

AGENDA ITEM

**REPORT TO
CORPORATE
PARENTING BOARD**

8 APRIL 2022

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR
OF CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

INTRODUCTION TO MOCKINGBIRD PROJECT

SUMMARY

1. Children's Services are working with the Fostering Network to implement Mockingbird; a model of foster care based on the premise, it takes a community to raise a child. One that nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families, supporting them to build a resilient and caring secure base from which to thrive.
2. It is envisaged that this model of support, will strengthen Stockton-on-Tees Local Authority fostering families, with a view to sustaining placements for looked after children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3 That the Corporate Parenting Board note the report and accompanied video link that supports the plan to implement the Mockingbird Model in Stockton-on-Tees.
[What is Mockingbird? - YouTube](#)

DETAIL

4. WHY ARE WE INVESTING IN MOCKINGBIRD?

- 4.1 Children who have experienced abuse and trauma require stable family placements to heal and learn to form secure attachments. Caring for children who have suffered such trauma, can be challenging. Equally fostering families experience the same stresses and vulnerabilities as other families, leaving them at times less able to offer the level of care these young people require. A strong informal support network, as well as opportunities for day care support and overnight stays, provide children and foster carers with the opportunity to recharge their batteries, maintaining stability of placements. To achieve respite placements currently is a real challenge, resulting in a number of fragile and disrupted placements. The lack of around the clock informal and peer support, as well as opportunities for a break, have been identified as significant contributory factors in placement disruptions.
- 4.2 There have been 31 referrals into the Fostering Team for respite placements in the last 6 months, including both one off and regular respite requests. On average,

children have waited 4 months for their first respite placement. Over 50% of current placement requests are re-referrals due to previous provision being discontinued as a result of individual carer's circumstances and the complex needs of the children. Children are, therefore, experiencing a lack of consistent care, despite regular searches inhouse and via the independent fostering sector.

4.3 Due to a shortage of appropriate fostering respite provision, some children have needed to access short breaks via the Local Authorities, Edge of Care residential service as a result of crisis situations. This has correspondingly reduced Edge of Care's capacity to fulfil their statement of purpose.

5. THE MOCKINGBIRD MODEL

5.1 The below diagram gives an outline of how the model works. Constellations (6-10 foster families) come together, supported by a hub home carer and liaison worker, to offer each other support, advice, social activities, learning and development opportunities and some sleepovers.



5.2 Research carried out by Fostering Network who developed the Mockingbird Model, has identified the following outcomes as a result of its implementation:

- More stable placements
- A network of strong relationships to replicate the support offered by extended family
- Improved support between foster carers
- Improved contact between siblings
- A better experience and process for respite foster care
- Increased confidence, skills and satisfaction for foster carers
- A robust structure able to support children, young people and foster carers through times of crisis and transition.

6. STOCKTON'S PLANS

6.1 Stockton is in the early stages of the implementation of Mockingbird and providing information for stakeholders about the model and benefits.

6.2 Over the coming months, work will be undertaken to recruit a hub carer and liaison worker in order to establish our first satellite constellation.

6.3 There is a plan to link our hubs with cluster residential homes in Stockton as part of the Councils overall strategic plans to review its residential care model. The vision is that foster carers will have access to support from the residential home, as well as share training, good practice and, in some situations, overnight stays.

6.4 It is envisaged that, as the satellite constellation grows and bonds between fostering households are strengthened, the foster carers and young people within the constellation will informally offer one another emotional and practical support including, overnights. This will allow children to stay with adults who are known to them, in a similar way to children spending time with relatives and close friends within birth families and will not require the involvement of social workers to facilitate the arrangements.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7 £96,500 (plus VAT) for a non-exclusive licence to use the Fostering Network Mockingbird Family Model to deliver SBC foster care services by creating and maintaining up to 5 constellations.

- Phase One: **£56,000 plus VAT** for the first 12-month period (2021/2022 - funding already received); and
- Phase Two: **£28,000 plus VAT** for the second period following completion of Phase One (up to a further 12 months – 2022/2023), then
- Community Package: **£12,500 plus VAT per annum,**

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8. None

RISK ASSESSMENT

9. None

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

10. None

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

11 None

CONSULTATION, INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

12 None

Name of Contact Officer: Jo Lee
Post Title: Service Lead Looked After Children and Complex Needs
Telephone No: 01642 527417
Email address: jo.lee@stockton.gov.uk