Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Birmingham
Programme name	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	15 – 16 September 2015

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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. The education provider has until 23 October 2015 to provide observations on this report. The report and any observations received will be considered by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 19 November 2015. At this meeting, the Committee will accept, reject or vary the visitors' recommended outcome.

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 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	Gary Dicken (Social worker in England) Pat Higham (Social worker in England) Sue Roff (Lay visitor)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Hollie Latham
Proposed student numbers	38 per cohort, per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	1 January 2016
Chair	Alison Coates (University of Birmingham)
Secretary	Davina Weston (University of Birmingham)

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	☐	☐	☒

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	☒	☐	☐
Programme team	☒	☐	☐
Placements providers and educators / mentors	☒	☐	☐
Students	☒	☐	☐
Service users and carers	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☒	☐	☐

The HCPC met with students from the BA (Hons) Social Work, MA Social Work at the University of Birmingham and the previously run Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (Step Up to Social Work) with the North West Midlands Regional Partnership 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 the programme is approved.

The visitors did not set any conditions for the programme.

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 made a recommendation for the programme.

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.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the placement portfolio is reviewed to provide clarity on what it means to give consent and that the form is optional.

Reason: The practice placement portfolio contains a section titled ‘Consent by student to future use of portfolio’ which asks students to consent for their portfolio to be anonymised and used in a number of stated capacities. The visitors were unable to clearly identify within this document if consent was optional. The programme team confirmed that consent was optional and that students would have the option to refuse consent. The visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, the visitors noted that the consent form itself did not dearly state that it was optional and therefore consider there to be a risk that students could misinterpret the requirements to sign the consent form. In addition to this, the visitors noted that the wording suggested that students were consenting to their work being used in research. The programme team stated that this was incorrect and that student work would not be used for research purposes, however this was not clear in the form itself. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider revisits the ‘Consent by student to future use of portfolio’ form to ensure there is clarity in what it means to give consent and that the form is optional. In this way the education provider can alleviate any risk of students misunderstanding this form and ensure that the resources to support student learning will continue to be effectively used.

Gary Dicken
Pat Higham
Sue Roff