

## Inspection report for Cornerstone

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<b>Inspection date</b>	28 April 2010
<b>Inspector</b>	Sean White
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Key
<b>Type of registration</b>	Adoption Support Agency

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding:* this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

*Good:* this aspect of the provision is strong

*Satisfactory:* this aspect of the provision is sound

*Inadequate:* this aspect of the provision is not good enough

*Not judged:* this aspect of the provision was not judged

## **Service Information**

### **Brief description of the service**

Cornerstone (North East) is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It was established in 1999 as an independent fostering agency (and is registered as such) for children on a long term or permanent basis with foster carers who have a practising Christian faith background.

Because so many of its foster carers went on to adopt the children they were looking after, Cornerstone continued to offer support; therefore the adoption support service was registered as a result of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

Cornerstone is an adoption support agency that provides services to only two families at present.

### **Summary**

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This was a key, announced inspection. The agency provides well managed services to people affected by adoption, which has their safety, welfare and well-being at the core of its operations. It is staffed by experienced, conscientious workers who take their duties and responsibilities seriously and who often exceed that which is expected of them.

The core work of supporting people, following an inclusive assessment of their needs, is undertaken with great commitment, clear understanding and professional integrity. Families receive an excellent service which they appreciate and value.

### **What the service does well**

The agency provides a very personalised, bespoke support service to those requesting it. Support is undertaken following a thorough assessment of needs and circumstances, which are regularly reviewed and which the service users are fully involved in.

The agency is very responsive and reacts in a timely way. It manages crises well, and families are very appreciative of the qualities and professional approach of managers and workers. There is added value to the support provided through the agency's ability and willingness to offer spiritual support when families request it.

### **What has been improved since the last inspection**

This is the first inspection of this service by Ofsted.

## **What sort of service is it?**

### **Statement of purpose**

The provision is good.

There is a well presented Statement of Purpose that describes clearly the agency's aims and objectives and how services are provided. It is particularly clear about providing services based on assessments of need and the inclusion of families in the process.

The statement includes all required information and is available to service users and partner agencies.

The agency has a colourful and informative children's guide that is used to help children understand the service and what it offers and provides; social workers take children through the guide rather than just handing it out. The guide, however, has out of date information regarding the registration authority.

### **Safeguarding and promoting welfare**

The provision is good

The agency provides support to families in a way that ensures they feel safe. There is a clear understanding of current law and thinking in safeguarding matters and workers are knowledgeable about contemporary practice in this area.

### **User focused services**

The provision is outstanding.

The agency provides bespoke support for families based on detailed assessments of need. There is a clear understanding of, and commitment to, the involvement of families in determining their support needs and how they might be met.

The level of support provided to families is impressive. The agency reacts quickly and responsively to crises and its knowledge and understanding of the families' backgrounds and circumstances enables it to be up to date and informed about complex issues that are being experienced.

Service users are clear that the support they receive will be based on a mutual

understanding of the reasons for that support and includes a deep trust in the agency's ability to understand and react positively to their spiritual needs.

## **Service delivery**

The provision is outstanding.

The agency has a clear, focused approach to the services it provides. Families receive a responsive service that they are consulted about on an on-going basis to ensure that their needs are being met and the support provided is what they expect.

The agency has a conscientious and dynamic approach to the families it works with. Families receive a clearly defined package of support that is detailed and recorded as being relevant to their individual circumstances and challenges. Workers demonstrate clarity of understanding of needs and undertake their duties with skill and commitment, often above and beyond that which is expected. This includes a spiritual dimension that is highly valued by service users who view this as an essential and integral aspect of their support needs.

## **Fitness to provide or manage an adoption support agency**

The provision is good.

The manager of the agency is a qualified and knowledgeable social worker with significant experience in family placement; she has been subject to all necessary and required checks to determine her suitability.

The agency is managed and led in a dynamic and efficient way that ensures services are delivered as required and to the satisfaction of service users. Strong leadership and sensitive management ensure that workers are motivated and supported to undertake their roles and responsibilities to the best of their abilities.

## **Management of the adoption support agency**

The provision is good.

The manager undertakes her duties and responsibilities conscientiously, efficiently and with due regard for the well-being and welfare of people affected by adoption.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The service extends a warm and embracing welcome to all people of devout Christian faith regardless of their racial heritage.

The manager ensures that the service is run as it is outlined in the Statement of

Purpose, which is explicit in the way that services are defined and undertaken. Families demonstrate significant appreciation of the way the service responds to their needs.

There is regular oversight and monitoring undertaken by the Trustees of the agency, who are kept informed of the work of the service by the manager.

## **Employment and management of staff and volunteers**

The provision is good.

The agency is staffed by experienced and qualified workers who demonstrate skills and knowledge in supporting people affected by adoption. Recruitment and selection processes are robust and ensure that only suitable workers are employed. There are sufficient workers in post to manage the current workload.

There is a clear management and accountability framework in place and workers are clear about the structure of the agency and its responsibilities. Workload allocation and management are efficient and equitable and workers are well supported and supervised to undertake their duties to a high standard. There are good opportunities for training and staff development which enable workers to enhance their knowledge and skills in a range of areas relevant to their work.

The agency provides a safe, supportive and encouraging environment that workers appreciate and value; advice and supervision are always available and the manager ensures that staff have every opportunity to explore issues as they arise.

## **Individual practitioners**

The provision is not judged.

## **Complaints and representations**

The provision is good.

There is a suitable complaints procedure in place and a corresponding one aimed at children. The agency also ensures that children are able to access other agencies if they wish to raise issues of concern.

## Records

The provision is good.

The agency has an efficient administrative framework and systems are in place to ensure that records are kept secure. There are separate records kept for all aspects of the agency's work, including complaints and allegations.

Case records are well ordered and contain all required information. Recording is clear, contemporaneous and reflects the work that is being undertaken. There are systems in place to monitor and comment upon the quality of case records and recording.

Staff records are well maintained and include all information required by regulations.

## Fitness of premises

The provision is good.

The agency operates from comfortable premises that are accessible to people who have legitimate business, including people with a disability. There are suitable IT and administrative resources to support the operational work of the service and facilities for secure storage of all confidential records.

## Financial requirements

The provision is good.

The agency has robust accounting systems in place that ensure constant oversight of finance is maintained. There are clear procedures in place that all staff are aware of. The agency's accounts are formally audited and a financial statement is presented to the Trustees annually. The financial statement demonstrates that the agency is financially viable.



## Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered provider(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Adoption Support regulations and the National Minimum Standards. The registered provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std	Action	Due date
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## Recommendations

These recommendations relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the registered provider(s) to consider carrying out.

Statement of Purpose	provide up to date information in respect of the registration authority in the children's guide. (NMS 1)
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