

Lika Family Fostering

Lika Family Fostering Limited

4th Floor, Davis House, 1 Robert Street, Croydon CR0 1QQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Lika Family Fostering is an independent fostering agency. Its ethos, philosophy and basis of care are firmly embedded in therapeutic ideas, namely systemic family therapy. The fostering agency registered with Ofsted in September 2015.

This fostering agency offers a range of placements. These include emergency, short-term, bridging, long-term, short breaks, care for disabled or chronically ill children, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and 'staying put' arrangements.

The registered manager resigned in October 2022. A new manager has been appointed and has applied for registration.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had 21 approved fostering households caring for 20 children.

Inspection dates: 15 to 19 May 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 2 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children thrive when they move to this fostering agency. They make significant progress from their starting points. Local authority social workers, independent reviewing officers and commissioners consistently say that they have great confidence in the fostering agency's ability to provide children with safe, secure and stable foster care. A local authority social worker told the inspector, 'The placement has been very effective. The carer has been an excellent match. My young person has a deep sense of connection; deep relational attachment to the family.'

A number of children have experienced several previous foster placements that have not been successful. For some, their current placement is the longest they have remained with the same foster carer. The stability, attachment and longevity of placements is a clear strength of this fostering agency. Children benefit from the high-quality care that their foster carers provide. A child said, 'One to ten? I rate them ten out of ten! I feel happy, confident and safe. I want to stay because I love it here.'

When asked what they wanted for themselves in the long term, several children said that their wish was to remain with their families 'forever'. The staff value children's views and opinions. They work hard to ensure that children's voices are heard. Children's feedback about their experiences is extremely positive. Complaints from children are rare.

Children benefit from the agency's revised matching processes. This results in the expert matching of foster carers who are skilled in meeting the identified needs of children. Children's identity needs are very well met. Foster carers meet children's cultural, religious and linguistic needs very well, and they understand the impact of children's disabilities. The foster carer of one sibling group arranged for their religious instruction to take place in the home. This was to ensure that the foster carer was aware of the nature and content of their religious education. Another child told the inspector how much she enjoyed attending the Holy Communion and confirmation of her 'foster cousins'.

Children settle into their placement quickly. Children receive age-appropriate information about the fostering agency and what to expect. In addition to the two children's guides, information about the agency is available in a creative short video. This makes the information accessible to children who may struggle with reading. This is an example of the agency's commitment to inclusivity and ensuring that all children are engaged with their fostering journey.

Children's learning outcomes are excellent and are a significant improvement from their starting points. Children's education attainment is carefully tracked and the agency takes proactive steps if children's learning outcomes are not as expected. Foster carers work with older children to develop their practical daily skills. This is to

help to prepare them for adulthood. The agency celebrates children's achievements, which children appreciate.

Children are in good health or are being helped to improve their health outcomes. Foster carers adhere strictly to healthcare plans. Children with complex medical and health needs make significant improvement. In one case, a foster carer stayed in hospital to receive training from hospital staff in order to care for a baby born with specific health needs. Foster carers ensure that children's health checks and immunisations are completed. Children attend specialist healthcare services as required.

Specialist systemic family therapists offer support to children and carers to address issues such as trauma and behavioural and mental health support needs. A child described how she used breathing techniques and meditation to relieve her feelings of anxiety. Staff and foster carers make use of a children's book co-authored by the agency's manager. This easy-to-read, child-friendly book is based on therapeutic, well-being techniques that help children recognise and cope with complex feelings.

Children benefit from the agency's understanding of and commitment to playfulness. As a result, children take part in a varied range of social and leisure activities. Recently, agency events have included a summer BBQ and a children's camping trip. Managers and staff find creative ways to include all children in play. This includes children who find it hard to engage with their peers. A good illustration of this commitment is a recent play session which saw the manager dress in a 'Tigger' costume to encourage a sibling group, likely for the first time, to play safely and positively together.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Staff work hard to protect children from harm and abuse. Children feel safe with their foster families and share positive and loving relationships with them. Children identify their foster parents as adults they trust and can go to with any worries and concerns. A local authority social worker said, 'The foster carer was his safe space. He [the foster carer] was always available, no matter what the difficulties, to support, befriend and counteract his [the child's] poor peer relationships.'

Managers have good management oversight of all safeguarding concerns. They keenly monitor all safeguarding incidents through use of a new safeguarding tracking system. All incidents, from those of a very low level to those that are cause for concern, are tracked. Staff then devise strategies to reduce known and emerging risks.

Safeguarding concerns, such as offending behaviour, gang affiliation, misuse of substances or alcohol, self-harm and going missing, do not feature frequently in this agency. When these occur, staff and foster carers take prompt and appropriate action to help keep children safe. Staff and foster carers receive regular guidance and training in child protection. Children receive good advice, information and resources that help to keep them safe.

Foster carers understand and adhere to local missing-from-care protocols. This results in the safe return of children when they are away from their homes without permission.

Staff and foster carers devise risk assessments and these are regularly updated. However, some risk assessments do not provide sufficient guidance to help foster carers mitigate risks. Some safe-care plans are not sufficiently specific to the children's individual needs.

Staff and foster carers work effectively and in close partnership with safeguarding professionals. This is particularly the case when there are concerns for children's safety. In such cases, managers and staff are quick to request and then fully contribute to strategy and professionals' meetings. This is to review the effectiveness of children's safety plans and decide how best to keep children from harm.

Complaints and allegations against foster carers are rare. When these occur, managers' communication with safeguarding professionals is consistent and effective. Managers' standards-of-care investigations are thorough, with children's welfare and protection central to their enquiries.

Children's positive behaviour is promoted. The agency's family therapists inform children's behaviour management plans, and foster carers provide children with clear routines and boundaries. This consistent support helps children to safely manage their feelings and behaviour.

Managers ensure that the vetting and recruitment of foster carers, panel members and staff are thorough. This confirms that those working for the fostering agency are suitable to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are ambitious and strive for continual improvement. Many aspects of the agency's leadership and management are sound. The fostering agency's manager is skilled, as well as suitably qualified and experienced to manage the agency. The manager is in the process of being registered with Ofsted. She is a qualified social worker and systemic family therapist. She is supported by the agency's responsible individual, who is also a qualified social worker and systemic family therapist.

The fostering agency is run effectively and efficiently. Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been successfully resolved. The agency's therapeutic approach to care is highly effective in ensuring that children have very positive experiences and make excellent progress. Case records are good and reflect children's progress and experiences. However, managers have not collated some key records to make accessing information easy. This is particularly the case for standards-of-care investigations, the agency's matching documents and some risk assessments.

The agency is well resourced and staffing levels meet the needs of children well. Managers and leaders have plans in place to further improve the range of support available to children. These plans include the recruitment of additional support workers, the development of the agency's Children in Care Council, support groups for birth children of foster carers, and plans to increase the agency's pool of foster carers.

Leaders and managers make use of effective monitoring systems. They regularly devise and review action plans that drive the continual growth and development of the agency. For example, the organisation's new progress tracking system provides managers with a good oversight of the operation of the agency, children's progress and placement issues. As a result, managers and staff act promptly to avoid placement disruptions. Managers and staff are committed and ambitious for all children and strive to secure excellent outcomes.

The fostering agency's preparation of foster carers is effective. This ensures that prospective foster carers have good insight into children's needs and are equipped to meet these needs. The training of foster carers is excellent. Foster carers complete a vast range of mandatory, core and specialist training. Staff source bespoke resources and training for foster carers when a specific need is identified. Managers and staff routinely share practice research within the team and with foster carers. This is to help inform and improve knowledge and practices and keep them current.

All foster carers have personal development plans. These support their learning and knowledge base to provide safe, effective personalised care to children. A foster carer said, 'I feel very well supported. Staff are very accessible and help to resolve issues quickly. I trust my supervising social worker and my young person trusts them too. They're absolutely brilliant.'

The foster carers' annual reviewing process ensures that foster carers remain suitable to care for children. However, foster carers do not consistently complete self-assessment forms for their annual reviews to provide their feedback on the previous year.

The staff team is very well supported. Staff receive regular and meaningful supervision, and training opportunities are good. Staff participate in reflective team and peer support group meetings. A staff member said, 'I really enjoy seeing the progress children make; it leaves staff and foster carers feeling proud. We're proud of successful matches; the quality of our foster carers is very high.' Managers appraise staff's performance each year, which ensures that staff's training and development are identified and planned for.

The agency's fostering panel operates effectively. Its membership is drawn from a range of professional backgrounds. The fostering panel undertakes clear and appropriate analysis of the work that is presented at panel meetings. Foster carers' assessments presented at the panel are of a high quality and clearly demonstrate an applicant's suitability to become an approved foster carer.

The fostering agency works very effectively with other professionals. There is close partnership working with children's social workers, independent reviewing officers and others. This ensures that children's identified needs are very well met.

A local authority representative said:

'The foster carer presented as a dedicated carer who genuinely wanted to care for and to make positive changes in the children's lives. He always went above and beyond his care duties. Supervising social workers were always present at looked after children reviews and were available for network and professional meetings. The foster carer was well supported by them. They are well organised, available, focused on the child but supporting the foster carer, responsive and working towards finding positive solutions.'

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the agency to ensure compliance with the agency's policies. This relates to the efficient compilation of key information into one report or document as opposed to several. Specifically, this relates to standard-of-care and matching reports. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.2)
- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the nature of records maintained and that there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record-keeping and take action when needed. This relates to the quality of some risk assessments and safe-care plans and the completion of some foster carers' annual review self-assessment forms. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.2)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC489561

Registered provider: Lika Family Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: 4th Floor, Davis House, 1 Robert Street, Croydon
CR0 1QQ

Responsible individual: Jamie McCreghan

Registered manager: Post vacant (the manager's application to be registered is in progress)

Telephone number: 020 8667 2111

Email address: kate@likafamilyfostering.co.uk

Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Inspector

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