



Cornerstone

Statement of Purpose Fostering 2024

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

Reviewed April 2024

Unity – Children – Development – Stewardship – Reverence - Integrity

Introduction

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with appropriate legislation and guidance including The 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 2023. 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.

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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 safe families. Cornerstone endeavours to provide 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 development of skills.
5. To continue to support therapeutic services in partnership with other providers.
6. To ensure all staff, volunteers and carers have access to online Cornerstone policies and procedures.
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, but they have to carry out their duties in accordance with legislation, Cornerstone principles and the Fostering Agreement.

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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 short break) are matched to the degree that is realistic given the time constraints.
7. Children are encouraged to give their views regularly. Although it is not always possible to act upon children's wishes, children always know they have been taken seriously and the reasons for their views not being actioned are given and explained in a way that they can understand.
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. In agreement with their Foster Carers and Local Authority, we monitor their development through their Assessment of Needs to ensure that each child is reaching his or her full potential as this is updated regularly.
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 independent, in accordance with their ability, in their journey into adulthood.
11. The skills, knowledge, and services of a wide range of professional and lay people are drawn upon as needed and Cornerstone ensures 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. One of which is within six weeks of a new placement, as well as their Foster Carer Annual Review. Annual Reviews are an opportunity to give Carers positive feedback for the work they have done, as well as highlight any areas of development that are required and the provision of support that is available.

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). The on-call number is provided to each carer.
6. Cornerstone believes in continuous development of staff and volunteers, including Panel Members. 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. 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 striving for permanence, where commitment to the young person extends beyond the age of eighteen. Permanency may be provided through long-term fostering, adoption, or Special Guardianship Order.
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 the safeguarding of children. To this end we ensure that our Carers and staff are trained in safeguarding vulnerable groups and therefore they know their roles and responsibilities. Social Workers are vigilant in monitoring practices. We recognise that safeguarding is the responsibility of everybody.
8. Cornerstone maintains membership with Fostering Network, Foster Talk, CoramBAAF and NAFFP.

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 as well as having 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.

3. Following the informal discussion (point 1 above) all suitable applicants receive an Initial Visit by a Social Worker to discuss the fostering process and view their accommodation. The 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. As part of Cornerstone's assessment process all applicants are required to attend the Skills to Foster Training.
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. Medical assessments are completed by the applicant's GP and the Panel Medical Adviser writes a report for Panel.
7. A mid-way review is held with the applicants, Social Worker, and Registered 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 to approve the applicants as Foster Carers, and the terms of their 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 handbook which has advice relating to their role.
2. Each Foster Carer is regularly supported by a named supervising Social Worker. This Social Worker supervises and supports the Foster Carer and their family and monitors the standards of care given. 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 two unannounced visits to the foster home in every 12-month period. Supervising Social Workers maintain regular contact with carers who do not have children or young people placed with them. The Supervising Social Workers also ensure that they see each child or young person in placement 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 Supervising Social Workers' specific 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 2024

Cornerstone recruitment is in accordance with regulatory requirements. 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, training, 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 obtained. Please see organisational chart for staff involved within Cornerstone.

