
Performance review process report

Hidden Hearing Limited, 2021-22

Executive summary

This is a report of the process to review the performance of Hidden Hearing Limited. This report captures the process we have undertaken to consider the performance of the institution in delivering HCPC-approved programmes. This enables us to make risk-based decisions about how to engage with this provider in the future, and to consider if there is any impact on our standards being met.

We have:

- Reviewed the institution's portfolio submission against our institution level standards and found our standards are met in this area following exploration of key themes through quality activities
- Undertook quality activities to arrive at our judgement on performance, including when the institution should next be reviewed
- Recommended when the institution should next be reviewed

Through this assessment, we have noted:

- The areas we explored focused on:
 - The most recent cohort was of 20 learners compared to our recorded numbers of 40. Learner numbers did not negatively impact the sustainability of the programme.
 - Relationships were built with organisations such as care homes and health centres. The programme had undertaken work to broaden learners' opportunities to learn with and from other professions.
 - The education provider has progressed with enhanced service user engagement in the programme.
 - The education provider produced a questionnaire based on the NSS (National Student Survey). They established steps to review the results and progress with actions.
 - The following are areas of best practice:
 - Learners usually complete their practice education at either a Hidden Hearing branch or in a mobile domiciliary structure. The education provider evaluated the impact of assigning a learner to a clinic location where they are required to stay in a hotel overnight when in practice or, where this is a commute of more than 90 minutes. This consideration of learner's circumstances is seen as an enhancement.
 - The provider should next engage with monitoring in two years, the 2024-25 academic year, because:
 - The visitors are recommending four areas are referred to the next performance review process.
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- The visitors recognised the education provider had provided internally sourced data. We understood the data was not externally verified. Where data has not been externally verified, we need to understand risks by engaging with the education provider on a frequent basis, a maximum of once every two years.

Previous consideration Not applicable. This performance review was not referred from another process.

- Decision** The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide:
- when the education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be
 - whether issues identified for referral through this review should be reviewed, and if so how

- Next steps** Outline next steps / future case work with the provider:
- Subject to the Panel's decision, the provider's next performance review will be in the 2024-25 academic year
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Section 1: About this assessment

About us

We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), a regulator set up to protect the public. We set standards for education and training, professional knowledge and skills, conduct, performance and ethics; keep a register of professionals who meet those standards; approve programmes which professionals must complete before they can register with us; and take action when professionals on our Register do not meet our standards.

This is a report on the performance review process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the institution and practice areas(s) detailed in this report continue to meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the institution and programme(s) ongoing approval.

Our standards

We approve education providers and programmes that meet our education standards. Individuals who complete approved programmes will meet proficiency standards, which set out what a registrant should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their education and training. The education standards are outcome focused, enabling education providers to deliver programmes in different ways, as long as individuals who complete the programme meet the relevant proficiency standards.

Our regulatory approach

We are flexible, intelligent and data-led in our quality assurance of programme clusters and programmes. Through our processes, we:

- enable bespoke, proportionate and effective regulatory engagement with education providers;
- use data and intelligence to enable effective risk-based decision making; and
- engage at the organisation, profession and programme levels to enhance our ability to assess the impact of risks and issues on HCPC standards.

Providers and programmes are [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to ongoing monitoring. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

The performance review process

Once a programme institution is approved, we will take assurance it continues to meet standards through:

- regular assessment of key data points, supplied by the education provider and external organisations; and

- assessment of a self-reflective portfolio and evidence, supplied on a cyclical basis

Through monitoring, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess how an education provider is performing based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. We take this assurance at the provider level wherever possible, and will delve into programme / profession level detail where we need to.

This report focuses on the assessment of the self-reflective portfolio and evidence.

Thematic areas reviewed

We normally focus on the following areas:

- Institution self-reflection, including resourcing, partnerships, quality, the input of others, and equality and diversity
- Thematic reflection, focusing on timely developments within the education sector
- Provider reflection on the assessment of other sector bodies, including professional bodies and systems regulators
- Provider reflection on developments linked to specific professions
- Stakeholder feedback and actions

How we make our decisions

We make independent evidence based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint [partner visitors](#) to design quality assurance assessments, and assess evidence and information relevant to the assessment. Visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make the decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of programmes. In order to do this, they consider recommendations detailed in process reports, and any observations from education providers (if submitted). The Committee takes decisions through different levels depending on the routines and impact of the decision, and where appropriate meets in public. Their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

The assessment panel for this review

We appointed the following panel members to support a review of this education provider:

Robert MacKinnon	Lead visitor, Hearing Aid Dispenser
Amy Taylor	Lead visitor, Radiographer, Therapeutic Radiographer
Mohammed Jeewa	Service User Expert Advisor
John Archibald	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: About the education provider

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers one HCPC-approved programme for the hearing aid dispenser profession. It is a private provider and has been running this HCPC approved programme since 2013.

The duration of the programme is 60 weeks and is work-based. It prepares learners for their Hearing Aid Dispenser roles within Hidden Hearing, once registered. All learners are full-time employees of Hidden Hearing on joining the programme. Practice-based learning is located within a Hidden Hearing branch. Practice educators are all Hearing Aid Dispensers employed by Hidden Hearing within the same management structure as learners. The programme start dates do not follow an academic calendar or year.

The last annual monitoring was 2019-20.

They were involved in the quality assurance model pilot and were included in our performance review process in 2021. There were no referrals to another process and ETP decided the education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in two years, the 2022-23 academic year.

This recommendation was made as it gave the education provider a sufficient interval in which to follow through the programme and staff development intentions outlined through the quality activity, and for there to have been a sufficient period to have integrated into the programme. It also enabled them to have established ongoing data reporting to the HCPC, if they wished to do so.

The actions which have come out of those intentions have been incorporated into the record of the work the education provider has done in the review period in the quality themes and findings sections. A commentary regarding programme data can also be found within the findings section.

Practice areas delivered by the education provider

The provider is approved to deliver training in the following professional areas. A detailed list of approved programme awards can be found in [Appendix 1](#) of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Hearing Aid Dispenser	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2013

Institution performance data

Data is embedded into how we understand performance and risk. We capture data points in relation to provider performance, from a range of sources. We compare provider data points to benchmarks, and use this information to inform our risk based decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of institutions and programmes¹.

Data Point	Bench-mark	Value	Date of data point	Commentary
Numbers of learners	40	20	2021 / 22	<p>The benchmark figure is data we have captured from previous interactions with the education provider, such as through initial programme approval, and / or through previous performance review assessments. Resources available for the benchmark number of learners was assessed and accepted through these processes. The value figure was presented by the education provider through this submission.</p> <p>The education provider is recruiting learners below the benchmark.</p> <p>We explored this by considering the most recent cohort numbers and any potential risks a reduction in learner numbers could make in terms of income generation, as detailed in quality theme 1. After</p>

¹ An explanation of the data we use, and how we use this data, is available [here](#)

				receiving further information, the visitors were satisfied with the education provider's performance in this area.
Learner non continuation	3%	n/a	2020 / 21	There is no data available for this data point. We asked the education provider to consider if they wanted to establish ongoing data reporting for this and other data points through this performance review assessment, and they decided to try and establish this data point through the submission. The data has not been externally verified or, as yet, agreed by us as a regular data submission.
Outcomes for those who complete programmes	94%	n/a	2019 / 20	There is no data available for this data point. We asked the education provider to consider if they wanted to establish ongoing data reporting for this and other data points through this performance review assessment, and they decided to try and establish this data point through the submission. The data has not been externally verified or, as yet, agreed by us as a regular data submission.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	n/a	n/a	n/a	There is no data available for this data point. We asked the education provider to consider if they wanted to establish ongoing data reporting for this and other data points through this performance review assessment, and they decided to try and establish this data point through the submission. The data has not

				been externally verified or, as yet, agreed by us as a regular data submission.
Learner satisfaction	n/a	n/a	2023	There is no data available for this data point. We asked the education provider to consider if they wanted to establish ongoing data reporting for this and other data points through this performance review assessment, and they decided to try and establish this data point through the submission. The data has not been externally verified or, as yet, agreed by us as a regular data submission.

Section 3: Performance analysis and quality themes

Portfolio submission

The education provider was asked to provide a self-reflective portfolio submission covering the broad topics referenced in the [thematic areas reviewed](#) section of this report.

The education provider's self-reflection was focused on challenges, developments, and successes related to each thematic area. They also supplied data, supporting evidence and information.

Data / intelligence considered

We did not have other data points and intelligence from others (eg prof bodies, sector bodies that provided support) to take into consideration.

Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided, and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their portfolio. Based on our understanding, we defined and undertook the following quality assurance activities linked to the quality themes referenced below. This allowed us to consider whether the education provider was performing well against our standards.

We have reported on how the provider is performing on all areas, including the areas below, through the [Summary of findings section](#).

Quality theme 1 – Reduction in learners' impact on sustainability

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted the most recent cohort had a cohort of 20 learners. They also noted the programme had approval for 40 learners. The visitors were subsequently unsure what reflection the education provider had undertaken regarding any potential risks a reduction of learner numbers could have had in terms of income generation. The visitors therefore sought more information about this to understand the ongoing sustainability of the programme and the consideration the education provider had undertaken regarding this.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The visitors were informed the education provider is an employer provider. The education provider stated the programme does not generate income, and as such, there was no negative impact based on the reduction in learner numbers. The education provider informed us they are a wholly owned subsidiary of Demant, a global hearing healthcare and audio technology company, based in Denmark. The education provider is the UK retail division of Demant and are financially supported and financially stable.

The visitors considered the education provider reflections and considered their sustainability was not affected by any potential reduction in learner numbers. The visitors were therefore satisfied with the education provider's response and had no further queries.

Quality theme 2 – Broadening interprofessional education (IPE)

Area for further exploration: The visitors' understood relationships have been built with care homes and health centres to broaden their exposure to IPE. The education provider stated the plan was for learners to visit these sites as part of their programme. They informed us this plan was affected by Covid-19, as healthcare facilities limited the passage of people in their facilities. Consequently, learners were not able to visit any external premises as had been planned. The visitors wanted to know whether there has been any reflection undertaken by the education provider about broadening the horizons of learners with learning alongside other specialists. The visitors therefore sought more information about this.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider informed t the visitors learners also can spend time at a 'visiting site' within the same area as their nominated clinic and or patient base. Learners are required to complete a piece of reflective writing which forms part of their professional development portfolio. The education provider stated the requirement to spend time within a visiting site has put the learner in contact with other health and social care providers. The visitors considered the education provider had evidenced the work they had done to broaden learners' opportunities to learn with and from other professions. The visitors were therefore satisfied with the education provider's response and had no further queries.

Quality theme 3 – Expansion of service users and carers input

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted the provider identified ways to enhance service user engagement in the programme. The education provider have or are currently actioning these. The visitors also noted there was a reliance on one named service user having a significant input into different areas of involvement on the programme. The visitors were unclear what work the education provider had undertaken should this named person become unavailable. The visitors sought more information about the education providers reflections in this area.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider informed us they accepted the individual service user's enhanced involvement represented a risk if they were temporarily or permanently unavailable.

We understood they are developing relationships through Hearing Dogs for the Deaf with another service user. This second service user visits every cohort. We understood the education provider also uses the knowledge of a hearing-impaired Hidden Hearing colleague, who leads a session on Communication and Tactics. This includes a question and answer on their experiences as a hearing aid user as well as a registered hearing aid dispenser. The education provider informed us both these individuals are available to step-in at short notice if the service user were unavailable. They acknowledged a pool of independent service users and carers would strengthen their robustness in this area. We recognised this is something the education provider wanted to work towards. The education provider recognised that sole reliability on the service user's involvement represented a risk if they were temporarily or permanently unavailable. They informed us their reflection and subsequent actions have countered this.

The visitors considered the education provider had provided clear information about the work the education provider has done should the service user who has significant input into the programme be unavailable. The visitors were therefore satisfied with the education provider's response and had no further queries.

Quality theme 4 – Progression with learners' feedback

Area for further exploration: The visitors were informed the education provider produced an equivalent questionnaire equivalent to the NSS. We were informed the questionnaire was anonymous and the education provider was able to use the results to draw conclusions about the quality of learners' experience. The visitors were unsure what work the education provider has undertaken to establish steps to review the results and progress if appropriate with actions. As a result, they were unable to identify reflection undertaken on the learner feedback and any associated actions from this. The visitors therefore sought more information about this.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider informed us they implemented changes following feedback by undertaking appropriate action. For example, learners indicated through their feedback survey they would like more scheduled practical time. As a result, the education provider has incorporated more scheduled practical sessions for future cohorts. They also informed us each cohort has a trainee representative. They play an intermediary role between trainers and learners. The education provider stated this role encourages informal feedback should a minor change be made. More formal feedback is obtained through the trainee representative's report which is prepared for the Steering Committee. For example, the minutes of the Steering Committee demonstrated learners' feedback about the notice of assignments. In response, an assessment schedule had been created. The education provider informed us they have asked the trainee representative to supply more frequent reports. They stated this allowed the education provider to be more dynamic in addressing feedback.

The visitors considered they had seen clear evidence from the education provider of the work they had undertaken to establish steps to review the NSS results and progress of appropriate reflection and associated actions. The visitors were therefore satisfied with the education provider's performance in this area.

Section 4: Findings

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings for each portfolio area, focusing on the approach or approaches taken, developments, what this means for performance, and why. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

Overall findings on performance

Quality theme: Institution self-reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Resourcing, including financial stability –**
 - The programme is resourced with 5.6 full time equivalent experienced training professionals. They are dedicated to the programme 100% of their time and have no other responsibilities. There is also a pool of additional people who deliver aspects of the programme as visiting lecturers.
 - The programme is fundamental to the continued growth of the company by increasing dispenser numbers, year on year, in line with the company's five-year business plan.
 - As detailed in [quality theme 1](#), the most recent cohort was of 20 learners. They also noted the programme had approval for 40 learners. The education provider is an employer provider, and the programme does not generate income. There is no negative impact should there be a future reduction in learner numbers.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Partnerships with other organisations –**
 - The education provider has developed new partnerships, for example with LearnUpon, who deliver a range of remote learning solutions. The education provider has consequently improved their efficiency in delivering remote learning.
 - As detailed in [quality theme 3](#), the education provider is developing relationships through Hearing Dogs for the Deaf with another service user.
 - They have strong relationships with technology companies, for examples Oticon, Bernafon, Starkey, and Med-RX.
 - Most organisations, the education provider considers they need to partner with, are either owned and managed by Hidden Hearing directly, or are part of the same parent organisation.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Academic and placement quality –**
 - Learners complete their practice education at either a Hidden Hearing branch or, once pre-registration status is achieved and a domiciliary assessment has been passed, in a mobile domiciliary structure. The education provider stated they need to explore different locations for practice education alongside adequate supervision.
 - Depending on the location of the trainee, there can be a challenge in finding a branch location that is within a reasonable commute of the trainee's home. The education provider has begun using their network of 'visiting sites' as part of a learner's practice education and

experience. To assess the suitability of the 'visiting site', a Visiting Site Coordinator from the education provider will establish a working relationship between themselves and the site manager or owner. A registered Hearing Aid Dispenser will provide regular services at the visiting site. The site will have established working protocols and will have assessed the Health and Safety of its employees at the site before it is agreed to be suitable for a learner.

- The education provider has reduced the number of systems and non-clinical processes a learner needs to learn about in the first stages of indirect supervision. Learners were finding it excessive to learn how to use the systems at the same time as adapting to the practice and clinical skills. They have broken systems and process training into smaller blocks and introduced other areas at different stages of the learner's development. This will be monitored throughout the cohort who started the programme in October 2022.
- We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Interprofessional education –**
 - As detailed in [quality theme 2](#), relationships have been built with care homes and health centres. All learners can be resident at the company training centre. Learners can also spend time at a 'visiting site' within the same area as their nominated clinic and or patient base. The requirement to spend time within a visiting site will put the learner in contact with other health and social care providers.
 - Learners are full-time employees of Hidden Hearing Limited on joining the programme. They work alongside and learn from other employees, such as ear care practitioners. Learners gain experience working with other health and social care professionals when conducting appointments in day care settings and residential care homes.
 - The education provider is undertaking work with a trainer from the social care sector to design and deliver a new lesson within the Professional Practice module. This will include details about the structure of social care within the UK, the various roles and responsibilities found within the profession and how a Hearing Aid Dispenser may connect or be required to communicate with members of the profession as part of a wider care package for a service user.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Service users and carers –**
 - The limitations created by Covid-19 meant service users and carers involvement was limited to guest presentations during classroom sessions. They discussed communication difficulties and additional services to assist the hearing impaired, for example Hearing Dogs. Service users are involved in the 'sign off' evaluation process for a learner entering their pre-registration period of indirect supervision.

- As detailed in [quality theme 3](#), the education provider identified ways to enhance service user engagement in the programme. There is one service user who has significant input into the programme. They do have relationships with other service users, who do input into the programme and who are available to step-in at short notice if appropriate.
- The education provider wants to increase further service user input to the programme. The service user led a seminar about understanding hearing loss from the service user's perspective. The education provider will consider the use of service users in the simulation exercises. The education provider plans to bring a service user into the Curriculum Development Group and Steering Committee. They also want to make use of the service user feedback given to learners while in practice.
- We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Equality and diversity –**
 - Learners are recruited in accordance with the education provider's equal opportunities and diversity policies. The processes work well and there have been no complaints or challenges about the education provider's approach to equality and diversity. The education provider does not identify any risks to the policy working as it should.
 - The education provider sets clear expectations of the behaviour expected of learners. The education provider HR team are involved with recruitment, induction and follow-up checks on all new learners, especially checking their expectations.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Horizon scanning –**
 - From the portfolio, it was clear the education provider had undertaken ongoing horizon scanning. For example, the education provider changed the structure of the programme. Instead of an initial block of 20 weeks classroom-based training, they have reduced this to 11 weeks. Going forward, they will observe and evaluate the cohort, and anticipate increased feedback from practice educators and line managers.
 - The education provider will also discuss and agree changes to the programme structure to enable learners to experience different parts of the new IT system at different stages of their development and learning.
 - In addition, the education provider is currently trialling Real Ear Measurements (REMs) with a group of registered Hearing Aid Dispensers. Their aim is to roll this out to all Hearing Aid Dispensers registrants in their organisation soon. Learners already learn about REMs as part of the Hearing Aid Technology module so any roll out would have minimum effect on the programme.

- We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Outstanding issues for follow up:

Visiting sites

The education provider has begun using their network of 'visiting sites' as part of a learner's practice education and experience. To assess the suitability of the 'visiting site', a Visiting Site Coordinator from the education provider will establish a working relationship between themselves and the site manager or owner. A registered Hearing Aid Dispenser will provide regular services at the visiting site. The education provider will have to reflect on how the use of 'visiting sites' has impacted the programme.

Structural changes

The education provider has broken systems and process training into smaller blocks. They have also introduced other areas at different stages of the learner's development. These will be monitored throughout the cohort who started the programme in October 2022. The education provider will reflect on how these have impacted on the performance of the programme in the next performance review.

Service user and carer involvement in the programme.

The education provider plans to bring a service user into the Curriculum Development Group and Steering Committee. They also want to make use of the service user feedback given to learners while in practice. In the next performance review, the education provider will reflect on how service user involvement has impacted the Curriculum Development Group and Steering Committee, and how their feedback has helped learners.

Quality theme: Thematic reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Embedding the revised Standards of Proficiency (SOPs) –**
 - The education provider does not foresee any challenge with embedding the revised standards into the course programme.
 - The education provider has undertaken work so the revised SOPs are embedded into the programme. For example, learners receive extensive training around promoting public health, preventing ill-health, and recognising signs of neglect and danger for service users, colleagues, and themselves. This is as part of the module Professional Practice. This training involves face to face training as well as e-learning and assessments.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.

- **Impact of COVID-19 –**

- The steps taken to mitigate the risks identified by the HCPC visitors during the previous quality assurance process have proved effective in enabling continuing operations at the training centre. Changes to the programme structure were necessary for the cohort who started their programme in June 2021. For example, the education provider implemented a two-metre safe distance zone between learners when in the training room or moving around the building.
- They also made it possible using IT setup so learners could participate live from a remote location, including their home. Learners now have the facility to participate in classroom learning session if they needed to self-isolate.
- Cohorts ran throughout the pandemic and were able to graduate as planned without any extension to the programme. Learners who started the programme in January 2022 had to provide evidence of being fully Covid-19 vaccinated. Temperature checks and lateral flow tests remained for anyone entering the training centre.
- We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.

- **Use of technology: Changing learning, teaching and assessment methods –**

- Remote learning and accessibility to technology is in place. There are several simulated environments for learners to use. For example, a room set up permanently to replicate a Hidden Hearing clinic, where learners can practice audiological procedures. They have another room which is set up to mimic a typical domiciliary environment learners may find themselves practicing in.
- The education provider has bought an 'audiology head'. Learners use it to practice otoscopy with simulated ear conditions, such as wax blockages. It has been incorporated into one of the objective structured practical examinations (OSPE) stations for summative practical examinations.
- The education provider is looking further into on-line simulation to include tools such as an augmented reality journey through the ear.
- Hidden Hearing implemented a new IT platform called 'One Retail'. This streamlined and partly automated some of the administrative tasks completed by a Hearing Aid Dispenser. This included ordering products and stock at point of sale and new electronic diary management. The education provider concluded module content needed to be amended to include sufficient knowledge and experience of the One Retail system to enable a learner to function during their practice education. Programme content was subsequently amended.
- Members of the programme team adapted well to delivering webinar style remote learning sessions. The process of using Microsoft One Note was a successful alternative to having printed trainee learning manuals and loose paper notes. Learners have been able to access

classroom sessions and participate fully if in self-isolation but able to work.

- During Covid-19 there was a need to reduce the number of people in proximity within an assessment situation. The education provider conducted external examiner observations remotely through Facetime. The external examiner noted, while the process of remote observation did work, there were limitations. The education provider set up a camera to allow for an adequate view of individual stations.
- We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Apprenticeships –**
 - The education provider has gained approval as an apprentice training provider and is registered on Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers to provide the level-5 HAD standard ST0600.
 - Much of the administration connected with the apprenticeship will be part of the responsibilities of the HR department. An existing programme team member with previous experience of apprenticeships will oversee the individual training records process. The HR department will be responsible for much of the administration connected with the apprenticeship. An existing programme team member with previous experience of apprenticeships will oversee the individual training records process.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Outstanding issues for follow up: None

Quality theme: Sector body assessment reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Assessments against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education –**
 - As the education provider has successfully joined the Register of Apprentice Training Providers (RoATP), they are subject to OFSTED inspections, as well as needing to adhere to HCPC standards. They have yet to be inspected by OFSTED.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Assessment of practice education providers by external bodies –**
 - During the period under review, the education provider was regulated by the HCPC only. Due to the nature of the education provider, the majority of practice-based learning was undertaken in house and monitoring through the education provider, and larger organisation, policies and processes. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.

- **National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes –**
 - The education provider did not have any NSS outcomes.
 - They conducted a survey of learners from their most recent cohort using the questions from the NSS. The results of this exercise outlined that 100% of trainees were satisfied with the quality of the programme. The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms. However, the survey was not verified by an external body. Where data has not been externally verified, we need to understand risks by engaging with the education provider on a frequent basis, a maximum of once every two years.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Office for Students monitoring –**
 - We did not ask the education provider to reflect on this area due to the nature of their provision and institution.
- **Other professional regulators / professional bodies –**
 - The relationship between the education provider and the British Society of Hearing Aid Audiologists (BSHAA), the professional body, was strengthened by the election of one of the Hidden Hearing employees and mentors to the BSHAA committee. This meant that there was immediate information flow from the professional body and the education provider.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance:

External verification of data

The visitors recognised the education provider had conducted a survey using questions from the NSS. We understood the data was not externally verified or, as of yet, agreed as a regular submission to HCPC. The visitors considered this created a risk their understanding of the programme and its performance was less complete than it might otherwise be, and dependent on qualitative rather than quantitative judgments. This in turn might lead to potential performance issues not being picked up.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None

Quality theme: Profession specific reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Curriculum development –**
 - The previous HCPC performance review process identified a risk in the potential overload of tasks carried by individual team members. This had the potential to dilute the curriculum content or cause content to become outdated.

- The education provider undertook work in this area to expand the programme team and redistribute key tasks and responsibilities. For example:
 - they have trained and developed the programme lead, a HCPC registrant and full-time member of the programme team.
 - a full-time trainer joined the programme team.
 - an experienced Hearing Aid Dispenser has been seconded to the programme team for three days per week.
 - removed module lead responsibility from the Training Team Leader to give them time for observation and development.
 - line-managers and other Hearing Aid Dispensers have been trained to help with learners' assessments.
 - moved to using electronic forms and recording of practice education observations, assessment, and logbooks.
- Hidden Hearing has also appointed a Head of Professional Services who will oversee the quality of the ongoing training programmes for trainees and future apprentices. They will have responsibility for maintaining the approved status of the programme from 2023.
- The education provider now can draw upon a wider breadth of professional experience and knowledge. They are now able to have a clear understanding of changes in the profession and ensure their curriculum is up to date.
- We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Development to reflect changes in professional body guidance –**
 - The BSHAA provided guidance. For example, in the provision and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as part of the reopening of hearing care services during and following Covid-19. The guidance created a need to procure stock levels suitable for all learners, the programme team, and other front-line employees.
 - The guidance also created training materials and workshops to ensure employees had sufficient knowledge to correctly wear and use PPE.
 - New operating procedures were needed regarding the safe storage and disposal of potentially infected PPE items.
 - The education provider reflected upon how the solutions implemented to cope with the challenging effects of Covid-19 in the workplace had been a success.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Capacity of practice-based learning –**
 - All practice-based learning is under the direct management of Hidden Hearing Limited, using company clinical premises and hearing aid dispensers, employed by the company, as practice educators and mentors.
 - The education provider stated it can be a challenge to find a branch clinical location within a reasonable commute of the learner's home.

However, they informed us the current process of identifying practice locations and practice educators works well. It is overseen by the Practice Education Supervisor, in partnership with line managers, who have the responsibilities for management of the trainees, the branch clinics and the Practice Educators. We were also informed there are more permanent clinical branch locations available than the number of learners requiring practice education.

- We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Outstanding issues for follow up: None

Quality theme: Stakeholder feedback and actions

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Learners –**
 - As detailed in [quality theme 4](#), the education provider had produced an questionnaire equivalent to the NSS. This was used anonymously amongst learners who studied between June 2021 and July 2022 to make comparisons in the quality of their experience.
 - Each cohort has a trainee representative. They play an intermediary role between trainers and learners. This role encourages informal feedback should a minor change be made. More formal feedback is obtained through the trainee representative's report which is prepared for the Steering Committee. For example, the minutes of the Steering Committee demonstrated learners' feedback about the notice of assignments. In response, an assessment schedule had been created. The education provider informed us they have asked the trainee representative to supply more frequent reports.
 - Learners have different mechanisms to feedback and ask for help. For example, each cohort has a trainee representative. They play an intermediary role between trainers and learners. This role encourages informal feedback. More formal feedback is obtained through the trainee representative's report which is prepared for the Steering Committee.
 - Learners usually complete their practice education at either a Hidden Hearing branch or in a mobile domiciliary structure. There can be a challenge in finding a branch location which is within a reasonable commute of the learner's home. Following feedback from learners, the education provider has evaluated the impact of assigning a learner to a clinic location where they are required to stay in a hotel overnight when in practice or, where this is a commute of more than 90 minutes. The visitors noted this addition to ease learner burden. They considered this consideration of learner's circumstances to be an enhancement.

- The education provider has put into practice recommendations from learners. For example, learners stated more training on non-Oticon products would be beneficial. A wider range of hearing aids is now used, and more time is now given to practicing with them before learners are in practice-based learning.
- We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **Practice placement educators –**
 - The education provider does not experience any challenges in the selection, training, or management of practice educators. This is because they are all employees of the education provider who have a contractual responsibility to accept the practice educator role, if appropriate.
 - A new Practice Education Supervisor was appointed. We understood this provided the education provider with an opportunity to review the training of Practice Educators and the Practice Educator training module. The education provider focussed the training content on observation, feedback, and coaching. They stated practice educators had fed back this was a welcomed refocus to the training. We were informed there has been positive informal feedback from practice educators. The education provider reflected this suggests this approach has improved the support and working relationships with learners.
 - A learner survey will be conducted in 2023. The results will be discussed with the Practice Education Supervisor and Programme Lead. The education provider will act further if necessary.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.
- **External examiners –**
 - The external examiner provided feedback to the education provider through their report. We were able to understand how the education provider had responded to the external examiner's comments.
 - For example, the external examiner noted one learner was wearing a long-sleeved jumper with the sleeves pushed up. Other learners had either short sleeves or sleeves which were rolled up. They stated pushed-up sleeves may slip down and require repositioning after gloves had been put on. We were informed this would create a risk of contaminating the gloves. The education provider stated sleeve length will be checked and made a requirement for entry to the exam. They added all learners have been trained on infection control and suitable attire.
 - We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Outstanding issues for follow up: None

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review: Learners usually complete their practice education at either a branch of the education provider or in a mobile domiciliary structure. There can be a challenge in finding a branch location which is within a reasonable commute of the learner's home. Following feedback from learners, the education provider has evaluated the impact of assigning a learner to a clinic location where they are required to stay in a hotel overnight when in practice or, where this is a commute of more than 90 minutes. The visitors noted this addition to ease learner burden. They considered this consideration of learner's circumstances to be an enhancement.

Data and reflections

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Learner non continuation:**
 - The education provider provided data showing learners continuing to programme completion. Of a cohort of 20, four learners removed themselves from the programme. The education provider did not submit reflections on why this was the case. One further learner was removed by the education provider after failing the pre-registration summative exams.
 - Although the education provider had provided this information, this needs to be externally verified. Because of this, we recognised there was a risk to understanding the performance of the education provider.
- **Outcomes for those who complete programmes:**
 - The education provider provided data showing learners continuing to be employed by Hidden Hearing as a Hearing Aid Dispenser. All learners who completed the programme and attained HCPC registration continued to be employed by Hidden Hearing.
 - Although the education provider had provided this information, it needs to be externally verified. Because of this, we recognised there was a risk to understanding the performance of the education provider.
- **Teaching quality:**
 - The education provider supplied final examination data for the latest cohort to graduate as a measure of teaching excellence. From this, we noted there were no failed final theory examinations.
 - All Personal Development Portfolios were assessed to meet the criteria, and all were eligible to apply for HCPC registration. 100% of graduates achieved registration as a Hearing Aid Dispenser, representing a 75% success rate from recruitment to completion.
 - Although the education provider had provided this information, it needs to be externally verified. Because of this, we recognised there was a risk to understanding the performance of the education provider.

- **Learner satisfaction:**
 - The education provider conducted a survey of learners from their most recent cohort using questions from the NSS. 100% of learners said they were satisfied with the quality of the programme.
 - Although the education provider had provided this information, it needs to be externally verified. Because of this, we recognised there was a risk to understanding the performance of the education provider.
- **Programme level data:**
 - As part of the performance review, we received data from the education provider. They considered the data they submitted to be equivalent to the data we draw upon. We considered the data provided to be appropriately aligned to the categories of data we receive from external sources. However, we noted the data from the education provider had not been externally verified.
 - Because of this, we recognised there was a risk to understanding the performance of the education provider.

Risks identified which may impact on performance:

External verification of data

The visitors recognised the education provider had provided internally sourced data. The education provider considered these data points were comparable to the data points the HCPC obtains through external organisations such as HESA. We understood that the data was not externally verified or, as of yet, agreed as a regular submission to HCPC. The visitors considered this created a risk to their understanding of the programme and its performance. This in turn might lead to potential performance issues not being picked up. The visitors considered it would be appropriate if the education provider was able to verify the data by an external body, such as an external examiner. This would ensure the performance review was as comprehensive as possible.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None

Section 5: Issues identified for further review

This section summarises any areas which require further follow-up through a separate quality assurance process (the approval or focused review process).

Referrals to next scheduled performance review

Visiting sites

Summary of issue: The education provider has begun using their network of 'visiting sites' as part of a learner's practice education and experience. To assess the suitability of the 'visiting site', a Visiting Site Coordinator from the education provider

will establish a working relationship between themselves and the site manager or owner. A registered Hearing Aid Dispenser will provide regular services at the visiting site. The education provider will have to reflect on how the use of 'visiting sites' has impacted the programme.

Structural changes

Summary of issue: The education provider has broken systems and process training into smaller blocks. They have also introduced other areas at different stages of the learner's development. This will be monitored throughout the cohort who started the programme in October 2022. The education provider will have to reflect on how these structural changes have affected the programme.

Service user and carer input in the programme

Summary of issue: The education provider plans to bring a service user into the Curriculum Development Group and Steering Committee. They also want to make use of the service user feedback given to learners while in practice. In the next performance review, the education provider will have to reflect on how the service user has impacted the Curriculum Development Group and Steering Committee, and how their feedback has helped learners.

External verification of data

Summary of issue: The visitors recognised the education provider had conducted a survey using questions from the NSS. They also understood the education provider had provided internally sourced data which the education provider considered comparable to the data points the HCPC obtains through external organisations such as HESA. We understood the data was not externally verified or, as of yet, agreed as a regular submission to HCPC. The visitors considered this created a risk their understanding of the programme and its performance was less complete than it might otherwise be, and dependent on qualitative rather than quantitative judgments. This in turn might lead to potential performance issues not being picked up. The visitors considered it would be appropriate if the education provider was able to verify the data by an external body, such as an external examiner. This would ensure the performance review was as comprehensive as possible.

Section 6: Decision on performance review outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that:

- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2024-25 academic year

- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 5 of this report

Reason for next engagement recommendation

- Internal stakeholder engagement
 - The education provider engages with a range of stakeholders with quality assurance and enhancement in mind. Specific groups engaged by the education provider were learners, external examiners, and practice educators.
- External input into quality assurance and enhancement
 - The education provider engaged with two professional bodies. They considered professional body findings in improving their provision.
 - The education provider engaged with Department for Health, Department of Education, British Society of Audiology (BSA) and the BSHAA. They considered the findings of Department for Health, Department of Education, BSA and the BSHAA in improving their provision.
 - The education provider considers sector and professional development in a structured way.
- Data supply
 - Through this review, the education provider has not established how they will supply quality and performance data points which are equivalent to those in external supplies available for other organisations. Where data is not regularly supplied, we need to understand risks by engaging with the education provider on a frequent basis (a maximum of once every two years).
- What the data is telling us:
 - From the internally verified data points considered and reflections through the process, the education provider considers data in their quality assurance and enhancement processes and acts on data to inform positive change.
- In summary, the reason for the recommendation of a two year monitoring period is:
 - As outlined in Section 5, the visitors are recommending four areas are referred to the next performance review process.
 - The visitors recognised the education provider had provided internally sourced data. We understood the data was not externally verified. Where data has not been externally verified, we need to understand risks by engaging with the education provider on a frequent basis, a maximum of once every two years.

Appendix 1 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
Award in Hearing Aid Dispensing Competence	WBL (Work based learning)	Hearing aid dispenser			01/10/2013

Appendix 2 – summary report

If the education provider does not provide observations, only this summary report (rather than the whole report) will be provided to the Education and Training Committee (Panel) to enable their decision on the next steps for the provider. The lead visitors confirm this is an accurate summary of their recommendation (including their reasons) and any referrals.

Education provider	Case reference	Lead visitors	Review period recommendation	Reason for recommendation	Referrals
Hidden Hearing Limited	CAS-01233-H5J3L3	Robert MacKinnon Amy Taylor	Two years	The visitors recognised the education provider had provided internally sourced data. We understood the data was not externally verified. Where data has not been externally verified, we need to understand risks by engaging with the education provider on a frequent basis, a maximum of once every two years.	Visiting sites – referred to next scheduled performance review Structural changes – referred to next scheduled performance review Service user input – referred to next scheduled performance review External verification of data – referred to next scheduled performance review