

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of York and Think Ahead
Validating body / Awarding body	University of York
Programme name	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work Practice (Think Ahead)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	26 – 27 January 2016

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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. We are a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. We currently regulate 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 approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 20 May 2016. At the Committee meeting, the programme was approved. 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 it was a new programme which was seeking HCPC approval for the first time. 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 an HCPC only visit. The education provider and validating body did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	David Childs (Social worker in England) Gary Hickman (Social worker in England) Kathleen Taylor (Lay visitor)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Hollie Latham
HCPC observer	Jamie Hunt
Proposed student numbers	100 per cohort, 1 cohort per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	18 July 2016
Chair	Lars Waldorf (University of York)
Secretary	Samantha McDermott (University of York)

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Descriptions of the modules	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice placement handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External examiners' reports from the last two years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The HCPC did not review external examiners' reports from the last two years prior to the visit as there is currently no external examiner as the programme is new.

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placements providers and educators / mentors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service users and carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HCPC met with students from the BA (Hons) in Social Work and MA in Social Work at the University of York as the programme seeking approval currently does not have any students enrolled on it.

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for approval the visitors must be satisfied 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 the relevant 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 50 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining eight SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be approved. 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 recommendation.

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

Conditions

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence which demonstrates that there are effective systems in place to manage the staffing structure and numbers.

Reason: From the documentation and in meetings at the visit the visitors learnt that the Think Ahead staffing structure is currently intended to work with 25 Consultant Social Workers (CSW), each supervising four students. The education provider will directly employ three Practice Specialists, who will be responsible for quality assuring placement experience for students. Each Practice Specialist will have oversight of the work of eight CSWs, who will remain within the structure of their employing organisation.

In addition to the above structure the education provider is in the process of supporting partner organisations in the recruitment of a number of Reserve CSWs to cover instances where CSWs are unable to deliver their role long term due to illness or other such instances of absence. Whilst the visitors were satisfied that there is a clear structure in place for staff responsibilities, they were unable to identify how the staffing structure and numbers would be effectively managed to ensure each staff member has the time and resources to successfully deliver their role and responsibilities. In particular the visitors noted that each practice specialist has a number of fundamental responsibilities, some of which include:

- ensuring partnerships are working well;
- ensuring each student has access to the resources they need;
- ensuring parity in placement caseloads for students;
- ensuring a range of placement experience;
- providing academic and pastoral support; and
- mentoring eight CSWs.

Based on the outlined structure and responsibilities the visitors were not satisfied that Practice Specialists and CSWs will have the time and support they need to deliver their responsibilities within the current system. Consequently, the visitors cannot see that the current staffing system in place is effective to manage the programme.

In addition to this the visitors noted that the Reserve CSWs will be expected to 'step in' where CSWs are unable to deliver their role. The programme team explained the support mechanisms in place for this role including attendance at training sessions, however, the visitors were unable to see how a Reserve CSW would be able to step in and take responsibility for a CSWs workload effectively. In particular, the visitors were unable to see how the workload of Practice Specialists would allow sufficient time to support the transition of a Reserve CSW into a CSW role without impact to their responsibilities. Consequently, the visitors are unable to see that there are effective staffing systems in place to manage the programme.

The visitors therefore require further evidence which demonstrates that there are effective staffing systems in place to manage the programme. Specifically, how the staffing structure is effectively managed to ensure that the people involved have the support they need to work within the systems in place.

3.5 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 which demonstrates how the Practice Specialist and Consultant Social Worker (CSW) roles are appropriately resourced to support effective delivery of the programme.

Reason: From documentation and in meetings at the visit the visitors were able to gain an understanding of the current staffing structure and numbers from Think Ahead. However, the visitors were unable to see how the current staff numbers within this structure are suitable to deliver an effective programme. Specifically the visitors noted that each practice specialist has a number of fundamental responsibilities, some of which include:

- ensuring partnerships are working well;
- ensuring each student has access to the resources they need;
- ensuring parity in placement caseloads for students;
- ensuring a range of placement experience;
- providing academic and pastoral support; and
- mentoring eight CSWs.

Due to the practical requirements of this programme the visitors consider that the current number of staff in this role is not appropriate to achieve the workload as outlined within the programme documentation and by the senior team. In particular, the number of CSWs and consequently students that each Practice Specialist will be responsible for. The visitors note that from discussions at the visit it became clear that the Practice Specialist is a pivotal role in ensuring the programme is effectively delivered. The visitors wish to stress that with such a significant responsibility on this particular role it is imperative that they are able to clearly see that this role is well supported and that the role criteria is achievable. The visitors are unable to see that these areas are achievable with the current staffing numbers. The visitors therefore require further evidence which demonstrates that there are an appropriate number of staff in place to deliver an effective programme. Specifically, how the role of the Practice Specialist will be appropriately resourced and supported to achieve the role criteria.

3.5 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 which demonstrates how the Practice Specialist role is appropriately resourced to effectively support and manage CSW's and Reserve CSWs.

Reason: From documentation and in meetings at the visit the visitors were able to gain an understanding of the current staffing structure and numbers from Think Ahead. However, the visitors were unable to see how the current staff numbers within this structure are suitable to deliver an effective programme. Specifically, the visitors noted that the Reserve CSWs will be expected to 'step in' where CSWs are unable to deliver their role. The programme team explained the support mechanisms in place for this role including attendance at training sessions, however, the visitors were still unable to see how a Reserve CSW would be able to step in and take responsibility for a CSW's workload effectively. In particular, the visitors were unable to see how the workload of Practice Specialists would allow sufficient time to support the transition of a Reserve CSW into a CSW role without impact to their responsibilities. Consequently, the visitors

are unable to see that there are suitable arrangements in place to deal with situations such as staff absences. The visitors therefore require further evidence which demonstrates that there are an appropriate number of staff in place to deliver an effective programme. Specifically, how the role of the Practice Specialist will be appropriately resourced and supported to effectively support and manage CSWs and Reserve CSWs.

3.5 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 evidence which demonstrates a clear timeline and plan for the implementation of the recruitment strategy, and that appropriate contingencies are in place.

Reason: From documentation and in meetings with the senior and programme teams, the visitors learnt that the programme intends to recruit a total of three Practice Specialists and to support partner organisations in the recruitment of 25 Consultant Social Workers. The senior team stated that they currently have one Practice Specialist in post, with two Practice Specialists starting in April 2016. They have also supported partner organisations in the recruitment of 18 CSWs, and were confident that they could support partner organisations in the recruitment of a total of 23 CSWs by the end of March 2016. However, the visitors were not provided with a clear plan or timeline to achieve this goal. The visitors also noted that 23 CSWs did not reach the required number of CSWs as outlined in the staffing structure within the documentation. In addition to this, the senior team were not able to provide any contingency plans should they not be able to recruit the required number of staff for this programme in the timeframes required.

The visitors note that from discussions at the visit it became clear that roles of Practice Specialists and CSWs are vital to the successful delivery of this programme. The visitors also note that these members of staff are due to undergo extensive training in preparation for their role which is vital in ensuring they are appropriately prepared to deliver their role as a Practice Specialist or CSW. It is therefore imperative that the visitors are confident that the programme will recruit an appropriate number of staff in the timeframes outlined within the programme documentation. This is supported by the comments under the previous conditions under SET 3.5 of this report.

The visitors therefore require documentation which clearly outlines an appropriate and defined timeline for the implementation of the recruitment strategy as well as an appropriate contingency plan. Each of these areas should take into consideration the conditions regarding staff numbers set under SET 3.2 and 3.5 of this report.

3.7 A programme for staff development must be in place to ensure continuing professional and research development.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence to demonstrate that there is an appropriate programme for staff development in place for the Practice Specialist and Consultant Social Worker (CSW) roles.

Reason: From the documentation provided and discussions at the visit it was clear that there is a programme for staff development in place for staff members from the University of York. However, the visitors were unable to locate a clear programme for staff development for Practice Specialists and CSWs beyond their initial training. In

discussions with the programme team it was stated that continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities will be provided for CSWs within their own organisations but there was nothing formal provided from Think Ahead. As the education provider, it is the responsibility of Think Ahead to ensure a programme of staff development is in place for all employees. Whilst there may be opportunities within partner organisations for Practice Specialists and CSWs to undertake, there is no formal programme for staff development in place for these roles which is managed by Think Ahead.

The visitors note that from discussions at the visit it became clear that the Practice Specialist is a pivotal role in ensuring the programme is effectively delivered. The visitors wish to stress that with such a significant responsibility on this particular role it is imperative that they are able to clearly see that this role is well supported with appropriate training and staff development opportunities. The visitors therefore require evidence to demonstrate that there is an appropriate programme for staff development in place, managed by Think Ahead, for the Practice Specialists and CSW roles.

5.1 Practice placements must be integral to the programme.

Condition: The education provider must provide copies of the signed Lead Partner Delivery Agreements for all partner organisations.

Reason: The education provider currently has a number of partner organisations in place who have each committed a number of placements for students on this programme. The visitors were provided with some copies of these agreements ahead of the visit, however, these were not signed at the time of review. The senior team stated that the agreements are due to be signed by the end of February 2016. The visitors note that without seeing final, signed agreements they are unable to be confident that placements are integral for all students. The visitors therefore require further evidence in the way of signed Lead Partner Delivery Agreements to ensure that this standard is met.

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 education provider must provide further evidence which demonstrates that the Practice Specialist and Consultant Social Worker (CSW) roles will be appropriately resourced to ensure effective management of placement experience.

Reason: From the documentation and in meetings at the visit the visitors learnt that the Practice Specialist holds a number of fundamental responsibilities for the programme including ensuring parity in placement experience for all students. Specifically, Practice Specialists will be responsible for ensuring students have access to a range of placements and receive parity in caseloads. Whilst the visitors were satisfied that this could be an appropriate structure for ensuring students have access to a range of placements, they could not see how the current number of staff in this role will be able to deliver this responsibility effectively for the number of CSWs and students they are each responsible for. Additionally, the visitors could not see how each Practice Specialist would be able to maintain appropriate oversight of each placement alongside their other key responsibilities as outlined under the condition for SET 3.2 of this report. The visitors note that with such significant responsibility on this particular role to ensure a range of placement experience, it is imperative that they are able to see that the role

is appropriately resourced and supported for the programme. The visitors are unable to see that this is achievable with the current staffing numbers.

In addition to this, as referenced under the conditions for SET 3.5 of this report, the visitors cannot be certain that all CSWs and Reserve CSWs will be recruited to post before the start date of the programme. The visitors note that the CSW is another vital role in ensuring that each student is supported on placement in the way of acting as a practice educator and providing all opportunities within different placement settings. With the CSW being such a vital role in ensuring a range of placement experience and the uncertainty of this role being adequately recruited in time for the start date of the programme, the visitors are unable to be certain that the number and range of placements available are appropriate to support the delivery of the programme.

The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that the Practice Specialist role will be appropriately resourced to ensure the range of placements are appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes. In addition to this, the visitors require evidence which demonstrates that there is a clear and appropriate recruitment and contingency plan in place for the CSW role to ensure the number and range of placements are appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence to demonstrate that a system is in place which ensures thorough and effective approval and monitoring for staff resourcing associated with practice placements.

Reason: In relation to the condition under SET 5.2 of this report the visitors were unable to see that there is a thorough and effective system in place for approving and monitoring staff resourcing associated with placements. The visitors note that due to the practical requirements of this programme, the approval and monitoring of staff resourcing is imperative to ensuring a successful placement experience. Currently, the visitors are not satisfied that the current system for approving and monitoring placements will ensure that all staff will be recruited and in place within appropriate time frames. Additionally, the visitors are not satisfied that there are appropriate mechanisms in place for the ongoing management of staff. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that an appropriate system is in place to ensure that the Practice Specialist and CSW roles will be appropriately resourced in time for the start date of the programme and will be appropriately managed for the duration of the programme.

5.6 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence to demonstrate that the Practice Specialist and Consultant Social Worker (CSW) roles are appropriately resourced to support students on placement.

Reason: In relation to the conditions under SET 5.2 of this report the visitors were unable to see that the Practice Specialist and CSW roles are adequately resourced and supported to support students in their learning in a safe environment. The visitors note

that due to the practical requirements of this programme, the number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting is imperative to ensuring a successful placement experience. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that the Practice Specialist and CSW roles will be appropriately resourced to ensure an adequate number of qualified and experienced staff at the placement setting.

6.8 Assessment regulations, or other relevant policies, must clearly specify requirements for approved programmes being the only programmes which contain any reference to an HCPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation and assessment regulations to ensure that the interim award is clearly articulated and does not contain any reference to an HCPC protected title or part of the Register.

Reason: In the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors noted reference to a PG Cert that the programme will offer as an interim award which does not lead to eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register. The senior team clarified that this award would be titled 'Post Graduate Certificate in Applied Social Welfare'. The visitors were satisfied that this is an appropriate name for the interim award, however were unable to locate the full name of this award within the programme documentation and assessment regulations. The visitors note that without clarification of the interim award in the programme documentation and assessment regulations they cannot be satisfied that this standard is met. The visitors therefore require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation and assessment regulations to ensure the interim award title is clearly stated.

Recommendations

5.3 The practice placement settings must provide a safe and supportive environment.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the wording used in the practice placement audit to eliminate possible misinterpretation.

Reason: Prior to the visit the visitors were provided with a practice placement audit document which included checks within the placement environment. The visitors are therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, the visitors noted that the wording within the document states that placement providers 'will' complete certain checks as opposed to 'have' completed certain checks. Whilst the visitors are satisfied that these checks are being undertaken in the current audit process, they consider that there is a risk that practice placement providers could misinterpret the wording within this document. Specifically, placement providers could interpret the wording as a task that they will complete over time and not necessarily ahead of the students placement. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team considers reviewing the current wording within the practice placement audit document to eliminate any possibility of misinterpretation.

David Childs
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