



Capstone
foster care

Building brighter futures

YOUNG PEOPLE'S GUIDE TO FOSTERING

A LITTLE HELP CAPSTONE FROM FOSTER CARE

This guide is to help you to understand what fostering means, how it may affect you and, hopefully, answer any questions you may have.

Moving away from home and going to live with foster carers can be really difficult, and it is different for every child and young person. You might be happy or relieved to be going to live with foster carers, or on the other hand, you might be frightened or angry at the idea of leaving home. Whatever it is you are feeling – it's ok.

Other children and young people have shared their thoughts to create this guide just for you. This guide answers many questions and it is ok to have more.

If your question isn't answered once you have read this guide, please let us know. Our contact details are on the back page.

You can either read this guide by yourself, or someone can read it to you. This guide will tell you all the things you can expect when living with a foster family, and about all the people who are there to help you along the way.



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There is only one thing that everyone at Capstone and that is the passion and belief that we can build futures for young people and children in foster care



CAPSTONE FOSTER CARE

At Capstone we look for lots of different types of people to become foster carers and we provide training and support so they can look after you. Foster carers can have different experiences, religious beliefs or cultures. There is only one thing that everyone at Capstone has in common, and that is the passion and belief that we can build brighter futures for young people and children in foster care.

We train our carers to make sure they have the understanding and skills to help the children and young people they care for. We offer them excellent support from experienced and knowledgeable social workers. We also have some fantastic staff at Capstone who can help you if you are struggling at school.

WHAT BEING FOSTERED MEANS

Fostering means going to live with a foster family when you cannot stay with your own family. Sometimes it's called going into care or being looked after.

There are many reasons why children are fostered. Your social worker will tell you why you need to be looked after and answer any questions you might have.

It is important that you have people around you to protect and take care of you as you are growing up. Even though you might be with a foster family for a short time, they will treat you as if you are part of their family.

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WHO DOES WHAT?

FOSTER CARERS

Foster carers look after children in their own home as part of their family. They have become foster carers because they want to help children who are unable to live at home with their own families. They have been very carefully chosen and prepared before they are able to care for children.

Each foster carer or fostering family is different. Some have one or two parents, some might have children of their own, or other foster children living with them. They may have pets or they might be good at certain things, which they can share with you. They all want to do their best to help you settle in and get your life back on track.



Your story
about

YOUR SOCIAL WORKER

You will have your own social worker and their job is to know if you are safe and being looked after properly. They are there to help you and your family sort out any problems. They will get to know you, listen to you and will help you to say things to your family and your foster carers.

Your social worker will help to make a plan about where you live and what happens. You can ask your social worker any questions about living away from your family and what will happen next while you are in care.

Write down your social worker's number here:

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YOUR FOSTER CARER'S SOCIAL WORKER

Our Capstone foster carers have their own social worker. Their job is to offer our carers advice and support. This it to make sure that they can look after any children who are fostered by them, and help each young person to achieve the very best that they can.

The Capstone social worker will see you and, from time to time, will ask to speak to you on your own so that you can tell them what it is like living with your foster carer.

They will also ask if they can take a look at your bedroom, to make sure that where you are sleeping is clean, comfortable and safe.

Write down your foster carer's social worker number below:

WHAT DO CAPSTONE FOSTER CARERS DO?

Foster carers will try to make sure that you feel safe and comfortable living with them - they will:

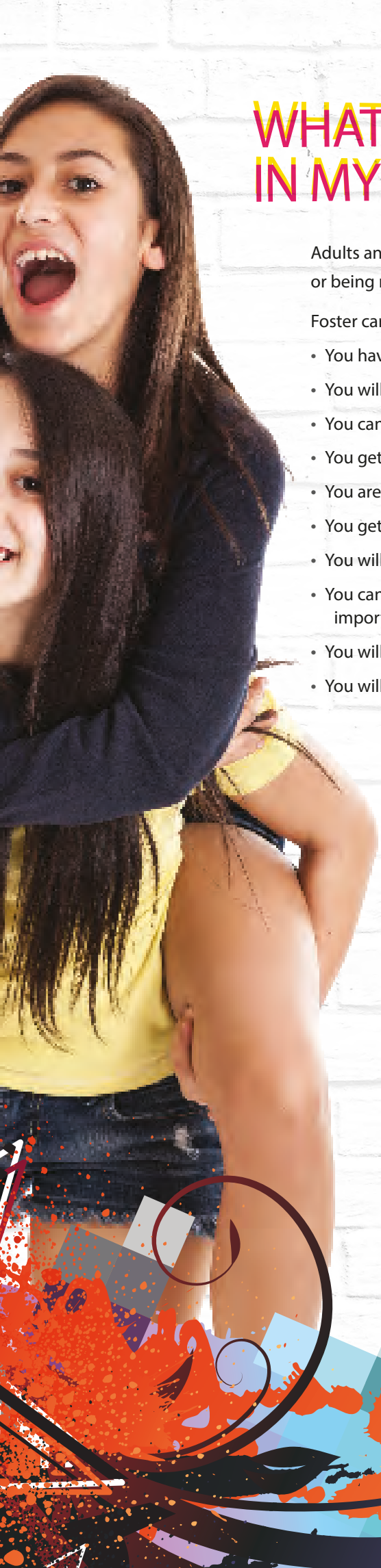
- Keep you safe
- Listen to you
- Provide healthy meals that you enjoy
- Give you a bedroom that is safe, clean and warm
- Help you to keep in touch and see your family if that is what has been planned
- Support you to go to school and help with homework
- Explain to you what their family rules are, so that you know
- Help you to follow your religion if you want to

WHAT DON'T CAPSTONE FOSTER CARERS DO?

Our foster carers will not:

- Treat you differently because you are a girl or boy, or because of your religion or race
- Stop you seeing your family when your social worker has said you can see them
- Smack or hit you
- Lock you in a room
- Refuse to feed you at meals times
- Talk about you and your family to their friends



A photograph of two young women with long dark hair. One woman is in the foreground, wearing a yellow top and dark shorts, with her arms around the other woman. The second woman is slightly behind her, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved top, and has her mouth open in a joyful expression. They are standing in front of a white brick wall.

WHAT SHOULD IT BE LIKE IN MY FOSTER FAMILY?

Adults and children will treat you with respect, by listening to you and not shouting at you or being nasty. All children in the family will be treated the same way, with no favourites!

Foster carers will make sure:

- You have your own bedroom
- You will have somewhere of your own to keep your clothes, books and toys
- You can see your social worker in private
- You get pocket money
- You are helped to stay in touch with your family and friends
- You get hair gels, shampoos and nice toiletries to keep clean
- You will get someone who will listen to how you feel and what you want
- You can celebrate special things like your birthday or religious festivals that are important to you like Christmas, Diwali, Eid and others
- You will have someone who wants you to be happy and healthy
- You will have someone who will do their best to help you be the very best you can be

LIVING AS PART OF THE FAMILY

All families have their own ways of doing things and ways they expect family members to behave. Whilst these might differ between families there are some “rules” which apply in almost all families. These are:

- Show respect to everyone in the house
- Do not take things that belong to other people without asking
- Respect people’s privacy
- Make sure you come home on time when asked
- Making sure you let people know where you are

RECORDING

Foster carers are asked to keep a diary of the time that you are living with them. They will regularly write down the things that you have been doing and things that have happened to you. This might be things that have happened at school, things you've done, places you have visited or family and friends that you have seen. This information will be shared with other people involved in your life, like your social worker. Information is only ever shared with people who have a right to know about what is happening in your life.

You have a right to know what our carers have written about you. We like our carers to share what they are writing with you as they do it. You might want to agree a regular time with your carer to talk about it. You can ask your carer to add any comments you want to make to their notes which they will do, or even write things down together.

Anything your carer writes down about you will always be kept in a safe and secure place so no one else can see it. When you leave your foster carer any information is returned to your social worker.

You do have the right to see any information that your carer has written about you and if you would like to do this then you can either speak to your social worker or your foster carers social worker who can arrange for this to happen.

MEETINGS, MEETINGS, MEETINGS!

There will be meetings to which you will be invited. They look at how everything is working out, and what else needs to happen to make sure you are being well looked after and supported. They are not reviews of YOU but about the arrangements for looking after you.

YOUR CARE PLAN OR PATHWAY PLAN

You will have a care plan, or if you are over 18 you will have a pathway plan. This is written by your social worker and is the plan for your future and covers all the important things like:

- How long you are going to be in foster care
- Where you are going to live
- How often you see your family and friends
- Your education and where you go to school
- Your health
- Things you like to do - hobbies, interests and activities

PLACEMENT PLANNING MEETING

The Placement Planning meeting is held within the first few days of your moving in to live with your foster carers. This meeting will discuss the details and arrangements for you stay with your carers.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEW

This is your meeting and will take place within 4 weeks of your moving in with your carers, again when you have been living with your carers for 3 months and then every 6 months. These are reviews of the care plans that have been made for how you are going to be looked after.

These meetings are to look at how things have gone and to plan for the next few months. It is important that you are able to go to these if you can, as it is a chance for you to talk to people about what you want.

The person in charge of the meeting is called the Independent Reviewing Officer. They have a really important job in making sure everyone is doing their very best for you.



INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS - IROs

When you first come into care an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) must be appointed for you. It is the IRO's job to make sure that decisions taken are ones that are best for you, follow your care plan and respect your rights. Once appointed the IRO MUST speak in private with you before your review, unless this is inappropriate or you say that you do not want this to happen. When they meet you they should do this one to one so that you can talk freely. They will also check with other people – your social worker, parents/carers and others involved in your life whether you are OK and happy where you are living and with your care plans. This information will help the IRO to understand how things are for you.

IROs are also there to make sure that your review is run properly; that your views are listened to; and, that your best interests are protected. They will do this by first, chairing your review, second, by letting you have your own say in your review; and third, by following up to make sure that people actually do what they agreed to do. These are your reviews, and it is very important that you make sure that the IRO knows how you feel and what you would want to happen.

If you have brothers and/or sisters in care they too will have the same IRO as you do.

You should know who your IRO is and how to make contact with them. If you are unsure ask your social worker or your foster carer who can find this out for you and let you have their contact details. You should keep the same IRO for the whole time that you are in care.

Write down your IRO's number here: _____

FOSTER CARERS ANNUAL REVIEW

All our foster carers have a meeting once a year when we look at how they have got on. We ask everyone to have their say which includes you and your social worker.

This is a chance for you to say what has been good about living with your carer, but also to tell us and them if you think there are things they could change or do better. No one knows everything and we want to learn so we can make things better.

PERSONAL EDUCATION

This is a meeting at school with your teacher, foster carer and social worker about how you are getting on in school.

ADVOCACY & INTERPRETERS

Some children may need the help of an interpreter or an advocate to take part in their review. This could be because they don't speak English very well, or they might want an advocate to speak up for them. Advocates can help if you don't feel confident that the adults around you are listening to your requests regarding your care. If you feel you need the help of an advocate please contact your social worker or talk to your foster carer so we can make this happen for you.

UNHAPPY ABOUT ANYTHING?

If you are unhappy or feel that something isn't right, you must speak to someone about this. It is important for us to hear about your concerns so that we can sort them out and ensure you are supported by your foster family. There are lots of people you can tell, your foster carer, your social worker, the Capstone social worker, a teacher or someone else you trust.

We promise that your worries or complaints will always be taken seriously and dealt with as quickly as possible. You should never worry about raising concerns, you will not be blamed for bringing things to our attention. Your feedback helps us to ensure that you receive the care you should, and makes our services better for the children and young people we support.

If you would like to get in touch, contact us at talk@capstonefostercare.co.uk. You can also call us free on 0800 012 4004.



INFORMATION WE HOLD ON YOU



What does the law say about your information?

The law says we must tell you what information we keep about you, and we must also keep this information safe. The only people who see it are people who need that information to help you.

How do we keep your information safe?

Information about you is kept on our computer system and we try to make sure that it is kept safe. Our workers must have a password from us before they can see the information and not all our workers will see your information. It will only be those people who are working with you or your foster carer.

Why does my foster carer write stuff about me?

When you live with our foster carer, they are asked to keep records about how you are getting on, what is going well and what is not going so well. Your foster carer is helped to do that by one of our social workers. This person may also write down things when they visit you and the foster carer. The law says we must keep information about you and share this information with your social worker.

How does my foster carer keep records?

Your foster carer will keep records on our computer system so that these are kept safe. If your foster carer has any notes on paper or things like letters from your school, these will go in a file that will be in a locked cupboard so no one else in the foster home can see them. This is because the records are your personal information and we must keep them safe.

Who sees the information about me?

The social worker who supports your foster carer will see the records your foster carer makes, and the boss of the social worker may also see the records. Your social worker will see the records too, and sometimes other people who are helping you may also need to see them. We will not show them to anyone who does not have a proper reason to see them.

How do we keep your information safe?

Information about you is kept on our computer system and we try to make sure that it is kept safe. Our workers must have a password from us before they can see the information and not all our workers will see your information. It will only be those people who are working with you or your foster carer.

Can I see the records that my foster carer keeps about me?

Yes, you have the legal right to see all the information about you but not information about other people. You can ask your foster carer or their social worker and they will sort out with you the best way to do this. You may want us to print the records out, or you may want to read them on a computer. You may want someone to be with you when you read the records. You may not want to read the records all at the same time. We can make a plan with you about the best way to do this.

Can I see the records that my social worker keeps about me?

Yes, you have the legal right to see all the information about you, but not information about other people. You can ask your social worker, or your foster carer, or their social worker. We will help you to sort this out.

What can I do if i am unhappy with what happened after I asked to see my information?

We have an important person in our fostering service called the Data Protection Officer whom you can ask to help sort this out. They can be contacted on **0121 374 2650** or by writing to the **Data Protection Officer at 28 The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham B38 8SD.**

If you have asked them, and you are still not happy, you can make a complaint to the Information Commissioner, who is an independent person and not part of our fostering service. Their contact details are:

Information Commissioner's Office:

Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF

www.ico.org.uk

Telephone: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545745 (national rate)

We can help you do this or you might want to get help from another organisation that helps children, like the **Children's Commissioner for England** (www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk, 020 7783 8330), or **Coram Voice** (www.coramvoice.org.uk, 0808 800 5792).

TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

We really like to have your feedback on our services, good and not so good. It tells us what we are getting right and how we can make things better. You can let us know by calling **0800 012 4004** or email **talk@capstonefostercare.co.uk**

If you don't want to talk to us directly there are lots of other agencies you could contact who will help you to raise your concerns with us. These are listed in the following pages of this guide. They will always listen and help you.

To make a formal complaint, you can take a look at our complaint policy on our website:
<https://www.capstonefostercare.co.uk/compliments-complaints/>.



WHO TO CONTACT

The Children's Commissioner for England

Promotes and protects children's rights in England

The Children's Commissioner is responsible for the rights of children who are in or leaving care, living away from home or receiving social care services. It is their job to make life better for all children and young people by making sure their rights are respected and realised and that their views are taken seriously. The Children's Commissioner has an Advice, Assistance and Representation service offering support to children and young people in care or leaving care. You can contact them using the details listed below by phone, email or writing.

Phone: 0800 528 0731

Email: advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/

Children's Commissioner for England
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT



Ofsted

Makes sure Capstone does its job properly. If you don't think we are doing a good job or have concerns about what we do you can tell them by either emailing, phoning or writing to them. The helpline is open Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 6.00pm.

Phone: 0300 123 4666

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD



ChildLine

ChildLine is a private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of 19. You can contact a ChildLine counsellor about anything - no problem is too big or too small.

Phone: 0800 1111

Website: www.childline.org.uk



Get Connected

Free, confidential help for young people under 25

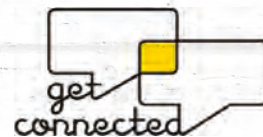
Get Connected is the UK's free, confidential and multi-issue helpline service for young people under 25 who need help, but don't know where to turn. They help young people find a path to a brighter future.

They can help children and young people no matter where they are in the UK and no matter what the issue. The service is available 365 days a year over the phone, via web chat, email or their free app.

Phone: 0808 808 4994

Email: www.getconnected.org.uk/email-us/

Website: <http://www.getconnected.org.uk/>



NYAS

NYAS is an advocacy helpline for children and young people in care. Their helpline is open from 9am to 8pm Monday to Friday, and 10am to 4pm on Saturday, excluding bank holidays.

You can contact them by:

Letter: just address the envelope containing your letter to 'Freepost NYAS'

Chatroom: Via the NYAS website Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm

Phone: 0808 808 1001 (please note that some mobile networks may charge the same as a landline charge to connect to 0808 numbers)

Email: help@nyas.net

Website: www.nyas.net

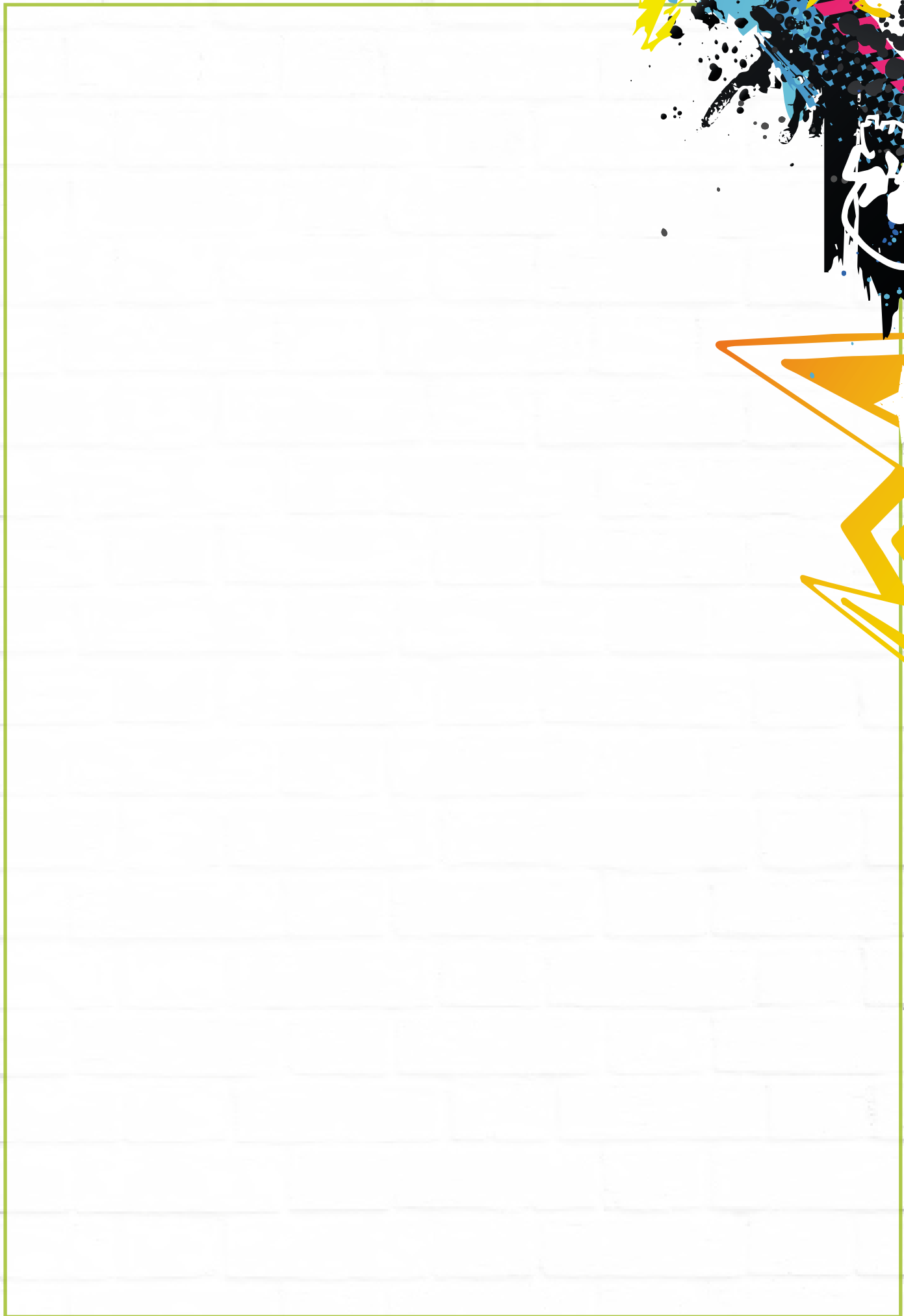




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Capstone
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Building brighter futures

If you want to get in touch or find out more about being fostered
please use the details below to contact us or visit our website.

T: 0800 012 4004 (Line open between 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday)
| E: talk@capstonefostercare.co.uk | W: www.capstonefostercare.co.uk