

Growing the programme

The Mockingbird programme is delivered by The Fostering Network, the UK's leading fostering charity.

We are working with a growing number of local authority fostering services, children's services trusts and independent fostering providers across the UK, with the aim of working with 40 services by 2020.

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If it wasn't for the Mockingbird programme, I wouldn't be a foster carer now.

satellite carer

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During the two year implementation period we provide each service with the support and guidance needed to tailor the programme to meet local needs, embed the programme in their policies and staff teams, and launch and sustain constellations. Once constellations are launched we offer ongoing support and shared learning opportunities to all services.

We are working with the Rees Centre at Oxford University to provide an independent evaluation to be published in 2020. This will add to the existing evidence base for the programme and showcase the ongoing impact in the UK.

About The Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children. We support foster carers to transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice.

We work to ensure all fostered children and young people experience stable family life and we are passionate about the difference foster care makes. We champion fostering and seek to create vital change so that foster care is the very best it can be.

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Mockingbird

an innovative new
model for foster care



The Fostering Network's Mockingbird programme is an innovative method of delivering foster care using the Mockingbird Family Model. This is an extended family model which provides respite care, peer support, regular joint planning and training, and social activities.

The programme improves the stability of fostering placements and strengthens the relationships between carers, children and young people, fostering services and birth families.



About the programme

The Mockingbird programme delivers the Mockingbird Family Model. This centres on a **constellation** where one foster home acts as a **hub**, offering planned and emergency respite, advice, training and support, to six to 10 **satellite** fostering or kinship care families. The model was originally developed by The Mockingbird Society in America in 2004.

The hub home builds strong relationships with all those in the constellation, empowering families to support each other and overcome problems before they escalate or lead to placement breakdown.

The hub home carer supports constellation families to access resources in the wider community, which provide enhanced opportunities for children and young people to learn, develop and succeed. The constellation also build links with birth families and others important to children's wellbeing.

Through regular activities, the constellation develops a supportive community like an extended family, providing children and young people with a more positive experience of care. The model also offers supportive peer relationships for sons and daughters of foster families and foster carers.

Benefits of the programme

Fostering services that took part in the pilot and have continued to deliver the programme have reported change in the following vital areas:

- Improved placement stability and reduction in placement breakdown.
- Stronger relationships that support looked after children, young people and fostering families.
- The provision of a robust and resilient structure, which offers support through times of crisis and transition.
- Improved respite care.
- Increased skills, confidence and role satisfaction for foster carers.
- Higher levels of foster carer retention and recruitment.
- Improved experience of peer support.
- Better experience of birth family contact, including siblings.
- Costs saved and costs avoided.

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It's like having a big family you can talk to about how you are feeling - it feels good to know I'm not alone.

young person

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