



Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Kent

Course approval: BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship

Inspection dates: 6th to 8th January 2026

Report date:	15/02/2026
Inspector recommendation:	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	01/04/2026

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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 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.
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

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

officer if they have any queries that may be able to be addressed in advance of the inspection.

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 Kent have made changes to their current BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship. This inspection was for a new version of the existing course. Students on the current version will continue on that route, and the course will be taught out. The new BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship will commence in autumn 2026.

Inspection ID	UKCPP517
Course provider	University of Kent
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship
Mode of Study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	30
Proposed first intake	September/October 2026
Date of inspection	6 to 8 January 2026
Inspection team	Caroline Reynolds, Education Quality Assurance Officer Sophie Kane, Lay Inspector Erika Natale, Registrant Inspector

Language

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

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 6th to 8th January 2026 at the University of Kent's Medway campus. 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 and one alumni from the current social work degree apprenticeship, some of whom were student representatives. Discussions included admissions processes, placement experiences, assessment feedback and academic and student support.

Meetings with university course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with staff including the head of school of social sciences, the director of studies social work, the course lead, the placement manager for social work programmes, the apprenticeships compliance manager, the apprenticeship student records manager, the business development manager, senior lecturers and staff involved in selection and admissions including.

22. The inspection team also met with a broad range of staff involved in providing academic and support services to students including the assistant director of student support, the engagement support manager, and apprenticeship advisors.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

23. The inspection team met with two people with lived experience of social work from the Partnership Initiative (PI) Group, one of whom was the chair. Discussions included their involvement in the social work degree apprenticeship and other social work programmes more generally, from admissions through to their involvement on the programmes, and their contributions to monitoring, evaluation and improvements.

Meetings with external stakeholders

24. The inspection team met with representatives from apprenticeship providers including workforce leads from Medway Council, Kent County Council, Enfield Council and Haringey Council. We also met with two independent practice educators.

Findings

25. 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

26. The inspection team reviewed the Social Work Degree Apprenticeship (SWDA) Admissions Handbook, which provided assurance of a holistic and compliant assessment process at the admission stage. The admissions processes were layered and included a combination of oral, interactive, written and multi-media assessments designed to demonstrate applicants' potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards.

27. The selection process was mapped to the Professional Capability Framework (PCF). The inspection team heard that this would enable the university to consider the applicant's potential to develop appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours.

28. There was a clear minimum entry criterion, including English language qualifications and IELTS minimum score, which, together with the layered admissions assessments, contributes to applicants demonstrating their command of English.

29. Students and alumni outlined that they had felt the admission processes were fair and inclusive. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

30. Applicants' prior relevant experience and non-academic requirements are assessed through an evaluation of their work-based learning opportunities by their employer, a written personal statement and the applicants expressed reasons for study. Applicants also complete an application which captures their education and work-based experiences, demonstrating their prior learning experiences at entry point.

31. The Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is also considered. The inspectors heard that this could be awarded to applicants who provide evidence that they have already met learning outcomes of expected modules in previous qualifications. APEL and the associated decision-making process were further explored during the inspection.

32. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

33. The inspectors heard that applicants are required to be employed and have employer support in order to join the programme.

34. Identified within documentary evidence and during discussions with employer partners and representatives from the Partnership Initiative (PI) Group, clearly demonstrated that these stakeholders are directly and significantly involved in the admissions and selection processes and that it was a joint partnership process.

35. Employers are heavily involved in the candidates' interviews, alongside an academic member of staff, and they participate in the scoring, suitability discussion and decision making. Members of the PI Group are involved in selecting and scoring candidates and acting as lead facilitators of observed group discussion assessments. They were consulted and involved in the creation of interview questions and procedures within the application process, as well as in the regular admissions reviews. This was further evidenced within the PI Group Terms of Reference.

36. The inspectors heard that mandatory training was in place for those involved in admissions processes, including PI Group members. The course team outlined that, going forward, they would be auditing e-learning to ensure more rigorous processes are in place. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

37. Documentary evidence provided confirmation that declarations of suitability to study, including criminal conviction declarations, health declarations, lived experience of care leavers declarations, employer-verified DBS details, and consent and confidentiality forms are sought and discussed during the interview process.

38. Employers hold DBS records, and these are shared with the course provider prior to the start of the programme. In addition, applicants complete a declaration form.

39. In the event of a positive DBS declaration, the inspectors heard that a detailed interview is conducted along with a reflective statement by the candidate, which is sent to a suitability panel comprising the relevant employer and academic staff.

40. In the case of declarations of health needs, student support and wellbeing services are contacted to ensure that suitable support can be provided, and any reasonable adjustments are made available to meet the potential students' needs. For care leavers, a referral is made to a specialist care leaver advisor to offer information, guidance, support and bursary eligibility details.

41. An applicant's character is also assessed in line with developing social work values through the application form's personal statement and throughout the interview process, including responses to questions and observed group discussions.

42. The course team outlined that they worked closely with employers to discuss health declarations and criminal conviction checks throughout the students' journey. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

43. The SWDA Admissions Handbook provided evidence of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), equal opportunities and widening participation, and advice regarding supporting applicants and students with disabilities, including encouraging them to discuss the need for any required alternative arrangements or reasonable adjustments during the admissions process.

44. The university's Admissions Policy clearly highlighted that applicants were considered solely based on their merits, abilities and potential. The inspectors heard that GDPR data protection, EDI and unconscious bias training was provided for all staff.

45. There was a clear university EDI Strategy and EDI Committee in place. During the inspection, the inspectors were able to understand more about how the policies and processes work in practice, including the monitoring of EDI, challenges and opportunities.

46. Students and alumni confirmed they felt the admissions process gave them sufficient opportunities to declare health conditions or EDI needs, including making requests for reasonable adjustments. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

47. Narrative and supporting documentary evidence demonstrated that the admissions processes gave applicants the required information to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a course. This was evidenced in written format through published and provided information, as well as verbally and visually through open days materials.

48. Reference to the role of Social Work England, applying for registration, professional requirements, placement information, the PCF and professional standards was made clear to applicants both online and within documentation.

49. During the inspection, university staff talked about the information sessions they ran for applicants. Students and alumni stated that they had been provided with clear and informative information to enable them to make an informed decision. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

50. Documentary evidence provided assurance of the requirement for students to spend at least 200 days (including up to 30 skills days), gaining different experiences and learning in contrasting practice settings, including one in a statutory setting/function. This was divided into a 70-day placement in the second year and a 100-day placement in the final year of study.

51. Students are required to undertake 30 skills development days with at least 14 taking place in the first year as part of the Social Work Context 1, Social Work Context 2 and Communication Skills modules. Five days are attached to each placement; this was evidenced within the Period of Assesses Work Based Activity Handbook. The remaining six days are incorporated into other modules such as the Practice Simulation in Adults and Families and Social Work Practice in Multi-agency Context. The offer and variety of skills days was further discussed during the inspection.

52. Employers had access to the Assessed Work-Based Activity Handbook and were advised of placement requirements at the point of enquiry. There were SWDA partnership meetings in place with employers and the university's placement manager. The inspectors heard that the placement manager provided support sessions to employers which introduced the requirements of placement and portfolio expectations.

53. Placement attendance and skills days were mandatory and they were monitored. Quality assurance was monitored via audits at the end of each placement, which included mandatory forms for students and practice educators to complete. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

54. The Assessed Work-Based Activity Handbook outlined the role of the university's placement manager, who supported employers to identify relevant placements for students to ensure that they are able to develop, meet the professional standards and evidence the learning outcomes from the module specification. The placement

manager also arranged training for practice educators and on-site supervisors (OSS) who were assigned to the students.

55. The inspectors heard that when a student was allocated a placement, they were also allocated an academic representative, practice educator, and where appropriate an OSS. These roles were clearly outlined within documentary evidence.

56. Students were supported through an initial placement learning agreement, held within three weeks of the placement commencing. This meeting further identified learning opportunities available in the placement in order to meet the PCF standards, and where appropriate, the Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) requirements.

57. During the inspection, further clarity was provided regarding how decisions are reached in assigning different practice experiences within the workplace, and the extent to which the course provider was involved in the decision making of which contrasting work-based activity/placement settings were assigned to students between the two placements.

58. During the inspection students and alumni provided examples of their contrasting placement experiences as well as their exposure to statutory tasks. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

59. Documentary evidence clearly set out the support, supervision and expectations of placements, including induction and workloads.

60. As referenced within standard 2.2, students are allocated an academic representative, practice educator, where appropriate an OSS, and an apprenticeship advisor. These role holders all contribute to offering students a personalised level of support throughout their studies.

61. An initial practice learning agreement meeting is held, outlining the expectations of the placement including the induction, any attached training, learning opportunities, frequency of supervision, expected workload, the practice educator and academic representative's key support role and responsibilities.

62. A midpoint check-in meeting also ensures that students are well supported and their progress is reviewed, with plans adjusted as needed including ensuring that workloads are realistic and that support and supervision are available.

63. Students can access further support through student voices meetings via a student representative or via in person attendance. The inspectors heard further information about the broad range of support that was available via the university's student support and wellbeing team.

64. Students and alumni spoke about their experiences of induction, workloads and complexities of tasks during the inspection, including the level of support and supervision they received and their general preparedness for practice. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

65. The placement learning agreement set out the students' responsibilities, the supporting role of the practice educator and the academic representative, together with the overall expectations depending on the level of study. The inspectors heard that the agreements were reviewed during supervision and at the midpoint review meetings to ensure that expectations remain at the required level.

66. If concerns are raised, the course provider liaises directly with the employer. SWDA partnership meetings were in place; these are held every 1-3 months. Employers and students are actively encouraged to liaise with the placement manager; the role holder also monitored an online placement discussion forum.

67. During the meeting with employer partners, practice educator, students and alumni, further insight was gained into how students are supported to strike the balance between the need for being challenged sufficiently to progress, and the need to ensure tasks are assigned at the appropriate level of complexity. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

68. Evidence provided by the university clearly demonstrated that there were evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure that students underwent assessed preparation for direct practice to ensure they were safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.

69. This is achieved through the requirement for students to pass the Social Work Contexts 1 and 2 modules in year one, which is prior to commencing placements in years two and three. The Social Work Contexts 1 and 2 modules include 20 skills days. The allocated practice educator also has to sign off suitability to practise.

70. Additional information suggested that students often attend social work education with significant backgrounds in social care and they usually work four days a week in the same or similar setting throughout their studies, therefore contributing to their readiness for practice placement.

71. During the inspection, the inspectors heard more about resits and the course team provided examples of the support that had been put in place for students going through them. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

72. Prior to the inspection, the course provider outlined that the placement team keep a register which is maintained and reviewed by the placement manager to ensure that all practice educators are registered and have up to date training.

73. The practice educator job description set out the requirements for the role, including the qualifications and experience required. The university's interview process ensures that key documents are seen before an appointment is made, and the documents are reviewed during the interview. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

74. The inspection team were satisfied that there were policies and processes, including whistleblowing, in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences. The university's whistleblowing policy and escalation routes were clearly evidenced.

75. The inspectors heard that placement providers are required through the practice learning agreement to ensure that students have access to relevant policies, including whistleblowing. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

76. Evidence provided assurance of how the new social work degree apprenticeship is supported by a management and governance plan that included the roles, responsibilities, lines of accountability of individuals and governing groups in the delivery, resourcing and quality management of the course. A key enabler of this, and how degree apprenticeships are supported more widely, was evidenced within the university's 2025 Strategy and the Kent 2025 Strategy: mid-term review. These documents highlighted the university's commitment to degree apprenticeships alongside widening participation.

77. The inspectors heard that all social work routes have a designated course lead; it is their responsibility to consult with the director of studies social work, lecturers, students and employers around matters of delivery, resourcing, and quality management. This was further evidenced within the course team presentation during the inspection.

78. Evidence was provided of several quality assurance mechanisms and collaborative governance with various stakeholders who held the required specialist knowledge such

as business development managers and apprenticeship advisors. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

79. Narrative and supporting documentary evidence outlined that the course provider has agreements and necessary consents in place with placement providers to provide education and training that meet both the professional standards and the education and training qualifying standards, including contingency mechanisms to deal with practice placement breakdowns.

80. Documentary evidence confirmed the placement provider's agreement and responsibilities to provide and ensure continuity with different and contrasting practice experiences through the practice learning agreement, the midpoint review meetings, and the role of the university's placement manager who supports employers to identify relevant placements for students. Further information on how placements are matched to students, and the quality assurance mechanisms, were outlined by the placement manager and the course lead during the inspection.

81. The placement manager arranges relevant training and support for practice educators and OSSs, and they regularly attend partnership meetings with employers.

82. The inspectors heard that placement breakdowns were not frequent. Should they occur, we were assured that the university tries to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity. Work-based learning difficulties are managed through action plan discussions with the employer, the student, an academic representative and the placements manager. If difficulties persist, the course team have an independent service organised by the Practice Assessment Panel (PAP), the details of which the inspectors reviewed. During the inspection, employers provided some examples of placement breakdown support they had put in place for students.

83. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

84. Evidence reviewed by the inspectors provided assurance that placement providers have the necessary policies, procedures and support systems in place in relation to students' health, wellbeing and risk. This is overseen by the placement manager, who had a supportive function towards employers, students, practice educators and OSSs before both the first and second placement experiences take place.

85. The practice learning agreement meeting and the midpoint review act as another key mechanism to review the employer's responsibilities for learners' health, wellbeing and management of risk, as well as any other support required, including the management of reasonable adjustments.

86. Placement risks, concerns and difficulties are managed through relevant contingency processes, policies and procedures. The inspectors reviewed a flow chart which highlighted the process of progressing any concerns, including the support offered. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

87. From the review of documentary evidence and through discussions with employers, this highlighted the significant involvement of employers in several elements of the course, including the management, monitoring, delivery, design, development and improvement of the course, as well as in the allocation of practice education and the student selection processes.

88. It was clearly evidenced that employers are viewed as integral partners in the delivery of the programme. This was demonstrated in several ways, including the SWDA partnership meetings which are held every 2-3 months, annual stakeholder events, practitioner lectures and workshops. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

89. The evidence reviewed demonstrated the regular, structured and multi-layered monitoring and evaluation processes in place, which clearly involve employers, people with lived experience and students. The quality assurance systems set out how formally embedded stakeholders are within programme governance and in the capturing of their feedback through a number of quality and impact monitoring boards.

90. Examples of stakeholders' involvement was evidenced within the PI meetings, the collaborative partnership meetings with employer representatives, student voices termly meetings, the course lead's annual monitoring report, end of year stakeholder feedback events, the external examiner's annual report, and the routine module and mid-term evaluations.

91. The inspection team heard that the placements manager carries out an annual review of the completed Quality Assurance Practice Learning (QAPL) forms to ensure standards are monitored and maintained. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

92. The number of students admitted onto the course is aligned to a clear and robust strategy driven directly by employer workforce needs and confirmed placement capacity.

93. The inspectors heard that the Global and Lifelong Learning (GLL)'s business development, relationships and marketing officer, and, where appropriate, the course lead, meet with employers to review expectations and confirm their ability to provide placements that meet regulatory requirements, including contrasting experiences and at least one statutory placement per student.

94. It was clearly evidenced that employers have to provide sufficient placement capacity before an applicant is admitted onto the course. The evidence provided assurance that recruitment is consistently aligned with service needs, placement availability, and programme requirements. The inspection team therefore concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

95. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the curriculum vitae (CV) of the director of studies social work who holds overall professional responsibility for the programme. The inspectors also reviewed the course lead's CV.

96. Both individuals are registered social workers who are appropriately qualified and experienced. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

97. Individual staff members' CVs provided assurance that the course has an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise, to deliver an effective course.

98. Social work academics were all registered social workers, with the exception of four lecturers who had relevant practice and research backgrounds in work with children and families, vulnerable adults and legal practice.

99. Further information outlined that all permanent lecturers teaching on the programme had either achieved their Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) or were working towards it. The inspectors heard that lectures were likely to be Fellows or Senior Fellows of the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

100. The university outlined that a Workload Allocation Model (WAM) was applied to ensure work was distributed fairly and feasibly amongst the course team. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

101. There was sufficient evidence to establish that the course provider had appropriate mechanisms in place to evaluate information about students' performance, progression and outcomes.

102. The evidence demonstrated a strong commitment to EDI principles; there was a strong focus on data gathering and performance evaluation. The student success team had undertaken research to look at the differences in attainment gaps, with a particular focus on ethnic minority students. This evidence was disseminated across university networks and informed institutional and programme level practice. The inspectors also heard about the Students Action for Diversity (STAND) group, a social work initiative developed to address issues of diversity, oppression and discrimination in social work education and practice, within the context of wider social inequalities.

103. Student progress is monitored via different routes including a twice-yearly board of examiners which tracks students' progress and gives resit opportunities, Global and Lifelong Learning progress reviews which take place three times per year; and academic advisors who regularly monitor students' progress. There are also triannual or quarterly reviews of students' progress with the course lead.

104. Module and mid-term evaluations are routinely gathered to ascertain what students find helpful and what could be improved upon. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

105. Evidence demonstrated that the university provided a comprehensive, structured, and well-resourced framework that supported educators to maintain current professional knowledge and practice. There were clear institutional commitments, multiple formal systems, and examples of ongoing professional engagement in place.

106. Many examples were provided of personal and professional staff development, including the academic in practice shadowing initiative, partnership work with local service providers, and staff who continued involvement in frontline practice (e.g., supporting asylum seekers, facilitating family group conferences, and court-related work).

107. Evidence also showed a strong commitment to research and mentoring, and the university has a professional development allowance for academic staff which can be used for activities relating to research and innovation, education, scholarship, and professional development. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

108. Evidence outlined there was a thorough systematic and proactive cross-mapping to ensure that the content, structure and delivery of the training was in accordance with relevant guidelines and frameworks.

109. The course was mapped against the PCF, and the QAA Subject Specific Benchmark Standards for Social Work. All module learning outcomes were mapped against the Professional Standards and the course was mapped to the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours which clearly demonstrated that the new programme curriculum meets all social work-related standards. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

110. Robust evidence demonstrated that the views of employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of social work are routinely sought and incorporated into the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum.

111. Termly partnerships meetings are in place with employers and academic staff delivering the programme. Feedback is routinely sought and provided on the content and assessment of modules.

112. The PI Group terms of reference were reviewed. The group consists of service users and carers with lived experience of social work. They provide feedback on the delivery and assessment of modules.

113. There are termly PAP meetings with practitioners who have a professional interest in practice education. Annual stakeholder programme reviews take place and these included employer representatives, PI group members and academics. In addition, feedback response days with the social work academics take place bi-annually. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

114. The evidence demonstrated that the course was designed in line with EDI principles, as well as accessibility and human rights frameworks. The inspectors heard that the course has been designed to ensure accessibility for learners in line with social work professional values and principles.

115. Accessible learning materials were clearly in place, and these included blended learning content, recorded lectures, materials published in advance, and adjustments to meet Inclusive Learning Plans (ILPs). The virtual learning environment materials follow accessibility standards in line with the university's Digital Accessibility Policy.

116. Employers spoke positively of the course team, the apprenticeship advisors and student support services being responsive and knowledgeable in providing advice and support for students requiring reasonable adjustments.

117. Further evidence regarding student support and wellbeing services and specialist staff who support students with specific learning difficulties was provided. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

118. The inspection team concluded there was clear evidence demonstrating that the course is continually updated in response to research, legislation, government policy, and best practice through multiple structured mechanisms.

119. Partnership meetings take place with employers to review current practice and integrate changes into teaching and placements. There are annual stakeholder reviews with practitioners to identify curriculum gaps. The inspectors heard that practitioners deliver specialist teaching to ensure current practice informs learning, and academic staff have continued professional development opportunities as outlined within standard 3.9. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

120. The inspectors concluded that the integration of theory and practice is central to the programme. Students are required to complete 200 days of practice in total, comprising 30 skills days across the three years and 170 days across the two placements. Structured logging of practice activities take place using the Aptem database, students record hours, reflective activities, supervision, and learning linked to degree outcomes.

121. Practitioners contribute directly to modules under the Practitioner Teacher Policy to ensure teaching reflects current practice. Modules explicitly connect theoretical concepts to practice as evidenced within the Theoretical Perspectives, Advanced Interventions, Lifespan Development, Children and Families, Social Work with Adults and Families modules. Learning outcomes were mapped to practice requirements. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

122. The evidence provided assurance that students have structured opportunities to work with other professionals through two practice placements, reflective assignments, and feedback from external professionals.

123. There is a dedicated module on multi-agency practice which reinforces learning, and discussions/webinars expose learners to diverse professional contexts. The inspectors heard that this module was designed to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and critical awareness needed to work effectively across organisational boundaries. It explores the legal and policy frameworks which shape interagency

collaboration, the dynamics of professional roles, and the practical challenges of information sharing, risk management, and joint decision making.

124. The inspection team heard that students engage with real world case scenarios, reflective exercises, and practitioner input to develop confidence in navigating complexity and advocating for service users within multidisciplinary systems.

125. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

126. The university offered a blended teaching format with pre-recorded lectures and live webinars. Some modules included a teaching block as part of this approach, while others were delivered entirely through a teaching block.

127. Each module specified allocated teaching hours, and students log their study time to ensure compliance with the apprenticeship 20% off-the-job learning requirement. The revised 10-week format (eight weeks of teaching, two weeks of assessment), ensures sufficient contact time to support competence development. There was a clear structure, documented teaching hours, blended delivery options, and tracking via the Aptem database in place. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

128. All module learning outcomes were indicated within the module specifications. Modules were mapped against the Professional Standards to ensure that qualifying students demonstrate their practice with the required knowledge and skills.

129. Quality assurance oversight is provided through the university's divisional quality assurance department. The inspectors heard that they rigorously review all module specifications to ensure assessments are fair, valid, reliable, and appropriate in volume and level and adhere to academic regulations. Significant changes are further scrutinised by senior academic staff and the Course Approval Subcommittee.

130. There were a variety of assessment methods such as essays, presentations, debates, reflective accounts, case studies/analysis, portfolios, online tests and legal problems to ensure that the learning outcomes are met according to the PCF, QAA Subject Benchmark Statements for Social Work and the Professional Standards. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

131. It was clear from the documentary evidence review that assessments were mapped to the curriculum and they were sequenced to support student progression. There was a staged approach to scaffolded learning which provided a coherent, progressive structure where assessment methods align with learning outcomes, credit

weighting, and increasing levels of cognitive demand, ensuring students develop the required knowledge and skills for professional practice. The end point assessment was aligned with apprenticeship requirements to ensure professional competence. The inspection team determine that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

132. The inspectors were assured from documentary evidence and from feedback from students and alumni during the inspection, that they received consistent, structured, and developmental feedback.

133. All teaching staff had relevant teaching qualifications and they are supported through module design, moderation processes, and the university's Assessment and Feedback Policy to provide effective feedback. Feedback is structured to cover assessment criteria, strengths, areas for improvement, and guidance on word count and similarity scores.

134. Formative tasks, such as non-assessed online tests, discussion forums, and sample writing exercises, are provided to help students develop skills and receive feedback before summative assessments. The feedback approach was designed to create a dialogue with students, enabling 'feed forward' to improve subsequent work.

135. Anonymous marking is applied where possible to ensure fairness and consistency, and multiple feedback methods, including group and audio feedback, are used to enhance learning and reflection. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

136. Evidence reviewed by the inspection team confirmed that assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise and that the external examiner for the course was appropriately qualified, experienced and on the register.

137. Narrative provided by the course provider and staff CVs reviewed by the inspection team demonstrated that assessments are undertaken by academics, people with lived experience of social work and practitioners who have varied experiences in social work and social care.

138. Practice educators are required to be qualified to at least Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) 2 with at least 5 years' experience as a practice educator. The inspectors heard that they must also demonstrate their commitment to ongoing professional development. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

139. The evidence demonstrated that the course has robust systems in place to monitor and manage student progression, incorporating input from multiple perspectives. The inspectors heard that academic advisors are informed of any concerns to provide early support, and formal exam boards review progression twice per year.

140. Direct observation of practice is systematically embedded: stage 1 students submit observed practice via the e-portfolio, while in stages 2 and 3, practice educators observe students up to six times during the Assessed Work-Based Activity, this includes feedback from service users or other colleagues.

141. The PAP, which included experienced practitioners and a representative from the PI Group, moderates and reviews the Assessed Work-Based Activity portfolios.

142. The inspection team concluded that a multi-sourced staged approach ensured that progression decisions are informed by academic, professional, and experiential perspectives, and they support a comprehensive and fair assessment of students' capabilities. The inspection team were therefore satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

143. The inspection team concluded that the course is designed to foster an evidence-informed approach to practice. Teaching is explicitly research-led, with modules structured to develop students' critical thinking, evaluative skills, and reflective practice.

144. Modules such as Theoretical Perspectives, Social Work with Children and Families, Social Work with Adults and Families, Advanced Interventions, Critical Policy and Critical Reflection, and Research for Social Work Practice provide direct engagement with research and evaluation, ensuring that learning is underpinned by evidence and scholarly research. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

145. A broad range of evidence including online information and a presentation given by academic and student support staff during the inspection, provided assurance that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including confidential counselling services, careers advice and support and occupational health services.

146. Reasonable adjustments are offered at selection and admissions stage, and the university supports students in creating ILPs. If a student has an ILP they could receive adjustments for learning such as having extra time for exams or flexible extension requests.

147. Student support and wellbeing services have specialist staff in place providing practical support and advice to students. The inspectors also heard that students can access a free confidential counselling service during their studies.

148. Academic support services including workshops and access to a subject librarian, together with careers support were well evidenced.

149. During the inspection, the inspectors heard more about how the university evaluates whether students' wellbeing needs are met, and the changes made to services in response to student feedback. Students and alumni spoke positively about the level of support available to them.

150. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

151. Students have access to an academic advisor who monitors academic progress, supports academic development, offers tailored guidance on issues affecting study, and encourages early disclosure of difficulties. Meetings are held at least once per term, however the inspectors heard that meetings could be more frequent depending upon different situations such as if a student requires more support around assignments etc. Students can also contact their academic advisor through MS Teams or via email, as well as booking appointments.

152. The university outlined that students have one to one support meetings every few months with an apprenticeship advisor who nurtures them in linking academic learning with workplace practice and signposting them to academic development resources. The inspectors heard that these meetings often include the student's workplace line manager.

153. The skills for academic success information is introduced at induction. Support is available for academic writing, and there are a wide range of workshops including essay planning and reading effectively in place.

154. The inspectors heard about the comprehensive library and research support together with subject librarians who liaise with academic staff to ensure there are adequate relevant academic resources in place. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

155. Narrative and cross-referenced documentation provided robust assurance that there was a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character, and health.

156. The inspection team were assured that declarations of suitability at admissions meet the requirement for pre-registration suitability screening.

157. There are embedded assessments and learning experiences which provide educational opportunities for students to develop and understand suitable conduct, character, and health to be effective social workers.

158. Students are expected to declare ongoing issues to their academic advisor. The inspectors heard they are the first point of call if concerns arise.

159. The Social Work Professional Suitability Procedure set out the formal, structured, and multi-stage procedure which enables the course team to review suitability where concerns have been raised.

160. As referenced within standard 5.1, students have access to support and wellbeing services if health issues arise which may affect suitability. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

161. Documentary evidence provided assurance that the course has effective and proactive systems in place to ensure that students with health conditions or impairments receive supportive and reasonable adjustments to enable them to progress and meet professional standards, in line with relevant legislation.

162. Students are introduced at induction to the university's student support and wellbeing services, who provide direct guidance on available support, including assessment for ILPs. The ILPs ensure personalised adjustments are made such as additional exam time, flexible extensions, or tailored learning strategies, allowing students to engage with their learning and assessments.

163. The senior tutor and student support teams contribute further oversight and they review ILPs. The inspectors heard that adjustments are applied on an individual basis, ensuring fairness, transparency, and alignment with equality standards. In addition, the University's Opportunity, Productivity, Engagement, Reducing barriers, Achievement (OPERA) initiative and Kent Inclusive Practices (KIPs) strengthen anticipatory accessibility measures across modules, such as accessible digital learning resources, advance sharing of materials, and support for assistive technologies.

164. The combination of individualised support and institution-wide inclusive practices evidenced a comprehensive and effective approach. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

165. The evidence provided by the university clearly outlined the comprehensive, accessible, and ongoing information provided to students about the curriculum, practice placements, assessments, and transition to apply for registration, including Continuing Professional Development (CPD) expectations.

166. Applicants are first introduced to this information at open days. Once enrolled, students receive detailed written guidance via the Programme Handbook which clearly set out the three-year curriculum, teaching and learning expectations, and full assessment requirements. The Programme Handbook additionally introduces students to Social Work England, the PCF, and the KSS. The inspectors heard that during induction, this information is reinforced to ensure understanding.

167. Placement information is further supported by the placements manager, who provides dedicated preparatory sessions, hosts online discussion forums, and works with practice educators to deliver consistent messaging about placement expectations.

168. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

169. Documentary evidence demonstrated that clear, accessible and repeated information about mandatory attendance is provided to students.

170. The Programme Handbook explicitly outlines the attendance policy for the course, ensuring that students understand the distinction between flexible, asynchronous learning and required in-person elements. While weekly non mandatory online sessions and module webinars offer students flexibility, the Programme Handbook clearly sets out that attendance during teaching blocks which are delivered 2–3 times per year over five days, comprising predominantly face-to-face study, are compulsory. The inspectors heard that this requirement is reinforced during induction and through reminders. Mandatory attendance expectations were further emphasised for practice placements.

171. Processes for managing absence through approved mitigating circumstances were stated, alongside the expectation that students should inform their employer and catch up on missed work where necessary. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

172. The inspectors were satisfied there were mechanisms in place to provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.

173. Academic staff follow a developmental standardised structure for feedback; this is in accordance with the principles for providing feedback as outlined within the university's Assessment and Feedback Policy. Further documentary evidence set out that the maximum time students can wait for written course feedback is usually three weeks.

174. The inspection team were informed that a sample of student's work and feedback for each module is reviewed by an external examiner. It was noted that the external examiner reports have consistently praised the course team for their consistency in marking, and in their provision of providing detailed and clear feedback. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

175. The university demonstrated that they have an effective and clearly structured process for students to make academic appeals. The Programme Handbook directs students to the Academic Appeals Policy; this is also accessible via the university's website. The policy includes a clear process that students should follow. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

176. As the qualifying course is the BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

177. The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.

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	Recommendati on given
Admissions			
<p>1.1 Confirm on entry to the course, via a holistic/multi-dimensional assessment process, that applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2 Ensure that applicants’ prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.4 Ensure that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes criminal conviction checks.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5 Ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.6 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.			
Learning environment			
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.			
2.7 Ensure that policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, are in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Course governance, management and quality			
3.1 Ensure courses are supported by a management and governance plan that includes the roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability of individuals and governing groups in the delivery, resourcing and quality management of the course.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2 Ensure that they have agreements with placement providers to provide education and training that meets the professional standards and the education and training qualifying standards. This should include necessary consents and ensure placement providers have contingencies in place to deal with practice placement breakdown.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3 Ensure that placement providers have the necessary policies and procedures in relation to students' health, wellbeing and risk, and the support systems in place to underpin these.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.4 Ensure that employers are involved in elements of the course, including but not limited to the management and monitoring of courses and the allocation of practice education.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendati on given
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students’ conduct, character and health.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the professional standards, in accordance with relevant legislation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.5 Provide information to students about their curriculum, practice placements, assessments and transition to registered social worker including information on requirements for continuing professional development.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.6 Provide information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register			

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendati on given
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor’s degree with honours in social work.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Regulator decision

Approved.