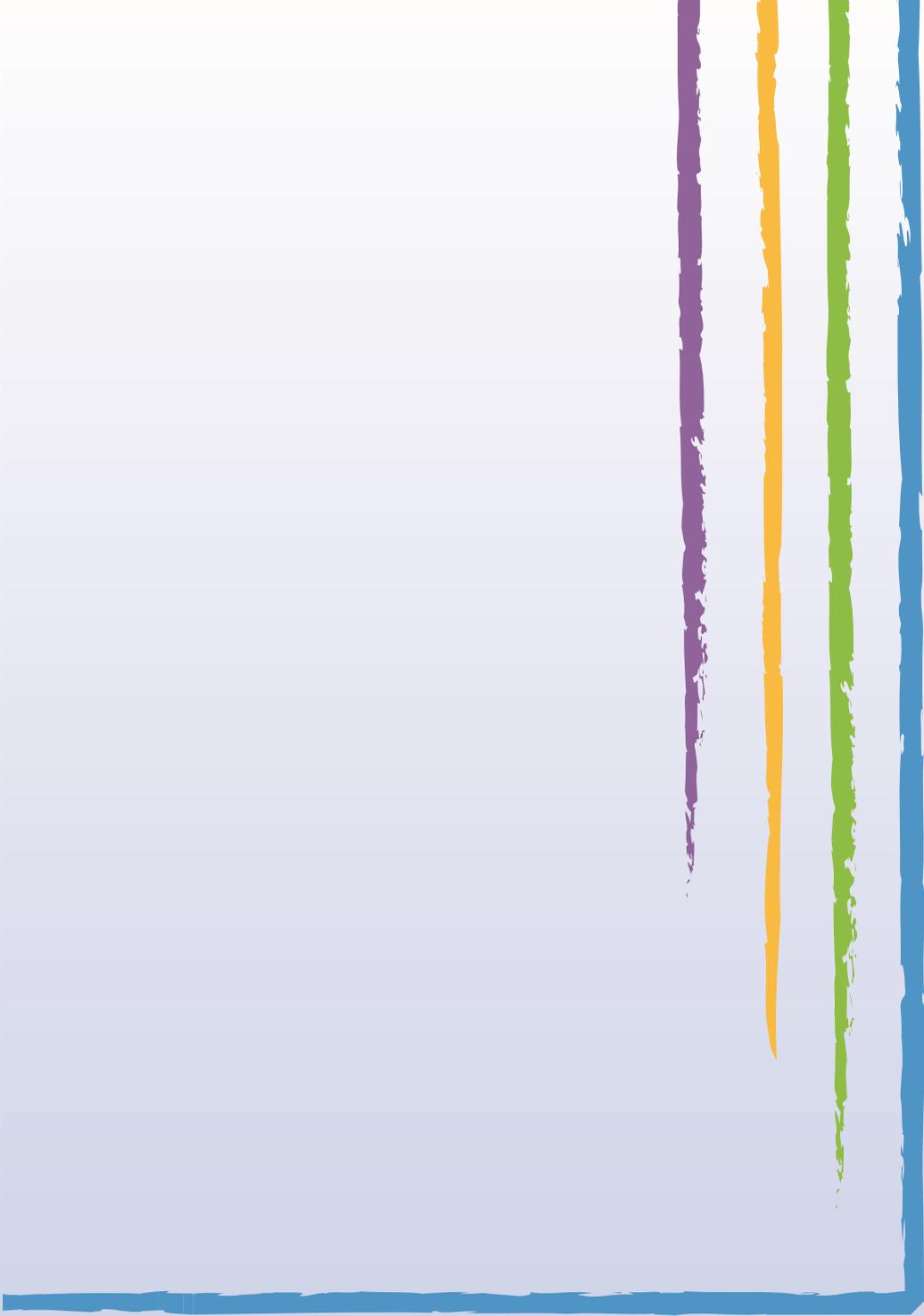
Statutory – this is what is required to be done according to the law

Assessed – this is the process that every foster carer has to go through to ensure that they have the skills to care for you

Approved – this is when the foster carers are given approval to care for you

Useful telephone numbers

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Brent Main number | 020 8937 1234 |
| Coram Voice www.coramvoice.org.uk | 0800 800 5792 (free) |
| Childline | 0800 1111 (free 24 hours) |
| Family rights group | 020 7923 2628 |
| NSPCC | 020 7825 2500 |
| Kidscape | 020 7730 3300 |
| Children's legal centre | 020 7359 9392 |
| Who cares - linkline | 0500 564 570 |
| National youth agency service (for children in care) | 0800 616 101 |
| Brent complaints department | 020 8937 2176 |
| Brent advocacy department | 020 8937 4240 |





Who to complain to

Here are the contact details of who
you should complain to

Martin Beasley
Complaints Team
Brent Civic Centre
Engineers Way
Wembley
HA9 0FJ
020 8937 2176

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



Independent Reviewing Officer
c/o Goitom Mebrahtu
3rd Floor
Brent Civic Centre
Engineers Way
Wembley
HA9 0FJ
020 8937 4563

Childline
NSPCC
Weston House
42 Curtain Road
London
EC2A 3NH
0800 1111
www.nspcc.org

Anne Longfield
Children's Commissioner
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT
0800 528 0731
help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

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020 8937 4538 / fostering@brent.gov.uk