

## HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Middlesex University and Think Ahead
Validating body	Middlesex University
Name of programme(s)	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work Practice (Think Ahead), Full time accelerated
Approval visit date	05 – 06 February 2019
Case reference	CAS-13660-S4Y7T5

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### Executive Summary

We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), a regulator set up to protect the public. We set standards for education and training, professional knowledge and skills, conduct, performance and ethics; keep a register of professionals who meet those standards; approve programmes which professionals must complete before they can register with us; and take action when professionals on our Register do not meet our standards.

The following is a report on the approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that programme(s) detailed in this report meet our standards of education and training (referred to through this report as 'our standards'). The report details the process itself, the evidence considered, and recommendations made regarding programme approval.

## Section 1: Our regulatory approach

### Our standards

We approve programmes that meet our education standards, which ensure individuals that complete the programmes meet proficiency standards. The proficiency standards set out what a registrant should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their education and training. The education standards are outcome focused, enabling education providers to deliver programmes in different ways, as long as individuals who complete the programme meet the relevant proficiency standards.

Programmes are normally [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to satisfactory engagement with our monitoring processes. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

### How we make our decisions

We make independent evidence based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint [partner visitors](#) to undertake assessment of evidence presented through our processes. The visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation of the visitors, inclusive of conditions and recommendations. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of programmes. In order to do this, they consider recommendations detailed in process reports, and any observations from education providers (if submitted). The Committee meets in public on a regular basis and their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

### HCPC panel

We always appoint at least one partner visitor from the profession (inclusive of modality and / or entitlement, where applicable) with which the assessment is concerned. We also ensure that visitors are supported in their assessment by a member of the HCPC executive team. Details of the HCPC panel for this assessment are as follows:

Diane Whitlock	Lay
David Ward	Social worker
Anne Mackay	Social worker
Eloise O'Connell	HCPC executive
Patrick Armsby	HCPC executive (observer)

### Other groups involved in the approval visit

There were other groups in attendance at the approval visit as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Celia Bell	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Middlesex University
Ruth Wood	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Middlesex University

Debbie Jack	Middlesex University representative (internal panel)	Middlesex University
Stefano Porrelli	Student representative (internal panel)	Middlesex University
Christine Cocker	External assessor (internal panel)	University of East Anglia
Clare Parkinson	External assessor (internal panel)	Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

## Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work Practice (Think Ahead)
Mode of study	FTA (Full time accelerated)
Profession	Social worker in England
First intake	01 July 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 160
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02022

We undertook this assessment of a new programme proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involves consideration of documentary evidence and an onsite approval visit, to consider whether the programme meet our standards for the first time.

Think Ahead is a national charity funded by the Department of Health and Social Care to deliver fast-track social work training. Previously, Think Ahead delivered a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work Practice (Think Ahead) with University of York, this programme has taken the last cohort in 2018 and will be closing when this final cohort has completed the programme. Middlesex University secured the contract as the new Higher Education Institute provider for the Think Ahead programme, with planned delivery to the first cohort of learners commencing in July 2019.

## Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment

In order for us to progress with approval and monitoring assessments, we require certain evidence and information from education providers. The following is a list of evidence that we asked for through this process, and whether that evidence was provided. Education providers are also given the opportunity to include any further supporting evidence as part of their submission. Without a sufficient level of evidence, we need to consider whether we can proceed with the assessment. In this case, we decided that we were able to undertake our assessment with the evidence provided.

Required documentation	Submitted
Programme specification	Yes
Module descriptor(s)	Yes
Handbook for learners	Yes

Handbook for practice based learning	Yes
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes
Completed proficiency standards mapping document	Yes
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	Yes
External examiners' reports for the last two years, if applicable	Yes

We also expect to meet the following groups at approval visits:

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Yes	We met with learners on HCPC approved programmes at Middlesex University, the MA in Social Work (Full time) and the Post Graduate Diploma Social Work (Full time accelerated).
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice education providers	Yes	
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Yes	
Programme team	Yes	
Facilities and resources	Yes	

## Section 4: Outcome from first review

### Recommendation of the visitors

In considering the evidence provided by the education provider as part of the initial submission and at the approval visit, the visitors' recommend that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards are met at this time, but that the programme(s) should be approved subject to the conditions noted below being met.

### Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is insufficient evidence that standards are met. The visitors were satisfied that a number of the standards are met at this stage. However, the visitors were not satisfied that there is evidence that demonstrates that the following standards are met, for the reasons detailed below.

We expect education providers to review the issues identified in this report, decide on any changes that they wish to make to programmes, and then provide any further evidence to demonstrate how they meet the conditions. We set a deadline for responding to the conditions of 27 March 2019.

### 3.9 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

**Condition:** The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how they will ensure there will be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

**Reason:** To evidence this standard, the education provider provided information about the programme team from Think Ahead, and information about the social work teaching staff at Middlesex University. The visitors understood that the staff from Middlesex University also contribute to the current social work provision at Middlesex University. From the documentation provided, the visitors were not clear how much input the staff from other social work programmes would have on the proposed new programme, and how much of their workload would be dedicated to the new programme. The visitors were also not clear whether staff that were involved with delivering the previous Think Ahead programme with University of York, would now be involved in this programme. As a result, they were unclear how their work load cross-over would be managed between the previous programme closing, and the new one starting.

At the visit, the senior team explained that that there will be a 'core team' among the social work staff at Middlesex University who will contribute to the new programme, but will also remain involved in the other social work programmes at Middlesex University. The senior team also clarified that by the beginning of July, when the programme is due to commence, they will have up to eight full time equivalent staff in place for the programme, with the recruitment for new posts beginning in May. The team have agreed to have a staff student ratio of 1:25 for the 'summer institute' and for placements a ratio of 1:4. The plan is to have this in place in time for the programme to commence in July. The visitors heard verbal reassurances of the plans the education provider has in place to ensure adequate staffing for when the programme is due to commence in July. However they require evidence which demonstrates how the education provider will ensure this plan will be in place for when the new programme is due to commence. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence which demonstrates how the education provider will ensure there will be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

#### **4.9 The programme must ensure that learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how the programme ensures that learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.

**Reason:** To evidence this standard, the education provider referred to one of the learning outcomes in the 'Placement stage one' module, which states "Operate effectively within multi-agency and inter-professional partnerships and settings". The documentation also includes a statement that on year one, most of learner's time will be "working on cases assigned to a multi-disciplinary community mental health service which supports adults with mental illness. You will work alongside a variety of other professionals including psychologists and psychiatrists". From their review of the documentation, the visitors understood that interprofessional education (IPE) on the programme would take place solely in practice-based learning through learner's opportunities to work in multi-disciplinary teams.

At the visit, the programme team explained that Middlesex University offers a series of interprofessional seminars, where all learners within the health and care professions are expected to attend two out of 12 available seminars. On these seminars, learners will be learning with and from, other learners and professionals in other relevant professions. The programme team explained that learners on the proposed new

programme will have the opportunity to attend at least two of the seminars when they attend Middlesex University for teaching and re-call days. The programme team gave reassurance that they would ensure there is some cross-over between learners attending the teaching days, and the interprofessional seminars, to ensure that learners are able to attend at least two. While the visitors agree that the seminars would be appropriate to ensure IPE, they were not clear how the education provider would ensure that all learners attend two seminars, when they have limited time in the academic setting, due to the nature of the accelerated programme. The visitors have heard verbal reassurances about how IPE will be delivered on the programme, however they have not seen documented evidence of this, or how they plan to structure and monitor this in order to ensure all learners will attend at least two seminars. Therefore, the visitors require further information about how IPE is structured within the programme, to ensure that learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.

## **5.2 The structure, duration and range of practice-based learning must support the achievement of the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate that the range of practice-based learning will support the achievement of the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency for social workers in England.

**Reason:** From their review of the documentation, the visitors understood that learners on the programme will complete two placement stages. For both of those stages, learners will be based in a community mental health team in the same 'host organisation'. During the second placement stage learners will spend 30 days, in either children and family social work, child and adolescent mental health services, or a third sector provider offering the opportunity for direct work with children and families. The education provider calls this the 'Contrasting Learning Experience (CLE)'. The visitors read within the documentation that 'Direct observation' is part of the assessment of practice-based learning. The documentation notes this may not be achievable on the CLE. From this information, the visitors could not determine whether learners would be assessed on the CLE.

At the visit, during the practice education provider meetings it was explained that the CLE is integrated into the practice learning agreement, and in the final placement report there is a section for the CLE. While the documentations suggests that there may be a direct observation for the CLE, the education provider gave reassurance that the direct observation on the CLE would be mandatory, and perhaps needs to be made more clear in documentation. From the information provided, and from discussions at the visit, the visitors were not clear how learning on the CLE is recorded and assessed for learners, which would ensure that all learners complete the CLE, and have been assessed within this setting to ensure the learning outcomes can be met. As the visitors were not clear how this would be recorded and assessed, the visitors could not determine that learners have access to a range of practice settings of the profession, which support the learning outcomes on the programme. As such, the visitors require further information about the CLE, to determine whether the range of practice-based learning will support the achievement of the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency for social workers in England.

### **5.7 Practice educators must undertake regular training which is appropriate to their role, learners' needs and the delivery of the learning outcomes of the programme.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that all practice educators undertake initial and update training which is appropriate to their role, learners' needs and the delivery of the learning outcomes of the programme.

**Reason:** In the SETs mapping document for this standard, the education provider states that "All CSWs will hold a practice educator award, or will be supported and funded to do so". From this statement, the visitors were not clear whether the Consultant Social Workers (CSWs) would be able to take learners before they have undertaken practice educator training, and note that the statement suggests not all CSWs have undertaken practice educator training at this stage. At the visit, the visitors asked for further information about the process the education provider has to ensure that all CSWs have undertaken practice educator training, and how they continue to monitor this to ensure regular training. The senior team explained that part of the role of the 'Practice Specialist' on the programme, is to make sure that CSWs have undergone practice educator training. At the practice education provider meeting it was explained that the 'host organisations' would work collaboratively with Think Ahead to ensure that the CSWs who had not yet undergone the practice educator training were supported appropriately until they had completed the training.

From these discussions, the visitors were not clear what role Middlesex University has in ensuring that all CSWs will have undergone training, or how they monitor that practice educators are continuing regular training. The team explained that Middlesex University have their own practice educator workshops and training, and will work with Think Ahead in terms of induction workshops for CSWs for this programme. The visitors were provided with some verbal reassurances about how the education provider would ensure all practice educators undertake training appropriate to their role. However, the visitors have not seen evidence of what process the education provider, including both Middlesex University and Think Ahead, has in place to record and monitor which practice educators have undergone initial training, and how they monitor this to ensure practice educators undertake regular training. As such, the visitors require further information to determine whether this standard is met.

### **Recommendations**

We include recommendations when standards are met at or just above threshold level, and where there is a risk to that standard being met in the future. Recommendations do not need to be met before programmes can be approved, but they should be considered by education providers when developing their programmes.

### **3.7 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.**

**Recommendation:** The visitors recommend that the education provider develops and implements their plans to engage the two groups of service users and carers, and involve these groups in the programme.

**Reason:** From their review of the documentation and through discussions at the visit, the visitors considered this standard is met at threshold level. The visitors met with two groups of service users and carers at the visit; those who have been involved on the current social work programmes at Middlesex University, and those who have been

involved with the programme previously delivered by University of York and Think Ahead. Both of these groups will be involved in this new programme. The visitors heard from the group involved with the previous Think Ahead programme, they had been involved in the admissions stage and the 'summer institute' where learners spend their first six weeks in the academic setting. The group explained that after the first six weeks, their involvement then ceased to continue until the next cohort began. The service users and carers expressed great interest in continuing this involvement throughout the entire programme, rather than being involved only in the initial stages. The visitors heard that they had fed this back to the team at Think Ahead, and that this would be reflected in the new programme, though they were not yet sure what the plan was for them.

Additionally, the visitors note that with this new partnership there are now two different groups of service users and carers involved. The service users and carers from both groups expressed great interest in having a partnership between the two groups, to work together through their involvement on this programme. At this stage, the service users and carers were aware that there were some plans in place for the groups to work together on the programme, however it was not clear exactly how this would work in practice. The visitors heard the service users and carers had hopes for engagement between the groups and further involvement throughout the programme, but were not completely reassured. Therefore, the visitors recommend that the education provider considers strengthening their plan to support the engagement of the two groups of service users and carers, and further involves the groups in the programme, to ensure ongoing and meaningful involvement from service users and carers on the programme.

## Section 5: Visitors' recommendation

Considering the education provider's response to the conditions set out in section 4, the visitors are satisfied that the conditions are met and recommend that the programme(s) are approved.

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 24 April 2019 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).