



Cornerstone
because foundations matter.

Statement of Purpose

Fostering

2022



Cornerstone

Cornerstone (North East) Adoption and Fostering Service, trading as Cornerstone UK, is registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee no: 05663749 and registered as a charity no: 1114213 and in Scotland no: SC050836

Introduction

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with appropriate legislation and guidance including Children Act 1989, The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (Amendments 2013), Children and Young People Act 2008, Children Act 2004, Children Act 2014, Children Leaving Care Act 2000, The Fostering Services Care Standards Act 2000, Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010, Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2010 (2013) (2015), National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. These form the basis of the regulatory framework of the National Minimum Standards used by Ofsted to inspect all fostering services. Ofsted has responsibility for the regulation and inspection of Children's Social Care Services in England.

Cornerstone is the trading name of Cornerstone (North East) Adoption and Fostering Service, a Christian agency and a company limited by guarantee (number: 5663749). Initially launched in January 1999 as a "not for profit" voluntary fostering agency, the company was incorporated on 29 December 2005 in England and Wales and, following registration with CSCI as an Independent Fostering Agency on Friday 29 March, began trading as Cornerstone on Monday 3 April 2006. There are no conditions of registration. Cornerstone was registered as a Charity on 16 May 2006 (number: 1114213) and registered as a Post Adoption Support Agency on 19 June 2006. The registered office is in Doncaster.

Cornerstone is a Cross-Border Charity trading as 'Foundations matter ... for Caledonian Children' and is registered as a Charity in Scotland No. SC050836.

Contact Details

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Registration Authorities

Cornerstone is registered with Ofsted as an Independent Fostering Agency (Registration: SC066812)
All enquiries should be made to:

Ofsted

National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Core Values

- 1 **Unity** – We are Christians who love God and others, and we work together as a faith community.
- 2 **Children** – We put vulnerable children at the centre of all we do to change their stories within the context of a loving family.
- 3 **Development** – We provide holistic support to children, carers and staff so they reach their full potential.
- 4 **Stewardship** – We strive to be good stewards of God's gifts in our lives and God's creation by using our resources in a wise and ecologically friendly way.
- 5 **Reverence** – We listen and communicate with respect and care.
- 6 **Integrity** - We work diligently and from our hearts out of love for God to demonstrate our life in Christ throughout our personal lives and the entire organisation.

Unity – Children – Development – Stewardship – Reverence - Integrity

Aims

1. To ensure that any child or young person placed within one of our approved households is cared for kindly and respectfully in a safe, nurturing environment by skilled and informed carers. This is to promote the best possible outcomes for the child/young person and empower, equip and support them in fulfilling their life's opportunities, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation or ability.
2. To place the greatest importance on the safety and protection of children and young people, complying with all legal and regulatory requirements and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.
3. To provide a range of fostering placements to meet the needs of young people and children who need care and to extend the scope of our work to embrace the expressed needs of Christian families who wish to offer a variety of placement opportunities including Short-term, Long-term, Respite and Emergency Placements, Foster with a view to Adopt (Early Permanence), Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Minors, Parent and Child placements and Shared Care.
4. To continue to develop an expertise in providing and supporting the placement of children, including those with complex needs, and sibling groups into 'forever families'. 'Forever family' is a concept of permanence that extends beyond the child's or young person's time in care.
5. To form clusters of families in geographical regions who will operate as teams to deliver a high standard of care and to extend Cornerstone's reach into other regions of the United Kingdom for Fostering, and Post-Adoption Support Services, creating stronger links with other national Christian initiatives and local church partners. Currently there is one cluster in the North and another in the Midlands area supported from the Doncaster Office. We also have a Hub in Menstrie to serve the families in Scotland.

Objectives

1. To carefully and safely recruit foster carers and ensure that the service they provide to the children and young people is of the highest quality.
2. To offer an honest and attractive recruitment strategy which encourages and develops the interests of a wide range of potential carers in terms of ethnicity, culture and expressions of the Christian faith as outlined in Cornerstone's Statement of Faith and Code of Conduct.
3. To provide high quality assessments of carers within 8 months of the acceptance of their formal application using the 2-Stage CoramBAAF Process.
4. To establish Training and Development profiles for all our carers reflecting their on-going achievement of skills.
5. To continue to support therapeutic services in partnership with other providers.
6. To ensure all staff and volunteers and carers have access to an online version of the policies and procedures including details of the services offered, the equal opportunities policy and health and safety procedures. and are given a copy of the grievances and disciplinary policy as part of their Induction.
7. To ensure the agency has written policy and procedural guidelines on considering and responding to representations and complaints in accordance with legal requirements and relevant statutory guidance.

Principles

1. All children have a right to experience positive family life and values, which encourages a sense of belonging and identity that will enable them to move successfully into adulthood. They have a right to be safe and to experience a home life where their personal, physical, educational, spiritual, emotional and psychological needs are fully met.
2. All children placed can expect to be regarded as a family member with all the relational rights and privileges of a family member beyond the age of leaving care.
3. Each individual family is free to function as is natural to them and is not subject to unnecessary interference on the part of Cornerstone. However, each family has to carry out their duties in accordance with legislation and Cornerstone principles.
4. Cornerstone is a Christian agency and therefore all families are aware of, and are in agreement with, the ethos and values of the organisation. In accordance with the Children Act 1989, Cornerstone is committed to the spiritual, emotional, psychological and physical development of each individual young person. We respect their right to follow the faith of their birth, or fostering or adoptive family, or any other, or no faith.
5. Carers are a central part of the Cornerstone team: they have a right to all information about the child placed with them. Unless there are particular identified factors to the contrary, foster carers are able to make day to day decisions about the child in relation to health, education and leisure. The extent of such delegated authority is stated in the child's agreed placement plan.
6. Careful matching is at the core of our service delivery; permanent placements are matched robustly as if they were matched for adoption and this is reflected in each Inter-Agency Agreement. All short-term placements (including emergency and respite) are matched to the degree that is realistic given the time constraints.
7. Children are helped to give their views on all aspects of their care. Although it is not always possible to act upon children's wishes, the children always know they have been taken seriously and the reasons for their views not being accepted are given and explained in a way that they can understand. Children's views form a big part of the Foster Carers' Annual Review.
8. Children have a right to independent advice and support. The appropriate Children's Guide is given to each child and contains details of how they can obtain help from someone independent whom they can contact directly and in private.
9. The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care. Outcomes for all children are monitored to ensure that each child is reaching their potential. Our monitoring systems include: physical and mental health; progress in education; and positive experience of recreation and family life.
10. Each child is:
 - encouraged and supported, subject to their care plan, to maintain constructive Family Time with birth family, friends and everyone who has played a significant part in their life;
 - able to enjoy a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills and talents;
 - encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour and actions in a way that is appropriate to their age and ability;
 - helped to develop the skills needed to make and sustain friendships;
 - supported if they encounter discrimination or bullying; and
 - encouraged to exercise choice and gradually be prepared to become as independent as they are able, as they move into adulthood.
11. The skills, knowledge and services of a wide range of professional and lay people are drawn upon to ensure that each child reaches their potential, and that families are adequately resourced and equipped in their task. We recognise that people are our greatest asset.

Services

1. Our services allow for the needs of looked after children and young people to be met within the environment of stable and supportive families, who are themselves supported and enabled in their task.
2. Family Supervision and Support are provided by a qualified Social Worker no less than once every six weeks but may be more often, depending on the family's need. A family support worker is available, where appropriate, to support the family and children. In addition, all foster carers have two unannounced visits per year, as well as their Foster Carer Annual Review. Annual Reviews are an opportunity to give carers positive feedback for the work they have done.
3. Ongoing training for all carers through the planning and delivery of tailored packages, taking account of their current qualifications and skills, is provided. Any other additional training or support required by foster carers can be organised directly, or arranged with other agencies, by Cornerstone. Continuity and consistency of training has a high priority as a means of supporting the carers and staff in order to enable them to meet the needs of the young people. Core training as well as regulatory required paediatric first aid is completed according to our policy.
4. Cornerstone offers family days and an annual holiday for all its fostering families.
5. Emergency cover from a Cornerstone Social Worker (24 hours per day for 365 days per year). Each carer has access to an on-call rota with contact details.
6. Cornerstone believes in continuous development of staff and volunteers, including Panel Members. Staff and volunteer appraisals are also used as a tool to assess future training and development needs.

Model of Care

1. Cornerstone provides appropriately approved homes to meet the needs of individual children and young people. It provides care through a variety of placement options including those for children regarded as hard to place and for sibling groups.
2. Cornerstone allows for the needs of children and young people in the Looked After System to be met within the environment of stable and supportive homes with carers, who are themselves supported and enabled in their task. Many of the young people continue to benefit from therapy advocated for and sourced by Cornerstone.
3. Respect and recognition are given to the importance of all aspects of equality and diversity including ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language, gender and sexual orientation of the child/young person and their families. Consideration is also given to any disability of the child/young person being cared for, so that individual needs are met in every placement.
4. Cornerstone's provision includes our permanent "forever family" model, where commitment to the young person extends beyond the age of eighteen. Permanency may be provided through long term fostering or adoption.
5. Where it is in the best interests of the children, Cornerstone welcomes adoption and supports foster carers and the children through the process, and beyond. Cornerstone has a post adoption support service which is rated GOOD with Ofsted.
6. We adopt a range of methods to seek consultation with the children and young people regarding their wishes - be that oral, written or through electronic means.
7. We place the highest importance on safeguarding any child placed into our care. To this end we ensure that our carers are trained in all aspects of safeguarding vulnerable groups and their role and responsibilities in respect of this. Our supervision of carers reflects this priority and monitoring their practice in this area is of paramount importance to us. We recognise that safeguarding is not only the responsibility of everybody but, by engaging in this work, carers themselves can be at risk of allegations. Therefore, we maintain membership of Fostering Network, CoramBAAF and NAFP and all our comprehensive insurances are up to date. We have robust policies and procedures, which are regularly reviewed.

Number of Children and Families

For the period 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022 Cornerstone had

- 20 approved fostering households and 1 family in assessment
- 22 children in long term, short term, respite and emergency placements

Please see our Post-Adoption Support Service Statement of Purpose to understand the continuity aspect for Cornerstone families and children.

Recruitment and approval of foster carers

The following process is followed for any applicants who wish to become approved foster carers:

1. When an enquirer contacts Cornerstone to register an interest in fostering we direct them to Cornerstone's website where most information is held and also have an informal discussion with them.
2. All enquirers are treated with respect and courtesy. Anyone whom Cornerstone cannot help is assisted by redirecting them to either a local authority or to another agency which is more appropriate. Cornerstone has links with other independent agencies through our memberships of Fostering Network, CoramBAAF and NAFF.
3. Following the informal discussion (point 1 above) all suitable applicants receive an Initial Visit by a Supervising Social Worker to discuss the fostering process. The Supervising Social Worker then makes a recommendation whether to proceed or not, which will be agreed by the Registered Manager, and the applicants are informed accordingly.
4. The applicants are then invited to attend the Skills to Foster Training. This enables applicants to make an informed decision about making a formal application to be assessed. It also allows Cornerstone to consider the suitability of the applicants further.
5. Cornerstone will assess foster carers by completing the CoramBAAF 'Form F' The Social Worker discusses the information, skills and experience required, which will include age, health, personality, religion, employment, leisure and experience of caring for other children, including previous fostering experience if any. It is Cornerstone's aim to complete the assessment within 8 months of the application.
6. Enhanced DBS Checks for all applicants and members of the household aged 18 and over are required. Checks with other agencies are also carried out, and several references (including, but not limited to, employers and local authorities, personal, professional and spiritual) are obtained as part of the process.
7. A mid-way review is held with the applicants, Social Worker and Fostering Manager to discuss the process, concerns and strengths.
8. When the Form F assessment is complete and all checks and references are returned, the application is submitted to Cornerstone's Independent Fostering Panel for their recommendation. The applicants are invited to attend Panel.
9. The Agency Decision Maker makes the final decision on whether or not to approve the applicants as foster carers, and the terms of the approval. Applicants are informed verbally as soon as the decision is made and this is followed up in writing.

Support for Foster Carers

1. Following approval, a formal Foster Carer Agreement is signed with Cornerstone and updated at the Annual Reviews. This agreement outlines the expectations for each party, and the main features of the relationship. Carers are given online access to written policies, procedures and advice relating to their role as a foster carer including detailed advice and direction on a number of important aspects of caring in a **Unity – Children – Development – Stewardship – Reverence - Integrity**

regulated service such as child care reviews, child protection procedures, behaviour support and holding policy, missing children, etc. They are also given information regarding payments and allowances.

2. Each foster carer is directly supported by a named supervising Social Worker on a regular basis. The Social Worker advises and offers support to the foster carer and their family, and monitors the standards of care given to the child or young person. The Social Worker regularly visits the carers to offer support and monitor how a placement is progressing. They report any concerns or difficulties in the home or with the placement to their manager or liaise with the placing authority about any issues that need attention or discussion.
3. A Social Worker or Cornerstone Manager will make at least 2 unannounced visits to the foster home in every 12-month period. Social Workers maintain regular contact with carers who do not have children or young people placed with them. Social Workers also ensure that they see each child or young person in placement every eight weeks and seek their views on all aspects of the care they are receiving.
4. The Quality Assurance of the service is very important to the Trustees and Senior Management Team. Additional visits to some carers will be made by senior personnel and a report of the visit will be shared with the Trustees of Cornerstone.

Training for Foster Carers

1. All prospective foster carers are required to undertake the Skills to Foster Preparation Training. Prospective carers groups are available where they can meet with other families who are in the assessment process. Upon approval, all carers must undertake Induction Training and are supported to work towards their Training Support and Development Standards.
2. Cornerstone has an annual training programme and foster carers have individual learning and development plans linked to the programme. Undertaking learning and development is an ongoing mandatory requirement for Cornerstone foster carers, and there are certain core modules which must be completed. These include: Therapeutic Parenting with PACE, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Paediatric First Aid, Managing Challenging Behaviour, Education of LAC and Record-keeping. Other topics are included at foster carer's or Social Workers' requests.
3. All Cornerstone training for foster carers fits within a framework of equal opportunities, and anti-discriminatory practice as required by the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. Cornerstone provides practical and other assistance to facilitate attendance on training courses (whether internal, external or on-line) by carers, and organises the times, venues, etc. to maximise attendance by its carers in consultation with them.

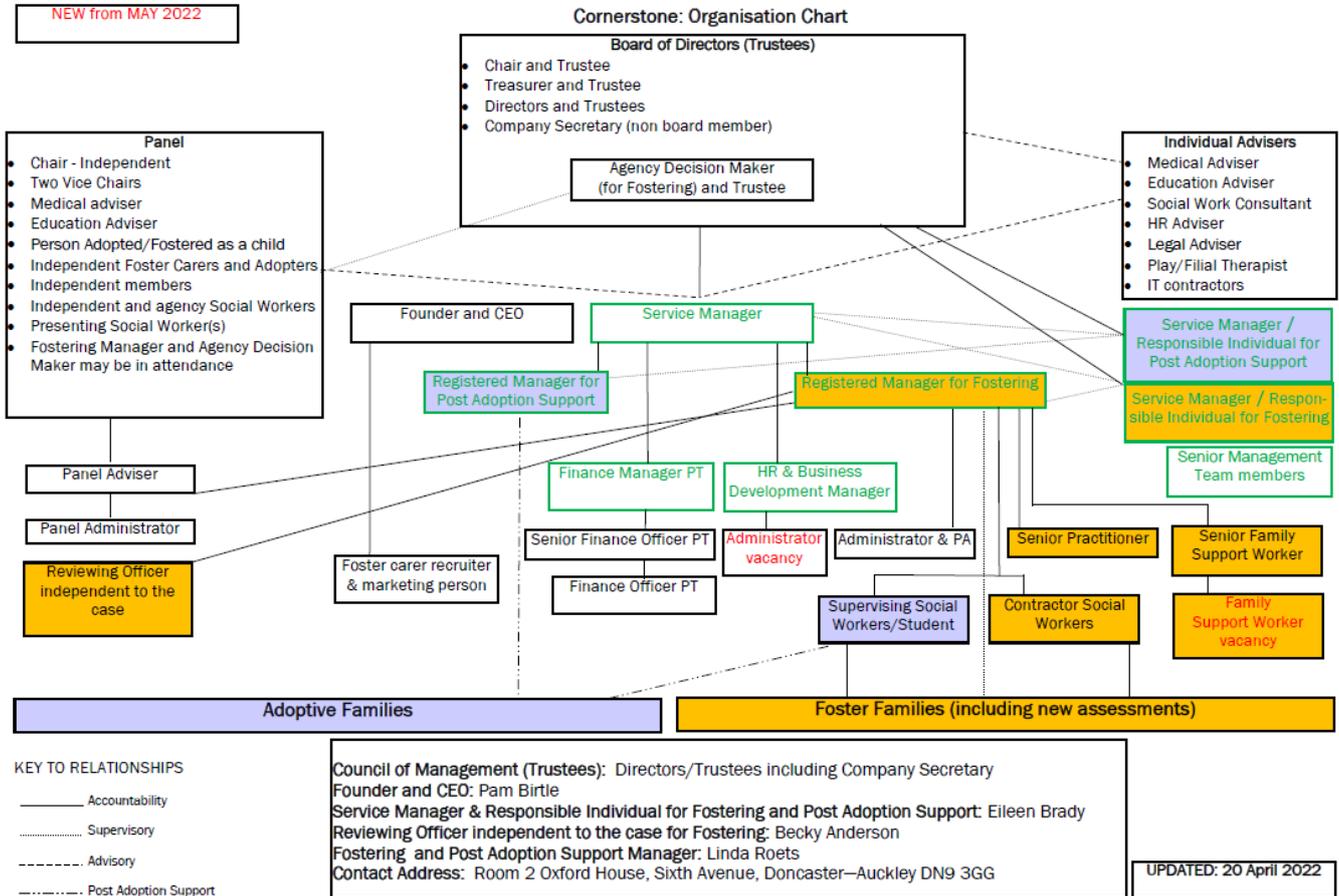
Compliments, Comments and Complaints

We want everyone to be satisfied with our service, but if anyone is feeling dissatisfied with any aspect of Cornerstone, attempts should be made as soon as possible to resolve the issue in an informal way. Cornerstone also has a clearly defined Complaints process that is accessible to children and young people and their families, foster carers, staff, Local Authorities and other independent persons. Complaints are treated respectfully, seriously and promptly, and resolution is sought as early in the process as possible.

The full Complaints Policy is available from Cornerstone on request.

Staff 2022

All staff and volunteers who work for Cornerstone hold a range of appropriately recognised qualifications, dependent on their role, and all social work staff are registered with Social Work England. They have management, teaching, administration and technical experience to ensure that the needs of Cornerstone are met. All staff receive regular supervision, support, training and appraisals. Pre-employment checks are undertaken, and all references are followed up. Enhanced DBS checks are undertaken.



The Statement of Purpose is reviewed on a regular basis, at least annually, but more frequently as and when information changes.