

Inspection Report

Inspection ID	LBUR1_BCP327
Course provider	Leeds Beckett University
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	Practice of Best Interests Assessment Module
Mode of study	Part-time
Maximum student cohort	60
Date of inspection	28 – 29 October 2025
Inspection team	<p>Caroline Reynolds and Sam Jameson (Education Quality Assurance Officers)</p> <p>LaReo Riviere (Lay Inspector)</p> <p>Graeme Currie (BIA registrant Inspector)</p>
Inspector recommendation	Approved
Regulator decision	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	22/01/2026

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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.
3. 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.
4. 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](#).
5. In this document we describe Leeds Beckett University as ‘the course provider’ and we describe the Practice of Best Interests Assessment Module as ‘the course’.

Summary of Inspection

6. Leeds Beckett University and its Practice of Best Interests Assessment Module was inspected as part of Social Work England’s reapproval cycle, whereby all course providers with BIA courses will be inspected against the new education and training approval standards for BIA courses.
7. A remote inspection took place from 28 – 29 October 2025.
8. As part of this process the inspection team gathered feedback from key stakeholders and university staff through meetings during this inspection. This included alumni from the Practice of Best Interests Assessment Module, people with lived experience who

are members of the Advice by Experience Leeds (ABEL) group and representatives from BIA, DoLS and MCA teams across Leeds, Kirklees and Wakefield.

Inspection Findings

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

<u>Standard 1. Admissions</u>	Met or not met.
<p>1.1 Confirm that applicants have:</p> <p>i. the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the 6 BIA capabilities set out in Annex 1 of these standards.</p> <p>ii. the potential to meet the eligibility criteria for the role set out in the relevant legislation governing BIA practice.</p> <p>iii. the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.</p>	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
<p><u>Key observations for standard 1</u></p> <p>10. The BIA application process and application form demonstrated that applicants must evidence awareness of relevant legislation, policy, and ethical</p>	

<p>frameworks. An application form is completed electronically, and a personal statement must be submitted.</p> <p>11. Applicants are required to submit a personal statement that evidences a clear understanding of relevant legislation, policy and ethical frameworks including the Mental Capacity Act, Mental Health legislation and Human Rights law to demonstrate appropriate legal literacy. Through their personal statement, applicants are expected to reflect on their own practical experience of applying these frameworks in professional contexts and articulate their understanding of risk in relation to these areas. Candidates must also outline their potential to meet the six BIA capabilities.</p> <p>12. Applicants must provide their appropriate professional body registration number. This is then verified against the relevant professional register by course staff.</p> <p>13. Candidates must provide evidence of two years post qualifying experience, complete a declaration of suitability to practise and provide evidence of a current DBS.</p> <p>14. We saw a range of evidence which showed that there is good engagement with employers and the ABEL group. ABEL group members and the course team outlined the makeup of the group and their lived experiences of BIA assessments and the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), including their involvement in the admissions processes.</p> <p>15. The course team provided a clear overview of their admissions processes including the assessment of the suitability of applicants. The university's EDI policy sets out that the application process involves opportunities for disability status disclosure and subsequent scope for reasonable adjustments where it is indicated. Past students provided examples of reasonable adjustments and the pastoral support they have received from the university.</p> <p>16. The university's website provides information to prospective applicants. This includes details of the award level, the professional qualification offered, course duration, teaching dates, assessment methods and the requirement for observation activities. Once an offer has been made, applicants then receive further information outlining the study arrangements.</p>	
<p>Standard 2. Course governance, management and quality.</p>	<p>Met or not met</p>
<p>2.1 Ensure courses are supported by a management and governance plan that includes the roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability of individuals and</p>	<p>Met</p>

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
<p><u>Key observations for standard 2.</u></p> <p>17. We heard how the course is supported within the management and governance structure of the university. The opening day presentation provided greater insight into the resourcing and quality assurance of the course, with clear involvement from members of the ABEL group and employer partners.</p> <p>18. We were given examples of feedback that students on the course have provided and how these have helped to shape the current format of the course. One example given was that the teaching days have been brought together into blocks of days rather than being spread out over a number of weeks due to feedback that previously there was too long in-between the teaching days. Employers noted how responsive the course lead was in relation to their feedback</p>	

<p>on the course and that they actively sought their views and actioned this in a timely, honest and open manner.</p> <p>19. We were satisfied that there is adequate provision of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to facilitate the course. We learnt how the course lead, director and wider teaching team are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding relevant to their role. There is dedicated and allocated time for continuous professional development, attending training opportunities, the MCA Regional Lead Network and BIA Yorkshire Network, and maintaining practice as a BIA.</p> <p>20. We were assured that the course lead and course director, who has overall professional responsibility for the course, is a relevant qualified professional with appropriate experience of BIA practice.</p>	
<u>Standard 3. Observation opportunities.</u>	<u>Met or not met</u>
<p>3.1 Ensure that each student has the opportunity to undertake a minimum of 2 practice observation opportunities which:</p> <p>i. enables the student to shadow a BIA or community DoLS assessment.</p> <p>ii. provide practice experience that can be applied to a variety of settings and types of supervisory body.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>iv. enables the student to produce a detailed analysis of relevant practice issues which forms part of the student's overall assessment.</p>	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
<p><u>Key observations for standard 3.</u></p> <p>21. We learnt from the BIA Consultation with Employers 2025 document that employer partners were aware of the requirements and were working with the course provider to ensure that each student has the opportunity to shadow a</p>	

<p>minimum of two practice observations with an appropriately qualified and experienced BIA.</p> <p>22. Applicants are made aware that undertaking two shadowing opportunities is a mandatory component of the course and its assessment requirements. This expectation is clearly stated in the entry criteria published on the university website, and applicants are asked to confirm whether these arrangements are in place at the point of application.</p> <p>23. We heard that the majority of independent applicants have been unable to undertake the course due to them not been able to secure two observations. Employers have been consulted on their ability to offer shadowing opportunities to independent applicants and during the inspection, the course team provided an example of how they had supported an independent student to gain shadowing opportunities.</p> <p>24. Alumni representatives provided insight into their experiences of shadowing opportunities, how these were arranged through the collaborative work and arrangements of their BIA/DoLS/MCA team, depending on the area they were based. Some local authorities stated that they had local rotas to help with allocation for at least two observations. Examples provided to us identified the varied opportunities for shadowing, learning and assessment, one example of shadowing a Learning Disability Nurse was explored during our discussion with alumni representatives. These examples provided greater insight into how the shadowing opportunities were organised, supported and helped their learning, development and inform their assignment as part of the course assessment process.</p> <p>25. We were satisfied that students are required to complete and submit evidence of two shadowing experiences, each involving observation of a qualified BIA conducting a formal DoLS assessment. This is a compulsory element of the course and it is part of the assessment requirements. Shadowing opportunities are arranged through local authorities responsible for undertaking DoLS assessments. To verify completion, students must provide documentation that includes confirmation of the BIA's professional registration and a signed statement from the BIA, verifying that the shadowing took place as described by the student.</p> <p>26. As well as the two compulsory shadowing experiences, students are required to complete a module assessment which includes a case study analysis of the DoLS process and role of a BIA, alongside completion of a Form 3. This is based on an assessment the student has observed. This ensures that students are able</p>	
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<p>to critically analyse relevant practice issues, directly linking their observation experiences to academic and professional standards.</p> <p>27. During the inspection, the exploration of ensuring appropriate consents was discussed with the course team and alumni representatives in specific relation to ensuring observations are undertaken ethically. We were informed of further work the course team is carrying out regarding capturing how consent has been obtained on relevant documentation.</p> <p>28. We were assured that standard 3.3 was met but that a recommendation would be appropriate to encourage the course provider to strengthen the process for how ethical considerations are made and appropriate consent is agreed for observations. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the proposed outcome section.</p>	
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 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.	Met
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, independent and well-evidenced determination in the best interests of the person.	Met
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
<p><u>Key observations for standard 4.</u></p> <p>29. During the inspection we saw that the module handbook includes detailed mapping of the learning outcomes to the six BIA capabilities. The course structure, content, and delivery are aligned with statutory guidance and frameworks, including the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). Taught sessions include lectures and seminars led by subject specialists. These cover legal, ethical, and the practical dimensions of BIA practice. The integration of policy, legal literacy and practice are embedded into the programme. Evidence showed how the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, human rights and legislative frameworks.</p>	

<p>30. The course team described how BIA practitioners and people with lived experience actively contribute to the delivery of teaching, and how they are involved in course reviews and in supporting the ongoing development and refinement of the course curriculum. Consultation documentation dated July 2025, corroborated and demonstrated the involvement of employers and people with lived experience in the design, and this was further evidenced in meeting with these stakeholders during the inspection.</p> <p>31. Several consultation documents and the module handbook showed that the course is continually updated to reflect research, legislation, best practice and case law.</p> <p>32. We also saw evidence that the allocated time for direct teaching by course educators is sufficient to ensure that students meet the required level of competence. The course provider has tried different options of contact hours and based on feedback from students changes to the teaching time blocks were made. Employers stated that BIAs from Leeds Beckett University were prepared for the role. Former students that we met with also stated that they felt ready for BIA practice.</p> <p>33. The course assessment tasks, are directly mapped to the six BIA capabilities and require students to apply legal frameworks, ethical reasoning, and evidence-informed decision-making to practice. These tasks simulate professional practice and are assessed using clearly defined learning outcomes to ensure consistency across the cohort.</p> <p>34. Alumni representatives confirmed that they had received summative feedback on their assignments, aligned with the module's learning outcomes and the six BIA capabilities. Feedback is provided within four weeks of submission, in accordance with university policy, and is designed to support academic progression and professional development.</p> <p>35. The BIA Module Handbook 2025-26 confirmed that for students to successfully complete the module/course, and be awarded 20 academic credits at Level 7, they must achieve a pass in both the written assignment and the completion of Form 3 document.</p> <p>36. We were assured that the Course Leader and Course Director are provided with professional development time, this includes specific time to undertake activities to maintain their professional registration as a social worker and updating knowledge in relation to their BIA and AMHP roles. There is a new External Examiner in place, and the 2024 External Examiners report was reviewed.</p> <p>37. Information we reviewed clearly stated that the BIA course does not have an equivalent award, but the university is considering a non-accredited route. The course team stated that some students attend the course, not to be a qualified</p>	
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BIA, but to increase their knowledge and understanding as part of their continuing professional development.	
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.	
38. We confirmed that students on the course have access to all University support services, with the Student Advice Team the central point of contact.	

<p>39. Alumni representatives spoke of the robust level of support they received from the course lead, and other members of the course team, regarding their academic progression and development, including pastoral support. We were provided with examples of students accessing university support services, reasonable adjustments and extenuating circumstances, with feedback that their experiences were timely, supportive and caring in their approach.</p> <p>40. Documentary evidence and discussions with alumni representatives confirmed that they received summative feedback on their submitted assignments, aligned with the module's learning outcomes and the six BIA capabilities. Feedback is provided within four weeks of submission, in accordance with university policy, and is designed to support academic progression and professional development.</p> <p>41. Discussions with the course team, alumni representatives and the documentary evidence review, assured us that students had access to all the information they required for their course. This included information and clear awareness of BIA refresher training, when and how to notify the university of any change in suitability and health, and how to make an academic appeal through the University Academic Appeals Process. Information and clear guidance is contained within the BIA Module Handbook for students as well as within specific university procedures.</p>	
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Proposed outcome

42. The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.
43. The regulator decision maker [agreed with this recommendation](#).

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	3.3	The inspectors are recommending that the university continue their ongoing work to strengthen their planning and process for how ethical considerations are made and appropriate consent is agreed for observations.	3.3