

Premier Nursing Agency Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2495004
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Inspection date(s):	23–24 October 2018
Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Lancaster House Fountain Court Millennium Business Park NG19 7DW

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 Nursing Agency Limited was established in 2016 as a privately owned independent learning provider. It began delivering vocational training by means of levy-funded apprenticeships in August 2017. This levy-funded provision was in scope for the monitoring visit.

Premier Nursing Agency Limited has 46 enrolled standards-based apprentices of whom 31 are intermediate care apprentices; the rest are advanced adult care apprentices. All apprentices are employed as domiciliary care workers within service users' homes. The standards-based apprenticeships are funded through the employer levy. In addition, Premier Nursing Agency has six business administration framework-based advanced apprentices. All these apprentices work at the agency's main office.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

Senior managers have been too slow in ensuring that the training entitlements for apprentices are met. The amount of training apprentices receive is too low. Apprentices complete the very large majority of the programme in their own time. Managers have suspended a significant proportion of apprenticeships as apprentices cannot find the time to undertake their studies. Care apprentices attend an appropriate range of mandatory off-the-job training needed for their work role. However, managers do not link this training to other apprenticeship training and assessment. The planning of on-the-job training for all apprentices is very weak. Apprenticeship programmes mainly concentrate on assessing, rather than developing, apprentices' vocational competence.

Senior managers do not utilise a wide enough range of data and targets to aid the monitoring of the performance of staff and apprentices. Managers have not exploited fully the existing information to identify trends for evaluation and decision-making purposes.

Senior leaders are committed to raising professional competence in the care sector. In response, they have established apprenticeship programmes with relevant career progression pathways. Managers recruit apprentices who are well motivated to participate in their programmes. Senior leaders have increased the size of the apprenticeship provision slowly as they have tried to develop an effective delivery capacity. However, the senior management team has been too slow in realising an effective strategy in pursuit of this aim. Corrective actions to solve the weaknesses found by inspectors during the monitoring visit are at very early stages. As a result, it is too soon to judge their impact.

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**

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes. Care apprentices receive no formal off-the-job training other than the mandatory training needed to work in the sector. Instead, assessors meet with apprentices once a month to help them gather the evidence needed to complete their apprenticeship. In addition, assessors review apprentices' targets, set assignments, discuss progress and provide help with assignment work. Meetings with assessors take place outside of apprentices' contracted working hours. These arrangements impede care apprentices' progress and, for many, lead to postponements in training or extension to their programmes' duration.

Too often, care apprentices are not developing new skills, knowledge and behaviours. Most apprentices have already worked in the care sector for a significant time prior to programme enrolment. Consequently, they already have many of the skills, knowledge and behaviours essential for care work. For many apprentices, the programme only consolidates existing vocational competence. Where new skills, knowledge and behaviours are developed, these improve apprentices' effectiveness within their work role. For example, care apprentices can explain how to apply a range of communication strategies to interact successfully with service users with dementia.

Business administration apprentices do not receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. Where work demands allow, apprentices sometimes secure study time during the working week. This is not part of a planned process of on- and off-the-job training designed to support apprentices' learning. However, because of their personal motivation and commitment, all but one of the apprentices are making good progress. For example, apprentices working as office administrators increase their effectiveness within the workplace. They gain confidence in dealing with a wide range of clients on the telephone. Apprentices competently design and use complex spreadsheets and can effectively prioritise demanding workloads.

Managers have recently introduced an electronic portfolio for apprentices to record progress, set targets and submit assignments. Assessors make relevant use of this resource to help apprentices understand how much progress they have made. Few apprentices have the confidence or ability to submit assignments or to monitor their own progress using this resource.

Managers have closely followed the emerging requirements for apprentices' end-point assessments and introduced suitable arrangements for their delivery. This has included raising assessors' knowledge and professional capability in preparing apprentices for the assessment. Managers rightly continue to modify processes and procedures as the requirements of the end-point assessment become public. Business administration apprentices have a good understanding of the assessment strategy for their apprenticeship framework. However, care apprentices' awareness of how they will be assessed is usually vague. As a result, few are well prepared for the end-point assessment.

Leaders and senior managers have yet to implement comprehensive quality assurance arrangements for the provision. Consequently, they do not have an adequately informed view of the provision's quality that allows for effective improvement. Managers do not routinely undertake a quality evaluation of the very limited off-the-job training experienced by apprentices. Internal quality auditing suitably contributes to the review and improvement of assessment practice.

Managers' recording and monitoring of apprentices' participation in apprenticeship training is insufficiently effective. Tracking of apprentices' development of new skills, knowledge and behaviours is weak. Consequently, managers are not able to effectively check and address rapidly enough any shortfalls in apprentices' development.

Senior managers have established an English and mathematics strategy that supports apprentices' success. For example, apprentices recruited with significant English and mathematics skills development needs receive more intense help from an external specialist-training provider. Examination pass rates at first sitting are high. However, assessors do not raise or provide accreditation opportunities for apprentices' English and mathematics skills levels beyond those required to complete the apprenticeship.

Assessors mark apprentices' work accurately and promptly return it to them. However, they do not provide adequate verbal or written feedback on apprentices' work to help them improve. Instead, assessors mark work and inform apprentices whether they have met the criteria or need to undertake additional work to achieve. As a result, apprentices aim to pass assignments rather than develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours expected of standards-based apprenticeship training.

Assessors adequately utilise information on apprentices' previous academic achievements and aptitudes to select the most appropriate programme and level. Apprentices receive detailed information about the structure and content of the

apprenticeship programme from assessors. Assessors supplement this with appropriately timed and relevant careers information, advice and guidance. This ensures that apprentices have a good awareness of how their apprenticeship can contribute to their future career prospects.

Assessors have appropriate qualifications and experience for the vocational areas in which they work. All assessors take part in relevant training and development so that they can effectively carry out their role.

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

The senior management team have implemented and use effective policies and procedures to protect both apprentices and staff. Prior to beginning their employment, all staff are subject to appropriate vetting, including an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check.

A suitably trained designated safeguarding officer effectively promotes and monitors all staff's adherence to relevant safeguarding practices. Leaders and managers ensure that staff attend compulsory and refresher training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Consequently, they have an adequate or better appreciation of their role in ensuring apprentices' and work colleagues' welfare.

Apprentices can effectively use their knowledge to illustrate their response to dangers they may encounter in their work or personal lives. They understand how to report safeguarding concerns and are confident that managers will address them in a suitably rapid and confidential manner. The procedure for reporting concerns is well established and fit for purpose. All care apprentices have a fittingly high appreciation of their safeguarding responsibilities as it applies to their service users.

Assessors do not always effectively enhance apprentices' understanding of fundamental British values and the 'Prevent' duty. Consequently, a minority of apprentices have failed to develop sufficient awareness of the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism.

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