Inspection Report

Inspection ID	UBE013
Course provider	University of Bedfordshire
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	Short Course: Best Interest Assessor Training
Mode of study	Part time
Maximum student cohort	20
Date of inspection	21 to 22 July 2026
Inspection team	Becky Madey (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Bradley Allan (Lay Inspector) Alison Smith (BIA Registrant Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	14 October 2026

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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 Bedfordshire as 'the course provider' and we describe the Short Course: Best Interest Assessor Training as 'the course'.

Summary of Inspection

5. The University of Bedfordshire's Best Interests 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 21 to 22 July 2026.

7. As part of this process the inspection team gathered feedback from key stakeholders through meetings on inspection. This included course staff, members of the senior leadership team and admissions team, employer partners, people with lived experience and students from a similar course to the BIA.

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'.

Standard 1. Admissions	Met or not met.
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.	Met
1.2 Confirm that applicants are and remain fully registered with a relevant regulatory body in line with the relevant regulations.	Met
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.	Met
1.4 Confirm that applicants have a robust level of legal literacy in appropriate legislative and policy areas.	Met
1.5 Ensure that employers, providers of observation opportunities, people with lived experience, and carers are involved in admissions processes.	Met
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.	Met
1.7 Ensure that there are equality, diversity and inclusion policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	Met
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.	Met
Key observations for standard 1 9. Regarding the admissions process, we heard that the course provider would accept both sponsored and self-funding applicants onto the course.	

10. The application process included an online form and an interview panel. The BIA training admission policy outlined how this would explore an applicant's potential to meet the 6 BIA capabilities. A personal statement within the application form allowed applicants to demonstrate their prior experience of applying legislation in practice. Prior experience and legal literacy would also be explored within the course provider's interview questions. (1.1, 1.3, 1.4)

11. Interviews would be conducted by the course leader, a person with lived experience and an employer partner. We heard from people with lived experience that they had input into the design of interview questions. We saw a scoring sheet which assured us that applicants would be assessed consistently regarding their legal literacy, prior experience, and potential to meet the BIA capabilities. (1.3, 1.4, 1.5)

12. We were assured that applicants would demonstrate their capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) through the completion of the online application form and participation in online interviews. We saw the course information form which outlined the admissions criteria for the course, including the requirement for applicants to hold at least two years' post-qualified experience as a relevant qualified professional. (1.1)

13. Within the application form, applicants confirmed their relevant regulatory body and registration number, which was checked by a member of the admissions team. During the inspection, the course team explained that they had enhanced their DBS policy and the admissions team would complete a status check via the update service. Where this was not available, the applicant would require a new DBS check. The BIA training admission policy confirmed that students must notify the course provider immediately if there was a change in their circumstances regarding professional registration, DBS or fitness to study. (1.2, 1.6)

14. We saw the course provider's Admissions Policy, which included provision for care leavers and applicants with disabilities, and the Access and Participation Plan which explicitly committed to promoting equality and diversity. We heard that applicants had an opportunity to request any reasonable adjustments required at interview stage. We understood that information regarding requesting reasonable adjustments at application stage would be stated on the course webpage. The course team confirmed that admissions data related to EDI would be analysed and any issues would be addressed within the course enhancement plan. (1.7)

15. We saw a course information leaflet, a post qualification and CPD information leaflet and teaching dates, which would be provided to applicants. These, combined with the example course webpage, included all details relevant to standard 1.8. As part of the application form, applicants would confirm that they have read this information to ensure that they are making an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the course. (1.8)

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	Met

governing groups in the delivering, resourcing and managing the quality of the course.	
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.	Met
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.	Met
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.	Met
2.5 Ensure that there is adequate provision of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.	Met
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.	Met
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.	Met

Key observations for standard 2.

16. We saw an organogram which outlined the school's structure, as well as the CV of the course leader, who was a registered social worker and a qualified BIA. The course provider confirmed that they had access to a pool of qualified Best Interest Assessors who would be employed as visiting lecturers. We were assured that there was a clear plan regarding the delivery and resourcing of the course, as well as contingency planning for staff absences. We understood how the Student Outcomes Quality Assurance Committee (SOQAC) reported into the Faculty Teaching and Quality Standards Committee (FTQSC), providing management of the quality of the course. (2.1, 2.4, 2.5)

17. We understood that the course leader was supported to complete their BIA refresher course annually and received additional hours for BIA practice. It was confirmed that visiting lecturers would be contracted as specialists and would be expected to maintain their knowledge and

continuing professional development relevant to their role. The course provider supported the visiting lecturers through the ability to obtain a higher education fellowship. (2.6)

18. The course team confirmed that their Course Enhancement Plans would include feedback from students when setting objectives for the following year. We understood that a mid-course student evaluation would take place and the course team would create a "You Said, We Did" response. Student representatives gave verbal and written feedback every semester. We heard from students from a similar course how the course team actively sought feedback. Students gave an example of how this feedback had been implemented within their course. (2.2, 2.7)

19. We heard from people with lived experience that meetings were held quarterly with the course team and that they had been involved in the design of the course. We were assured that people with lived experience felt able to feedback to the course team and that this was valued and considered. (2.2)

20. The course team explained that the meetings were split into 6-weekly operational meetings, as well as strategic meetings which took place every two months. These meetings were used to discuss all courses, obtain employer feedback and share student feedback. Employers confirmed that they attended regular partnership meetings with the course provider and had been offered the opportunity to give feedback on the course. (2.2, 2.7)

21. We understood that the course provider collaborated with employers to understand projected demand for the course and would continue to do so prior to each intake through their partnership meetings. The part-time course was designed with a blended learning model to provide flexibility to students. (2.3)

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. iv. enables the student to produce a detailed analysis of relevant practice issues which forms part of the student's overall assessment.	Met

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.	Met
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.	Met

Key observations for standard 3.

22. We understood that all students would be required to undertake a minimum of 2 practice observation opportunities to complete the course. One of these practice opportunities could be completed up to 12 months prior to the start of the course. This requirement was confirmed during the admissions process. (3.1)

23. Both observation opportunities would be assured through a verification form, which were signed by the observed practitioner and supervisory body and checked by the course leader. This form confirmed that the student had observed a qualified BIA. Both observations would be used as part of the student's assessment, which were mapped to the course learning outcomes. (3.1, 3.2)

24. We saw the observation policy which outlined expectations for observations, including that opportunities must provide experiences which can be applied to a variety of settings. Written guidance would be shared with observation providers to reinforce these expectations. (3.1, 3.2, 3.3)

25. We heard from employer partners that they have always had capacity to provide observation opportunities to their own students. The course provider confirmed that where observation opportunities broke down for self-funding students, they would work with the teaching partnership to provide opportunities locally in the first instance. (3.1, 3.3)

26. Observation opportunities would be reviewed annually as part of the Course Enhancement Plan process. Where concerns were raised about the quality or variety of observation opportunities, the course team would discuss this formally with their observation providers. (3.3)

27. We understood that where completed observation opportunities were deemed unsuitable, students would be required to undertake another prior to completion of the course. The inspection team recommended that the verification form template be shared with the observation guidance at the earliest possible stage to prospective applicants. This would help those completing an observation prior to enrolment to consistently capture and record their practice observation experiences, ensuring observation suitability earlier in the process. (3.3)

Standard 4. Curriculum and assessment	**Met or not met**
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	Met

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.	
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.	Met
4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, and, human rights and legislative frameworks.	Met
4.4 Ensure that the course is continually updated as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy, best practice, and case law.	Met
4.5 Ensure that the integration of policy, legal literacy and practice is central to the course.	Met
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.	Met
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.	Met
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.	Met
4.9 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	Met
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.	Met
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,	Met

independent and well-evidenced determination in the best interests of the person.	
4.12 Clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the course.	Met
4.13 Clearly specify that any equivalent award which may be made will not lead to eligibility to be approved as a BIA.	Met
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.	Met

Key observations for standard 4.

28. We saw a unit information form, a reference mapping document and a teaching schedule which outlined how the course would enable students to meet the requirements of the role as set out in the BIA capabilities. We were assured that the course embedded the values of human rights, social justice and social perspectives. We understood that the course content included variations in regulations related to students who would practice in Wales. (4.1)

29. As referenced within standard 2.2, we heard that people with lived experience and employers met regularly with the course team. Both groups confirmed that their feedback was incorporated into the design of the course. We understood that people with lived experience would also meet separately with course leaders to review the curriculum at regular intervals. (4.2)

30. Students were encouraged to declare any health conditions to ensure that reasonable adjustments could be made where required. Any needs would be identified within a Learning and Teaching Support Assessment. We saw that an Equality Impact Assessment had been used to consider issues that might present barriers to inclusion. We heard examples of how the course was accessible and inclusive by design, such as through consideration of religious festivals. (4.3)

31. We understood that changes could be made to the course through the FTQSC to ensure that developments in research, legislation, government policy, best practice and case law were reflected. The course leader and visiting lecturers would be practicing BIAs to ensure that teaching remained current. (4.4)

32. The course team demonstrated how students would be taught legal and policy frameworks, which would then be applied to case studies. Students would also draw on their practice experience and observation opportunities within their assessments, drawing on relevant case law and decision making. We saw through the learning outcomes, teaching schedule and assessment briefs how students were expected to apply evidence-based decisions throughout the course. The course team outlined within their session details how they would cover the areas relevant to standard 4.11. (4.5, 4.10, 4.11)

33. We understood that the number of hours spent in structured academic learning was directed by the academic credits associated with the course. We saw a summary of the learning hours and a teaching schedule which assured us that this was sufficient for students to meet the required level of competence. (4.6)

34. As referenced within standard 2.6, the course leader was provided with protected time to maintain their BIA practice to ensure that their own knowledge and practice was up to date. Practicing BIAs would be expected to attend annual refresher training to maintain their currency. The course provider confirmed that permanent staff, visiting lecturers and people with lived experience would reflect on the delivery of teaching and learning to inform future intakes. (4.7)

35. We understood that students must pass every assessment to complete the course, which was confirmed within the unit information form. We saw how each assessment was mapped against the course learning outcomes. A marking rubric was available to students for each assignment. The course team outlined that all assessments were first and second marked as well as externally moderated. Student progression was reviewed at an examination board in line with course provider regulations. (4.8, 4.12)

36. We heard that external examiners, people with lived experience, employers and students were able to provide feedback regarding assessments. The assessment process was also evaluated at the SOQAC. Changes made would be documented within the Course Enhancement Plan. We were assured that assessments were fair, robust, reliable and valid. (4.8)

37. Students would receive formative feedback from people with lived experience and the course team during a simulation task. We saw a feedback template that would be used for each summative assessment within timeframes that adhered to course provider requirements. (4.9)

38. The course team confirmed that there was no equivalent award available, which was specified within the course information form. (4.13)

39. We saw the process for approving an external examiner as well as the criteria for appointment. We were assured that the identified external examiner was an appropriately experienced and relevant qualified professional. (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.	Met

5.2 Ensure that students have access to a system of academic and pastoral support for their progression, development and welfare.	Met
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	Met
5.4 Make reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the specialist, capabilities in accordance with relevant legislation.	Met
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.	Met
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.	Met
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	Met
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	Met
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.	Met
Key observations for standard 5.	

40. We reviewed web links that outlined student services to support health and wellbeing, including confidential counselling services. Students would be signposted by staff or could self-refer. The course team confirmed that the potential impact of BIA practice on emotional and mental wellbeing would be covered within teaching. We understood that BIA students would have access to the school librarian, as well as guidance on academic writing. Students from a similar course gave examples of accessing these support services. (5.1, 5.2)

41. The course team confirmed that all students would sign an agreement to disclose any issues or changes in circumstances that may impact on their suitability in relation to their conduct, character or health. We heard examples from other courses which demonstrated that employer partners were also expected to disclose suitability concerns. We saw the fitness to study policy and were assured that the course provider had a thorough and effective process in place. (5.3)

42. We saw that applicants could confirm any reasonable adjustment or support requirements within their application form. We understood that reasonable adjustments would be outlined within a learning and teaching support agreement and shared with relevant staff, subject to student consent. The course provider confirmed that they would ensure that reasonable adjustments were implemented within observation opportunities. (5.4)

43. We saw a range of documentation which provided information to students and employers about the course. These included information leaflets outlining the course content, observation requirements, post qualification and CPD, as well as assessment briefs and an assessment handbook. The course team would also cover ongoing refresher training and requirements of professional registration. (5.5, 5.6)

44. Students would receive feedback from summative assessments using a standard template within 20 working days to align with the course provider's requirements. Formative feedback would be provided following the simulation task from people with lived experience and the course team. (5.7)

45. We saw the course provider's academic appeals policy and whistleblowing policy and were assured that effective processes were in place. The course provider confirmed that students would follow their observation provider's whistleblowing policy to raise any concerns during observation opportunities. (5.8, 5.9)

Outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.

The regulator decision agreed with this recommendation.

Recommendations

The inspectors identified the following recommendation for the course provider. This recommendation highlights areas that the course provider may wish to consider. The recommendation does not affect any decision relating to course approval.

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	3.3	The inspectors are recommending that the course provider consider how to share templates and guidance to prospective applicants to help them consistently capture and record pre-course practice observation experiences.	Paragraph 27