

Inspection Report

Course provider: University College Birmingham

Course approval: BA (Hons) Social Work Degree
Apprenticeship, PGDip Social Work Degree
Apprenticeship

Inspection dates: 9th – 12th December 2025

Report date:	23 rd December 2025
Inspector recommendation:	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	18 th February 2026
Date conditions met and approved:	N/A

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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 standards](#) and ensure that learners successfully completing these courses can meet our [professional standards](#).
2. During the approval process, we appoint partner inspectors. One inspector is a registered social worker with us, and the other is not a registered social worker (a 'lay' inspector). These inspectors, along with an officer from the education quality assurance team, undertake an activity to review information and carry out an inspection. This activity could include observing and asking questions about teaching, placement provision, facilities and learning resources; asking questions based on the evidence submitted; and meeting with staff, training placement providers, people with lived experience and learners. The inspectors then make recommendations to us about whether a course should be approved.
3. The process we undertake is described in our legislation, the Social Worker Regulations 2018¹, and the Social Work England ([Education and Training](#)) Rules 2019.
4. You can find further guidance on our course change, approval and annual monitoring processes on our website.

What we do

5. When an education provider wants to make a change to a course or requests the approval of a new course, they are asked to consider how their course meets our education and training standards and our professional standards, and provide evidence of this to us.
6. The education quality assurance officer reviews all the documentary evidence provided and will contact the education provider if they have any questions about the information submitted. They also provide advice and guidance on our approval processes.
7. When we are satisfied that we have all the documentary evidence required to proceed with an inspection, we assign one registrant and one lay inspector. We undertake a conflict of interest process when confirming our inspectors to ensure there is no bias or perception of bias in the approval process.
8. The inspectors complete an assessment of the evidence provided and advise the officer if they have any queries that may be addressed in advance of the inspection.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2018/9780111170090/contents>

9. During this time, a draft plan for the inspection is developed and shared with the education provider to make sure it is achievable at the point of inspection.

10. Once the inspectors and officers are satisfied that an inspection can take place, this is usually undertaken over a three to four-day visit to the education provider. We then draft a report setting out what we found during the inspection and if and how our findings demonstrate that the course meets our standards. Inspections are carried out either on site at the education provider's campus or remotely using virtual meetings.

11. The inspectors may recommend in this report that the course is approved with conditions, approved without conditions or that it does not meet the criteria for approval. Where the course has previously been approved, we may also decide to withdraw approval.

12. A draft of this report is shared with the education provider, and once we have considered any comments or observations they may wish to provide, we make a final regulatory decision about the approval of the course.

13. The final decisions that we can make are as follows: that the course is approved without conditions, the course is approved with conditions or that the course does not meet the criteria for approval. The decision and the report are then published.

14. If the course is approved with conditions, we will write to the education provider setting out how they can demonstrate they have met the conditions, the action we will take once we decide that the conditions are met, and the action we will take if we decide that the conditions are not met.

Summary of Inspection

15. The University College Birmingham’s proposed BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship and PGDip Social Work Degree Apprenticeship were inspected for approval against Social Work England’s Education and Training Standards 2021.

Inspection ID	UCB_CPP500_CPP501
Course provider	University College Birmingham
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Courses inspected	BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship PGDip Social Work Degree Apprenticeship
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship - 45 PGDip Social Work Degree Apprenticeship - 40
Date of inspection	9 th – 12 th December 2025
Inspection team	Becky Madey (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Joseph Hubbard (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Lisa Brett (Registrant Inspector) Sarah Hamilton (Lay Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved
Approval outcome	Approved

Language

16. In this document, we describe University College Birmingham as ‘the course provider’ or ‘the university’, and we describe the proposed BA Social Work Degree Apprenticeship and the PGDip Social Work Apprenticeship as ‘the course/s’, ‘the apprenticeship/s’, or ‘the programme/s’.

Inspection

17. An on-site inspection took place from 9th to 12th December 2025. As part of this process, the inspection team met with key stakeholders, including apprentices on existing programmes, course staff, support services staff, employers, and people with lived experience of social work.

18. These meetings formed the basis of the inspection plan, which was agreed with the education provider ahead of inspection. The following section provides a summary of these sessions, who participated and the topics that were discussed with the inspection team.

Conflict of interest

19. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with learners

20. The inspection team met with several learners from across several year groups of the existing Nursing Associate apprenticeship, as this was the most similar existing programme. Discussions included admissions, placements, assessment, student support, and student voice.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course team, admissions team, senior management, practice-based learning team, and support services.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the design and delivery of the university's social work programmes. Discussions included admissions, readiness for direct practice, course development and delivery, training and support.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from employer partners, including local authorities and the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector (PVI) organisations. They also met with a number of practice educators and a representative from the West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership.

Findings

24. In this section, we set out the inspectors' findings in relation to whether the education provider has demonstrated that it meets the education and training standards and that the course will ensure that apprentices who successfully complete the course can meet the professional standards.

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. Documentary evidence demonstrated a two-stage admissions process. Employer partners would identify candidates who may be suitable for the apprenticeships in Stage 1. The university would then host an assessment day, Stage 2, which consisted of a panel interview and a group exercise. The panel interview attendees would include a member of the social work team and an employer partner representative. The group exercise had been co-designed with, and would be supported by, people with lived experience.

26. Entry requirements, including English language, were confirmed within the admissions guide submitted by the university. The inspectors were assured that the admissions process would assess an applicant's potential to meet the professional standards, as well as their command of English, information and communication technology (ICT) and capability to meet academic standards. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.2

27. The mapping document narrative outlined the requirement for employers to confirm that applicants had at least 6 months of experience in a social care setting and would be working in an appropriate role to meet the Social Worker Apprenticeship standards. This experience would be outlined within the application form. Stage 2 of the process was designed to draw upon the applicant's experience through a panel interview and group exercise. Prior to enrolment, applicants would have to complete an Initial Needs Assessment Skills Scan, which would explore their existing knowledge, skills and behaviours. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.3

28. Employer partners would identify candidates who may be suitable for the apprenticeships in Stage 1 of the admissions process. These candidates would attend the Stage 2 panel interviews with the course provider. Where possible, the course provider would take measures to ensure employers were not assessing their own candidates. People with lived experience would support and assess applicants with the group exercise.

29. At inspection, this involvement was confirmed by both stakeholder groups. People with lived experience confirmed that they had redrafted the panel interview questions with the course team. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.4

30. The mapping document confirmed that prior to enrolment, employers must complete and return an Employer Nomination Form and a DBS, Occupational Health and Safeguarding Form. The course provider confirmed that at Stage 1 of the admissions process, the employer was responsible for verifying an applicant's enhanced DBS.

31. During the inspection, the course team confirmed that where applicants are not on the DBS update service, the university would complete an enhanced DBS check. Where suitability issues arise, the course team would review these on a case-by-case basis, liaising with the applicant's employer. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.5

32. Documentary evidence provided for this standard included the course provider's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy, Transgender Policy, and Strategic Plan. The Employer Nomination Form captured diversity data at Stage 2 of the admissions process. Applicants could also declare any reasonable adjustments within this form. During the inspection, the course team confirmed that the diversity data would be monitored and reviewed. Reasonable adjustments would be discussed further with the applicant to ensure accessibility during the admissions processes. It was confirmed that all staff undertook EDI training, and this was monitored by the course provider. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.6

33. Documentary evidence included admissions guidance for employers and potential applicants to support the admissions process. These documents outlined information regarding course content, structure, the professional standards and apprenticeship knowledge, skills and behaviours. The university website outlined details of apprenticeship fees, and briefing slides explained that apprentices who completed the courses would be eligible to apply to register with Social Work England. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

34. Documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that learners enrolled on the BA Social Work Degree Apprenticeship would complete 185 placement days and 15 skills days. Learners enrolled on the PGDip Social Work Apprenticeship would complete 190 placement days and 10 skills days. The mapping narrative outlined that the courses were designed with

time allocated to allow apprentices to retrieve any missed learning. This would be monitored through progress reviews between the course team, employer and apprentice. Requirements for contrasting placements were detailed within the Placement Handbook. During inspection, the course team confirmed that there would be a minimum of 30 days providing contrasting placement experience to allow a flexible approach across employer partners. Where employers could not provide a statutory placement for apprentices, the course provider ensured that arrangements would be put in place using a Job Analysis Tool, which identified how the placement was able to meet the requirements for a statutory task placement. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.2

35. The mapping narrative outlined the employer's responsibility to ensure that apprentices had access to practice learning opportunities that enabled them to gain the necessary knowledge and skills. The course provider's placement handbook sets out placement requirements. Learning opportunities were monitored through documentation such as the Job Analysis Tool, the Practice Placement Portfolio and the Practice Learning Agreement. Development of knowledge and skills would be monitored through progress reviews between the course team, employer and apprentice. During the inspection, employer partners confirmed their understanding of this requirement. The West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership representative confirmed that there was a regional approach to the quality assurance of placements. The course provider confirmed that they intended to join the teaching partnership following approval of the course. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.3

36. Documentary evidence provided included the placement handbook, which outlined the requirements related to this standard. The mapping narrative confirmed that employers would induct their apprentices into their role, as well as their contrasting learning experiences. The Practice Placement Portfolio outlined the recommended frequency for supervision, which would be agreed and documented within the Practice Learning Agreement.

37. During the inspection, the course team explained that they would have oversight of supervision, support and workload of apprentices through their progress reviews. The inspection team were assured by student support services colleagues that apprentices would receive the same support offer as other students whilst on placement. Employer partners confirmed their understanding regarding induction, supervision and workload. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.4

38. During the inspection, the course team explained that some apprentices may remain in the same role throughout their course. Employers understood that the requirements regarding appropriate responsibilities would be set out by the course provider and would be monitored through regular meetings. Apprentice responsibility and workload would be overseen by a named practice educator, who is a registered social worker. The course team confirmed that progress reviews would be used to ensure that apprentices had appropriate levels of responsibility. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.5

39. The mapping narrative outlined that any apprentice who was nominated by their employer to undertake the course must have passed, or be in the process of completing, their probation period, and engaged in appropriate direct work with people with lived experience. The course team confirmed that they would ensure that a valid enhanced DBS check is in place at the admissions stage. The apprentice would then declare to the course provider annually that their circumstances have not changed.

40. A formative Assessed Preparation for Direct Practice would be completed in Year 1, before any placement period, which included a group discussion, a direct observation and a reflective written assessment. During inspection, people with lived experience confirmed that they would be involved in this formative assessment. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.6

41. As outlined in the mapping document, the course team requires for every appointed practice educator an up-to-date DBS, Social Work England registration number, relevant qualifications, and evidence of currency and CPD. The university offered workshops and briefings every two months to support practice educators to maintain their currency.

42. During the inspection, the course team confirmed that practice educators must have supervised a minimum of one learner every two years to maintain currency. Practice educators would confirm to the course team in writing that they remained registered with Social Work England following the annual renewal period. The course team would also check the Social Work England register to confirm registration following the renewal period. The West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership representative explained that the partnership delivered CPD sessions for all social workers within the region. The course provider confirmed that they intended to join the teaching partnership following approval of the course. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.7

43. Documentary evidence provided included the Practice Placement Portfolio, which listed the relevant policies required to be accessible to apprentices. The Placement Handbook confirmed that these policies will be introduced during the apprentice's induction.

44. During the inspection, support services colleagues outlined the routes available for apprentices to raise concerns within the university. Learners on another professional apprenticeship programme confirmed that they knew how to raise a concern and how to access the relevant policies. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

45. Documentary evidence provided for this standard outlined the university's management and governance plan. This included details of the university leadership structures and quality review processes. The Programme Quality Review Enhancement and Monitoring (PQEM), designed to review programme performance, good practice, and areas of enhancement, informed the Departmental Quality Review, Enhancement and Monitoring (DQEM) and the School Quality Review, Enhancement and Monitoring (SQEM). It was confirmed that the Programme Lead and Head of Social Work were registered social workers. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.2

46. The course team confirmed that each apprentice would have an agreed training plan, signed by the apprentice, employer partner and university, which detailed their work-based learning. The mapping narrative outlined details of the Practice Learning Agreement, which would document important placement arrangements. Action plans would be implemented and monitored if the apprentice could not provide evidence that the learning was meeting apprenticeship and Social Work England standards. It was acknowledged by the course provider that Social Work England approval was required before contractual agreements could be put in place.

47. Employer partners confirmed that they had discussed placement agreements with the course provider and understood that expectations would be clearly set out within their contracts. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.3

48. Documentary evidence provided for this standard included a declaration within the Practice Placement Portfolio and a prompt within the Progress Review Template. Tutors would confirm with apprentices that they had access to organisational policies in relation to their health, well-being, and risk. During the inspection, learners on another professional

apprenticeship programme confirmed that they knew how to raise a concern related to placement. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.4

49. Documentary evidence provided for this standard demonstrated employer involvement in two SPRINT events with the course provider, which was confirmed by employer partners during the inspection. The SPRINT events used previous learning to co-produce the course design and delivery model. Employers continued to be updated on course developments through email. Following approval, the course team intended to meet regularly with employer partners to review apprentice progress and review the course. Employer partners received quarterly progress data as a requirement of apprenticeship funding rules.

50. During the inspection, it was confirmed that most employers were part of the West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership, which was used as a forum to work collaboratively between employers and universities. The teaching partnership recruited practitioners to deliver skills days within universities. The course provider confirmed that they intended to join the teaching partnership following approval of the course. The course team also offered examples of practitioner involvement in skills days outside of the teaching partnership. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.5

51. The mapping document outlined that the course team intended to hold stakeholder meetings twice a year to review and discuss the programme's progress, which would include apprentices, people with lived experience and employers.

52. People with lived experience explained their involvement throughout the course, for example, redrafting policies, developing modules with the course team and reviewing assessments. The inspection team were assured that the feedback of people with lived experience was regularly collected and analysed. The course team confirmed their commitment to the ongoing involvement of people with lived experience in their monitoring and evaluation processes.

53. All apprentices could provide feedback informally with the course team, and formally through surveys, module evaluation, student forums and through engagement with the Student Guild. Student Representatives would share feedback at Subject Boards and Boards of Studies meetings. Feedback was discussed by the course team at monthly team meetings. During the inspection, learners on another professional apprenticeship programme confirmed that there were feedback mechanisms in place and recognised that changes were implemented as a result.

54. Employer partners confirmed their involvement in two SPRINT events. The inspection team was assured by the course team that employers would complete the Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) survey, which was reviewed by the Placement Quality Panel and

circulated back to employers as a report. The course provider would hold regular employer and line management meetings, as well as practice educator workshops. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

55. The mapping narrative outlined that, as these courses are apprenticeships, learner numbers were determined by employer need. The contractual requirements between the university and the employer would ensure that there was sufficient placement capacity. During the inspection, members of the senior leadership team confirmed their commitment to sufficiently resourcing the course. A panel took place each week to review university staffing requests. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

56. The mapping narrative outlined the experience of the programme lead and the head of social work, who were registered social workers with appropriate experience. The head of social work would hold overall professional responsibility for the course. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

57. Documentary evidence provided for this standard included the CVs of the course team. The mapping narrative outlined the experience of the programme lead and the head of social work, who were registered social workers. During the inspection, members of the senior leadership team outlined arrangements for managing absence from the team and ensuring sufficient resourcing. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

58. Documentary evidence provided for this standard included details of the university's quality review processes at programme and school level. The university operated a Programme Quality Review Enhancement and Monitoring (PQEM) process designed to enhance learner experience and optimise outcomes. The PQEM process included analysis of continuation, completion, and attainment rates across various demographic groups.

59. At inspection, it was confirmed that the programme lead completed the PQEM, with progression being reviewed by the Apprenticeship Management Committee, which in turn fed into the Academic Board. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.10

60. The mapping document narrative outlined the range of ways in which the programme team would be supported to engage in ongoing professional development. Involvement in the Progress Review meetings required for apprentices would support course staff to maintain their knowledge of professional practice, and they would also be encouraged to participate in the Academics Into Practice scheme as part of the West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership. Evidence was provided of continuing professional development activities staff in the school have engaged with, to show the university's commitment to supporting the maintenance of staff's practice currency. At inspection, the course team staff provided a number of examples of ways in which they ensured their knowledge of professional practice stays up to date, including participation in national networks and conferences. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

61. The documentary evidence provided before inspection confirmed that the curriculum and programme learning outcomes had been mapped to a series of relevant guidance and frameworks, including Social Work England's Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours, Social Work England's Professional Standards, and Skills England social worker apprenticeship occupation duties. Details were also provided of how the teaching and learning strategy had been designed to enable apprentices to demonstrate that they had the knowledge and skills to meet Social Work England's professional standards. At inspection, further detail was provided regarding the programmes' curricula and the proposed content of skills days. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

62. As discussed within standards 3.4 and 3.5, review of the university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that development of the apprenticeships had been supported by key employer stakeholders, who had engaged in several consultation and development events. People with lived experience of social work (PWLE) had also participated in these events and were consulted with throughout the development of the programme.

63. At inspection, several mechanisms for ongoing stakeholder engagement were discussed, including participation in the board of studies and Practice Quality Panel, in addition to bimonthly meetings with employer partners. Both employer partner and PWLE representatives confirmed their involvement and that this had been meaningful, with their input being heard and actioned on. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

64. The university's mapping document outlined how Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles had been embedded in the design of the curricula and would inform the delivery of the programmes. A range of university-wide EDI policies were supplied, including an Access and Participation Plan and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. It was also explained how particular modules would develop apprentices' engagement with EDI principles, such as the Social Work, Social Justice and Lived Experience module. Consideration had also been given to decolonisation of the curriculum when designing both programmes.

65. At inspection, the information provided within the mapping document was triangulated with senior management and course team members, and university support staff outlined how their services met the needs of a diverse learner population. It was also confirmed that a further university-wide inclusion strategy was due to be launched by the university. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

66. The documentary evidence for this standard included an explanation of the processes through which the programmes would be kept under review, to ensure they remained up to date with developments in legislation, practice, and research. The mapping narrative stated that the university's workload management process included dedicated planning time to review and update course content. The currency of the programmes would also be reviewed through the university's quality assurance processes, as discussed within previous standards.

67. It was confirmed at inspection that the university would be a participant in the regional teaching partnership, which would further support the inclusion of recent developments in practice into the programmes. Employer partners also confirmed that they had been asked to provide their adopted models to inform course content. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

68. Evidence provided before inspection indicated that the programme had been designed and would be delivered to support apprentices to integrate theory and practice in their learning. The mapping stated that application of theory to practice would be modelled to apprentices through the use of case studies, examples from professional practice, and simulation of practice approaches. An example was provided of the use of 'problem-based learning' scenarios, which would require apprentices to work in groups on complex real-world case examples.

69. It was noted within this standard that practice educators would also contribute to developing apprentices' integration of theory into practice while they are on placement. Apprentices' ability to apply theory to practice would be assessed as part of the apprenticeship KSBs, and would therefore be reviewed regularly through the Progress Review meetings. At inspection, it was confirmed that skills days would include a day dedicated to

the application of theory to practice. The inspection team was satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

70. The university's documentary submission noted that apprentices would be undertaking work within multi-disciplinary teams as part of their existing roles, and would be required to reflect on this particularly while on placement. Within the taught element of the programmes, some content would be delivered by teaching staff from other professions such as public health, substance use, advocacy, criminology, nursing, and psychology. There would also be opportunities to learn alongside learners from professions such as paramedics and nursing within the school.

71. At inspection, it was confirmed that interprofessional learning is a priority for the school. An extensive simulation suite had recently opened, which had been designed to support interprofessional learning. It was also confirmed that social work staff currently teach on other courses in the school, and that this would be reciprocal once the programmes are running. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.7

72. Documentary evidence for this standard confirmed the requirements that would apply to learners on the apprenticeship programmes, reflecting apprenticeship funding rules regarding time spent during on-the-job and off-the-job learning. Information was also provided in the documentation regarding how attendance at academic learning would be monitored through an electronic registration system. At inspection, it was confirmed that time requirements for both placement and academic hours would be very comprehensively tracked and mapped due to apprenticeship requirements and contractual obligations. Each apprentice's attendance data would be shared between the university, employer, and apprentice, and monitored through Progress Review meetings. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.8

73. The documentary evidence for this standard included details of the planned assessment strategy for both courses, which followed the university's assessment cycle and would be reviewed regularly by the academic board and the external examiner. The programmes would include a broad range of assessment types, including presentations, mock social work assessments, critical case studies, professional discussions, and a portfolio of practice learning. All assessments were mapped to the relevant module learning outcomes, which were in turn mapped to Social Work England's Professional Standards. The inspection team was satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 4.9

74. The university's documentary evidence confirmed that all assessments in the programme had been fully mapped to the curriculum, the learning outcomes, and professional standards. All assessments were also aligned with the university's level descriptors for the relevant level of learning. Assessment tasks had been sequenced to build and develop apprentices' knowledge and skills as they progressed through their programme. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.10

75. The mapping document provided before inspection stated that the assessment strategy for the programmes required feedback to include constructive aspects to support their ongoing development, including areas of strength as well as challenge. All written assessments would be marked anonymously, and feedback would be provided within 20 working days. The programmes would include both formative and summative assessment elements to support apprentices' development ahead of summative work. Marking would be annotated and include clear, actionable feedback, and both internal and external moderation would be in place for quality assurance of assessment marking.

76. At inspection, learners on an existing apprenticeship within the school reported that they have received constructive feedback throughout their programme to support their ongoing development. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.11

77. Review of course staff CVs and other relevant documentation before the inspection confirmed that all members of the programme team had appropriate expertise, and that all new staff members would be appropriately inducted and trained to carry out assessments. While an external examiner (EE) had not yet been appointed as the programme was not due to begin until September 2026, a job advertisement was provided which made explicit the requirement for the EE to be appropriately qualified and registered with Social Work England. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 4.12

78. The university's documentary evidence outlined how the university used a digital data analysis tool, Power BI, to track apprentice progression, retention, and outcomes. Apprentices' progression data would be closely monitored and reviewed through Progress Review Meetings to inform decisions about each apprentice's progression. Direct observations of practice were required to take place, and the outcomes were recorded within the apprentices' practice portfolio. Formal decisions regarding each apprentice's progression

would be made at the Exam Board and in line with the apprenticeship funding rules. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.13

79. Evidence was provided ahead of inspection that set out how apprentices would be introduced to the importance of evidence-informed practice from the outset of the programmes, with course content covering the analysis and evaluation of research. Relevant content across the programmes included teaching on developmental theories, legal and policy frameworks, and the interpretation and application of a range of types of evidence. The reading lists for all modules included peer-reviewed research along with legislation, statutory guidance, and policy documents. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

80. Documentary evidence provided by the university for this standard demonstrated that the university provided a range of services to support apprentices' health and wellbeing. These services included confidential counselling, careers advice, and occupational health services as required by this standard. Additionally, the university was a member of Student Minds' University Mental Health Charter. With regards to occupational health, applicants to the programme would receive an occupational health assessment as part of the admissions process, and would have access to their employers' occupational health service once on the programme. It was confirmed that apprentices could also access university occupational health if necessary. The university also had a specific Break In Learning process in place to provide support for apprentices taking a break from learning due to personal circumstances.

81. At inspection, details of the support available to apprentices were triangulated with representatives from various support services across the university. Support services staff demonstrated an awareness of considerations relevant specifically to apprentices, such as less time on campus and access to services outside of working hours. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.2

82. The university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that apprentices would be allocated a personal tutor and also have access to tutorial support for each academic module they undertook. The university provided written guidance for staff to support the provision of quality personal tutoring and academic support. The university had a central team, the Centre for Academic Skills and English (CASE), which provided academic skills support. There was also a subject-specific academic librarian in place to ensure that the university library had relevant and current resources for apprentices.

83. At inspection, course staff and support services staff confirmed the details of the academic support which would be available to social work apprentices. An additional provision outlined during inspection was the ASET (Academic Skills in English Task), an assessment which evaluated each learner's academic skills and areas for development, then signposted to relevant support services and resources. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 5.3

84. As discussed within standard 1.4, the university provided documentary evidence demonstrating how an applicant's suitability for the programme was assessed at the admissions stage. Once on the programme, apprentices would be required to complete an Annual Declaration of Suitability for Social Work each year. These declarations would be reviewed by a member of the course team, with any concerns being raised with the programme lead.

85. The inspection team met with current learners on another professional apprenticeship programme, who confirmed that the university had clearly communicated the requirement that they declare any changes in their potential suitability throughout their programme. The course team cited progress review meetings as one of the various opportunities they would have to monitor apprentices' suitability and check for any changes. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.4

86. Documentary evidence confirmed that apprentices would be asked to declare any disabilities during the admissions process, through the occupational health assessment. There was also a question regarding any disabilities within the annual suitability declaration. Once enrolled, any apprentices who had declared a disability would be signposted to access support from the university's central disability support service. The disability service worked with apprentices to develop an access and support plan, which set out any reasonable adjustments required for academic work and/or placement learning.

87. The documentary evidence provided also outlined how accessibility had been embedded into the programme throughout its development. This was evidenced in a number of features of universal design intended to make the programme more accessible for all apprentices, such as accessible teaching materials and assessment flexibility. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

88. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that the programme handbook and module guides would provide apprentices with detailed information about the programme. These materials would be provided to apprentices for reference throughout their programme. Documentation also indicated that apprentices would be provided with information about the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) and the transition to registered social work practice as part of the Readiness for Social Work Practice module. In addition, there would be a specific skills day delivered towards the end of the programmes, intended to support apprentices' transition to registered social work practice. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.6

89. Documentary evidence provided before the inspection confirmed that the programme handbook and module guides set out the attendance requirements for the proposed apprenticeships. Attendance was mandatory for all aspects of the programme, and would be monitored through digital attendance monitoring and progress review meetings. At inspection, learners on a current apprenticeship within the school confirmed that any missed teaching had to be made up through a retrieval of learning process. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 5.7

90. As discussed within standard 4.10, the mapping document provided before inspection stated that the assessment strategy for the programmes required feedback to include constructive aspects to support their ongoing development, including areas of strength as well as challenge. All written assessments would be marked anonymously, and feedback would be provided within 20 working days. The programmes would include both formative and summative assessment elements to support apprentices' development ahead of summative work. Marking would be annotated and include clear, actionable feedback, and both internal and external moderation would be in place for quality assurance of assessment marking.

91. At inspection, learners on an existing apprenticeship within the school reported that they have received constructive feedback throughout their programme, and confirmed that this feedback is provided within the stated timescales. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.8

92. Review of the evidence provided before inspection confirmed there was a university-wide Assessment and Appeals Procedure in place. The procedure was available on the university portal and signposted in the programme handbook. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard six: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register

Standard 6.1

93. As the qualifying courses were a BA (Hons) Degree Apprenticeship and PGDip Apprenticeship, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
Admissions			
<p>1.1 Confirm on entry to the course, via a holistic/multi-dimensional assessment process, that applicants:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards 2. can demonstrate that they have a good command of English 3. have the capability to meet academic standards; and 4. have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2 Ensure that applicants' prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.4 Ensure that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes criminal conviction checks.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5 Ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
1.6 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 professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning environment			
2.1 Ensure that students spend at least 200 days (including up to 30 skills days) gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings. Each student will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and 2. a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.7 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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Course governance, management and quality			
3.1 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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2 Ensure that they have agreements with placement providers to provide education and training that meets the professional standards and the education and training qualifying standards. This should include necessary consents and ensure placement providers have contingencies in place to deal with practice placement breakdown.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3 Ensure that placement providers have the necessary policies and procedures in relation to students’ health, wellbeing and risk, and the support systems in place to underpin these.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.4 Ensure that employers are involved in elements of the course, including but not limited to the management and monitoring of courses and the allocation of practice education.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
3.5 Ensure that regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, and that these involve employers, people with lived experience of social work, and students.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.6 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes consideration of local/regional placement capacity.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.7 Ensure that a lead social worker is in place to hold overall professional responsibility for the course. This person must be appropriately qualified and experienced, and on the register.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.8 Ensure that there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise, to deliver an effective course.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.9 Evaluate information about students' performance, progression and outcomes, such as the results of exams and assessments, by collecting, analysing and using student data, including data on equality and diversity.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.10 Ensure that educators are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum and assessment			
4.1 Ensure that 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 to meet the professional standards.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
4.2 Ensure that the views of employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of social work are incorporated into the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, and human rights and legislative frameworks.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4 Ensure that the course is continually updated as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5 Ensure that the integration of theory and practice is central to the course.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6 Ensure that students are given the opportunity to work with, and learn from, other professions in order to support multidisciplinary working, including in integrated settings.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.7 Ensure that the number of hours spent in structured academic learning under the direction of an educator is sufficient to ensure that students meet the required level of competence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.8 Ensure that the assessment strategy and design demonstrate that the assessments are robust, fair, reliable and valid, and that those who successfully complete the course have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.9 Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression through the course.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are appropriately qualified and experienced and on the register.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.12 Ensure that there are systems to manage students' progression, with input from a range of people, to inform decisions about their progression, including via direct observation of practice.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.13 Ensure that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting students			
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing, including: 1. confidential counselling services; 2. careers advice and support; and 3. occupational health services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development, including, for example, personal tutors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the professional standards, in accordance with relevant legislation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.5 Provide information to students about their curriculum, practice placements, assessments and transition to registered social worker, including information on requirements for continuing professional development.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.6 Provide information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register			
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor’s degree with honours in social work.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Regulator decision

Approved.