



Cornerstone

Statement of Purpose Fostering 2025

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 UK 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 Mattersey.

Cornerstone is a Cross-Border Charity trading as 'Foundations Matter 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

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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 Looked After children and young people who are in need of a nurturing and caring family who are committed to seeing them enjoy the same quality of life and opportunities as other children. Additionally, to extend the scope of our work to enable the outworking of faith alongside the fostering task in order 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 and Parent and Child placements.
4. To provide a high-quality responsive child-centred service that will include the provision of therapeutic services in partnership with other providers
5. To continue to develop an expertise in providing and supporting the placement of children, including those with complex needs, and sibling groups into nurturing and caring families. Cornerstone UK is committed to endeavouring to provide permanence that extends beyond the child's or young person's time in care. To form clusters of families in geographical regions who provide mutual support and encouragement to deliver the expectation of a high standard of care and to extend Cornerstone UK's reach into other regions of the United Kingdom for Fostering, Adoption (URN: 123473) and Post-Adoption Support Services (URN: SC066944) creating stronger links with other national Christian initiatives and local church partners. Currently there is one cluster of fostering families in the Northeast of England and another in the Yorkshire, Humber and East Midlands area supported from offices in Doncaster and Gateshead.
6. In accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering to carefully and safely recruit Foster Carers and ensure that the service they provide to the children and young people provides the highest standards of care.
7. To engage in a strategy of recruitment which encourages and develops the interests of a wide range of potential foster carers from a wide spectrum of ethnic and cultural backgrounds as well as expressions of the Christian faith as outlined in Cornerstone's Statement of Faith and Code of Practice.
8. Ensuring that foster carers provide a nurturing and caring family home to children and young people that are looked after, and they provide opportunities for them to be consulted and actively participate in their care and family life in general.
9. To ensure that the service offered by Cornerstone UK is based on statutory requirements, good practice, and also processes to ensure that the voices of stakeholders such as looked after children and young people, foster carers and their children, as well as Panel members, have an opportunity to feed into the ongoing improvement of the agency.

Objectives

1. To promote looked after children and young people's physical, emotional and intellectual development by providing each with opportunities for developing their full potential through health care, education and leisure activities that will enhance their life chances.
2. To ensure that each foster carer has an allocated SSW who is there to provide supervision and expert support and who will assist with identifying and reviewing their training and development needs as part of a Personal Development Plan.

3. To enable and equip foster carers through training to have positive regard for the child/young person in their care and to support their racial, religious and cultural needs.
4. To regularly consult and learn from those in receipt of services through complaints, compliments and regular meetings via the Foster Carer Association, Foster Carer Forum and the Service Improvement Committee, as well as informal feedback.
5. To regularly consult with children and young people who are looked after and also the children of foster carers through a variety of mechanisms and creative methods to ensure that their voices are heard and what is said feeds into the continuous improvement of the service.
6. To continually improve services to stakeholders with a view to ensuring that what is carried out is aimed at promoting wellbeing and welfare of looked after children and young people.

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 in a way that instils the first principle, but there is also the expectation that they are function in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering, Cornerstone UK policies and procedures, as well as its Fostering and Supervision Agreements.
4. Cornerstone UK 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 UK 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 team around the child: 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 in accordance with the delegated authority as stated in the child's/young person's agreed Placement Plan.
6. Careful matching is a critical aspect of our service delivery; permanent placements are matched robustly with the aim of ensuring that a child/young person is placed where they their physical, emotional and intellectual development will be promoted through a range of opportunities that are aimed at enhancing their life chances. All short-term placements (including emergency and short break) are matched to maximise the opportunities for the physical, emotional, intellectual development as well as life opportunities of the child/young person who is placed.
7. Children will be regularly consulted on various aspects of the service provision as well as events.
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 Need to ensure that the skills and knowledge of foster carers are developed in order to enhance daily opportunities and through the creation of a nurturing environment that will enable a looked after child/young person to improve their life chances.
10. For each child and young person they will be:

- encouraged and supported, subject to their Care Plan, to maintain constructive Family Time with birth family, friends and anyone 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, support persons 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 are equipped, encouraged and supported via their personal network, church and Cornerstone UK staff to carry out the challenging and rewarding task of fostering.
2. Supervision is provided by a Supervising Social Worker on a bi-monthly basis, with online/telephone support meetings in the intervening months depending on the stability of the placement and the implications of this in terms of the fostering family. A Family Support Worker is available, where appropriate, to support the family and children. In addition, all Foster Carers have an unannounced but there is also the expectation that Supervising Social Workers will have support visits, a number of which may be in person and where this is the case, they are to observe the interaction of carers with the children and young people that are placed. 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. Personal Development Plans provide the opportunity for ongoing training for all Foster Carers through the planning and delivery of an annual training programme, core training and the agency's own specified training Framework. Any other additional training or support required by Foster Carers will be organised directly, or arranged with other agencies, by Cornerstone UK.
4. Cornerstone UK provides a range of activities and regional family days as well as an annual holiday to all fostering families that provides an opportunity for mutual support, fun, play and rest.
5. Cornerstone UK provides an Out Of Hours (OOH) Service after 5pm on weekdays and 24 hours a day during all weekends and public holidays. All foster carers and those support persons that provide overnight carer are provided with the OOH number
6. Cornerstone UK is committed to improving its service by providing stakeholder groups and individuals with training and development e.g. Fostering Panel, ADM etc as well as appraisals which are designed to provide constructive feedback and discuss future training and development needs.

Model of Care

1. Cornerstone UK provides a range of placement options to meet the needs of individual looked after children and young people

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Where it is in the best interests of the children, Cornerstone UK 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.
5. Cornerstone UK places the highest importance on the safeguarding of children and young people. To this end we ensure that foster carers, staff and stakeholders are trained in safeguarding vulnerable groups and therefore they know their roles and responsibilities. We recognise that safeguarding is the responsibility of everybody.
6. Cornerstone UK as part of ensuring that it delivers services that are built on good practice and research maintains membership with Fostering Network, Foster Talk, CoramBAAF and NAFPP.

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 talk to them informally and then provide details of our offer as a Fostering Service.
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, as will their Support Person(s)
5. Cornerstone will assess Foster Carers by completing the CoramBAAF 'Form F'. The Assessing 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 3-4 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 which is incorporated into the Form F after being analysed by the Assessing Social Worker.
7. 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.
8. 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 provided with supervision and support via a named Supervising Social Worker (SSW). The above is achieved through ensuring that Foster Carers understand the important role they play in contributing to meeting the needs of the child/young person who is in their care. Furthermore, through specific activities associated with post approval, pre-placement, during placement and at the end of a placement (see Foster Carer Supervision Policy for further details).
3. An unannounced visit to the foster home will be undertaken and there is also the expectation that the SSW is to have support visits, a number of which may be in person and where this is the case, they are to observe the interaction of carers with the children and young people that are placed. For foster carers who do not have children placed with them, the expectation is that their SSW will maintain regular contact through online support visits, as well as formal supervision.
4. As part of the support provided to foster carers Cornerstone UK has a Family Support Worker framework of support that has a spectrum that involves support at the start of a placement through to specific interventions that are designed to stabilise placements.

Training for Foster Carers

1. As part of the Form F process all prospective Foster Carers are required to undertake the Skills to Foster Preparation Training. Upon approval, all carers must undertake an induction programme that includes the completion of core training (Therapeutic Parenting with PACE, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Paediatric First Aid, Managing Challenging Behaviour, Education of LAC and Record-keeping) and the Training Support and Development Standards, as well as completion of training identified as part of Cornerstone UK's training framework.
2. Cornerstone UK has an annual training programme and Foster Carers have Personal Development Plans. Additionally, the organisation has a training framework that has levels of complexity based on experience as a foster carer and existing knowledge and skills.
3. All Cornerstone UK training for Foster Carers and staff fits within a framework of equal opportunities, and anti-discriminatory practice as required by the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. Cornerstone UK 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

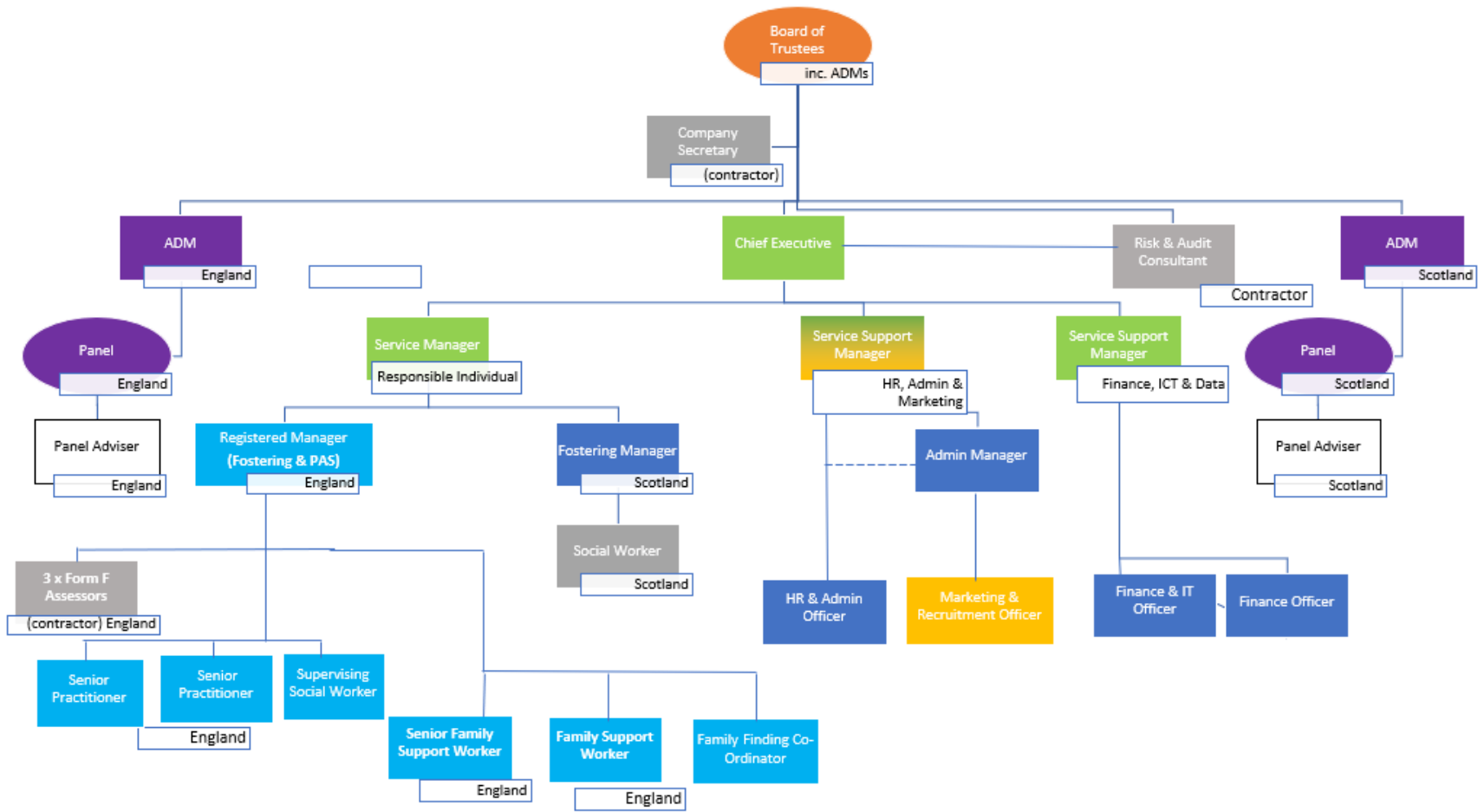
Cornerstone UK is committed to ensuring that the services provided are satisfactory and ensuring that through the complaints process it learns valuable lessons that promote continual improvement. To this end, all Foster Carers, looked after children and young people, as well as stakeholders e.g. Local Authorities, other professionals and independent persons are made aware of both our compliments and complaints processes. . 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 2025

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.

Organisational Chart



Reviewed April 2024