

Inspection Report

Inspection ID	NUNR1_ACP108
Course provider	Northumbria University at Newcastle
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	PGCert Approved Mental Health Professional
Mode of study	Part Time
Maximum student cohort	60
Date of inspection	05 May – 06 May 2026
Inspection team	Katie Parkin (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Kate Springett (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Joanne Benn (Lay Inspector) Andrea McCarthy (AMHP registrant Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	24 June 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 Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) courses. We approve courses against these standards to ensure that students who successfully complete an AMHP course can meet the requirements set out in the Mental Health (Approved Mental Health Professionals) (Approval) (England) Regulations 2008.
2. During the approval process, we appoint partner inspectors. This will include a registered inspector who will be a qualified AMHP, and a lay inspector who is not AMHP 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, placements, 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 Northumbria University Newcastle as ‘the course provider’ and we describe the PGCert Mental Health Professional as ‘the course’.

Summary of Inspection

6. Northumbria University at Newcastle Approved PGCert Mental Health Professional was inspected as part of Social Work England’s reapproval cycle, whereby all course providers with Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) courses will be inspected against the new education and training approval standards for AMHP courses.
7. A remote inspection took place from 05 to 06 May 2026.
8. As part of this process the inspection team gathered feedback from key stakeholders through meetings on inspection. This included students, employer partners, practice educators, course team and people with lived experience.

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 AMHP courses. We describe the inspection team in this section as 'we'.

Standard 1. Admissions	Met or not met.
1.1 Confirm on entry to the course that applicants have: i. the potential to acquire and demonstrate the competences set out in the relevant legislation governing AMHP practice; ii. the capability to meet the academic requirements of the course; and iii. the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes	MET
1.2 Confirm that applicants are and remain fully registered with a relevant regulatory body in line with the relevant regulations	MET
1.3 Ensure that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes appropriate criminal conviction checks	MET
1.4 Ensure that applicants have suitable prior experience of the practical application of appropriate legislation and policy, specifically including but not limited to mental health, mental capacity and human rights legislation	MET
1.5 Ensure that applicants have a robust level of legal literacy in appropriate legislative and policy areas	MET
1.6 Ensure that employers, placement providers, people with lived experience of social work, and carers are involved in student admissions	MET
1.7 Ensure that there are equality, diversity and inclusion policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored	MET
1.8 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include information about the award level and professional qualification, course content, teaching modes, location of study, assessment	MET

methods, duration, and observation requirements including the expectations around arranging or securing placements	
1.9 Ensure that the admissions process allows candidates from any eligible profession to demonstrate their suitability to join the course	MET

Key observations for standard 1

10. The admissions process required applicants to evidence prior academic study, professional experience, and reflective capability through a personal statement, CV, and supporting documentation. Applicants were encouraged to reflect on their understanding of relevant legislation, policy, case law, and the key competencies required for AMHP practice, including consideration of their own strengths and development needs. Admissions decisions were informed by review of applicants' qualifications, employment history, and reflective statements. The course team confirmed arrangements for recognising prior learning for applicants who had previously completed relevant BIA study with the university. Overall, we were satisfied that the admissions process appropriately assessed applicants' readiness to undertake the programme. (Standards 1.1, 1.4, 1.5).

11. The course team demonstrated that applicants were provided with detailed information in advance of the course, through the programme webpage, handbook, and application materials, enabling informed decision making about suitability for the AMHP role and the expectations of the programme. Applications were submitted online, supporting accessibility and ensuring applicants were able to demonstrate appropriate digital literacy skills relevant to contemporary AMHP practice. (Standards 1.1, 1.8).

12. We confirmed that professional registration requirements, DBS processes, and expectations regarding suitability and conduct were clearly communicated prior to enrolment and monitored through established admissions processes. Applicants were required to complete enhanced DBS clearance prior to practice learning opportunities, and appropriate arrangements were in place for managing disclosures, suitability concerns, and ongoing fitness to practise expectations. Applicants were also encouraged to disclose support needs or health conditions at application stage so that reasonable adjustments and support could be put in place where required. Students described positive experiences of support from the course team, and we heard that any adjustments requested at application stage were supported by the university. Taken together, we were satisfied that appropriate safeguards and support mechanisms were in place to promote safe and inclusive participation on the programme (Standards 1.2, 1.3, 1.7).

13. People with lived experience contributed to reviewing personal statements and providing feedback to applicants and the course team and clearly articulated their role during the inspection

process. Employer partners and local authority representatives described collaborative working arrangements with the university through both formal and informal networks, supporting shared understanding of admissions expectations and workforce needs. While the programme had not yet recruited applicants from non-social work professional backgrounds for some years, the course team demonstrated awareness of wider workforce barriers and confirmed that appropriate arrangements and support mechanisms were in place should applicants from other professions apply in the future. (Standards 1.1, 1.6, 1.9).

14. Equality, diversity and inclusion considerations were embedded throughout admissions and programme governance arrangements. The university demonstrated that EDI data relating specifically to admissions processes (including application and selection outcomes) was routinely monitored to identify and address potential bias. This information informed admissions practice and was shared within regional AMHP forums to support transparent decision making and workforce planning. Overall, we were satisfied that admissions arrangements were transparent, proportionate, and effective in supporting the recruitment and selection of suitable applicants for the programme (Standards 1.7, 1.9).

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 delivery, resourcing and quality management of the course	MET
2.2 Ensure that regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, and that these involve employers, people with lived experience including carers, and students	MET
2.3 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes consideration of: i. local and regional placement capacity; and 1. 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 with appropriate experience	MET

2.5 Ensure that there is adequate provision of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise	MET
2.6 Ensure that educators are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice	MET

Key observations for standard 2.

15. Strong internal and external governance structures were evident, including oversight through regional AMHP networks and university quality assurance processes. The academic lead and professional lead worked collaboratively to oversee all aspects of programme delivery and development, with both individuals holding appropriate professional qualifications and current Social Work England registration. The professional lead also maintained current AMHP practice, ensuring the programme remained informed by contemporary practice developments and legislative change. Overall, governance arrangements were robust, transparent, and appropriately connected to regional and national AMHP networks (Standards 2.1, 2.4).

16. There was meaningful involvement from employers, students, practice partners, and people with lived experience throughout governance and quality assurance processes. The programme management committee adopted a partnership approach with representation from key stakeholders. Student feedback was actively used to inform programme enhancement and curriculum development, including changes arising from module evaluations and ongoing discussions with student representatives. Students described both formal and informal opportunities to provide feedback and provided examples where this had led to tangible change. People with lived experience were also actively involved in governance structures and programme activity, with mechanisms in place to support continuity of involvement where required. We were therefore satisfied that quality assurance arrangements were well established and supported continuous improvement across the programme (Standards 2.1, 2.2).

17. We heard about effective partnership working with local authorities and regional AMHP networks to support workforce planning, admissions, placement capacity, and programme delivery. Student numbers were informed by workforce demand and local authority capacity, including considerations around placement provision and backfill arrangements. The university maintained regular dialogue with employer partners, particularly in relation to barriers affecting recruitment from non-social work professional groups and challenges associated with placement availability outside local authority settings. While these barriers reflect wider system issues, we

were satisfied that the university remained responsive and engaged in ongoing dialogue to support future widening participation (Standards 2.3).

18. We were also satisfied that the programme was delivered by an appropriately qualified and experienced staff team with relevant expertise in AMHP practice, mental health, teaching, and assessment. Staffing structures were proportionate to cohort size and supported by wider university governance arrangements. Contingency arrangements were in place to manage staff absence and support succession planning, including forward workforce planning and additional staffing capacity where required. Guest lecturers, AMHP practitioners, and people with lived experience contributed to teaching, supported by appropriate quality assurance processes. Employer partners confirmed that the programme remained current and informed by practice developments (Standards 2.1, 2.5).

19. Staff demonstrated strong engagement with professional development, research activity, and current AMHP practice. Protected workload allocation supported involvement in partnership working, research, and teaching. The programme also demonstrated a reflective approach to supporting guest lecturers and people with lived experience through debriefing and reflective discussion following teaching sessions. Overall, we were satisfied that staff maintained appropriate professional currency and that the programme was informed by current practice, research, and legislative developments (Standards 2.5, 2.6).

Standard 3. Curriculum	Met or not met
3.1 The views of employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of mental health services are incorporated into the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum	MET
3.2 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, including around cross-national border issues in relation to practice in Wales, where this is appropriate	MET
3.3 The course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, human rights and legislative frameworks	MET
3.4 Course content is routinely updated as a result of developments in legislation, research, government policy, and best practice	MET

3.5 The integration of theory and practice is central to the course	MET
3.6 Students understand how the standards of the student's own professional regulator(s), apply to their specialist practice	MET
3.7 The course is designed to enable students to demonstrate an evidence-informed approach to AMHP practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation	MET

Key observations for standard 3.

20. We were satisfied that there was effective partnership working across the programme, with close collaboration between local authorities, the Northeast AMHP Leads Network, employers, and people with lived experience. These partnerships informed curriculum design, programme delivery, governance, and ongoing review processes. Feedback from students, people with lived experience, and partner agencies was actively used to shape programme development, including decisions relating to delivery methods and curriculum updates. People with lived experience described their involvement as meaningful, and confirmed their participation in admissions, programme review, and feedback processes. Students also described both formal and informal mechanisms for providing feedback and consistently reported that the course team responded constructively to their views (Standard 3.1).

21. Module specifications, teaching materials, and practice learning documentation demonstrated how students are supported to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for AMHP practice. Students and stakeholders consistently described the programme as current, relevant, and reflective of contemporary practice (Standards 3.2, 3.4).

22. We also found clear evidence of a strong organisational commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the student journey, from admissions through to practice learning and student support. University-level governance and monitoring arrangements were in place, alongside practical support mechanisms such as reasonable adjustments, wellbeing services, and accessibility planning. Students, staff, and people with lived experience provided examples of how diversity, anti-stigma work, and anti-discriminatory practice were embedded across teaching and practice learning environments (Standard 3.3).

23. Programme content was kept up to date through ongoing engagement with AMHP practice, regional and national networks, research activity, refresher training, and legislative and policy

developments. The course team described how curriculum content is routinely updated in response to changes in practice, emerging research, and real case examples to ensure learning remains grounded in contemporary AMHP practice. Students similarly described how current case law, policy developments, and practice issues were consistently integrated into teaching (Standard 3.4).

24. We found a strong emphasis on integrating theory, critical reflection, and evidence-informed practice throughout the programme. Teaching, assessments, and the practice learning portfolio demonstrated how students are supported to apply theory to practice and develop defensible decision-making skills. Students provided clear examples of how theoretical learning informed their practice, including reflection on stigma, diagnosis, and evidence-based decision-making in AMHP contexts. Employers and AMHP leads also described how learning from practice settings fed back into wider programme development and regional AMHP discussions (Standards 3.5, 3.7).

25. We were satisfied that students were supported to understand the relationship between their professional background, their relevant regulatory professional standards, and the AMHP role throughout the programme. While in recent years the course has only enrolled social work professionals, the provider demonstrated how this approach would be adapted to reflect the standards of other professions should they join the programme. These expectations are embedded within induction, teaching sessions, practice learning, and ongoing reflection. Students were able to clearly articulate how professional standards informed their developing AMHP identity and described how practice learning strengthened this understanding (Standard 3.6).

Standard 4. Practice Placements	Met or not met
4.1 Ensure practice placements are integral to the course	MET
4.2 Ensure that the number, duration and range of practice placements is appropriate to support the delivery of the course and the achievement of the learning outcomes	MET
4.3 Ensure that students, practice placement providers and educators are prepared for each placement, which will include information about: i. the learning outcomes to be met ii. the timing and duration of any placement experience iii. the records to be maintained	MET

iv. expectations of professional conduct v. assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure to progress vi. communication and lines of responsibility	
4.4 Maintain clear collaborative arrangements for planning and communication with placement providers including a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements, in order jointly to ensure: i. that practice placement settings provide a safe and supportive environment ii. that placement providers have equality, diversity and inclusion policies in place which will apply to students, and which they will implement and monitor iii. that there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise, at the practice placement setting iv. that practice placement providers support their placement staff to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice, including appropriate practice placement educator training v. that a range of learning and teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of people with lived experience of social work and colleagues must be in place throughout all practice placements	MET

Key observations for standard 4.

26. We were satisfied that practice learning is a central and well-supported component of the programme, underpinned by a strong partnership approach to placement provision. Expectations, learning outcomes, and regulatory requirements were clearly set out within pre-application and placement documentation. The practice learning portfolio demonstrated clear alignment with AMHP standards and Social Work England requirements, with structured processes in place to support students, AMHP assessors, and employers throughout. Students consistently described practice learning as integral to their development and reported positive experiences of support from both employers and the course team. Flexible approaches, including reasonable adjustments such

as part-time arrangements and support for caring responsibilities, were evidenced where required (Standards 4.1, 4.2).

27. We found robust systems in place for preparing, monitoring, and supporting students throughout practice learning. Documentation clearly outlined roles, responsibilities, professional conduct expectations, assessment requirements, and progression processes. Preparation workshops, tripartite meetings, midpoint reviews, and ongoing communication between the university, employers, and AMHP assessors were used effectively to support progression and address concerns where needed. Students and employers described communication as open and supportive, with examples of action planning and additional support being implemented where students required further development during placement. Employers also confirmed that students were appropriately prepared for practice learning and understood expected learning outcomes (Standards 4.1, 4.3).

28. We found clear evidence of robust oversight and quality assurance of placements from allocation through to completion. Placement suitability was assured through formal processes including placement agreements, risk assessments, and pre-placement checks. The course team described how each placement opportunity was reviewed to ensure appropriate learning experiences were available and how engagement with local authorities supported identification and mitigation of any gaps. Ongoing oversight was maintained through tripartite reviews, interim monitoring, direct employer communication, and student feedback. Employers and AMHP leads confirmed strong communication with the university and clear processes for monitoring placement quality and supporting students throughout practice learning (Standards 4.2, 4.4).

Standard 5. Supporting students.	Met or not met
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: i. confidential counselling services ii. occupational health services, where appropriate	MET
5.2 Ensure that students have access to a system of academic and pastoral student support for their progression, development, wellbeing 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 relevant standards, in accordance with relevant legislation	MET
5.5 Provide timely information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory and have associated monitoring mechanisms in place	MET
5.6 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments	MET
5.7 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.

29. We were satisfied that there was a strong and embedded commitment to supporting student health and wellbeing across the programme, with EDI integrated into governance, oversight, and annual review processes. Students were provided with clear and consistent information about wellbeing and support services at all stages of the student journey, including pre-application, enrolment, and practice learning. This ensured expectations and available support were transparent from the outset and aligned to programme requirements (Standards 5.1, 5.4).

30. We heard that applicants were supported to make informed decisions about the demands of the programme through detailed pre-admission information and induction activities, which explicitly addressed the emotional and academic demands of AMHP training. Students had access to academic staff as a first point of contact, including the programme lead and wider academic team, alongside university counselling, mental health, and accessibility services. Additional support was available through employer-based provision, including occupational health services and 24/7 helplines, which strengthened the overall support offer (Standards 5.1, 5.2).

31. We were satisfied that appropriate systems were in place to support students with individual needs, including the development of accessibility plans and reasonable adjustments. These were embedded across academic delivery and practice learning, and where required were reflected in placement arrangements and support planning. Students provided examples of adjustments being implemented effectively, demonstrating a responsive and inclusive approach to supporting progression (Standard 5.4).

32. We confirmed that clear and transparent fitness to practise processes were in place, supported by formal procedures, defined stages, and appeal routes. These expectations were communicated from the outset and reinforced throughout the programme, including requirements relating to professional conduct, disclosure, and ongoing suitability. Health-related matters were appropriately considered within wider support and escalation processes, ensuring a proportionate and holistic approach to fitness to practise (Standards 5.3, 5.1).

33. We were satisfied that attendance, and engagement expectations were clearly defined within programme documentation, and linked to successful completion of academic and practice learning requirements. Attendance was monitored through university systems and practice learning processes, with clear mechanisms in place to address absence and support continued engagement. The practice learning portfolio set a minimum requirement of 40 days (300 hours), which was tracked and verified by practice assessors (Standard 5.5).

34. We heard that a flexible and supportive approach was taken where students experienced disruption, with mechanisms such as academic support, catch-up arrangements, and interruption of studies used where appropriate. This ensured that attendance processes remained proportionate while maintaining academic and professional standards (Standards 5.2, 5.5).

35. We were satisfied that assessment, and feedback processes were well established and consistently applied across the programme. Students received formative and summative feedback across both academic and practice learning components, with summative work returned within 20 working days. Feedback was constructive and developmental, with additional support provided where resubmission was required (Standard 5.6).

36. In practice learning, students received structured feedback from AMHP assessors alongside academic tutor support and portfolio-based guidance. Students described feedback as supportive of their development and helpful in applying learning to practice contexts (Standard 5.6).

37. We were satisfied that accessible processes were in place for raising concerns, including whistleblowing and raising concerns procedures. These were communicated through programme documentation and reinforced during induction, with students also required to engage with placement-specific policies through the practice learning portfolio. Academic staff acted as the first point of contact for concerns, with clear escalation routes into university and employer processes where required. Placement agreements set out whistleblowing arrangements prior to commencement, supporting safe practice and clarity of responsibility across settings. We were

therefore satisfied that appropriate systems were in place to support openness, accountability, and safe escalation (Standard 5.7).

Standard 6. Assessments	Met or not met
6.1 Ensure that the assessment strategy and design demonstrate that the assessments are robust, fair and consistent, and that those who successfully complete the course have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the competencies set out in the relevant legislation and rules as set out in the guidance that accompanies these standards	MET
6.2 Ensure that professional aspects of practice are integral to assessments	MET
6.3 Use objective measures of student performance which ensure safe and effective practice as an AMHP	MET
6.4 Regularly monitor and evaluate assessment standards	MET
6.5 Clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the course	MET
6.6 Clearly specify that any aegrotat award which may be made will not lead to eligibility to be approved as an AMHP	MET
6.7 Clearly specify the procedure for the right of appeal for students	MET
6.8 Clearly specify a process for the appointment of at least 1 external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and from the relevant part of an appropriate professional register	MET

Key observations for standard 6.

38. We were satisfied that programme documentation clearly mapped programme and module learning outcomes to the AMHP competencies set out in Schedule 2 of the Mental Health (Approved Mental Health Professional) Regulations 2008. Learning outcomes, assessment requirements, and support arrangements were clearly set out for students, and assessment methods included written and oral examinations alongside practice-based assessment within the practice learning portfolio. Assessment processes were underpinned by university academic regulations and a clear assessment strategy, ensuring consistency, fairness, and transparency. Students undertook both formative and summative assessment with structured feedback to support progression, and assessment tasks promoted the application of theory to practice, including an oral examination in Mental Health Law (Standards 6.1, 6.3).

39. We were satisfied that AMHP practitioners, employers, and regional networks were actively involved in programme design, delivery, and assessment. AMHP leads contributed to oral examinations and moderation of practice-based assessment, with joint oversight between employer assessors and the university ensuring decisions were grounded in current practice (Standard 6.2).

40. Students were clearly informed of assessment expectations at all stages, including pre-application, enrolment, and module delivery. Requirements, grading criteria, progression expectations, and fitness to practise requirements were consistently communicated. We were satisfied that robust governance arrangements were in place for assessment quality assurance. Outcomes were moderated internally and externally and overseen through programme assessment boards and university processes. Feedback from students, employers, external examiners, and people with lived experience informed ongoing review and enhancement activity, although formal governance involvement for people with lived experience was still developing in some areas (Standards 6.3, 6.4).

41. Progression, awards, and reassessment arrangements were clearly defined and communicated. Students were supported through academic regulations and reassessment processes where required. We confirmed there was no alternative award route, as clearly set out in programme documentation. Clear and accessible appeals and complaints processes were in place, underpinned by university policy and communicated throughout the programme. External examiner arrangements were robust, with examiners appointed in line with policy and involved in moderation, assessment oversight, and annual reporting. The current external examiner was a registered social worker and AMHP, with registration verified (Standards 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8).

Outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.

The regulator decision maker agreed with this [recommendation](#).