

**YOUR
GUIDE TO
FOSTER
CARE
A YOUNG
PERSON'S
GUIDE**

INTRODUCTION

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WHO ARE FOSTERPLUS

We are Fosterplus – an independent fostering agency who supports Foster Carers to care for children and young people all over the UK. We have a team of staff who work with the local authorities to make sure that our Foster Carers do the best job they can and that the young people living with them are well looked after so they can reach their full potential.

THE GUIDE

We have put together this guide to help you understand what fostering means and provide you with all the information you may need, as well as important contact details. If there is any more information or advice that you need, your Fosterplus Social Worker is always there to help.

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WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Today, there are over **60,000** children and young people in foster care in England. Each young person is unique and has their own story. Like all our young people, our foster families are all different - but the main thing to remember is that your Foster Carers are there to help you and there is always someone to turn to for advice.

WHO ARE FOSTER CARERS?

Foster Carers are people who look after children and young people that come to live with them when they cannot live with their own birth family. A young person may come into care for many reasons and they may stay with their Foster Carers for any amount of time, from a few nights to months or even years.

Foster Carers may be young or old, single or married, gay or straight, and they may or may not have children of their own. When you are looked after, your Foster Carer will care for you as part of the family and make sure that you are kept safe and healthy, supported with things like education, hobbies and interests, and will make sure you're listened to and that decisions are made in your best interests.

WHAT DOES A SOCIAL WORKER DO?

A Social Worker is there to help people. There are Social Workers who support adults and families who are having a difficult time, Social Workers who help care for people who have health issues or disabilities, and there are Social Workers who help children and young people in foster care.

You will have a Social Worker from the Local Authority, whose job it is to support you, check how things are going and inform you of any plans that might affect you. To help support you and your Foster Carer, you will also have an Fosterplus Social Worker. The Fosterplus Social Worker will work with the Local Authority to help you stay safe and make sure you are well looked after by your foster family. Your Social Workers are there for YOU, so you can always contact them if you have any worries or you need help with something.

HOW WILL THEY FIND THE RIGHT FOSTER CARER FOR ME?

Part of your Social Worker's job is to find you a foster family who most closely matches your needs, and where they think you will fit in well. Your Social Worker will try their best to find you a family that shares similar interests with you, and has a similar cultural and ethnic background. If this is not possible, they will make sure that you are placed with a family that understands and respects your background, culture and religion, and supports you with your individual needs and interests.

WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN FOSTER CARE?

The length of time you will spend living with your Foster Carer will depend on the individual circumstances. If a child's parents are unwell, then they will return home as soon as their parents are better. Sometimes, the situation can be more complicated and your Social Worker may be worried whether your parents are able to keep you safe from harm.

Sometimes, even though parents love their children, they may make bad decisions or not understand how to care for their children properly. This means that a judge will need to make a decision about who should care for you to make sure you are safe.

Sometimes it is in a child's best interests to stay in foster care and sometimes children can return home later.

Your Social Worker, the courts, staff at Fosterplus, and other people concerned with your care will all work together, with your family, to make sure we reach the best outcome for you.



A YOUNG PERSON'S EXPERIENCE OF FOSTERING

I first came into care ten months ago, because I was having trouble at home. When I came to my Foster Carer Becky's house, I felt really scared and I knew I didn't want to be there. Becky really helped me and let me settle in in my own time. Over the ten months, I have become more confident. I have made some new friends and joined a Karate club, which I love. I have good days and bad days, which is part of being human, but the main thing is that I feel like I have more support now. I have still been able to see my mum and she is really happy that I am starting college this year. All in all, my life in care has turned out alright and I am starting to look forward to the future.

JACK, AGED 16.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The Children Act 2004 was designed with the below principles for caring for and supporting children and young people.

- Allow young people to be healthy and have their needs met.
- Help young people to be safe and protected from harm.
- Help young people enjoy life, follow their interests and have positive relationships with people in their life.
- Help young people to succeed, have support with their education and developing their skills.
- Help make a positive contribution to young people's lives and ensure they are listened to and feel valued.
- Encourage economic stability for young people's futures and prepare them for life as an adult.

HOW WILL MY FOSTER CARERS SUPPORT ME?

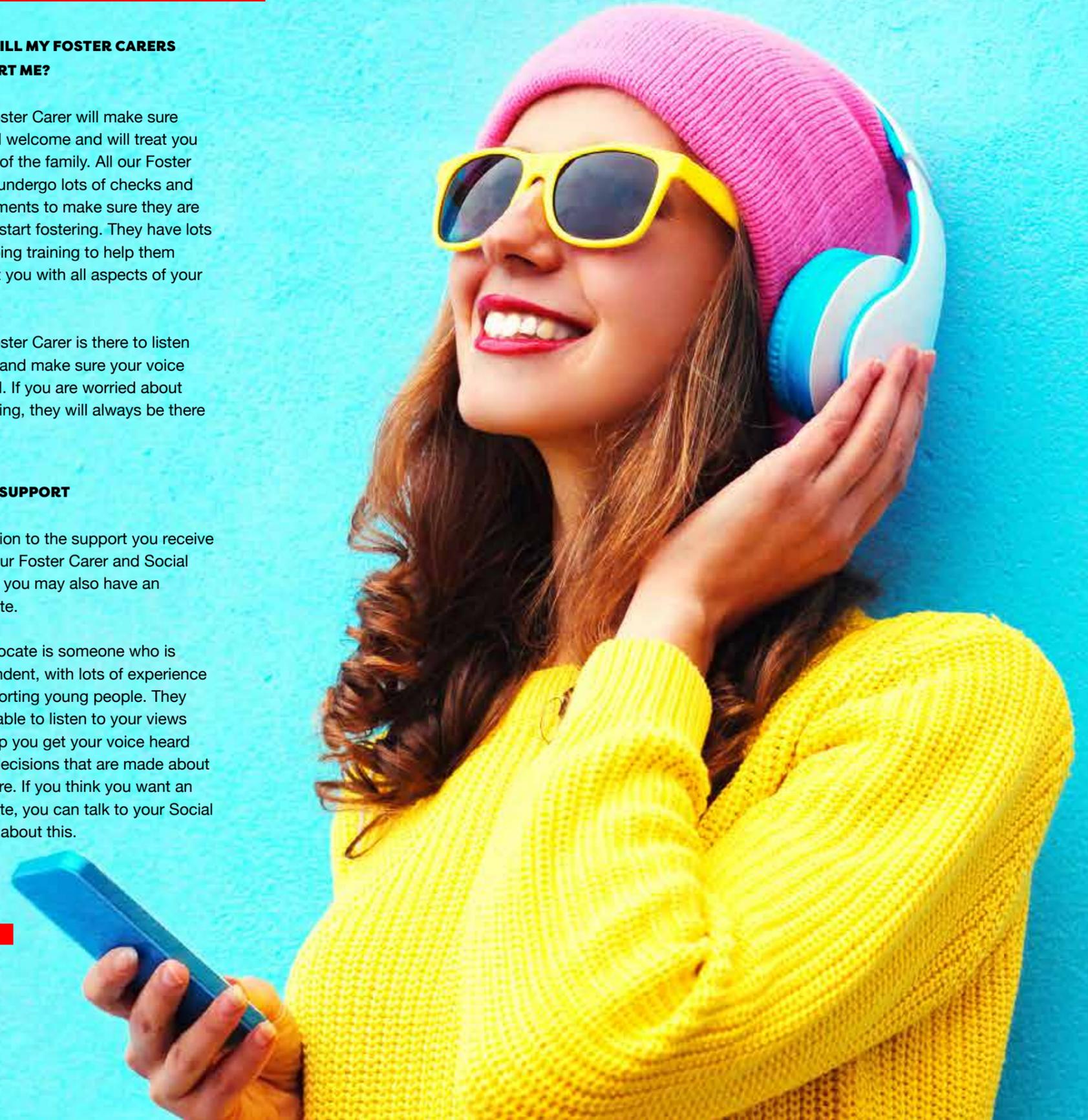
Your Foster Carer will make sure you feel welcome and will treat you as part of the family. All our Foster Carers undergo lots of checks and assessments to make sure they are able to start fostering. They have lots of ongoing training to help them support you with all aspects of your life.

Your Foster Carer is there to listen to you, and make sure your voice is heard. If you are worried about something, they will always be there to help.

EXTRA SUPPORT

In addition to the support you receive from your Foster Carer and Social Worker, you may also have an Advocate.

An Advocate is someone who is independent, with lots of experience in supporting young people. They will be able to listen to your views and help you get your voice heard about decisions that are made about your care. If you think you want an Advocate, you can talk to your Social Worker about this.





EDUCATION AND SCHOOL

Fosterplus will always try to make sure you can stay at your own school, as we know you may feel settled and have lots of friends there.

We know that your education is important so your Foster Carer will support you with your schoolwork and help you to develop your interests.



WILL I GET POCKET MONEY?

Yes, you will get pocket money from your Foster Carer. Your family and your Social Worker will discuss pocket money and the amount will be worked out depending on your age.

CELEBRATIONS AND SOCIALISING

Your Foster Carer will help you to have fun and enjoy yourself whilst living with them. They will help provide opportunities to socialise and make new friends. They will celebrate birthdays, as well as any festivals that are important to you. You may get to enjoy days out or holidays, and your foster family will also enjoy learning new hobbies that you may share with them.

As you make new memories, your Foster Carer will help you put together your Life Story Book, which can include all kinds of things about you, your life and your family. They will collect things like photos, videos and mementoes, which will be yours to keep and look back on in the future.

WHAT IF MY FOSTER FAMILY FOLLOWS A DIFFERENT RELIGION TO ME?

Your Social Worker will always try to place you with a family who has the same religion as you, however sometimes this might not be possible. Your Foster Carer will always respect your beliefs and will help you to follow your own faith, which may mean attending a place of worship, eating certain foods, or following certain customs.

WILL I STILL BE ABLE TO KEEP IN CONTACT WITH MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS?

We want to make sure you can stay in contact with the people who are important to you. The amount and type of contact you have will be worked out in your best

interests, based on the individual circumstances to make sure you are kept safe. Regular contact with your family and friends will be encouraged, and this can be in person or over the phone. Your Foster Carer will support you with this, and they know that sometimes this can be hard so they will be there to listen if you want to share how you are feeling.

STAYING SAFE

'Safeguarding' is the term used to describe our responsibility to make sure you are safe and well. Your Foster Carer will help to keep you safe in many ways, which may mean boundaries in place such as keeping in contact when you are out, or making sure you are home at a certain time. Sometimes a young person can go missing, which means going off somewhere

without permission and not telling people where you are or who you are with. Fosterplus wants to make sure you are safe so we take this very seriously. If you go missing, we will take immediate action to find you and put things right so you do not go missing again.

If there is ever a time when you do not feel safe, you are being hurt, or something is happening to you that you want to stop, you should talk to a responsible adult immediately.

This could be your Foster Carer, your Social Worker, your Fosterplus Social Worker, or a teacher.

You will find contact details for people you can contact in the back of this booklet.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

BULLYING

Bullying can take many forms. It can be someone calling you names, making fun of you or your circumstances, blackmailing you, trying to get you in trouble, threatening you or physically harming you.

Whether it is online, on mobile, or face-to-face, if somebody is being nasty to you or picking on you, remember that this is not acceptable and you should never have to suffer in silence.

Don't ever be afraid to speak out and let somebody know what is happening. Your Foster Carer, Social Worker or any member of Fosterplus will always listen, and work with you to prevent bullying from happening.



STAY SAFE ONLINE

- 1** You must be over the age of 13 to have a Facebook account.
- 2** Never share your password with anyone!
- 3** Do not give out any personal information about yourself, your family or friends on the internet or social media.
- 4** Do not open an email that looks suspicious - it could be a virus.



Never send pictures or post inappropriate photos of yourself to anyone, including on Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat - Once a photo is out there it is hard to take it back.

5**6**

Never agree to meet anyone online in person without your Foster Carer's knowledge – and NEVER meet anyone on your own, always go with a trusted adult.

STAY SAFE ONLINE

Always tell your Foster Carer or Social Worker if you see anything on the internet that makes you feel uncomfortable, or if someone on the internet harasses or threatens you.

You can use the 'Report' link if you see something on Facebook that you do not like – Facebook will review it and take appropriate action.

You can click 'Block this person' if someone is saying things you don't like. This means they can no longer find you in searches on Facebook, they cannot view your profile or contact you. These people will not know that you have blocked them.

Make sure you edit the Privacy Settings on your social media account, so that only your friends can see your profile and information you post. It is important to check from time to time that your profile is protected.

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If you see an unwanted photo of yourself online, you can click on 'Remove Tag' so that this photo will no longer be linked to your profile. You can only be tagged in photos by your friends, so if you are having trouble with a someone who keeps tagging you in unwanted photos, remove them as a friend.

Using the internet and social media will always have its risks, but if you are unsure about anything speak to your Foster Carer or Social Worker.

WHAT CAN FOSTER CARERS EXPECT FROM ME?

Foster Carers will have some house rules to make sure that everyone in the family is looked after properly, and will expect you to follow these while you are living with them.

Every foster family may have different rules, including bedtimes, mealtimes, schoolwork, swearing, smoking, reasonable behaviour and consideration towards family members.

As you are living as part of a family, it is important to respect each other and you may be expected to get involved in family life, whether this is helping with dinner or joining in family activities.

THINGS FOSTER CARERS CANNOT DO

They cannot hit you or physically punish you

They cannot stop your meals

They cannot stop you contacting your social worker

They cannot stop you seeing your family when this has already been arranged

They cannot stop you asking anyone else for help

You have the right to contact the childcare helpline at all times



WHAT MEETINGS DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT?

PLACEMENT PLANNING MEETING

This is a meeting that is held at your Foster Carer's home before or just after you move in. You will meet with your Foster Carers, Social Worker and Fosterplus Social Worker to discuss living with your new foster family, things you like and dislike, things you may need and what school you will go to. It is a good chance to share your views so we can help you be as settled as possible.

REVIEW MEETINGS

These meetings are about an hour long, and are held every few months at either your foster home or at school. You will have a Care Plan that outlines aspects of your life and things you need, which will be looked at during the meeting. The meeting is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), who is aware of any changes to your care plan and makes sure that your wishes and feelings are heard. Your Social Worker or Foster Carer will be able to give you your IRO's contact details.

It is good for you to attend your review meetings so you can talk about how things are going, and if there is anything you need. If you are not happy going to the meeting, you can always ask your Foster Carer or Social Worker, or even an Advocate, to attend and express your views for you.

EDUCATION MEETING

This is a meeting held at your school with your Foster Carers, Social Workers and Teacher. You will be able to talk about your schoolwork, whether there are any problems that you need help with and have a think about what you would like to do or learn in the future.

WHAT IS LIFE LIKE AFTER CARE?

MOVING ON

Being in foster care doesn't last forever and the time will come when it is appropriate to move on from your foster family. This could be to return home, or to move to a planned foster care placement where you might stay until you are 18, or once you are old enough, a move to your own independent home.

PATHWAY PLAN

Your Foster Carer will help you to learn independence skills for the future, which may be written down in what is called a Pathway Plan. All young people should have a Pathway Plan by the time they are 16 years old. This helps to plan what you may need for the future, such as where you might live, whether you want to go to college or university, if you want to start work and what you might want from the future.

FURTHER SUPPORT

Once you are ready to live on your own, everyone will support you to find your own home. We know this can be a big step so your Foster Carer and Social Workers will support you with this. Even when you have left foster care, you can stay in touch with your foster family and always receive further guidance and support from a Social Worker.

A SOCIAL WORKER IS ALWAYS THERE TO HELP

HOW CAN I MAKE A COMPLAINT?

If you are unhappy about anything, for whatever reason, it is important that you talk to someone about it. People you can talk to are:

- Your Foster Carer
- Your Social Worker
- Your Fosterplus Social Worker
- An adult who you trust, such as a Teacher
- Your Advocate
- Or you can mention it at your Review Meeting

If you think you have been unfairly treated, or something has gone wrong, then you have the right to complain.

- To make a complaint, you can contact Fosterplus using the details at the back of this booklet.
- If you need to make a complaint about Fosterplus, you can contact Ofsted via the details at the back of this booklet.
- More details about making a complaint can be found in our Complaints Policy on the website

**HEAD OFFICE
FOSTERPLUS FOSTERCARE**

Wavendon Tower, Ortesia Drive,
Wavendon, Milton Keynes, MK17 8LX

www.fosterplus.co.uk

Telephone:

England: 01908 804 499
Scotland: 0131 241 6200

Email:

England: askus@fosterplus.co.uk
Scotland: askus.edinburgh@fosterplus.co.uk

**HELPLINE
FOSTERPLUS FOSTERCARE**

Call or text Corrinne - Leave a message
and she will call you back within 48 hours.

Call: 0330 333 5103

Text: 07792 263 020

**YOUR FOSTER CARER'S FOSTERPLUS SOCIAL
WORKER:**

Name:.....

Phone number:.....

YOUR FOSTER CARER

Name:.....

Phone number:.....

YOUR SOCIAL WORKER:

Name:.....

Phone number:.....



OFSTED

Responsible for inspecting all care
services in England.

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street,
Manchester, M1 2WD
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

**CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER OF
ENGLAND**

The Children's Commissioner promotes
and protects the rights of children and
stands up for their views.

Tel: 0800 528 0731

Email: help.team@childrenscommis-sioner.gov.uk

NSPCC CHILDLINE

A free 24 hour helpline for children
or young people.

www.childline.org.uk

Tel: 0800 1111

KIDSCAPE

A national charity protecting children,
which provides courses and materials
to develop protection skills for young
people.

www.kidscape.org.uk

Tel: 0207 730 3300

**NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE
(NYAS)**

www.nyas.net

Young person's website:
www.youngpeople.nyas.net

Tel: 0808 808 1001

Email: help@nyas.net

BECOME

Charity supporting children and young
people living in care, as well as care
leavers, in the UK.

www.becomecharity.org.uk

Tel: 0800 023 2033

Email: advice@becomecharity.org.uk

TALK TO FRANK

A free national drugs helpline, available
24 hours a day.

www.talktofrank.com

Tel: 0300 123 6600

LAWSTUFF

For information about your rights whilst
in care.

www.lawstuff.org.uk

Tel: 0808 8020 008

ENGLISH

Information from this document can be made available in alternative formats and in different languages. If you require further assistance, please use the contact details below.

ARABIC

ي ف ةءراول ءامول عمل ءحات! نكم يو
ةل يءب ل الكشأ ي ف ةق ي ءول ا هءه
ءءا ءب ءنك اءا. ةفل ءءم ءا ءلب و
ى ءرى، ةءءاسم ل ن م ءىزم ل
ه انءا ل اصل ءال ل ي صا فت ما ءءءسا

FARSI

رد ن او ء ى م ار ءن س نى زا ءا ءال ط
ى اه ن ابز رد و نى ز ءى ءا ءه بل ا ق
ر ءا .ءاء رارق س رءءس ء رء فل ءءم
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هءا فءءسا رى ز س اءء ءاى ءى ز ء زا
ءى نك.

FRENCH

Les informations présentées dans ce document peuvent vous être fournies dans d'autres formats et d'autres langues. Si vous avez besoin d'une aide complémentaire, veuillez utiliser les coordonnées ci-dessous.

PORTUGUESE

A informação presente neste documento pode ser disponibilizada em formatos alternativos e em línguas diferentes. Se desejar mais assistência, use por favor os contactos fornecidos abaixo.

SOMALI

Macluumaadka dokumentigan waxaa lagu heli karaa qaabab kale iyo luuqado kala duwan. Haddii aad u baahan tahay caawinaad intaas dhaafsiisan fadlan isticmaal xiriirka faahfaahinta hoose.

SPANISH

La información en este documento puede facilitarse en formatos alternativos y en diferentes idiomas. Si necesita más ayuda por favor utilice la siguiente información de contacto.

CONTACT INFO

WWW.FOSTERPLUS.CO.UK T: 01908 804499 E: ENQUIRIES@FOSTERPLUS.CO.UK