

| March 2020 | Research Protocol

This content was created by the Early Intervention Foundation before merging with What Works for Children's Social Care to become Foundations.

The content contains logos and branding of the former organisation.

### Independent Evaluation of the Mockingbird Programme in Ten Local Authorities

<b>Intervention Developer</b>	UK Developer: The Fostering Network International Developer: The Mockingbird Society
<b>Delivery Organisations</b>	Participating sites (local authorities) deliver the intervention with support from The Fostering Network
<b>Evaluator</b>	Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford
<b>Principal Investigator</b>	Dr Ellie Ott
<b>Protocol Author(s)</b>	Dr Ellie Ott with assistance from Dr Emily Buehler, Dr Ellie Suh, Vania Pinto, David Sanders-Ellis, and Heather Browning-Lee
<b>Type of Trial</b>	Quasi-experimental design
<b>Age or Status of Participants</b>	Ages 0-90+; children in care, care-experienced young people, foster carers (including kinship carers)
<b>Number of Participating Sites and Local Authorities</b>	<p>7 new sites (10 new local authorities):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barnsley</li> <li>• East Cheshire</li> <li>• Sheffield</li> <li>• South Tyneside</li> <li>• Wakefield</li> <li>• Warrington</li> <li>• Together4Children Regional Permanency Partnership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shropshire</li> <li>• Staffordshire</li> <li>• Stoke-on-Trent</li> <li>• Telford &amp; Wrekin</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Additionally, 13 local authorities that have been working or liaising with the evaluation team for the 'Wave 2' DfE Innovation evaluation will be approached to continue having their data analysed with this evaluation.</p>
<b>Number of Children and Families</b>	Estimate a total of 579 children in care and 362 fostering homes in the intervention group
<b>Primary Outcome(s)</b>	Placement stability
<b>Secondary Outcome(s)</b>	Foster carer retention, child wellbeing
<b>Contextual Factors</b>	Local authority/regional variation, dose of the intervention, available placement history information

## Table of contents

<b>Background and Problem Statement</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Problem statement.....	3
On-going and previous large-scale English evaluations .....	3
<b>Intervention and Theory of Change</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Project context .....	5
Project aims and intended outcomes.....	6
Project activities .....	7
Project theory of change .....	14
<b>Impact Evaluation</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Research questions .....	15
Design .....	16
Randomisation .....	18
Participants .....	18
Sample size / MDES calculations .....	20
Outcome measures.....	22
Analysis plan.....	22
<b>Cost evaluation</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Ethics &amp; Participation</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Registration</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Data protection</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Personnel</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Timeline</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>32</b>

## Background and Problem Statement

### Problem statement

The outcomes for fostering services, children in care, and foster carers are frequently documented as poor. The outcomes at a service-level go hand in hand with the individual-level experiences and outcomes for children, young people, and foster carers (La Valle, Hart, Holmes, & Pinto, 2019). At a service level, concerns include multiple and expensive placements for children and young people, poor foster carer retention and the need to recruit new foster carers, and difficulties in recruiting foster carers (Education Committee, 2017).

Children in care often experience a lack of stability in caring adults, lack of support to permanency, inadequate contact with birth family, and low levels of wellbeing (Education Committee, 2017; Luke et al, 2014). Stability is a fundamental predictor of outcomes (Education Committee, 2017; Luke et al, 2014). For example, children in care have poorer outcomes than their peers in a number of educational outcomes (O'Higgins, Sebba, & Luke, 2015), but stability in placement and school setting is a predictor of better educational outcomes (Sebba et al, 2015). Children in care also have more prevalent mental health difficulties and externalising behaviours when compared to their peers (Ford, Vostanis, Meltzer, & Goodman, 2007), however the relationship and bond that is developed between children in care and carers are key to children's outcomes (Linares et al., 2010) and to the placement stability (Oosterman, Schuengel, Slot, Bullens, & Doreleijers, 2007).

The poor foster carer retention is often linked to foster carers feeling unsupported, inadequate respite care, and low levels of wellbeing (Lawson & Cann, 2019). A number of studies have identified being respected by supervising social workers, the child's social worker, and the fostering agency as important factors in deciding whether to remain as a foster carer (Ottaway & Selwyn, 2016).

The Mockingbird programme aims to address these problems through four key theories from the literature. First, there is the importance of peer support for foster carers theorised to be a non-judgemental way of gaining help that improves foster carer wellbeing, satisfaction, respect, retention, and thus placement stability. A review of the international literature on foster carer peer support by the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford identified The Mockingbird Programme as a promising model of foster carer peer support (Luke & Sebba, 2013). Second, the programme is underpinned by the idea of improving relationships, particularly between foster carers and their children, through the importance of shared activities (Gilligan, 2009; Wade et al, 2012). Third, underlying the programme is the idea of expanding the social networks for both foster carers and children and the literature that upholds that social networks are positively associated with placement stability (Sinclair et al, 2007). Lastly, underpinning all of the activities and the language in Mockingbird is an overarching theory of the importance of high standards of 'ordinary' foster care and of normalising care. These theoretical ideas can be seen in the theory of change that this evaluation and previous evaluations examine.

### On-going and previous evaluations

Existing evaluations have highlighted the ability to implement the Mockingbird programme and promising indicators for outcomes for child safety, permanency, placement stability,

sibling connections, fostering cultural identity, building strong community connections, and systems change (McDermid, Baker, Lawson, & Holmes, 2016; Northwest Institute for Children and Families, 2007; *Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Mockingbird Family Model Evaluation Report*, 2017; The Mockingbird Society, 2010). Some of these evaluations focussed more on aspects of the American implementation that are theorised in the theory of change to be of less importance to the English implementation. Limitations of existing evaluations include being conducted by or for the implementing agency (e.g. Northwest Institute for Children, 2017; The Mockingbird Society, 2010; Stockport, 2017), having short time-frames and sample sizes that make it difficult to discern impacts (e.g. McDermid et al., 2016), being unable to create comparison groups and examine impact (e.g. McDermid et al., 2016, Stockport, 2017), and not being built in from the launch of Mockingbird or able to examine longer-term impacts.

There was one American analysis with a comparison group and propensity score matching that referred to the Mockingbird Family Model as the hub home model (Goodvin & Miller, 2017). This evaluation found that the hub home model youth were more likely to have higher rates of placement stability but on average take longer to achieve permanency. The hub home model had no effect on placement with siblings or rates of re-entry into care for those who exited. Hub home model youth were more likely than comparison youth to run away from care. It also found that youth often received a small dose of Mockingbird, which was explained given that the duration of removal episodes, and of Mockingbird index episodes, can be very short and vary widely, but also given that there was a lack of follow-up data, as most of the data clustered around recent years. There has yet to be a published English evaluation examining impact with a comparison group.

The Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Wave 1 Mockingbird project beginning in September 2015 involved 8 fostering providers, and the [evaluation](#) was undertaken by Loughborough University focusing on early implementation (McDermid et al., 2016). The evaluation report was submitted in April 2016 shortly after hubs had launched, and there was an 18-month hiatus until the evaluation for Wave 2 began.

The Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Wave 2 project (DfE innovation) 'scales up' the model to a further 5 new providers and works with 7 of the continuing Wave 1 services to 'scale out' by initiating some innovative and targeted approaches aimed at supporting specific groups of children and young people based on locally identified needs, such as young people in residential homes or adoptive families. This programme runs from 2017 to 2020 with the independent evaluator of the Rees Centre, University of Oxford being formally appointed in December 2017. This evaluation focuses on the following questions:

1. What impact does the Mockingbird programme have on children, young people and foster carers, including placement stability, wellbeing and carer retention?
2. How do outcomes change over time for children, young people, foster carers and services participating in the Mockingbird programme?
3. How has the Mockingbird programme been implemented?
  - a) How many people have participated (foster carers, children and young people)? What kind of activities have they participated in?
  - b) What are the experiences of staff, foster carers, children and young people who are involved in the programme? What effects do they think it has had?

- c) What factors seem to facilitate or inhibit the implementation of the programme and the achievement of the intended outcomes?
  - d) What adaptations have been made to the programme by sites? How have these helped to meet the needs of different care populations?
  - e) What factors enable or limit longer-term sustainability of the programme?
4. What is the fiscal return on investment associated with the Mockingbird programme?

Given the funding and timescales of the DfE innovation evaluation, yearly administrative data is only used for three years ending March 2019. This does not allow for long-term impacts to be examined and programme developers and implementers theorise that Mockingbird has more impact in the longer-term. The Supporting Families: Investing in Practice evaluation design builds off the prior evaluation and greatly raises the sample size and statistical power in doing so. In addition to the 10 new local authorities, 7 new Mockingbird sites (“selected local authorities”), we will approach the 13 local authorities & Children’s Services Trusts taking part in the “Department for Education Children’s Social Care Innovation Programme Wave 2” evaluation of the Mockingbird Family Model<sup>1</sup>. We will look to update our existing data sharing agreements with these sites via an addendum to allow for them to continue to send us pseudonymised individual child-level data (e.g. SSDA903) and foster-carer level data (Ofsted). This would potentially expand the sample beyond 10 new selected local authorities to include the majority of the 41 constellations running (as of November 2019) as well as any new constellations those continuing local authorities launch. Comparison groups will be constructed using similar children and foster carers from the local authorities to control for variables such as geography, agency-level variances, individual care trajectory, and demographics. As we already have 3-years of data from the existing sites, this data will enable the evaluation team to look at longer-term impacts, subgroup populations, as well as impacts by the duration and intensity of support.

## Intervention and Theory of Change

### Brief Intervention Title: Mockingbird programme

#### Project context

The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) was developed in the US by The Mockingbird Society, and The Fostering Network was granted a licence by The Mockingbird Society to replicate Mockingbird in the UK, creating the ‘Mockingbird programme’ which is often just called Mockingbird by those families involved in the intervention. The rationale for the project is provided in the previous section on the problem statement.

Mockingbird is a model that aims to replicate the support available through an extended family network. It creates a constellation of 6-10 satellite fostering families who are supported by one hub home that is operated by an experienced foster carer, offering planned and emergency sleepovers, advice, training and peer support.

---

<sup>1</sup> This includes 2 children’s trusts (Doncaster and independently-funded Slough). In addition to the 13 local authorities and children’s trusts, we also have DSAs with two independent fostering agencies.

**Figure 1: Model of The Fostering Network's Mockingbird programme**



The Fostering Network's Mockingbird programme

Source: *The Fostering Network*

This new evaluation will work with 10 local authorities, as 7 sites, to evaluate the roll-out of the programme as well as offering the opportunity to incorporate the data from DfE Innovation sites and a few sites that are far enough along to examine longer-term impact. The Department for Education (DfE)-funded evaluation for Wave 2 of the Innovation Programme covers 12 fostering providers made up of 10 local authorities and 2 independent fostering agencies. Additionally, the evaluation incorporates findings from the evaluation of the Mockingbird programme as part of Bradford B Positive Pathways. As of November 2019, The Fostering Network was working with 38 partners, 41 fostering services to implement and sustain the Mockingbird programme.

### **Project aims and intended outcomes**

The model aims to improve stability for children and young people. The model intends to address the issues of high incidence of unplanned placement moves, escalation of problems within a placement, low levels of wellbeing for looked after children and young people, low levels of confidence and motivation of foster carers as well as poor retention of foster carers, over-use of costly placement options and poorly planned and facilitated contact with birth families.

Table 1 below presents participation of Mockingbird sites for those returning the monitoring forms as of November 2019. The majority of the households participating are in one of the sites funded by the Department for Education Children’s Social Care Innovation Programme. These are point-in-time numbers, and estimates for future samples take into account new participants from the newly funded sites as well as historical participation from participating sites.

**Table 1: Point in time participation for Mockingbird from Nov 2019 monitoring forms**

	Active constellations / hub homes	Satellite homes	Children in foster care	Birth children	Adopted children	Guardianship Orders	Children with Special Guardianship	Children in residential	Young people in staying put
21 UK Mockingbird constellations	41	310	440	169	34	16	10	16	
9 DfE Innovation-funded local authorities	32	234	333	120	34	16	8	14	

## Project activities

Project activities include, but are not limited to:

Activities led by The Fostering Network:

- providing guidance, resources and coaching to fostering services
- certifying new hub fidelity in phase one; pre-launch, three, six, nine and twelve months post-launch, moving to six monthly in phase 2. The Fidelity Assessment form is available from the Fostering Network
- delivering training for hub home providers and liaison workers
- holding national learning events; including leaders’ workshops for services currently implementing forums for hub home carers and liaison workers
- collating monitoring data and providing support for site-level monitoring and evaluation activities

Activities led by the host service, supported by The Fostering Network:

- recruitment and hiring of the liaison worker to implement Mockingbird
- development of an implementation working group
- stakeholder engagement
- recruitment of hub home carers
- identifying satellite families and launching new constellations
- developing operational protocols, policies and procedures to support the running of Mockingbird in the host service

Activities led by the hub home, supported by the host service and The Fostering Network:

- providing emergency and planned sleepovers and short breaks
- monthly social activities taking place with foster carers and children and young people in the hub
- peer foster carer support taking place
- foster carer training opportunities, either in a formal and regularised manner or in an as needed basis
- opportunities for birth family relationships to be sustained, such as birth family contact or sibling contact

Within the bounds of the fidelity of Mockingbird, the programme should be tailored to meet individual site, foster carer, and young people needs, for example by:

- including 1-2 young people who are in residential homes
- including young people who have transitioned to permanency outside of foster care, for example have been adopted, are under Special Guardianship orders, or who have returned to birth parents
- including broader aspects of the fostering service, such as strength-based work, attachment work, or No Wrong Door
- targeting a small subset of young people within a broadly diverse constellation who are particularly vulnerable, such as those vulnerable to child sexual exploitation, vulnerable to county lines activities, or have diagnosed conditions such as autism
- providing support to foster carers and children and young people in times of allegations
- providing support to foster carers and children and young people in times of bereavement

Project activities are also aligned in the table below. This sets out the stages of the Mockingbird project activities once a new partner is signed up to deliver Mockingbird. This does not include standard pre-implementation work with a service. The order in which the stages are laid out is just one possible order – each site is free to design a logical timeline that works best for them.

Project activities (Stages)									
#	Stage description	Notes on stage and central resources (what – materials)	Who (recipients)	What (procedures)	Who (provider)	How (format)	Where (location),	When and how much (dosage)	Tailoring (adaptation)
1	Introduction meeting with The Fostering Network's Mockingbird coach and implementation manager and key people within the service	Mockingbird coaching framework Introduction meeting agenda Communications guideline	Service project lead and senior leaders	Structured meeting	TFN	Face to face meeting	In service	First activity post SAQ  2.5 hours	Minimal
	Timeline planning session	Timeline exercise	Service project lead and invited project team	Planned exercise (sometimes one to one but often small workshop)	TFN – via coach	Face to face meeting or workshop	In service	Early  3 hours	Minimal
	Stakeholder engagement and communications planning session	Stakeholder engagement exercise  Coach led	Service project lead and invited project team	Planned exercise (sometimes one to one but often	TFN – via coach	Face to face meeting or workshop	In service	Early  2 hours	Minimal

Project activities (Stages)									
#	Stage description	Notes on stage and central resources (what – materials)	Who (recipients)	What (procedures)	Who (provider)	How (format)	Where (location),	When and how much (dosage)	Tailoring (adaptation)
		session		small workshop)		p			
	Mockingbird fidelity overview session	Fidelity checklist  Coach led session	Service project lead and invited project team	Planned exercise (sometimes one to one but often small workshop)	TFN – via coach	Face to face meeting or workshop	In service	Early  2 hours	None
2	Agree Implementation working group structure, approach and membership	Implementation working group planning checklist	Service project lead and invited project team	Service discussion	Decision making owned by service – guided by coach	Service discussion	In service	Pre 1 <sup>st</sup> IWG	Must fit service structures and ways of working
3	Appoint and adequately induct IWG members – including IWG chair.	Implementation working group planning checklist	Service project lead and invited project team	Service discussion	Decision making owned by service – guided by coach	Service discussion  Information session	In service	Pre 1 <sup>st</sup> IWG  Time needed variable	Must fit service structures and ways of working
4	Hold first implementation working group (IWG) meeting, agree terms of reference for the group and diarise future meetings.	Template agenda for first implementation working group	IWG	Regular meeting (monthly or 6 weekly)	Decision making owned by service – guided by coach	Formal project team meeting	In service	3 hours every month or 6 weeks	Must fit service structures and ways of working
5	Ensure all the key people in the IWG and delivery team are familiar and comfortable with the full Mockingbird fidelity checklist.	Mockingbird fidelity checklist Mockingbird fidelity checklist with coaching notes Coaches session guide - Mockingbird fidelity	IWG	Service discussion	Coach	Service discussion (often at IWG)	In service	One off session with ongoing reinforcement	None
7	Review the draft Mockingbird operations protocol.	Template – Mockingbird operations protocol	IWG	Service discussion	Decision making owned by service – guided by coach	Service discussion (often at IWG and working groups between meetings)	In service	Ongoing discussion – document is built over implementation process	Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
8	Sign off the service’s Mockingbird operations protocol.		IWG (ultimately needs head of service sign off)	Service discussion	Decision making owned by service – guided by coach	Service discussion (often at IWG and working groups between meetings)	In service	Pre-launch but with ongoing review once constellation is up and running	Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
9	Hold key communications and engagement events. (Multiple events may be needed across implementation and	Template – Mockingbird PowerPoint presentation Link – Mockingbird	IWG  Wider service  Foster	Presentations at events and team meetings	Project lead and IWG  Often supported by coach		In service	Throughout implementation  Dosage varies by service	Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor

Project activities (Stages)									
#	Stage description	Notes on stage and central resources (what – materials)	Who (recipients)	What (procedures)	Who (provider)	How (format)	Where (location),	When and how much (dosage)	Tailoring (adaptation)
	beyond to meet multiple audience needs.	film Link – Katy’s story (Young person’s animation from Doncaster) Link – Mockingbird web page Mockingbird communications guidelines and logos	carers  Children and young people groups						mockingbird fidelity
10	Agree hub home carer role description, person specification, pay and conditions.	Hub home carer role and responsibilities Learning sheet – Hub home carer payments	IWG	Service discussion	Decision making owned by service – guided by coach	Service discussion (often at IWG and working groups between meetings)	In service		Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
11	Agree liaison worker job description, person specification, pay and conditions.	Liaison worker role and responsibilities	IWG	Service discussion	Decision making owned by service – guided by coach	Service discussion (often at IWG and working groups between meetings)	In service		Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
12	Agree the constellation supervision structure	Constellation supervision structure	IWG	Service discussion	Decision making owned by service – guided by coach	Service discussion (often at IWG and working groups between meetings)	In service		Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
13	Design and sign off the recruitment, training and induction process for the hub home carer.	Hub home carer draft advert	IWG	Service discussion	Decision making owned by service – guided by coach	Service discussion (often at IWG and working groups between meetings)	In service		Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
14	Design and sign off the recruitment, training and induction process for the liaison worker	No central resources as this is very much based on the service’s own HR processes and internal recruitment approach.	IWG	Service discussion	Decision making owned by service – guided by coach	Service discussion (often at IWG and working groups between meetings)	In service		Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
15	Design and signoff the hub home carer agreement	Hub home carer agreement: headings and	IWG	Service discussion	Decision making owned by	Service discussion (often	In service		Must fit service structures

Project activities (Stages)									
#	Stage description	Notes on stage and central resources (what – materials)	Who (recipients)	What (procedures)	Who (provider)	How (format)	Where (location),	When and how much (dosage)	Tailoring (adaptation)
		prompt questions			service – guided by coach	at IWG and working groups between meetings )			and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
16	Hold hub home carer interviews		Service interview panel	Interview process as designed by service	Supported by coach but rarely on panel	Interview process as designed by service	In service	Once	Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
17	Hold liaison worker interviews		Service interview panel	Interview process as designed by service	Supported by coach but rarely on panel	Interview process as designed by service	In service	Once	Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
18	Hub home carer in post and starting induction		Hub home carer	Induction meetings, joining IWG, time with coach, discussions with liaison worker, self directed learning	Designed by service with guidance from coach	Face to face and self directed	In service	Will depend on strengths and gaps for each hub home carer and the capacity of the service	Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
19	Liaison worker in post and starting induction		Liaison worker	Induction meetings, joining IWG, time with coach, discussions with hub home carer, self directed learning	Designed by service with guidance from coach	Face to face and self directed	In service	Will depend on strengths and gaps for each liaison worker and the capacity of the service	Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
20	Hub home carer and liaison worker attend The Fostering Network's training day.	Slide pack Training activities Training handouts	Training focused on HHC and LW – but the service is free to invite key members from the wider team to help them understand Mockingbird and how to support the constellation	Full day training	Mockingbird coach	Classroom based training day	In service	Post HHC and LW appointment – pre constellation launch	There is a set syllabus for the day – but coaches can work with the service to tailor the day to meet specific needs
21	Constellation registration form completed and returned to The	Constellation registration form	Project lead	Complete registration form	Mockingbird coach	Word document	In service	Pre-launch – post training	None

Project activities (Stages)									
#	Stage description	Notes on stage and central resources (what – materials)	Who (recipients)	What (procedures)	Who (provider)	How (format)	Where (location),	When and how much (dosage)	Tailoring (adaptation)
	Fostering Network								
22	Design a selection criteria and approach for identifying and appointing satellite families.	Mockingbird learning sheet – identifying satellite families	Foster carers	Process designed by service with guidance from coach	Process designed by service with guidance from coach	Information days, newsletter articles, emails to carers, discussion with SSW	In service		Must fit service structures and ways of working but honor mockingbird fidelity
23	Design and signoff the satellite carer agreement.		IWG	Service discussion and formal documentation	Designed by service with guidance from coach	Formal document	In service		
24	Design and signoff satellite carer induction meetings with hub home carer, liaison worker, supervising social worker and children's social worker. Thinking here must include delegated authority, risk assessments, review of care plan and putting in place the necessary paperwork and support needed for each family to join the constellation.	Preparation and training for satellite families  Delegated Authority Decision Support Tool Contact Planning Tool  These last two tools are not specific to Mockingbird – but have been developed as good practice guides by The Fostering Network. They are given out at the hub home carer and liaison worker training. They are available to the coaches for reference on the coaches library.	Satellite families	Series of 'placement planning' meetings or 'settling in' meetings (language dependent on local service).	Led by service – guidance from coach but coach never present in the meetings		In service  Sometimes in satellite homes – sometimes in hub home – sometimes in service office	One meeting per satellite family – pre launch	
25	Develop a plan for supporting children and young people to understand Mockingbird and what it will mean for them.		IWG	Planning discussions	designed by service with guidance from coach	Agreed plan	In service		
26	Select satellite carers	Mockingbird learning sheet – identifying satellite families	Fostering families	Information events, expressions of interest, discussions between foster carers and SSWs	designed by service with guidance from coach  led by fostering team and SSWs		In service		
27	Develop training for satellite carers	Preparation and training for	IWG		designed by service				

Project activities (Stages)									
#	Stage description	Notes on stage and central resources (what – materials)	Who (recipients)	What (procedures)	Who (provider)	How (format)	Where (location),	When and how much (dosage)	Tailoring (adaptation)
		satellite families			with guidance from coach				
28	Deliver training to satellite carers		Satellite carers	Deliver training designed by service	Typically delivered by service team including HHC and LW. Guidance from coach	Informal discussion and structured training	In service	Pre – launch Dosage dependent on service design	
29	Prepare children and young people for the launch of the constellation and answer any questions they may have.		Children and young people		Typically satellite carer – sometimes supported by hub home carer	Informal age appropriate discussion within the family	Satellite home		
30	Appoint monitoring and evaluation lead, review The Fostering Network’s monthly return requirements and put in place any other monitoring and evaluation needs for the service.	Once this person is identified put them in touch with Tom George (Mockingbird monitoring and evaluation analyst) Mockingbird monthly monitoring form	IWG		Guidance and support from TFN’s monitoring and evaluation analyst				
31	Pre-launch fidelity check from The Fostering Network	Fidelity checklist Fidelity checklist with coaching notes	Hub home carer, liaison worker, service lead and any invited participants	Structured fidelity review using fidelity checklist	Mockingbird coach	Structured fidelity review using fidelity checklist	In service	On off – around two weeks before launch	none
32	Launch event(s)	Launch events learning sheet	Satellite and invited service guests	Formal or informal launch event	Delivered by the service – guidance in design from coach. Sometime coach attends and speaks		In service  Sometimes hub home, sometimes service office, sometimes hired venue,	One off	Launch events differ greatly service to service
33	Hold first constellation meetings and events	Launch events learning sheet	Whole constellation		HHC and LW		Hub home		
34	Change implementation working group into ongoing Mockingbird steering group – review membership, agree new terms of reference and set								

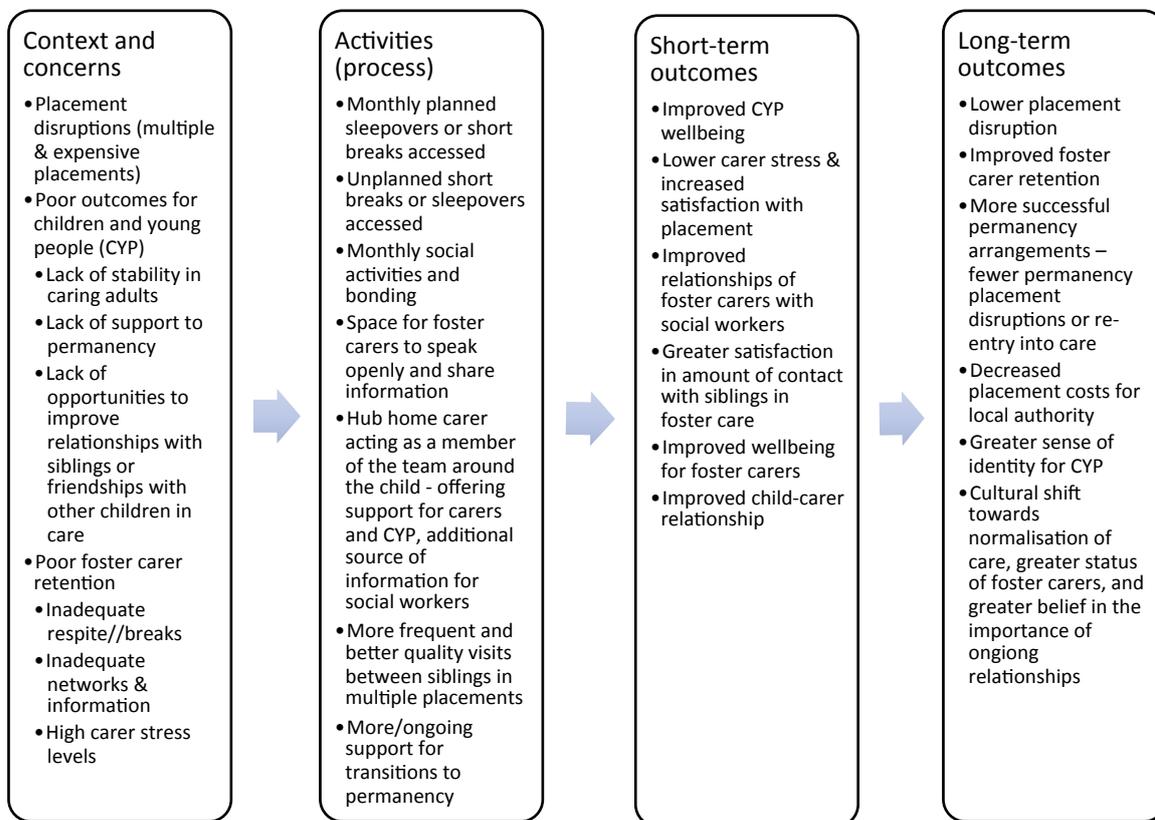
Project activities (Stages)									
#	Stage description	Notes on stage and central resources (what – materials)	Who (recipients)	What (procedures)	Who (provider)	How (format)	Where (location),	When and how much (dosage)	Tailoring (adaptation)
	ongoing meeting schedule.								
35	Diarise regular fidelity checks	Fidelity checklist	Hub home carer, liaison worker, service lead and any invited participants	Structured fidelity review using fidelity checklist	Mockingbird coach	Structured fidelity review using fidelity checklist	Service office	Regularly throughout the year	none
	HHC and LW attend constellation development forums	Different focus and materials each forum	HHC and LW	Whole group forums – some with workshops	The Fostering Network	Focus on practice and peer learning between services.	North and South (eg Leeds and London)	1 full day every six months	
	Service leaders attend leaders workshops	Different focus and materials each workshop	Service leaders	Large group presentation, table discussions and networking	The Fostering Network	Focus on sustainability and peer learning nationally.	Rotating location around England	Quarterly	
	Mockingbird summer adventures	Outwood bound based two-night residential	Constellations		The Fostering Network – led by activity centre staff	Focus on strengthening constellations and building national connections.	Rotating location around England	Two nights a year	
	Mockingbird Nest	Children and young peoples workshops, facilitated and activity based group building	Children and young people, foster carers	15-20 children and young people from national constellations	The Fostering Network	Focus on developing new skills, confidence, relationships and creating a national group to represent children and young people who are part of Mockingbird nationally.	Rotating locations in England	Once every 6-8 weeks	

## Project theory of change

In establishing the evaluation, the evaluation team held a Theory of Change workshop in the launch meeting on 1 November 2019. Colleagues from The Fostering Network and What

Works for Children’s Social Care worked to articulate a simplified Theory of Change. This inevitably builds off of work from the DfE Innovation evaluation and findings to examine what are the key theory of change dimensions that will be examined in this evaluation. The Theory of Change is presented in Figure 2: Simplified Mockingbird programme theory of change. This is not a static theory of change, and it is subject to modification as the project and evaluation progresses.

**Figure 2: Simplified Mockingbird programme theory of change**



Source: The Research Team

## Impact Evaluation

### Research questions

Primary research questions:

- Primary impact measures: What is the impact of the Mockingbird programme on placement stability as measured by the rate of unplanned endings?
- Secondary measures: What is the impact of the Mockingbird programme foster carer retention as measured by the rate of de-registration of foster carers? What is the impact of Mockingbird on changes in the wellbeing of children in care?

Secondary research questions:

- How does foster carer satisfaction and foster-carer wellbeing change over time through the intervention?

- How does the child and young person wellbeing change over time for those participating in Mockingbird? How does their satisfaction with the amount of contact with their siblings who are also in foster care seem to be affected by participation in the Mockingbird programme?
- How many people have participated in Mockingbird (foster carers, children and young people)? What kinds of activities have they participated in?
- What are the perceived facilitators and enablers to implementing the Mockingbird programme and achieving intended outcomes?
- What is the return on investment associated with the Mockingbird programme for monetisable outcomes?

## Design

- The following table summarises the design of the evaluation:

<b>Trial type and number of arms</b>		<b>Quasi-experimental design, 2 arms</b>
<b>Unit of randomisation</b>		None.
<b>Stratification variables (if applicable)</b>		Potential matching variables: Child-level: Gender, age, available placement history, type of last placement, age of entry into care Foster carer-level: Ethnicity, age, time spent as a foster carer with agency, number of foster children
<b>Primary outcome</b>	variable	Placement stability
	measure (instrument, scale)	Number of unplanned endings experienced by the child within the year (SSDA903)
<b>Secondary outcome(s)</b>	variable(s)	Foster carer retention; child well-being
	measure(s) (instrument, scale)	De-registration of foster carers (Ofsted, number of de-registrations/year); SDQ score (SSDA903, 0-25 scale)

For the child and young person participants in Mockingbird in the 7 sites, the following will be their experience:

- Baseline survey sent online via the evaluation lead/liaison worker at hub launch
- Follow-up survey sent online via the evaluation lead/liaison worker at approximately 1-year post-launch
- Small chance of their being approached for an interview in approximately February 2022. We will randomly select 3/7 sites for participant interviews and then 3 children and young people will be selected in each site to be contacted for interviews on their experience approximately 2 years into the evaluation. We hope to randomly select the children and young people for interviews as well as the sites.

In addition:

- Pseudoanonymised child-level SSDA903 administrative data is collected on a yearly-basis including two baseline years for all children in the sites. For those participating in Mockingbird, this data is matched with their monthly participation data. Comparison groups are also created through this data. This goes via the local authority and does not involve any participants directly.

For the foster carer participants in Mockingbird in the 7 sites, the following will be their experience:

- Baseline survey sent online via the evaluation lead/liaison worker at hub launch for distribution
- Follow-up survey sent online via the evaluation lead/liaison worker at approximately 1-year post-launch
- Small chance of their being approached for an interview in approximately February 2022. We will randomly select 3/7 sites for participant interviews and then 3 foster carers will be selected in each site to be contacted for interviews on their experience approximately 2 years into the evaluation. We hope to randomly select foster carers for interviews as well as the sites.

In addition:

- Pseudoanonymised Ofsted administrative data about foster carers is collected on a yearly-basis including two baseline years for foster carers in the sites. For those participating with Mockingbird, this data is matched with their monthly participation data to be analysed. This goes via the local authority and does not involve participants directly.

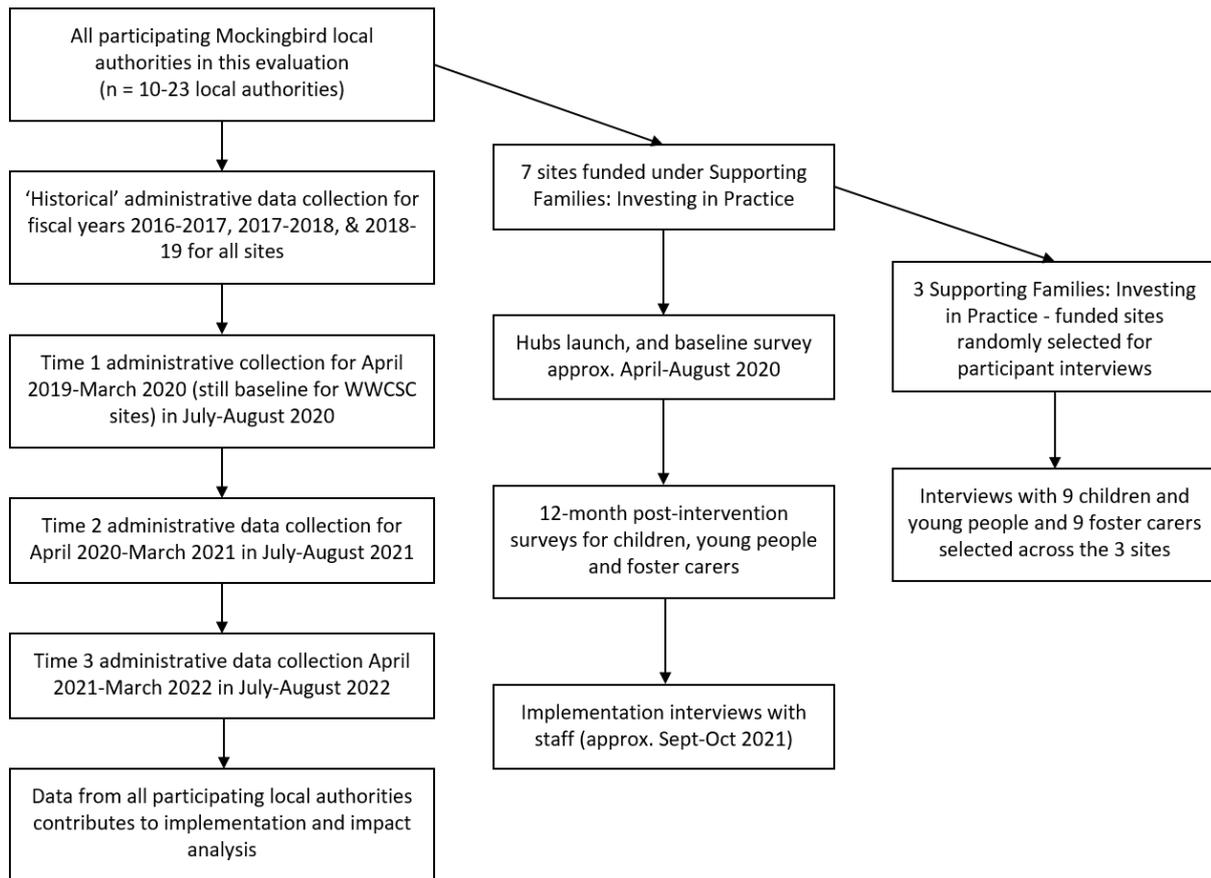
For the staff participants in Mockingbird in the 7 sites, the following will be their experience:

- Site-set up discussions about the evaluation
- Regular contact for data sharing agreements, administration of the surveys, data collection of SSDA903 individual child-level data, Ofsted individual foster-carer level data, participation data, and code linking documentation
- Telephone interviews approximately 18-months into the programme with key implementation staff member at each site (7 interviews total).

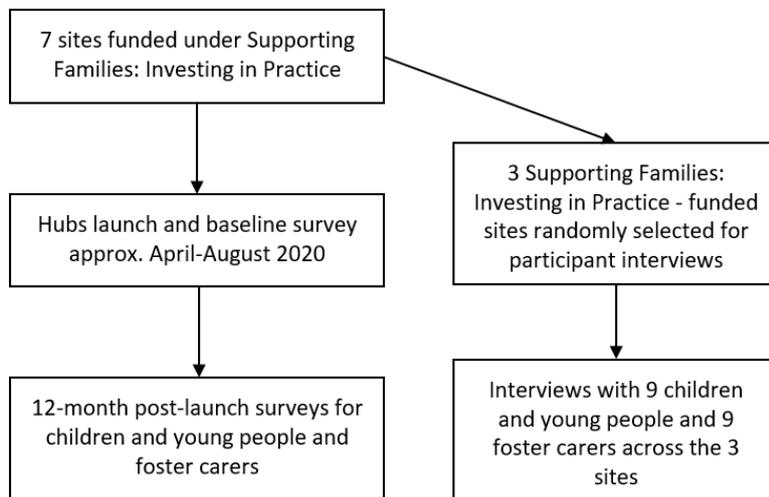
For the national staff implementing Mockingbird, the following will be their experience:

- Launch meeting and theory of change workshop
- Regular monthly calls for updates and catch ups
- Regular contact for sharing of participation data
- Telephone interviews approximately 18 months into the programme with key national staff from the Fostering Network (4 interviews in total) to understand the implementation and barriers and facilitators to implementation
- Attendance at some national events for joint communication and sharing of learning

**Figure 3: Flow chart of main evaluation data collection activities:**



**Figure 4: Experience of evaluation for foster carers, children and young people participating in Supporting Families: Investing in Practice – funded Mockingbird sites:**



### Randomisation

- Not applicable. No randomisation.

### Participants

The new sites participating in the evaluation have been selected as:

- Barnsley

- East Cheshire
- Sheffield
- South Tyneside
- Wakefield
- Warrington
- Together4Children Regional Permanency Partnership:
  - Shropshire
  - Staffordshire
  - Stoke-on-Trent
  - Telford & Wrekin

Four of the local authorities plan to operate as a Together4Children Regional Permanency Partnership and implement the programme jointly. The 10 new local authorities were selected by What Works for Children's Social Care and the Department for Education in consultation with The Fostering Network. In addition, 13 local authorities that are currently implementing Mockingbird and working with the evaluation team will be approached about continuing to collect and use their administration and participation data. We will liaise with The Fostering Network about whether there are any other self-funded sites that may be far enough along in their implementation journey that they should be approached about their willingness to participate and share administrative data

Fostering families and children will be identified and recruited by those implementing the Mockingbird Programme. Recruitment decisions are made following expressions of interest from carers themselves and service led discussions within the Implementation Working Group and wider fostering team. This may include identification and recruitment of participants by liaison social workers, hub home carers, supervising social workers, children's social workers, and social work managers.

## Sample size / MDES calculations

Below is a summary of same size calculations and assumptions:

		MDES (Proportion of a Standard Deviation)
<b>MDES</b>		0.2
<b>Baseline/Endline correlations</b>	Child	
	Family	
	Social Worker	
<b>Intracluster correlations (ICCs)</b>	Family	
	Social Worker	
	Team	
<b>Alpha</b>		0.05
<b>Power</b>		0.8
<b>One-sided or two-sided?</b>		Two-sided
<b>Level of intervention clustering</b>		
<b>Average cluster size</b>		
<b>Sample Size (children)</b>	Intervention	196
	Control	196
	<b>Total</b>	392
<b>Sample Size (families)</b>	Intervention	196
	Control	196
	<b>Total</b>	392
<b>Sample Size (Social Workers)</b>	Intervention	
	Control	
	<b>Total</b>	

Our plan is to use difference-in-difference for changes in the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and coarsened exact matching for measures such as unplanned endings or de-registrations of foster carers that require a change at two time points.

In regard to the sample size/power calculations: For this proposal the aim is to determine whether there is a difference across the intervention and control groups in outcomes that are proportions (proportion of unplanned endings, foster carer de-registration, and SDQ scores of concern). For a two independent sample test of proportions in which there is a power of 0.8, significance level of 0.05 for a two sided test, and a desired Cohen's d effect size of 0.2, then a sample size of 392 cases in both the treatment and control groups would be necessary. A calculation using a more conservative Cohen's d effect size estimate of 0.1 would require a sample size of 1570 in both groups in order to achieve a power of 0.80. These estimates were calculated using the two-proportion power test in R.

The following R code can be used to replicate sample size estimate calculation:

- `install.packages("pwr")`
- `library(pwr)`
- `pwr.2p.test(h= 0.2, sig.level = 0.05, power = 0.80)`
- `pwr.2p.test(h=0.1, sig.level = 0.05, power = 0.80)`

We are estimating a total of 579 children and 362 fostering homes in the intervention group (based on the current and new numbers of sites) and will create a control group of similar size for use in a coarsened exact matching approach. This sample size should therefore be sufficient to detect an effect of 0.2 with an appropriate level of power, however it would not be sufficient if the effect was 0.1. There is little data or literature to currently indicate what minimum detectable effect sizes we may anticipate for this intervention, so we have assumed a relatively small effect size, which most literature states as a Cohen's *d* value of 0.2. We recognize there may be issues related to the power of our results if the effect size is smaller than this value. Additionally, we will report the Glass's delta effect size in the presentation of our results; this statistic calculates effect sizes using the control group standard deviation rather than a pooled standard deviation.

Our sample size calculations on page 1 assume a relatively long time period for setup for the new sites and a fairly large agreement to continue to use data from existing sites. Using the 6 new Mockingbird sites funded under Department for Education Wave 2 Children's Social Care Innovation (DfE Innovation) funding as a proxy for this evaluation, as of a full 24 months into their funding 8 hubs had been established (range 1-2, average 1.3 hubs per site) including 60 satellite homes and 117 looked after children. The hubs had been operating an average of less than a year, 323 days (range 22-503 days). This information has been used as a proxy for the sample along with the data from April 2019 on the active constellations for the 13 local authorities with which the evaluation team has data sharing agreements for DfE Innovation evaluation.

Selection bias may be present and this will be partially controlled for with the comparison group, although given the nature of the implementation findings from Mockingbird, we acknowledge this will not be completely controlled for. The implementation findings for Mockingbird discuss the diversity needed to create a Mockingbird constellation with fidelity, including the diversity in the needs of children and young people and in the needs of foster carers and for unmeasured characteristics (such as personality and willingness to actively participate in the programme) to be taken into account. Although Mockingbird is a group intervention, outcomes are measured on an individual-level basis and we will assume that those taking part in Mockingbird are similar to the matched comparison group on measured as well as unmeasured variables. We acknowledge that this is a large and not entirely unproblematic assumption, and differences in groups will be further explored through interviews with site leads. To as far of an extent as possible, we plan to match on case histories for the multiple years of baseline data requested.

There may be spill over and cross-over effects between the Mockingbird hubs and the comparison communities. In the theory of change workshop and in the ongoing evaluation of Mockingbird, national level staff clearly indicate a systems theory of change wherein they hope that engaging with this programme will lead to agency-level change in aspects such as respect for foster carers, considering delegated authority, and the language used around

foster care (e.g. sleepovers instead of respite). Some of this may lead to a cultural change that could improve the outcomes of comparison children as well as intervention children. The evaluation will explore these theories in interviews, but it will be unable to fully capture any of these effects. Some foster carers and children may also not be formally part of Mockingbird, but they may still take part in Mockingbird activities or benefit from improved wellbeing of their friends (e.g. through existing foster carer support groups, networks from trainings, or informal networks siblings or friends through children in care councils). Monthly monitoring forms has open text designed to capture aspects such as inclusion of those not formally in Mockingbird as well as to capture any formal involvement, even for a month. Interview can further explore any cross-over or spill-over effects, but the evaluation will not be designed to fully look at these effects. The evaluation assumes minimal cross-over and spill-over effects, and these aspects have not emerged as prominent enough in the Department for Education Innovation Programme funded evaluation so as to undermine this evaluation design. Given fidelity measures, Mockingbird hubs are designed around creating community within specific size bounds. Any cross-overs and spill overs effects that do exist are likely to result in a lower measured impact of the Mockingbird programme compared to the ‘true’ impact.

### Outcome measures

The following are the primary and secondary outcome measures. These are supported by the theory of change. Based on this theory of change, the final measure is the further time point collected. The narrative of reporting the data will discuss multiple statistical testing. In addition to significance levels at standard alpha rates, we will also report significance if corrected for multiple comparisons (most likely through the Holm-Bonferroni approach that is more powerful for multiple comparisons or the traditional Bonferroni correction).

<b>Primary outcome</b>	<b>variable</b>	<b>Placement stability</b>
	measure (instrument, scale)	Number of unplanned endings experienced by the child within the years of the Mockingbird evaluation (SSDA903)
<b>Secondary outcome(s)</b>	variable(s)	Foster carer retention; child well-being
	measure(s) (instrument, scale)	De-registration of foster carers (Ofsted, number of de-registrations/year); SDQ score (SSDA903, 0-25 scale)

### Analysis plan

#### Primary Analysis:

The primary impact measure will examine the impact of the Mockingbird programme on placement stability as measured by the number of unplanned endings in the SSDA903 between those participating in Mockingbird and comparison communities via coarsened exact matching given the nature of the data. More detailed statistical advice will be sought after the data is cleaned, and more detailed data that will be used to create comparison groups are listed below.

Because we will be using coarsened exact matching to create the control and treatment groups, we will specify ex ante how the variables listed will be temporarily coarsened in the matching procedure. After the matching algorithm is applied and unmatched data are

discarded, the original uncoarsened values are retained. The level of coarsening for each variable will be informed by a review of empirical literature and decisions about coarsening will be reported. The aim of coarsening is to create a grouping in which all values contained within the coarsened bin are substantively indistinguishable; for example, a seven-year old's experience of foster care is not substantively different from an eight-year old's experience, therefore we may coarsen the age variable for matching purposes to allow seven and eight year olds to be matched.

The formula below describes the calculation of weights  $w_i$  that will be assigned to each matched unit  $i$  in stratum  $s$ . Treated units within the strata are denoted by  $T^s$  and control units within the strata are denoted by  $C^s$ . The number of matched units for treatment and controls are  $m_T = \cup_{s \in S} m_T^s$ , and  $m_C = \cup_{s \in S} m_C^s$ , respectively.

$$w_i = \begin{cases} 1, & i \in T^s \\ \frac{m_C m_T^s}{m_T m_C^s}, & i \in C^s \end{cases}$$

The treatment effect of participation in Mockingbird for a unit  $i$  is denoted as follows:

$TE_i = Y_i(1) - Y_i(0)$ . The value of this effect is known as the sample average treatment effect on the treated (SATT). The SATT is calculated using the matched units extracted from the CEM algorithm. It is expressed as follows:

$$SATT = \frac{1}{n_T} \sum_{i \in T} TE_i$$

A secondary measure looks at foster carer retention via the de-registration of foster carers in the Ofsted data. Again, Ofsted data will be collected for all foster carers in the local authorities two years prior to the launch of Mockingbird and any subsequent years, in order to create comparison groups using coarsened exact matching. We anticipate that the reason for de-registration will not be uniform or sensitive enough to be used for this evaluation, but this will be re-examined in the analysis.

The next evaluation question plans to look at the impact of the intervention on wellbeing of children in care as measured by changes in the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) as reported in the SSSA between those participating in Mockingbird and comparison groups at the same sites. We plan to use difference-in-difference statistical techniques to vary from the current DfE Innovation evaluation and given that the measure seems to lend itself to DiD as the former measures do not. We will consider carefully the completeness of SDQ reporting before moving forward with this analysis. We plan to select comparison groups based on prior common trends in SDQ scores.

Based on literature about the importance of care history and demographics as well as our current understanding of the data, the following subset of SSSA903 data may be used as control variables or create equivalent comparison groups:

Type of data indicator	Data items
Demographic information	Gender
	Date of birth
	Ethnic origin

	Local authority
<b>Unaccompanied asylum seeking status</b>	Unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC) status
	Date UASC status ceased
<b>Episode information</b>	Date episode commenced
	Reason for new episode of care
	Legal status
	Category of need
	Placement location (in/out of local authority)
	Placement type
	Placement provider
	Previous permanence option
	Date of (previous permanence option) order
	Date episode ceased (for years prior to Mockingbird)
	Reason episode ceased (for years prior to Mockingbird)
	Reason for placement change (for years prior to Mockingbird)
	Missing from placement (for years prior to Mockingbird)
Missing episode start date (for years prior to Mockingbird)	
Missing episode end date (for years prior to Mockingbird)	
<b>Wellbeing</b>	Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score
<b>Care leavers</b>	Local authority in touch
	Contact through a third party
	Main activity
	Accommodation
	Suitability of accommodation

Based on literature theorising the importance of the length of time of fostering experience, type of fostering placement offered, and demographics as well as our current understanding of the data, the following subset of Ofsted returns data may be used as control variables or create equivalent comparison groups:

<b>Type of data indicator</b>	<b>Data items</b>
<b>Demographic information</b>	Number of foster carers in household
	Ethnicity of Carer 1
	Ethnicity of Carer 2
	Local authority
<b>Terms of approval</b>	Date approval
	Terms of approval: max child
	Placement offer: primary designation
	Placement offer: additional
	Exemption in operation during past year
<b>Use of approved places</b>	Number of children in placements
	Number of vacant places
	Number of places used for short break care
	Number of not available places
	Description of not available places
<b>Restraint</b>	Number of incidents of physical restraint of CYP

<b>Recruitment</b>	Date Stage 1 started
	Date Stage 2 ended
	Application status
	Date of panel

The variables on the recruitment process and the number of vacant places are theorized as less important in matching, but are nonetheless included in the above table as secondary matching variables. The amount of time in recruitment could be proxy measures for ideas such as resilience of carers or concerns about the quality of carers.

## Secondary Analysis

Secondary research questions include:

- How does foster carer satisfaction and foster-carer wellbeing change over time through the intervention?

These are planned to be measured through surveys using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) and measures comparable to the State of the Nation report (Lawson & Cann, 2019) about recommending fostering. Draft foster carer survey measures are described below:

Data sources	Availability / uptake of training	Formal / informal support	Availability / uptake of respite care	Respect, recognition	Satisfaction with fostering (individual, family)	Wellbeing	Retention	Placement stability	Control variables
Carer surveys	<p>How many days training have you had in the past 12 months? (TFN)</p> <p>Do you have an agreed training plan? (TFN)</p>	<p>How do you rate the support you receive from the following: Supervising social worker, children's social worker, IRO, constellation liaison worker, out of hours service, other foster carers, support group, buddying scheme, foster care association? (TFN)</p>	<p>How would you rate the respite care on offer to you? (TFN)</p>	<p>Do you feel you are treated as an equal member of the team by named members of team? (TFN)</p> <p>Do you feel you have the authority and support to make day-to-day decisions about your fostered children? (TFN)</p>	<p>How likely are you to recommend fostering to others? (TFN)</p> <p>How do you rate the support your fostered child(ren) receive(s) from their social worker? (TFN)</p> <p>Overall, are you satisfied as a foster carer?</p>	Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)	How long do you intend to continue fostering? (TFN)	Have you experienced a placement ending when you felt it was not in the child's best interest? (TFN)	<p>Foster care experience</p> <p>Gender</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Ethnicity</p> <p>Child's care plan</p>

- How does the child and young person wellbeing change over time? How does their satisfaction with the amount of contact with their siblings who are also in foster care seem to be affected by participation in the Mockingbird programme?

Child and young people wellbeing will be measured in the ORS survey. The decision to use this scale was based on a review of the literature for well-being of children in care. Sample draft children and young people measures are below (please note, there will be some differences based on age:

Data sources	Placement stability / belonging	Contact with siblings / birth parents	Educational attainment / aspirations	Positive relationships /identity	Wellbeing
Surveys	e.g., CACYI scale	e.g., how often do you see ...?  Overall, is the amount of contact you have with your brothers or sisters...?  Overall, how would you describe your relationship with your brothers or sisters...?	e.g., do you try hard at school?	e.g., do you have a trusted adult?  Peer relationship scale for young-people (Anderson-Butcher et al, 2013)	e.g., ORS scales for children and ORS scale for young people

### Exploratory Analysis

Exploratory analysis will consider how the duration of participation in Mockingbird affect outcomes on placement stability, foster carer retention and child wellbeing. This will use the same measures as above, examining the variations depending on duration of participating with Mockingbird. Duration will be looked at via a continuous variable and a binary variable of participating in Mockingbird 12 months or more and participating in Mockingbird for less than 12 months as well as a binary variable of participating in Mockingbird for 6 months or more and less than 6 months.

Exploratory analysis may also investigate if certain demographics such as age groups of participants, gender, and sites predict greater impact. Additionally, exploratory analysis may look at if greater participation or participation in certain activities (e.g. social events) predicts greater impact.

We also plan to do exploratory analysis on any impacts on post-care. This has emerged more strongly in the last theory of change. We will do exploratory analysis on the impact of Mockingbird on reunification rates. If sufficient data exists, we will look at rates of re-entry into care for those reunified to birth family. We will also explore if other measures on post-permanency will be feasible to explore.

### Contextual Factors Analysis

Social Care is known to have a lot of variation in practice, services available, and demographics by local authority. This is evidenced in part by different rates for entry into care as well as by Ofsted judgements. Thus, comparison groups are created from within local authorities to control for this variation.

The programme may also be implemented in a variety of different ways. Fidelity checking by The Fostering Network will assist with some standardisation, but the dose of the intervention will also be explored via the monitoring data, which can be matched with the SSSDA903 and Ofsted Data.

The quasi-experimental design may allow for greater external validity in that the trial is more of an effectiveness trial than a small efficacy trial, with some sites being currently self-funded and the inclusion of more and varied sites. There is a trade off with a design such as a smaller, randomised controlled trial efficacy design that would have internal validity but may have been chosen and randomised in a way that was not sustainable.

### Implementation and process evaluation

The terms of reference for this evaluation referred to a 'light touch' process evaluation. As such, the implementation and process evaluation is designed to build upon work the Fostering Network is currently doing and the extensive interviews from the DfE Innovation evaluation to further explore implementation and process, whilst not over-burdening participants.

The Fostering Network collects a lot of information already on the implementation of the programme, including fidelity reviews and an extensive SAQ checklist. It is expected that all hubs operating meet fidelity, and this will be checked via the interviews with the Fostering Network and local authority staff.

- How many people have participated in Mockingbird (foster carers, children and young people)? What kinds of activities have they participated in?

This will be measured in the monthly monitoring data as well as through the foster carer and child and young person survey. This will consider aspects such as reach and dosage.

- What are the perceived facilitators and enablers to implementing the Mockingbird programme and achieving intended outcomes?

This will be explored via semi-structured interviews. Interviews will get at participant responsiveness and ability to differentiate the programme from business as usual activities, quality of the delivery, and the extent of any adaptations to the programme.

The survey for foster carers also explores what services foster carers are currently receiving as well as their satisfaction of support by different professionals in order to differentiate Mockingbird from services as usual. Questions in the child and young person surveys also explore aspects such as adults that they trust and relationships with school. These replicate questions from the current DfE Innovation evaluation and are designed to be able to develop theories to explain any outcomes at a national level as well as outcomes at a local level and variations between local authorities.

## Cost evaluation

The cost evaluation is focused on monetisable outcomes attributable to children, young people and the workforce. This work builds on our current evaluation of Mockingbird as part of the Department for Education Innovation Programme. The cost evaluation makes use of expenditure data and child-level and foster-carer level monetisable outcomes included in the administrative data (SSDA 903 & Ofsted), such as placement stability, and also utilises existing unit costs of the costs of placement change such as movement to/from residential care, for example. We also propose including the cost benefit of changes to the retention of foster carers, and the recruitment of foster carers if relevant.

The Rees Centre's experience evaluating the Regional Adoption Agencies has shown that understanding the combined financial data for regional partnerships has additional complexities. In order to understand the workings of the regional permanency partnership, we have planned a focus group in the permanency partnership and will examine the degree to which budgets have been combined, or remain devolved.

## Ethics & Participation

- Ethical approval will be gained from the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC).
- As this research is funded by the Department of Education (DfE), it is exempt from research governance procedures through the Association of Directors of Children's Services.
- After CUREC ethical approval is received, the research team will approach individual sites to see if there are any research governance processes that should be followed in line with those local authorities' guidance.
- For any primary data collection, all agreement to participate will be in line with CUREC approved procedures including informed consent.

## Registration

- The evaluation will be registered with the OSF, and the trial registry will be updated with outcomes at the end of the project.

## Data protection

- Individual data sharing agreements will be completed with each Local Authority (the "Mockingbird Site") and the Chancellors, Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford ("Oxford") for the purposes of the Evaluation. The information below highlights some of the legal obligations.
  - **Shared Personal Data.** This Agreements will establish the framework for the sharing of personal data between the parties as data controllers. Each party

acknowledges that one party (the **Data Discloser**) will regularly disclose to the other party (the **Data Recipient**) Shared Personal Data collected by the Data Discloser for the Data Recipient to process for the Agreed Purposes.

- **Effect of non-compliance with Data Protection Legislation.** Each party shall comply with all the obligations imposed on a controller under the Data Protection Legislation, and any material breach of the Data Protection Legislation by one party shall, if not remedied within 30 days of written notice from the other party, give grounds to the other party to terminate this agreement with immediate effect.
- **Obligations of Data Discloser.** The Data Discloser shall ensure that it has all necessary notices and consents in place to enable lawful transfer of the Shared Personal Data to the Permitted Recipients for the Agreed Purposes.
- **Obligations of Data Recipient.** The Data Recipient shall:
  - process the Shared Personal Data only for the Agreed Purposes;
  - not disclose or allow access to the Shared Personal Data to anyone other than the Permitted Recipients;
  - ensure the reliability of any of its personnel who have access to the Shared Personal Data and hold the Shared Personal Data under at least the conditions of confidence as such party holds personal data processed by it other than the Shared Personal Data;
  - ensure that it has in place appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal data.
  - not transfer any personal data outside the EEA unless the transferor ensures that (i) the transfer is to a country approved by the European Commission as providing adequate protection pursuant to Article 45 GDPR; (ii) there are appropriate safeguards in place pursuant to Article 46 GDPR; or (iii) one of the derogations for specific situations in Article 49 GDPR applies to the transfer:
- In addition, all reasons for processing special categories of personal data and procedures for ensuring data quality and confidentiality are scrutinised by the Oxford Ethics Procedure.

## Personnel

- Delivery team: The Fostering Network
  - Lilian Stevens, Head of Mockingbird
  - Freya Burley, Implementation Manager
  - Lizzie Thomas, Project Manager
  - Tom George, Monitoring & Evaluation Analyst
  - Ellie Parkin, Events and Administration Assistant
  - Carina Waldock, Project Worker

- Kathy Clancy, Project Worker (Starting at the end of January)
- Andy Limbert, Project Coach
- Vickie Oldroyd, Project Coach
  
- Evaluation team, all from the Rees Centre, University of Oxford:
  - Dr Ellie Ott, Evaluation Lead responsible for the overall evaluation of the programme
  - Data specialist -- Dr Lousie Mc Grath-Lone (currently on maternity leave) and David Sanders-Ellis, responsible for the data collection, data cleaning, and analysis.
  - Cost benefit analysis specialist in Children's Social Care – Dr Ellie Suh
  - Dr Lisa Holmes, Director of the Rees Centre, University of Oxford – senior oversight for cost benefit analysis
  - Qualitative research specialist -- Helen Trivedi (currently on maternity leave), responsible for interviews and qualitative analysis.
  - Heather Browning-Lee, Project Officer, responsible for providing project organisation and administrative support, including assisting with the Data Sharing Agreements, organising meetings, creating the gantt chart and data trackers, and typing up meeting notes.
  - Natalie Reynolds-Garcia, Administrator: responsible for processing travel requests and administrative assistant

## Timeline

The following is a rough timetable of the evaluation. Plans are set to change depending on the progress of the implementation of the programme.

Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/leading
1 Nov 2019	Theory of change workshop	Dr E. Ott
Nov 2019 – Dec 2019	Protocol development	Dr E. Ott
Dec 2019 – Feb 2020	Protocol re-review and revisions	Dr E. Ott & WWCS
Feb 2020 – June 2020	Planning and set up: ethics, research governance, LA engagement, and data sharing agreements	Dr E. Ott
Approx. April – August 2020	First hubs in 7 sites are launched	Delivery team, Local authority
Approx. April – August 2020	Baseline surveys of foster carers and children and young people at the 7 sites (somewhat rolling basis)	Dr E. Ott, Data Specialist
July – August 2020	Time 1 administrative data collection in all participating local authorities (SSDA903, Ofsted, participation data, expenditure data)	Rees Centre Data Specialist, Tom George at TFN responsible for participation data
Approx. April – Aug 2021	12-month into intervention surveys of foster carers and children and young people (somewhat rolling basis)	Dr E. Ott, Data Specialist
July – August 2021	Time 2 administrative data collection (SSDA903, Ofsted, participation data, expenditure data)	Rees Centre Data Specialist, Tom George at TFN responsible for participation data
Sept – October 2021	Implementation interviews with local authority and Fostering Network staff	Dr E Ott, H. Trivedi
Feb – April 2022	Interviews with 9 foster carers and 9 children and young people in 3 randomly-selected sites	H. Trivedi
Nov 2021 – Aug 2022	Interview analysis	H. Trivedi, Dr E. Ott
April – Oct 2022	Cost evaluation analysis – preparation, focus group with Partnership to understand expenditure data, analysis	Cost benefit analysis specialist with oversight by L. Holmes
July – August 2022	Time 3 administrative data collection (SSDA903, Ofsted, participation data, expenditure data)	Rees Centre Data Specialist, Tom George at TFN responsible for participation data
Sept 2020 – Oct 2022	Data cleaning and analysis	Data Specialist
Oct – Nov 2022	Report writing	Dr E. Ott

## References

- The Education Committee (2017). *Fostering*. HC 340. London: House of Commons. Available from: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/education-committee/publications/?type=&session=29&sort=false&inquiry=3487> [accessed 6 December 2019].
- Ford, T., Vostanis, P., Meltzer, H., & Goodman, R. (2007a). Psychiatric disorder among British children looked after by local authorities : comparison with children living in private households. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 4(190), 319–325.
- Gilligan, R. (2009). *Promoting resilience: —Supporting children and young people who are in care, adopted or in need*. BAAF.
- Goodvin, R., & Miller, M. (2017). Evaluation of the foster care hub home model: Outcome evaluation. *Evaluation of the foster care hub home model: Outcome evaluation*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- La Valle, I., Hart, D., Holmes, L., & Pinto, V. S. (2019). *How do we know if children’s social care services make a difference? Development of an outcomes framework*. Rees Centre, University of Oxford
- Lawson, K. and Cann, R. (2019). *State of the Nation’s Foster Care* [online]. London. The Fostering Network. Available from: <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/www.fostering.net/files/content/stateofthenation/fostercarefullreport.pdf> [accessed 24 February 2019].
- Linares, L. O., Li, M., Shrout, P. E., Ramirez-Gaité, M., Hope, S., Albert, A., & Castellanos, F. X. (2010). The Course of Inattention and Hyperactivity/Impulsivity Symptoms After Foster Placement. *Pediatrics*, 125(3), 489–498.
- Luke, N., & Sebba, J. (2013). *Supporting each other: An international literature review on peer contact between foster carers*. Rees Centre, University of Oxford.
- Luke, N., Sinclair, I., Woolgar, M., & Sebba, J. (2014). *What works in preventing and treating poor mental health in looked after children*. London, UK: NSPCC.
- Gilligan, R. (2009). *Promoting resilience: —Supporting children and young people who are in care, adopted or in need*. BAAF.
- Goodvin, R., & Miller, M. (2017). Evaluation of the foster care hub home model: Outcome evaluation. *Evaluation of the foster care hub home model: Outcome evaluation*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- McDermid, S., Baker, C., Lawson, D. & Holmes, L. (2016). *The evaluation of the Mockingbird Family Model: Final evaluation report* [online]. London. The Department for Education. Available from: [https://innovationcsc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/1.2.73-DFE-RR528-Mockingbird\\_family\\_model\\_evaluation.pdf](https://innovationcsc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/1.2.73-DFE-RR528-Mockingbird_family_model_evaluation.pdf) [accessed 7 March 2019].
- Northwest Institute for Children and Families. (2007). Mockingbird family model project evaluation. *Mockingbird family model project evaluation: Year three evaluation report*. Northwest Institute for Children and Families.

O'Higgins, A., Sebba, J., & Luke, N. (2015). *What is the relationship between being in care and the educational outcomes of children?* Oxford: The Rees Centre.

Oosterman, M., Schuengel, C., Slot, N. W., Bullens, A. R., & Doreleijers, A. H. H. (2007). Disruptions in foster care: A review and meta-analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29(1), 53–76.

Ottaway, H., & Selwyn, J. (2016). *'No-one told us it was going to be like this': Compassion fatigue and foster carers*. Retrieved from <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/sps/documents/hadleydocs/compassion-fatigue-and-foster-carers-final%20report.pdf>

Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, K., Strand, S., Thomas, I., Sinclair, I & O'Higgins, A. (2015). *The educational progress of looked after children in England: Linking care and educational data*. Oxford and Bristol: Rees Centre, University of Oxford and University of Bristol. Retrieved from Google Scholar: [http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport\\_Nov2015.pdf](http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport_Nov2015.pdf) [accessed 19 October 2016].

Sinclair, I., Baker, C., Lee, J., & Gibbs, I. (2007). *The Pursuit of Permanence: A Study of the English Child Care System*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

*Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Mockingbird Family Model Evaluation Report*. (2017). Stockport, UK: Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.

The Mockingbird Society. (2010). *Mockingbird family model 2009 management report on outcomes: January 1 to December 31, 2009*.