hcpc health & care professions council

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	The City of Liverpool College (formerly Liverpool Community College)
Validating body / Awarding body	Liverpool John Moores University
Programme name	BA (Hons) in Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker, in England
Date of visit	23 – 24 April 2013

Contents

Executive summary

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health and care professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HCPC is a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HCPC currently regulates 16 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Social worker' in England must be registered with us. The HCPC keep a register of health and care professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

The visitors' report which follows outlines the recommended outcome made by the visitors on the ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 22 August 2013. At the Committee meeting, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and that the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures that those who complete it meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Introduction

The HCPC visited the programme at the education provider as the Social work profession (in England) came onto the register on 1 August 2012 and a decision was made by the Education and Training Committee to visit all existing programmes from this profession. This visit assessed the programme against the standards of education and training (SETs) and considered whether those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

This visit was part of a joint event. The education provider and validating/awarding body reviewed the programme and the professional body considered their endorsement of the programme. The education provider, the professional body and the HCPC formed a joint panel, with an independent chair and secretary, supplied by the education provider. Whilst the joint panel participated in collaborative scrutiny of the programme and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HCPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HCPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HCPC's standards. A separate report, produced by the education provider and the professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Dorothy Smith (Social Worker)
	Caroline Jackson (Social worker)
	George Delafield (Forensic psychologist / Occupational psychologist)
HCPC executive officer	Benjamin Potter
Proposed student numbers	18
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2013
Chair	Tony Hall (Liverpool John Moores University)
Secretary	Kris Barrow (Liverpool John Moores University)
Members of the joint panel	Rebecca Bartlett (Internal Panel Member)
	Debbie Ford (External Panel Member)
	Karen Jones (The College of Social Work)
	Sue Furness (The College of Social Work)

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HCPC reviewed the documentation detailed below, sent by the education provider:

	Yes	No	N/A
Programme specification	☒	☐	☐
Descriptions of the modules	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	☒	☐	☐
Practice placement handbook	☒	☐	☐
Student handbook	☒	☐	☐
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	☒	☐	☐
External examiners' reports from the last two years	☒	☐	☐

During the visit the HCPC saw the following groups or facilities:

	Yes	No	N/A
Senior managers of the education provider with responsibility for resources for the programme	☒	☐	☐
Programme team	☒	☐	☐
Placements providers and educators/mentors	☒	☐	☐
Students	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☒	☐	☐

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for approval, the visitors must be assured that the programme meets all of the standards of education and training (SETs) and that those who complete the programme meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

The visitors agreed to recommend to the Education and Training Committee that a number of conditions are set on the programme, all of which must be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 49 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 8 SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for approval. Conditions are set when certain standards of education and training have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the standard being met.

The visitors have also made a number of recommendations for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

Conditions

2.1 The admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The programme team need to clarify the entry criteria for the programme to ensure that it is referenced consistently and clearly for the new programme.

Reason: From the documentation provided, the visitors noted that in exceptional circumstances an entry examination will be offered to applicants if they cannot provide evidence of achieving the required 240 Universities and Colleges Application Service (UCAS) points for entry to the programme. However, the visitors were unclear as to when this examination was offered to applicants and what the 'exceptional circumstances' may be. The visitors were also unclear as to what this examination covered and how this was mapped to the UCAS points to ensure parity in the application process. In discussion with the programme team it was clarified that this examination had formed part of the part time programme which is no longer recruiting and that it was put in place so that mature students who may not meet the UCAS criteria were not disadvantaged. The team further clarified that this examination would no longer be offered as part of the admissions process for this programme. The visitors therefore require the programme team to ensure that the entry criteria that is included in the programme documentation, on the website and in any advertising information is clarified and the offer of an entry examination is removed. In this way the visitors can be sure that applicants applying to the programme have all of the information they require to make an informed choice about applying to the programme.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider needs to provide further evidence of the formal structures within the education provider and the validating body which are in place to effectively manage the programme

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitors were aware of how the programme is managed day to day. The programme manager is responsible for all aspects of the operation and function of the programme and is responsible to the head of school and the head of higher education at the education provider. The programme manager is also responsible for liaising with the link tutor from the validating body. However, in discussion at the visit the visitors noted that some elements of the programme were dealt with by the education provider's policy and processes while others were covered by the validating body's policies and processes. As such it was not always clear which institutions' policies and procedures were responsible for which aspects of the programme and where there were similar policies and procedures which took precedence, such as in aspects of assessment. As a result the visitors were unclear about the management structures at the education provider and how these structures work in tandem with the validating body's management structures. Therefore the visitors require further information about the structures that are in place to manage the programme effectively, how they are designed to operate and how the education provider's management structures work with those of the validating body. In this way the visitors can determine where responsibility for each aspect of the programme lies and how the structures in place support the effective management of the programme.

3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to ensure that the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to the HCPC and statutory regulation.

Reason: The visitors noted that the programme documentation submitted by the education provider included instances of incorrect terminology and occasional errors. This was highlighted by the programme team at the visit and a list of updates and corrections that were to be made to the documentation were provided to the visitors. However, in addition to these changes there were some errors when referencing the HCPC. In particular there were references to the programme providing a '…licence to practice qualification in social work approved by the Health and Care Professions Council' (Student Handbook, page 84) and the 'Programme accredited by: Health and Care Professions Council' (Student Handbook, page 91). The HCPC does not 'accredit' education programmes, as a statutory regulator we 'approve' education programmes. It is also the case that the HCPC does not grant a 'licenses to practice' instead we register professionals who are then able to use the protected title Social worker, in England. The visitors considered the use of this terminology could be misleading to students and therefore required the programme documentation to be reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect terminology throughout.

3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.

Condition: The programme team should provide further evidence of their relationship with the Forum Of Carers and Users of Services (FOCUS) North West group to identify how the provision of support to service users and carers enables the team to effectively manage their input into the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted from the evidence provided at the visit and in the documentation prior to the visit, that service users and carers play key roles in a number of aspects of the programme. In discussion with the service user and carer representatives it was highlighted that their primary role in the programme was in the delivery of seminars to describe their experiences of being a service user or carer. In addition the representatives from FOCUS highlighted that they were involved in some of the assessment of students work and in the interview parts of the programme's admission process. It was also made clear to the visitors that those members of the group who wanted to get involved in these areas volunteered through the FOCUS group's internal processes and weren't picked and trained by the programme team to undertake these roles. In the programme team meeting it was clarified that there is a great deal of support for the members of the FOCUS group through the group's staff and that there were opportunities through the group for development and training opportunities. However, the visitors were unclear about the support that the programme team offered group members to ensure they could effectively undertake the roles that they were being asked to undertake. The visitors were also unclear about what training was offered for FOCUS group members to ensure they could undertake any required role in the assessment of students. The visitors therefore require the programme team to provide more information about the support and training they provide to service users and carers to ensure that the service users can effectively undertake the roles they are being asked to fulfil and support student learning.

3.14 Where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

Condition: The programme team need to provide further evidence of how they obtain students' consent to participate in role play element of the course particularly when they are acting as service users or carers.

Reason: From their reading of the programme documentation the visitors could not identify how the programme team obtains students' consent to act as service users in practical teaching, such as role play. In discussion with the students the visitors noted that while students felt comfortable opting out of any role play, in some instances this was dependent on the knowledge the teaching staff have of individual student's circumstances. It was also highlighted that there was no formal mechanism for obtaining students' consent to participate in practical or role playing aspects of the programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence as to how the programme team obtain students' consent to participate in role play elements of the course particularly when they are acting as service users or carers.

3.15 Throughout the course of the programme, the education provider must have identified where attendance is mandatory and must have associated monitoring mechanisms in place.

Condition: The programme team must identify how students are made aware of the implications of non-attendance are and how these implications relate to the professional suitability policy of the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation provided that there is an expectation articulated that the students are expected to attend 100 per cent of the course and that their attendance will be monitored both at the education provider and practice placement providers. In discussion with the students it was highlighted that that there is an attendance policy and that the students are aware of when and where attendance is mandatory. However, when asked, the students were unsure what level of non-attendance would trigger any action from the programme team to address it or what that action would be. In discussion with the programme team it was clarified that in scrutinising students' attendance a decision would be taken to intervene if any student's attendance became inconsistent but that there was no absolute level of non-attendance that would trigger action. It was also clarified that there was currently no explicit link between level of attendance and the fitness to practice procedure. Therefore the visitors require further evidence of what the level of attendance is considered acceptable in order to meet the required learning outcomes of the programme and what action is taken when attendance drops below this level. They also require further evidence to demonstrate how students are made aware of what effect contravening this policy may have on their ability to progress through the programme and how non-attendance is linked to the professional suitability policy.

5.2 The number, duration and range of practice placements must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Condition: The programme team must provide further information about how their relationship with the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Partnership ensures that there is a sufficient range of placement opportunities for students.

Reason: From the evidence provided prior to and during the visit, the visitors were made aware of the close relationship the programme team have with the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Partnership for the organisation of placements for students in local authority (LA) settings. Through this partnership a great deal of the co-ordination regarding the placement providers, placement educators and students occurs. This includes the approval of LA placement environments, provision of training for placement educators, determination of the number of LA placements available and the allocation of students to LA placement providers and educators. The visitors noted, in conversation with the practice placement providers and educators that the partnership takes a significant role in allocating students to available placements based on student preferences that have been expressed in application forms for placement. They also noted in conversation with students that some students had been provided with their preferences for placement on two occasions while other students had not. As such the visitors are unclear as to the role of the programme team in the allocation of placements for students and how the team ensure that each student gets the experience they need to meet the learning outcomes associated with practice placements. Therefore the visitors require further information about the relationship the programme team has with the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Partnership and how this works in practice to ensure that all students get the experiences they require on placement. In this way the visitors will be able to determine how the programme team ensure there is a sufficient number and range of placements to support students in the achievement of the required learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency for social workers.

5.4 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Condition: The programme team must provide further information about how their relationship with the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Partnership ensures that they have overall responsibility for the quality and monitoring of practice placements.

Reason: From the evidence provided prior to and during the visit, the visitors were made aware of the close relationship the programme team have with the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Partnership for the organisation of placements for students in local authority (LA) settings. Through this partnership a great deal of the co-ordination regarding the placement providers, placement educators and students occurs. This includes the approval of LA placement environments, provision of training for placement educators, determination of the number of LA placements available and the allocation of students to LA placement providers and educators. The visitors noted, in conversation with the practice placement providers and educators that the partnership approves LA placements by completing the Quality Assurance of Placement Learning assessments (QAPL) paperwork on behalf of the programme team. They then provide this information to the programme team. As such the visitors are unclear as to the process by which the programme team ensure that these assessments had been undertaken appropriately and that the information provided was correct. Therefore the visitors

require further information about the relationship the programme team has with the partnership and how this works in practice to ensure that the programme's system for approving and monitoring all placements is thorough and effective. In this way the visitors will be able to determine how the programme team ensure that all practice placements meet their requirements and provide a suitable environment for their students to achieve the required learning outcomes.

6.11 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be from the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to make it clear that external examiners appointed to the programme must be HCPC registered unless alternate arrangements have previously been agreed with the HCPC.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail concerning the recruitment of external examiners to the programme. This standard requires the assessment regulations of the programme to state that any external examiner appointed to the programme needs to be appropriately registered or that suitable alternative arrangements should be agreed. Therefore the visitors require evidence that HCPC requirements regarding the appointment of external examiner to the programme have been included in the relevant documentation to ensure that this standard continues to be met.

Recommendations

2.7 The admissions procedures must ensure that the education provider has equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Recommendation: The education provider should keep the equality and diversity policy under review to ensure that the equality and diversity policy is being applied consistently and clearly at programme level.

Reason: The visitors noted from the documentation provided at the visit and in discussion with the programme team that the education provider has an equality and diversity policy in relation to applicants and students. Therefore the visitors are satisfied that this standard is met. However, from the evidence given the visitors could not determine how the 'Equality Impact Assessment', particularly in relation to the application and selection process, links with the gathering of equality and diversity monitoring data. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider keeps the implementation of its equality and diversity policy under review to ensure that it is being applied clearly and consistently at programme level. In this way the education provider may be better able to identify where issues concerning equality and diversity may occur and put in place actions to circumvent any such issues arising.

3.4 There must be a named person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme who must be appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be on the relevant part of the Register.

Recommendation: The programme team should keep the level of input from regulated professionals into the programme under review and determine if the programme leader needs to be HCPC registered in light of this.

Reason: The visitors noted that while the programme lead is not currently HCPC registered two other member of the programme team are and the team is supported by a number of visiting lecturers who are on the Register. Therefore the visitors are content that this standard is met. However the visitors recommend that the team should keep this situation under review and, if necessary, the programme lead should become HCPC registered, if possible. In this way the programme team may be better placed to maintain the input into the curriculum from registered social work professionals and ensure that any changes to the landscape of statutory regulation can be quickly and clearly communicated to students.

3.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should keep the resources at the college campus under review to ensure that the available budget is used effectively to support the delivery of the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted that the programme team have been able to access sufficient resources at the education provider when necessary. Therefore the visitors are content that this standard is met. However, in discussion with the senior management team and the programme team it was clear that the method of allocation

of the resources to the programme and the campus at which it is based was not always clear. The visitors also noted that the education provider had made some recent changes to the way resources have to be requested and are allocated which caused some difficulties for the programme team. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider keeps the resource allocation to the programme, and the college campus at which it is based, under review. In this way the education provider may be in a better position to ensure that the resources available for the programme's delivery continue to effectively support the programme team's learning and teaching activities.

5.10 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider.

Recommendation: The programme team should keep the channels of communication with local private, voluntary and independent placement educators under review to ensure that the level of communication with them is comparable to those educators in local authority settings.

Reason: The visitors noted from the documentation provided, and in the meeting with the practice placement providers that there was effective collaboration with practice placement educators, mainly through the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Partnership. Therefore the visitors were content that this standard has been met. However, in the meeting with the practice placement providers it was highlighted that there were some difficulties getting placement educators from the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector organisations involved in some of the regular partnership meetings. As such some PVI placement educators did not have as regular communication with the programme as those educators who worked in local authority or statutory settings. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team keeps their communication with the educators in the PVI sector under review to ensure that those educators are fully informed of the developments in the programme and of the opportunities available for them to get involved. In this way the programme team may be able to facilitate a greater number of placement opportunities for their students in the PVI sector.

5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:
   • **the learning outcomes to be achieved;**
   • **the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;**
   • **expectations of professional conduct;**
   • **the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and**
   • **communication and lines of responsibility.**

Recommendation: The programme team should keep the channels of communication with local private, voluntary and independent placement educators under review to ensure that they can access the same training opportunities as those educators in local authority settings.

Reason: The visitors noted from the documentation provided, and in the meeting with the practice placement providers that there was effective collaboration with practice placement educators, mainly through the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work

Partnership. Therefore the visitors were content that this standard has been met. However, in the meeting with the practice placement providers it was highlighted that there were some difficulties getting placement educators from the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector organisations involved in some of the regular partnership meetings. As such some PVI placement educators did not receive as many of the regular offers for training as those educators who worked in local authority or statutory settings. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team keeps their communication with the educators in the PVI sector under review to ensure that those educators are fully informed of the opportunities for training that are being offered in the local area. In this way the programme team may be able to facilitate a greater number of placement opportunities for their students in the local PVI sector.

6.7 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

Recommendation: The programme team should consider reinforcing the completion deadlines for students to ensure that they aware of when and how long they have to complete the required work for the programme.

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitors were able to identify how long students had to complete the course and the number of re-sits that students were able to take in order to pass relevant assessments. This information was re-iterated in discussion with the programme team and as such the visitors were content that this standard has been met. However, the visitors noted that there was some divergence of opinion amongst the students when they were asked questions about re-sits and the amount of time they had available to complete the programme. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team identify where they can reinforce this information either via the programme documentation or in induction sessions for the students. In this way the programme team may better facilitate students' understanding of the requirements for progression through the programme.

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