Inspection Report

Inspection ID	UWOR1_B_CP339
Course provider	University of Wolverhampton
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	Developing Capability as a Best Interests Assessor
Mode of study	Part-time
Maximum student cohort	20
Date of inspection	3 – 4 February 2026
Inspection team	Caroline Reynolds, Education Quality Assurance Officer Lyn Westcott, Lay Inspector Jozef Rys, BIA Registrant Inspector
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	7 May 2026
Conditions	Standard 1.1 Standard 1.3 Standard 1.5 Standard 1.7 Standard 1.8 Standard 2.2 Standard 2.7

	Standard 3.2 Standard 3.3 Standard 4.2 Standard 4.8
Date conditions met and approved:	14 October 2026

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Introduction

1. Social Work England completes inspections as part of our statutory requirement to approve and monitor courses. Inspections form part of our process to make sure that courses meet our education and training approval standards for Best Interests Assessor (BIA) courses. We approve courses against these standards to ensure that students who successfully complete a BIA course can meet the requirements set out in the Mental Capacity Act 2005, Schedule A1 and 1A, the Mental Capacity (Deprivation of Liberty: Standard Authorisations, Assessments and Ordinary Residence) Regulations 2008 and the 6 BIA capabilities as described in Annex 1 to the education and training approval standards for Best Interests Assessor (BIA) courses.

2. During the approval process, we appoint partner inspectors. This will include a registered inspector who will be a qualified BIA, and a lay inspector who is not BIA qualified.

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 the University of Wolverhampton as 'the course provider' and we describe the Developing Capability as a Best Interests Assessor as 'the course'.

Summary of Inspection

6. The University of Wolverhampton Developing Capability as a Best Interests Assessor course 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 3 to 4 February 2026.

8. As part of this process the inspection team gathered feedback from key stakeholders through meetings on inspection. This included a number of former students who had completed the course, a person with lived experience from the course provider's

Success Team, and three employer partner leads from Stoke on Trent, Sandwell and Telford local authorities. Written feedback was also gathered from two former students in advance of the inspection.

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'.

Standard 1. Admissions	**Met or not met.**
1.1 Confirm that applicants have: i. the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the 6 BIA capabilities set out in Annex 1 of these standards. ii. the potential to meet the eligibility criteria for the role set out in the relevant legislation governing BIA practice. iii. the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.	**Not met** *See key observations for standard 1 for further information.*
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.	**Not met** *See key observations for standard 1 for further information.*
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.	**Not met** *See key observations for standard 1 for further information.*
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.	**Not met** *See key observations for standard 1 for further information.*
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.	**Not met** *See key observations for standard 1 for further information.*

Key observations for standard 1

10. We heard that majority of applicants were sponsored social workers and that it was rare for other professionals to apply for the course. Applicants were required to complete an agency reference form, which required applicants to have at least two year's post-registration experience, and their sponsoring organisation was required to explain the rationale for the candidate's preparedness to undertake the course. We heard that applicants were sponsored primarily through their local authority or NHS Trust, and at application and shortlist stage they are required to submit a personal statement to their sponsoring organisation. In addition, applicants are required to upload a personal statement on the course provider's eVision online application platform. We were concerned that the course provider had limited or no oversight of the questions sponsoring organisations posed to applicants, particularly in relation to assessing their potential to develop the knowledge and skills needed to meet the BIA capabilities. We therefore agreed that standard 1.1 was not met. Full details of the condition can be found in the proposed outcome section.

11. The agency reference form required applicants to declare their professional role and confirm that they were a registered professional under the relevant regulations. The form captured the candidate's registration number and post registration experience. We heard that the course provider checked and verified applicants' professional registration status, and the sponsoring employer signed off the agency reference form to confirm the employee's registration information (1.2).

12. Documentary evidence provided detailed information about the course content, structure, and expectations for applicants preparing for the best interests' assessor role. However, we did not see evidence of how applicants' prior skills, experience, or practical application of relevant legislation were assessed or verified during the admissions process. We were therefore not assured that all applicants had appropriate prior experience in applying the relevant legislation and policy in practice. We agreed that standard 1.3 was not met. We also noted that audit measures and clear guidance for all individuals involved in selection activities could be strengthened to ensure a consistent and equitable approach and therefore agreed that a recommendation in relation to standard 1.3 was appropriate. Full details of the condition and recommendation can be found in the proposed outcome section.

13. The course provider offered a Decision-Making and Interventions with Adults in a Legal Framework module (hereafter 'decision-making module') to support applicants in developing legal literacy in mental health and mental capacity legislation, including systematic decision-making and values in practice. This module was strongly recommended as preparation for the course, but it was not mandatory, and we heard that take up of this module was low (1.1, 1.3, 1.4).

14. We were assured that from the applicants' completion of the agency reference form, employer selection activities, and their personal statement demonstrated that they were required to have a robust level of legal literacy in the relevant legislative and policy areas (1.4).

15. We heard that interview practices varied across sponsoring organisations. The course provider reported that initial interview stages were undertaken by local authorities and NHS Trusts and noted that the course lead had been invited to serve on the Stoke-on-Trent interview panel for the past three years. However, the course provider was not involved in the selection or interview processes of other sponsoring organisations, nor was there stakeholder input into the design of the admissions procedures. As a result, we were not assured from the evidence provided how the course provider engaged with employers to ensure their contributions to the design and implementation of selection and admissions processes were current and appropriately embedded. We also saw no evidence that people with lived experience or carers were involved in admissions interviews or assessments, although plans for their future involvement were discussed during the inspection. We therefore concluded that standard 1.5 was not met. Full details of the condition can be found in the proposed outcome section.

16. We heard that the initial suitability of applicants were vetted by the sponsoring organisation. The course provider's compliance team sent out weblinks for applicants to upload their Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) documentation, and the admissions team ensured that students uploaded their professional qualifications and advised of their professional registrations. Fitness-to-practice expectations were documented within the relevant policy documentation (1.6).

17. We were satisfied that that the course provider had processes in place to gather and analyse equality, diversity and inclusion data in relation to admissions onto the course. It was unclear what the processes were for applicants to request reasonable adjustments during the admissions process, including how sponsoring organisations provided adjustments during the selection processes. We therefore agreed that standard 1.7 was not met. Full details of the condition can be found in the proposed outcome section.

18. We reviewed programme documentation, including details about the award level and professional qualification, the course content, teaching modes, location of study, assessment methods, duration and observation requirements. We spoke with alumni, who confirmed that they had been provided with sufficient information to make an informed decision about whether to take up a place on the course. However, we identified that the observation requirements were not made sufficiently clear across several documents and therefore agreed that standard 1.8 was not met. We also noted from documentation and through discussions with employers that the requirement for two contrasting observation requirements were not clear throughout the documentary evidence and this could be strengthened to further support employer understanding. As a result, we therefore agreed that a recommendation was appropriate. Full details of the condition and recommendation can be found in the proposed outcome section.

Standard 2. Course governance, management and quality.	**Met or not met**
2.1 Ensure courses are supported by a management and governance plan that includes the roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability of individuals and governing groups in the delivering, resourcing and managing the quality of the course.	**Met**
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.	**Not met** *See key observations for standard 2 for further information.*
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.	**Not met** *See key observations for standard 2 for further information.*

Key observations for standard 2.

19. Documentary evidence, including the BIA course guide 2025-2026 (hereafter 'course guide') and the teaching delivery team CVs, demonstrated that qualified leadership and teaching was in place, with clear proximity to current BIA practice. This was achieved through the involvement of a practising BIA visiting lecturer and a specialist visiting lecturer with extensive BIA and AMHP experience. The course guide set out the delivery arrangements, learning outcomes, practice-based learning, and assessment quality mechanism, all of which evidenced operational control over the quality of teaching and assessment (2.1).

20. During the inspection, we heard further details about the management and governance of the programme, including the roles, responsibilities, decision-making routes, lines of accountability and resourcing. We agreed that standard 2.1 was met, but that a recommendation would be appropriate to strengthen the supportive framework between the head of social work and the course lead to demonstrate that there are effective processes to ensure the resourcing and quality management of the course. Full details of this recommendation can be found in the proposed outcome section.

21. Following the review of documentary evidence and discussions with key stakeholders, we confirmed that the course was embedded within the course provider's continuous monitoring and improvement cycle (CMI) which had appropriate oversight from senior colleagues through the governance structure. Students had two formal opportunities to provide feedback over the course, and their feedback data was analysed through the course provider's Tableau system and reviewed by the course provider's quality assurance team (2.2, 2.7).

22. We heard that employers were involved in programme improvements, and people with lived experience were involved in the assignment review sessions. However, there appeared to be no formal mechanisms in place for employers, people with lived experience or students to be involved in the monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems of the programme (2.2). We did not see, or hear, evidence of employer engagement with student feedback outcomes, including how these outcomes were used to inform the management and development of the course (2.7). We therefore agreed that standards 2.2 and 2.7 were not met. Full details of the conditions can be found in the proposed outcome section.

23. Admissions onto the programme were linked to a strategy that ensured observation opportunities were available before enrolment, and there were flexible learning opportunities in place for students. The agency reference form required sponsoring organisations to confirm that applicants would have access to essential learning opportunities, including shadowing a BIA during a DoLS process, receiving feedback from both the BIA and the supervisory body, and engaging with at least one additional DoLS case. For self-funding applicants, evidence of an organisation providing observation opportunities had to be submitted prior to enrolment. We agreed that standard 2.3 was met but agreed that a recommendation was appropriate to strengthen the course provider's oversight of the availability of observation opportunities to widen access and support broader planning purposes. Full details of this recommendation can be found in the proposed outcome section.

24. We reviewed the CV of the person with overall professional responsibility for the course. They were a qualified social worker with AMHP and BIA qualifications. Whilst their direct BIA practice experience was limited, proximity to current BIA practice was strengthened through a visiting lecturer with substantial and recent BIA experience who delivered key technical sessions on complex assessments and legal challenges. A sessional staff member also contributed to teaching on the programme. During the inspection, we heard that other professionals were involved in the

delivery of the programme, such as nurses who provided sessions on end-of-life care and 'tree of life' content to students (2.4, 2.5).

25. There were arrangements in place to support educators in maintaining up-to-date knowledge of mental capacity, mental health, and human rights legislation, as well as the practical application of DoLS. We heard that educators regularly attended National Mental Capacity Forum webinars, which provided updates on policy and practice developments. During the inspection, all members of the teaching team gave examples of continuing professional development (CPD) activities they had undertaken (2.6).

Standard 3. Observation opportunities.	**Met or not met**
3.1 Ensure that each student has the opportunity to undertake a minimum of 2 practice observation opportunities which: i. enables the student to shadow a BIA or community DoLS assessment. ii. provide practice experience that can be applied to a variety of settings and types of supervisory body. iii. enables the student to observe a suitably qualified and experienced relevant qualified professional who has relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to demonstrate safe and effective practice. iv. enables the student to produce a detailed analysis of relevant practice issues which forms part of the student's overall assessment.	**Met**
3.2 Ensure that the number, duration and range of observation opportunities is appropriate to support the delivery of the course and the achievement of the learning outcomes.	**Not met** *See key observations for standard 3 for further information.*
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.	**Not met** *See key observations for standard 3 for further information.*

Key observations for standard 3.

26. We reviewed the 2025-2026 BIA portfolio guidance (hereafter 'portfolio guidance'), which clearly set out the two observation requirements. Observations were expected to be recent – no more than 12 months old - to ensure currency. It was evident that responsibility for securing practice observations sat within the sponsoring organisation, while the student was responsible for arranging and undertaking the observation opportunities. This commitment was captured within the agency reference form. The sponsoring organisation was required to confirm, and where necessary arrange through neighbouring agencies, the learning opportunities, including shadowing, feedback,

and attendance. Self-funding applicants were required to provide evidence of the organisation through which they would access observations prior to enrolment onto the programme (3.1).

27. The BIA student placement feedback form captured the student perspective, and this was shared with local authorities. Students were required to produce a written account of the observations and a second reflective account. We heard that one observation was assessed. The portfolio guidance instructed students to brief the BIA, schedule feedback, and send their practice Form 3 to the supervisory body within seven days, evidencing that observations were completed (3.1).

28. We noted that the course materials reviewed did not make it clear to students how observations contributed to, and informed, the requirements of the assessment portfolio. We agreed that standard 3.1 was met but that a recommendation was appropriate for the course provider to formalise within the course materials how all observation opportunities contributed to meeting the requirements of the assessment portfolio. Full details of this recommendation can be found in the proposed outcome section.

29. Prior to each observation, students provided a briefing document to the BIA they were observing. This document was aligned to the course learning outcomes and demonstrated a clear link between observation activities and learning objectives. Observations were documented within the student portfolio and verified through formal feedback from the BIA. We heard that this feedback process had been strengthened and that there were plans to increase feedback further to ensure a more comprehensive evaluation of student learning (3.2).

30. From discussions with the course delivery team and sponsoring employers, it was unclear what oversight the course provider had in monitoring both observations and the requirement for students to undertake contrasting observations. It was evident that there was a reliance on sponsoring organisations and the students themselves to ensure that the requirements had been fulfilled (3.2).

31. Documentary evidence demonstrated that observation arrangements were primarily conducted between students and their sponsoring organisations. While a student placement/observation feedback form was in operation and the moderation panel feedback commented on portfolio quality, we agreed there was no documented, course provider led framework demonstrating partnership working with providers. There was no evidence that the course provider offered sponsoring organisations guidance on expectations, ethics and consent, relevance to BIA training, or how observations informed summative assessments. In addition, there were no clear approval or monitoring processes in place that recorded where, when, and how the observations took place, including verification of the observing professional's suitability (3.3).

32. We agreed that standards 3.2 and 3.3 were not met. Full details of the conditions can be found in the proposed outcome section.

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.	**Not met** *See key observations for standard 4 for further information.*
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.	**Not met** *See key observations for standard 4 for further information.*
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**

Key observations for standard 4.

33. Documentary evidence demonstrated that the curriculum was mapped to the six BIA capabilities, with ethical principles, legal literacy, and decision-making embedded across modules and assessments. The course provider confirmed that they had not accepted any students practicing in Wales, nor any students registered in Wales (4.1).

34. Narrative information provided by the course provider, together with feedback from employers during the inspection, confirmed that employers and practitioners contributed feedback through participation in assessment moderations. However, it was unclear what further involvement employers and practitioners had in the design, ongoing development, and review of the curriculum (4.2).

35. We heard about the historic involvement of people with lived experience in designing another module, but it was unclear what wider or ongoing involvement people with lived experience had in the design, development and review of the curriculum. We were informed that initial discussions had begun with members of the people with lived experience group, the Success Team. However, there was no documentary evidence of formal curriculum review meetings, governance structures, or co-production processes demonstrating the involvement of both employers and people with lived experience. We therefore agreed that standard 4.2 was not met. Full details of the condition can be found in the proposed outcome section.

36. We heard that the course is aligned with the course provider's equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies and frameworks, including the embedding of equality and human rights principles within the curriculum content and operational processes. The learning outcomes evidenced that students were required to reflect on service user and carer perspectives, promote diversity, and demonstrate person-centred practice. Accessibility was supported through the student enabling centre and special needs tutor, and we heard that inclusive teaching materials and adaptations of

accessibility were provided when requested by students. It was evident that student support was in place for physical, mental health and wellbeing needs. During the inspection, we were shown examples of the Tableau system where EDI information was stored and analysed (4.3).

37. The course guide explicitly referenced the Mental Capacity Act (2005),the DoLS regulations, and updates on Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS), demonstrating awareness of legislative developments. It also stated that students were directed to authoritative updates – such as case law and policy guidance - via the virtual learning environment (Canvas). The teaching timetable included sessions on complex best interests assessments and the interface between DoLS and the Human Rights Act, reflecting contemporary legal debates. The assessment strategy, which required a practice portfolio grounded in current law and best practice, reinforced the expectation that students applied up-to-date knowledge. During the inspection, we heard further details about recent curriculum changes and updates made in response to developments in case law and research from the course delivery team (4.4, 4.5).

38. The evidence reviewed showed strong integration of policy, legal literacy, and practice throughout the course. Core teaching sessions required students to interpret legislation, case law, and ethical principles, enabling them to apply statutory frameworks, justify decisions, and balance human rights with risk. Legal and policy frameworks were further embedded through structured assessments and defined learning outcomes. Portfolio guidance reinforced this approach by requiring a practice portfolio and Form 3, both evidencing lawful, reflective, and ethical decision making (4.5).

39. Students undertook around 200 hours of study for the module, which included taught sessions, shadowing a BIA, and preparation of the portfolio. The module guide and course guide set out the structured academic components, consisting of nine scheduled weeks of teaching activities. These sessions combined lectures, practice-based exercises, group discussions, and assignment workshops, and were supported by experiential learning and case-based reflection. Additional learning was reinforced through Canvas, where students accessed resources and updates. During the inspection, we heard further details about the structured academic hours and their sufficiency to meet the learning outcomes and BIA capabilities (4.6).

40. There were two visiting lecturers who delivered training on the programme, alongside the course lead. During the inspection, we heard how they maintained up-to-date practice and knowledge in line with statutory and regulatory requirements, including through CPD activities and refresher training (4.7).

41. We heard that the assessment approach used triangulation of evidence through the practice portfolio, Form 3, and reflective analyses. These components collectively assessed legal reasoning, ethical decision-making, and human rights understanding in alignment with the BIA capabilities and learning outcomes. Student assessments were practice-focused, incorporating DoLS assessments

and simulated scenarios. Reliability was achieved through internal and external moderation processes, employer-led portfolio panels, and oversight by an external examiner (4.8, 4.14).

42. However, there was no evidence provided for the academic assessment of the portfolio assignment to ensure transparency, and there was no system to ensure that all individuals involved in assessment marking were confident in their role and had the necessary guidance to participate in the process. In addition, there was no evidence of clear written guidance for students outlining the standards required to achieve a satisfactory pass. We therefore agreed that standard 4.8 was not met. Full details of the condition can be found in the proposed outcome section.

43. Formative feedback was clearly embedded throughout the teaching structure. Interactive discussions, group tutorials, and virtual assessment scenarios provided immediate feedback, while activities such as the portfolio review and assignment workshop offered targeted guidance on structure, analysis, and legal reasoning. During practice learning, students received real-time feedback from supervising BIAs and DoLS leads, supported by portfolio guidance that encouraged feedback from supervisory bodies and allowed formative comments on draft Form 3 submissions (4.9).

44. Summative feedback was provided on the practice portfolio and Form 3, focusing on strengths, legal accuracy, and areas for development. The course guide stated that provisional results and feedback were released via eVision within four working weeks. Additional opportunities were available through personal tutor meetings, an open-door approach from the course lead, and the Student Voice process (4.9).

45. We were assured that the course was structured to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to assessment and evaluation. The learning outcomes required critical reflection on legal and ethical principles to ensure that students systematically engaged with evidence and applied it to practice. Teaching and learning activities required students to interpret legislation, case law, policy guidance, and research, applying these to decision making. Practice based learning reinforced this by connecting theory to real world scenarios. The assessment strategy supported this approach through the practice portfolio, which provided a holistic demonstration of students' legal, analytical, and research-informed practice (4.10).

46. The combined teaching, practice learning, and assessment framework demonstrated compliance by preparing students to anticipate and manage conflict within DoLS, uphold rights, and produce well evidenced best interests determinations across evolving legal contexts (4.11).

47. We agreed that the course specified the requirements for student progression and achievement. The timetable provided clear evidence of the submission dates, panel dates, and return dates, ensuring transparency around deadlines and progression milestones. Assessment was based on a single portfolio that triangulated evidence from the candidate's analysis, practitioner feedback, and observed capability, enabling students to demonstrate theoretical knowledge, critical reflection, and practice skills. Students were permitted one resubmission

opportunity, and results were published provisionally on eVision before confirmation by the assessment board. Successful completion of all required elements, followed by board approval, was necessary for recognition as a Best Interests Assessor. There was no alternative award available for students who do not meet the BIA capabilities (4.12, 4.13).

48. We reviewed the process for appointing external examiners, as outlined in the assessment handbook, and found that it aligned with sector standards. During the inspection, we heard about the recent appointment of the external examiner for this programme; their CV provided evidence of their relevant experience and qualifications. We also reviewed an example of the external examiner's recent module feedback (4.14).

Standard 5. Supporting students.	**Met or not met**
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including confidential counselling services. The course must also equip students to understand the potential impact of BIA practice on their own emotional and mental wellbeing, and the importance of identifying ways to handle this impact.	**Met**
5.2 Ensure that students have access to a system of academic and pastoral support for their progression, development and welfare.	**Met**
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	**Met**
5.4 Make reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the specialist, capabilities in accordance with relevant legislation.	**Met**
5.5 Provide timely information to students about their curriculum, observation requirements, assessments, and implications for their continuing practice, including arrangements for annotation of the register and requirements for periodic refresher training.	**Met**
5.6 Ensure that students are able to draw links between the completion of their BIA course and ongoing refresher training, and the ongoing requirements of their professional registration such as continuing professional development.	**Met**
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	**Met**
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	**Met**

5.9 Ensure that policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, are in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences.	**Met**

Key observations for standard 5.

49. We reviewed information about the course provider's mental health, wellbeing, and counselling services. During the inspection, we learned more about access to these services for part-time students, including how students were signposted and referred (5.1).

50. It was evidenced that students had a structured system of academic and pastoral support throughout their study, and they were assigned a personal tutor, who was the course lead for this programme. We heard that the personal tutor system followed the course provider's personal tutor policy and handbook, which set out clear responsibilities for supporting progression, development, and welfare. Former students spoke positively about the availability of the course lead and the support they provided. They confirmed that they received regular check-ins and were signposted to specialist services such as skills for learning, mental health and wellbeing, and disability support when appropriate, and they provided examples of the support that had been put in place for them (5.2, 5.4).

51. There was a robust process in place for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character, and health, in line with fitness-to-practice requirements. The fitness to practice policy and procedure set out clear expectations for professional behaviour and provided a structured framework for identifying, notifying, and managing concerns (5.3).

52. Students were required to declare any changes in their health or circumstances that might affect their suitability, and sponsoring organisations were expected to provide relevant updates to the course provider. We were assured that where concerns arose, they were addressed through staged processes, including informal resolution, action planning, and escalation to faculty or course provider panels (5.3).

53. The course guide and module guide outlined the structure and delivery of the single 20-credit module at level six. The module ran for eight weeks and included both online and in-person sessions. The teaching timetable detailed key topics such as the Mental Capacity Act, the DoLS/HRA interface, complex best interests assessments, and portfolio workshops (5.5).

54. We heard about the mechanisms in place to inform students of the two observation requirements. Students were advised to arrange these early in the programme to ensure they had the necessary prior knowledge and understanding. This was further verified by the former students during the inspection (5.5).

55. Assessment information was clearly communicated, including the portfolio format, submission dates, pass marks, resit opportunities, and the policies relating to mitigating circumstances, reasonable adjustments, appeals, and complaints (5.5).

56. It was clear that guidance on maintaining current knowledge of legal frameworks and case law were embedded within the teaching content and reinforced through portfolio tasks requiring critical reflection. While the course provider did not provide periodic refresher training, the requirements and expectations around this, together with continuing professional development (CPD), were outlined to students (5.5, 5.6).

57. Teaching sessions and the practice portfolio required students to reflect on how they would manage the additional responsibilities of the BIA role alongside their existing duties. We heard that the portfolio guidance further reinforced this by requiring students to identify future learning needs and strategies for maintaining competence. Sponsoring local authorities confirmed their commitment to ensuring learning opportunities beyond completion of the course through the agency reference form (5.6).

58. We heard that self-funding students were advised to engage with local DoLS/BIA networks, attend annual legal refresher courses, and access course provider CPD opportunities to meet ongoing requirements (5.6).

59. We were assured, based on the information contained within the course guide, that the expectations for maintaining current knowledge of legislation and case law were clearly signposted, including the links between course completion, refresher training, and professional registration obligations. We agreed that standard 5.6 was met but noted that the requirement for ongoing refresher training, due to the differences of opinion between former student recollections and the information provided by the course provider, could be made clearer and therefore agreed that a recommendation was appropriate. Full details of this recommendation can be found in the proposed outcome section.

60. The course guide evidenced that written feedback and provisional grades were released via eVision within four working weeks of submission. We heard that feedback was structured to highlight strengths, areas for development, and guidance for future professional growth. Formative feedback was embedded throughout the module, and we heard how the course provider ensured an equitable approach to formative feedback. The BIA feedback sheet template and moderation panel reports demonstrated that feedback was comprehensive and aligned to learning outcomes and key capabilities (5.7).

61. We were provided with academic appeals process documentation, which assured us that there was an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals. Former students stated that when they received their results, there was a clear prompt advising them of their right to appeal (5.8).

62. We reviewed the course provider's speak up policy, which provided assurance that students could report any concerns about wrongdoing or malpractice without fear of victimisation, discrimination, or disadvantage. The escalating concerns guidance addressed health and social care placements (5.9).

Outcome

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

The regulator decision maker agreed with this recommendation.

Conditions

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

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	1.1	Linkage with 1.3 The course provider must demonstrate how all applicants' potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the BIA capabilities is considered in the admissions process regardless of professional background and employment status.	7 August 2026	1.1
2	1.3	Linkage with 1.1 The course provider must demonstrate how the admissions process ensures all applicants are assessed to have suitable prior experience in the practical application of appropriate legislation and policy and how this is considered as part of the decision-making process in	7 August 2026	1.3

		deciding who is offered a place on the course.		
3	1.5	The course provider must provide evidence of how they engage with employers and people with lived experience to ensure their contributions to the design and procedures used for student selection and admissions processes are current, and appropriately embedded.	7 August 2026	1.5
4	1.7	The course provider must demonstrate how applicants are able to declare additional needs within the application process, including how such requests are reviewed and responded to.	7 August 2026	1.7
5	1.8	The course provider must update all relevant documentation so that the required number of observation opportunities is clearly stated.	7 August 2026	1.8
6	2.2	The course provider must evidence how they ensure that effective systems for monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement are in place, and demonstrate that these systems involve employers, people with lived experience (including carers), and students.	7 August 2026	2.2
7	2.7	The course provider must evidence how they share feedback with employers and others involved in commissioning places onto the course, including how this feedback is used to inform the management and ongoing development of the programme.	7 August 2026	2.7
8	3.2	Linkage with 3.3. The course provider must demonstrate how they maintain oversight of the two required observations and ensure that all students undertake two contrasting observation opportunities.	7 August 2026	3.2
9	3.3	Linkage with 3.2. The course provider must demonstrate how they maintain	7 August 2026	3.3

		oversight of the two required observations and ensure that all students receive two contrasting observation opportunities. The provider should supply formal guidance issued to employers and applicants that sets out expectations regarding ethics and consent, relevance, and the links to summative assessment, including the 12-month currency requirement.		
10	4.2	The course provider must evidence that a system is in place to ensure that the views of employers and people with lived experience are incorporated into the design, delivery, ongoing development and review of the programme.	7 August 2026	4.2
11	4.8	Marking criteria: (1) The course provider needs to have clear and comprehensive marking guidance in place for the academic assessment of the portfolio assignment and ensure this is transparent and accessible to students. (2) The course provider needs to ensure that a robust and reliable internal moderation system is in place so that all individuals involved in the marking process are confident in their role and have the necessary guidance to undertake it effectively. BIA assessors' commentary on observations: The course provider needs to ensure there is a system that informs and evaluates the validity of comments provided to students on their written work, including clear guidance on whether a satisfactory standard has been achieved.	7 August 2026	4.8

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

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	1.3	We recommend that the course provider has audit measures and clear guidance in place for all individuals involved in selection activities to ensure a consistency and equity of approach.	1.3
2	1.8	We recommend that the course provider outlines the differing observation requirements more clearly to further support employer understanding.	1.8
3	2.1	We recommend that the course provider strengthens the supportive framework between the head of social work and the course lead to demonstrate that there are effective processes to ensure the resourcing and quality management of the course.	2.1
4	2.3	We recommend that the course provider strengths its oversight of the availability of observation opportunities from employer partners to support broader planning purposes.	2.3
5	3.1	We recommend that the course provider formalises within the course materials how all observation opportunities contribute to meeting the requirements of the assessment portfolio and clearly explains this within all student-facing documentation.	3.1
6	5.6	We recommend that the course provider more clearly emphasis the requirement for ongoing refresher training, given the differences between former students' recollections and the information provided by the course provider.	5.6

Meeting of Conditions

If conditions are applied to a course approval, Social Work England completes a conditions review to make sure course providers have complied with the conditions and are meeting all of the BIA 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 course provider must demonstrate how all applicants' potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the BIA capabilities is considered in the admissions process regardless of professional background and employment status.	Condition met
2	1.3	The course provider must demonstrate how the admissions process ensures all applicants are assessed to have suitable prior experience in the practical application of appropriate legislation and policy and how this is considered as part of the decision-making process in deciding who is offered a place on the course.	Condition met
3	1.5	The course provider must provide evidence of how they engage with employers and people with lived experience to ensure their contributions to the design and procedures used for student selection and admissions processes are current, and appropriately embedded.	Condition met
4	1.7	The course provider must demonstrate how applicants are able to declare additional needs within the application process, including how such requests are reviewed and responded to.	Condition met

5	1.8	The course provider must update all relevant documentation so that the required number of observation opportunities is clearly stated.	Condition met
6	2.2	The course provider must evidence how they ensure that effective systems for monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement are in place, and demonstrate that these systems involve employers, people with lived experience (including carers), and students.	Condition met
7	2.7	The course provider must evidence how they share feedback with employers and others involved in commissioning places onto the course, including how this feedback is used to inform the management and ongoing development of the programme.	Condition met
8	3.2	The course provider must demonstrate how they maintain oversight of the two required observations and ensure that all students undertake two contrasting observation opportunities.	Condition met
9	3.3	The course provider must demonstrate how they maintain oversight of the two required observations and ensure that all students receive two contrasting observation opportunities. The provider should supply formal guidance issued to employers and applicants that sets out expectations regarding ethics and consent, relevance, and the links to summative assessment, including the 12-month currency requirement.	Condition met
10	4.2	The course provider must evidence that a system is in place to ensure that the views of employers and people with lived experience are incorporated into the design, delivery, ongoing development and review of the programme.	Condition met
11	4.8	Marking criteria:	Condition met

		(1) The course provider needs to have clear and comprehensive marking guidance in place for the academic assessment of the portfolio assignment and ensure this is transparent and accessible to students. (2) The course provider needs to ensure that a robust and reliable internal moderation system is in place so that all individuals involved in the marking process are confident in their role and have the necessary guidance to undertake it effectively. BIA assessors' commentary on observations: The course provider needs to ensure there is a system that informs and evaluates the validity of comments provided to students on their written work, including clear guidance on whether a satisfactory standard has been achieved.	

Findings

63. The conditions review was undertaken as a result of the conditions set during the course approval as outlined in the original inspection report above.

64. The course provider implemented a revised, standardised admissions process for all applicants, providing greater consistency, transparency and oversight. Applicants were required to demonstrate their potential to develop the knowledge, skills and professional capabilities required of a BIA, regardless of professional background or employment status. Employers also confirmed applicants' suitability, relevant experience and readiness to undertake the programme.

65. The revised process strengthened the assessment of prior experience in applying relevant legislation and policy. Applicants were required to provide anonymised examples from their professional practice that demonstrated the application of relevant legislation and policy, alongside a personal statement outlining their experience and motivation for undertaking the programme. This enabled the course provider to consider evidence from both applicants and employers when making admissions decisions. Overall, the strengthened admissions process provided greater

assurance that applicants had suitable prior experience and the potential to successfully develop the competencies required for BIA practice. We agreed that the standards are now met (1.1, 1.3).

66. The course provider demonstrated a clear process for applicants to declare additional needs during the application process, with assurance that disclosures would not disadvantage applicants. Requests were reviewed by the admissions reviewer or module lead, with agreed actions, referrals, responsibilities and review arrangements recorded to provide a clear audit trail. Overall, the evidence demonstrated that additional needs were appropriately identified, reviewed and responded to, and applicants were sent links to wider university support services. We determined that the standard is now met (1.7).

67. We were assured from the updated admissions, course and programme information that the requirement for two mandatory observation opportunities were clearly and consistently communicated. At application stage, employers confirmed their commitment to providing both opportunities, and proposed arrangements were reviewed to ensure they were relevant, suitable and achievable. Clear guidance was provided to employers, students and observation providers, outlining responsibilities, expectations relating to relevance to practice, meaningful contrast, ethics, consent, confidentiality and the 12-month currency requirement. The guidance also established clear links between the observations and summative assessment.

68. Evidence demonstrated that throughout the programme, the course provider maintained oversight of both observation opportunities through tracking and quality assurance processes, monitoring approval, completion, contrast and any required actions. Completion and evidence of both observations were reviewed through assessment and moderation processes, enabling any gaps to be identified and addressed. Progression and award remained dependent on the successful completion of two relevant, current and contrasting observation opportunities. We agreed that the standards are now met (1.8, 3.2, 3.3).

69. The course provider demonstrated substantial progress in strengthening stakeholder engagement, governance and quality assurance arrangements across admissions, programme delivery, monitoring, evaluation and ongoing development of the programme. A clear governance framework was established, supported by structured processes for stakeholder engagement, action planning, monitoring, implementation review and impact evaluation. Employer involvement was well evidenced and informed developments to admissions processes, candidate preparation, observation arrangements and wider programme delivery. Feedback mechanisms, action tracking and governance arrangements provided a robust audit

trail demonstrating how stakeholder contributions were considered, acted upon and reviewed.

70. The course provider also established a comprehensive framework to support the involvement of people with lived experience, including carers, as part of a wider co-production approach. Although the implementation remained at an early stage of development, the provider had established an appropriate framework to support involvement, monitor impact and embed their contributions.

71. We were satisfied that stakeholder contributions were incorporated across admissions, curriculum design, teaching, assessment, observations, programme evaluation and programme review, supported by mechanisms to record feedback, decisions, actions and impact. There was evidence of active and ongoing engagement with employers and people with lived experience through regular meetings, with stakeholder contributions embedded within governance arrangements and used to inform the ongoing development, delivery and review of the programme. We agreed that the standards are now met (1.5, 2.2, 2.7, 4.2).

72. Evidence demonstrated that the course provider had strengthened its portfolio assessment framework through clearer marking guidance, level 6 grading criteria and detailed assessment rubrics, providing greater transparency about assessment expectations and pass requirements. A more robust moderation process had also been implemented, with shared guidance, common assessment criteria and calibration activities supporting consistency in marking decisions. Additional moderation checks reviewed mandatory evidence, legal and professional accuracy, and the quality and consistency of feedback.

73. The revised arrangements were tested through an internal moderation exercise, which identified and addressed issues relating to observation evidence, feedback quality and legal accuracy. This demonstrated that effective systems were in place to assure the validity and consistency of assessor commentary and to ensure students received clear feedback on whether they had met the required standard. Overall, the evidence provided assurance that marking and moderation arrangements were clear, consistent and appropriately quality assured. We determined that the standard is now met (4.8).

74. Following the review of the documentary evidence submitted, the inspection team are satisfied that the conditions set against the approval of the Developing Capability as a Best Interests Assessor course are met.