

Foster with
Gloucestershire
County Council

Mockingbird in Gloucestershire

A guide to Mockingbird - an innovative way of fostering which nurtures relationships between children, young people and foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community



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What is Mockingbird?

Mockingbird, led by The Fostering Network in the UK, delivers sustainable foster care. It is an evidence-based model structured around the support and relationships an extended family provides. It empowers foster families to support each other and overcome problems before they escalate and offers children a more positive experience of care.

The programme uses the concept of a constellation (the term used to describe the fostering community involved within the model), where six to ten satellite families live near to a dedicated hub home which provides peer support, planned and emergency short break care, and regular social activities. The constellation also builds links with other adults important to children's care plans, including resources in the wider community that provide enhanced opportunities to learn, develop and succeed.

Mockingbird has been running since 2015 and has been evidenced to improve placement stability, safety, and permanency for children and young people in care, and to improve support for, and retention of, foster carers.



What are the key roles within Mockingbird?

Liaison Worker

The liaison worker is a qualified social worker employed by the Local Authority. The liaison worker provides support to the foster families in the constellation in many ways, including helping plan constellation activities, reviewing the progress and needs of the children in the constellation and reporting the outcomes. The liaison worker supports and supervises the hub home carer. They will work alongside the supervising social workers and children's social workers to make sure families are getting the support they need.

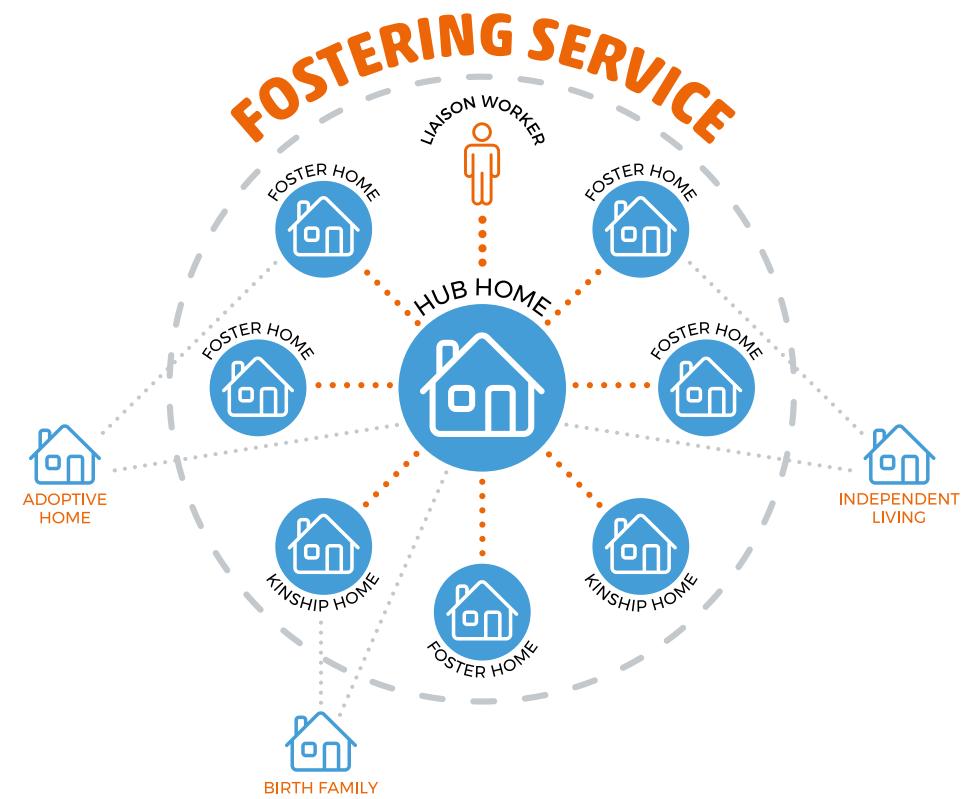
Hub Home Carer

A hub home carer is an experienced, approved foster carer who provides support, guidance, and leadership to foster carers and children within the Mockingbird constellation. The hub home carer is a central point of support for all families within the constellation, this includes day care and planned sleepovers for children and young people living with satellite families. The hub home carer can also provide emergency sleepovers when times are tough. They are the key communicator between the hub home, satellite carer homes and the fostering service.



Satellite Carers

There will be between 6 and 10 satellite families within each constellation. Satellite families are all approved foster carers with Gloucestershire County Council, they are supported by the hub home carer. Satellite families actively contribute and be a part of the constellation, participating in regular social activities, support groups and training opportunities.



The Fostering Network's Mockingbird programme

What does a hub home carer do?

- Supports and mentors satellite families, providing both emotional and practical guidance
- Plans and hosts regular social events for all the families in the constellation
- Provides planned and emergency sleepovers for children and young people living in the constellation
- Hosts and supports family time for brothers and sisters and birth family within the constellation when needed
- Attends and coordinates training for carers in the constellation
- Is the coordinator and energy source necessary to preserve placements, strengthen relationships, nurture permanency, and provide support to satellite families
- They are sensitive to the culture and identity of the children and young people within the constellation
- Ensures anti-racism and anti-discriminatory practices are embedded within the constellation.

What can satellite carers expect?

- Practical and emotional support from the hub home carers, including evenings and weekends
- Planned and crisis sleepovers that are tailored to meet the needs of the children and young people in satellite families
- Training and development opportunities with other members of the constellation
- Monthly social events for families within the constellation, providing peer interaction and support for all carers, children, and young people
- Monthly foster carer support groups which will provide peer support and mentoring
- A close support network of foster carers within the constellation, who can offer peer support and guidance.

What is expected of satellite carers?

- To actively contribute and be a part of the constellation, not be passive receivers of support
- Participate in monthly constellation social activities, support groups and training opportunities
- To build positive working relationships with, and be supportive of, members of the constellation.



What can children and young people expect from Mockingbird?

The Mockingbird programme is based around support to everyone in a fostering family, including children in care and birth children.

- Monthly social activities with all members of the constellation
- Peer relationships with other children and young people
- A close network of families around them who can meet their different needs at different times
- Support from the hub home carers
- Sleepovers at the hub home
- To feel part of a community and a sense of belonging.



What do people involved with Mockingbird think about this way of fostering?

With over 100 constellations nationwide, there is a reassuring amount of evidence collected regarding the success of each constellation. Mockingbird currently supports over 3,000 individuals, comprised of almost 700 satellite families, over 500 brothers and sisters and 300 birth children. But the support doesn't end there. Mockingbird also supports family and friends, adoptive parents, Kinship and SGO carers, and a lot of pets! The Fostering Network estimates almost 400 placements have avoided breaking down because of the support of their Mockingbird families.

“

I am really enjoying being a part of Mockingbird and can't sing its praises any higher! Every foster carer should have this in place. Not only is it fantastic for the children to be a part of but also the support and reassurance it provides for the carers too.

Satellite Carer

“

It was lovely to take two of the children from the hub on a day trip. First time on a train, first time to Birmingham... at first they were unsure, but both had a fantastic time. They have formed a lovely friendship and I am hoping they continue to be a positive influence to each other.

Hub Home Carer

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It was my first Mockingbird social this month. It's so reassuring to know that there is support, help and advice on hand, if needed. Particularly as I am a single carer, and family can't always support us. Thank you so much everyone.

Satellite Carer

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One of our children told his carer that he "feels like he has a friend now". He'd requested a play date with our grandson, and they went to the cinema together. It is lovely to see!

Hub Home Carer

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“

The friendships our children are making are priceless, these will be constant throughout their young lives.

Hub Home Carer

What do children and young people think about being part of a Mockingbird family?

Children and young people are at the heart of GCC's fostering service. The Fostering Network - the UK's leading fostering charity - has researched the impact that being part of a Mockingbird constellation has had on children and young people, and you can read some of the positive feedback below.

“

I can't believe all these kids are in care like me. It's amazing, I thought it was just me.

“

“

Now I am part of a community I can really trust. I know I am not going to get swept away somewhere new and strange.

“

“

I love going to the hub house. We get to have sleepovers and make things, play games this week I got to pick our dinner. We have parties too. My favourite was at Christmas we got to see Santa and had lots of party food. The hub is amazing. I have made friends there too and like them.

“

"I am a far more confident person now."

“

I have made so many friends since joining Mockingbird.

“

I remember when I met the rest of the constellation, it was different but also exciting meeting new people, who were just like me because we are in the same boat. Now we get to do all these things together like trips walk or birthdays.

“

"Mockingbird is like one big family, now I have a load more brothers, sisters, aunties and uncles, I feel like I belong."

Would you like to know more?

If you are interested in becoming a foster carer and finding out more about Mockingbird, please contact Gloucestershire County Council Fostering on **01242 532654** or email **fostering@goucestershire.gov.uk**

If you are already an approved foster carer with Gloucestershire County Council and are interested in being a part of a Mockingbird constellation, please contact your supervising social worker.