

Impact report
2016

THE
CORNERSTONE
PARTNERSHIP



Training - Mentoring - Consulting
Children's Social Care

"the project has been genuinely transformative and has embedded a positive, business-like culture with the team"

Adoption Service Manager

Why Cornerstone?

Cornerstone is a social enterprise founded by two adopters, Helen and Clare, who recognised the opportunities within the adoption system to improve the process of assessing, supporting and training adopters, ultimately creating more stable and swifter placements - particularly for harder to place children.

“Our vision is for adopters to be equipped and informed through peer support and formal professional training providing them with the tools they need, and that adoptive placements will be faster and ultimately ‘better’ for the whole family.”



Clare

Helen

Led and run by experienced adopters with relevant professional expertise, our peer mentoring and training programmes both place a strong focus on real life experiences, building supportive and collaborative relationships amongst adopters we work with. We have a strong partnership philosophy to our work with adoption services, and strive to develop highly collaborative working relationships with our support being co-produced and targeted to where it is most needed. In this way we have achieved further efficiencies for local authorities by freeing up social worker time thereby increasing assessment and family finding capacity.

Since our beginning in December 2014, we have:

Worked with adoption services in 11 local authorities

Delivered savings of between £1.9m to £3m to local authorities, of which £260k are direct cost savings associated with the lower costs of foster care

Helped local authority adoption services to improve their ofsted grade

Mentored 119 adoptive families

Trained 135 adopters

What we do?

Our model brings together three core strands of support:

1. **Peer Mentoring** from experienced adopters, trained in our mentoring approach and familiar with the local adoption context. Our mentoring support has delivered outstanding results in terms of keeping families on track and helping speed up the process. The support is designed to complement the vital role of the social worker and can help us to free up some of their time, whilst ensuring that adopters are supported and encouraged to stick to the process.

For families who have children placed, and who are struggling, our mentoring support can mean the difference between a placement disrupting or continuing.

Mentoring relationships are very much peer-to-peer and can be built through face-to-face, phone and email contact. All of our mentors volunteer their time to undertake this role, although we are able to offer them small 'thankyous' on a monthly basis through our relationships with the private sector.

"Talking to someone who's actually been through it and knows the reality, and who really knows what it's like to be in the shoes of the adoptive parent is a massive help."

"JR felt relieved to hear that she wasn't the only one to have felt like she does. As a professional I can tell her that what she was feeling was normal but it doesn't have the same impact."

"It is without any reservation that I say that Cornerstone has given us hope when there was none and kept our family together when all seemed lost."



2. Our three day **Restorative Parenting training** course, delivered with both a psychotherapist and an experienced adopter, equips parents to support children who have experienced trauma, using the DDP (dyadic developmental psychotherapeutic) approach. The training places a strong emphasis on real-life experiences, helping adopters to support more complex children, which allows children to be placed more quickly.

92% of adopters who attended training told us that they intended to change their parenting approach as a result.

As a result of the training and support they'd received, two sets of adopters have been taken up by external agencies, generating income of

£68,000
to the local authority.

Placements accelerated include a seven-year old child, an 8 year old boy and a complex 4 year old.

3. We offer bespoke, **targeted adopter recruitment / head hunting** for local authorities looking to find adopters for specific children waiting. The challenge is often to recruit a particular skillset or capability (for example older or harder to place children), but we would work with you to understand your local needs.

Our work with Adopt Berkshire has meant that there are currently no children waiting to be linked or placed with potential adopters.

Working in partnership with you

We believe that partnering with the organisations we work with, based on trust, honesty and mutual respect provide the best conditions for our work to make a difference. We are currently partnering with a number of local authorities to provide bespoke, tailored support, including:

Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Slough, Ealing, Hounslow and Reading.

Our aim is to both complement and enhance the effectiveness of ongoing work within the services we work with. Training and mentoring services will be set within the context of any local frameworks and reflective of your values. Our organisational culture, ethos and practices reflect our backgrounds, which are mostly in the private sector, and we recognise that this can bring an enhanced focus, motivation and productivity to the services we work with.

At a time of unprecedented change across adoption services, we remain flexible and responsive to the external policy context and are working with Adopt Berkshire to develop a framework of support to Regional Adoption Agencies. We anticipate being able to offer this framework to other RAAS as they take form over the coming months.

We are at the early stages of developing our understanding of the value of our services but have some very clear headline findings on the value of our work with Adopt Berkshire. An independent economic impact assessment reported that:



- Direct, in-year, cost savings to children's services of £260k - largely through the lower costs of foster care.
- Overall cost savings to local authorities in the range of £1.9m - £3m associated with cases in which Cornerstone had a clear impact (includes direct cost savings mentioned above).
- Further benefits to agencies other than local authorities would be expected, but these have not been estimated.
- Based on assessment, we believe it is fair to say that our services are, overall, cost neutral.

The cost of our services

Bespoke and flexible packages of support are available, which can be tailored to your specific requirements. We offer a range of options in terms of the cost of our support and fees are dependent on the number of families requiring support.

Please note minimum fees apply.

For a full package of support, the cost per family would be £3,000 per year.

For mentoring support only, cost per family would be £1,000 per year.

For training only, the cost per individual would be £1,000 per year (3 day course plus monthly webinars).

How do our partners rate us?

“Working with Cornerstone has been a truly collaborative partnership. Our front line teams have really benefited from their input. The training and mentoring provided to adopters has been very well received, making a real difference to their confidence and preparedness for family life.”

Director of Children’s Services, Tri Borough (London)

“Cornerstone’s input to our service has transformed the way adopters are supported and trained and that has led to some really significant impacts in terms of timeliness and quality of service. They work alongside social workers bringing both a complimentary set of skills and the views and insights of adopters - the project has been genuinely transformative and has embedded a positive, business-like culture with the team”.

Adoption Service Manager



There’s lots more information on our website www.thecornerstonepartnership.com and if you would like to consider Cornerstone’s services further we would welcome the chance to discuss with you in person.

Please contact Helen Costa, CEO in the first instance on helen@thecornerstonepartnership.com or call 01628 636376 to speak to a member of the team.