

The Independent Person's Report

Report as per Regulation 44, Part 6, *The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015*: Visits by the Independent Person must form an opinion as to whether (i) children accommodated at the children's home are effectively safeguarded; and (ii) the conduct of the children's home promotes the well-being of the children accommodated there. NYAS is an independent children's rights charity.



Visitor's name	Davina Hanley	Date of current visit	16/02/2024 - Unannounced
		Date of previous visit	12/01/2024
Time of arrival	12:45am	Time of departure	16:55pm
Home	The Seeds	Ofsted URN	SC040437
Initial/s of young people living in the home	R, who is in The Seeds on an extended short break.	Initial/s of young people present	R
Has the local authority been informed about any admissions / discharges since the last visit?	The Seeds is an adolescent unit registered to offer outreach, short breaks, and emergency residential care. It operates within the local authority adolescent services.	Initials of staff on duty and their position	JS – Deputy manager CA – Principal adolescent support team worker (ASTW) AC – Adolescent support team worker (ASTW) SG & CT – ASTW's (was finishing their shifts on my arrival)
Visitors' book	The front door was opened by JS who welcomed me in. She asked me to sign in the visitors' book. This book is general data protection regulation (GDPR) compliant.		
Permission to view young people's core files	Permission is on file and my pen portrait is displayed.		

Recommendations from the previous regulation 44 visit	Actions taken by the registered manager
There were no recommendations from my visit in January 2024.	Not applicable.
Judgement from the last Ofsted inspection and any subsequent requirements and/or recommendations	Actions taken by the registered manager
<p>Inspection dates: 14 and 15 November 2023</p> <p>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account: good.</p> <p>Details of this inspection are fully recorded in the December 2023 report.</p>	<p>The registered manager has responded promptly to the requirement and recommendation suggested by the Ofsted inspector.</p>
Theme/s that have been identified for this month's visit	
<p><u>How effective is management oversight in this home</u></p> <p>JS and I had a conversation about this month's theme. She explained that managerial oversight starts from the referral at the adolescent services' panel and continues through the time that the young person receives support from The Seeds. She provided me with examples to evidence how management oversight confirms individual risk management plans and support plans; the chronology, short breaks and finishing the journey of support, recognising the achievements gained during the young person's time with The Seeds. There has had to be managerial confirmation of the need to hold off any short breaks whilst R is being offered an extended short break within the home. I was able to see the minutes of a risk management review for R on 01/02/2024 and read the management oversight for decisions being made. Accidents, incidents and missing from care incidences are always signed off by the manager, though there were no examples of these happening in the last month.</p> <p>JS confirmed that personal supervisions completed by the principal adolescent team workers and the deputy are overseen by the residential manager, and she checks the paper work read and has discussions with the relevant senior members of staff.</p> <p>MC, the residential manager, attends the team meetings and steers decisions and actions. The responsible individual will be coming to the March team meeting to spend time with the staff and gain an understanding of how day to day issues and plans are being managed.</p> <p>I can see a strong managerial input into all support that is offered to the young people in The Seeds. It is worth mentioning that The Seeds have around a caseload of 65, according to JS, so the fact that the manager is able to oversee the support that is being delivered and plans agreed for each young person is quite a feat.</p>	

1 The Quality of Care Standard (see regulation 6)

Physical condition of the home, fixtures and fittings (internal and external) in this monitoring period. To include young people's bedrooms where possible/permission has been given

Internal/external condition	<p>It was raining when I arrived and walked up the path to the front door. The garden was tidy, the outdoor furniture covered up, football nets ready for use in better weather, and the trees, plants and wall displays had all been kept to a high maintenance standard.</p> <p>The inside of the house is bright, clean, fresh, warm and organised. There are many attractive wall decorations, signs and photos. Doors to the various rooms; pool room, craft room, living room, games/chill out zone, were open and invited use by young people. The entrance hall and dining area are central to the whole of the downstairs of the home, surrounded by relaxing and activity rooms and the kitchen and utility room. On my visit it was quiet as there was only one young person in the home, and he spent time in the games/chill out room and in his bedroom.</p> <p>Upstairs the landing is a conglomeration of bedrooms for young people, bathrooms and an office area. Again, everywhere was tidy and organised, in preparation for restarting short breaks stays, whilst having a relaxed and informal atmosphere for the young person who was currently living in the home. The office, the hub for staff activity, is set up effectively to enable staff to work at computers, locate files and check information. The whiteboard is a useful daily information point to check times of staff working and tasks that need to be completed.</p>
Have young people's bedrooms been seen with their permission?	<p>R kindly showed me the room he was staying in, the graffiti room. He had his personal belongings strewn around, making this space his own, his bed was made, he had the window open with window restrictors. R told me that this was his favourite room. He told me that he likes to be in a room far away from the staff bedroom and office. He was keen to show me two cuddly toys, books and lamps, a reading lamp and a night light. He said that some young people like to use white noise to help them sleep and staff can organise this for them, but he doesn't like it. He showed me the toiletries provided by The Seeds. He said that he appreciated that if there was something he needed the staff would buy it straight away. Apparently in other places where R has stayed, he has had to wait.</p> <p>I looked into the campervan room, grey room and marvel room and these were all prepared for short breaks. The bathrooms around the bedrooms were clean and had nice quality mats and towels in place.</p>
Interviews with staff at the home	
Job role	Comments

Deputy Manager	<p>JS outlined the reasons behind R's extended short break stay with The Seeds. R, a 16-year-old boy, is well known to The Seeds as they have been supporting him whilst he has been living at home with his mother in the local area, and he has regularly participated in short breaks. He had been moved to a placement outside the area after Christmas when R signed a section 20 agreement, but this placement failed and he revoked the agreement and returned home. Over the last couple of weeks R has been coming to The Seeds through short breaks as a response to difficulties that have erupted at home. LG, a principal adolescent support team worker, who has been doing some mediation work with R and his mother, but sadly the relationship between the two remains erratic. R's social worker has agreed to search for a new residential placement for R and in the meanwhile, R remains with The Seeds under the auspices of an extended short break. It was decided that short breaks for other young people would not be offered whilst R was having an extended short breaks on the weekend of my visit, however short breaks on the other weekends in February have been offered to young people.</p> <p>It was agreed that R would benefit from being given some additional emotional support due to him going through relationship difficulties with his Mum. JS explained that R was having some increased anxieties and worries and by supporting him this way he was able to emotionally regulate himself with support from staff when things became overwhelming for him. Whilst R is on an extended short break, staff are offering outreach sessions to young people who would normally have had short breaks. The local authority is offering additional support activities for R through an independent youth support organisation to support The Seeds' staff in managing other young people who need their services.</p> <p>JS explained that a decision has been made with the missing from care team that if young people go missing and are known to The Seeds that The Seeds' staff will take on the missing from home return interview. This decision recognises the value of the relationship that The Seeds' staff have with young people and this role could well help to unearth true reasons for being missing. I asked if all staff felt comfortable with this arrangement and she confirmed that the majority of staff have had experiences of talking to young people about being missing and are familiar with the paper work. She added that for any newer member of staff who does not have this experience, that support would be offered.</p> <p>JS contributed hugely to other sections of this report and I appreciate the time she gave me in this visit.</p>
ASTW	<p>AC talked about a young person, C who I have met previously, who comes to short breaks. C is waiting for an ASD (autistic spectrum disorder) diagnosis. C struggles socially and AC explained how she is helping C to build up her confidence without putting any pressure on her. She chooses quiet evenings for her to come on a short break session and C is slowly building up some tentative friendships. AC has been able to encourage her to join in group outings and explained how she is learning to be careful how she makes suggestions. She explained that following a trip to the beach with another young person, she had mentioned the name of a famous fast-food restaurant as a general idea of</p>

a place to get food, but C would only consider going to this restaurant, which, as AC said, complicated the end of the day out. AC added that C can become distressed very easily and finding an easy solution to resolve a problem is not always easy. She talked about a recent trip to the gym, in which C ripped a nail, became upset and just repeated her need to see her mother. AC called her mother and put C on the phone and after a short conversation, C was calmed and able to continue her session. As C says, it is important to recognise and validate C's feelings and that nothing will be achieved unless this happens. AC shared that when C is making loud noises, she uses humour to help her to recognise this and quieten herself. AC has been teaching C to bake and in the last couple of weeks they have been making cupcakes and pancakes. As AC said, it is difficult to see her making mistakes and her not wanting to listen to advice, but considered that maybe when it goes wrong, she can learn the right way of doing things. Encouraging C to talk with other young people can be difficult, but last week when C and another young person were having tea together, AC lead on a conversation about "would you rather ..." and this encouraged both young people to share ideas and talk. It sounds to me like AC has a skilful approach in working with C and is helping her to gain confidence.

AC also told me about starting some support with two sisters who live with different members of the family, one with her mother and one with her grandfather. She says that there has to be sensitivity in contacting the different family members and the girls are enjoying having some time together, as well as some sessions on their own.

Principal ASTW

CA explained that she was rostered to do shifts on the day of my visit and the two days over the weekend, with time off on Saturday afternoon and evening. She would however, be on call at this time. I asked her how she felt about being in work for an extended amount of time. CA explained that this arrangement was unusual and the senior staff were able to share out responsibilities more evenly, but due to annual leave, this shift pattern had been put in place. CA said that she didn't mind and that she would enjoy some extended time away from work when other seniors were on duty.

My conversations with CA are captured in other parts of the report.

Interview with parents / carers and professionals

Status	Role	Comments
Parent, J	Uncle of young person, A	J explained that A has been enjoying short breaks, trips out to the local cities and has been a part of the music group. J said that I really likes going to The Seeds and was disappointed this weekend that the planned short breaks night could not go ahead. As A's uncle, he told me he appreciates The Seeds giving A opportunities to do things away from the house. He told me that all arrangements are made in advance and A's case worker, SH, is "great at letting me know what is happening and how it

		went". He hopes that The Seeds' support can continue because "it's helping A to be around more people of his own age and adults".
Parent, L	Mother of young person, L	L told me that her son is supported by CT, who comes and takes him out, sometimes they play pool. "It's good for L to be out of the house." She added, "CT is very good, he rings me up and gives me an update about what L has been doing". She said that she thinks L is being brought out of himself and feeling more comfortable talking to adults. "This is good for him". She thinks that L likes spending time with CT and looks forward to having a weekly meeting with him.
Professional 1, SP	Social worker of A	I spoke to SP by telephone. She said, "I can't say a bad word about The Seeds". She spoke about A, his traumatic childhood, his difficult relationship with his mother and school, being confused about who his father is, and moving to live with his aunt and uncle which initially was very unsettled. SP said that The Seeds' involvement arrived at just the right time for A. Through outreach support and short breaks, they have been able to provide support for his new home life living with his aunt and uncle and given him new experiences and some happiness at a low time for him. She told me that SH is his caseworker and he has built up a good relationship with this young boy, who has been closed off to professionals and to any activities. As a social worker, SP appreciates the constant support that The Seeds offer to A, and this is particularly valuable when she is not available or in work. She used an example of the support offered to A when he was arrested. She said that SP and the manager MC led on a transition plan to get A back to his carers and identified the support he would need to make this a successful return. Having some short breaks has helped to ease A back into this home life. She has appreciated input from SP in multi-agency meetings considering how to support A emotionally and help him to build up his relationships. She told me that A really enjoyed the music group, yet he had never had any experiences of playing music beforehand and now he would like to carry it on. "This is what is great about The Seeds, they give young people new opportunities and open doors to unfound and unknown skills". SP confirmed that contacting The Seeds is easy and if SH is not around all the other staff members are helpful. She thinks the home itself is wonderful and likes having the chance to show new young people around and enjoys seeing their reaction to visiting this home.
Professional 2, AP	Social worker of three young people; H, L1 and L2	AP has three young people on her caseload who are receiving support from The Seeds. She talked about them individually. H's caseworker is LG, and says "he looks up to him, listens to him and has the best relationship ever". She described H as being complex and hard work and yet LG is influencing some positive behavioural changes in him. He particularly enjoys going to the gym with LG. L1 loves to come to The Seeds. Her case worker is EH and apparently L1 tells AP that "I want

		to move in.” AP thinks that the most important thing for L1 is that she is being given a voice by The Seeds as she has had a difficult restrictive life at home. For L2, AP describes his caseworker TT as being “fantastic” and explains that L2 presents many challenges for social care with him going missing and yet “TT is all over it”, contacting him and helping him to resolve immediate problems. AP said that her only wish is that The Seeds could be allowed within the authority to just concentrate on short breaks and outreach work because when an emergency placement arises, it disrupts the regular activities. As she then pointed out, this is not The Seeds’ fault; they have to do what they are asked to do.
Professional 3, KF	Family support worker for young person C	We spoke about The Seeds’ support of C who has unidentified additional needs and is on the ASD pathway. She talked positively of how The Seeds contribute to a joined-up approach with all professionals working with C which is providing a consistent way of working, to which C is responding well. KF acknowledged that C’s caseworker, AC, has helped to build up a trusting relationship with C, doing direct work with C at times that best suit her and ensures all activities don’t overwhelm her. She talked about the positivity of AC attending meetings and describing how C behaves whilst in The Seeds and with other young people. This information will direct future planning and support for C so KF feels this is extremely helpful.
Visitor’s evaluation of the interviews conducted. Has the standard or quality of the accommodation changed since the last visit?		
<p>I am grateful to the staff and professionals for giving me valuable pen pictures of some of the young people who are being supported by The Seeds. In all these cases, the young people are progressing and developing as a result of having dedicated time with a worker and in being given new experiences and activities. The professionals all referred to the benefits of The Seeds being a valuable participant in multi-agency planning and support.</p> <p>The Seeds’ accommodation is of a high standard, one which is a pleasure to spend time in, and clearly the young person R is very happy living in.</p>		
2 The Children’s Views, Wishes and Feelings Standard (see regulation 7)		
Interview/s with young people present with their consent and in private (where possible) / or observations made. Use quotes from the young people		
		Comments

Interviewed y/n	Y	<p>I had several conversations with R during my visit. He told me that The Seeds “are better than all the other places I’ve been”. He spoke about going to the cinema later on with a member of the private support organisation who are involved in R’s care. He asked JS which members of staff would be working over the weekend. Having heard that ASTW, TT would be on shift on Saturday he expressed his wish to remain in the home as “I have fun with TT”. I asked him what he liked to do with TT. R listed, going for drives, playing loud music and going for food. I asked him about life in The Seeds whilst he is waiting to move somewhere else. R told me the rules “were fair”, the staff “great” and he has to do “chores; cleaning, cooking and washing”. I asked R if he thinks he is different from having support from The Seeds from how he used to be. He told me that “I am getting better at keeping calm” and then went on to tell me that he managed to deflect an angry situation at a recent trip on the dodgems with a calm approach, not reacting to accusations made towards him. R added that, “I trust the staff more. I used to hate coming here, but now I really like it”. He appreciates that the staff share his wishes and feelings with his social worker and recognises that The Seeds will help the staff in the new placement to understand him before he moves. He added though, “I wish The Seeds could be my long-term care home”.</p> <p>I observed him talking about the importance of career choices with staff members. He had a humorous conversation with JS about him helping with the cleaning, by doing the hoovering downstairs picking up beanbag polystyrene balls. When I first saw R, he was expressing disappointment that he could not use the Xbox as the license needed to be renewed. He politely raised this problem with JS and CA responded to this immediately. I asked R later if he could now use the Xbox, and he confirmed he had been able to do so.</p>
Observed y/n	Y	
Initial	R	

How are young people consulted day to day and how do young people have a positive impact on the home as a result of their engagement and participation?

CA informed me about how The Seeds are involved in the local authority voice and participation council meeting and plans to ensure more young people are able to shape and influence services. She explained that some of the Seeds’ young people will be involved in the young inspectors’ work that is an important mechanism to enable the young persons’ voice to be heard. CA told me that there will be a training session in April to include staff and young people and this will enable specific members of The Seeds to roll out more young inspectors’ training going forward. There will also be training for young people interested in interviewing and recruitment. She talked about the underpinning processes, which include a contract for each young person thinking about their time, ensuring that their participation is outside the school day, that they are rewarded through vouchers and that they are able to evidence their involvement through an ASDAN (life skills programme) Careers and Future module. She said that there is currently some consideration to come up with a variety of ways that young people can record their findings and views in inspection and recruitment work, recognising that not every young person likes to write. CA

reminded me that the Young Inspectors visited The Seeds last year; The Seeds are still waiting for their certificate and once this arrives, they will update the service leaflet.

CA confirmed that the former “you said, we did” board will be reinstated in the pool room. There is no doubt in my mind that the young people’s wishes and feelings are paramount to service and support plans within The Seeds, but this board is an excellent and visible way of proving that young people’ ideas and views are being responded to.

At the January team meeting, there was a discussion about the young people’s meeting and how they wanted to link it to research, so in February they planned to do a consultation about LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning). In the pool room I saw that a new information board has been designed, very well put together being visible with flags, terminology explanations, famous soundbites and a timeline of the history of LGBTQ. A new internet safety board has been created alongside the vaping board. All these boards have been designed with young people in mind, are attractive and I think will draw their interests into looking more closely.

There was a young people’s meeting on 05/02/2024 with six young people. They helped to design the LGBTQ board, and there are photos of this activity. They were consulted about what this meant for young people. This group also talked about the Chinese New Year and a banquet was ordered for them. This was a good experience for these young people as some of them had never eaten Chinese food. Future activity requests were discussed and logged.

3 The Education Standard (see regulation 8)

(This section does not necessarily need to be assessed / completed at every visit. If education was assessed last time and there appears to be no significant change in circumstances, it can be left. However, this section must be completed at the next visit).

How does the staff team ensure that young people make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and how are they helped to do so?

Initial	Individual education plan (IEP) / personal education plan (PEP), education, health and care plan (EHCP). Review dates	How are these plans being used to help young people?
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The Seeds’ staff have liaised with school staff over supporting R, who is in his last year of formal education, to attend college open days and interviews. He has expressed an interest in doing barbering. Staff have helped him to compile a CV (curriculum vitae).

The music group young people have recently finished their six-week project and have gained an ASDAN (life skills programme) music arts award to evidence their skills and progress made.

Visitor’s evaluation of educational progression for this monitoring period from young person’s / people’s starting point/s

The Seeds are not involved in supporting R’s education whilst he is staying in The Seeds, though they are developing his life skills. It was half term on the week of my visit. I heard them gently supporting R’s thoughts about returning to school to complete his qualifications prior to

going to college, though R is currently not showing a lot of motivation, saying he hates the school and that he will do English and Maths at college.

4 Enjoyment and Achievement Standard (see regulation 9)

(This section does not necessarily need to be assessed / completed at every visit. If enjoyment and achievement was assessed last time and there appears to be no significant change in circumstances, it can be left. However, this section must be completed at the next visit).

Evaluate in this monitoring period how young people take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop / reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills

CA explained that half term has been filled with more outreach activities for their young people. Pancake mixes were given out to their families. R talked about activities that he has enjoyed during his time in The Seeds.

The music group has now finished. I asked CA about the participants and outcomes: three of them will be continuing to attend a youth service weekly music group, one has asked to do one to one sessions, so a request to the social worker for funding has been made, one enjoyed the musical instruments and hopes to continue playing in school, and one enjoyed the gaming and pod cast side of the group and has gained in confidence. It is clear to me that all six young people gained a lot from participating and five of them want to continue doing some music in their leisure time.

A new boys' group is due to start next month, led by DB, an ASTW. A sign-up sheet will be placed in the pool room so that young people can sign up. CA added that it is felt to be a good way to create a group through young people's interest as well as asking ASTWs to nominate their young people.

The gym membership has ended and currently suspended as there hasn't been a lot of interest in it. At the January team meeting, it was agreed to find prices for a six-month membership and see how well it is used. In the meanwhile, anyone who wants to go can under a pay as you go arrangement.

CA and JS told me that there will be holiday activities planned for the Easter holidays using HAF (holiday activity fund) funding. Individual requests for activities will continue to be agreed to if they are safe and easy to carry out. It is hoped that the music group will restart again in April.

I can see that the enjoy and achieve standard is very much aligned with the wishes of the young people receiving a service from The Seeds, and can tell from talking to the staff members that they are open to all suggestions.

5 The Health and Well-being Standard (see regulation 10)

(This section does not necessarily need to be assessed / completed at every visit. If health and well-being was assessed last time and there appears to be no significant change in circumstances, it can be left. However, this section must be completed at the next visit).

Evaluate in this monitoring period, how young people's health / well-being needs are met. Do they receive tailored advice, services and support and are they helped to lead healthy lifestyles?

I heard from staff and professionals how health support particularly in relation to emotions has been supported in individual work with young people. There is valuable health promotion through information boards in the pool room, in relation to LGBTQ, vaping and on-line safety. I noticed that in the games / chill out zone there are "becoming your healthy self" colouring books.

I was delighted to see how staff are encouraging positive mental health through a black board in the kitchen entitled New Year resolutions. Many staff members have written how they intend to support their mental health and young people anonymously have written their own thoughts. By having the board in the kitchen enables an informal chatty conversation whilst young people congregate in the kitchen whilst a staff member is cooking.

A health and wellbeing blog has been written and displayed in the pool room. This blog showed lots of photos of ways young people felt could be good for their health, including dog walking and walking, and there was information about the winter workout of exercises that was completed by young people and staff together. It just goes to show that doing something together can be more fun and more achievable.

6 The Positive Relationships Standard (see regulation 11)

I observed positive relationships and conversations between R and the staff on duty during my visit. R spoke politely and respectfully, mirroring responses from staff.

The professionals also referred to positive relationships between staff and their young people and evidenced how this is benefitting them.

Use of restrictions of movement and / or liberty during this monitoring period

Have there been any restrictions of movement?
If so, how many and with which young people?
Is this less or more than the last period?

There have not been any restrictions of movement during this reporting period.

How does the manager assess the appropriateness of these interventions? If there has been an increase / decrease does the manager understand how / why?	Not applicable.
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Are approaches to restorative practice used? If so, give examples.	Young people actively choose to come to The Seeds so there is no need for restorative practices to be used.
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Complaints / compliments during this monitoring period

Date	Complaint or Compliment	Comments and response/action taken by the home
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There have been no complaints or compliments so I cannot evaluate the effectiveness of managing complaints and compliments.

7 The Protection of Children Standard (see regulation 12)

Health and safety arrangements

What health and safety checks have been completed since the last visit?	<p>JS explained that The Seeds' cleaner is currently off sick, so the staff are sharing out all cleaning responsibilities. I first saw CA on this visit carrying beanbags, explaining that she had decided to clean the outside covers, but this involved emptying out the polystyrene balls, and this resulted in sprinkles of balls all around the house. Everyone was extremely relaxed about these tiny balls appearing in every room in the house and laughed about the potential difficulties of removing them all.</p> <p>I checked the main health and safety file and the kitchen file and all checks have been diligently completed. I looked into the fridge and freezer and the food has been arranged safely and carefully to avoid any contamination. The recycling bins are clean and accessible for use before moving recycling to the outdoor bins.</p>
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	I asked about short strings attached to some of the lights in the bedrooms. JS assured me that these lights are not working and confirmed that the strings are short to prevent any risks. JS added that emergency lights are being replaced in the bedrooms and the tube light in the office.			
How are fire prevention measures implemented? Evaluate arrangements and actions taken to keep everyone safe since the last visit	<p>There was one fire induction carried out with a young person since I last visited.</p> <p>I can see that all weekly fire checks have been completed throughout the home.</p> <p>I think that all fire drills should include young people, plus any new or agency workers, who will be less familiar with escape routes.</p>			
Fire drill/evacuation, duration of drill, attendees since the last visit	Date	30/01/2024	Staff present	JS, LG, MC
	Time taken	2 minutes	Young people present	No young people
Significant incidents and events that relate to young people's welfare and safety in this monitoring period, (including allegations against staff)				
Young person	Date regulation 40 notification/s if made	Who else was notified, i.e. Local authority designated officer (LADO)/placing authority (LA)/police/parents/carers/other agencies/professionals?	Comment on actions/outcome	
There have not been any significant incidents and events in this reporting period.				
How, in this monitoring period, have incidents of young people being absent or missing from home been managed to ensure their safety and welfare is promoted?				
There have not been any incidences of missing from care during this reporting period.				
Risk management and assessment				
Have there been any updates to risk assessments?	I looked at the risk management assessment for R who is currently on an extended short break session with The Seeds. There are no new updates. It is a comprehensive assessment which covers all identified risks based on R's background and incidents that have occurred, and describes strategies that should be followed should any potential risky situations arise.			

Evaluate how the home are keeping the young people safe and protect them from harm.

In the team meeting in January, staff were warned to be vigilant about young people in the home having access to videoing and drop in applications.

I heard from my visit that staff are careful in following safeguarding measures with young people when on outreach activities, ensuring staff know where they are and keeping in touch using the specific home what's app. The senior in charge at the time has responsibility to oversee what is happening, whether in or out of the home. This was the gist of the conversation JS and CA were having about planning weekend activities for young people due to receive some outreach support. In the home during my visit, I was aware that staff ensured that they knew where R was and if he was downstairs a member of staff went to work downstairs, to loosely supervise him. CA also checked with R's private support organisation about plans for the support for the evening, times for arrival and drop off.

8 The Care Planning Standard (see regulation 14)

Visitor's evaluation of young people's contact arrangements / planned care and progress since the last monitoring period

There were many examples in my visit to evidence how The Seeds work closely with professionals within the adolescent services team and with external services, and how they contribute to the young people's lives within the care system. Some of them are in this section, whilst others are talked about by the professionals I spoke to.

I heard of a wonderful example of how The Seeds are supporting R's social worker in a transition to a new residential placement. The Seeds are keeping R safe and occupied through extended short breaks whilst the local authority considers various options. The staff have supported R's social worker, who is new to him, by adding to the pen picture for the referrals, and they will be involved in the transition. They intend to prepare staff from the new placement to understand R, and give advice about how best to handle his emotions and suggest ways to help him to settle in. I heard conversations with staff with R, being matter of fact though reassuring, about him moving on to a residential placement, despite his constant declarations that nowhere will be as good as The Seeds.

Whilst R is participating in extended short breaks at The Seeds, staff are preparing him for independence by developing his life skills, encouraging him to take on cleaning, washing and cooking tasks. R is responding well to learning these skills though says he would prefer not to be independent and wants to be taken care of.

JS talked about another young person, well known to The Seeds, who they are supporting through a difficult period in her life. D, who was recently supported to move schools, has been being bullied and was assaulted. She called her caseworker, SS, for help, and because SS was not available, she called on her colleagues to intervene. CT, an ASTW, went to meet D and offer support. Since then, staff have been working with the social worker, D, her foster carers, who have given notice and D's mum, with whom D now wants to live. This is a sensitive situation, and as JS explained, the advantage that The Seeds have is that they can advocate on D's behalf, as they know her extremely well.

AC attended a multi-agency meeting on the morning of my visit and kindly told me about this. The young person, C, receives psychological support within the local authority to enable her to manage her emotions and build up her social prowess. She is waiting for a diagnosis for ASD (autism spectrum disorder). The meeting considered how valuable The Seeds are to supporting C's behaviour and agreed that they were doing a "wonderful job". The meeting highlighted the benefit of working together by the social worker, psychological team, mother, youth service and The Seeds and there a recognition of the value of having a consistent approach and being careful over language used with C to avoid any misunderstandings. Professionals acknowledged that there have been occasions where C's wishes have been given priority over other young people to avoid her becoming upset, and so work will be done to help her to recognise that others also have choices. Staff have been advised that they should recognise her feelings and validate them and help her to build up resilience as she gains more confidence in being around her peers.

A big strength of The Seeds is that they work well within a larger team for the benefit of the young people and their families and carers, communicate effectively, think creatively about how to engage a young person, advocate on the young person's behalf and are not limiting themselves to a restrictive area of work but looking beyond The Seeds, constantly ensuring that the young person has a support network beyond life with The Seeds.

9 The Leadership and Management Standard (see regulation 13)

Evaluate whether the registered manager knows and understands the home's strengths and weaknesses, is able to prevent shortfalls, identifies and takes effective action when needed? Since the last visit, what changes have taken place as a result of this knowledge / understanding?

JS and I discussed this. She acknowledged that keeping staff shift rotas full has been a challenge this month, that there have been a few personal worrying issues affecting staff's ability to come into work. This has come at a time when requests for annual leave are higher as the end of the financial year approaches. She said that despite all of this, staff are coming into work with a smile on their faces and are offering extra shifts, supporting working together as a team. I asked how the caseloads for the staff off sick being managed. She explained that some young people don't need weekly support and are happy with a telephone call, whilst others are being prepared for closure. JS added that not being able to offer short breaks to other young people whilst R is on an extended short break is frustrating, but hopes that he will be moving to a new placement next week. Caseloads have increased this month following a higher request for The Seeds' service from social care professionals.

What monitoring /quality assurance processes are in place to inform the development of the home? Since the last visit, what evidence is there for this?

The principal adolescent support team workers (Principal ASTWs) have now taken on the auditing role having been prepared for this over the last few months. SP, a Principal ASTW, has been working with MC, the manager, auditing all the journey of support documents, and were pleased to be able to recognise outstanding quality of work in these documents. JS said that the next stage of the auditing process is for the Principal ASTWs to bring the ASTWs into the audit as a learning opportunity for them.

JS explained that there is more focus on checking in the case supervisions that staff are meeting the targets agreed with their young people, matching up the reasons for referral with the support work being offered to the young person and their families or carers.

Evaluate how the Registered Manager has managed the staff team during this period?

JS explained about the current staffing difficulties affecting The Seeds. There are three members of staff off on sick leave at the moment and a number, including the registered manager and responsible individual on annual leave. The cleaner is also off sick. I asked JS about how The Seeds support staff who are off sick and she explained about having welfare meetings in venues of their choosing to enable them to feel relaxed. I asked about the contingencies of having an unexpected significant number of staff members not being in work at the moment. JS explained that there are higher than usual use of regular casual staff; one who used to work for The Seeds and a couple who already work for the local authority. A new casual worker, a family support worker for the authority, is doing her induction with The Seeds and will be in work on the day after my visit, completing her training and shadowing of staff. JS said that she and the manager MC have helped to fill in some gaps along with flexible working from other staff members.

JS and I talked about training within the monthly team meetings. There are plans to measure the impact for young people participating in short breaks. She said that training is being given to the staff in team meetings. They will also be having in the next couple of meetings some bite sized sessions on research in practice and attachment and trauma. The last team meeting was on 17/01/2024. Information about future training was provided.

I overheard a conversation between JS and CA as they discussed which young people would be having outreach support over the weekend and what the staff on rota would be expecting to do, including one long term casual worker and also a new casual worker who has agreed to cover a shift. CA confirmed she would be doing the handover for staff on Saturday, and return on Sunday, whilst being on call during the time when she was out of the home.

It was good to see the white board in the office being used to communicate new information. On this visit, I saw the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance which was updated in December 2023 and information suggesting better ways of working together, and also information from the neglect strategy from the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children).

<p>How are newly recruited staff or staff still on probation supported with their training and development?</p>	<p>There is one probationary member of staff who I did not meet or discuss during my visit. I will ensure I follow up progress for this member of staff in my March visit. The new casual support worker has nearly completed her induction, is completing her medication training on line and will be spending some time with CA learning about some of the working processes that are specific to The Seeds.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Visitor's overall evaluation of leadership, management and staffing in this period</p>	
<p>Leadership is strong, and over the last few weeks has had to be creative in keeping all rotas fully staffed and all young people supported. JS, with support from senior members of staff, has successfully kept all The Seeds' "balls in the air". CA, as a principal ASTW has gone over and above to support the staff team over the weekend following my visit. I could see that both JS and CA work well together and collaborate for the benefit of the staff team and the young people.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">10 Summary and Sign-off</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Young people's suggestions</p>	
<p>R just simply wants to remain at The Seeds, which he realises is impossible.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Visitor's summary of the visit</p>	
<p>This was an unusually quiet visit, and I appreciated all the support I received from the three members of staff in work. I left with JS' words ringing through my ears that although staffing is a challenge at the moment everyone still comes to work with a smile on their faces. What a wonderful passionate team. I was overwhelmed by the number of positive case studies from staff and professionals and recognise that without The Seeds' input things would not be anywhere near as good for the young people. Even R, the young person, was able to evidence how he has changed because of The Seeds. These testimonies reinforce the reasons why The Seeds is such a successful service.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Recommended actions to consider</p>	
<p>I do not have any recommendations on this occasion.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Sign off by the independent visitor</p>	
<p>I am satisfied that at the time of this visit the young people accommodated at this children's home are effectively safeguarded and their well-being promoted.</p>	

Signed: <i>Davina A Hanley</i>	Date: 19/02/2024
Manager's comments with regard to any recommendations made by the independent visitor	
<p>This is a positive Reg 44 report, despite some staffing issues and extended short breaks for R all of our YPs have been seen and supported through outreach sessions.</p> <p>Feedback from young people, parents and professionals evidence the good work we do and it is good when this is captured through feedback from our Reg 44 inspector.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>J. Smithson</i></p> <p>Signed: J Smithson</p>	Date: 28.02.2024
Comments from the responsible individual	
<p>This is another positive report and evidences the support for a YP that was on an extended short break and the continued support for all te children and young people that attend SEEDS</p>	
<p>Signed: <i>CBubb</i></p>	Date: