

One Minute Guide: The Mockingbird Programme

What is the Mockingbird Programme?

The Mockingbird Programme is led by the Fostering Network in the UK, since 2015 and it is an evidence-based model structured around the support and relationships an extended family provides. It nurtures relationships between children, young people, and foster families, supporting them to build a resilient and caring community.

The Mockingbird Programme empowers foster families to support each other and overcome problems before they escalate and offers children a more positive experience of care. Mockingbird has been evidenced to improve stability, safety and permanency for children and young people in care, and to improve, support for, and retention of foster carers.

What does the Mockingbird Programme look like?

The Mockingbird Programme uses the concept of a constellation (the term used to describe the fostering community involved within the model), where 6 to 10 satellite families live near to a dedicated hub home. The hub home carers provide the satellite families with peer support, planned and emergency short break care, support groups, and regular social activities.

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.

Satellite Carers

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.

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.



The Fostering Network's Mockingbird programme

One Minute Guide: The Mockingbird Programme

What support is provided by the hub home?

- 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 stability, 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 is it really like being part of a Mockingbird constellation? Here are just a few thoughts from foster carers, children, children in care, and social workers involved:

'I have made friends with other kids at Mockingbird and really enjoyed the food and football there' - *Child in Care (10)*.

'This is the best day of my life' - *Child in Care (4) at Mockingbird party*.

'The children right from the offset were enabled to make natural friendly relationships, with others who perhaps share their backgrounds who they wouldn't have otherwise met' - *Satellite carer*.

'Everyone in the constellation has different strengths and needs and we are therefore able to support each other. It really does feel like a family, albeit in its infancy' - *Satellite carer*.

'I know there is someone at the end of the phone if I have had an emotional day. I can talk to someone I have met/made friends with; I didn't have that before' - *Satellite carer*.

'My carers are very appreciative of the support that has been offered to them via the hub home carers. They enjoy the wrap around care that they and the young person has received both emotional and practical' - *Supervising Social Worker*.

For more information contact: Mockingbird@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Gloucestershire Children's Social Care:

One Minute Guide: The Mockingbird Programme

Title of document	One Minute Guide: Mockingbird Programme
Author's job title	Head of Service Children in Care and Fostering (TW)
Document version	V1
Supersedes	N/A
Date of adoption	October 2024
Review due date	October 2025
To be stored on	Online procedures/local resources/one minute guides Online procedures/local resources/fostering, adoption and permanence/fostering services