

Inspection Report

Course provider: Birmingham City University

Course approval: BSc Social Work Degree
Apprenticeship, PGDip Social Work
Apprenticeship

Inspection dates: 5th – 8th December 2023

Report date:	9 th February 2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	19 th March 2024
Date conditions met and approved:	11 th December 2024

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Introduction

1. Social Work England completes inspections as part of our statutory requirement to approve and monitor courses. Inspections form part of our process to make sure that courses meet our [education and training standards](#) and ensure that students successfully completing these courses can meet our [professional standards](#).
2. During the approval process, we appoint partner inspectors. One inspector is a social worker registered with us and the other is not a registered social worker (a 'lay' inspector). These inspectors, along with an officer from the education quality assurance team, undertake activity to review information and carry out an inspection. This activity could include observing and asking questions about teaching, placement provision, facilities and learning resources; asking questions based on the evidence submitted; and meeting with staff, training placement providers, people with lived experience and students. The inspectors then make recommendations to us about whether a course should be approved.
3. The process we undertake is described in our legislation; the Social Worker Regulations 2018¹, and the Social Work England [\(Education and Training\) Rules 2019](#).
4. You can find further guidance on our course change, approval and annual monitoring processes on our website.

What we do

5. When an education provider wants to make a change to a course, or request the approval of a new course, they are asked to consider how their course meets our education and training standards and our professional standards, and provide evidence of this to us. We are also undertaking a cycle of re-approval of all currently approved social work courses in England following the introduction of the Education and Training Standards 2021.
6. The education quality assurance officer reviews all the documentary evidence provided and will contact the education provider if they have any questions about the information submitted. They also provide advice and guidance on our approval processes.
7. When we are satisfied that we have all the documentary evidence required to proceed with an inspection we assign one registrant and one lay inspector. We undertake a conflict of interest process when confirming our inspectors to ensure there is no bias or perception of bias in the approval process.
8. The inspectors complete an assessment of the evidence provided and advise the officer if they have any queries that may be able to be addressed in advance of the inspection.

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

9. During this time a draft plan for the inspection is developed and shared with the education provider, to make sure it is achievable at the point of inspection.
10. Once the inspectors and officer are satisfied that an inspection can take place, this is usually undertaken over a three to 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. Inspections are carried out either on site at the education provider's campus, or remotely using virtual meetings.
11. The inspectors may recommend in this report that the course is approved with conditions, approved without conditions or that it does not meet the criteria for approval. Where the course has previously been approved, we may also decide to withdraw 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 regulatory decision about the approval of the course.
13. The final 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. Birmingham City University's proposed BSc and PGDip Social Work Apprenticeship programmes were inspected for approval against Social Work England's education and training standards 2021. The inspection was for approval of both the BSc and the PGDip; as there were no substantial differences in how these awards meet the education and training standards, they are being written up together within this report. Any areas of difference will be noted within the findings.

Inspection ID	BCU 1184
Course provider	Birmingham City University
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Courses inspected	BSc Social Work Degree Apprenticeship, PGDip Social Work Apprenticeship
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	20 per cohort for each course
Date of inspection	5 th – 8 th December 2023
Inspection team	Joseph Hubbard (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Lisa Brett (Registrant Inspector) Lyn Westcott (Lay Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Approval outcome	Approved with conditions

Language

16. In this document we describe Birmingham City University as 'the course provider' or 'the university' and we describe the BSc Social Work Apprenticeship and PGDip Social Work Apprenticeship as 'the course/s', 'the BSc', 'the PGDip' or 'the programme/s'.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from 5th – 8th December 2023. As part of this process the inspection team met with key stakeholders including students, course staff, employers and people with lived experience of social work. The inspection was originally planned to take place on-site, but was made remote due to rail strikes.

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. As the programmes under inspection are not yet running, the inspection team held a meeting with students on the most similar currently running programmes at BCU. The student meeting included around 10 students, from across all years of the current BSc Social Work and year one of the current MSc Social Work. Discussions included placement provision, accessibility, student support services, and assessments.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course team, admissions team, senior management, practice-based learning team, and support services.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the design and delivery of the university's social work programmes. Discussions included admissions, course development and delivery, training and support.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from the two employers intending to partner with BCU for the apprenticeship programmes; Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Children's Trust. They also met with a number of practice educators, including independent practice educators.

Findings

24. In this section we set out the inspectors' findings in relation to whether the education provider has demonstrated that it meets the education and training standards and that the courses will ensure that students who successfully complete the course are able to meet the professional standards.

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. The university provided documentary evidence for this standard which confirmed their entry requirements, and the various aspects of the admissions process. The admissions process is multidimensional, involving a written application, employer screening and interview, written task, and university interview. International students require an IELTS score of 7.0 or above to ensure they have a good command of English. As the application process takes place online, applicants' information technology skills can be assessed through their participation.

26. At inspection, the inspectors asked about how the admissions process would be differentiated for the two courses. The admissions team confirmed that they intend to keep the BSc admissions day separate from the PGDip admissions day to ensure immersion in the specific course. They confirmed that while the written task will be the same for both levels, there will be higher expectations from the PGDip applicants to reflect the higher academic level of the course. Inspectors also asked whether the academic staff on interview panels and assessing the written task for PGDip applicants will be required to have a level 7 qualification, to assess whether the applicant could meet the required academic standard. The university responded that some staff assessing PGDip applicants may have a level 7 qualification and others may not, and stated that the requirement for an undergraduate degree will indicate that applicants to the PGDip can meet the required academic standard. The inspectors felt that this could have implications for the fairness of the admissions process, as some applicants' capacity for level 7 study may be more robustly assessed than others if they happen to have a panel member with a level 7 qualification.

27. Inspectors also enquired as to whether the employer on the interview panel would be someone from the applicant's own employing organization or not, and the university responded that this may vary. The university stated that in cases where someone was to be interviewed by someone from their own employing organization, they would ensure it was not someone who worked too closely with them to avoid bias. The inspectors felt there could still be an adverse impact on objectivity and fairness if some applicants may be interviewed by staff from their own employing organization and others not.

28. Due to the above concerns regarding fairness and consistency in the admissions process, the inspection team determined that a condition was necessary against this standard.

Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 1.2

29. The admissions guidance for both programmes states that applicants must have prior experience of working with vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. For the BSc, the admissions guidance states that the type and amount of experience required will be determined by the relevant employer, but will typically be about two years. Prior experience is discussed and assessed during the interview process, and candidates are expected to be able to articulate how their experience is relevant to social work values and skills. A portfolio route is available for applicants with significant experience who don't meet all of the formal entry requirements; the details of this route are outlined clearly in the admissions guidance document.

30. The course team and admissions staff confirmed on inspection how prior experience is discussed at interview, and the type of responses they expect. There was a clear shared understanding between the university and employer partners around expectations of prior experience and of the portfolio route. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

31. Documentary evidence was provided to demonstrate that employer partners and people with lived experience of social work (PWLE) are involved in the admissions processes for both programmes. Employers will complete an initial screening and selection process to shortlist applicants for the apprenticeship programmes. Every interview panel will include a person with lived experience and an employer partner representative, and both of these stakeholder groups have been involved in the design of the admissions process. To further support PWLE involvement in admissions, the university have also recently created an expert by experience (EBE) admissions lead role.

32. During the inspection, the inspection team met with PWLE (including the EBE admissions lead), who confirmed that for existing social work courses they have meaningful involvement in the design of interview questions and in decision-making about applicants at interview stage. Employer partners confirmed at inspection that they have been involved in the development of the admissions process. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.4

33. The university provided documentary evidence demonstrating their processes for assessing the suitability of applicants' conduct, character, and health. Applicants are required to complete a declaration of suitability, occupational health check, and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Where any cautions or convictions are declared, the faculty's DBS policy and procedure is followed to determine the student's suitability for the programme. The inspectors noted some inconsistencies in the documentation regarding the level of DBS required, with some documents stating enhanced DBS and others not, and one document stating advanced DBS. Given that many applicants to the apprenticeship programmes may already have DBS in place through their employer, the inspectors also sought clarity regarding whether existing employer DBS would be deemed sufficient.

34. At inspection, the university confirmed that they will obtain their own separate DBS checks on applicants regardless of any existing employer DBS checks. It was still not fully clear whether this will be at enhanced level or not, or whether the DBS Update service will be in use, with staff providing inconsistent answers around this area. Due to this lack of clarity around the DBS requirements for the programmes, the inspection team determined that a condition was necessary against this standard. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 1.5

35. Documentary evidence was provided prior to the inspection indicating that there are equality and diversity policies and strategies in place at both university and programme level, including the Birmingham City University Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022. All staff and stakeholders sitting on interview panels receive regular Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training. At inspection, admissions staff were asked how they ensure applicants are provided with reasonable adjustments where needed, and responded that there will be a section of the application forms for declaring any support needs. Documentary evidence could not be provided of this as the application forms have not yet been created. Current students were asked about their experience of any additional support during the admissions process, and responded that they weren't aware of any available support until after the admissions process.

36. The inspection team determined that as it was not yet possible to review the application forms and confirm the relevant section for requesting reasonable adjustments, a condition was necessary against this standard. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet

the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 1.6

37. Review of the university's course webpages confirmed that clear information is provided regarding staff research interests, placement opportunities, fees and funding, course structure, content, and assessment. A series of briefing days will provide further opportunities for applicants to receive any information they need to make an informed choice about enrolling on either of the programmes. Information is also provided on the programme webpages regarding the professional standards and regulation of social work. However, the apprenticeship webpages state that graduates of the apprenticeships will be "eligible to register" with Social Work England, as opposed to eligible to apply to register.

38. The inspection team determined that a condition was necessary against this standard to ensure the website wording around registration would be corrected. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

39. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that students spend the required 200 days of learning in contrasting practice settings. This includes 30 skills days for which attendance is mandatory and monitored. At inspection, the course team and employer partners were asked about ensuring contrasting placements when both take place within the same organisation. Both groups demonstrated a shared understanding of the importance of providing contrasting placements and how this would be achieved. As Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Children's Trust are very large organisations, there are a breadth of potential contrasting opportunities available.

40. As the documentary evidence stated that skills days would be integrated into modules rather than held separately, it was also discussed on inspection how attendance monitoring for skills days would be managed. The course team confirmed that attendance at each skills day would be checked and signed off by students' personal tutors through progress reviews, with a full sheet being submitted at the end of the year to show that all 30 days have been attended and signed off. It was also confirmed that the full hours for each module have

been accounted for separately from the 30 days required for the skills days. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.2

41. The documentary evidence provided by the university for this standard stated that all new placements are quality reviewed using a placement audit form, which is also used to review existing placements. The Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) document and meeting lay out the expected learning opportunities, and the student's progress against these is reviewed at formal placement meetings. Recall days throughout both placements provide additional checkpoints to ensure students are developing the required knowledge and skills. Practice Assessment Panel (PAPs) and QAPL (Quality Assurance in Placement Learning) processes serve as mechanisms for assuring placements are meeting students' learning needs. At inspection, employer partners stated that they are committed to ensuring they provide high quality placements as they are keen to 'grow their own' social workers; this applies especially to the proposed apprenticeship programmes. Employers also confirmed that they have regular contact with the university, and that the university's procedures are very clear and ensure PLAs are in place. Employers stated that they operate their own internal placement quality assurance processes in addition to the university's processes. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 2.3

42. Documentary evidence was provided ahead of the inspection, confirming that a Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) will be completed for each placement, setting out requirements in relation to students' induction, supervision, and support. A PLA meeting will then be held to confirm mutual understanding of the expectations, and document the agreed induction, supervision, and workload plans. An interim meeting will follow to review these arrangements and confirm the student is receiving the expected support and progressing appropriately. This is in addition to the required apprenticeship progress review meetings. At inspection, students on current courses confirmed that they have had consistent supervision and thorough induction on placement. Students and support services also confirmed that relevant university support services are available and accessible while on placement. The inspectors therefore had no concerns around the induction, supervision, or support aspects of this standard.

43. During the inspection, employer partners stated that they intend to place apprenticeship students in a frontline team for their first placement, and then move them to a contrasting placement such as a fostering team for their second placement. This raised some concerns for the inspectors regarding ensuring a realistic workload, as meeting the demands of a frontline role may not be realistic for a first placement. This was later raised with the course provider, who stated they would need to discuss this with the employers; there did not appear to be a clear shared understanding yet on this matter. The inspection team

determined that a condition was necessary across this standard and several others to ensure formal agreements are established between the university and the employer partners. For this standard to be met, the agreements will need to ensure a shared understanding of how workloads on placement will be kept realistic. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 2.4

44. As outlined within standard 2.3, documentary evidence provided by the university for this standard demonstrated that a Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) will be completed for each placement, setting out requirements in relation to students' learning needs. A PLA meeting will then be held to confirm mutual understanding and ensure the student's responsibilities on placement are appropriate. Both practice placement modules are mapped to the relevant Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). The mid-way review meeting serves as a checkpoint to ensure the parameters of the PLA are being met, including in terms of the appropriateness of the student's responsibilities.

45. Some concerns were raised at inspection, as discussed within standard 2.3, around the employer partners' intention to use frontline roles for first placements. As outlined above, the inspectors were not assured that the course provider and employers had a shared understanding of this intention or how it would be ensured that various standards would still be met. The inspection team determined that a condition was necessary across this standard and several others to ensure formal agreements are established between the university and the employer partners. For this standard to be met, the agreements will need to establish a robust shared understanding of how it will be ensured that responsibilities on placement are appropriate for the stage of education. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 2.5

46. Prior to inspection, the university outlined the various requirements a student must meet prior to carrying out any direct practice in a service delivery setting. As discussed within standard area 1, all applicants must obtain an DBS check and health declaration,

followed by an occupational health assessment. Module specifications were provided for the Skills for Social Work Practice (BSc) and Social Work Skills for Practice (PGDip) modules, which students undertake prior to placement to prepare them for practice learning and assess their preparedness. Students are not able to progress to placement until they have successfully completed the requisite skills modules, which are mapped to the readiness for practice level of the PCFs. Details of the content of skills days were also provided to evidence further preparation for practice which takes place outside of these modules. The PLA includes a reflective activity students must complete on the preparation they undergo through the modules. During the inspection, employers and practice educators reported that students from BCU generally arrive on placement well-prepared, and that in cases where students struggle the university provides appropriate support. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.6

47. Prior to inspection, the university provided a Practice Based Learning Handbook which outlines their requirements for approved practice educators. The apprenticeship programmes will use off-site practice educators, who have their qualifications and registration status checked by the university on initial employment and again each time they take on new students. A spreadsheet is kept to check and record practice educators' qualifications, registration, and currency. Continuing professional development sessions are run regularly to support practice educators in maintaining their currency. Practice educators' work is also regularly reviewed as part of wider quality assurance processes such as placement audits and the annual QAPL. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 2.7

48. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that there is a university-wide whistleblowing policy in place, which students can access via the university website. A section of the placement portfolio also requires the placement provider to make their own whistleblowing policy available to students as part of the induction process. The inspection team determined that this standard was met based on the documentation.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

49. The university provided documentary evidence ahead of the inspection which confirmed that the programmes are governed within the School of Education and Social Work. The social work leadership team is made up of the academic lead, course leads, and quality enhancement leads. The quality assurance of the courses is overseen by the social work partnership board, along with other quality assurance mechanisms such as the Practice

Assessment Panel (PAP) and External Examiners. The details of these arrangements were discussed and confirmed with members of senior management at inspection.

50. Resourcing needs documents were provided for both programmes, however the inspectors queried that these documents appeared to be in draft form and not signed off by management. The inspectors also sought clarification as to whether there was one additional FTE member of staff planned for each programme or one across both, and whether resource planning has looked forward to accommodate the increased apprenticeship numbers of successive admissions cycles. The university were able to provide final signed-off versions of both resourcing documents, and confirmed that two additional FTE members of staff have been agreed. The resourcing documents state that staffing levels will need review, and it was confirmed that the university has a standard annual review of staffing levels to ensure this remains proportionate. Senior management were able to confirm that the commitment is to maintain the current student-staff ratio over time, either by increasing staff or reducing recruitment to other programmes. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.2

51. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection indicated the apprenticeships have been developed in partnership with placement providers, as necessitated by the nature of the programmes. Practice-based learning handbooks and professional placement portfolios were provided which lay out expectations of placement providers, including consents and processes for managing placement breakdown. However, the inspectors noted that these did not appear to have been tailored to the proposed apprenticeship programmes. For example, the placement breakdown contingencies did not address the implications for apprentices' substantive employment should a placement be unsuccessful. The inspectors noted that existing agreements will need to be adapted as apprentices are also employees and may be subject to employment processes, such as disciplinary procedures, as well as university processes, such as fitness to practise procedures. A blank memorandum of cooperation was also provided as an example of the agreements the university will have in place with placement providers, however this document was specific to the BSc and MSc social work programmes rather than the proposed apprenticeships.

52. At inspection, the inspectors queried with both the course team and employer partners whether they had any formal agreements in place regarding the apprenticeships, and both groups confirmed that there are not yet any formal agreements in place. Employer partners stated that they have existing apprenticeship agreements in place with other providers, and presume they will use these with BCU but do not have them in place yet. The inspectors therefore agreed that a condition was necessary against this standard (and spanning the related concerns under standards 2.3, and 2.4) to ensure the university puts in place formal agreements with placement providers for the proposed apprenticeships. To meet this standard, the agreements will need to establish a shared understanding of contingencies for

placement breakdown, accounting for differences in complexity with an apprenticeship. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 3.3

53. Prior to inspection, the university confirmed that all necessary health and wellbeing policies and expectations are addressed as part of the PLA form and meeting for each placement. A placement provider audit form was also provided which ensures that all placement providers have the required policies and support systems in place. At inspection, students reported that access to university support services remains strong while on placement. Support services staff also demonstrated an awareness of the need for support services to be accessible for students while on placement, and confirmed that online and out of hours support is available. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

54. Documentary evidence provided by the university confirmed that, as employment-based programmes, the apprenticeships have been developed in close collaboration with employer partners. Employers will be directly involved in the programmes through recruitment and admissions, and quality assurance processes such as QAPL and PAP. Employers are also represented at the university's Social Work Partnership Board and Social Work Placement Evaluation meetings. Employers have further indirect input through the teaching partnership which the university also participates in. At inspection, employer partners confirmed they have a good existing relationship with the university, and have been heavily involved in the development of both programmes. Employers also discussed their involvement in the placement allocation process for existing programmes, and confirmed that this process works effectively. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

55. Review of the university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that there are a number of quality assurance processes in place for the programmes which involve employers, students, and people with lived experience of social work. The programmes will be subject to a university-wide annual programme monitoring and review process, as well as PAPs and programme boards with employer and PWLE representation. A number of existing routes are in place for student participation in course improvement, such as regular

student forums and module evaluations. There will be at least two student representatives for each year group across the programmes. Placements are reviewed annually through the QAPL process, which collates feedback from students and practice educators on their placement experiences. External examiners provide a further quality assurance mechanism for both programmes.

56. At inspection, students on existing courses confirmed that they have the opportunity to contribute to programme improvements through routes such as the module evaluations and student representatives. Students also reported feeling able to approach staff more informally with any concerns, and reported that their feedback is responded to quickly and efficiently. Employers and PWLE confirmed they have regular involvement in PAPs and programme board. When inspectors raised student voice with the practice-based learning team, it was acknowledged that it can be difficult to ensure employers release apprentices for involvement in course improvement work. The inspectors agreed that as regular improvement systems are in place involving all three stakeholder groups, this standard was met. However, the inspectors felt that the university would benefit from a [recommendation](#) to include provision within the agreement with placement providers for apprentices to be released for regular involvement in programme monitoring and evaluation work.

Standard 3.6

57. The university's documentary evidence submitted for this standard states that the intended recruitment number for the first year of the apprenticeships is 10-20 per programme. This figure has been determined in collaboration with the teaching partnership, who have a Workforce Planning section within their teaching partnership agreement document. The document confirms that student admissions numbers are matched to projected workforce and labour market need. Overview and context documents for the proposed apprenticeships include a section which outlines the current shortage of social workers nationally, and states that the apprenticeships will contribute to addressing this as a more accessible route into social work. At inspection, the university noted that the decision to create both an undergraduate and postgraduate apprenticeship was partly informed by information from employers regarding the varied educational backgrounds of potential candidates within their organisations. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.7

58. The lead social worker for both courses is registered with Social Work England and their CV confirms they are appropriately qualified for the role. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was sufficient to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

59. The inspectors' review of the staff CVs provided within the university's evidence submission confirmed that staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, and represent a breadth of specialist knowledge. A pool of associate lecturers is also available to provide further specialist expertise where needed. As discussed within standard 3.1, resourcing needs documents were provided for both programmes which appeared to be in draft form and did not explicitly confirm that resource planning has looked forward to accommodate the increased apprenticeship numbers of successive admissions cycles. The university were able to provide final signed-off versions of both resourcing documents, and confirmed that two additional FTE members of staff have been agreed. The resourcing documents state that staffing levels will need review, and it was confirmed that the university has a standard annual review of staffing levels to ensure this remains proportionate. This resolved inspectors' concerns regarding staffing levels within the university, but some concerns remained regarding planning for the provision of practice educators.

60. At inspection, employer partners and course staff confirmed that practice educators for both apprenticeships will be provided by the university, as employers do not have capacity to provide this. Current practice educators employed by the university reported high workloads with the existing number of programmes, and it was not clear from discussion with the practice-based learning team how many practice educators the university currently employs, or whether this will be sufficient to meet the increased provision required by these programmes. The inspectors determined that a condition was necessary against this standard for the university to determine the necessary practice educator provision for the first three years' delivery of the apprenticeship programmes, and how this provision will be met. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 3.9

61. Documentary evidence provided for this standard confirmed that the university monitors and analyses student progression through an annual Course Monitoring and Enhancement process. Module Assessment Reports are produced for each module, which assess trends in progression data and are fed into the quality report. Annual external examiner reports and responses are also reviewed. The annual report reviews progression rates in relation to a number of EDI metrics, and identifies any actions needed in response to this data. At inspection, senior management spoke about current themes around EDI and actions being taken to address attainment gaps. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

62. The evidence submission for this standard confirmed that the university utilises a workload allocation model which includes protected time for professional development and scholarship. A document was provided which outlines the workload allocation model principles including the time allowance for scholarly activity and development. Information was also provided regarding an Academics into Practice initiative run by the teaching partnership, which a number of staff have participated in. The evidence submission also noted the work of the Social Work Education, Policy and Practice research cluster developed by the department. At inspection, staff were able to speak in more detail about their participation in Academics into Practice and other continuing professional development activities which maintain their knowledge of professional practice. The inspection team agreed that this standard had been met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

63. The documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that the curriculum and learning outcomes for both programmes have been mapped to both BASW's Professional Capability Framework and Social Work England's Professional Standards, as well as the required apprenticeship Knowledge Skills and Behaviour standards. The courses and modules have also been mapped to the QAA benchmarks. At inspection, students on current social work programmes stated that teaching content is often not very engaging, to an extent which impacts on attendance levels. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met, with a [recommendation](#) to review teaching and learning with existing students and ensure best practice is translated over to the apprenticeship programmes.

Standard 4.2

64. As discussed within standards 3.4 and 3.5, the apprenticeships have been developed in close collaboration with employer partners. Both employers and PWLE will be involved in ongoing quality assurance processes such as the QAPL, PAP, and programme boards. Employers (including practitioners) are also represented at the university's Social Work Partnership Board and Social Work Placement Evaluation meetings. Employers have further indirect input through the teaching partnership which the university also participates in. The university also utilises Teaching Consultants who are currently practicing social workers, to contribute to development and delivery of their programmes. At inspection, employer partners, PWLE, and practice educators confirmed that they have had involvement in the design and development of both programmes. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

65. As discussed within standard 1.5, documentary evidence was provided prior to the inspection indicating that there are equality and diversity policies and strategies in place at

both university and programme level, including the Birmingham City University Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022. EDI principles are also reflected in the course outcomes as outlined within the programme specifications. All staff and stakeholders sitting on interview panels receive regular Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training. As noted within standard 3.9, the annual course monitoring and enhancement process involves review of progression rates in relation to a number of EDI metrics, and identifies any actions needed in response to this data. At inspection, the course team and support services confirmed there are a number of opportunities in place for students to declare and discuss any additional learning needs they may have. Students reported that although they weren't aware of additional support available at the admissions stage, once enrolled all of the necessary information was provided and reasonable adjustments arranged where needed. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

66. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that the module reading lists for both programmes are current and include relevant recent publications. As discussed in standard 3.10, staff are involved the Social Work Education, Policy and Practice research cluster as well as the Academics into Practice initiative, both of which maintain the currency of their knowledge. Modules are developed and updated in response to this knowledge, and reflect staff's own and others' research. The department also works with teaching consultants who are current social work practitioners, helping to further inform the currency of the programmes. At inspection, the course team confirmed that annual programme review days are held where each module is reviewed with stakeholders to identify necessary updates. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

67. Evidence provided prior to inspection indicated that the integration of theory into practice has been woven into the design of the programmes, in academic modules as well as during placement. The programme specifications for both programmes highlight the intention to ensure taught content is interactive and involves application of theory to practice, giving equal focus to both. Review of module specifications provided detail how integration of theory and practice features in specific modules. At inspection, students on current programmes discussed ways in which their practice educators required them to link theory to practice, as well as examples of how theory and practice are integrated during taught content. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

68. The university's documentary submission provided examples of the involvement of other professionals in course teaching, for example, some skills module content is delivered with physiotherapy lecturers. It was noted that practice placements also provide substantial

opportunity for working with other professions, and the second placement requires students to work with and gather feedback from a non-social work professional for their portfolio. The PGDip curriculum includes a research methods module which is taught across several faculties, enabling students to learn alongside students from other professions.

69. At inspection, students confirmed that they had been taught by other professions and had opportunities for interprofessional working on placement. However, students did report feeling that there were missed opportunities to work with other student professionals within the university, and that their learning would be enriched by more work with learners from other professions. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met, with a [recommendation](#) to review and develop further opportunities for interprofessional learning on the programmes.

Standard 4.7

70. Documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that the designated hours of structured academic learning required for each module are clearly stated in module specifications, and conform to university-wide requirements. It was also noted that due to the added complexities of time management for apprenticeship programmes, the courses had been designed with an increased amount of directed learning to assist apprentices in meeting the demands of the course. The inspectors enquired at inspection about how the hours of structured learning would be managed for apprentices who are on less than full time employment contracts, as the apprenticeship standards allow for candidates to work a minimum of 30 hours per week. University staff responded that this would need to be managed in negotiation with employers, but had not yet been considered or discussed.

71. The inspectors determined that the compound condition regarding agreements with placement providers needed to be applied to this standard to ensure mutual understanding of arrangements for any apprentices working less than full time. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 4.8

72. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that a range of assessment types have been planned for the programmes, including essays, exams, and simulated interview with PWLE. All assessments have been developed with reference to the relevant regulatory standards and PCFs. Placements will be assessed through formative and summative assessments, review meetings, and a practice portfolio. An external examiner

system provides external scrutiny of standards of assessments and compares currency with other social work courses in England. An indicative assessment schedule was provided which has been mapped to reflect the time management challenges unique to apprenticeship programmes.

73. At inspection, students on current programmes confirmed that the range of assessments allows everyone the opportunity to show their strengths. Staff confirmed during the inspection that the apprenticeship-specific tripartite meetings are currently planned to be combined with the standard programme placement meetings to reduce the overall number of meetings required. When practice educators were asked about the plans for tripartite meetings, they stated that they believed the current plan was to keep them separate from placement meetings, and noted that combining the two risks losing the intended focus of both meetings. The inspectors agreed that a condition was necessary around confirming plans for the tripartite and placement meetings, to ensure assessment of students from the meetings is robust, fair reliable and valid. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 4.9

74. The university's documentary evidence included assessment schedules for the summative elements of all modules. The evidence indicated how assessments are aligned to the learning outcomes of each module, and noted that assessments are sequenced with the intention for formative assessment feedback to be provided prior to completion of summative assessments. Learning objectives become more academically challenging as the levels progress to ensure students progress through the course. Later modules develop themes from earlier modules in order that learning and assessment are developmental. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

75. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection confirmed that students on both programmes will receive formative and summative feedback to support their development over time. Documentation also confirmed that students will receive feedback on their progress throughout their studies from personal tutors and workplace mentors, as well as through the required tripartite meetings. At inspection, students had no concerns around timeliness of feedback, and reported receiving annotation feedback which meets the agreed feedback format. Students also confirmed that the library offers helpful academic development support. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

76. Prior to the inspection, the university provided staff CVs, and outlined the areas of assessment which practitioners and people with lived experience are involved in. Review of the CVs confirmed that staff carrying out assessments are appropriately qualified.

Placement portfolios are assessed by practice educators whose qualifications and currency are monitored per the processes outlined in standard 2.6. At inspection, the university confirmed that new staff and stakeholders involved in assessments are given training and support. People with lived experience who are involved in assessments stated that they feel confident and prepared for their participation in assessments.

77. The inspection team concluded that while there were no concerns regarding staff qualifications and registration status, this standard was not met as external examiners had not yet been appointed for the proposed apprenticeships. The inspectors agreed that a condition was needed against this standard in order that the external examiners' qualifications and registration status can be assessed. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 4.12

78. The university's documentary evidence included an assessment and feedback policy which lays out the requirements for marking and moderation of students' work.

Standardisation and course marking meetings are held to maintain consistency across marking teams. The mapping document also confirmed that practice educators carry out direct observation of student practice as part of placement assessments. The placement portfolio also includes requirements for students to obtain feedback from non-social work professionals and people with lived experience of social work. Students' suitability for their programme and for social work practice is assessed at all levels, and decisions regarding progression made accordingly. Students cannot progress to placement until they successfully complete the corresponding Skills for Social Work practice module, and cannot complete the programmes unless they pass both placements. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.13

79. Evidence was provided ahead of inspection that evidence-based practice is embedded throughout the curricula of both programmes, supported by up to date reading lists, and both programmes include a research-focussed module. As discussed in standard 3.10, staff

are involved the Social Work Education, Policy and Practice research cluster, and module content is updated to reflect staff's own and others' research. The department also works with teaching consultants who are current social work practitioners, helping to further inform the currency of the programmes. At inspection, the course team confirmed that annual programme review days are held where each module is reviewed with stakeholders to identify necessary updates. It was also noted at inspection that the Social Work Education, Policy and Practice research cluster puts on regular webinars which students can attend; these are also recorded and made available online in order that a wider audience of students are able to benefit from them. A subject librarian provides further support for students regarding literature searches and other research skills, and students confirmed that the library are very responsive in sourcing any necessary materials. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

80. Documentary evidence provided by the university confirmed that students have access to a range of support services, which include a careers service, counselling service, and occupational health where appropriate. The mapping narrative for this standard acknowledged that due to the nature of apprenticeship programmes, university services and employers will need to work collaboratively to support students. At inspection, course and support staff provided further details of the support services available, and students overall spoke positively of the support services available in terms of both wellbeing and more practical support such as careers advice and reasonable adjustments. Students reported that access to university support services remains strong while on placement, with online and out of hours services available. Support services staff demonstrated an awareness of the different support needs apprentices may have, and confirmed there are some bespoke services available for apprentices. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.2

81. The university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that students have access to a range of resources to support their academic development, including personal tutors, a subject librarian, and library skills sessions. At inspection, course team and support services staff were able to provide further detail of these resources and how they work for students. Students spoke positively of their experience with and access to their personal tutors, as well as the library support and resources available. The inspection team determined that the standard was met. The inspectors enquired at inspection whether apprentices on the PGDip will be allocated personal tutors with level 7 qualifications, and the university responded that this is not currently the intention. The inspectors agreed that a [recommendation](#) would be beneficial against this standard for the university to consider pairing level 7 students with

personal tutors with level 7 qualifications, to help support students' academic development at postgraduate level.

Standard 5.3

82. As discussed within standard 1.4, applicants to the programmes are required to complete a declaration of suitability, occupational health check, and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Where any cautions or convictions are declared, the faculty's DBS policy and procedure is followed to determine the student's suitability for the programme. Following these initial suitability checks at the admissions stage, students are required to complete further suitability declarations on placement application forms. Documentary evidence confirmed that there is a comprehensive fitness to practice policy in place to deal with any concerns arising regarding a student's ongoing suitability. Students confirmed they were clear about needing to disclose any changes which may impact on their suitability.

83. Per the findings for standard 1.4, the inspectors noted some inconsistencies in the documentation regarding the level of DBS required, with some documents stating enhanced DBS and others not, and one document stating advanced DBS. Given that many applicants to the apprenticeship programmes may already have DBS in place through their employer, the inspectors also sought clarity regarding whether existing employer DBS would be deemed sufficient. At inspection, the university confirmed that they will obtain their own separate DBS checks on applicants regardless of any existing employer DBS checks. It was still not fully clear whether this will be at enhanced level or not, or whether the DBS Update service will be in use, with staff providing inconsistent answers around this area.

84. Due to the lack of clarity around the DBS requirements for the programmes, the inspection team determined that the condition applied to standard 1.4 also applied to this standard. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 5.4

85. As discussed in standard 1.5, documentary evidence was provided prior to the inspection indicating that there are equality and diversity policies and strategies in place at both university and programme level, including the Birmingham City University Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022. All staff and stakeholders sitting on interview panels receive regular EDI training. At inspection, admissions staff were asked how they ensure applicants are provided with reasonable adjustments where needed, and responded that there will be a section of the application forms for declaring any support needs.

Documentary evidence could not be provided of this as the application forms have not yet been created; a condition was applied to standard 1.5 to ensure this can be reviewed once the application form is written.

86. As noted within standard 4.3, students reported that although they weren't aware of additional support available at the admissions stage, once enrolled all of the necessary information was provided and reasonable adjustments arranged where needed. Support services staff outlined at inspection the details of how students access reasonable adjustments. It was confirmed that the university does not offer a formal diagnosis for apprentices as they don't require diagnosis to access support; instead, support is put in place based on the results of screenings offered by the university. Staff from the disability team were knowledgeable about the interface between employer and university specific to apprenticeships, and how these complexities can be navigated. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

87. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that information sessions will be provided for potential applicants up to twelve months prior to the programme start date. Once students are enrolled, programme and module handbooks for both courses give information on the academic and practice curriculum requirements, assessment, resits, and mitigating circumstances. The university has a careers service who provide advice and support in seeking employment; at inspection, careers service staff demonstrated a clear awareness of the different ways in which apprentices may benefit from careers advice. Preparation for registered practice and for the ASYE will be addressed within a call back day towards the end of final placement. Students on current programmes confirmed that there is a jobs fair held annually with regional employers, and that they have found the careers service helpful. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 5.6

88. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that the programme handbooks lay out the mandatory attendance requirements for the courses, and confirm that attendance at taught content is monitored through an electronic system. However, the inspectors noted that while the mapping documents state that additional attendance monitoring processes are required to meet apprenticeship requirements, this is not mentioned in the handbooks. At inspection, students on the current BSc programme stated that there have been issues with low attendance at taught content, and students falsifying their attendance by checking in and then out or having others write their names on paper registers. Students acknowledged that course staff are aware of these issues and taking steps to address the situation. University staff confirmed that a student success and

retention team has recently been established, in addition to the central attendance team, to work on attendance and engagement issues.

89. Staff from the student success and retention team stated that the university's central engagement and attendance policy has a separate section for apprenticeship students which covers the attendance levels they must meet. However, this policy was not provided within the university's evidence submission or referenced in the mapping document narrative for this standard. The inspectors determined that as the programme handbooks do not provide attendance information applicable for apprentices, this standard was not met. A condition has therefore been applied to this standard around providing clear and complete information about attendance requirements for apprentices within the programme handbooks. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 5.7

90. As discussed within standard 4.10, the documentary evidence provided prior to inspection confirmed that students on both programmes will receive formative and summative feedback to support their development over time. Documentation also confirmed that students will receive feedback on their progress throughout their studies from personal tutors and workplace mentors, as well as through the required tripartite meetings. At inspection, students had no concerns around timeliness of feedback, and reported receiving annotation feedback which meets the agreed feedback format. Students also confirmed that the library offers helpful academic development support. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

91. Review of the evidence provided prior to inspection confirmed there is a university-wide academic appeals process in place. The university website and programme handbooks both clearly detail the appeals process. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met based on the documentary evidence.

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

Standard 6.1

92. As the qualifying courses are a BSc (Hons) and a PGDip, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met for the programmes.

Proposed outcome

The inspection team recommend that the courses be approved with conditions. These will be monitored for completion.

Conditions

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

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	1.1	The education provider will evidence that they have amended admissions documentation as follows: i. To include a clear position regarding whether candidates will be interviewed by their own employer (at university selection stage) or not, ensuring this is equitable for all students ii. To include a clear position regarding whether the academic interview panel member for PGDip candidates will require a level 7 qualification or not, ensuring this is equitable for all students iii. To remove references to the HCPC to reflect the current regulator	19 th June 2024	Paragraph 25
2	1.4, 5.3	The education provider will evidence that they have established clear procedure and arrangements for enhanced DBS checks for both apprenticeships, to be reflected in admissions documentation and/or agreements with employer partners.	19 th June 2024	Paragraph 33 Paragraph 82

3	1.5	The education provider will evidence that they have developed an application form for the programmes which includes appropriate provision for applicants to request reasonable adjustments.	19 th June 2024	Paragraph 35
4	1.6	The education provider will evidence that they have amended apprenticeship website content to reflect that graduates are eligible to apply to register with Social Work England.	19 th June 2024	Paragraph 37
5	2.3, 2.4, 3.2, 4.7, 5.4	The education provider will evidence that they have established formal agreements with employer partners for the apprenticeship programmes, ensuring these include: i. How mutual agreement will be reached regarding whether a placement can provide realistic workloads and appropriate responsibilities for students' stage of learning ii. Contingencies for placement breakdown and/or concerns, including when/whether employer or university processes (or both) will be used iii. Attendance arrangements for students on less than full time contracts (for taught content and placement) iv. Arrangements between the university and the employer regarding provision and funding of reasonable adjustments	19 th June 2024	Paragraph 42 Paragraph 44 Paragraph 51 Paragraph 70
6	3.8	The education provider will evidence that they have determined the projected number of practice educators required for the first three years' delivery of the apprenticeships at maximum stated cohort sizes, and how this provision will be met.	19 th June 2024	Paragraph 59
7	4.8	The education provider will evidence that they have reviewed plans to combine the	19 th June 2024	Paragraph 72

		tripartite and placement meetings taking into account stakeholder input. If still intending to combine the meetings, provide details of how any conflicting interests will be managed to ensure both meeting types serve their intended purpose.		
8	4.11	The education provider will evidence that they have appointed appropriately qualified and registered external examiner/s for the programmes.	19 th June 2024	Paragraph 76
9	5.6	The education provider will evidence that programme handbooks have been amended to provide students with clear and complete information regarding attendance requirements specific to the apprenticeships.	19 th June 2024	Paragraph 88

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	Standard 3.5	The inspectors are recommending that the course provider includes provision within their agreements with employers for apprentices to be released for regular involvement in programme evaluation work.	Paragraph 55
2	Standard 4.1	The inspectors are recommending that the course provider reviews teaching and learning experiences with existing students, and applies insights from this to the apprenticeship programmes.	Paragraph 63
3	Standard 4.6	The inspectors are recommending that the course provider reviews and develops further opportunities for interprofessional learning on the programmes.	Paragraph 68

4	Standard 5.2	The inspectors are recommending that the course provider consider pairing students on the level 7 (PGDip) programme with personal tutors who have a level 7 qualification.	Paragraph 81
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Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
Admissions			
1.1 Confirm on entry to the course, via a holistic/multi-dimensional assessment process, that applicants: i. have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards ii. can demonstrate that they have a good command of English iii. have the capability to meet academic standards; and iv. have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.	☐	☒	☐
1.2 Ensure that applicants' prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.4 Ensure that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes criminal conviction checks.	☐	☒	☐
1.5 Ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	☐	☒	☐
1.6 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.			
Learning environment			
2.1 Ensure that students spend at least 200 days (including up to 30 skills days) gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings. Each student will have: i) placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and ii) a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions.	☒	☐	☐
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	☐	☒	☐
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	☐	☒	☐
2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.	☒	☐	☐
2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.	☒	☐	☐

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
employers, people with lived experience of social work, and students.			
3.6 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes consideration of local/regional placement capacity.	☒	☐	☐
3.7 Ensure that a lead social worker is in place to hold overall professional responsibility for the course. This person must be appropriately qualified and experienced, and on the register.	☒	☐	☐
3.8 Ensure that there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise, to deliver an effective course.	☐	☒	☐
3.9 Evaluate information about students' performance, progression and outcomes, such as the results of exams and assessments, by collecting, analysing and using student data, including data on equality and diversity.	☒	☐	☐
3.10 Ensure that educators are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice.	☐	☐	☒
Curriculum and assessment			
4.1 Ensure that the content, structure and delivery of the training is in accordance with relevant guidance and frameworks and is designed to enable students to demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards.	☐	☐	☒
4.2 Ensure that the views of employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of social work are incorporated into the design,	☒	☐	☐

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	☒	☐	☐
4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are appropriately qualified and experienced and on the register.	☐	☒	☐
4.12 Ensure that there are systems to manage students' progression, with input from a range of people, to inform decisions about their progression including via direct observation of practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.13 Ensure that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation.	☒	☐	☐
Supporting students			
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: I. confidential counselling services; II. careers advice and support; and III. occupational health services	☒	☐	☐
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	☐	☐	☒
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the professional standards, in accordance with relevant legislation.	☐	☒	☐
5.5 Provide information to students about their curriculum, practice placements, assessments and transition to registered social worker including information on requirements for continuing professional development.	☒	☐	☐
5.6 Provide information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory.	☐	☒	☐
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	☒	☐	☐
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	☒	☐	☐
Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register			
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor's degree with honours in social work.	☒	☐	☐

Regulator decision

Approved with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of conditions

If conditions are applied to a course approval, Social Work England completes a conditions review to make sure education providers have complied with the conditions and are meeting all of the [education and training standards](#).

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

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

	Standard not met	Condition	Inspector recommendation
1	1.1	The education provider will evidence that they have amended admissions documentation as follows: iv. To include a clear position regarding whether candidates will be interviewed by their own employer (at university selection stage) or not, ensuring this is equitable for all students v. To include a clear position regarding whether the academic interview panel member for PGDip candidates will require a level 7 qualification or not, ensuring this is equitable for all students vi. To remove references to the HCPC to reflect the current regulator	Met
2	1.4, 5.3	The education provider will evidence that they have established clear procedure and arrangements for enhanced DBS checks for both apprenticeships, to be reflected in admissions documentation and/or agreements with employer partners.	Met
3	1.5	The education provider will evidence that they have developed an application form for the programmes	Met

		which includes appropriate provision for applicants to request reasonable adjustments.	
4	1.6	The education provider will evidence that they have amended apprenticeship website content to reflect that graduates are eligible to apply to register with Social Work England.	Met
5	2.3, 2.4, 3.2, 4.7, 5.4	The education provider will evidence that they have established formal agreements with employer partners for the apprenticeship programmes, ensuring these include: v. How mutual agreement will be reached regarding whether a placement can provide realistic workloads and appropriate responsibilities for students' stage of learning vi. Contingencies for placement breakdown and/or concerns, including when/whether employer or university processes (or both) will be used vii. Attendance arrangements for students on less than full time contracts (for taught content and placement) viii. Arrangements between the university and the employer regarding provision and funding of reasonable adjustments	Met
6	3.8	The education provider will evidence that they have determined the projected number of practice educators required for the first three years' delivery of the apprenticeships at maximum stated cohort sizes, and how this provision will be met.	Met

7	4.8	The education provider will evidence that they have reviewed plans to combine the tripartite and placement meetings taking into account stakeholder input. If still intending to combine the meetings, provide details of how any conflicting interests will be managed to ensure both meeting types serve their intended purpose.	Met
8	4.11	The education provider will evidence that they have appointed appropriately qualified and registered external examiner/s for the programmes.	Met
9	5.6	The education provider will evidence that programme handbooks have been amended to provide students with clear and complete information regarding attendance requirements specific to the apprenticeships.	Met

Findings

1.1 – The university provided an amended version of the employers’ handbook for both programmes which made clear the requirement for employers to provide a representative to take part in the selection panel to ensure consistency across candidates. The handbook also asks that employers select a representative who is sufficiently distant from the candidate, for example not the candidate’s direct line manager, to minimise potential bias in the selection process. The admissions handbook has also been amended, to show that interviewers for the level 7 programme will hold a level 7 qualification. Updated versions of documentation were provided demonstrating that these no longer reference the previous regulator. The inspectors’ recommendation is that this condition is now met.

1.4, 5.3 – Amended documentation for both programmes was provided by the university to evidence that all references to DBS checks now consistently state that this must be at enhanced level. The inspectors’ recommendation is that this condition is now met.

1.5 – The university provided evidence to show that the apprenticeship application form now includes a section asking candidates to self-declare any disabilities and/or support requirements. The employers’ handbook has also been amended to include a

section regarding available support. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

1.6 – The university provided evidence that the programme websites have now been amended to correctly state that graduates will be eligible to apply to register with Social Work England. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

2.3, 2.4, 3.2, 4.7, 5.4 - The inspectors' recommendation is that all aspects of this condition are now met; please see below for details of each section.

- i. The university provided an employer handbook which outlines the process for the university to oversee appropriate levels of responsibilities for apprentices. In addition, quarterly review meetings monitor progress against standards, and processes are in place for apprentices and employers to raise any issues that arise.
- ii. The university provided amended copies of the employer handbook and placement handbook which outline the details of the interface between employers and the university. These documents included clear information on placement breakdown, the sourcing of first attempt and repeat placements, and roles and responsibilities on both the employer and university side.
- iii. The employer handbook includes a section which addresses how the university will accommodate students who are on less than full time hours. The information is clear on the academic study, as this is one day per week, and adjustments have been made on placements, with these having the facility to be completed over four days rather than five. The additional remaining placement days can then be completed over a six-week period allocated in the timetable.
- iv. The university provided an amended copy of the employer handbook which included an updated section regarding support for apprentices with a disability. The updated information within the employer handbook provides clear details of the processes and expectations for supporting apprentices who require reasonable adjustments.

3.8 – The university submitted evidence to show that they have reviewed the expected numbers of students, and provided projected targets for the first three years of both apprenticeships. The target numbers of apprentices for the first year have been reduced to ensure this is manageable with the current number of off-site practice educators available, and the university are taking sensible steps to increase the number of offsite practice educators in preparation for subsequent years. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

4.8 – The university confirmed that the placement reviews and tripartite meetings are now planned to be held as separate meetings, with rationale provided for this decision. This information is outlined clearly in the amended version of the placement handbook and the apprentice handbook. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

4.11 – The university provided the details of the external examiner they have now appointed, and the inspectors were able to confirm from the evidence that the appointee is suitably qualified and registered with Social Work England. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

5.6 – The university provided amended versions of the programme handbooks which now provide clear details of the attendance requirements for apprentices. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

Regulator Decision

Conditions met.