

Inspection of Barchester Healthcare Limited

Inspection dates:

22–24 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Barchester Healthcare (Barchester) is an independent health care company. It provides nursing and residential care for older people in care homes, and for adults with specialist healthcare needs. Barchester supports approximately 11,000 people in over 200 care homes and hospitals across the country. Previously, Barchester delivered apprenticeship frameworks in health and social care, hospitality and catering, and business administration at levels 2 and 3. In 2018/19 they engaged external providers to deliver these programmes on their behalf. Barchester now only delivers the level 5 care leadership apprenticeship framework. At the time of the inspection, there were 26 apprentices on this programme. All were employees before becoming apprentices.

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

Apprentices are keen to move forward in their careers. They learn the knowledge and skills to support their recent appointments as deputy or general care home managers, or to improve as managers. They are ambitious and keen to provide a quality service for those who are in their care. Many apprentices have been promoted soon after starting their apprenticeship programme.

Apprentices value the support they receive from their assessors. Assessors give apprentices the right level of help, for example to make them feel more assured when they need to make difficult decisions. They are available throughout the day for phone calls, visits and emails so that apprentices can check whether what they are doing is the right thing.

Managers have created a helpful online application to support apprentices with their personal welfare. It informs apprentices of important aspects of life, such as healthy lifestyles and how to apply for counselling should they need it. Apprentices can feedback on how their day has been and read about career opportunities within Barchester. Apprentices feel well supported and safe in their job roles.

Apprentices work in very demanding roles, and we found that, too often, they struggled to complete their research and assignment work in their protected study time. Their programme does not link well enough all the elements of their work, training and off-the-job activities. As a result, too many apprentices make slow progress towards achieving their framework within the planned time.

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

Leaders have a clear strategic intention for why they need to train their managers in care leadership. They want to improve the skills of their staff and help them to become effective leaders in running their care homes. The apprenticeship complements the existing leadership programme.

Leaders do not plan the curriculum for apprentices in a logical way. Staff do not link apprentices' workplace learning with off-the-job training sessions. Management workshops for apprentices happen in isolation from apprentices' learning in the workplace. As a result, apprentices do not reflect on what they have learned in these sessions. Nor do they build effectively on their knowledge and skills.

Staff do not assess well apprentices' gaps in their knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, the information apprentices give staff on what they already know and can do at the start of the programme is not used to plan their learning. As a result, apprentices' training plans do not support them to develop the specific individual skills they need to improve, such as advanced analytical skills that help apprentices identify trends in operational management and staff deployment.

Staff are knowledgeable about, and experienced in, the care industry. They give

apprentices a deep insight into care management. Apprentices remember and recall these discussions accurately. As a result, they use the right management style in the right situation. The work-based assignments apprentices complete build on their management knowledge. For example, they learn how to be resilient in challenging situations.

Apprentices have positive attitudes to their learning and their job roles. They attend their one-to-one sessions with their assessor on time and keep in frequent contact with their assessor. During these sessions they receive helpful feedback on their work. They reflect on how their management practice has improved. Apprentices' line managers told us how they have seen apprentices grow in confidence in their leadership.

Apprentices use what they learn about diversity effectively in their work. For example, they make provision for the different needs of their residents when planning their care. Apprentices create safe and supportive environments for their residents and their staff. They behave in a way that promotes the organisation's values very well. For example, they behave with integrity, act responsibly and show respect for others.

Leaders, managers and those responsible for governance do not have a good enough understanding of the areas requiring improvement in the quality of education. The quality assurance activities carried out by managers do not focus on improving the overall experience of apprentices. Managers do not have robust improvement plans in place to take appropriate action. They do recognise that too many apprentices left their programme early last year due to management changes.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that all apprentices are able to access all their protected time off for study. Too often, apprentices struggle to take this time due to the demands of their job roles. Leaders have not made sure apprentices' line managers put in place adequate cover for apprentices to complete their assignments and research during their work time.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put in place appropriate policies and procedures for an employer-provider. All apprentices are over the age of 18 and in managerial positions within the company. Apprentices complete relevant safeguarding training, and training that informs them how to recognise the signs of radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices have a good understanding of these issues. They know how to keep themselves, their staff and their residents safe.

A senior leader, who has relevant experience and qualifications, has overall responsibility for safeguarding.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that apprentices benefit from a coherent and logical programme. Staff should review all the off-the-job training activities, identify what specific knowledge, skills and behaviours apprentices will gain by completing these and sequence activities to enable apprentices to make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Staff must use the information they collect about what apprentices already know and can do at the start of the programme to identify their knowledge and skills gaps. They should then make sure these gaps are resolved in apprentices' individual programmes.
- Leaders must work with apprentices and their line managers to ensure that they receive adequate study time at work.
- Leaders need to improve how they assure the quality of the apprenticeship programmes. They should give those staff responsible for governance frequent updates on the progress made against their actions.

Provider details

Unique reference number	55614
Address	3rd Floor The Aspect 12 Finsbury Square London EC2A 1AS
Contact number	0207 3494423
Website	www.barchester.com
Principal/CEO	Gareth Williams
Provider type	Employer
Date of previous inspection	10 August 2016
Main subcontractors	n/a

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of contracts and management information, 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 observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

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