



**Cornerstone**  
because foundations matter

**Statement of Purpose:  
Voluntary Adoption Agency**

Cornerstone (North East) Adoption and Fostering Service  
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## Introduction

This Statement of Purpose is a public document for any person interested in adoption in either a professional or personal capacity. It outlines Cornerstone's philosophy and principles, on how the agency aims to deliver a comprehensive adoption service. This Statement of Purpose is underpinned by the requirements of the Adoption: National Minimum Standards 2014 – Standard 18 which are as follows:

- The Adoption agency (1232473) and Post Adoption Support service (SC066944) have a clear Statement of Purpose which is available to and understood by staff, volunteers, children, birth parents and guardians, prospective adopters and adopters, and is reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance.
- The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are outcome focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children.
- The Statement of Purpose is reviewed at least annually.
- The agency's policies, procedures and any written guidance to staff and volunteers accurately reflect the Statement of Purpose.
- Service users and staff are clear about the aims and objectives of the adoption agency, post adoption support service, and what facilities are provided. Furthermore, that the adoption agency/post adoption service meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose.

Cornerstone is the trading name of Cornerstone (North East) Adoption and Fostering Service, a Christian agency and a company limited by guarantee (number: 5663749). 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. It was registered as a Voluntary Adoption Agency on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025. The trading office is in Retford, Doncaster.

The Post-Adoption Support Manager is the proposed VAA Manager and is accountable to the Responsible Individual (RI) for the running of this service.

Currently the Manager is Kate Noor. The RI overseeing the service is Jenny Simpson. She is directly accountable to the Chief Executive Officer, Josh McDonald and the Board of Trustees

Cornerstone's governing documents specify that the charity will only recruit Christian staff, volunteers and carers. There is a Genuine Occupational Requirement on all posts.

Cornerstone has a set of standards and criteria that it regularly revises and updates to reflect changes in legislation, policy and good practice in order to ensure the effective provision of the adoption and fostering services offered to children and families.

Professional supervision and consultation is provided for the social work staff by appropriately qualified and experienced practitioners, the numbers of which are sufficient for the effective provision of the services offered by Cornerstone. Training and personal development is mandatory in terms of Social Work England compliance for social work staff. Similarly, there is an expectation as part of their terms and conditions for training and personal development which will be reviewed annually as part of the appraisal process.

The agency has a clear training and support programme for adopters. They are able to access the same training platform as the foster carer cohort and are invited to attend additional monthly training and peer support that is delivered by a range of professionals with the relevant expertise in the subject area. Training is additionally made available to family and friends of adoptive carers to support them in understanding adoption, and how best to support the adoptive family in their network.

Bespoke training can also be commissioned according to the needs of children and their families.

## Cornerstone's Core Values

**1 Unity** – We are Christians who love God and all people, 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 to reach their full potentials.

**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.

## Contact Details

Currently the registered office is (details as follows):

Cornerstone UK Adoption and Fostering Service

First Floor

Mattersey Hall Training Centre

Retford Road

MATTERSEY

DN10 5HD Email: [info@cornerstoneuk.org](mailto:info@cornerstoneuk.org)

Tel: 0191 5656423

[www.cornerstoneuk.org](http://www.cornerstoneuk.org)

## Registration Authorities

Cornerstone was registered with CSCI as a Post Adoption Support Agency on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006 (Registration: SC066944)

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007, all responsibility for fostering and adoption was transferred from CSCI to Ofsted and a new certificate was issued on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

Conditions of current registration are as follows:

- Must display the certificate
- May provide adoption support services to children and adults
- May provide birth record counselling and intermediary services

Cornerstone was registered with Ofsted as a Voluntary Adoption Agency on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

Conditions of current registration are as follows:

- Domestic adoption services (DA)
- Adoption support services for children and adults

All enquiries should be made to:

### **Ofsted**

National Business Unit

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

**Cornerstone's Post Adoption Support Service continues to be rated as a GOOD service by Ofsted.  
Last inspected in February 2023.**

## Cornerstone's Aims

To meet the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children and Families Act 2014, the overarching aim of Cornerstone Voluntary Adoption Agency and Post Adoption Support Service is as follows:

*Cornerstone provides an innovative, child-focussed service for children and adoptive families; with a vision to provide permanent, safe and loving homes with highly trained and supported adults who are able to meet children's needs and provide a secure relationship within which they can thrive throughout childhood and beyond, whilst acknowledging faith.*

To improve/ensure attachment and trauma informed post adoption support services to adoptive families.

Through the recruitment and assessment process, Cornerstone ensures adopters are prepared to meet the needs of children into the long term. From the outset, Cornerstone will help prospective adopters consider and develop their self-care, self-regulation and reflective skills. The recruitment and assessment process will involve prospective adopters 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

Early on, prospective adopters are introduced to attachment and developmental trauma theory and key Dyadic Developmental Principles (DDP). Cornerstone staff will model the DDP attitude of PACE. PACE is an acronym (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy) that conveys the importance of parents having a playful connection with their child, accepting the child's inner world, being curious about the meaning of underlying behaviour, and empathically connecting with the child's emotional state. PACE is at the heart of therapeutic re-parenting which Cornerstone promotes.

The provision of adoption support services is based on accurate and up-to-date assessment of need, drawing upon other professional expertise as necessary and guided by an understanding of developmental trauma, attachment, intersubjectivity and neurobiology theories.

The aim is to ensure that adoptive families receive the help they need when they need it and to offer support in ways that focus on enhancing family relationships.

As an organisation Cornerstone aims to ensure a culture of continuous challenge, innovation and improvement using research, academic input and stakeholder views and experiences. The organisational culture is geared towards building staff's capacity for regulation and reflection, maintaining openness with families, each other and with partner agencies. Cornerstone has performance and quality assurance systems in place to ensure a continuous journey of learning and improvement.

## Principles

All children have a right to experience positive family life and values, which encourage a sense of belonging and identity that enables them to move successfully into adulthood. They have a right to be safe and to experience a home life where their personal, physical, spiritual, emotional, educational and psychological needs are fully met.

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, their families, and their adopters. Consideration is given to any disability of the child adopted, so that individual needs are met.

Upon adoption the child is regarded as a full member of his or her family, who can meet their needs throughout childhood and beyond. Every child is listened to, has their wishes and feelings taken into account, to enjoy a healthy childhood which has their wellbeing at the centre. Moreover, to benefit from education and a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills and talents, as well as promote positive behaviours that support long term relationships

Each individual family is free to function as is natural to them but they have to carry out their responsibilities in accordance with legislation and Policy.

Cornerstone is a Christian agency and therefore all families are aware of, and are in agreement with, the ethos and values of the organisation. We respect the right of every child or young person to follow the faith of their adoptive family, any other, or no faith.

Cornerstone believes in continuous development of all stakeholders involved in adoption, this includes adopters, staff, members of the Adoption Panel and the ADM. To this end regular evaluation takes place of training delivered, role performance via appraisals, and service evaluation through feedback mechanisms made available to all stakeholders including children and young people. Regular evaluations of training, as well as consultations with adopters and staff, are used as a tool to look at future training and development needs.

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.

Children have a right to independent advice and support. The Welcome pack (Children's Guide), which is given to every child, contains details of how a child can obtain help from someone independent whom they can contact directly and in private. This will be made available in a variety of formats to accommodate children and young people who are identified as having additional needs.

The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care.

Each child is:

- a. encouraged and supported where appropriate in maintaining constructive direct or indirect contact with birth family (siblings, birth family members, birth parents and other people of significance to the child or young person as outline in the Adoption Support Plan), and everyone who has played a significant part in their life. Together with Life Story work, contact helps to promote a child's identity;
- b. able to enjoy a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills and talents;
- c. encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour and actions in a way that is appropriate to their age and ability;
- d. helped to develop the skills needed to make and sustain friendships;
- e. supported if they encounter discrimination or bullying; and
- f. encouraged to exercise choice and gradually be prepared to become independent, in accordance with their ability, in their journey into adulthood.

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.

## Cornerstone Procedures and Processes

Approaches to working with prospective and approved adoptive families are underpinned by an Adopter Charter that outlines Cornerstone's commitment to providing a professional, timely and relationship focused service.

All enquiries to Cornerstone, either by telephone or the Cornerstone website are forwarded to the Manager who will establish the nature of the contact and take basic personal information which is entered or checked on the electronic record system, SharePoint. As the business support staff are often a first point of contact into Cornerstone, they will aim to ensure all callers are left feeling understood and supported from the outset. Where enquirers only request information, this is logged and sent to them directly within 3 working days. For more detailed discussion the referrer is transferred to the Adoption Service Manager.

## Services to Prospective Adopters

Prospective adopters are prepared for adoption through a robust and thorough process in line with regulatory requirements and statutory guidance. These ensure safety and security for a child to be placed. Registrations of Interest to adopt are accepted in line with requirements and eligibility criteria.

The recruitment, information and preparation processes serve to raise awareness of adoption generally and specifically the needs of children currently waiting for placement. Throughout these processes Cornerstone is proactive in introducing models of attachment theory, intersubjectivity and how – through a DDP (Dyadic Development Psychotherapy) parenting ethos and PACE principles – they can establish strong emotional bonds with their adopted children forming the basis for secure attachments in the future.

Adoption Information Meetings are held regularly online and provide enquirers with:

- Information about the Cornerstone Adoption Service – pre and post adoption including details of the range of adoption support services
- Adoption activity and the number and needs of children who require adoption
- The process for adoption approval for both adopters and children. This includes children's experiences of trauma, loss and abuse and how they impact upon their development and how children need to be parented therapeutically as a consequence,

### *Stage 1 pre-assessment process and preparation groups*

Following receipt of the Information Meeting material, enquirers send through a Registration of Interest Form, which is followed by a home visit within 5 working days which may be online. The decision is made by the Adoption Service Manager to either:

- Accept an application
- Defer an application to adopt
- Undertake early checks and references
- Decline an application where enquirers are not suitable

Applicants are invited to attend the Adoption Preparation Course consisting of 6 core modules that may be facilitated in a blended format of both online and face to face. Applicants are required to complete all sessions which includes a module on adoption of siblings.

All applicants must be able to demonstrate that they fully appreciate the significance of adoption and the long-term impact that it will have on the child, themselves and their extended network of family and friends. The groups cover in more depth issues of attachment, the neurological impact and how PACE and DDP informed therapeutic parenting can assist them in remaining available and sensitive to a child's needs. A 'PACE-ful' attitude and approach is modelled during the course.

The stage 1 process also involves Cornerstone undertaking all necessary references and DBS checks including an adopter medical which is considered by the agency's Medical Advisor. Once these have been received and are satisfactory, the applicants can decide to proceed to stage 2 of the adoption assessment process or request a break for up to 6 months without needing to start the process again.

### *Stage 2 – Assessment process*

The Adopter Assessment Report (AAR) is completed. Social workers approach the assessment with an attitude of PACE with the aim of facilitating openness, discovery and a deeper understanding of the prospective adopter's experience. At the outset of the home study process an Assessment Agreement will be signed and the service aims to complete the assessment within 5 months of the agency accepting the adoption application. An Independent Assessor will be commissioned to undertake the assessment.

The assessment will include 6 personal references (for couples) in addition to former partners and children as appropriate, and in all cases a reference from the current employer/s is obtained as well as a Spiritual reference. Where applicants have previously worked with children or vulnerable people references are also sought. Applicants can read, comment upon and sign the completed assessment report after it has been approved to go to the Adoption Panel.

Prospective adopters are invited to attend the Cornerstone Adoption Panel when their application is being considered. Once the Cornerstone Agency Decision Maker has considered the Adoption Panel recommendation, applicants are informed of this within 5 days. Where the decision is to defer or not to approve as suitable to adopt, the prospective adopters are advised and notified in writing of their right to make representation, including the Independent Review Mechanism.

Approved adopters are reviewed annually. In circumstances where an adopter has not been matched within 2 years the review is considered by the Cornerstone Adoption Panel. Where three years have elapsed a re-assessment report is required (including statutory reference checks) which will consider whether the applicants are still suitable to adopt.

## **Services to adopters once approved**

### *Post approval*

Following approval, adopters will receive a comprehensive Post Approval Information Pack. Training events are promoted which are delivered online and in-person. Post placement the Therapeutic and Sensory Based Parenting is available that covers DDP informed parenting techniques and understanding the meaning of behaviour in more detail. The key message of the training is that addressing problems with behaviour is more effectively done when adoptive parents have understood the child more and can experience some empathy for the child.

The minimum visiting frequency by the adoption social worker is 3 monthly and the adoption social worker remains involved with the adoptive family for 12 months following the granting of the adoption order.

## **Adoption support**

Cornerstone provides the following services as standard provision for adoptive families:

- Post approval allocation for social worker services
- Placement matching and support
- Support for 12 months post order with a minimum of quarterly contact
- Training via the E-learning platform
- Monthly peer support groups
- Subsequent requests for an Assessment of Need for Adoption
- Monthly programme of training for adoptive parents
- A training programme for family and friends of adoptive parents
- Organisation of events to enable adopted children to meet
- Out of hours telephone support and advice
- Post adoption counselling and support
- Dyadic developmental therapy

- Support and counselling to adults who have an adoption connection

The following training courses are actively promoted which may also be funded through the Adoption Support Fund:

- Therapeutic and sensory based parenting
- Theraplay
- P-Cap Parent to child attachment play programme

## **Compliments, Comments and Complaints**

Cornerstone UK is committed to ensuring that the services provided are satisfactory and to ensuring that through the complaints process it learns valuable lessons that promote continual improvement. To this end, all Adopters, 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.

## **Quality Assurance Processes**

Cornerstone has a range of quality assurance processes in place. These processes serve to answer two key questions:

- What do we know about the quality and impact of practice?
- How does Cornerstone know this?

They also reflect the commitment that Cornerstone has to continuous improvement, equality, diversity and inclusion and DDP informed practices, that are all encompassing in our aim to achieve good outcomes for children and adoptive families.

Cornerstone reviews and improves its service and performance through the effective use of data and robust quality assurance processes. Regular reports are made available for the CEO and Board of Trustees. The Adoption Panel also has feedback processes in place and reports on the quality of adoption practice to the agency.

Further the CEO and Board of Trustees receives details of complaints and data breaches and actions taken. Safeguarding and causes of concern for children in adoptive placements are also

recorded and monitored by the Service Manager, ensuring that remedial action is taken and service improvements delivered.

- All Social Workers are registered with Social Work England, and all staff are subject to an enhanced Criminal Record Check and references.
- All staff receive regular formal supervision and an annual appraisal
- All adoption panel members will be formally appraised on an annual basis
- The agency will produce an annual report about the activity and performance of panel including statistics, membership and issues of interest or concern
- Panel will receive regular updates from the agency on the progress of approved adopters in family finding and placements made
- Panel will provide feedback on the quality of reports to the agency.
- All prospective adopters and social workers will be asked to provide written feedback following attendance at panel
- Panel considers reports of disrupted placements to advise on lessons to be learned
- All approved prospective adopters who do not have placements will have an annual review.
- A report on the adoption service is presented three times a year to the Board of Trustees
- The adoption service is inspected by Ofsted

# Organisational Structure

