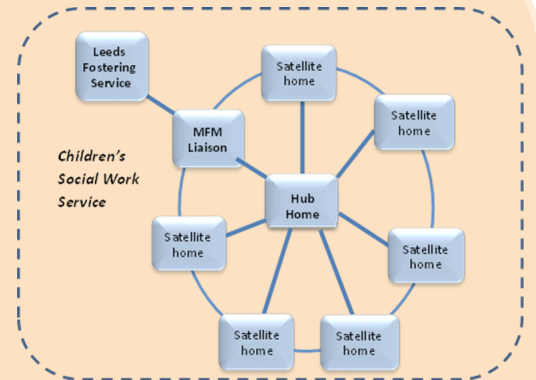


What is the Mockingbird Family Model?

The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is an alternative way of providing foster care. It involves foster carers being part of a group with other foster carers who are described as satellite foster homes; they are supported by a central 'hub' home, which provides resources and support to the satellite homes. The hub home and the satellite homes are supported by the fostering service which provides a worker to take on a liaison role across the hub.



The aim of the model is to create a support network similar to that of an extended family, providing children and their carers with support, including sleepovers where appropriate and shared social activities.

How is the hub home chosen?

The hub carer needs to be an experienced, skilled foster carer with the motivation and skills to build a community. Hub carers are trained by accredited Mockingbird trainers via [The Fostering Network](#). The hub home is required to have two beds available specifically for the children and young people in their hub. Ideally, these are in two separate bedrooms, but two beds in a shared bedroom can be considered.

Satellite carers are invited to join a hub; referrals are completed jointly by fostering social workers and children's social workers, who first must discuss the concept of the model with carers. Satellite carers will usually live relatively near to their hub home and must be committed to actively engaging in the hub community.

What support is provided by the hub home?

The support provided through the hub home includes:

- Monthly social events for families, providing peer interaction and support for caregivers, children and young people;
- Unlimited access to social support and mentoring for satellite carers;
- Planned and emergency respite care 24/7, including day care and overnight stays; and
- Help to navigate the system and access community resources.

The hub home can also provide a neutral environment for shared decision-making meetings, social worker visits, and sibling and birth family visits, as well as critical support to social workers, thus increasing safety, wellbeing and permanence. A key feature of the Mockingbird Family Model is that it helps to take good care of the people who take care of children and young people.

Why the Mockingbird Family Model?

The aims of the Mockingbird Family Model are to improve placement stability for children who are looked after, prioritise sibling connections, promote active child protection, support permanence and improve the support provided to foster carers, so that the local authority can retain foster carers and reduce feelings of isolation for them.

The model was developed in Washington State, USA, and is based on the concept of extended family. This fits with the Leeds approach of putting families at the centre of finding solutions and solving problems, using restorative approaches.

The model is evidence-based, has been formally evaluated and shows improved outcomes for children, young people and foster carers.

What is happening in Leeds?

[The Fostering Network](#) secured funding from the Department for Education (DfE) in 2015 and was one of eight local authorities to be involved in a pilot scheme. Leeds set up four hub homes initially, two for mainstream fostering and two for kinship fostering.



Since the pilot, further funding was secured from the DfE, which helped Leeds to establish a further six homes.

Leeds now has five mainstream homes, some of which have an additional focus such as adoptive families and links to young people in residential care. We also have five kinship hubs.

The feedback from satellite families has been very positive to date, and it has been key to supporting long term placements and the retention of foster carers.

Key contacts and more information:

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You can find out more about the [Mockingbird Family Model](#) from the Mockingbird Society website.