

Priory Central Services Limited

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the second follow up re-inspection monitoring visit to Priory Central Services Limited following publication of the inspection report on 17 April 2015 that found all aspects of the provider to be inadequate, including the sector area of health and social care. At the time of this monitoring visit, 15 apprentices were undertaking training.

Themes

<p>What progress has the provider made to ensure apprentices' workplace managers and trainers have high aspirations for apprentices and effectively support their training, learning and assessment?</p>	<p>Insufficient progress</p>
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Workplace managers are now effectively involved in the training and assessment of apprentices. A comprehensive tripartite review ensures that all parties: trainer, manager and apprentice, participate appropriately in the process and agree to the recorded progress. As a result, apprentices are attending workshops more frequently and overall success rates have improved. However, trainers do not ensure all apprentices have a sufficient understanding of established learning objectives or what work remains to complete their programme. Progress to identify and assist all learners with identified special support needs has been too slow.

Each apprentice can now access an electronic 'learner progress file' which captures progress and key events relevant to their training, for example review and teaching sessions dates. The trainer holds the individualised learning plan and the apprentice has a copy. There is significant overlap between these documents, with trainers focusing too much on describing what the apprentice has done rather than succinctly recording evidence and helping the apprentice prioritise their next steps to complete units. This impedes the apprentices' progress.

Trainers do not consistently set challenging short-term targets for apprentices that raise their aspirations and support achievement. In the better practice, trainers establish targets that help apprentices to attain set goals within ambitious but realistic timeframes. However, too often targets are not set or are imprecise and not time-bound. Consequently, apprentices are unclear what they need to do to complete the apprenticeship.

What progress has the provider made in establishing effective governance and self-assessment arrangements that include a monitored action plan, and lead to raised standards in the provision?

Reasonable progress

Since the last monitoring visit, leaders and senior managers have completed a major strategic review. As a result, the apprenticeship programme now sits at the centre of the organisation's vision to be 'the leading provider of behavioural care in the UK'. The establishment of a new organisational and governance structure now clearly defines lines of accountability. The executive board act as a steering group and are driving improvements through effective monitoring of managers' actions to raise apprenticeship standards. The board has clearly focused key performance indicators on improving the learning experience. The data and reports used by the board are appropriately detailed and allow it to scrutinise effectively the pace and impact of improvement initiatives. As a result, the board has agreed to a two-year strategy to rebuild the internal capacity of the group through outsourcing current and future enrolments.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have prepared a very detailed quality assurance and improvement action plan that senior leaders monitor monthly. Managers have sensibly prioritised and achieved key actions; for example addressing the significant number of apprentices still on programme beyond their planned end date. Managers have wisely committed to resolving endemic issues within the provision using robust improvement actions. However, managers recognise that the speed of improvements needs to quicken. At the time of our visit, the self-assessment report was at an early stage of development. Procedures to collect stakeholder views were in abeyance. Managers had credible plans and processes in place to start routinely gathering and analysing feedback to support the self-assessment process.

What progress has the provider made in introducing comprehensive quality assurance and improvement arrangements that monitor and significantly improve the provision's standards?

Insufficient progress

Since the last monitoring visit, managers have strengthened the review of apprentices' progress and attendance through structured monthly meetings with trainers. Managers now use the available data to routinely check and predict trainer workloads and the progress of their apprentices. Trainer workloads, which were excessive at the last monitoring visit, are now at an acceptable level; consequently, trainers now meet with apprentices for progress reviews every four to six weeks. Assessment is now more frequent and accelerates apprentices' progress.

Managers have revisited the arrangements for the management of staff performance. All trainers now have a monthly meeting with their manager where they record agreed outcomes in an individual performance agreement (IPA). Findings from IPAs show managers have a comprehensive view of trainers' strengths and weaknesses. Trainers receive individual support from managers. However, while managers claim this aids improvement, there is little evidence of the impact of the support on raising standards and improving learning.

Managers do not prioritise trainers' training needs effectively. All trainers have completed a detailed self-assessment of their training needs. However, managers have not collated and used the outcome of this exercise to develop a comprehensive and focused training plan that addresses key performance shortfalls and supports improvement.

At the last monitoring visit, managers had suspended the use of direct observation to assess the quality of training interventions. Since then, managers have developed and reintroduced a system for the observation of teaching, learning and assessment. The records of observation are very detailed but excessively long and too descriptive. Observers' judgements are insufficiently evaluative and a minority are over-graded. Managers have not established a moderation process to ensure the observation process generates consistently valid and reliable evaluations.

What progress has the provider made in establishing an effective strategy for the delivery of English and mathematics that drives up standards and ensures all apprentices achieve to their full potential?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous monitoring visit, achievement rates for English and mathematics functional skills have improved significantly, particularly when compared with the low levels of the previous year. Actions by managers to ensure trainers effectively develop apprentices' skills in English and mathematics have started to raise standards. All trainers have now achieved an appropriate English and mathematics qualification at level 2. In addition, trainers have received individual support from the functional skills tutor to ensure better embedding of functional skills within the programme. Progress to improve trainers' teaching skills has been reasonable, with all but one trainer now holding a relevant teaching qualification.

Managers recognised that the timetabling of off-the-job functional skills training resulted in sessions of excessively long duration and led to apprentices having low levels of engagement and achievement. As a replacement, since August 2015 apprentices attend short, focused workshops to develop specific skills, for example letter writing, fractions, and simple statistic indicators. This approach has met apprentices' needs well. Managers recognise the need for further work to identify

learning opportunities that contextualise functional skills as well as develop lesson plans and learning resources that fully support workshop delivery.

Managers do not routinely analyse and use data for English and mathematics functional skills success rates at level 1 and 2 as part of comprehensive performance management. While trainers encourage learners to complete functional skills above the level required by their apprenticeship, they do not use available data to evaluate the uptake and achievement rates of this cohort.

What progress has the provider made in improving the rate at which apprentices achieve their framework and in narrowing the performance gaps between different groups of learners?

Reasonable progress

At the previous visit, around 300 apprentices were on programme, of which two thirds had passed their planned end date. Data available during this visit shows an improving trend in apprenticeship success rates since the previous inspection, though rates are still below the national rates. Currently, 15 apprentices remain on programme of which a third are past their planned completion date. The majority are making appropriate or better progress towards completing their apprenticeship. This improvement is in part due to managers implementing more effective apprentice performance management to track progress. In addition, apprentices now receive swifter and relevant help that enables them to succeed.

Apprentices achieve their full apprenticeship at a similar rate regardless of age. However, male apprentices achieve at a significantly higher rate than females. This continues the trend noted at the previous inspection. Managers have investigated the discrepancy but not identified specific reasons for the differences that allow them to implement an improvement action plan.

What progress has the provider made to ensure apprentices have good access to, and use, high-quality training materials, including online resources?

Insufficient progress

Leaders and managers have successfully ensured that apprentices are able to use online training materials in the workplace. The range and variety of available resources to support independent learning has improved. These include opportunities for learners to review their understanding of functional skills topics, attempt past examination papers, complete practice questions and explore other websites to widen their knowledge base. Trainers provide apprentices with regular updates on what resources are available. However, progress in ensuring apprentices use the

available resources has been too slow. Currently managers do not monitor the volume and frequency of apprentices' access to, and use of, the online materials. Progress reviews make insufficient reference to the use of online resources. Associated targets, linked to the use of online resources, are not routinely set and reviewed to facilitate apprentices' achievement. During our visit, not all apprentices considered they had adequate access to paper-based learning material. Managers have not effectively defined and implemented an overall strategy to integrate online and classroom/workplace-based training methods.

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