



Education Quality Assurance, Annual Monitoring Report

Agenda Item 9 Paper Ref 07

Paper for the

Social Work England Board

Sponsor

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Reviewed by

Colum Conway, Chief Executive

This paper is for

Assurance and Noting

Associated Strategic Objective

SO7: We will work with course providers to make sure our standards are embedded in practice, whilst encouraging innovative and creative approaches to course development.

Impact: Risk Type and Appetite

Regulatory functions - Cautious

1. Summary

This paper accompanies the attached report 'education and training in the first year of regulation – annual monitoring'. The report shares some high-level findings from the first annual monitoring cycle undertaken with all education and training providers and sets out key areas that we will take forward over the coming year as a result of those findings.

2. Action required

The Board are invited to note the content of this paper and attached report.

3. Commentary

As part of our education and training quality assurance activity, as set out in the Social Workers Regulations 2018 and associated Rules, we are required to undertake an annual monitoring exercise to ensure that approved courses continue to meet the education and training standards. We undertook this annual monitoring process for the first time between September 2020-November 2020, and all 75 education providers delivering 290¹ courses responded to the annual monitoring request.

The annual monitoring return was set out in the following way:

- A declaration to be made by the course provider that approved courses continue to meet the criteria for approval.
- Information from the provider about adjustments they have made to courses because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Information from the provider on how they are preparing to meet the revised education and training standards which come into effect from September 2021.
- A voluntary request for information about the key characteristics of the social work student cohort to help our understanding the diversity and experiences of social work students.

All providers made the declaration and provided significant information and evidence about how they have responded to the pandemic, and how they are preparing for the revised standards. As set out on page six of the attached report, we received a much smaller set of information in response to our request for data relating to student diversity, primarily due to data protection safeguards within the education providers. As such, it is not possible to draw conclusions at this time from the data, and we will continue to work towards developing our approach to working with providers on collecting this data as part of our data and insight strategy.

Following the completion of the annual monitoring exercise with these providers, we conducted a smaller annual monitoring process with approved mental health professional (AMHP) courses (24 courses), and training courses for best interest assessors (BIA) (22 courses). This monitoring process consisted of each provider making the declaration that

¹ In addition, there were eight courses without a student cohort during this annual monitoring period, and who therefore were not required to submit an annual monitoring form.

they continue to meet the relevant criteria for approval, as set out in the education and training Rules. As part of this first annual monitoring process for BIA courses, an aspect of the process was to ascertain how many courses were in fact operating, and also to ask these courses whether they are planning to deliver Approved Mental Capacity Professional courses in the future.

4. Conclusions

As set out in the report, over the course of the year we will undertake the following activities:

- We will communicate with course providers to offer as much flexibility as possible around deadlines for meeting the revised education and training standards. We have started this work as we begin to communicate with providers about the start of the cycle of course reapproval which will commence in September 2021.
- We will explore the scope for updated guidance about what sort of placement settings count as 'statutory' for the purposes of meeting the new standards, and plan to consult educators and practitioners about this. Work has already advanced in these areas, and a 'task and finish' group involving professional experts has been working to develop revised guidance which we will then consult upon.
- We will continue to seek knowledge about what works well to involve people with lived experience in social work education with course providers and educators.
- We will continue to discuss any emerging support requirements for students nearing the end of their courses, including additional issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We will continue to be ready to discuss the scope to build 'no detriment' provision into ongoing business continuity plans with course providers.
- We will engage with course providers, social work students and apprentices in gaining a fuller understanding of what forms of blended learning prove most sustainable and effective.
- We will review the design of the annual monitoring form to provide assurance of data protection and anonymity, and to seek a full data set around student gender balance. This work will form part of our wider data and insight strategy, and we hope to be able to use an updated form when we undertake our second annual monitoring exercise from September 2021.

5. Annexes

Attached is the report 'education and training in the first year of regulation – annual monitoring'.