

Parenta

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Parenta is based in Maidstone, Kent and offers a broad range of services to the childcare industry. The services offered include government-funded and private training. Programmes currently offered include apprenticeships, foundation learning and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), most of which are associated with child development and well-being.

In 2009/10, the Skills Funding Agency in Kent funded 50 advanced apprentices and apprentices, 120 Train to Gain learners and 67 Entry to Employment (E2E) learners. At the time of the focused monitoring visit, most of the training delivered was to learners privately funded by local authorities, with 15 advanced apprentices and apprentices and eight foundation learning learners funded by the Skills Funding Agency.

The previous inspection in 2008 judged all aspects of the provision to be satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in improving the self-assessment process?

Insufficient progress

At the time of the previous inspection, the self-assessment process was judged to be satisfactory, although arrangements for quality improvement were insufficiently established. Since then, insufficient progress has been made in developing these aspects further. Parenta seeks and includes the views of all staff through regular team meetings. However, there are no clear records of the team meetings' content and actions arising. It is not clear how learner feedback informs self-assessment. The self-assessment report contains insufficient judgements about the company's key strengths and very few judgements about areas that require improvement. The latest report has omitted key performance information, for example a critical review of achievement data across all types of provision. It is difficult to justify grades awarded in the self-assessment report due to the over-use of descriptive narrative.

Parenta's quality improvement plan clearly details actions to improve the provision. However, it is not sufficiently linked to the self-assessment. Following the previous inspection, managers implemented a review of all procedures related to training activities. New documentation now provides a standardised set of procedures for all staff to follow, from initial contact to exit arrangements. However, the monitoring of all aspects of learner activities is not sufficiently and formally implemented.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving success rates and completion rates of the qualification in the agreed time? **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection, overall success rates were judged to be satisfactory, although a key area for improvement was the low proportion of learners on apprenticeship programmes completing within the planned period of study. Since then, Parenta has made reasonable progress to improve this.

Over the past three years, steady progress has been made to improve overall apprenticeship success rates and completion rates within the agreed time. Success rates have risen 20 percentage points to 72% in 2009/10. This is around the national average. Completion rates within the agreed time period have improved by 27 percentage points to 53% in 2009/10. This is five percentage points below the national average. Since the previous inspection, Train to Gain and E2E provision have been introduced and concluded. Success rates for Train to Gain improved, in 2009/10, by 13 percentage points since the previous year. They rose to 75%, compared with the national average of 83%. Completion rates within the agreed time improved by 23 percentage points to 59%, compared with the national average of 71%. The percentage of E2E learners achieving a positive outcome in 2009/10 was low at 23%.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in coordinating and managing initial assessment and support for literacy and numeracy? **Insufficient progress**

At the previous inspection, the arrangements for the initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy were judged to be satisfactory. However, the process was insufficiently coordinated and no qualified member of staff was available to support learners with literacy and numeracy needs. Overall, there has been insufficient progress made. Parenta has appointed a tutor with an appropriate knowledge of literacy. They have provided staff with awareness training on literacy and numeracy and issued resources to help them to support learners. Foundation learners attending the training centre complete a detailed online literacy and numeracy assessment. Assessment results inform learning plans and appropriate support is offered. Monitoring of foundation learners' literacy and numeracy progress is satisfactory. However, there is no Skills for Life strategy.

For work-based learners, the results of initial assessment are insufficiently used to inform learning plans. Arrangements to support work-based learners and track their progress, are insufficiently coordinated and monitored. Overall management arrangements are insufficiently developed. Parenta recognises that initial assessment arrangements are not sufficiently thorough and is in the process of introducing an online literacy and numeracy assessment for all learners.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in improving the promotion of equality and diversity to learners? **Insufficient progress**

The previous inspection judged the promotion of equality and diversity to be weak. Since then insufficient progress has been made. A very useful equality and diversity information sheet has been developed for staff to recognise ways of meeting all learners' individual needs, with particular reference to learning, teaching and assessing, although it has yet to be implemented. The equality and diversity policy is brief and does not make appropriate reference to current legislation. The apprenticeship handbook contains an outline of information relating to the organisation's equality and diversity policy, although the approach is not coordinated across other programmes. Learners have appropriate information on how to appeal or make a complaint. Records of complaints are appropriately recorded and collated by managers. At the review of learners' progress, learners are asked about any incidents of harassment, bullying or discrimination since their previous review. However, there is little evidence to indicate that learners' general awareness of equality and diversity issues are explored during these meetings.

Parenta collates and easily extracts information from its management information system relating to different groups of learners. Information is now starting to be analysed and discussed during team and management meetings but there is insufficient formal recording of actions arising.

What progress has been made in improving the process of observation of teaching, training and learning? **Insufficient progress**

At the previous inspection, the process of assessing the quality of training was inadequate. All the areas for improvement as outlined in the previous report remain. Of the few observations of teaching and learning completed in 2010, the records lack sufficient detail and do not focus sufficiently on learning. Actions to improve teaching and learning are not sufficiently clear or monitored. There are no records to assess the performance of assessors delivering training in the workplace. The sharing of good practice is not sufficiently developed. Parenta judges teaching and learning to be good in its self-assessment, although it does not provide any supporting evidence for the grade awarded.

What progress has been made in improving the use of management information? **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection a key area for improvement was the insufficient use and analysis of management information. Since then, Parenta has introduced a new management information system. It is now well established and used well by all staff to track learners' NVQ progress and monitor meetings between assessors and learners. A useful section of the system allows assessors to highlight any concerns they may have about a learner that is impacting on their ability to progress and succeed. Managers appropriately monitor this information and deal promptly with

actions to support the learner and assessor. Success rates and completion of the programme by learners in the agreed time have much improved.

However, the management information system is not sufficiently developed to monitor all aspects of a learner's progress, for example literacy and numeracy. The analysis of the available information is not used sufficiently to set actions to improve the provision.

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