

Inspection Report

Inspection ID	USCPP516
Course provider	University of Salford
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	Best Interest Assessor
Mode of study	Part time
Maximum student cohort	50
Date of inspection	23 to 24 June 2026
Inspection team	Becky Madey (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Sarah Hamilton (Lay Inspector) Nicole Richards (BIA Registrant Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	25 August 2026
Conditions	Standard 1.5 Standard 2.2 Standard 4.2
Date conditions met and approved:	

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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 approval standards for Best Interests Assessor (BIA) courses. We approve courses against these standards to ensure that students who successfully complete a BIA course can meet the requirements set out in the Mental Capacity Act 2005, Schedule A1 and 1A, the Mental Capacity (Deprivation of Liberty: Standard Authorisations, Assessments and Ordinary Residence) Regulations 2008 and the 6 BIA capabilities as described in Annex 1 to the education and training approval standards for Best Interests Assessor (BIA) courses.
2. During the approval process, we appoint partner inspectors. This will include a registered inspector who will be a qualified BIA, and a lay inspector who is not BIA qualified. These inspectors, along with an officer from the education quality assurance team, undertake activity to review documentary information and evidence, and carry out an inspection. This activity could include observing and asking questions about teaching, observations, facilities and learning resources; asking questions based on the evidence submitted; and meeting with staff, people with lived experience and students. The inspectors then make recommendations to us about whether a course should be approved.
3. The process we undertake is described in our legislation: The Children and Social Work Act 2017, [The Social Workers Regulations 2018 - Social Work England](#) , and our [Education and Training Rules 2019](#).
4. In this document we describe the University of Salford as ‘the course provider’ and we describe the Best Interest Assessor course as ‘the course’.

Summary of Inspection

5. The University of Salford’s Best Interest Assessor course was inspected for approval against the Social Work England’s education and training approval standards for BIA courses.
6. A remote inspection took place from 23 to 24 June 2026.
7. As part of this process the inspection team gathered feedback from key stakeholders through meetings on inspection. This included course staff, visiting lecturers, members of the senior leadership team, employer partners and a student from a similar course to the BIA. Written feedback was also gathered from people with lived experience during the inspection.

Inspection Findings

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

<u>Standard 1. Admissions</u>	<u>Met or not met.</u>
1.1 Confirm that applicants have: i. the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the 6 BIA capabilities set out in Annex 1 of these standards. ii. the potential to meet the eligibility criteria for the role set out in the relevant legislation governing BIA practice. iii. the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.	<u>Met</u>
1.2 Confirm that applicants are and remain fully registered with a relevant regulatory body in line with the relevant regulations.	<u>Met</u>
1.3 Confirm that applicants have, and can demonstrate, suitable prior experience of the practical application of appropriate legislation and policy, specifically including but not limited to mental capacity, mental health and human rights legislation, and demonstrable experience of understanding risk in relation to these.	<u>Met</u>
1.4 Confirm that applicants have a robust level of legal literacy in appropriate legislative and policy areas.	<u>Met</u>
1.5 Ensure that employers, providers of observation opportunities, people with lived experience, and carers are involved in admissions processes.	<u>Not met</u> <i>see key observations for standard 1 for further information</i>
1.6 Ensure that the admissions processes include assessment of the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes appropriate criminal conviction checks.	<u>Met</u>
1.7 Ensure that there are equality, diversity and inclusion policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	<u>Met</u>
1.8 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up a place. This will include information about the award level and professional qualification, course content, teaching modes, location of study, assessment methods, duration, and observation requirements including the expectations around arranging or securing observation opportunities.	<u>Met</u>

Key observations for standard 1

9. At the time of the inspection, the course provider confirmed that they would accept applicants who were sponsored by their employer. We understood that employer partners had to nominate candidates prior to the application stage.

10. We saw an application pack, completed by both the applicant and their sponsoring employer. We were assured that applicants would be required to demonstrate their capability of using information and communication (ICT) methods through completion of the application pack. (1.1)

11. Applicants had to outline details of their qualifications and their readiness to study, which included responding to three questions. These questions related to the applicant's level of legal literacy as well as their prior experience. Applications were reviewed as a course team to ensure consistency. We were assured that these questions were sufficient to demonstrate an applicant's ability to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the BIA capabilities. (1.1, 1.3, 1.4)

12. Applicants had to confirm their professional body registration number within the application pack, which would then be checked and recorded by the admissions team. Students would be informed of their obligation to declare any changes in registration status to the course provider. We heard that employers would also declare any changes to the course provider. (1.2)

13. Applicants would confirm that they had a valid enhanced DBS check within the application pack and would supply their DBS number. We saw the process that the course provider undertook if an application contained a declaration. The onboarding policy outlined that applicants completed an occupational health screening prior to enrolment, which could be referred for further investigations. (1.6)

14. We understood that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data was collected and analysed at the application stage. This was fed back to the course team and to employer partners to identify trends and concerns. We saw the admissions policy which outlined that applicants could contact the Disability Inclusion Service to request advice regarding reasonable adjustments. (1.7)

15. Information regarding observation opportunities was outlined within the application pack. We saw the module specification and programme handbook which detailed award level and professional qualification, teaching and course content, assessment methods, location of study and duration, as well as the role of Social Work England in relation to the regulation of the BIA role. Whilst the BIA webpage was not available at the time of inspection, we reviewed a webpage for a similar course. We were assured that the webpage would outline relevant student facing information, including cost. (1.8)

16. We heard that employer partners reviewed the application pack as part of their involvement in the design of the admissions process. We understood that people with lived experience were not yet involved in admissions processes at the time of the inspection. Therefore, the inspection team determined that a condition was required against standard 1.5. Full details of the condition can be found in the [proposed outcome section](#). (1.5)

Standard 2. Course governance, management and quality.	Met or not met
2.1 Ensure courses are supported by a management and governance plan that includes the roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability of individuals and governing groups in the delivering, resourcing and managing the quality of the course.	<u>Met</u>
2.2 Ensure that effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, and that these involve employers, people with relevant lived experience including carers, and students.	<u>Not met</u> <i>see key observations for standard 2 for further information</i>
2.3 Ensure that admissions are aligned to a clear strategy, which includes consideration of: i. wherever appropriate, local and regional capacity for observation opportunities; and ii. the availability of part-time or other flexible course arrangements to widen access wherever possible.	<u>Met</u>
2.4 Ensure that the person with overall professional responsibility for the course is a relevant qualified professional (social worker, occupational therapist, psychologist or nurse) with appropriate experience of BIA practice.	<u>Met</u>
2.5 Ensure that there is adequate provision of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.	<u>Met</u>
2.6 Ensure that educators are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to mental capacity, mental health and human rights legislation and policy, including recent developments, and the practical application of this via the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, including giving support to undertake continuing professional development relevant to their role.	<u>Met</u>
2.7 Ensure that students have the opportunity to provide feedback about the course and that this feedback is analysed, shared with employers and others involved in commissioning places on the course, and used to inform the management and development of the course.	<u>Met</u>
<u>Key observations for standard 2.</u> 17. We saw the course provider's management and governance structure, which included clear roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability. The course team outlined how they ensured sufficient resourcing through workload balancing. The academic handbook outlined policies which demonstrated oversight of the quality management of the course, such as the programme monitoring and enhancement procedure. (2.1) 18. The course would be led by a qualified social worker and BIA. The wider course team consisted of qualified BIAs and visiting lecturers with relevant expertise. We were assured that there was	

adequate provision of appropriately qualified and experienced staff through workload balancing across the school. (2.1, 2.4, 2.5)

19. We heard examples of how the course team were supported to maintain their knowledge to assist with the ongoing development of the course and how visiting lecturers delivered specialist training to relevant staff. (2.6)

20. The part-time course would only be available to sponsored applicants, who would confirm that they had access to at least two observation opportunities. We heard that the course team and employer partners have engaged in discussions about capacity and the number of intakes were determined by considering their feedback. (2.3)

21. Employer partners confirmed that they had attended multiple meetings with the course provider to provide feedback on the course. They had also reviewed course documentation. We heard that the course team had made changes because of this feedback. Employer partners confirmed that they would collect student feedback and discuss this with the course provider. (2.2)

22. We were assured that students would have the opportunity to feedback directly to the course team midway through the course, and on completion. There would also be informal feedback mechanisms in place at the end of teaching. We heard an example of how feedback from students had been implemented on a similar course. (2.2, 2.7)

23. We saw the course provider's module review survey which collected feedback from students. The course team confirmed that they analysed this feedback as part of a wider annual monitoring process to create actions and develop the course. (2.7)

24. We heard from the course team how people with lived experience would be involved in the review of the course in the future. However, we understood that people with lived experience were not yet involved in monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems at the time of the inspection. Therefore, the inspection team determined that a condition was required against standard 2.2. Full details of the condition can be found in the [proposed outcome section](#). (2.2)

Standard 3. Observation opportunities.

Met or not met

3.1 Ensure that each student has the opportunity to undertake a minimum of 2 practice observation opportunities which:

- i. enables the student to shadow a BIA or community DoLS assessment.**
- ii. provide practice experience that can be applied to a variety of settings and types of supervisory body.**
- iii. enables the student to observe a suitably qualified and experienced relevant qualified professional who has relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to demonstrate safe and effective practice.**

Met

iv. enables the student to produce a detailed analysis of relevant practice issues which forms part of the student's overall assessment.	
3.2 Ensure that the number, duration and range of observation opportunities is appropriate to support the delivery of the course and the achievement of the learning outcomes.	<u>Met</u>
3.3 Maintain clear collaborative arrangements for planning and communication with providers including a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all observation opportunities.	<u>Met</u>
<u>Key observations for standard 3.</u> 25. Within the application pack, sponsoring employers signed a declaration to confirm that applicants had access to at least two observation opportunities with a qualified BIA. Students would complete a BIA observation form for each observation, which would be submitted as part of their assessment. Students would undertake a reflective conversation linked to the BIA capabilities demonstrated during their observations as part of their assessment. (3.1) 26. We heard from employer partners that all students had access to a minimum of two observation opportunities. The inspection team were assured that employer partners offered a range of observation opportunities within relevant settings to enable students to achieve the learning outcomes. (3.2) 27. The course team would review the BIA observation forms to ensure consistency and appropriateness. We understood that the course provider maintained collaborative arrangements through regular meetings with employer partners. (3.3)	
<u>Standard 4. Curriculum and assessment</u>	<u>Met or not met</u>
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 requirements of the role as set out in the 6 BIA capabilities set out at Annex 1, as well as a sound understanding of cross-national border issues in relation to practice in Wales, where this is appropriate.	<u>Met</u>
4.2 Ensure that the views of employers, practitioners, people with lived experience of social work and carers are incorporated into the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum.	<u>Not met</u> <i>see key observations for standard 4 for further information</i>
4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, and, human rights and legislative frameworks.	<u>Met</u>

4.4 Ensure that the course is continually updated as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy, best practice, and case law.	<u>Met</u>
4.5 Ensure that the integration of policy, legal literacy and practice is central to the course.	<u>Met</u>
4.6 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.	<u>Met</u>
4.7 Provide staff involved in leading and delivering the training with sufficient protected training time to keep their own practice and knowledge up to date in line with statutory and regulatory requirements.	<u>Met</u>
4.8 Ensure that assessments are robust, fair, reliable and valid, and that those who successfully complete the course have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to make robust, independent and well-evidenced assessments in the best interests of the person. This should include regular monitoring and evaluation of assessment standards to ensure that they remain robust and reliable.	<u>Met</u>
4.9 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	<u>Met</u>
4.10 Ensure that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to assessment and evaluation, underpinned by skills, knowledge and an ability to interpret and respond appropriately to legislative and policy change and case law.	<u>Met</u>
4.11 Ensure that the course equips students with knowledge and skills in relation to identifying and anticipating areas of conflict arising from DoLS processes and outcomes, and supporting individuals, families, carers and agencies to understand the checks and balances of the DoLS system, to support a robust, independent and well-evidenced determination in the best interests of the person.	<u>Met</u>
4.12 Clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the course.	<u>Met</u>
4.13 Clearly specify that any equivalent award which may be made will not lead to eligibility to be approved as a BIA.	<u>Met</u>
4.14 Clearly specify a process for the appointment of at least 1 external examiner who must be an appropriately experienced and relevant qualified professional.	<u>Met</u>

Key observations for standard 4.

28. We saw a draft timetable, a teaching overview and a reading list which assured the inspection team that the content, structure and delivery of the course would enable students to demonstrate that they had the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of the course. A mapping document outlined how the learning outcomes were mapped against the BIA capabilities. Through this documentation, we saw how the course content covered the areas outlined within standard 4.11. (4.1, 4.11)

29. The teaching overview and curriculum mapping demonstrated how the course integrated policy, legal literacy and practice. The inspection team were assured that the content of the course enabled students to develop an evidence-informed approach to assessment and evaluation. Students would be required to apply legislation and case law to scenarios and justify decisions using evidence and research. (4.5, 4.10)

30. We were assured that assessments would be robust, fair, reliable and valid. The application pack outlined details of a simulated BIA assessment, undertaken with actors and observed by an academic, a practitioner and a person with lived experience. Students would also participate in a professional conversation with an academic and a practitioner to reflect on their BIA assessment. We heard that employers had provided feedback regarding the assessment, which had been implemented. The course team outlined how their assessment standards are monitored through internal moderation and external examiner review. (4.8)

31. We understood that students would be receiving feedback through their assessments from the course team, practitioners and people with lived experience. Students would also receive feedback through their observations and from their personal tutors. (4.9)

32. The number of hours spent in structured academic learning was consistent with the course provider's academic credit framework. We understood that employer partners were consulted regarding the number of taught days on the course to ensure that this was sufficient and appropriate. (4.6)

33. We were assured that the course was inclusive by design as the course team acknowledged that they considered different learning needs within their teaching. We heard how the course team ensured that their teaching environment was accessible for their students. Reasonable adjustment plans and carer support plans would be available for BIA students. EDI data was collected at module level and analysed by the course team. (4.3)

34. The course provider offered protected time to staff to engage in continuing professional development to keep their practice and knowledge up to date. We heard examples of legislation updates that were being implemented into the course design at the time of the inspection. The course team outlined how the course would be continually updated through the university's curriculum management platform. (4.4, 4.7)

35. We heard that employers had been included in the design and review of the curriculum through employer forums from the start. We understood that feedback from employers had impacted the design of the curriculum, and they felt confident that they would be involved in the ongoing development of the course. (4.2)

36. We heard from the course team how people with lived experience would be involved in the review of the curriculum in the future. However, we understood that people with lived experience were not yet involved in the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum at the time of the inspection. Therefore, the inspection team determined that a condition was required against standard 4.2. Full details of the condition can be found in the [proposed outcome section](#). (4.2)

37. Progression and achievement requirements were outlined within the course provider's assessment and feedback policy, which included information regarding resit and retake opportunities. We understood that all elements of the BIA assessment had to be passed to complete the course. The course team confirmed that the minimum attendance requirement was 85%. At the time of inspection, this was not specified within the documentation and the inspection team recommended that this should be included for clarity to students. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcome section](#). (4.12)

38. The course team confirmed that there was no equivalent award available in relation to the BIA course. (4.13)

39. We saw the external examiner policy and the academic handbook, which outlined the process for the appointment of an appropriately experienced external examiner with a relevant professional background. (4.14)

‘Standard 5. Supporting students.’	Met or not met
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including confidential counselling services. The course must also equip students to understand the potential impact of BIA practice on their own emotional and mental wellbeing, and the importance of identifying ways to handle this impact.	<u>Met</u>
5.2 Ensure that students have access to a system of academic and pastoral support for their progression, development and welfare.	<u>Met</u>
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students’ conduct, character and health.	<u>Met</u>

5.4 Make reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the specialist, capabilities in accordance with relevant legislation.	<u>Met</u>
5.5 Provide timely information to students about their curriculum, observation requirements, assessments, and implications for their continuing practice, including arrangements for annotation of the register and requirements for periodic refresher training.	<u>Met</u>
5.6 Ensure that students are able to draw links between the completion of their BIA course and ongoing refresher training, and the ongoing requirements of their professional registration such as continuing professional development.	<u>Met</u>
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	<u>Met</u>
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	<u>Met</u>
5.9 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.	<u>Met</u>
<u>Key observations for standard 5.</u> 40. Students would have access to the course provider’s disability, inclusion and wellbeing service, which included confidential counselling services. An online student handbook outlined these services to students. Students would also have access to a personal tutor for academic and pastoral support. We heard during the inspection that students understood how to access support. (5.1, 5.2)	

41. We understood that students were able to self-refer to complete a reasonable adjustment plan tailored to their individual needs. We heard examples of reasonable adjustments that had been made to enable students to progress through their course. (5.4)
42. The inspection team were assured that robust fitness to practise processes were in place. Students would confirm during onboarding their responsibility to inform the course provider of any changes to their suitability. We heard from employers that they would also notify the course team of any issues regarding a student's fitness to practise. (5.3)
43. We saw the application pack, the programme handbook and the assessment pack, which outlined information regarding curriculum, observation requirements, assessments and annotation of the register. The course team confirmed that students would be informed of the requirements for periodic refresher training and continuing professional development in a teaching session which would be uploaded onto their virtual learning environment. (5.5, 5.6)
44. We understood that feedback opportunities would be available to students through formative and summative assessment. Students would also receive verbal feedback following simulated activities, professional discussions and from their personal tutors. We saw the university assessment and feedback policy which outlined the expectations around timeliness of feedback. (5.7)
45. We saw the course provider's policies regarding academic appeals, safeguarding and whistleblowing. The inspection team were assured that robust processes were in place. We also heard that the course provider offered confidential safe listening spaces that were facilitated by staff members with no connection to the course. This would be offered to BIA students and information would be shared with the course team with the consent of the student. (5.8, 5.9)

Outcome

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

The regulator decision maker agreed with this [recommendation](#).

Conditions

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

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	1.5	The course provider must provide evidence to ensure that people with lived experience and/or carers are involved in the admissions process	25 November 2026	1.5
2	2.2	The course provider must provide evidence to ensure that effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, which includes people with lived experience and/or carers.	25 November 2026	2.2
3	4.2	The course provider must provide evidence to ensure that the people with lived experience of social work and/or carers are incorporated into the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum	25 November 2026	4.2

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

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	4.12	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider clearly outlining attendance requirements within student facing documentation.	4.12

Meeting of Conditions

If conditions are applied to a course approval, Social Work England completes a conditions review to make sure course providers have complied with the conditions and are meeting all of the education and training approval standards for BIA courses.

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

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

	Standard not met	Condition	Inspector recommendation
1			
2			
3			

Findings