

Companies fined more than £400,000 after hospital staff violently attacked by patients

Two companies have been fined a combined total of more than £400,000 after staff working at a South Wales mental health hospital were subjected to violent attacks by patients over a three year period.

Parkcare Homes (No.2) Limited and Priory Central Services Limited, both part of The Priory Group, pleaded guilty after failing to manage risks to care staff and patients from violence and aggression.

Cardiff Magistrates Court heard that Priory Hospital in Aberdare – a facility owned by Parkcare Homes (No.2) Limited – was a specialised institution for people with complex mental health, behavioural and learning issues. At any one time, there were up to 12 in-patients being cared for by the staff.

Over a three year period between 2014 and 2017, there were incidents of violence and aggression towards both care staff and patients, resulting in serious injuries, including loss of consciousness and permanent scarring. Due to the frequency and severity of incidents, concerns were formally raised by senior management of the hospital in November 2016 to Priory Central Services Limited, which was responsible for the provision of training and equipment and the employment of staff at Aberdare. Priory Central Services Limited failed to take prompt and appropriate action to rectify the deficiencies and incidents were allowed to continue.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found there were no suitable and sufficient risk assessments carried out and the equipment and environment was not fit to diffuse violent situations. Staff were not provided with adequate information or training to cope with patients with aggressive traits.

The investigation also found staff were not given the appropriate personal protective equipment, including bite resistant clothing and personal safety alarms.

There were no post incident de-brief sessions carried out with staff involved or even when individuals return from sick level following an injury. No investigations were carried out of incidents to establish what had happened to identify lessons learnt despite repeated serious and significant injuries being caused.

The companies were fined at a sentencing hearing on 26 July 2023 after entering guilty pleas at an earlier date. Parkcare Homes (No.2) Limited of Fifth Floor, 80 Hammersmith Road, London, W14 8UD pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2(1) & 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Priory Central Services Limited of Fifth Floor, 80 Hammersmith Road, London, W14 8UD

pleaded guilty of breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Parkcare Homes (No.2) Limited was fined £363,000 and ordered to pay £43,656 in costs. Priory Central Services Limited was fined £40,000 and ordered to pay £21,828 in costs.

After the hearing HSE Principal Inspector Anne Marie Orrells said: “Priory are a leading independent provider of mental healthcare and adult social care in the UK. It is a long-established company and despite repeated warnings about systemic failures it failed to prevent its staff being injured.

“Care providers should have adequate arrangements to effectively plan and organise preventative measures to prevent violence towards staff and other patients.”

Notes to editors

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.