# Fostering regional group meeting notes and action log July 2023

Chair: Sarah Daly DCS Portsmouth

**Meeting details: Thursday July 13 10-11.30 via MS Teams**

**Item 1 and 2:**  Minutes and action log from the April meeting were agreed

**Item 3:**  The fostering recruitment and retention expression of interest and supporting papers were shared by SD and SD and RE confirmed that we had been successful in getting through to the next stage.

**Item 4:**  RE presented the number of carers and caseloads. LAs reflected that the caseload information was useful as will be helpful to challenge social workers with evidence of typical caseloads.

**Action:**  If any further LAs wish to submit information please send to Rebecca

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|  | **Caseload** | **No of carers recruited in year 2022/23** | **No of places recruited in year 2022/23** | **No of connected carers** |
| **Kent** | 18 | 54 |  | 89 |
| **East Sussex** | 15 | 24 | 40 |  |
| **West Berks** | 14 | 13 | 24 |  |
| **Portsmouth** | 20 | 22 | 36 |  |
| **Isle of Wight** | 23.5 | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| **Wokingham** | 15 | 5 | 7 |  |
| **Milton Keynes** | 16 | 7 | 11 |  |
| **Southampton** | 22 | 14 | 20 (25 if siblings) |  |
| **RBWM (AfC)** | 10 | 5 | 7 |  |
| **Brighton and Hove** | 15 | 13 | 17 |  |
| **Bucks** | 15 | 9 | 14 |  |
| **Slough** | 15 | 7 |  | 8 |
| **Oxfordshire** | 14 (usually 18) | 17 short or long term; respite 11 = 28 | 27 short or long term; respite 17 = 44 | 94 connected carers including Reg 24 |
| **Average** | 16.5 |  |  |  |

**Item 5 Family group conference research:**  James Somerville and Eve Smyth from What Works centre for Social Care presented their research on Family Group Conferencing which showed the positive impact of FGCs.

They used a randomised controlled trial to evaluate the impact that offering FGCs at the point of pre-proceedings had on outcomes for children: • Over 2500 children in approximately 1500 families across 21 local authorities in England were involved in the trial (including the control group).

The outcomes measured were: whether children became looked-after, whether court proceedings were issued, time children spent in care, whether children’s living arrangements changed and how inclusive their birth parents perceived their interactions with their local authority.

Their research found Children whose families were referred for a Family Group Conference are less likely to go into care twelve months after the pre-proceedings letter was issued. Just over a third of children (36.1%) whose families were referred to an FGC were taken into care, compared to almost half (44.8%) of children who were not referred. • Children referred for FGCs were less likely to go to court. At the end of the study, 59% of children referred for FGCs had care proceedings issued, compared to 72% of children who were not referred. • Children referred for FGCs spent less time in care. Six months after the pre-proceedings letter, children whose families had been referred for FGCs had spent an average of 87 days in care, compared to 115 days for children who were not referred.

They estimate that if Family Group Conferences were to be rolled out across England, 2,293 fewer children would go into care in a 12-month period, which would save the public purse over £150 million in one year.

LAs shared their experiences of the successes of FGCs.

**Item 6: Mystery shopping:** RE updated the group that Mystery shopping will cost £950, 5 mystery shoppers who are foster carers will be looking at websites over the summer. They are from the following LAs: Jackie Clark (Portsmouth) Keith Langley (West Berks) Sarah Smith (Hampshire) Cathy Seiderer (Brighton and Hove). **Action:**  Brighton and Hove said their website is being updated over the summer and please ensure that mystery shopping does not happen until after the relaunch

**Item 7: Mockingbird update:**

**Southampton (Carina)**

After an extended pause Matt Jenkins, new Head of Service, has confirmed that they would like to restart the implementation process. Dates have been shared with Matt and team for a new coach introduction and kick-off meeting. I**t seems we may still be a little way off starting with Southampton**

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| Mockingbird project lead | Matt Jenkins (Head of Service) [matt.jenkins@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:matt.jenkins@southampton.gov.uk) |
| Senior leader | As above |

**Wokingham (Vickie)**

Wokingham are very committed to Mockingbird and are passionate and well engaged with the coach and the project. Liaison worker has been appointed and the service has a very robust implementation working group. However, they are struggling to find their first hub home carers. They have had a two previous carers pull out due to concerns around managing the role alongside other work and life commitments. They currently have two potential couples interested in the role, but are working through questions and challenges to determine if they’re viable hub home carers. No launch date planned yet, but should be able to move quite quickly once hub home carers are appointed.

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| Mockingbird project lead | Anisha Reed (Team Manager)  [anisha.reed@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:anisha.reed@wokingham.gov.uk) |
| Senior leader | Previously Jasmine Grimshaw (Head of Service). Jasmine has recently retired and we’re awaiting confirmation as to the name of the new head. |

**AFC Windsor and Maidenhead (Carina)**

implementation is moving forward, but progress has been slow. However, they have appointed their liaison worker in April and we are hopeful that this person may become their project lead and enable the timeline to move forward at more pace. Carina is in the process of building her relationship with the newly appointed liaison worker. No launch date set.

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| Mockingbird project lead | Harkiran Randhawa (Fostering Branch Manager) [harkiran.randhawa@achievingforchildren.org.uk](mailto:harkiran.randhawa@achievingforchildren.org.uk) |
| Senior leader | Natalie Bugeja, (Head of Fostering) [natalie.bugeja@achievingforchildren.org.uk](mailto:natalie.bugeja@achievingforchildren.org.uk) |

**Buckinghamshire (Carina)**

Constellation 1 launched 1/10/22 and going really well.

Plans are well on the way for constellation 2 with a pre-launch fidelity in the diary for 16 May and a launch date set for 3 June.

Slight challenge around the fact that there is no head of service at the moment. Hillary Shayegan (Team Manager and Mockingbird lead) is stepping up into the role for now.

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| Mockingbird project lead | Hillary Shayegan (Team Manager and Mockingbird lead currently stepping up as head of service) [hilary.shayegan@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:hilary.shayegan@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) |
| Senior leader |

**West Sussex (Carina)**

Constellation 1 launched 27/10/2022 and is going really well.

Plans are developing for constellation two, but there is no set timeline for this yet.

Things were slowed by various staff changes, including a change to Mockingbird lead and head of service. New staff are now in place in both roles and Carina is building relationships with both. Strong IWG who are set to agree the timeline for constellation 2 in their next meeting.

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| Mockingbird project lead | Heidi Luck (Team Manager)  [heidi.luck@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:heidi.luck@westsussex.gov.uk) |
| Senior leader | Kelly Wilkes (Head of Service)  [kelly.wilkes@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:kelly.wilkes@westsussex.gov.uk) |

**Closed Services**

**Bracknell Forest**

Confirmation on 26/04/2023 that they can no longer take forward Mockingbird.  **32 hours on MB work with Bracknell Forest**

**Brighter Futures for Children**

Confirmation in June 2022 that they did not want to move forward with Mockingbird. Funding transferred to Achieving for Children Windsor and Maidenhead

**Medway**

Confirmation on 8/11/22 to withdraw from Mockingbird.

**West Berkshire**

Confirmation in June 2022 that they did not want to move forward with Mockingbird.

**Showing interest**

**Brighton and Hove  -**[**Cathy.Seiderer@brighton-hove.gov.uk**](mailto:Cathy.Seiderer@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

**Already launched**

**Previously launched not as part of this funding round:**

·  Oxfordshire- [Jackie.Giles@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.Giles@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

·  Slough - [Yemi.Ukwenu@slough.gov.uk](mailto:Yemi.Ukwenu@slough.gov.uk)

·  Surrey- [gianna.forward@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:gianna.forward@surreycc.gov.uk)

·  Portsmouth  - [vicky.laybourne@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:vicky.laybourne@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

**Standing items:** No issues for escalation to DCSs

**Next meeting:** Mystery shopping conducted by foster carers, Surrey to share practice, Oxfordshire to share retention team impact. Medway or Wokingham to share practice, Increasing quality of ISW work.

**Future items**

Other areas identified for themed discussion or projects reporting to the group (to be scheduled):

* Increasing quality of ISW work
* How to approach families that have expressed interest in Homes for Ukraine to become foster carers (taking forward as part of regional hub)
* Sharing/jointly delivering training for staff on fostering
* Sharing/jointly delivering training for foster carers (JB, KL, SS) (taking forward as part of regional hub)
* Supporting foster carer groups (and LAs) to positively engage with unionisation trend
* Sharing /jointly delivering training for panel members
* Sharing panel members across different LAs, especially those from diverse backgrounds (SS, NB, PH, MS, KL, JC all interested in a project on this)
* Hosting an annual regional carer conference (taking forward as part of regional hub)

**Action log:** This action log was updated 12 October 2023. Shaded lines, actions are complete

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Action** | **Responsible** | **Date issued** | **Status** |
| **34** | If any further LAs wish to submit information (caseload and number of carers recruited) please send to Rebecca. Will need number of carers recruited in 2022/23 for all LAs in fostering hub. | RE | July 2023 | Open |
| **33** | Brighton and Hove said their website is being updated over the summer and please ensure that mystery shopping does not happen until after the relaunch | RE | July 2023 | complete |
| **32** | Future discussion – increasing quality of ISW assessments (October 2023) | RE | April 2023 | Complete |
| **31** | RE to contact Louise toward the end of the year to see if any feedback from Home Office re: DBS classification. | RE | April 2023 | Complete |
| **30** | RE to benchmark caseloads for supervising social worker and numbers of carers/placements recruited in the last year. | RE | April 2023 | Complete |
| **29** | RE to circulate previous research with foster carers. | RE | April 2023 | Complete |
| **28** | RE to set up website mystery shopping run by foster carers for October 2023 | RE | Jan 2023 | Complete |
| **27** | JD to distribute contact details for trainer and amended foster care agreement. SS worker in Hampshire to connect with Brighton and Hove worker. – Anti-racist practice | JD | Jan 2023 | Complete |
| **26** | JG to share the training provider: anti-racist practice | JG | Jan 2023 | Complete |
| **25** | CS, JG and MG to share how to contact Ukraine hosts to see about receptiveness to foster. RE Add to agenda for future meeting. | MG, JG, CS | Oct 2022 | Complete |
| **24** | RE to circulate previous research on USPs of LA fostering | RE | Oct 2022 | complete |
| **23** | MT to provide welcome book/pack examples for UASC to RE to circulate to the group | MT | Oct 2022 | complete |
| **22** | SD to check if Ofsted ok with return to virtual visits given increasing covid risks? | SD | Oct 2022 | Complete |
| **21** | LS to circulate CCTV policy from Bucks | LS | July 2022 | Complete |
| **20** | MV to circulate Kent slides | MV | July 2022 | Complete |
| **19** | KL (West Berks- circulated) and JC (Portsmouth) offered to share their recruitment crib sheet. | KL and JC | July 2022 | Complete |
| **18** | Bucks to do mystery shop for Jan (poss testing online/email contact), review mystery shopping in Jan | LS | July 2022 | Complete |
| **17** | Can we monitor and discuss Ukraine again next meeting | DG | April 2022 | Closed |
| **16** | Chair to escalate issues re: Inside Out | DG | April 2022 | Closed |
| **15** | West Sussex to share retention officer JD | JB | April 2022 | closed |
| **14** | Kent to share practice next time | MV | April 2022 | Closed |
| **13** | Map management structures and roles, map respite/sleepover offer through survey | RE | April 2022 | Closed |
| **12** | Draft model of excellence for next time based on learning over the last several waves | RE | April 2022 | Closed |
| **11** | Next waves of mystery shopping are Bracknell Forest (July), then Milton Keynes (October) then Bucks (Jan) | RE | April 2022 | Closed |
| **10** | RE to contact IoW Milton Keynes and Surrey who have had no reps at the last two meetings | RE | Jan 2022 | Closed |
| **9** | Terms of reference to be finalised and uploaded to SESLIP website. | RE | Jan 2022 | Closed |
| **8** | JB and MS to share contact details for training delivered on anti-racist practice | JB and MS | Jan 2022 | Closed |
| **7** | Discuss at April meeting which of the areas for regional collaboration the group want so take forward first (discuss with new chair) | All | Jan 2022 | Closed |
| **6** | LS to share legal advice received in relation to case where unions involved, re: foster carers and employment rights. | LS | Jan 2022 | Closed |
| **5** | Rebecca to draft Terms of reference and regional priorities for consideration at next meeting | RE | Oct 2021 | Closed |
| **4** | Any LAs interested in forming project team to develop regional recruitment website contact Rebecca. Revisit this action in 2023 pending outcome of Care review and capacity of Las to take forward. Being taken forward as part of DfE regional proposal | All | Oct 2021 | closed |
| **3** | Reading to share practice and mystery shopping at January meeting | SJ | Oct 2021 | Closed |
| **2** | All to contact Alistair Herbert to arrange support with using the fostering projection tool. Fostering projection tool to come back once further work complete. (Agenda for Jan 2023) | All | Oct 2021 | Closed |
| **1** | All to publicise regional online SG conference | All | Oct 2021 | Closed |