

Inspection of Agincare Group Limited, trading as Training Now

Inspection dates:

13 to 15 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Training Now is the training arm of Agincare Group Ltd. Agincare Group is a large, national, private company operating in the health and care sectors. Training Now predominantly provides training for apprentices working for Agincare Group companies.

All but three of the current apprentices are adults. Most are female and work in the south of England. The apprentices work in live-in care, supported living, care homes or domiciliary care environments.

At the time of inspection, there were 270 apprentices. The largest number, 111, were on the level 3 lead adult care worker apprenticeship and 66 were on the level 2 adult care worker programme. Around 40 apprentices were on either a level 4 or 5 care programme. Thirty apprentices were following either a level 3 business administrator or team leader programme.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Most level 2 and level 3 apprentices enjoy studying their apprenticeship. They can identify clearly how it is helping them develop and apply new professional and personal skills, knowledge and behaviours. In turn, these enable them to improve their care and support for clients. Apprentices on the higher-level programmes are similarly positive about the impact of their apprenticeship. However, many of these struggle to balance their normal workloads with the additional demands of studying and are at risk of falling behind.

Apprentices gain and put into practice a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their clients safe. Apprentices know how to identify signs that might indicate that their clients' safety or well-being are being compromised, for example if a vulnerable client is being groomed. Apprentices are confident about initiating the correct actions to protect their clients.

Most apprentices learn and successfully apply the skills and behaviours required to carry out their care worker roles effectively, reliably and with empathy. Learning such aspects thoroughly is a core and well-taught component of each apprentice's programme. Most demonstrate a very good understanding of the attributes of care: compassion, courage, communication, competence and commitment.

Most teaching and learning coaches (TALCs) liaise closely and regularly with their apprentices to plan programmes of learning. However, this process does not always include input from employers. Consequently, the planning of learning is not consistently well-rounded or facilitated in practice. Most apprentices have sufficient time to undertake the training they are entitled to during working hours.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders in the Agincare Group have focused strongly and successfully on developing and implementing effective apprenticeship curriculums from levels 2 to 5 in the health and care sector. The Training Now board has taken an active role in promoting this process, appointing new directors and senior managers with appropriate skills and care sector expertise. As a result, governance has been, and continues to be, particularly effective.

Training Now's largely new management team has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The team is taking appropriate action to build on strengths and eliminate weaknesses. This process is ongoing, but much has been achieved in a relatively short period of time.

For example, the level 2 and 3 adult care curriculums have been designed to be flexible. They allow apprentices to develop knowledge and skills appropriate to their specific care setting. This means that apprentices working with the elderly may also complete units on dementia, end of life care or managing Parkinson's disease. The level 4 lead practitioner in the adult care programme provides an effective bridge

between the level 3 and 5 apprenticeships. The programme provides a structured route for apprentices to develop the substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to secure leadership roles in the care sector.

All the curriculums are sequenced logically to build apprentices' knowledge and skills progressively. At the beginning of the programme, all apprentices learn about safeguarding and how to communicate with clients appropriately. These two key elements underpin each apprentice's ability to function effectively in their work roles. Consequently, apprentices are able to develop their resilience, confidence and competence in exercising their duty of care.

However, while leaders' and managers' curriculum planning has been successful, elements of implementation are still work in progress. For example, the small TALC team is professionally and appropriately experienced, but a minority of team members are not skilled enough in teaching. Nonetheless, most use their care sector expertise and knowledge well during one-to-one online training sessions with apprentices to provide context and real-world examples. Most use a wide range of appropriate assessment methods to check apprentices' understanding of key concepts during teaching sessions. Most also use reflection and questioning well to confirm the skills and behaviours that apprentices have gained in the course of a training session and their programme so far.

Managers have produced new, comprehensive slide-based training materials in order to provide consistency in curriculum content, TALCs' planning and schemes of work. Nonetheless, these resources are not being used well by TALCs because the slides are often too dense in content and use terminologies unfamiliar to most apprentices. A minority of TALCs resort to reading out slides verbatim rather than using the text as a prompt for rich discussion and learning. TALCs are not always providing apprentices on levels 4 and 5 programmes with training at the level expected.

Apprentices' written work is generally of a standard appropriate to the level of the qualification. Levels 4 and 5 apprentices' work shows good evidence of how they apply their new practical skills. For example, they use their understanding of the Mental Capacity Act to develop more effective care plans. Their understanding of the Equality Act has influenced their interview and recruitment practices.

All TALCs are diligent in their support for apprentices. TALCs have worked hard to alleviate the impact of the pandemic on apprentices, such as increased pressures of work caused by the high turnover of staff in the care sector. During lockdowns, TALCs supported clients to use the internet to maintain contact with families, access church services and attend funeral services. TALCs have successfully motivated many apprentices to engage or re-engage in their learning. TALCs schedule online sessions considerately to meet apprentices' needs, such as night-shift working. TALCs are successfully motivating many apprentices to aim for high levels of achievement. Around three quarters of apprentices have gained merit or distinction grades during the past year.

Managers have introduced effective strategies to identify and support apprentices' career aspirations at the start of their programmes, and follow this through the apprenticeship. Higher-level apprentices receive ongoing useful advice and guidance as their career progresses, such as how best to move on from a senior team leader role to registered manager of a care home.

Employers value the way that the current TALC team brings wider and more relevant professional experience of the care sector to their roles than was previously the case. Employers comment positively that TALCs are starting to run successful group face-to-face sessions at apprentices' workplaces.

Senior Training Now leaders have focused strongly on introducing systematic quality improvement arrangements. These are informed particularly well by managers' monthly one-to-one meeting with TALCs. Managers and TALCs monitor the progress of each apprentice thoroughly. Together, they plan effective interventions to stop apprentices falling behind in their studies.

Leaders, managers and TALCs have been working together effectively to help a large backlog of apprentices who were well past their original completion dates to complete their qualification. The backlog was caused partly by interruptions to learning as a result of COVID-19. However, while the number of apprentices past their end dates has reduced considerably, the backlog has not been eliminated. Furthermore, too many of these apprentices have not completed their programmes due to ongoing delays in completing their functional skills qualifications.

At the start of their programmes, apprentices receive useful training in equality and diversity, fundamental British values, safeguarding and how to avoid the risks of radicalisation. This has limited long-term impact because the themes are either not revisited routinely or are in insufficient depth throughout apprentices' programmes. As a result, apprentices' understanding of these themes is too often cursory.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place to support apprentices who are adults and those under 18 years of age. Five staff are trained designated safeguarding leaders. They identify learners who may need early help, who are at risk of harm or who may have been harmed. They ensure that the most appropriate action, support or referral is made. Apprentices know whom to contact if they feel unsafe at work or during training.

Managers ensure that safe recruitment processes are followed. Leaders keep board members up to date with safeguarding matters. Board members have sufficient safeguarding expertise to hold leaders to account.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that the planning of each apprentice's on- and off-the-job training routinely involves each employer so that all apprentices experience a fully coordinated, effective and comprehensive programme of training.
- Leaders should provide all TALCs with appropriate professional training which improves their teaching skills to a level which provides apprentices with consistently rich and varied training.
- Leaders should ensure apprentices' timely completion of their functional skills qualifications so they can complete their apprenticeship.
- Leaders should ensure that apprentices understand equality and diversity, fundamental British values and safeguarding themes in sufficient depth so that they appreciate how these aspects are integral to their daily lives and work.

Provider details

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Website	www.training-now.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Tara Roudiani (Managing Director)
Provider type	Independent training provider
Date of previous inspection	14 to 17 January 2020
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director of Training Now, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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