

**Supporting Families: investing in practice**

**Expression of Interest form and guidance**

**June 2019**

# Supporting families: investing in practice programme

## How the programme will work?

The Supporting Families: investing in practice programme was announced in May 2019, with the intention of working with up to 40 local authorities on interventions with emerging evidence of impact. Now, the programme is looking to work with up to a further 8 local authorities to test an additional project - the Mockingbird Family Model. The overall budget for the Supporting Families: investing in practice programme is up to £15 million.

The Supporting Families: Investing in Practice initiative complements the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme (SFPC) by supporting families to work with practitioners to ensure that young people in care are given the best opportunities in life and can enjoy stability and the chance to thrive, while ensuring that foster carers themselves receive sufficient respite and support. Where the SFPC seeks to support whole system change, this initiative will support the implementation of a targeted intervention, building on the existing promising evidence base whilst looking to expand the programmes to new areas and rigorously testing their impacts.

The Department for Education will work with What Works for Children’s Social Care (WWCSC) who will appoint an independent evaluator to oversee a randomised controlled trial to gather robust and usable evidence on the effectiveness of the programme in increasing the stability of fostering placements. We expect the evaluation of this programme to run for approximately two years after implementation of the first constellation (which could take up to one year). The Fostering Network will support the effective implementation of the Mockingbird model.

## The eligibility criteria

The DfE and the WWCSC would welcome expressions of interest from local authorities who have an interest in introducing this model by **midnight 2 August 2019**.

Any local authorities who are not currently delivering the Mockingbird model are eligible to apply.

## Background to What Works for Children’s Social Care

The WWCSC has been created to foster evidence informed practice in the children’s social care sector.

Overall the WWCSC seeks to address two key challenges:

* Creating a better evidence base – by sponsoring new practice-focussed research in areas where existing research is absent, of inadequate quality, or lacking relevance  
  to decision-makers.
* Ensuring that the Centre’s work results in change, not just knowledge – by  
  investigating and addressing the barriers that might otherwise prevent practice  
  leaders and practitioners from using insights from evidence to inform their decisions.

## Background to the Projects

* 1. The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) originated in Washington State, USA, in 2004. It is an innovative approach to supporting foster carers and the children and young people placed with them. Under the model, clusters of between 6 and 10 ‘satellite homes’ come together to form a ‘constellation’. The constellation is supported by ‘hub carers’ who provide a range of support to the adults and young people within the constellation.
  2. The Fostering Network’s Mockingbird programme, funded by the department since 2015, recreates the original model with the aims of improving the stability of fostering placements and strengthening the relationships between foster carers, fostered children, fostering services and birth families. Families involved in Mockingbird have access to sleepovers and short breaks, peer support, regular joint planning and training, and social activities. It is underpinned by the ethos ‘it takes a village to raise a child’, keeping improved outcomes for children and young people at the heart of the design.
  3. The Fostering Network operates under an exclusive licence from The Mockingbird Society, the originators and designers of the model, to deliver Mockingbird in the UK. The Mockingbird Society has exclusive ownership rights of the Mockingbird Family Model.

For local authorities invited to take part, the Fostering Network will provide support and guidance throughout the implementation of the programme, including help in tailoring the model to local needs whilst meeting the model’s fidelity criteria. The Fostering Network will help LAs launch sustainable constellations, and offer ongoing support and shared learning opportunities thereafter.

## Evaluation

WWCSC will appoint independent evaluators to conduct a randomised controlled trial to test the effectiveness of this model further. **Participation in the evaluation is a requirement of involvement in this programme.**

Participation in the evaluation will involve:

* Complying with random assignment as specified by the evaluator. In this evaluation, foster carers which meet the criteria for eligibility for being either a hub carer or satellite carer will be selected by the local authority; from those shortlisted as being suitable for the role, some will be selected at random to participate.
* Working with the evaluator and delivery partner to agree outcome measures.
* Facilitating the collection of data and/or providing existing administrative data.
* Supporting qualitative components of the evaluation, which may involve interviews, focus groups and surveys of relevant stakeholders.

We envisage these evaluations lasting for up to two years following the implementation of the first constellation. A trial protocol outlining the evaluation plan and a final report will be published by WWCSC.

## Timelines

1. The timelines for the development of the programmes are still being clarified, so the following are indicative only:
2. Following the closing of the EOI submission deadline at midnight on August 2nd where necessary, we may request a clarification calls (to take place week commencing 19th August). We hope to be able to inform successful applicants of a decision in late August/early September.
3. We expect implementation to begin shortly after successful applicants are notified.

## How to apply

**Please answer all questions in the expression of interest (EOI) form below. Your EOI should be e-mailed to** [**wwcprogrammes@nesta.org.uk**](mailto:wwcprogrammes@nesta.org.uk) **by no later than midnight 2nd August 2019.**

If you have a specific questions not answered either above or in the EOI attached to this, please email [wwcprogrammes@nesta.org.uk](mailto:wwcprogrammes@nesta.org.uk).

## Decisions

Applications will be assessed by the Department and WWCSC, with input from the relevant delivery partners (the Fostering Network). Decisions will be made based on the evidence you provide through the EOI and any additional clarification information that may be requested.

Bringing all this information together, the DfE will then make a recommendation to the Minister and you will be notified of our decision.

# Supporting Families: investing in practice programme

# Expression of interest

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Organisation Name |  |
| Address |  |
| Lead Contact Person |  |
| Phone No. |  |
| Email |  |

*We will store and use this information to contact you about your application. This will involve sharing details with What Works Centre Development Team members.*

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| Current practice Please describe your current fostering model for supporting families, including any ‘named’ interventions that you are making use of (including any variations or similar models), and how these are currently being used in practice (max 250 words): |
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| Motivation Describe your commitment to the model and how it would fit within your current practice and local service planning? (max 250 words per model): |
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| Recruitment of hub carers Please indicate how readily you think appropriate hub carers could be identified, and how you could go about approaching and recruiting these carers. (max 250 words) |
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| Project support and senior leadership Describe the roles and experience of each of the key individuals who will support the implementation. How will senior leadership support the project? (max 250 words)**:** |
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| Sustainability Describe your approach to ensuring the long-term sustainability of this model. Where possible, provide examples of initiatives which you have successfully supported beyond their initial external funding period (max 250 words).  Note: while the funding will be provided this financial year (prior to March 2020), local authorities are able to decide how to appropriately use these funds to support the introduction of the model. It is expected that the model is implemented and run for the duration of the implementation of the first constellation (up to one year) and the evaluation (approximately two years following this), and ideally longer. |
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| Evaluation Please confirm your commitment to, and how you will support the evaluation (max 100 words): |
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| Budget Please provide the Local Authority’s estimated budget using the table below. We will ask for a more detailed breakdown if you are successful.  Note: We consider implementation to run until the first constellation is established. Please provide this total in a) and the estimated yearly cost thereafter in b)  (max 100 words): |
| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | LA Name | a) Estimated cost of implementing model | | b) Estimated yearly cost of model | | |  | LA contribution | Amount requested from DfE | LA contribution | Amount requested from DfE | |  |  |  |  |  | |



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