



# Mockingbird Impact Report 2024



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## About the Mockingbird Programme

Mockingbird, a global award winning and pioneering programme 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.

The model nurtures relationships between children, young people and foster families, supporting them to build a resilient and caring community of six to ten families, known as a 'constellation'.

**Watch 'What is Mockingbird?'** to hear more about the programme and from those who make it possible.

## Welcome to the 2024 Mockingbird Impact Report

I am delighted to share with you some fantastic new stories and data that illustrate the continued impact of The Fostering Network's Mockingbird programme. In recent years the programme has continued to expand in both scale and recognition, enabling more children, young people and fostering families to benefit from being part of a Mockingbird constellation.

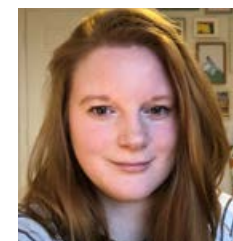
In May 2022 we were delighted that the model was recommended in England's Independent Care Review, due to the impact it was having in retaining foster carers. We are grateful for the consequent support and funding from the Department for Education in England to extend Mockingbird to more local authorities through their 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' strategy. By the end of 2024 we were able to celebrate the milestone achievement of the launch of our 200th constellation. For a regularly updated list of our partners please visit our [constellation map](#).

This report contains national data from our latest analysis period covering April 2022 to March 2023. You will also find cumulative data around impact and costs avoided from 2018 to 2023, as well as some 2024 programme updates. A series of 'What Mockingbird means to me' quotes from people living in constellations across the UK helps bring the impact to life.

Thank you everyone who makes Mockingbird what it is. We are so proud of all the work that our community does to provide children and young people with what they need to thrive.

### **Freya Burley**

Head of Mockingbird  
The Fostering Network



# Mockingbird Population

This page shows point in time programme population from 102 active constellations in 46 partners in March 2023.



# Community support

**Constellations grasped opportunities to connect and have fun together again, with 1,683 social activities taking place in 2022 – 2023.**

Nationally, we saw 958 training sessions and constellation meetings offering peer support taking place in constellations and hub home carers providing 337 mentoring and coaching sessions.

The number of sleepovers rose to 7933 overnights in 2022 – 2023.

When comparing instances of planned sleepovers, emergency sleepovers and daytime

support in 2022 – 2023, 57% of all instances were daytime support, 39% were planned sleepovers and 4% were emergency sleepovers.

In addition to sleepovers and daytime support, this year we captured data on one-to-one support in person or via phone call, video call or text message. There were over 21,150 instances of one-to-one support recorded across the national programme.

This year also saw an increase in the number of birth family and sibling visits supported through Mockingbird, with 308 recorded.



“We had a carers meeting at Pizza hut and Patrick shared with us that his dad is in end-of-life care. I said to him, “Remember if you need help, no matter what the time is, just phone me directly.”

What was really lovely was that straight away another carer, Linda said, “You’ll have to pass my house to go to the hospital, so drop your Liam off with me anytime and Anne, the hub home carer can pick him up later.”

I just sat there thinking wow! This time last year this would have been alien to everyone, and here we are just working this out like a family.” **Liaison worker**

**958**  
constellation  
training and peer  
support sessions  
recorded



# Bringing our Mockingbird community together

Each year the Mockingbird team at The Fostering Network organise a whole calendar of engagement events for those in our Mockingbird community.

These occasions provide a valuable opportunity for the community to come together, build relationships across constellations, share best practice and have fun!

Between April 2023 – March 2024:

## 434

hub home carers liaison workers and services leaders engaged in our peer support spaces

## 1102

community members of all ages joined together at our Roost summer activity days

## 122

children and young people got creative through our creative arts program, Nest.

## Our events

**Forums:** peer learning spaces for hub home carers and liaison workers to share their experiences, learn from each other and develop new skills to build resilient constellations. Events take place in spring and autumn.

**Roost:** summer activity days which give constellations the opportunity to try new things, learn together, support one another and meet other Mockingbird members.

**Leaders Workshops:** peer learning spaces designed to provide tools and connections which to support long-term constellation sustainability and maximise the impact fostering families. Meetings take place 6 times per year online and in person.

**Compassion fatigue workshops:** workshop for hub home carers and liaison workers to understand Compassion Fatigue Theory and its relevance for their role leading Mockingbird constellation communities.

**Nest:** creative arts programme for 10-18 year olds. Three Nest groups each meet three times a year in person and three times a year online. Read more about Nest overleaf.



### What Mockingbird means to me:

“As the hub carer it means no foster carer will be left feeling alone, not knowing where to turn to ask questions. I experienced this as a new foster carer and would not want any of my satellite carers to feel that way. This is also very important for our children and young people; they are making new friends and having sleepovers as well as attending organised events where we all have fun.”

**This timeline shows the events delivered between April 2023 – March 2024.**

April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023
<p><u>Compassion Fatigue Leaders Workshop</u></p> <p><u>Nest South in person</u></p> <p><u>Introduction to Mockingbird</u></p>	<p><u>Compassion Fatigue Nest Online South</u></p> <p><u>Introduction to Mockingbird</u></p>	<p><u>Nest Online Southwest</u></p> <p><u>Nest South in person</u></p> <p><u>Introduction to Mockingbird</u></p>	<p><u>Nest Southwest in person</u></p> <p><u>Introduction to Mockingbird</u></p>	<p><u>Roost: Outdoor activity days at 6 sites across England and Wales</u></p> <p><u>Introduction to Mockingbird</u></p>	<p><u>Nest South online</u></p> <p><u>Leaders Workshop</u></p> <p><u>Introduction to Mockingbird</u></p> <p><u>Nest Southwest online</u></p>
October 2023	November 2023	December 2023	January 2024	February 2024	March 2024
<p><u>Nest Northeast online</u></p> <p><u>Introduction to Mockingbird</u></p>	<p><u>Autumn Forum London</u></p> <p><u>Autumn Forum Newcastle</u></p> <p><u>Nest Northeast in person</u></p> <p><u>Autumn Forum + Leaders Workshop</u></p> <p><u>Introduction to Mockingbird</u></p> <p><u>Nest Southwest in person</u></p>	<p><u>Nest South in person</u></p> <p><u>Introduction to Mockingbird</u></p>	<p><u>Leaders Workshop</u></p>	<p><u>Nest Northeast online</u></p> <p><u>Nest Southwest online</u></p> <p><u>Nest South online</u></p>	<p><u>Spring Forum London</u></p> <p><u>Spring Forum Leeds</u></p> <p><u>Spring Forum Birmingham</u></p>



**As well as our active diary of community events and learning spaces, all services receive dedicated support from one of our team of Mockingbird coaches. Thousands of hours of tailored support has helped services develop, sustain and strengthen their Mockingbird offer.**

# Local Impact: Flintshire

**In 2020, Flintshire Council in North Wales launched their first Mockingbird constellation – by March 2024 the number of constellations had grown to three.**

Flintshire Council liaison workers Lorraine and Steph shared their reflections on implementing Mockingbird.

“One of the biggest things that I think that we got out of Mockingbird that we didn’t expect, was the expansion of people’s approval and the growth of carer confidence to take new placements” reflects Steph.

This rise in confidence has meant that many carers have felt able to increase the number of children they are approved to care for.

“**So, we’ve got the service benefits of the cost saving and all that sort of thing, but actually, for this child they have consistency of care; they have consistency of education; they have consistency of contact with family, and they are thriving**

As a result, over the past five years, ten additional placements have been created through the support and structure of the three Mockingbird constellations.

Of those ten children who were placed within a Mockingbird constellation, four or five would have otherwise been put into placements provided by independent fostering agencies. Some of these would have been long-term, and one may have been placed in long-term residential care. Providing homes for those children within the local authority’s Mockingbird community was not only cost-effective for the service, but also provided better outcomes for the children involved.



Ainsley initially came into the Mockingbird community in Flintshire with their sister in an emergency placement. Flintshire social work teams could not find a suitable match for Ainsley and so were considering either a residential home or a fostering placement far from family and friends.

Either option would have impacted on Ainsley’s relationship with their sister, their school which was their safe space, and disrupted any relationships with adults they had begun to trust in their Mockingbird constellation.

Aware of the risk of Ainsley to be moved away, two Mockingbird carers came forward to discuss extending their approval to enable Ainsley to stay within the same constellation as their sister.

As a result, Ainsley stayed near their family, friends and stayed in their school. With both siblings placed within Mockingbird they are now able to enjoy more family time together than they would have through a formal contact arrangement.

# Retention and stability

**Relationships formed in Mockingbird constellations offer countless opportunities for supportive and restorative interventions led by the hub home carer and liaison worker with the aim of maintaining stability in satellite families.**

Key data is captured to allow an understanding of how Mockingbird activity contributes to the stabilisation of relationships and therefore placements that may have otherwise resulted in a young person moving or a carer giving notice.

Of the 2476 satellite carers participating in the programme between May 2018 and March 2023 services reported that 233 would have resigned without the support provided by Mockingbird.

Of the 3171 children and young people in placements participating in the programme between May 2018 and March 2023, services reported 507 placement breakdowns have been avoided.

## What Mockingbird means to me:

“No one in Mockingbird is ever alone on their fostering journey. There is always someone around for advice, support and no one is judged. It's a privilege to be part of Mockingbird and the kids are genuine friends it's lovely to watch the friendships and relationships grow.”



**9.5% carers**  
would have resigned if they hadn't been supported by the Mockingbird programme

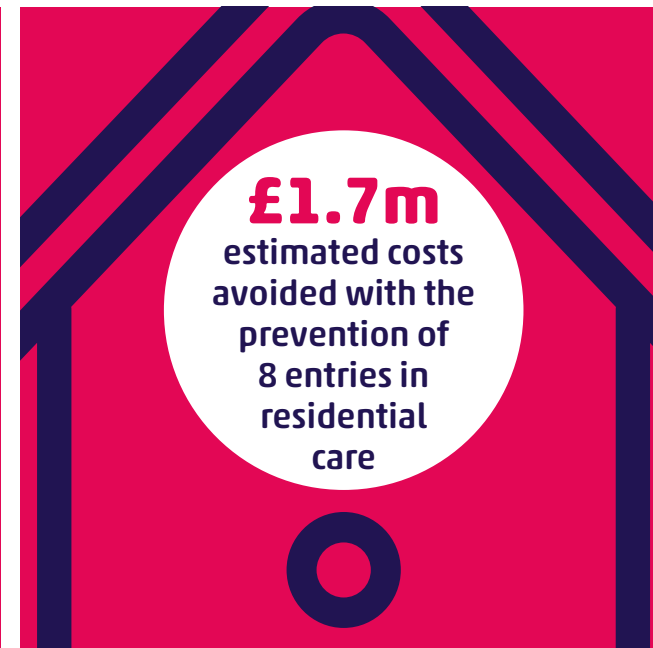
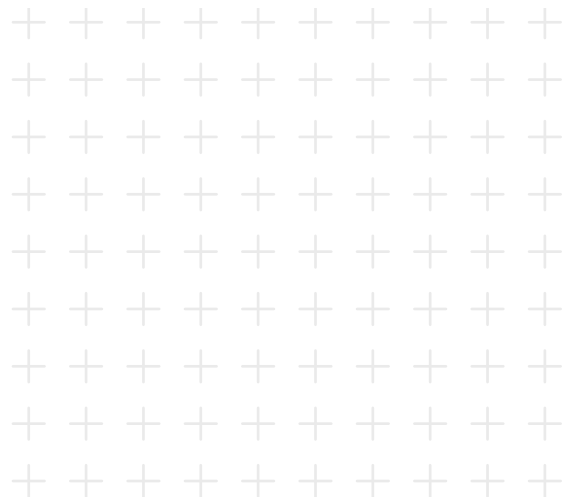
**16% placements**  
would have broken down if they hadn't been supported by the Mockingbird programme



# A Sustainable System

Mockingbird is an invest to save model. Independent evaluation of 12 services between 2017 – 2020 found that for every £1 invested in the programme by a fostering service there has been a saving of 99 pence.

The infographics show cumulative estimated costs avoided using data collected 2018 – 2023. The programme has grown each year and some satellite carers and children and young people will have joined or left in a particular year, or continued participating through multiple years.



# Mockingbird Nest

**Nest is a creative arts programme, bringing young people from Mockingbird constellations across the UK together to explore their creativity in a safe and supportive environment, facilitated by professional artists.**

Nest offers a consistent space for children and young people to explore their creativity and build confidence and skills for life.

Due to the success of Nest and its positive impact on children and young people, we expanded Nest from one central group founded in 2019 to three regional groups based in south England, the southwest and the northeast.

Throughout 2023 and into 2024 children and young people explored a variety of art forms, including zine making, graffiti art, pottery, and stop motion animation.

**“**  
**Recently I started doing Mockingbird Nest. It’s fun and sociable. I made a good friend the first time I went and I now look forward to seeing her every time. The activities are always very creative and it’s easy to stay interested – young person, aged 13**

**”**

## Hearing from those involved

Theatre Practitioner Adam Kammerling, who has been heading up the delivery of Nest for 5 years, ‘Nest has been developing organically since its inception in 2018. The expansion has given us the chance to condense 5 years of learning into a transferable practice that we have handed over to our brilliant regional teams. We are absolutely chuffed that Nest is now creating remarkable experiences for even more children and young people and artists across the country.’

Jess Callaghan, a Mockingbird Hub Home Carer has been bringing young people to Nest since 2021. ‘I love attending the Mockingbird Nest events with one of the sibling groups from my hub’ she explains. ‘The structure of each session is familiar enough to be predictable and feel safe for the young people whilst each session is a fresh experience – the team are brilliant at making sure all the young people get involved, giving them positive feedback on what they are creating and contributing’.



## What Mockingbird means to me:

“It means showing young people that there is a community around them who care for them and who celebrate their successes and support them in their struggles. Showing them that being part of something can be fun and exciting. That being part of our constellation’s team is a great thing and part of their identity. It means supporting carers through the tough times and helping them rejoice in the achievements. **It’s about the sum of the whole constellation being greater than the sum of the parts.**”



# Mockingbird Partners

This table details the 46 Mockingbird partners that submitted data in 2022 – 23 which is included in this report.

For full details of our 116 partners and current constellation numbers see our live map [here](#)



\* Services with launched Mockingbird constellations receiving funding to further their Mockingbird offer as part of the DfE's 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' strategy.

Services reporting in 2022-23	Constellations
Barnardo's Scotland Fostering, Edinburgh	1
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	3
Buckinghamshire Council	1
Cheshire East Council*	2
Darlington Borough Council	1
Devon County Council*	1
Dorset Council*	1
Durham County Council	1
Flintshire County Council	3
Fostering People	1
Gateshead Council	1
Hartlepool Borough Council	1
Heath Farm Fostering	5
Hertfordshire County Council*	6
Hull City Council	1
Kirklees Council	1
Leeds City Council	10
London Borough of Merton Council	1
London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council*	2
London Borough of Waltham Forest Council*	2
NFA London	1
North Somerset Council*	3
North Tyneside Council	1

Services reporting in 2022-23	Constellations
North Yorkshire County Council	2
Northumberland County Council	1
Oxfordshire County Council*	2
Portsmouth City Council	5
Rochdale Borough Council*	2
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	3
Royal Borough of Greenwich	4
Sheffield City Council	2
Shropshire Council	1
Slough Children First*	1
South Tyneside Council	3
Staffordshire County Council	1
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council*	3
Stoke-on-Trent City Council	1
Suffolk County Council*	3
Surrey County Council*	2
Telford & Wrekin Council	1
Together for Children Sunderland	2
Wakefield Council	2
Walsall Council	5
Warrington Borough Council*	3
West Sussex County Council*	1
Wigan Council*	2



The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in foster care.

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.



**Read the full  
independent  
evaluation  
2017-2020 here.**

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