

Revised case study

Mockingbird in Flintshire – Community, confidence and an increase in capacity

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 expansion of people's confidence to take new placements” reflects Steph.

Because of the peer support provided by Mockingbird, Lorraine and Steph have seen an increase in the levels of confidence amongst their Mockingbird carers. This rise in confidence has meant that a number of carers have felt able to increase the number of children they are approved to care for. **As a result, over the past five years, ten additional placements have been provided within the structure of the three Mockingbird constellations.**

Four or five of those ten children 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's story

Ainsley 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 it was being considered for them to be moved far away or to be moved into a residential home. Both these options would have had adverse effects on Ainsley's relationship with their sister, their school which was their safe space, and would have disrupted any relationships with adults they had started to trust within Mockingbird.

Aware of the potential for the siblings to be separated by Ainsley being moved so far 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.

“So, we've got the service benefits of the cost saving and all that sort of thing” explains Steph, “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.”