

Care Experience Parenting Pledge

There is no such thing as the perfect parent.

Being a parent can be a wonderful experience, however it is also really hard. We recognise that being care experienced and being a parent can bring extra challenges. At the heart of Barnet's Care Experience Parenting Pledge is the commitment that we, your corporate parent and your child's corporate grandparent, are here to support you to be the best parent that you can be.

We know that becoming a parent is not easy for any of us, and you should not have to do it alone. We pledge to be alongside you as you learn to understand your child, your new role as parent and face the challenges along the way. And if it is determined that your child needs more support and care than you are able to offer, we will be there to support you during this difficult time.

Our commitment to you:

1. We can help you prepare for being a parent at a time that is right for you. We will respect your choices, even when we may not agree with them.
2. We will work with you to make sure you have help and support when you are expecting a child or when you become a parent with the things you need to live well; this includes a place to live, be in receipt of the correct benefits and essential items.
3. We will support you to know and to understand your rights and entitlements including benefits, grants, and resources whether this is in Barnet or in the area local to where you live.
4. We will support you to learn new things. With our colleagues in the Early Years Parenting Hub (EYPH) you will be able to access specialist support to develop skills and strategies to better know what your baby/child needs from you. At the EYPH you can also access support from other care experienced parents.
5. Parenting can be rewarding but also challenging, and we will make sure that you know who is available to support you with advice and support, even in the middle of the night or on weekends.
6. We will support you to access leisure centres and gyms and opportunities to have a break.
7. We will work collaboratively with you to create a safe and suitable family home.
8. At the O&U Care Leaver centre, you can access education advice and careers guidance. And when you are ready to return to education or access employment, we will support you to know your rights and entitlements to childcare.

If your child has a social worker:

9. Parents who are in care or who are care experienced and receiving leaving care services can experience stigma and disadvantage. This is not acceptable, and we will make available resources that highlight and challenge these unhelpful assumptions about parents who have a care history. As your corporate parent we will ensure that all relevant information is shared where necessary, and where possible the local authority works with one care plan that acknowledges both the parent's needs and those of the child.

10. Your leaving care Personal Advisor or your social worker, if you are under 18, and your child's assessing social worker will work together to ensure there is one Local Authority plan you are working towards. We aim to be transparent and collaborative with you to support you in parenting your child.
11. If concerns are raised about your parenting, we will make sure you have access to advocacy and legal advice. We will support you to ensure that your care history and records are not used against you, but that your history of being in care informs the assessment and highlights challenges you may experience as a parent without a blueprint of being positively parented yourself.
12. We will work with you, to ensure you are treated fairly and that your rights are respected. We want you to know who the professionals are who are working with you and your child, including your child's social worker and your child's CAFCASS Guardian. We will support you to attend your appointments and have your voice heard.
13. If the Local Authority has assessed that your child is at significant risk of harm in your care and the Court has agreed that you cannot care for your child without further intervention, we will continue to support you, to help you deal with the practical, financial and emotional implications. As your corporate parent, we will be with you every step of this journey until a final decision is made regarding your ability to parent your child.
14. If you are working with the Early Years Parenting Hub, we will support you with attending appointments, ensure you feel supported to engage in the programme and implement recommendations to make positive change in your relationship with your child.
15. Should the final decision from the care proceedings conclude that sadly your child will not be returning to your care, we will support you to engage with the recommendations from assessments that have been made, for example accessing ongoing therapeutic intervention and counselling or attending appointments with other professionals such as Change Grow Live (CGL).
16. We will make this support available to parents up to the age of 25 and we expect to be challenged if we fail in our responsibilities. We will keep reviewing how we are doing and will continue to work with parents, services, and charities to make sure parents in and leaving care are well supported and treated fairly.

This Pledge has been co-created with care experienced parents. This document should be read in conjunction with the [Leaving Care Local Offer](#).

Care experienced parenting pledge: pathways for professionals.

This guide should be read alongside the [Barnet Family Services Unborn Protocol](#).

Barnet Family Services is committed to supporting care experienced parents through the provision of one Local Authority plan that addresses both the needs of their child, but also recognises the needs of a vulnerable parent who sadly was not provided with the experience of what good parenting looks like.

We are aware that for many parents who are care experienced, becoming a parent can be a triggering experience and the involvement of professionals may seem frightening and overwhelming. This parenting pledge is designed to confirm our commitment to care experienced parents and simultaneously outline our pledge to working together across Family Services to deliver a holistic one Local Authority care plan that recognises the needs of both the child and the parent.

The process:

Upon the allocated worker for the expectant parent being made aware of a pregnancy, they will complete a referral to MASH, usually at 12 weeks when pregnancy is confirmed as viable. In most instances MASH will progress the referral for a statutory social work assessment of need and risk to be undertaken. The assessment outcome will determine what further action is required to support the parent(s). The allocated worker for the parent must be contacted and their views must be sought to contribute to the assessment, recommendation, and plan.

The parent's allocated worker should be invited to attend the Assessment and Change Forum alongside the unborn's allocated social worker. They should also be invited to any discharge planning meetings and contribute to the multi-agency discharge plan. If the local authority assessment identifies significant risk of harm to the unborn and progresses to instigating pre-proceedings processes, the allocated worker for the parent must be informed of this recommendation and be invited to attend all legal gateway meetings.

If care proceedings are being considered, the allocated worker for the parent should be invited to attend and contribute to the legal planning meeting to ensure a joined up and holistic local authority approach to supporting both the care experienced parent and their unborn child.

If care proceedings are initiated, the parent's allocated worker must be advised and invited to all care planning reviews. Their views must be sought as part of the local authority planning and they must contribute to the final care plan. The allocated worker should also be invited to attend the permanency tracking panel where care planning is reviewed.

If a referral to the Early Years Parenting Hub has been recommended, the parent's allocated worker should be included in all network meetings and kept advised of the progress of the assessment and any therapeutic intervention. Where possible, the parent's allocated worker should be invited to attend all relevant sessions that would be considered appropriate as part of the assessment and intervention.

If assessments completed during care proceedings conclude that it is not safe for the child to be returned to the care of their parent(s), the parent's allocated worker must be informed in advance. The child's social worker alongside the parent's allocated worker must work together to ensure the care experienced parent is supported when difficult information is shared, and the plan on how to support the parent and child must be collaborative and involve all professionals involved with the family.

Document Control:

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Version	3.1
Date revised	21/02/2024
Status	Final