Inspection Report

Inspection ID	BNUR1_A
Course provider	Buckinghamshire New University
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Course inspected	PGDip Approved Mental Health Professional
Mode of study	Full time and part time
Maximum student cohort	20
Date of inspection	28th – 29th April 2026
Inspection team	Joseph Hubbard (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Lainy Russell (Lay Inspector) Nick Perry (AMHP registrant Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	3rd September 2026
Conditions:	Standard 1.2 Standard 1.3 Standard 1.7 Standard 2.2

	Standard 2.4 Standard 6.8
Date conditions met and approved:	TBC

Contents

Introduction

1. Social Work England completes inspections as part of our statutory requirement to approve and monitor courses. Inspections form part of our process to make sure that courses meet our education and training approval standards for Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) courses. We approve courses against these standards to ensure that students who successfully complete an AMHP course can meet the requirements set out in the Mental Health (Approved Mental Health Professionals) (Approval) (England) Regulations 2008.

2. During the approval process, we appoint partner inspectors. This will include a registered inspector who will be a qualified AMHP, and a lay inspector who is not AMHP qualified.

3. These inspectors, along with an officer from the education quality assurance team, undertake activity to review documentary information and evidence, and carry out an inspection. This activity could include observing and asking questions about teaching, placements, facilities and learning resources; asking questions based on the evidence submitted; and meeting with staff, people with lived experience and students. The inspectors then make recommendations to us about whether a course should be approved.

4. The process we undertake is described in our legislation: The Children and Social Work Act 2017, The Social Workers Regulations 2018 - Social Work England , and our Education and Training Rules 2019.

5. In this document we describe Buckinghamshire New University as 'the course provider' and we describe the PGDip Approved Mental Health Professional as 'the course' or 'the programme'.

Summary of Inspection

6. Buckinghamshire New University's PGDip Approved Mental Health Professional was inspected as part of Social Work England's reapproval cycle, whereby all course providers with AMHP courses will be inspected against the new education and training approval standards for AMHP courses.

7. A remote inspection took place from 28th – 29th April 2026.

8. As part of this process, the inspection team gathered feedback from key stakeholders through meetings on inspection. This included employer partners, students, and people with relevant lived experience.

Inspection Findings

9. In this section we set out the inspectors' findings in relation to whether the course meets the education and training approval standards for AMHP courses. We describe the inspection team in this section as 'we'.

Standard 1. Admissions	**Met or not met.**
1.1 Confirm on entry to the course that applicants have: i. the potential to acquire and demonstrate the competences set out in the relevant legislation governing AMHP practice; ii. the capability to meet the academic requirements of the course; and iii. the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes	Met
1.2 Confirm that applicants are and remain fully registered with a relevant regulatory body in line with the relevant regulations	Not met *see key observations for standard 1 for further information*
1.3 Ensure that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes appropriate criminal conviction checks	Not met *see key observations for standard 1 for further information*
1.4 Ensure that applicants have suitable prior experience of the practical application of appropriate legislation and policy, specifically including but not limited to mental health, mental capacity and human rights legislation	Met
1.5 Ensure that applicants have a robust level of legal literacy in appropriate legislative and policy areas	Met
1.6 Ensure that employers, placement providers, people with lived experience of social work, and carers are involved in student admissions	Met
1.7 Ensure that there are equality, diversity and inclusion policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored	Not met

	see key observations for standard 1 for further information
1.8 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include information about the award level and professional qualification, course content, teaching modes, location of study, assessment methods, duration, and observation requirements including the expectations around arranging or securing placements	Met
1.9 Ensure that the admissions process allows candidates from any eligible profession to demonstrate their suitability to join the course	Met

Key observations for standard 1

10. This narrative will outline the key observations for the whole of each standard area, giving more specific detail about any standard the inspection team have deemed not met.

11. Please refer to the conditions table for additional information, accessible via the following link.

12. Evidence provided relating to admissions indicated that following employers' own internal selection processes, candidates completed a university application form and interview. Applicants' ability to acquire the AMHP competencies was assessed through the interview questions and a personal statement. Capability to meet the academic requirements was indicated by the entry requirements, which included a minimum 2:2 bachelor's degree. Ability to use information and communication technology to achieve course outcomes was established through candidates' relevant work experience and engagement with the online application process (1.1).

13. While the university stated that the interview at their stage was undertaken by a panel, the students we met with on inspection reported having been interviewed by only the course lead. The university stated that this was due to scheduling issues and that most students were interviewed by a panel consisting of the course lead, a person with lived experience (PWLE), and/or another academic. The inspectors recommend that the university take steps to ensure a consistent interview process across applicants wherever possible, to ensure a fair and robust admissions experience (1.1).

14. It was communicated clearly within course documentation that relevant professional registration and DBS checks were a requirement for the course, and it was acknowledged that candidates for the course would be in roles that required the relevant professional registration and

DBS clearance. However, it was confirmed at inspection that no formal check was undertaken by the university to confirm that all candidates met these requirements. The inspectors recommend that a condition is therefore required on standards 1.2 and 1.3 to ensure that applicants' registration and DBS status are confirmed (1.2, 1.3).

15. Applicants' legal literacy and experience of applying relevant mental health legislation was assessed through the interview questions and personal statement, along with shadowing requirements (1.4, 1.5).

16. Employer involvement in admissions was ensured through each employer's own internal selection process, usually involving an expression of interest and at least one panel interview. People with lived experience (PWLE) were involved through representation on the university's interview panel, however we learned at inspection that it was not uncommon for these arrangements to fall through for various reasons. This had resulted in many candidates being interviewed by just the course lead, without PWLE representation. The inspectors recommend that the university takes steps to more consistently ensure PWLE involvement in some aspect of the admissions process (1.6).

17. University-wide equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies were in place, and EDI data was gathered through the application form. However, this data was not being reviewed or analysed to monitor the implementation of the EDI policies in place. At inspection, employer partners and the course provider stated that they believed cohorts to be diverse and representative, but they have not undertaken any formal assessment of this. We confirmed that there was no interface between the course provider and employer partners regarding EDI in relation to applicants. The inspectors therefore recommend that a condition is set against this standard (1.7).

18. The programme website and information session materials provided applicants with the information they needed to decide whether to take up a place on the course (1.8). We were assured that the admissions process was open and accessible to applicants across all eligible professions (1.9).

Standard 2. Course governance, management and quality.	**Met or not met**
2.1 Ensure courses are supported by a management and governance plan that includes the roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability of individuals and governing groups in the delivery, resourcing and quality management of the course	Met

2.2 Ensure that regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, and that these involve employers, people with lived experience including carers, and students	Not met *see key observations for standard 2 for further information*
2.3 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes consideration of: i. local and regional placement capacity; and 1. the availability of part-time or other flexible course arrangements to widen access wherever possible.	Met
2.4 Ensure that the person with overall professional responsibility for the course is a relevant qualified professional with appropriate experience	Not met *see key observations for standard 2 for further information*
2.5 Ensure that there is adequate provision of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise	Met
2.6 Ensure that educators are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice	Met

Key observations for standard 2.

18. We received evidence of the roles and responsibilities for the course, with the head of department managing the course lead within the social work department, and associate lecturers contributing to teaching delivery. The course provider demonstrated that the course was included in an annual quality assurance review process along with the rest of the social care provision. Internal moderation was also completed for every module, and the course was reviewed by an external

examiner. The inspectors recommend that the course provider develops a clear documentary outline of the management and governance for the programme (2.1).

19. At inspection, stakeholders confirmed that they provide informal feedback about the course through ad hoc conversations with the course lead. However, there was no formal mechanism for this input to inform the development of the course. We also established that students were asked to complete feedback forms on each module, though it was acknowledged that response rates were low. The quality assurance systems outlined above did not involve any input from stakeholder groups. The inspectors therefore recommend a condition is set against this standard (2.2).

20. We confirmed that there was close collaboration between the course provider and employers regarding student numbers. There were no concerns around placement provision, as the course only accepted sponsored students with a guaranteed placement with their employer. Regarding resourcing, course provider management confirmed that staffing for the programme would increase in proportion to any rise in student numbers (2.3).

21. The two central requirements of standard 2.4 are that the person with overall professional responsibility for the course is a relevant qualified professional and has appropriate experience. The guidance states that this person should be a qualified and approved AMHP with a recognised qualification and professional registration. The head of department was listed as the person with overall professional responsibility for the course, however inspectors noted that they had no AMHP qualification or experience. While the course lead did have qualification and experience as an ASW (Approved Social Worker), they no longer held professional registration. The inspectors therefore recommend that a condition is required against this standard (2.4).

22. The guidance for standard 2.1 states that in cases where the course lead is not a qualified AMHP, they must be able to show they have access to the necessary information about current AMHP practice, such as through a network of AMHP professionals. We were assured that the course lead had access to this knowledge through close working relationships with employer partners (2.1, 2.4). Considering the input of associate lecturers who were practising AMHPs, the inspectors agreed that there was adequate provision of appropriately experienced staff for the course (2.5).

23. We heard that there were funding and support in place across the university for staff continuing professional development, including through an annual review process. Examples were provided of development activities the course lead had undertaken to maintain their understanding of professional practice, including through attending AMHP refresher training (2.6).

Standard 3. Curriculum	Met or not met

3.1 The views of employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of mental health services are incorporated into the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum	Met
3.2 The content, structure and delivery of the training is in accordance with relevant guidance and frameworks and is designed to enable students to demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge and skills, including around cross-national border issues in relation to practice in Wales, where this is appropriate	Met
3.3 The course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, human rights and legislative frameworks	Met
3.4 Course content is routinely updated as a result of developments in legislation, research, government policy, and best practice	Met
3.5 The integration of theory and practice is central to the course	Met
3.6 Students understand how the standards of the student's own professional regulator(s), apply to their specialist practice	Met
3.7 The course is designed to enable students to demonstrate an evidence-informed approach to AMHP practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation	Met

Key observations for standard 3.

24. Employers, practitioners, and PWLE reported at inspection that they had contributed to the ongoing development of the curriculum. The inspectors recommend that the course provider develops formal written documentation of this stakeholder input (3.1). Course documentation

showed that the programme was mapped to relevant standards, and module content covered applicable EDI principles and frameworks (3.2. 3.3).

25. The course provider states that the course content was updated for each new cohort to reflect developments with legislation, research, and best practice. Employer partners confirmed that the course content was up to date with current practice (3.4). Module learning outcomes demonstrated that critical reflection and integration of theory and practice were an important part of the course (3.5), and the course required students to demonstrate an evidence-informed approach to practice (3.7). Students and employers confirmed at inspection that the course supported them to apply their own professional standards to AMHP practice (3.6), and to support their practice with evidence sources such as case law and academic research (3.7).

Standard 4. Practice Placements	**Met or not met**
4.1 Ensure practice placements are integral to the course	Met
4.2 Ensure that the number, duration and range of practice placements is appropriate to support the delivery of the course and the achievement of the learning outcomes	Met
4.3 Ensure that students, practice placement providers and educators are prepared for each placement, which will include information about: i. the learning outcomes to be met ii. the timing and duration of any placement experience iii. the records to be maintained iv. expectations of professional conduct v. assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure to progress vi. communication and lines of responsibility	Met
4.4 Maintain clear collaborative arrangements for planning and communication with placement providers including a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements, in order jointly to ensure:	Met

i. that practice placement settings provide a safe and supportive environment ii. that placement providers have equality, diversity and inclusion policies in place which will apply to students, and which they will implement and monitor iii. that there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise, at the practice placement setting iv. that practice placement providers support their placement staff to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice, including appropriate practice placement educator training v. that a range of learning and teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of people with lived experience of social work and colleagues must be in place throughout all practice placements	

Key observations for standard 4.

26. Evidence indicated that a suitable number, duration, and range of practice placements formed an integral part of the course, with clear placement documentation provided to students (4.1, 4.2). This documentation was sufficient to prepare students, placement providers, and educators for the expectations of placement, including learning outcomes to be met. Employers and students confirmed that they were clear about the expectations of placement (4.3).

27. Practice learning agreements were in place for each placement, and these provided the formal, written arrangements for approving and monitoring placements. This documentation included checks of policies the placement provider was required to have in place, for example for health and safety and EDI (4.4). The inspectors recommend that the course provider bolsters its processes for gathering feedback from students on their experience of placement.

Standard 5. Supporting students.	**Met or not met**
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: i. confidential counselling services	Met

ii. occupational health services, where appropriate	
5.2 Ensure that students have access to a system of academic and pastoral student support for their progression, development, wellbeing and welfare	Met
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health	Met
5.4 Make reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the relevant standards, in accordance with relevant legislation	Met
5.5 Provide timely information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory and have associated monitoring mechanisms in place	Met
5.6 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments	Met
5.7 Ensure that policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, are in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences	Met

Key observations for standard 5.

28. Support services were available from the university for students on the AMHP programme, including confidential counselling services. As all students were sponsored by their employer, they had access to workplace occupational health services (5.1). In terms of academic support, students had access to a range of university support services including personal tutoring, library services, and academic skills support (5.2).

29. The practice learning agreement included a fitness to practise declaration, which required students to confirm that they would notify the university and their employer of any changes to their fitness to practise (5.3).

30. Students who required reasonable adjustments were given the opportunity to declare this during the admissions process. They were then referred to the university's central Disability and Inclusion team, who completed an assessment and provided the student with a Reasonable Adjustments Plan (5.4).

31. Clear information was made available to students within the handbook regarding attendance requirements, and student attendance was monitored through an electronic register system. Attendance on placement is recorded on an attendance sheet, which is signed off by the employer and university (5.5).

32. Written feedback is provided on formative and summative assessments using a marking rubric, and this is supported by one-to-one tutorials where appropriate to provide further feedback. Students confirmed at inspection that the feedback they receive is timely and meaningful (5.6).

33. A university whistleblowing policy is in place to support students to raise any concerns about unsafe behaviours or wrongdoing. The practice learning agreement also includes a requirement for placements to direct students to the whistleblowing policy for the placement setting (5.7).

Standard 6. Assessments	**Met or not met**
6.1 Ensure that the assessment strategy and design demonstrate that the assessments are robust, fair and consistent, and that those who successfully complete the course have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the competencies set out in the relevant legislation and rules as set out in the guidance that accompanies these standards	Met
6.2 Ensure that professional aspects of practice are integral to assessments	Met
6.3 Use objective measures of student performance which ensure safe and effective practice as an AMHP	Met
6.4 Regularly monitor and evaluate assessment standards	Met

6.5 Clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the course	Met
6.6 Clearly specify that any aegrotat award which may be made will not lead to eligibility to be approved as an AMHP	Met
6.7 Clearly specify the procedure for the right of appeal for students	Met
6.8 Clearly specify a process for the appointment of at least 1 external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and from the relevant part of an appropriate professional register	Not met *see key observations for standard 2 for further information*

Key observations for standard 6.

34. The assessment process and design were outlined and supported with a university-level assessment and feedback policy. Details were provided of the quality assurance processes that were in place for the assessments, including internal moderation and an external examiner process for external moderation (6.1, 6.3, 6.4). Student progression data was also reviewed as part of the annual quality review of all programmes within the department (6.4). A university examinations board oversaw decision-making regarding student progression, following university-wide policies and regulations (6.5). The inspectors recommend that the course provider develops formal routes for stakeholder input into assessments (6.4).

35. Aspects of professional practice were integrated into the assessment of students through critical reflections on practice learning, along with the mid-point and final placement reports (6.2). The assessments throughout the course were mapped to the AMHP competencies to ensure students could demonstrate all competencies on completion of the course (6.3). Employers confirmed that they were satisfied with the standard of AMHPs coming out of the programme (6.1, 6.2, 6.3).

36. We confirmed that there was no aegrotat award available, however students completing only 60 credits could opt to be awarded a certificate in Mental Health Studies (6.6). Regarding academic appeals, there was a university-wide appeals process in place, which students were signposted to through the programme handbook (6.7).

37. A university-wide policy was provided for the appointment for external examiners (EEs), along with the details of the currently appointed EE. On review of the EE's background and experience, the inspectors identified that they were not on the relevant part of an appropriate professional register. While the EE had appropriate academic experience, they also did not have relevant professional experience or qualifications. The inspectors therefore recommend that a condition is applied to this standard (6.8).

Outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved with conditions. These will be monitored for completion.

The regulator decision maker agreed with this recommendation.

Conditions

Conditions for approval are set if there are areas of a course that do not currently meet our standards. Conditions must be met by the course provider within the agreed timescales.

Having considered whether approval with conditions or a refusal of approval was an appropriate course of action, the inspection team are proposing the following conditions for this course at this time.

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	1.2	The course provider will evidence that they have implemented a consistent process for confirming	3rd December 2026	1.2

		that all students are registered with a relevant regulatory body.		
2	1.3	The course provider will evidence that they have implemented a consistent process for confirming that all students have a satisfactory DBS check.	3rd December 2026	1.3
3	1.7	The course provider will evidence that EDI policies in relation to admissions are being monitored, through analysis of the admissions EDI data and/or collaboration with employers to respond to this data.	3rd December 2026	1.7
4	2.2	The course providers will evidence that regular evaluation systems are in place for the programme, and that these systems include documented input from employers, PWLE, and students.	3rd December 2026	2.2
5	2.4	The course provider will evidence that the person with overall professional responsibility for the course is a relevant qualified professional with appropriate experience.	3rd December 2026	2.4
6	6.8	The course provider will evidence a process in place for the appointment of an external examiner who is appropriately experienced, qualified, and registered.	3rd December 2026	6.8

As conditions have been attached to the approval, Buckinghamshire New University must provide evidence of meeting these conditions as outlined in the report and in the timescales agreed. Failure to do so may result in approval being withdrawn.

Recommendations

In addition to the conditions above, the inspectors identified the following recommendations for the course provider. These recommendations highlight areas that the course provider may wish to consider. The recommendations do not affect any decision relating to course approval.

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	1.1	The inspectors recommend that the university take steps to ensure a consistent interview process across applicants wherever possible, to ensure a fair and robust admissions experience.	1.1
2	1.6	The inspectors recommend that the university takes steps to more consistently ensure PWLE involvement in some aspect of the admissions process.	1.6
3	2.1	The inspectors recommend that the course provider develops a clear documentary outline of the management and governance for the programme.	2.1
4	3.1	The inspectors recommend that the course provider develops formal written documentation of stakeholder input in curriculum development and review.	3.1
5	4.4	The inspectors recommend that the course provider bolsters its processes for gathering feedback from students on their experience of placement.	4.4
6	6.4	The inspectors recommend that the course provider develops formal written documentation of stakeholder input into assessments.	6.4

Meeting of Conditions

If conditions are applied to a course approval, Social Work England completes conditions review to make sure course providers have complied with the conditions and are meeting all the AMHP standards.

Inspectors will undertake the conditions review and make recommendations to Social Work England's decision maker.

This section of the report will be completed when the conditions review is completed.

	Standard not met	Condition	Inspector recommendation
1			
2			
3			

Findings