

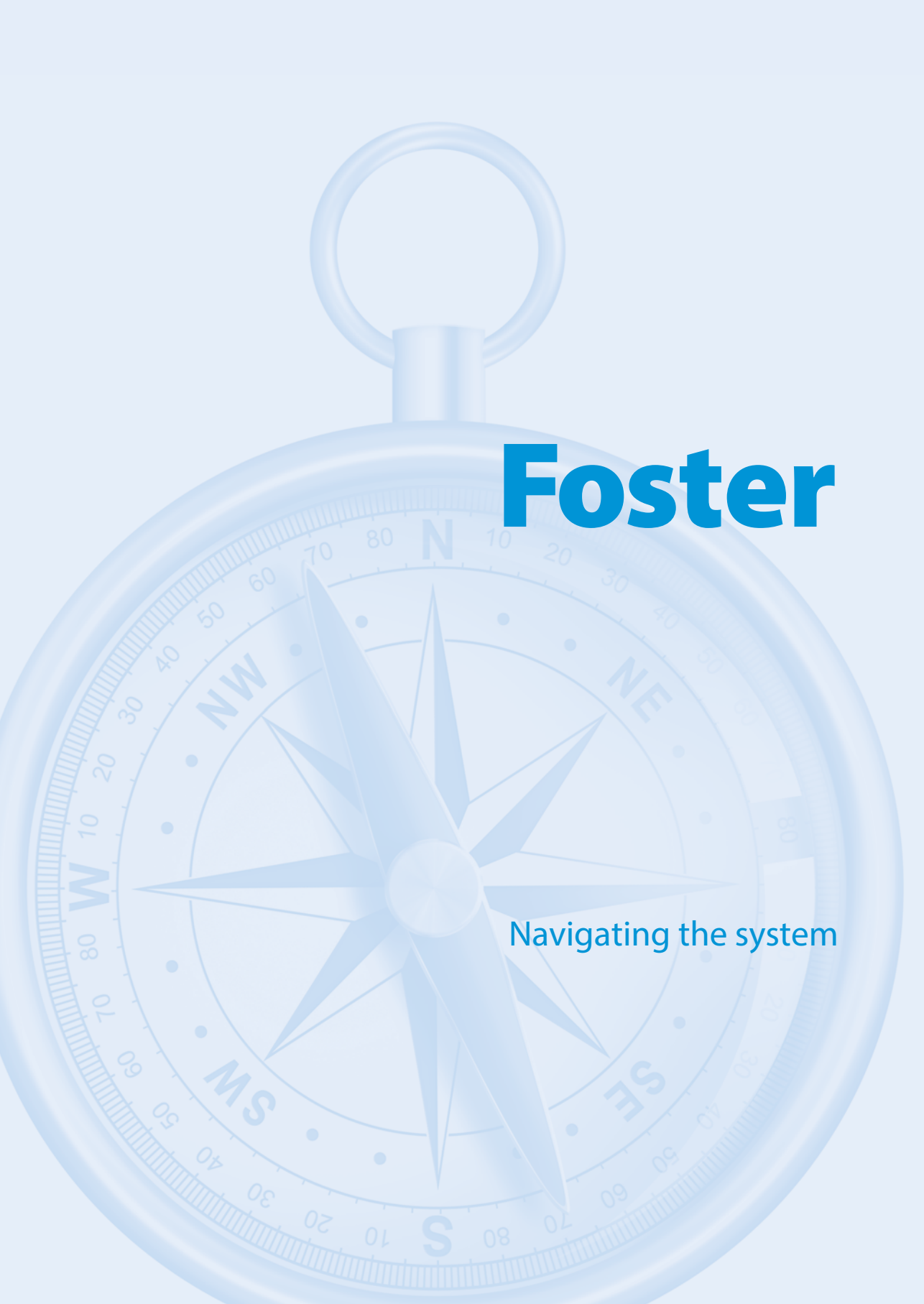
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Foster

Navigating the system



Irish Foster Care Association



Foster

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Foreword

Catherine Bond, IFCA Chief Executive Officer

Foster care is supported by numerous, complex systems. A working knowledge of these systems and processes can empower those who need to engage with them, and this is the focus of issue four of 'Foster' journal, entitled ***Navigating the system***.

Integral to the placement of a child in care is a care plan which sets out a detailed plan for the child, encompassing all aspects of their life. Those involved with the child have a responsibility to adhere to the actions set out in the care plan. There is a statutory requirement that child in care reviews are held regularly to ensure that the child's care plan is being implemented. Nerilee Ceatha and Trena Ratcliffe explain the child in care review process. They underline the importance of collaboration between everyone involved in the child's life to ensure, most importantly, that the voice of the child is heard.

The importance of the 'voice of the child' in court proceedings is also critical and Freda McKittrick of Barnardo's offers an overview of the role of the Guardian ad Litem. She defines the Guardian ad Litem as a skilled professional who can navigate court proceedings on behalf of the child and identify any inadequacies in their care plan.

An issue for many foster carers and social workers is access to specialist services for children with disabilities. Lorraine Dempsey, co-chairperson of the Special Needs Parents Association, offers readers a comprehensive overview of the services available to children and those who care for them. This informative article identifies the range of specialist services and entitlements available, including those concerning education. Katie Mannion of the Immigrant Council of Ireland outlines the immigration documentation requirements of migrant children in care and the steps towards meeting these legal obligations and making applications for Irish citizenship. Her article offers support towards ensuring that the rights of immigrant children are upheld.

The Adoption Act, 2010, allows for the provision of adoption from fostering where it becomes clear over time, through child in care reviews, that it will not be possible to reunite the child with their birth family. In cases where it is in the best interests of the child, adoption with the child's foster family may be a viable option. The Adoption Authority of Ireland outline the fostering to adoption process and how to engage with