



Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Hertfordshire

Course approval: BSc (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship

Inspection dates: 13th – 15th February 2024

Report date:	26.03.2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	29.04.2024

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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 students successfully completing these courses can meet our [professional standards](#).
2. During the approval process, we appoint partner inspectors. One inspector is a social worker registered 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 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 students. 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, new course 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 request 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. We are also undertaking a cycle of re-approval of all currently approved social work courses in England following the introduction of the Education and Training Standards 2021.
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 appearance 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 able to 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 officer are satisfied that an inspection can take place, this is usually undertaken over a three- or 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.
11. The inspectors may recommend in this report that the course is approved with conditions, without conditions or that it does not meet the criteria for 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 decision about the approval of the course.
13. The 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 the conditions are not met.

Summary of Inspection

15. Course details: The University of Hertfordshire wish to run a three year Bachelors of Art Social Work Degree Apprenticeship with the first cohort being proposed for September 2024.

Inspection ID	UH_BADA
Course provider	University of Hertfordshire
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	BSc (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship
Mode of Study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	20
Proposed first intake	September 2024
Date of inspection	13 th – 15 th February 2024
Inspection team	Catherine Denny (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Lainy Russell (Lay Inspector) Lisa Brett (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe University of Hertfordshire as ‘the education provider’ or ‘the university’ and we describe the BSc (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship as ‘the course’

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 13th – 15th February 2024 across sites in Hatfield, Hertfordshire where the education provider is based. As part of this process the inspection team planned to meet with key stakeholders including students, course staff, employers and people with lived experience of social work.

18. These meetings formed the basis of the inspection plan, 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 students

20. The inspection team met with six students from the BSc and MSc Social Work who were at different stages in their study. All students had completed at least one of the placements required as part of their degree. Discussions included experience of admission to the course, placement experiences, curriculum, assessment and student support services available through the university.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course team, placements team, senior leadership team, admissions, central apprenticeship teams and student 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 offering input into the development of social work courses within the university. Discussions included their involvement in admissions processes across social work courses, their input into the development of the apprenticeship, involvement in the assessment of students and how the university regularly sought input into the development and review of provision.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust and Phoenix and Spring Care Support Services.

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 students who successfully complete the course are able to meet the professional standards.

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. Documentation submitted by the education provider outlined an admissions process which included a wide range of assessments which would be undertaken in partnership between the university and employer partners. The inspection team heard that the whole interview process was underpinned by appropriate systems which were accessible to the student, university and employer partners. Where new employers came on board, appropriate training was provided by the university.

26. The evidence provided outlined an online interview process, however the inspection team were assured by the university that, should candidates require additional support or have accessibility needs, these could be discussed with members of the admissions team via telephone or face to face. Student representatives from other social work courses delivered by the university explained that their experience of admission to the course had been positive and that communication was consistently clear. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

27. The inspection team heard that prior relevant experience was considered at all stages of the application process, starting with the questions used as part of the initial application. This was further expanded upon through the provision of an initial needs assessment which was completed by all candidates and through questions used within interviews. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

28. The narrative provided by the university outlined their intention for all apprenticeship interviews to include employers, placement providers and people with lived experience (PWLE) of social work. The involvement of these stakeholders included playing a role in the scoring of candidates and leading specific elements of the process, such as group exercises. The university outlined that their intention was to replicate what was in place across other courses as this had proved to be a successful model.

29. During a meeting with employer representatives, positive feedback was provided about their involvement in admissions processes for other social work courses at the university. Representatives confirmed that they understood proposals about processes for the apprenticeship and explained that they intended to refrain from interviewing candidates from their own organisation to retain a fair and consistent approach for all.

30. PWLE were consistently involved in admissions processes for established social work courses at the university and explained that they understood that this would be replicated for the degree apprenticeship. Representatives explained that they felt like a valued and integral part of the process and were able to challenge decisions where necessary. The inspection team also heard that members of the PWLE network had co-produced an admissions guide to support new representatives involved in interviews, however this was not consistently used in its intended format.

31. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to reinstating consistent use of the PWLE admissions guide. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.4

32. Suitability processes for the course were outlined within the course programme specification as part of the entry requirements for the course, and through the apprenticeship handbook. Due to the nature of apprentice's employment status, there was an expectation that enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks would be completed by the employer and this was outlined within the draft apprenticeship training services agreement submitted by the course provider. The apprenticeship handbook also outlined that any successful applicants would be required to undergo an occupational health (OH) screening to ensure suitability for the course. Reference to both DBS and OH screening was further included in the placement learning agreement (PLA) form and this was checked before being signed off for individual apprentices. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

33. The course provider submitted a copy of their institutional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy which included reference to how the diversity of applicants was monitored through admissions. Through meetings held as part of the inspection, the inspection team were eager to understand how applicants with additional needs would be supported through the admissions process and what training was available to members of interview panels. The inspection team heard a consistent response from all stakeholders who confirmed that they understood what support was available to prospective applicants and how to access this. Where additional support had been requested, representatives commented that this was quick and had a positive impact. Examples were provided of the

needs of dyslexic or neurodiverse applicants being picked up through admissions processes as a result of the supportive measures in place. In relation to the training available to interview panels, the inspection team heard that there was a good range of training, which included issues such as unconscious bias.

34. During a meeting with student representatives, the inspection team heard further examples of the support offered to candidates in relation to EDI issues. This included positive information and intervention for international applicants as well as those with caring responsibilities. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

35. The course provider outlined that applicants would be provided with information to support them to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the course via a range of means. This included the university website, via employers and through literature provided by the university. The inspection team reviewed documentation such as a fact sheet and admission day presentations which demonstrated the level of information that would be included. The inspection team heard that information would be presented via a range of means such as face to face events, webinars and through sending hard copies of documents to prospective candidates.

36. Following the initial phase of the admissions process, successful applicants to courses received additional information through keeping warm events and receipt of course handbooks. The course provider also highlighted that a narrated and captioned video about apprenticeships had been developed to support applicant understanding. Student representatives from other courses at the university confirmed that they felt that the information provided was detailed and informative and supported their decision making. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

37. Documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection outlined that all apprentices would complete two placements during their study amounting to 170 days of practice based learning. Year 1 placements were proposed to take place within the apprentices usual workplace, though some employers suggested this would be better managed in a different team. Year 2 placements would provide a contrasting experience, offering statutory tasks, which would be overseen by the university. During meetings with employer partners, the inspection team noted that their understanding of placement requirements and the definition of statutory tasks was strong and in line with the standard.

38. The additional 30 days of practice based learning was provided via skills days however, the inspection team were not clear about how these would be delivered and what the

content would be. The course team provided additional evidence in the form of a draft timetable for skills days on the apprenticeship which included details about workshop topics and suggestions for who would be involved in delivery. The inspection team agreed that there was a good range of skills being proposed and heard that these would be predominantly provided via discrete modules in year 1 and 2. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

39. The course provider outlined their process for auditing placements to ensure that they offered suitable learning opportunities which would enable students to meet both the professional standards and related knowledge skills and behaviours (KSBs) of the apprenticeship standard. In order to ensure that all involved in placements maintained a good understanding of expectations, the course provider offered pre-placement briefings for practice educators (PEs) and work based supervisors (WBS). The inspection team agreed that there was a good range of placements available to students and employers were highly engaged in university led processes to maintain quality. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

40. The course provider outlined how the expectations in relation to induction, supervision and support were communicated to employers in advance of placements commencing. When students started their placements, the Placement Learning Agreement (PLA) meeting and supporting documentation provided a comprehensive overview of requirements and offered ample opportunity for discussion about student needs. Employer partner representatives commented that the PLA documentation provided by the university was strong and students from other social work courses felt there was a good offer in relation to induction and support. Student representatives also commented that, as a result of the support available to them, where challenges occurred, these were quickly resolved. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

41. As with standard 2.3, the course provider outlined how the PLA meeting would support placement providers to ensure that student responsibilities on placement were appropriate to their stage of education and training. This was further supported by the mapping of placements to the relevant descriptor within the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF).

42. The inspection team were interested in how the course provider had considered how the nature of the apprenticeship, and potential for students to be placed in their workplace, might result in higher workloads. The inspection team heard that the course provider had ensured a good level of protection for apprentices by communicating the requirement for them to have the same caseloads as students on other routes, which was understood by

employer representatives. Employer representatives also explained how they had considered the need to move apprentices outside of their usual teams to avoid assumptions about their knowledge or capacity. Further to this, the course provider considered how additional meetings, such as tripartite meetings, could be combined with mid and end point reviews to ensure apprentices did not become overwhelmed. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

43. The course provider outlined the proposed arrangements in place to ensure that students would be assessed as being ready for direct practice. This included tasks such as an interview with a service user or carer and a role play exercise with professional actors. The inspection team heard that the assessment of readiness for practice involved academics, practitioners and people with lived experience of social work to provide a comprehensive overview of students' skills. Students were only permitted to sit the module which assessed readiness for practice twice, which added a further layer of assurance that they would be safe to practice, though employers reported that students from other routes were appropriately prepared. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

44. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection outlined the audit process for Practice Educators (PEs) in place at the university. This included checks of registration, level of qualification and training to ensure PEs hold the required knowledge and skills to support effective learning. The course team explained that information held would be reviewed annually in line with the process for other social work courses.

45. The university also outlined their ongoing training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) offer which included face to face workshops, support groups and conferences. The course team explained that attendance at these sessions for established PEs was currently variable. This was corroborated by current PEs that the inspection team met with who explained that this was due to time constraints. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to considering whether delivery methods for ongoing training and CPD could be adapted to enable a wider range of PEs to attend. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.7

46. The inspection team reviewed copies of organisational whistleblowing policies and documentation which outlined the process for students to raise concerns in relation to unsafe or concerning behaviour. The inspection team agreed that these were appropriate and were understood by students. During the inspection, the inspection team also heard about the provision of extraordinary meetings which could be called by anyone involved in a

student placement if concerns were raised. This was seen as an additional mechanism in which student concerns could be raised. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

47. During a meeting with members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) the inspection team heard details about the robust governance structures in place around the course. The inspection team acknowledged that there were a range of committees and an in depth structure, however this was deemed appropriate and was understood by all. Assistant Deans held specific areas of strategic responsibility however they provided clarity about how their roles and responsibilities interacted to ensure effective management of provision. This was evidenced by senior leaders demonstrating an understanding of programme level issues and any actions required to address these.

48. When considering wider university governance, the inspection team agreed that there was a strong understanding of the requirements of apprenticeships as a whole and that monitoring and evaluation systems had been developed to support this. The team involved in the delivery of the apprenticeship worked with colleagues internally and externally to review plans for the course and consider where actions could have the biggest impact. The inspection team also heard about the provision of funding for the addition of additional staff to support the delivery of the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

49. The inspection team reviewed a copy of the draft apprenticeship training services agreement that had been developed by the university to support the implementation of the course. This was appropriately detailed and contained information about the responsibilities of the employer in supporting the apprenticeship, including details in relation to placement, learning hours and support. The services agreement was further supported by individual placement documentation which would be completed at the start of each placement. The course team outlined that a collaborative approach had been taken to the development of documentation in liaison with employer partners and the teaching partnership.

50. When discussing agreements and the arrangements in place to support with the implementation of these, the inspection team were reassured by the experience of the wider university in relation to the delivery of apprenticeship provision. Conversations with those involved in apprenticeships centrally, who were a key link to the course team, provided details around the implementation of and monitoring of agreements with employers.

51. The inspection team heard details about the arrangements in place in relation to placement breakdowns. This included the provision of extraordinary meetings, tutor support, action planning and review periods. This process was understood by all parties involved in supporting the apprentice. The university also outlined how learning around this process was shared amongst clinical leads in the university to ensure that any necessary changes could be implemented to the process, if required. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

52. Documentary evidence received in advance of the inspection demonstrated that there was a clear audit process in place to ensure that placement providers would have the necessary policies and procedures in place to support students. This was further supported by the provision of employer meetings, training and placement documentation which offered clarity about expectations. During a meeting with employer representatives, the inspection team heard that they were clear about expectations, and systems in place across other courses were effective. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

53. The course provider outlined how the development of the course was conceived as an employer led initiative from the outset. Documentary evidence included details of the involvement of employer partners in the programme committees in place at the university and minutes from the social work degree apprenticeship development meeting. During meetings held with employers during the inspection visit, the inspection team heard that there was consistent knowledge and understanding from employer partners about the development of the course, however some representatives had been more engaged in its development than others.

54. A representative from Hertfordshire County Council offered a range of detail about their involvement which included initial contact and proposal discussions, resourcing, timescale for delivery, stakeholder forums and the provision of the Practice Assessment Panel (PAP). Whilst the inspection team were assured that the standard was met, they agreed that a recommendation was appropriate in relation to widening the pool of employer partners (such as those in NHS or Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector settings) involved in course monitoring and development. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.5

55. Documentary evidence submitted by the course provider outlined how the new course would be subject to monitoring and evaluation by a programme committee and via the course enhancement process. Through both processes, feedback was obtained by all partners, including employers, PWLE and students. As this was a new programme, examples

of how this process worked in practice were provided against established social work courses.

56. During meetings held with relevant stakeholders, the inspection team heard a range of examples about how they were involved in course monitoring, evaluation and improvement processes. Student representatives explained that the system worked well and their feedback was sought at a modular and course level. PWLE representatives explained that they had a range of input into the course but that the feedback they received on their input was often informal or observed by reviewing minutes from meetings. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to strengthening the feedback loop between the course team and relevant stakeholders so that there was clarity about how feedback had resulted in meaningful change. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.6

57. Documentary evidence provided by the course provider outlined a clear approach to the development of the apprenticeship in relation to resourcing, placement availability and staffing. This included details about the development of the course over subsequent years and any relevant funding considerations. Through meetings held with employer partners and those involved in the provision of placement learning, the inspection team heard that there was the necessary placement provision and a growing interest in the course from relevant stakeholders. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

58. The inspection team reviewed the qualifications, experience and registration of the professional lead for the course, who was appropriately qualified and on the register. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

59. As referenced in standard 3.6, the course provider submitted clear planning and rationale for the development of the course which included consideration of staffing and necessary resources. The inspection team heard that staff already employed to support social work provision at the university were being consulted about their interests and experience to support delivery of the course.

60. In relation to wider staffing support, the inspection team met with staff from a range of teams within the university such as those with an apprenticeship specific focus and those from student support services. The inspection team observed that all teams worked well together and had the necessary skills and knowledge to support course delivery. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

61. The course provider outlined how data was collected and analysed using the Tableau system. Examples were provided on the type of data that was provided by the system and how this fed into the course monitoring enhancement process. During the inspection visit, the inspection team also heard details about other data systems that were used to inform analysis of courses and student cohorts. The systems used were live and the course teams were reactive to this, using the data to inform changes to provision. From an EDI perspective, the course team provided evidence of the ways in which they responded to the diversity of student cohorts. The inspection team were confident that these approaches would be translated to the ongoing analysis of the degree apprenticeship and as a result, agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.10

62. Documentary evidence included copies of staff CVs and an overview of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) policy at the university. This included 22 hours (full time equivalent) allocation for staff to undertake scholarly activity, which included research opportunities and attendance at conferences, and was supported and encouraged by senior leaders. The relationship between the university and teaching partnership offered further development opportunities for staff. The inspection team heard details about how staff knowledge and research influenced the review and design of the curriculum. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

63. The inspection team were able to review documentation that demonstrated how the course was mapped to the relevant standards and frameworks including Social Work England professional standards, the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and the apprenticeship standards. It was also clear how each module had been mapped to show its coverage of the relevant frameworks. During conversations with PE and employer representatives, the inspection team were assured that students from the university were well prepared for practice and had a good level of knowledge and skills. Students on other social work courses explained that they felt that their level of competence was strong as a result of the curriculum offered by the university. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

64. As referenced in previous standards, the inspection team saw and heard that PWLE were involved in course review and delivery via a range of mechanisms. This ranged from their input into admissions processes, through the development of supporting guidance and influence on questions used in interviews, through to their input into the assessment of students Readiness for Direct Practice (RfDP).

Commented [DB1]: If this is first use of this acronym, possibly add the full name here?

65. Employer partners had influence on the development and design of the new apprenticeship course and the inspection team also heard how, for other social work provision at the university, some employers supported with the delivery of skills day provision. The course team explained their intention to replicate this model for the apprenticeship due to its previous success. Employer partners also commented that they felt that the university valued input from them, as students often had a good knowledge of the models used within local authorities as the course team had introduced these for students in taught lectures. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met with a recommendation in relation to sharing the content of the curriculum with all PEs involved in supporting students on the course. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.3

66. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection included copies of the Definitive Module Documents (DMDs) across all years of the course. Upon reviewing the documentation, the inspection team agreed that there was evidence of how EDI issues had been threaded into many aspects of learning. During the inspection event, the inspection team were eager to understand how students applied these principles in practice alongside understanding how inclusive course design was for students with additional needs.

67. During the inspection visit, the inspection team heard about the support that had been developed for international students on other social work courses at the university. This was evident from their experience of admission through to the support offered during their study. Student representatives also commented on the assessment design of the courses they were studying and explained how they considered accessibility for all through the range of tasks. The inspection team were able to see this approach mirrored in the design of the new course. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

68. The course provider submitted an overview of the formal mechanisms in place to support ongoing review of the curriculum and course content. As the course was not yet being delivered, the inspection team were able to review examples of the ways in which other social work programmes were updated in line with developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice.

69. The inspection team also received feedback from employer partners about the ways in which they had influenced social work provision at the university. They outlined how their involvement in supporting the delivery of skills sessions provided an opportunity for them to offer perspectives about developments in practice. A further example of how practitioners had influenced the course was provided through the development of workshops in relation

to asylum seekers and refugees following feedback from stakeholders. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

70. The apprenticeship handbook and DMDs which were submitted as documentary evidence offered details about the ways in which theory would be integrated into teaching on the course. Documentation outlined how the role of the PE supported students to integrate this learning into practice.

71. During the inspection, student representatives explained that they felt curriculum content in relation to social work theory was a strength and they were prepared and supported to integrate theory into practice on placement. PE representatives supported this view and commented that students were able to name theories accurately. Supervision between students and PEs offered further opportunities to discuss theory and to plan the ways in which this could be integrated into their work with service users. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

72. The course provider directed the inspection team to a range of examples of interdisciplinary learning within the DMDs for the apprenticeship. The inspection team agreed that planning and intent in this area was clear but were keen to hear more about how this would look in practice. During meetings held as part of the inspection, examples were provided of learning opportunities such as accessing a simulated court room with a barrister. The course team also explained how the wider school that social work sat within supported multidisciplinary learning and, as a result, colleagues from areas such as occupational health and mental health were involved in course delivery. Moving forward the course team hoped to increase opportunities for social work students to learn alongside students from other disciplines through taught sessions, though there was evidence of this already occurring within practice placements. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

73. As with standard 4.6, the DMDs were a key example of evidence to support this standard and offered assurance that there was an appropriate amount of structured time in academic learning. During meetings with the course provider, the inspection team heard that the course team planned to adopt a mainly face to face model with some hybrid options where appropriate as their aim was to build connections amongst the apprenticeship cohort. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

74. The apprenticeship handbook offered details about the range of assessments on the course which included methods such as role play, essays and case studies. The inspection team also heard from employer partners that they had offered feedback on some aspects of the assessment strategy, and this had been responded to within the design for the course. As referenced in standard 4.3, student representatives provided a positive account of their experiences of assessment due to the range of tasks and accessibility of these. The inspection team agreed that assessments had been planned to enable students to meet the professional standards upon completion of the course. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

75. Inspectors agreed that the mapping provided against this standard was clear and robust and included reference to the relevant frameworks. There was evidence of a staggered approach to assessment which progressively challenged students as they moved through the course and included information about key progression points. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

76. During meetings held as part of the inspection, the inspection team heard that students from other social work courses had positive experiences of receiving feedback which supported their ongoing development. Student representatives explained that the assessment criteria provided was sufficiently detailed and offered clear guidance on how to achieve different grades. The fact that this was referred back to by markers ensured a consistent understanding for students.

77. The inspection team heard that standardised templates were used by all markers when offering feedback to students and these were moderated by staff independent to the course team. Both students and staff offered examples of how feedback was a two-way process, with the course team meeting regularly to discuss student experiences and consider how to improve practice in this area. As the apprenticeship would be subject to the same processes as other social work courses, the inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

78. The course provider submitted copies of social work staff CVs to demonstrate the experience and expertise of those involved in the marking of assessments. This was further supported by ongoing moderation which supported staff development in relation to marking and feedback. In addition, the inspection team were able to review the process for the appointment of External Examiners (EEs) to social work courses which was detailed and appropriately checked the qualifications and registration of any new appointments. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

79. The inspection team reviewed documentation which provided details of the systems in place to manage student progression on the course. This included the provision of an exam board where grades were ratified and progression between years was agreed. Placement documentation also outlined the expectations in relation to student observations, which were completed by PEs, and moderated via the Placement Assessment Panel (PAP). PE representatives confirmed that they were clear about the expectations in relation to observations as a result of the input from the university. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

80. The inspection team agreed that there was clear evidence provided of how the design of the course had considered how students would be able to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice. This was demonstrated through the links between curriculum, assessment and placement experiences and the understanding of how to use theory in practice. Student representatives provided clear examples of how learning on the course had supported them in practice and enabled them to bring learning alive. Meetings with the wider staff team also provided details of how students were offered additional support in relation to the development of research skills. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

81. Evidence provided throughout the inspection demonstrated that there was a comprehensive student wellbeing service available which included the provision of safeguarding support, mental health advisors and in house counsellors. The inspection team heard that a key focus for student support services was to break down barriers in relation to asking for help and offer early intervention. Weekly multidisciplinary meetings also ensured that there was a holistic approach to student support.

82. As apprentices often accessed support from their employers, the student wellbeing service outlined their approach to ensuring that students on apprenticeship routes were aware of the additional support available from the university. This included additional signposting on these routes and monthly meetings with apprenticeship teams across the different schools in the university. The team also outlined their close working relationships with employer liaison tutors at the university to target early intervention where required. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

83. In relation to the academic support available for students, the inspection team heard about the provision of 1:1 appointments with members of the academic support team where they could focus on specific areas of need. Embedded workshops on academic skills were also built into the course alongside drop in sessions which could be booked at different times across the week. The inspection team also learned about coaching provision within the university which offered up to 5 meetings with a qualified coach where students could focus upon a personal academic goal.

84. In order to support students working remotely, the academic services team had also introduced online modules which allowed students to engage in self-directed learning to support the development of skills. A pilot program, developed alongside the social work team, had also been developed to support students for whom English was an additional language. Representatives also shared their updated website which had been developed to support ease of access to appointments and resources for students across all courses.

85. In relation to the provision of tutor support, the inspection team reviewed documentation which outlined the different tutor roles and how these interacted with each other. This included a personal tutor, apprenticeships specific employer liaison tutor and employer mentor from within their own workplace organisation. There were good links between central academic services and tutor roles to ensure that student needs could be supported. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

86. The course provider outlined that all apprentices were required to complete a self-disclosure form in relation to their suitability to practice which was revisited through PLA documentation at the start of each placement. The inspection team queried how university and employer processes in relation to suitability interacted and heard from both the course team and employer partners that there was a culture of collaboration and openness which supported the sharing of important information. The provision of extraordinary meetings which focused on early intervention and support also ensured that there was a proactive approach to suitability. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

87. The course provider submitted an overview of their approach to making supportive and reasonable adjustments to students which started from the point of admission to the course. All students completed an initial needs assessment which was reviewed by the course team. Where needs were identified or declared, these would then be passed onto the student disability team who would be able to offer specific intervention or additional screening tools. As outlined in previous standard areas, there was a proactive approach to student support taken by the course provider which was focused upon early intervention and signposting.

88. Where additional needs were identified, a study needs agreement would be implemented which detailed the level of need and support required. This included both short and long term adjustments, and could be reviewed in conjunction with university staff. The inspection team heard that there was a good level of wraparound support in place and this was further supported by good communication between employers and university staff. Student representatives from established social work courses at the university spoke positively about the support in place where required. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

89. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard included copies of handbooks and presentations used to share key information with students in relation to the curriculum, placements, assessments and the role of a social worker. During meetings with students, the inspection team heard that communication in relation to these areas was readily available from the outset of the course and communicated well throughout study. Where students had specific queries, these were answered quickly, and the level of information shared was consistent across all social work courses. As the plan for information sharing on the apprenticeship was in line with that of other established courses, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

90. Details about attendance monitoring and related information was provided through the apprenticeship handbook. The handbook outlined that attendance monitoring would be managed via the Aptem platform and that all absences needed to be reported to both the university and employer. Mandatory sessions were detailed via the relevant DMDs and supporting documentation outlined the potential consequences of missing mandatory sessions. Student representatives demonstrated a clear understanding of attendance expectations. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

91. As outlined in relation to standard 4.10, the inspection team received positive comments from students regarding their experience of receiving feedback. Assessment criteria provided to students was clear and consistently referred back to by markers. The inspection team also heard that students had positive experiences of the feedback they received in relation to formative assessments which supported their ability to apply learning to summative pieces. The course team outlined that they would adopt the same approach to feedback for the apprenticeship and, as a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

92. The inspection team were directed to details about the academic appeals process through documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection. Participants involved in the inspection demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of the process. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

93. As the qualifying course is a BSc social work degree apprenticeship, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	Standard 1.3	The inspection team are recommending that the university consider reinstating consistent use of the admissions guidance which was developed by PWLE.	Paragraph 28
2	Standard 2.6	The inspection team are recommending that the university consider reviewing the delivery methods of their CPD offer for PEs to enable increased participation where travel or time constraints are an issue.	Paragraph 44
3.	Standard 3.4	The inspection team are recommending that the university consider widening the range of employers involved in the launch of the apprenticeship to ensure that there is representation from the PVI sector and NHS trusts.	Paragraph 53
4.	Standard 3.5	The inspection team are recommending that the university review the ways in which it shares updates to stakeholders about the ways in which their feedback has influenced course design.	Paragraph 55
5.	Standard 4.2	The inspection team are recommending that the university consider the ways in which it could share details about the course curriculum and timetables of delivery with PEs involved in supporting students on the course.	Paragraph 64

It should be noted that all qualifying social work courses will be subject to re-approval under Social Work England's [2021 education and training standards](#).

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
Admissions			
1.1 Confirm on entry to the course, via a holistic/multi-dimensional assessment process, that applicants: i. have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards ii. can demonstrate that they have a good command of English iii. have the capability to meet academic standards; and iv. have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.	☒	☐	☒
1.2 Ensure that applicants' prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.	☒	☐	☒
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.	☒	☐	☐
1.5 Ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	☒	☐	☐
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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.			
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: i) placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and ii) 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.	☒	☐	☐
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	☒	☐	☐
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☒

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
3.5 Ensure that regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, and that these involve	☒	☐	☒

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
employers, people with lived experience of social work, and students.			
3.6 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes consideration of local/regional placement capacity.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
3.10 Ensure that educators are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
4.2 Ensure that the views of employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of social work are incorporated into the design,	☒	☐	☒

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
ongoing development and review of the curriculum.			
4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, and human rights and legislative frameworks.	☒	☐	☐
4.4 Ensure that the course is continually updated as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.5 Ensure that the integration of theory and practice is central to the course.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
4.9 Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression through the course.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
Supporting students			
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: i. confidential counselling services; ii. careers advice and support; and iii. occupational health services	☒	☐	☐
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	☒	☐	☐
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	☒	☐	☐

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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐
5.6 Provide information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory.	☒	☐	☐
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	☒	☐	☐
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☒	☐	☐

Regulator decision

Course approved.