

# Premier People Solutions Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 1278581

**Name of lead inspector:** Ken Merry HMI

**Inspection dates:** 22–23 October 2018

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of a series of monitoring visits to a sample of new apprenticeship training providers that are funded through the apprenticeship levy. Ofsted's intention to carry out monitoring visits to these new providers was first announced by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in November 2017. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

Premier People Solutions Limited, trading as Premier Partnerships, has been a commercial training provider for around 25 years. The company's head office is in Doncaster. Premier People Solutions Limited works with public sector organisations to offer public service delivery officer standards-based apprenticeships. In August 2017, Premier People Solutions Limited recruited their first levy-funded apprentices. Since then, they have quickly recruited nearly 1,000 apprentices. As well as levy-funded apprenticeships, Premier People Solutions Limited also delivers privately funded training and apprenticeships. On this monitoring visit, only the levy-funded apprenticeship provision in England was inspected.

Premier People Solutions Limited has 686 apprentices in learning. All except five are on the public service delivery officer standards-based apprenticeship at level 3. The remaining five apprentices are on a team leader standards-based apprenticeship at level 3.

### Themes

#### **How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?**

#### **Insufficient progress**

Leaders and managers have not ensured that the apprenticeships they offer are meeting the requirements of apprentices. Too many apprentices have a poor learning experience and do not develop substantial new skills, knowledge or behaviours.

Staff do not plan apprentices' programmes well. Too many apprentices are unsure about when they are due to complete their apprenticeship. Leaders do not ensure that trainers plan all elements of apprentices' programmes well enough. Training staff do not plan effectively enough for apprentices to receive their entitlement to off-the-job training, and too many apprentices do not receive their entitlement. This means that, for too many apprentices, the provider is not meeting the principles of an apprenticeship.

Leaders have an overly optimistic view of the quality of their provision. While they identify in their most recent self-assessment report most of the weaknesses in the quality of training, they underestimate the severity of the weaknesses identified during the monitoring visit. They are not aware that they are not consistently meeting the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. As a result, they do not prioritise actions well enough to address the weaknesses that would have the biggest impact on improving the training that apprentices receive.

Leaders have weak relationships with employers. Staff at employers, including line managers, do not participate actively in the planning of apprentices' programmes or in reviewing apprentices' progress. Trainers do not take effective action to overcome employers' lack of participation when visiting apprentices, and insufficient support from employers to their apprentices persists.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that the apprentices they enrol are suitable for an apprenticeship. Too often, apprentices are either existing members of staff or already have the skills to carry out their job role. Consequently, most apprentices do not develop new occupationally specific skills, knowledge and behaviours. Careers advice during apprenticeships is not effective. Too many apprentices are approaching the end of their programme without realistic or clear plans for their next steps. This means that apprentices on fixed-term contracts that only last the length of their apprenticeship are not supported well enough to plan their next steps.

Leaders and managers have been successful in securing contracts that commit them to recruiting a high volume of apprentices. However, leaders do not ensure that all the employers that they work with understand and apply fully the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship.

Trainers have appropriate qualifications for their roles, including assessor qualifications. Most have teaching qualifications, and those that do not are working towards them currently. Leaders have invested significantly in good-quality e-learning materials to support apprentices to work independently. However, too few apprentices have access to these resources or use them to support their learning.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?      Insufficient progress**

Too many apprentices make slow progress towards completing their apprenticeship. Trainers do not ensure that apprentices receive the support and encouragement that they need to make the progress of which they are capable. Apprentices are frustrated that they are not making quick enough progress based on their own expectations. They report concerns that their trainers change frequently. This lack of continuity impedes the progress of apprentices towards completing their apprenticeship within the planned timescale.

Leaders and managers do not take enough action to improve the performance of teaching staff. They have implemented an appropriate quality assurance process that includes observations of training and subsequent action plans to improve trainers' practice. However, observation records focus too much on the actions of trainers and not on the impact of the training on apprentices' learning and progress. Too often, trainers do not improve quickly enough the features of their teaching that observers identify as needing attention. As a result, leaders' actions to improve the quality of provision are not having enough impact on apprentices' progress.

Apprentices do not have milestones set for them as they progress through their programme. As a result, trainers are unable to measure the progress that apprentices are making towards the non-qualification elements of their standards-based apprenticeships, such as attitudes and behaviours. Although trainers determine most apprentices' starting points effectively by using baseline assessments at the beginning of the programme, they do not use this information well enough to plan and deliver learning programmes that meet apprentices' individual needs.

Leaders, managers and trainers do not ensure that apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. Too many apprentices fail to attend training sessions. Apprentices are aware of their entitlement and they attempt to gain their line manager's support to attend. However, too often employers do not permit apprentices to attend training due to high workloads in their operational areas, or they change shift patterns at short notice, which results in apprentices being unable to attend sessions.

Trainers do not provide apprentices with helpful feedback. When assessing apprentices' written work, trainers focus too much on the completion of tasks and not enough on the skills that apprentices are developing. Feedback does not help apprentices to recognise how they can improve their work or identify what skills they need to develop further. As a result, too few apprentices improve their work over time.

Too many trainers do not ensure that training meets the individual needs of apprentices. During their interactions with apprentices, trainers do not challenge apprentices well enough to deepen their understanding of subjects. Too often, apprentices are unable to recall previous learning. Most apprentices believe that the learning activities that they undertake reinforce existing skills and knowledge, and do not enable them to develop new skills or extend their knowledge.

Too few apprentices develop their English and mathematics skills beyond the minimum requirements of their apprenticeship. Trainers quickly identify apprentices who do not already have level 2 qualifications in English or mathematics and ensure that they study the appropriate level of programme to comply with the apprenticeship standards. However, too many apprentices receive poor support from trainers and do not develop the skills that they need for their job roles.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?      Insufficient progress**

Leaders and managers do not comply with their statutory requirements under the 'Prevent' duty. They do not have a risk assessment or action plan that identifies the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism that apprentices may come across.

Leaders and managers do not have safe enough recruitment procedures. They do not hold references for too many of the trainers who they employ to work with apprentices. Leaders apply for references, but if they are not returned, they do not pursue them. In addition, they accept references that are not from the trainer's most recent previous employer. As a result, leaders and managers cannot be sure that their members of staff are safe to work in the sensitive environments of the employers for whom their apprentices work.

The designated safeguarding officer and deputy safeguarding officer have undertaken appropriate training to enable them to carry out their roles. All members of staff undertake appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty as part of their induction with the company.

Leaders and managers use safeguarding policies and follow procedures that are fit for purpose and cover most of the main priorities in relation to safeguarding. They frequently produce and circulate useful information to trainers and apprentices through a series of bulletins and themed emails. Recent examples include highlighting concerns about the influence of drill music in inner-city locations and the growing risk of county lines activity. However, leaders and managers do not evaluate well enough the impact of these updates on apprentices' understanding.

Most apprentices have a good understanding of safeguarding. They know who to contact should they have any concerns. Where it is an essential part of their job, apprentices have a good understanding of the risk of extremism. For example, they know the signs of extremism to look for when handling external mail. However, too few apprentices understand well enough the risks of radicalisation and extremism in their everyday lives.

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