

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Mary Hare Services Ltd
Programme name	Mary Hare Certificate in Hearing Aid Audiology
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Hearing aid dispenser
Date of visit	25 – 26 July 2017

Contents

Executive summary	2
Introduction.....	3
Visit details	3
Sources of evidence	4
Recommended outcome	5
Conditions.....	6
Recommendations.....	11

Executive summary

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health and care professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. We are a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. We currently regulate 16 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'hearing aid dispenser' must be registered with us. The HCPC keep a register of health and care professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

The visitors' report which follows outlines the recommended outcome made by the visitors on the ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 21 September 2017. At the Committee meeting on 23 November 2017, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and that the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures that those who complete it meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Introduction

The HCPC visited the programme at the education provider to consider major changes proposed to the hearing aid dispenser provision. A major change was submitted by the education provider for their previously approved Higher National Diploma hearing aid audiology, in order for the HCPC to assess how their provision meet the standards of education and training (SETs).

The major change affected the following standards - the level of qualification for entry to the Register, programme admissions, programme management and resources, curriculum, practice placements and assessment. The education provider intends to self-validate their programme in the 2016-17 academic year, and introduce their own certificate in hearing aid audiology. The HCPC decided that due to these significant changes to the provision, the most appropriate process to assess the changes was through an approval visit and that the certificate would be assessed as a new programme. With the changes in validating body and qualification it was vital for the HCPC to visit the education provider to assess whether the programme meets the standards of education and training and ensure that those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for hearing aid dispensers.

This visit was an HCPC only visit. The education provider views this as a continuation and therefore did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Richard Sykes (Hearing aid dispenser) Timothy Pringle (Hearing aid dispenser) Susanne Roff (Lay visitor)
HCPC executive officer	Jasmine Pokuaa Oduro-Bonsrah
Proposed student numbers	Twelve per cohort, one cohort per year
First approved intake	September 2016
Chair	Rory Kewney (Independent chair – Hearing aid dispenser)
Secretary	Penny Viney (Mary Hare) Sarah McDevitt (Mary Hare)

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HCPC reviewed the documentation detailed below, sent by the education provider:

	Yes	No	N/A
Programme specification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Descriptions of the modules	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice placement handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External examiners' reports from the last two years	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HCPC did not review external examiners' reports from two year ago prior to the visit as the programme is new. The HCPC did however receive the external examiners reports for the previously approved Higher Nation Diploma in Hearing Aid Audiology.

During the visit the HCPC saw the following groups or facilities:

	Yes	No	N/A
Senior managers of the education provider with responsibility for resources for the programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placements providers and educators / mentors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service users and carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for approval the visitors must be satisfied that the programme meets all of the standards of education and training (SETs) and that those who complete the programme meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for the relevant part of the Register.

The visitors agreed to recommend to the Education and Training Committee that a number of conditions are set on the programme, all of which must be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 50 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining eight SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be approved. Conditions are set when certain standards of education and training have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the standard being met.

The visitors have also made a number of recommendations for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme can be approved. Recommendations are made to encourage further enhancements to the programme, normally when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

Conditions

3.1 The programme must have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.

Condition: The education provider must submit evidence to demonstrate that the programme has a secure place in the overall business plan, in particular evidence to demonstrate what the proposed future plans are for the programme.

Reason: In the documentation provided prior to the visit the education provider submitted a summary of changes to the programme, which included the development of the Mary Hare Certificate in Hearing Aid Audiology. The programme will no longer have an external validating body from the 2016-17 academic year, and will now be delivered and quality assured by Mary Hare Services Ltd (formerly Mary Hare – Mary Hare Services Ltd is the commercial branch of Mary Hare). From the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors could not determine whether the programme has a secure place in the education provider's business plan. From discussions with the senior team, the visitors were informed that the education provider was seeking approval retrospectively for the Mary hare certificate in Hearing Aid Audiology programme from the 2016-17 academic year. The senior team also mentioned that they would no longer be recruiting onto this two year programme. The visitors however received contradicting information regarding the future recruitment onto the programme. In the programme team meeting it was also expressed that they would not be recruiting for the 2017-18 academic year as they did not want to recruit any further without programme approval. However, the programme team informed the visitors that they would want to recruit students in the years following (2018-19) and that the 2017-18 year is the only year in which they would not recruit. The visitors did not also receive any evidence to demonstrate how the programme is secure in the education provider's business plan. They also did not see any evidence to demonstrate whether this programme will be supported in the future by the education provider. The education provider will therefore need to submit evidence to demonstrate that the programme has a secure place in the education provider's business plan. The visitors will also need to see evidence which articulates what the future plans for this programme is and provide evidence to demonstrate how it fits in the business plan moving forward.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence which defines the roles and responsibilities of members of staff who hold quality assurance roles, and also demonstrate how they contribute to the effective management of this programme.

Reason: In the student handbook the education provider has highlighted the roles and responsibilities of the student, course leader, personal tutor, workplace mentor and the unit leader. In the documentation, the education provider also highlighted the roles and responsibilities of the internal moderator, quality nominee, placement verifier and external assessor. From a review of the documentation and discussions at the visit, the visitors learnt that the 'external assessor' is to hold a similar role as the previous validating body. At the visit, the external assessor highlighted what she believed her role would entail and explained that the responsibilities had not been finalised. The visitors also learnt that the responsibilities of the placement verifier had also not been finalised. The visitors were therefore unsure about what the roles and responsibilities of the placement verifier and external assessor will be, and were also unsure about how

they will contribute to the effective management of the programme. The education provider therefore must provide evidence to demonstrate what the roles and responsibilities are for the external assessor and placement verifier, in order for the visitors to determine if the programme is effectively managed. The education provider will also need to demonstrate how the placement verifier and the external assessor fits in to management of this programme and how this is appropriate to effectively manage the programme.

3.17 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that service users and carers are adequately and appropriately prepared before they are involved in the programme.

Reason: From the documentation and discussions at the visit, the visitors learnt that service users and carers are involved in the programme through 'Real patient days'. These events involve a real life situation where service users and carers act as 'real patients' whilst the students assess them under exam conditions. The visitors also learnt from discussions with the service user and carer group that they are briefed about what to expect in these sessions and given feedback following these sessions. However, the visitors found that the service users and carers did not have a full understanding of what they were involved in. In the service user and carer meeting the visitors were told that although service users and carers participate as 'models' in these real patient day events, and were prepared to be involved in the sessions, they did not understand how their participation contributed to the programme. The service users and carers also did not have knowledge about what the programme is for. For example, they asked the visitors to explain what the programme was, the length of the programme, and the purpose of the programme. The visitors therefore noted that the service users and carers are not adequately and appropriately prepared before they are involved in the programme. The education provider must therefore submit evidence to demonstrate how they will ensure that service users and carers are adequately and appropriately prepared before they are involved in the programme.

5.3 The practice placement settings must provide a safe and supportive environment.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure practice placement settings provide a safe and supportive environment.

Reason: From a review of the documentation and discussions at the visit, the visitors were aware that students are employed as hearing aid audiology trainees, and that their placements will be at their employer. During discussions with the practice placement team, the visitors were informed that the education provider visits the head office of some of the employers. However, the visitors were unclear of the nature of these visits, or whether they include an audit of the placement areas. During the programme team meeting the visitors were told that the education provider expects that these employment areas will have policies and procedures in place regarding health and safety and risk assessments, as students are already employed in these areas. However, from the evidence provided, the visitors could not determine how the education provider ensures that the practice placement settings provide a safe and supportive environment for all students. The education provider must therefore provide

further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure practice placement setting provide a safe and supportive environment for the students on this programme.

5.4 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate that there is a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Reason: To evidence this standard the visitors were directed to the student handbook and training day agenda for placement mentors. In this documentation the visitors could not see any evidence of how practice placements are approved and monitored. During discussions with the practice placement team the visitors were informed that the education provider visits the head office of some of the employers. However, the visitors were unclear of the nature of these visits, or whether they include an audit of the placement areas. During the programme team meeting the visitors were told that the education provider expects that these employment areas will have policies and procedures in place to manage placement quality, and therefore the education provider did not approve and monitor these placement areas. From the evidence provided, the visitors were unclear of the overall process for the approval and on-going monitoring of placements, and how information gathered from placement providers at approval, or during a placement experience, is considered and acted upon by the education provider. The education provider must therefore demonstrate how they maintain and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

5.5 The placement providers must have equality and diversity policies in relation to students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of how they ensure there are equality and diversity policies in relation to students within practice placement setting, with an indication these will be implemented and monitored.

Reason: To evidence this standard the visitors were directed to the student handbook and training day agenda for placement mentors. In this documentation the visitors could not see any evidence of how practice placements are approved and monitored. During discussions with the practice placement team the visitors were informed that the education provider visits the head office of some of the employers. However, the visitors were unclear of the nature of these visits, or whether they include an audit of the placement areas. During the programme team meeting the visitors were told that the education provider expects that these employment areas will have equality and diversity policies and procedures in place. Furthermore, the placement providers told the visitors that they have equality and diversity policies and procedures in place as part of their human resources requirements. However, from the information provided and discussions, the visitors did not know how the education provider ensures that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to students within the practice placement setting, or how these will be implemented and monitored. Therefore, the education provider must provide further evidence that demonstrates how they ensure there are equality and diversity policies in relation to students within the practice placement setting, with an indication of how these policies will be implemented and monitored.

5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:

- **the learning outcomes to be achieved;**
- **the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;**
- **expectations of professional conduct;**
- **the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and**
- **communication and lines of responsibility.**

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure all practice placement educators are fully prepared for placement before they start mentoring students.

Reason: To evidence this standard the visitors were directed to the student handbook and the Practice Placement Mentor Handbook and Training day agenda. In the documentation and from discussions with the programme team and the practice placement providers, the visitors learnt that the education provider offers training to practice placement educators. This training is intended to prepare them for supervising and mentoring students on this programme. The visitors noted that the content and materials used to train the practice educators were appropriate to equip them with the tools to supervise students. However, the visitors were informed at the visit that the training session for practice educators takes place six weeks after students start on their placement. The visitors were therefore unclear about what preparation is given to the practice educators before the students start on placement. The visitors were particularly unsure about how the placement providers are informed about particular rules pertaining to students regarding their study time. For example, the visitors learnt from discussions at the visit with the programme team, placement providers and students that some students are not expected to work in their placement areas in the first six weeks of the programme and are expected to focus solely on their theory based work. The visitors noted that there is no consistent communication between the different placement educators and students in delivering this message that students are supposed to be focusing on their academic work in the first six weeks of their study. The visitors were therefore unclear how the education provider ensures that they clearly communicate the responsibilities of the practice placement educators before students start their placement, so that they are fully prepared to take on their duties of supervision and mentoring. The education provider must therefore provide evidence to demonstrate how they ensure that all practice placement educators are fully prepared for placements before they supervise and mentor students.

6.9 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that the programme documentation clearly articulates that aegrotat awards do not confer eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register.

Reason: To evidence that this standard is met by the programme the visitors were directed to the student handbook. However, the visitors could not see in the programme documentation where it clearly states that aegrotat awards do not confer eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register. The visitors were also unclear how the education provider

ensures that students are aware that this is the case. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the assessment regulations clearly specify that aegrotat award do not provide eligibility for admission to the HCPC Register.

Recommendations

2.1 The admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the admissions material to provide more clarity on who will pay for the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

Reason: From the documentation provided and discussions at the visit the visitors learnt that students are not expected to pay for their criminal convictions checks and were therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, the visitors were told in the meeting with the students that there was some confusion regarding who pays for their DBS checks. Some students explained that they thought it was their responsibility to pay for the DBS whilst other students mentioned that their employers paid for the DBS. In discussions with the programme team the visitors were told that the employers are supposed to pay for the DBS and not the students. The education provider should therefore consider revisiting their admissions material to provide more clarity on whose responsibility it is to pay for the DBS.

3.17 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the current level of service user and carer involvement for the programme.

Reason: From the documentation and discussions with the programme team and service user and carer group, it was clear that there is currently service user and carer involvement in the programme and appropriate support is in place for these members. However, the visitors noted that there were low levels of service users and carer involvement in the programme. Currently, the way in which service users and carers are involved in the programme is by having 'Real patient days'. These events involve a real life situation of service users and carers acting as 'real patients' whilst the students assess them under exam conditions. Whilst the visitors were satisfied that service users and carers are involved and supported throughout the sessions they partake in, they considered that the current level of involvement in the overall programme poses a risk to continued involvement for the programme. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team considers reviewing the current level of service user and carer involvement for the programme, and how this involvement can be enhanced to ensure that this does not fall below a threshold level.

Richard Sykes
Timothy Pringle
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