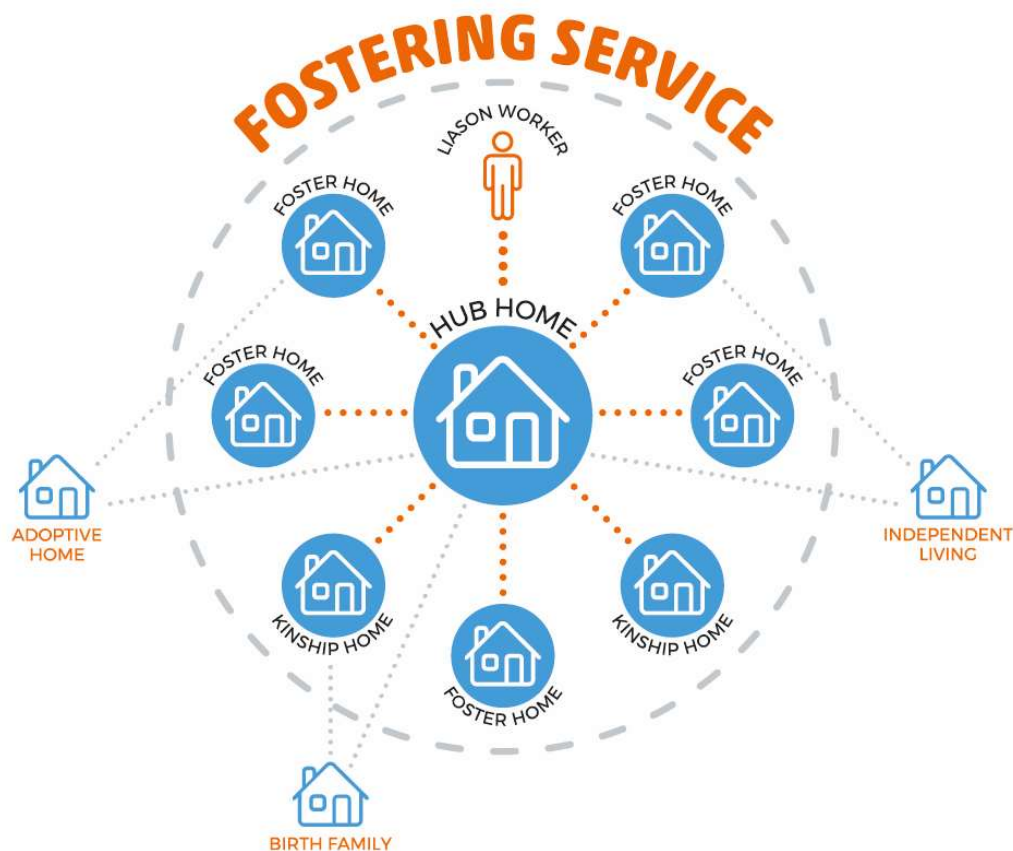


The Mockingbird Family Model

What is Mockingbird?

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 that 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. This image gives you an idea of how it works.



There are 3 key roles in Mockingbird:

- Hub home carer
- Liaison worker
- Satellite carers

Key elements of the model

- Foster carer led advice, guidance and emotional and social peer support
- Planned and emergency sleepovers
- Formal and informal training and development opportunities
- Whole community social activities
- Support through to permanence – birth family, long term placement, adoption, independence
- Support with sibling and birth family contact

Mockingbird's underpinning principles

- Active child protection
- Birth family viewed as partners and future support
- Community-based care
- Continuity of care
- Cultural relevancy, identity and belonging
- Foster carer support
- Normalisation of care
- Unconditional care

Mockingbird's impact

- Improved placement stability – reduced placement breakdown
- A network of strong and authentic relationships able to replicate the support offered by an extended family
- Improved experience of peer support
- Improved sibling contact
- Improved process and experience of respite care
- Improved skills, confidence and role satisfaction for foster carers
- Improved levels of carer retention and recruitment
- A strong, robust and resilient structure able to support children, young people and fostering families through times of crisis and transition.
- Improved experience of birth family contact
- Costs saved and costs avoided.

How does it work for Bradford Fostering families?

Bradford is one of 60 plus fostering provider services to deliver this programme across the UK. We currently have 1 constellation supporting 8 families with a plan to extend the model by 2 more constellations 2023.

Progress so far

We know from records, data and by listening to our carers that there is a need to improve the retention and support of our foster carers.

The hub carers meet on a one-to-one with each satellite family, and both supervising social worker and the children's social worker/s to agree a plan of support that is individual to each foster carer and the child or young person's needs.

Monthly carers' support meetings and free family events are held. These events have included: a garden party at the hub home; walks and adventures at local parks; the National Science & Media Museum; and breakfast with Santa.

The constellation meetings are held in the hub carer's homes.

The activities are planned to strengthen the forming of relationships within the constellations and opportunity was given for the satellite families to complete the evaluation forms, discuss the process and plan future events.

Activities are for the whole of the family, including birth children, grandchildren and brothers and sisters that are placed within other families.

Foster carers must attend 9 out of 12 meetings and activities a year to demonstrate their commitment to the model.

What do hub home carers offer?

- Planned and emergency sleepovers/day care (when available around other Mockingbird commitments and planned sleepovers. No more than 3 at any one time)
- 24 hour telephone support
- Monthly support meetings
- Access to specialised training, mentoring and coaching
- Monthly family activities and events

What are the main characteristics of a hub home?

A hub home carer will:

- Be an experienced caregiver.
- Be a strong communicator with excellent interpersonal skills.
- Build strong relationships with young people and adults.
- Understand developmental stages of children and adolescents.
- Be excellent at building a sense of community.
- Trained to identify and effectively manage high risk situations.
- Have a flexible life style and stable home life.
- Possess strong social and emotional skills.
- Be organised and creative.
- Have two spare beds to consistently offer respite care when needed.

What are the main characteristics of a satellite family?

A satellite carer will:

- Build strong relationships with young people and adults.
- Be willing to play an active role in the constellation as a micro-community.
- Benefit from a supportive network of foster carers and others caring for children and young people.
- Commit to being a supportive member of the constellation.
- Live in reasonably proximity to the hub home

If you are interest in becoming a hub carer or a satellite family, please contact Vickie Oldroyd at Vickie.oldroyd@bradford.gov.uk or on 07951171986 for more information.