

# Priory Central Services Limited

## First re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 59108

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**Last day of inspection:** 1 May 2015

**Type of provider:** Employer

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit to Priory Central Services Limited following publication of the inspection report on 17 April 2015 that found the provider to be inadequate overall. All aspects were judged as inadequate, including the sector area of health and social care.

### Themes

#### **What action has been taken to ensure apprentices' workplace managers are fully involved and accountable for the planning and monitoring of training, learning and assessment?**

At the inspection, the involvement of workplace managers was not sufficiently effective to ensure all apprentices made appropriate progress and achieved the agreed targets. Since then managers have introduced an improved progress review process and associated documentation that requires recorded tripartite discussions between the trainer, apprentice and workplace manager. Apprentices state that they are more confident and able to raise concerns using the new review format. Workplace managers have started to be more responsive in helping to plan training and assessment opportunities in the workplace. However, trainers do not upload review documentation and individual learning plans to the electronic portfolio system. Trainers retain original documents, but apprentices do not routinely receive a copy of these records. The provider does not keep original documents in an appropriately protected state. Of the current 681 apprentices, 189 have gone beyond the planned end date of their training. Operational managers' report that delays in the relevant external examination body agreeing dates for apprentices to sit tests is preventing them completing their functional skills and could lower timely success rates for 2014/15.

#### **Priorities for improvement**

- As a priority, trainers need to further encourage and extend workplace managers' involvement in their apprentices' training and assessment. They should use the improving relationships between trainers and workplace managers to facilitate frequent and regular support interventions where necessary.
- Ensure all progress reviews result in the setting of specific and precise targets for apprentices' vocational and personal development needs so their progress accelerates and they complete the apprenticeship within the expected timescale.

- Introduce a system that allows apprentices to easily view and interrogate their training documents currently held by trainers. The provider should keep all original records in an appropriately protected state.

**What action has been taken to improve the planning and delivery of learning sessions so apprentices are challenged to develop good skills and knowledge, progress quickly and achieve within the planned timescale?**

The inspection report noted failings in all aspects of taught session preparation and delivery. Managers now recognise that trainers are not confident in making changes to taught session plans to promote learning. They require more support to improve their skills in formulating and delivering inspiring and individualised training. Managers are currently reviewing session plans to check they are fit for purpose and include identification of a wide range of assessment opportunities. The provider will use a training event on 18 May 2015 to improve trainers' understanding and use of the proposed session plans. Managers intend to work closely with trainers to help them become proficient in adapting plans to suit an individual apprentice's needs. Previously produced 'key skills' workbooks have been revised so they apply to the delivery of functional skills in a vocational context, though they are not yet used to support learning. The provider has developed a 'stretch and challenge' toolkit for use by trainers in taught sessions. However, exercises contained within the learning resources often require the apprentice to repeat similar work rather than progress onto more challenging activities. Managers have introduced a 'stretch and challenge' forum but it is too early to judge the impact of this and other improvement initiatives on apprentices' success. A 'how is it going?' learner survey has been placed on the provider's electronic portfolio system but the feedback has yet to be fully collected, analysed or used to improve learning.

**Priorities for improvement**

- Rapidly improve trainers' skills and knowledge to allow them to better plan and deliver learning sessions so all apprentices achieve to their full potential. Develop and monitor trainers' effectiveness in individualising learning to promote rapid progress and high achievement for all apprentices.
- Review all proposed learning materials and planned teaching strategies to ensure they provide challenge to apprentices throughout their programme and inspire them to work to the highest standards.
- Use the outcomes of forum and feedback processes to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of improvement initiatives.

**What action has been taken to ensure apprentices have good access to high-quality training resources, including online resources?**

The inspection identified learning resources and access to them by apprentices as an area for improvement. Since the inspection, managers have started to introduce a range of online resources, particularly to support the development of functional skills.

These include opportunities for apprentices to attempt past examination papers, complete practice questions and explore useful aide-memoires to promote understanding. The existing online resources include web-based links to relevant and useful websites and an informative handbook. The provider monitors the website links weekly to ensure they provide valid results. However, apprentices interviewed during the monitoring visit had made little use of the existing resources and did not perceive their availability as a valuable source of learning. Apprentices do not always have adequate access to online resources at work locations due to limited internet connectivity.

### **Priorities for improvement**

- Significantly accelerate the introduction of online resources to ensure apprentices can use high-quality training resources. Ensure that trainers are fully aware of what resources are available in all formats and encourage apprentices to use them to promote private study that helps them achieve quickly. Systematically check and evaluate the use of learning resources through consultation with apprentices and monitor their usage.
- Ensure that all apprentices have good workplace access to online learning resources.

### **What action has been taken to raise trainers' expectations of apprentices and extend their vocational skills and knowledge?**

At the inspection, trainers set insufficiently high ambitions and expectations for apprentices, who consequently did not achieve to the best standards or make rapid enough progress. The organisation has started to look closely at apprentices' roles in the workplace and has changed their individual learning plans to reflect this. The new plans identify more explicitly where apprentices at intermediate level have started to demonstrate competences in line with units from a higher level, for example in medication. The provider has piloted the new individual learning plan paperwork with approximately 100 apprentices, though it is too soon to judge its impact. Trainers previously undertook inductions of new apprentices in groups. The provider is considering using individual inductions to ensure that apprentices' receive more personalised and challenging programme planning that reflects their own individual needs, aspirations and abilities. There have been no new inductions since the previous inspection. Current arrangements for observations of teaching, learning and assessment in the workplace overly focus on teaching rather than learning and its impact on high performance at work.

### **Priorities for improvement**

- Urgently introduce all proposed improvement initiatives, including extending the introduction of new documentation, particularly for individual learning plans, to promote and record progress and achievement by all apprentices beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship framework.

- Use the outcomes from the observation of teaching, learning and assessment in the workplace to raise trainers' expectations of apprentices by focusing on the use of learning to achieve consistently high and improving work performance.

### **What action has been taken to ensure trainers use effective strategies to develop apprentices' skills in English and mathematics?**

At the time of the inspection, trainers did not plan and teach sessions that effectively helped apprentices to develop English and mathematics skills that they could apply in their work. Trainers mainly focused on preparing apprentices to take functional skills tests. Since then the provider has carried out preparatory work to ensure trainers effectively develop apprentices' skills in English and mathematics, though it has had very limited impact on apprentices' achievement. A review of lesson plans and learning resources has commenced which aims to identify opportunities to contextualise functional skills. Planned use of improvements to initial assessment and progress reviews, designed to promote apprentices' skills in English and mathematics, are at an early stage. Managers are identifying trainers' English and mathematics skills levels, and their competence in teaching these topics, to inform future staff training. In addition, they have started to map functional skills development opportunities with the requirements of the apprenticeship programme.

### **Priorities for improvement**

- Establish and communicate a strategy and procedures for the delivery, quality assurance and improvement of English and mathematics so all trainers have a sound understanding of their role and contribution to improving apprentices' achievement. Establish processes to identify and assist all apprentices with identified special support needs.
- Urgently complete the identification of trainers' training needs with respect to English and mathematics functional skills delivery and implement development opportunities so they all perform to a high standard.
- Ensure all trainers are qualified to level 2 in English and mathematics and provide training for those who can attain to a higher level. Routinely encourage apprentices to complete functional skills above the level required by their apprenticeship where they have the potential to succeed further.
- Quickly complete the review of learning resources and the mapping exercise and use an assessment of the findings to implement improvements. Undertake an early evaluation of this work to assess how well the actions are contributing to raising success rates.
- Managers should routinely analyse and use data for English and mathematics functional skills success rates as part of comprehensive performance management to drive up standards.

**What action has been taken to increase the effectiveness of quality improvement arrangements by developing systems to monitor and improve all aspects of the provision?**

At inspection, quality improvement arrangements were inadequate, and alongside weak operational management, did not lead to a rising standard of experience for the apprentice. Quality assurance by observation of teaching and learning was not effective in improving the quality of the provision. Not all training activity was subject to an assessment of its quality. Recently, the provider has established a new operational management team and work has commenced to address identified weaknesses in quality improvement.

As noted at inspection, apprentices still do not routinely have sufficient time to complete their studies at the workplace. Attendance by apprentices and trainers at scheduled workplace meetings is still low. The number of apprentices allocated to each trainer has reduced but remains too high. Managers have carried out preparatory work to link trainers' self-assessment to monthly reviews designed to improve their performance and the quality of the provision. Trainers have received training to reinforce their understanding of the required standard for completed individual learning plans and progress reviews. Assessment of taught sessions by direct observation has been in abeyance since the inspection but appropriate improvements to the process have been undertaken.

**Priorities for improvement**

- Immediately recommence the quality assurance of taught sessions by direct observation to focus on delivering significant improvements to the standard of teaching and learning. Extend the breadth of observations to include all aspects of the apprentice experience. Ensure that observations lead to detailed feedback and action plans that enable all trainers to improve their practice. All recorded graded judgements should be subject to robust moderation prior to use in trainer improvement planning. Ensure that observers are competent and confident in carrying out observations and providing detailed feedback on trainers' performance. Make use of identified best practice to improve teaching and learning across the organisation.
- Correct the shortfalls identified at the previous inspection relating to insufficient apprentice study time at the workplace, poor meeting attendance rates and excessive trainer workloads.
- Ensure trainers and managers make full use of data for quality assurance and improvement purposes. In particular they should identify and quickly respond with remedial action where apprentices are not making good or better progress. Managers should review all apprentices' interim progress targets to check they are appropriately challenging and lead to apprentices completing by their planned date.

**What action has been taken to develop and implement a detailed and comprehensive improvement action plan so that the pace of sustained improvements in the quality of the provision for apprentices is increased significantly?**

The inspection report identified improvement action planning as weak, with managers not effectively implementing recommendations made at the last inspection. As a consequence, the provision's quality had not improved. Strategic and operational priorities were not clear and accountability, including use of effective governance arrangements, was lacking. Since then, managers have produced an overarching improvement action plan that addresses all the weaknesses found at the inspection. However, actions outlined in the plan fail to include sufficient detail to aid effective monitoring at an operational level. The plan does not include enough quantitative targets to support an effective assessment of the impact of the implemented actions. Managers have rightly prioritised improvements to the quality of taught sessions, though as noted elsewhere, they have not yet implemented fully the planned strategies to raise standards quickly. Few trainers hold a recognised teaching qualification or have participated in relevant training. The provider has made good progress in strengthening governance and safeguarding arrangements.

**Priorities for improvement**

- Managers need to establish and communicate both a clear vision and strategic objectives for the provision linked to the achievement of business and operational goals stated in terms of high standards and outcomes for all apprentices.
- The improvement action plan requires the inclusion of interim and completion targets to secure accountability of individual staff for their performance in delivering a high standard of provision. In addition, the plan requires the inclusion of a wide range of quantitative data targets, including overall and timely success rates, to aid monitoring. Review the plan's section dealing with the impact on the apprentice and set measureable outcomes. Use detailed supplementary action plans to enhance the effectiveness of performance management. Clarify the weightings within the different risk bands so all managers are clear what they indicate and when further action is required.
- Fully implement the plans for a strategic governance board whose terms of reference should include the setting and monitoring of challenging targets to drive the pace of improvement. Ensure that the board receives relevant data so it can scrutinise and evaluate progress in raising the standard of learners' outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment, and leadership and management. Governance should include a robust consideration of safeguarding.
- Review the planned model for teacher training so it meets the needs of trainers in terms of preferred learning style and delivery methods.

**What action has been taken to review and improve the arrangements for self-assessment to provide an accurate view of the provision and inform robust action plans leading to a rapidly improving experience for apprentices?**

At the inspection, inspectors judged the self-assessment process as insufficiently rigorous, with the associated report failing to identify the provision's strengths and areas for improvement. Since the inspection, the provider has reallocated responsibility for self-assessment to a senior manager who is reviewing the process to ensure it leads to comprehensive improvement and corrects the weaknesses identified. The provider plans to undertake self-assessment following completion of a current organisational review.

**Priorities for improvement**

- Establish a quality assurance cycle that leads to the production of a comprehensive self-assessment report and action plan. Ensure stakeholders' views and the widest possible range of quantitative and qualitative data inform the evaluation of the provision's quality.



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