Guide to Fostering with Cornerways

fostering@cornerways.org
www.cornerwaysfosteringservices.org
01293 826 830

Join us now and make a real difference to a child’s life.
Welcome to Cornerways Fostering Services!

We are a truly independent fostering agency covering much of Surrey, West Sussex and surrounding areas.

We hope that you’ll find what you are looking for in our Guide. It is designed to give you an overview of fostering. If you feel fostering could be the vocation for you one of our experts would love to speak with you.

Our role as a Fostering Service

Our purpose as a fostering service is to provide safe and supportive foster homes for children and young people who can't live with their own families - some for a short time and some for the rest of their childhood.

We care for young people who need the time, care and attention of a foster carer so they can enjoy their life safely and then successfully move into adulthood and become a fulfilled person within the community.

We provide fostering for children from all sorts of backgrounds, from age 0 to 18. Some of our carers provide specialist foster placements for parents with young babies who need extra assistance, support and guidance. We also have carers who look after unaccompanied asylum seeking children and help them with the legal processes involved and also with adapting to the different language and culture they often encounter on arriving in the UK.

fostering@cornerways.org
www.cornerways.org 01293 826 830
Fostering offers a safe way of life for children who can’t live with their own families. Foster carers welcome children into their homes and help them to grow and feel happy again by providing them with stability, affection, consistency and nurturing.

Foster care can provide temporary care while a child’s parents get help sorting out their own problems or can help to support children through difficult periods in their lives. It can provide practical and emotional support for parents and babies to help them develop parenting skills and confidence. Some children will return home after a period in foster care, some will stay in long term care until they can live independently as adults and some will move to adoption.

Foster carers are role models and advocates who play a very important part in the team of professionals including social workers, schools, health care workers and therapists. To be a foster carer takes commitment, time and enthusiasm as well as an ability to work with professionals and the child’s birth family members in a confident and competent way.
Local authorities are the services that identify children who can't live with their own families and try to find them an alternative safe family. The courts and the child's parents may also be involved in this decision. The local authority either places children with foster carers who work for the local authority or contracts the work out to independent agencies such as Cornerways.

The social care and business relationships Cornerways has with local authorities are based on our "Good" Ofsted inspection rating. We go through a regional tending process with local authorities, during which all aspects of our service are scrutinised. We are contracted as "Preferred Providers" to the following local authorities:

- Brighton & Hove and West Sussex
- Croydon
- All 33 London Boroughs
- South West London Commissioning Group (Wandsworth, Kingston, Richmond, Sutton, Merton)
- Southern Region (Surrey County Council, Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth County Council, Reading Borough Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Bracknell Forest Council, Slough Borough Council, Southampton City Council, West Berkshire Council, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Woking Borough Council)
Diversity: Here at Cornerways we embrace diversity and recruit foster carers from all backgrounds. We recruit single people or couples, with or without birth children, regardless of faith, sexuality, gender or race. Children under 5 years need to be in a smoke-free environment.

Support: There is always a social worker at the end of the phone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to ensure that our carers have professional support whenever they need it.

Matching: Our Foster Carers are matched carefully with a child or young person, siblings or maybe a parent and baby depending on each carer’s abilities, circumstances, registration and wishes. Our foster carers are fully involved in deciding who is placed in their home. Cornerways has a good reputation for matching children with carers very carefully and has very low numbers of placements going wrong after a child arrives.

Experience: Over 10 years of experience operating as a fostering service which is owned and run by a team of dedicated social workers.

Other Benefits: Prompt weekly payments to carers. Foster carer charter written and agreed by foster carers.

What makes Cornerways special?
What do we look for in a Cornerways Foster Carer?

We need foster carers with **ENTHUSIASM, COMMITMENT** and a desire to provide **OPPORTUNITIES** for children to **GROW** and **DEVELOP**.

- A comfortable, secure home (mortgage or tenancy) in the right location to foster with us.
- A tolerant attitude towards others regardless of faith, ethnicity, background or culture.
- Steady financial circumstances without major debt (except mortgage).
- Families without very young children.
- Good general and mental health.
- Integrity, transparency and open communication.
- A strong local support network of family/friends.
- A readiness for the reality that fostering completely changes your day to day life.
- An acceptable DBS check.
- At least 1 spare bedroom and adequate social space in the home.
- Probably age 25+ (no upper limit).
- A recognition of the need to work within Cornerways’ policies and the standards and procedures of the law.
- Reconciliation with any significant life events in your life over the past 18 months (eg. bereavement, divorce, serious physical or mental illness).
Main Responsibility: To provide a safe, caring, healthy and nurturing environment for young people in a way that promotes their individual wellbeing and development towards maturity.

In General: To inform and seek help from Cornerways Fostering Services with any concerns relating to a fostered child/young person or any impediment to fulfilling the expectations of the role of the foster carer, using the out of hours telephone support if needed.

Responsibility 1: To actively and positively support children/young people to achieve good outcomes in the following areas:

* Safety  * Health  * Resilience  * Self-esteem  * Emotional intelligence  * Control
* Relationships  * Achievement  * Preparation for Adulthood

Responsibility 2: To work to the legal, financial, equality & valuing diversity requirements within the fostering role.

- To promote equality and diversity and to support the cultures and beliefs of young people.
- To work to all the agreements of the Foster Care Agreement/Terms and Conditions regarding the care of and disciplining of children.
- To understand and meet the legal requirements of foster carers and fostering services.
- To properly maintain files and records in accordance with our policies and procedures.
- To complete daily/weekly records for each child and to provide written and/ or verbal information to other professionals as required.
- To provide adequate insurance cover for the home, transport and overseas travel.
Responsibility 3: To work in close partnership with Cornerways and external people or organisations linked to the young people.

- To engage in proactive and open communication, informing Cornerways of any changes of circumstance.
- To work with social workers and other agencies as required, including attendance and participation in multi-professional meetings. Maintaining up to date records and sharing records.
- To participate in regular supervision with your fostering social worker and to follow all plans as required.

Responsibility 4: To develop skills and knowledge in fostering.

- To participate in all basic training courses: child protection, first aid, attachment & record keeping.
- To attend other appropriate training courses, carer groups & events.
- To complete TSDS induction standards within the first year of registration.
- To notify Cornerways of any changes that could affect your fostering.

Responsibility 5: To take responsibility for personal affairs such as finance, tax and your family's health:

- To successfully manage personal, financial and tax affairs arising from all fostering activities.
- To ensure that allowances for children are accounted for and used appropriately.
- To support young people in claiming any appropriate benefits (eg for disability issues).
- To be aware of and manage one’s own health and that of family members in the household.
- To notify Cornerways of any changes that could affect your fostering.
What do foster carers do all day?

Caring for young people:

* Encouraging young people to build life skills such as cooking, saving money and making friends.
* Teaching young people to care for themselves and develop interests.
* Ensuring children receive all appropriate medical checks and attend health appointments.
* Keeping children and young people safe both inside and outside the home.
* Helping young people to enjoy life and have fun through providing opportunities for shared activities and clubs and providing transport as necessary.
* Supporting the individual's developing sense of identity and their cultural and religious interests.
* Providing a welcoming, comfortable home with nutritious food and appropriate clothing.
* Listening carefully to help young people through times of crisis and difficult separations & with their life choices.

Personal Development:

* Attending training to develop their own skills and share their knowledge with other carers.
* Meeting fellow Cornerways carers to share experiences and support each other.
* Checking the Cornerways website carer page for information and news.

Working with Others:

* Attending professional meetings with education providers and social workers.
* Keeping detailed records of health, education, finance and daily events around the child.
* Speaking frequently to Cornerways for support and advice and to keep everyone informed.
* Enabling, encouraging and transporting children to contact with their birth families.
* Supporting and helping to assess parents in the care of their babies.
* Attending meetings with professionals involved with a child to plan and help the child develop.
* Advocating for children and young people so their needs are met and their views are heard.
Payments are made **WEEKLY** when a child is in placement. The amounts vary a little depending on the type and complexity of the placement and the age of the child. As an example, here is a breakdown of the weekly payments for a foster carer looking after a 14 year old:

- **Fee paid to foster carer**: £235
- **Maintenance Allowance for the child**:
  - £15 pocket money
  - £10 savings
  - £25 clothes
  - £12 travel tickets
  - £2 to save towards birthday
  - £113 all other expenses including food, hobbies, trips, toiletries, school equipment & toys/games.

- **Up to 2 weeks of respite care each year.**
- **Birthday lump sum**: £125 to put towards a party/gift/outing.
- **40p per mile after the first 15 miles per journey plus mileage for up to 4 training days/year.**
- **Holiday allowance**: £125 x 2 each year (this does not apply for very short term placements).
Depending on the type of fostering you choose to undertake, fostering may or may not be your main source of household income. Some people undertake long term fostering while others just provide short periods of respite care. You are paid for the time that you are looking after a child/young person.

Foster carers are considered to be self-employed and must register as such. They are responsible for completing tax returns as appropriate. They must ensure they have adequate insurance for their homes, holidays and vehicles and must ensure they inform their insurance providers that they are foster carers. Home insurance specific to foster carers is recommended.

From April 2003 the Inland Revenue simplified taxation for foster carers and established a “Tax Exempt” element of fees to encourage family placements. This equates to an individual limit of £10,000 per residence per year with an additional tax exempt amount per child per week.*

* Correct at time of publication – please see HMRC website for more information.
Who could you foster?

All sorts of children and young people enter foster care and the type of child you choose to look after will depend on a variety of factors such as the child's needs (social, emotional, location, cultural, religious, contact with birth family), your family circumstances and interests and the requirements of the local authority. At Cornerways we take all of these things into account when matching a child with a foster carer and we only place a child if the carer is in agreement with the match. Here are some of the different types of fostering you could consider:

Parent & Child

Parent and child placements occur where there are concerns over parenting ability or about potential danger in the community to the parent and/or child. Carers are trained to record observations, give evidence in court and help the parent to develop good child care skills. The parent may be a teenager or already an adult and is likely to face challenges in their own life. This is a specialised activity and Cornerways focuses on delivering very competent and experienced carers for parent and baby fostering.

UASC

Many unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) arrive every year in the UK from overseas. Many of these children have lived through traumatic experiences and require high levels of nurturing. They may need support adapting to a different culture and language and with getting their asylum claims processed.

fostering@cornerways.org
www.cornerways.org    01293 826 830
Who could you foster?

Short Term

During a crisis in a child’s life while a plan for their future is made.

Foster carers work with the child’s family and Social Worker to help the child keep in contact with important people. They ensure that the child’s health and educational needs are met and that the child feels accepted, valued, protected, listened to, encouraged and cared for.

Sometimes an emergency foster placement is made when there has been a sudden and unexpected breakdown in a child’s normal life. In these cases a child may be placed on the same day. Some carers also provide respite, short regular or one off breaks so to help children remain with their birth parents.

Long Term

For young people aged 9+ who can’t return to their birth family.

A commitment to care for a child through all the ups and downs of growing up and, eventually, to help prepare them for independent life.
The Application Process

Whether you have fostered in the past and want to take up fostering again, are new to fostering or are currently a foster carer looking for a change of agency we would like to talk to you about fostering with Cornerways.

1. Once you have expressed an interest in fostering one of our social workers will call you for a chat and will arrange to visit your home.

2. If you meet our basic criteria and would like to work with us we invite you to our 3 day “Skills to Foster” training. This helps you to explore fostering in more depth and decide if it is right for you.

3. Your **formal assessment** starts. This is in 2 stages:
   - **Stage 1** – we take up references and carry out checks on you and your household, including DBS checks and medicals.
   - **Stage 2** – we visit you and your family several times and then write an assessment report that details your life experiences, skills and potential as a foster carer.

4. The independent Cornerways Fostering Panel considers your application and makes a recommendation about your approval to our Decision Maker. Once approved, you can begin to foster. The whole process takes about 4-6 months.

fostering@cornerways.org
www.cornerways.org    01293 826 830
Training and Development

Our foster carers are expected to attend 4-6 training sessions a year. Training can include:

**Formal training.** Provided by external trainers or by our own social workers. These courses usually last for 4 hours and run on week days.

**Informal carer groups** run by our social workers. Carers meet to discuss a variety of topics relevant to their fostering.

**Online training** specifically aimed specifically at foster carers. Carers can undertake these short courses (usually 1-2 hours) at a time convenient to them in their own home.

What types of training might a foster carer need?

**Mandatory training.** We expect all of our carers to undertake first aid and child protection/safeguarding training every 3 years. During a foster carer’s first year they must also complete their “Training and Development Standards” workbook.

**Other training.** Possible courses include managing behaviour, internet safety, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, child development, parent and child, risk assessment, promoting independence and many more.

“I like to attend training and I think it is important to keep up your skills and to learn about what is going on. Also you train with other foster carers and it is a chance to share experiences, give each other advice. Training has very much had a positive effect on my fostering. You are never too old to learn!”

MR – Cornerways foster carer

fostering@cornerways.org
www.cornerways.org    01293 826 830
Fiona is the Head of Fostering Services and Registered Manager for Cornerways Fostering Services. Fiona has managed the service since it began in 2003, having previously worked in a large local authority for many years as a children's social worker, fostering and adoption social worker and as a Fostering Team Manager. She is a qualified social worker, holds a Practice Teacher qualification, PQ 2-5 Award in Family Placement and Level 5 Diploma in Management.

Amanda is the Fostering Team Manager. Amanda joined Cornerways in 2013 having previously worked as a social worker and as a Practice Supervisor in a large local authority. Amanda has worked in children's services and fostering for many years, including leading a specialist team of social workers and foster carers within a therapeutic re-parenting scheme for children with attachment difficulties. Amanda's particular interest is in promoting high quality care for children growing up in foster care, ensuring that foster carers are well supported and able to both understand and meet the needs of the young people who live with them.

Sharon joined Cornerways Fostering Services in 2004. Sharon is a social worker additionally qualified with the Post Qualifying Specialist Award in social work and is able to provide practice placements for student social workers. Within our team she has a senior role and has a particular lead in developing and delivering our fostering services for parents and babies/children placed together. Her previous background is as a foster carer with an interest in how psychology can help foster carers and the children they care for.

Marguerite joined us at the start of 2017. She comes from a child protection front line team and has worked with young people in residential care, as pastoral support in schools and as a mental health support worker.

Helen and Zoe undertake the administration of the Fostering Service. Prior to joining Cornerways Helen was the manager of a preschool setting, having previously worked as an administrator and finance manager. Zoe has administration experience and is also a qualified primary school teacher who still regularly provides supply teaching.

All of our social workers are registered with the HCPC.
Cornerways Fostering Services is part of a larger Cornerways organisation which has been caring for young people and children in residential homes since 1989. The organisation is owned and run by social workers.

Cornerways runs in accordance with the National Standards for Foster Care and the Law and Regulations that apply to Children’s Services and Fostering Services. Our services are all registered and inspected by Ofsted. To view our last inspection report visit www/ofsted.gov.uk/reports/ and key in the URN SC059535.

Cornerways Fostering Services works closely with Local Authorities in West Sussex, Surrey, Brighton & Hove, South London, Hampshire and bordering councils.